

No Answer in the Apparent Reality

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James: Hi, Carla.

For what it's worth, here's what I took away from our conversation concerning the question of judgment and discrimination with reference to the difficulty you have with some of your *guru's* behavior.

In the *Gita* Krishna makes this statement: "About the topic of *karma* even the sages are perplexed," which means that when you try to understand the meaning of anything in the world, the apparent reality (*mithya*), you cannot ultimately find a logical reason, because the world is not real. Discrimination is separating what is real from what isn't. Your questions about this issue are *mithya* questions. There is never a simple answer about anything in the apparent reality, because to supply an answer is to take into account everything in the field of existence, which no human mind can do. If there is an answer, only *Isvara* knows it. And *Isvara* is not in the business of supplying answers to *mithya* questions. Scripture is *Isvara's* answer. It is: separate *satya* and *mithya* if you want to be free, meaning separate yourself from the doubt.

The second point is that a student of Vedanta who uses discrimination to determine the nature of something in the apparent reality is misusing Vedanta's most essential tool, since discrimination is separating what is real - you, consciousness - from the thoughts appearing in you. So there is a lack of judgment involved in your pursuit of understanding concerning this topic. A discriminator should be able to dismiss the doubt quickly because its resolution won't lead to *moksa*, which is your primary goal. If you accept one of many *mithya* explanations or come up with one of your own, you aren't any closer to *moksa*.

The question then becomes: Why is there a lack of judgment concerning this issue? It is usually because there is some kind of *pratibandaka*, emotional block - a perfection *samskara*, for instance - that distorts the problem and conceals the real issue, which for a Vedanta student is discrimination between *satya* and *mithya*, between you and the Carla part. Carla is never going to understand it, because Carla herself is *mithya*. And if Carla does understand, the understanding is still *mithya*. Your desire to have the teacher conform to your idea of what a teacher should be is the issue.

If there is emotion around a certain topic due to faulty discrimination, then it is caused by insufficient dispassion, *viragya*, the second qualification. A dispassionate person would take a look at the whole picture and see if there is corruption in all aspects of the teacher's life or if his or her concern is purely over some idiosyncratic non-injurious habit. Although my *guru* had certain habits that I didn't care for, it never occurred to me to judge him for it, since I was there for *moksa*, not to keep him on the straight and narrow. I looked around and saw the tremendous value he brought to the lives of others and I couldn't begrudge him the small things. And then too, being a sinner has its advantages: it makes you tolerant and humble; you can't claim the moral high ground. If there is not dispassion on a particular topic it is due to lack of *karma yoga*, since *karma yoga* is about taking what one doesn't like as *prasad*, which neutralizes likes and dislikes. A good teacher will make sure that his

or her disciples know that he or she is not perfect. At the same time, he or she will not knowingly injure people.

In the last two or three discussions on this topic with you I have focused on the idea that the emotion is caused by the nature of the thought that you are trying to resolve. And I have suggested that you substitute a thought that neutralizes the disturbing thought. Obviously, the quickest and easiest thought is that the thought is not real, i.e. *mithya*. That should be enough to dismiss it. If it isn't, then a discriminator can try to dig up other thoughts that neutralize it, the Byron Katie *pratipaksha bhavana* approach. This process of neutralizing *vasanas* with knowledge is called *jnana yoga*.

Confronting your teacher doesn't work, as you can see, because the real issue is trust. You don't trust her. If you don't trust somebody and you ask them to prove that they are trustworthy you are only going to get one answer. Maybe it is best to look for another teacher. Having said that, I'll give you one more solution, one that my ex-wife used to solve the imperfection issue. When I criticized her for something, she used to say, "I fucked up. So what?" You may be less judgmental after Vedanta than you were before but even a small projection can cause a lot of grief. Or as Einstein said, "The solution to a problem is not to be found at the level of the problem." Which, as I said above, is only resolved by seeing it as *mithya* and dismissing it. If you say you see that it is *mithya* and it still bothers you, it means that you still think it is a real problem.

Anyway, since I have no first-hand information about your teacher I can't give my opinion. It is something you will have to work out on your own.

Carla: Thanks again for the email and continually putting thought into this matter. I feel much better after talking with you and Sundari. I agree with you that the solution to the problem is to just accept it for what it is, as you did with Swami Chinmayananda.

When I was talking about discrimination I was talking about discrimination as compared to judgment, and you are right, these are both within *mithya*. We discussed the example of discriminating between a fat person and a thin person but not making a judgment about the fat person. I realize we were not talking about discrimination as a spiritual practice of Vedanta, which discriminates between *satya* and *mithya*. I have tried to implement discrimination as a spiritual practice of Vedanta in this situation, but due to my lack of clarity about *satya* it has been difficult.

I'm glad you brought up the statement "even the sages are perplexed." I believe the solution is not to figure it out but rather to accept it, which includes not wanting it to be different. Thank you again for being patient, and thank Sundari for me, she has been great.

James: Yes, there are certain things in *maya* that are not logical and, as you say, they need to be accepted for peace of mind. The teaching on *Isvara* boils down to accepting everything because *Isvara* is the author of everything, which means that the emotions belong to *Isvara*, not to Carla. You don't think, "I'll be emotional," before you become emotional. You experienced something contradictory and an emotion arose automatically, which means that you can't own it. You "surrender" it

to *Isvara*, meaning you see that it isn't actually yours.

Clarity with reference to *satya* simply means that the self is whole and complete, lacking nothing. You can't add anything to it or subtract anything from it. So discrimination is looking at your thinking when there is emotion around a particular situation in light of the idea that you are the *satya*, the self. You say, "To whom is this emotion happening?" And then you bring up the basic teaching about the self and the doer/ego, the reflected self. Vedanta says that your primary identity is the self, not the doer/ego, and that the self is free of actions, emotions and thoughts, which means that Carla is emotional, not the self. When you apply this teaching it objectifies Carla and makes you aware that you are the self. When this happens the emotion dries up. Sometimes the emotion just disappears the moment you make the discrimination.

The intellect makes determinations/evaluations and it makes judgments. The difference is that determinations are impersonal if they are based on scripture, whereas judgments are personal, that is to say they are *vasana*-based. The point of discrimination is to neutralize emotion-producing *vasanas*, which leaves the mind calm. Faith in the teaching means that you have to cede your personal point of view, which creates emotions, and accept an impersonal view of yourself, which neutralizes emotions. It is very hard to do because we have been conditioned since childhood to see ourselves as specific individuals, located in a body, not as non-specific, non-located consciousness. It takes a long time to complete the shift from the personal self to the impersonal self, particularly if you come to Vedanta later in life when the *vasanas* are well-established. I was lucky because I was young and totally disgusted with the world and my ego, so my *vasanas* weren't much of a problem. Two years of intense *sadhana* with Swamiji was enough to neutralize the binding *vasanas* and complete the shift. During that time I practiced discrimination 18 hours a day.

This whole problem with your teacher was good. *Isvara* created it and *Isvara* resolved it. I'm glad I could be of service. Write or call anytime.

~ Love, James