

Seeking a Relationship to Work Out *Vasanas*

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Seeker: One thing I'd like to ask about. I have a *vasana* for suffering in a relationship; I think it stems right back to the death of my grandmother, the *vasana* seems to be dependent on an intimate relationship. I'm not sure whether to engage in intimate relationships and see if the *vasana* will burn itself out or to disengage from relationship and let it linger in the darkness. It only seems to manifest in intimate relationships or perhaps it's just more gross in such cases.

Sorry, heavy *tamas* right now. I guess it just boils down to whatever helps *satya-mithya* discrimination?

Sundari: Well, everything regarding self-inquiry boils down to *satya-mithya* discrimination. If you see the *vasana* and understand how it works, know that it does not come from you but from the causal body – the “darkness,” or unconscious. It is an eternal and universal *vasana*, not personal. There is nothing right or wrong about repeating a particular behaviour. Certain habits are good and certain habits are not, depending on what you are trying to achieve. As discriminating inquirers, we are interested in the psychology behind our behaviour, not the behaviours themselves, although certain behaviours are completely off limits, such as those that violate *dharma* or cause injury to ourselves or others. The basic psychology operating behind most of our unhelpful behaviours is fear, a sense of lack. Fear is always originates from ignorance.

Suffering invariably accompanies romantic intimate relationships because they are entered for the wrong reasons – with the hope that they will deliver something you do not already have or solve a problem – which as an inquirer, you know is impossible. Nobody can give you anything or be the solution to any of your problems. Only self-knowledge provides permanent solutions to anything in *mithya*. As a psychologist, you must be all too familiar with the fact that unconscious motivations are behind most things people do or don't do. Until we have some level of self-knowledge or at the very least self-objectivity, we do not realize that we are never in relationship with another person, but our *vasanas* are in relationship with their *vasanas*.

As an inquirer, you know that the joy or the solution to anything in *mithya* is in never in *mithya* – in another object. It is in you, the self. There is no need (and it is not advisable) to enter a relationship for the purpose of burning up a *vasana*. *Isvara* will give you plenty of opportunities without the additional *karma* of a relationship. And as an inquirer, you no longer seek a relationship for any reason, because it is contrary to self-inquiry. Seeking implies dependence, and self-inquiry is about freedom from dependence on objects.

So the correct approach for you to this binding *vasana* is to continue doing inquiry into it and instead of acting upon it, take a stand in awareness as awareness, with the *karma yoga* attitude. In time, *karma yoga* will lessen the pressure of this *vasana* and eventually, assuming you keep your attention on the self, it will burn up in the knowledge.

If this is a deeply-seated *pratibandika*, which it sounds like it is, remember this:

There Are Three Types of *Vasanas*

There are basically three types or categories of *vasanas* – smoke or fire, grime on a mirror and fetus in the womb.

- 1. Smoke or Fire:** These *vasanas* disturb the mind but are negated without too much effort. Like smoke dissipates on its own and fire is extinguished by water, we can dissolve this type of tendency quite easily. Examples of this are things that we can forgo relatively easily – like wanting an ice cream, for instance (unless we have a pathological addiction to it!), anything patently gratuitous.
- 2. Grime on a Mirror:** Grime on a mirror, which has been there for a while, needs elbow grease to remove it. These tendencies are not so easy to negate and require diligent practise of self-knowledge. Examples of this are habitually talking too much, eating too much, indulging any of the senses too much, frantic activity, manipulating to get our own way – any habit that is binding but we are aware of it.
- 3. Fetus in the Womb:** Just like a fetus in the womb takes nine months to gestate in order to develop fully, so these tendencies cannot be removed before they come to fruition. This kind of *vasana* usually creates *samskaras* (conglomerations of *vasanas*) or *pratibandikas* – deeply entrenched, and most often deeply unconscious, habits.

I think you already know all this, but it bears keeping in mind.

~ Much love, Sundari