

# Mental Health, Magic and Vedanta

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**Kanai:** I am connecting with you with hopes that you may enlighten me to understand my current situation. About a two years ago, I went to the jungle and drank some *ayahuasca*. I shared with the shaman that on a previous experience I was told I was a healer. I asked him how one enters shaman-hood. He never answered the question.

During a group session, he explained to me that I had come from a family of black magic. I never questioned him. I should have. I don't practise black magic.

By the end of the ceremony, he simply looked at me and said that I will be taught. That was all; I was perplexed. As I left the jungle, I realized that there was something wrong.

When I was on the plane, my heart hurt and I had a feeling that I had ruined my life by going there to the jungles of Ecuador, as I went there as a translator.

**Sundari:** I am not surprised you left Ecuador and the "shamans" feeling worse than when you arrived. I doubt you ruined your life, you just caused yourself unnecessary suffering. Shamanism, along with all the many other offerings in the world of spiritual materialism, simply does not work to remove suffering permanently; nothing does, apart from Self-knowledge, which is the fruit of self-inquiry. Vedanta says that we do not need a special experience to experience the truth of who you are, because your true identity as the Self/awareness precedes all experience.

To conduct self-inquiry, you need a valid means of knowledge capable of removing the ignorance of your true nature; only in this way can you understand and negate your limited identity as a person and claim your identity as the knower of all experiences, awareness, the Self. There is no magic, white or black, that can give this or take it away from you, because non-dual, actionless, unlimited, unconditioned and ever-present awareness is your intrinsic nature. But if ignorance stands in the way of this knowledge, limitation and suffering caused by the belief in duality will be your experience.

Many people in the so-called spiritual arena erroneously believe that they can use tricks, such as mind-altering substances, hypnosis, positive thinking, contact with the spirits through séances or other shamanic practices to gain "special" powers, prevent bad things happening or pervert the course of unconscious negative thoughts. In other words, to gain what they want or avoid what they don't want. The shamanic way says that the laws that govern this universe can be bent to the will of those who are free from the belief that it is impossible to get what you want with the "right attitude" or through "magic."

It may be true up to a point, but there is no *karma yoga* in this attitude, as it is all results-based, dualistic thinking. Even if you do get what you want, it is not your doing but *Isvara's*, the Field of Existence. Most so called (usually self-proclaimed) masters or "shamans" have no knowledge of how the *dharma* field functions (the *gunas*), nor do they understand or practise *karma yoga*.

*Karma yoga* is the understanding that you can act to get what you want but you are not in charge of the results. The results are up to the Field of Existence, a field of natural laws, or *dharmas*, which must be understood and respected to have peace of mind. Your actions are consecrated to the Field in an attitude of gratitude. You surrender with the acceptance that all results are the right results for you and you take them as such, relinquishing expectations, worry, hope or the need for a specific resolution according to your likes and dislikes.

The main reason that spiritualism, hypnosis and shamanic practices ultimately do not work is because they do not take *Maya/Isvara* – and the *vasanas* (pre-existing tendencies or psychological mental and emotional patterns) – into account. A *vasana* is a tendency to repeat certain actions. Not all *vasanas* are bad, but binding *vasanas* that cause bondage to negative thinking/emotional patterns cause great suffering. And all you will get with these kinds of spiritual practices are more *vasanas* for phenomenal experiences, addictions, hypnosis, New-Age *The Secret* type nonsense and shamanic tricks.

Therefore the “spiritual” option is bullshit because it’s underlying premise is based on duality, that you are incomplete and need something (an experience or special power) to complete you, which is never true. The “you are master of your destiny” idea is partially true in the short run, but it does not solve the fundamental problem of existential suffering, the binding *vasanas* and the belief in doership. It does not take into account the sad fact that the conditioned person identified with being a person (duality) is the problem in the first place. As a person your life needs to conform to the truth of existence if you want peace of mind, but the ideas proposed by spiritualism will NOT produce freedom from bondage, as you experienced, but more pain and suffering.

Whatever “truth” or actions these practices promote, the underlying idea is that you can (or must) “do” something to improve or perfect the person and their *karma*. Vedanta says there is no point in improving the person, because even though they exist, they are only apparently real, real being defined as “that which is always present and never changes,” which only applies to awareness, nothing else. You can indirectly improve the person through Self-knowledge in that it frees the mind from bondage to your likes and dislikes, but small-self-improvement is not the aim of self-inquiry. It is a by-product of Self-knowledge. And Vedanta also says that no action taken by a limited entity will result in a limitless result, freedom from limitation and suffering. It says that all experience takes place in time and so will end, leaving ignorance untouched unless Self-knowledge is assimilated from the experience. And only Self-knowledge is capable of removing ignorance.

**Kanai:** I now am psychotic, experiencing delusions. I have a feeling in my heart that I was not supposed to be mentally ill in this lifetime.

**Sundari:** You may be identified with being a “psychotic,” Kana, because you think you are your body-mind, but while psychosis may be conditioning your mind, YOU are not psychotic, and you are not your mind. You are the knower of the psychosis taking place in the mind. The problem is how to steady and calm the mind sufficiently so that it can at the very least get a grip on itself. If emotional/fear thinking is in charge of your intellect, it will not be capable of discrimination.

**Kanai:** The reason why I am connecting is because I was always a very happy 58-year-old. Perhaps you could say that I was seeking answers by continuing to drink that concoction.

**Sundari:** Well, if that is the case, that is where the problems you are experiencing arose. Why not stop drinking the concoction, for starters!!? It will not help you.

**Kanai:** It feels as if my heart had a spirit that is no longer there protecting me and keeping me whole. I have listened to all of your Vedanta series. I wish I had learned about them sooner.

**Sundari:** There are no such things as “bad spirits.” There are only negative and entrenched thoughts and emotions that take over and seem to “possess” the mind. Everything we experience originates from our thoughts, nowhere else, because there IS nowhere else. Some people can see subtle energies such as disembodied *jivas* of a “good or bad” nature more clearly than others and are called “sensitives, psychic or possessed.”

Much of it is the result of neurotic projections based on misguided fears and beliefs. The New Age fad of “channelling” supposedly superior beings is open ground for fools and phoneys, as is the idea that you can gain powers through “shamanism.” The magical-thinking types who abound in the spiritual marketplace use this subjective knowledge and present it as though it is truth, and of course, you need to give your power over to them because THEY know what the truth is for you. The psychic world of spirits is best avoided because it is all based on duality, it has no valid or objective teaching, and therefore is all ignorance.

**Kanai:** My question to you is, where and how does mental illness play a role in our spiritual life? I could only conclude that I connected to a deep part in my heart and I expressed fear.

**Sundari:** I am not sure exactly what you mean by “connected with a deep part of my heart,” but these practices definitely gave rise to a great deal of fear and deeply rooted *samskaras* (constellations of *vasanas*). If you can use these experiences to take an objective view at what came up for you, they could be of some benefit to you. If you succumb to repeating these negative practices that produce these fear experiences, you are asking for more suffering.

Vedanta is not a magic pill that will help you resolve your painful conditioning and emotional suffering. It requires a clear and purified mind which has realized that life is a zero-sum game, that there is nothing to gain through experience. Self-inquiry is your only real option, but without the qualifications for self-inquiry present in the mind, self-inquiry will not work. If the mind is mentally disturbed or ill, it will not be capable of self-inquiry.

Read the first chapters of James’ book and inform yourself of what the qualifications are. Taking drugs is off limits if you want us to help you or you want to help yourself. I suggest you find a good therapist or counsellor who can help you calm the mind sufficiently so that it can function more dispassionately.

**Kanai:** Is it possible for mental illness to be a betrayer of the heart??? Can the heart be the residence of our gods?

**Sundari:** What is “the heart,” Kana? And who are “the gods”? These are just thoughts appearing in you, consciousness. The human heart is just a symbol of consciousness; it is not capable of betraying you, because it is not conscious. Your heart does not know you, it is an object known to you. Your problem is not your heart but beginningless ignorance of your true nature and the nature of reality. Yoga calls the heart the *hridaya*, and although we like to think that consciousness is located physically in the human heart, it is really not located anywhere, because there is nowhere that consciousness (YOU) is not. It appears in the “heart cave,” “located” in the causal body – which is the macrocosmic unconscious mind – and where all seemingly personal *vasanas* originate. It means the essence, or “that without which a thing is not a thing,” like sweetness is the essence of sugar; sugar cannot be sugar without sweetness. It means that the true essence of everything is consciousness.

**Kanai:** My mind has already asked me to kill myself, and when I did not, it now ridicules me and has torments.

**Sundari:** All minds are run by involuntary thoughts that we seem to have no control over. To learn to think deliberately, you need to see that your thoughts and emotions are not real; they are known to you, so cannot BE you. Nor do they have the power to command you to do anything, unless you give them that power.

All our likes and dislikes and the emotions they create are nothing more than thoughts, they don’t hold any inherent meaning. Without the attention of consciousness/the Self (ME), they cease to exist. The only reason we continue to pay these self-limiting thoughts attention is because we think that they have some truth to them or that they represent something substantial, but they do not. To understand this is a radical shift in perspective because we are so used to assigning so much meaning to everything that takes place in our lives. Vedanta is completely counter-intuitive, which is why you need to develop the qualifications for self-inquiry first.

Every pleasant or unpleasant experience that takes place is the perfect opportunity to clean up our mind by take a stand in awareness as awareness and remove the meaning we have assigned to whatever is agitating us. If the mind is not qualified for self-inquiry, you can simply start by understanding and applying *karma yoga*. Offer up your agitation and distress to the Field (*Isvara*, or God, however you see it) and trust that the results you need will come to you, whatever they are. Take the results that do come as a gift and you will find your mind becoming calmer and clearer without any doing on your part. *Karma yoga* is designed to negate the doer, or ego, the “I” thought wrongly associated with experience, who believes the solution to suffering is in gaining or avoiding something. It never is. *Karma yoga* also removes the pressure of the *vasanas*.

**Kanai:** I am looking for some enlightening words because everywhere I look no one ever talks about mental illness. I shall remind you that I was whole and complete two

years ago. Please send some words of truth as you see it, as I trust what will come forth.

**Sundari:** You were not whole and complete two years ago, you always were and always will be whole and complete. Nothing has the power to change that. You have fallen into an *Alice in Wonderland* hole and lost your way. As I said above, Kana, you first need to purify the mind of most of its psychological agitation and develop at least the understanding of *karma yoga*. From there, you can proceed to develop the rest of the qualifications for self-inquiry.

Do not despair, you are never alone. We can try to help you, but you must help yourself first.

~ Sundari

**Kanai:** I understand that my *vasanas* led me to the jungle. Is it possible I am carrying an ancestral debt of some kind? And now Mother Earth is asking me to kill myself because my thoughts are so negative and not in harmony with what I was given??? My mind thinks into the future and I talk to myself inside my head. Perhaps I am being punished for not following my own *dharma*.

My dreams have changed dramatically. They are all on the same topic, like the storyline told by my shaman when I was in the jungle. I feel like I am stuck in a catch-22, like my mind can't figure out what went wrong. It's hard to meditate, as the psychic attack has made me tired. It knocked me off-balance, you can say. At my age, 56, I am not sure if I will be able to do the exercises either. I have always been fit, but with the headache, I don't feel healthy anymore.

I am so stiff. I feel like I was asked to kill myself for a reason, no?? Could it be *Maya*, my *jiva* no longer wants me in this life for not having enough will power of my own to follow my own *dharma*??? It is possible that the elements are cleaning out the environment, no?

I have totally surrendered, but I cry a lot and I regret many things.

~ Kanai

## **Tough Love**

**Sundari:** Yes, your *vasanas* lead you everywhere, as they do everyone, and they will continue to do so until you are prepared to do some work on yourself. "Mother Earth" cannot ask you to kill yourself, only your thoughts identified with your emotions can do that. Life supports whatever you want and will respond to you as you respond to it. There is no magic, black or white, no force outside of you making you do anything other than what goes on inside your head.

I have explained to you what self-inquiry entails, Micah has tried to help you by sharing his experience and the knowledge. Vedanta is the science of consciousness, it is thousands of years old and it works to remove suffering, if the mind is ready to do the work and has seen that life is a zero-sum game. Vedanta is knowledge-based,

not experience-based, as I explained to you. If you are after experience, Vedanta is not for you and you must stick to your New Age quasi-religious spiritual practices. We cannot help you with that.

Nor can we or anyone help you to be happy or give you what you seek, because you are what you seek. You must want to help yourself and want to stop being a victim. You do have free will to make the right choices for yourself, and we have said all we can say to you at this point. There is no solution in the world, the only way out of suffering is to understand what ignorance is and why it seems to separate you from who you are: whole and complete, non-dual, ever-present, unchanging awareness. Nothing touches you as awareness, you are unborn and undying.

But killing the body will NOT free you from ignorance, your binding *vasanas*. "You" will just be back for another round, as "someone else," only next time it will be harder.

If you insist on identifying with your small ego-self that feels so compromised, suicidal and afraid, nothing we say will make any difference to you. There is no point in writing to us.

Why don't you man up, stop feeling sorry for yourself and stop beating yourself up? Nobody is out to get you or punish you. Ask yourself if you have any real problems, other than the ones you imagine you have.

Where is your gratitude to the field for taking care of you, what do you give back to it?

The first time you wrote, you told me you were 58, now you say you are 56. It does not matter, but I wonder why your story changes. I know you live in New York; what do you do for a living?

Have you read what we wrote to you and followed any of our instructions?

This is tough love, Kanai. Vedanta has no issue with victims, but as I said above, because we know who you really are. But we are not interested in hearing about your confused ramblings about shamans, drug-taking or "magic." It is all BS.

~ *Om*, Sundari