

Mind, Language and Vrittis

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Simon: Yes, I'll be holding off on the PhD for now. It is difficult to see how the topic of the *gunas* could be expounded academically, since academia does not acknowledge the Self. I empathize with the likes of Freud, Jung and Carl Rogers because from the Western scientific perspective, the science of consciousness/self-inquiry is a flawed science, since the Self cannot be measured or even defined. That said, the *gunas* are specific measurable states which we take to be real. No doubt, the effect of *upasana*, *karma* and *dharma yogas* on the *gunas* could be measured. Pff, sounds a bit mundane though. Plus, academics are a bit boring anyway. I'm probably too much of a free spirit for academia, to be honest, 😊 but who knows?

Sundari: The *gunas* cannot be measured, so neither can the effect of Self-knowledge on them. The *gunas* are principles, not things, and the only way we can measure the effect of knowledge on them is indirectly, through the way we contact objects or react to experience. The more we live Self-knowledge the less we suffer, and then life is just life, it's fine however it appears. We surrender it to *Isvara* and go with the flow. As *jnanis* we always aim for *sattva*, but are not affected if it is there or not, because we are *trigunaatita*. *Sattva* is just another object known to me, and although it is much more pleasurable for the *jiva* to have a predominantly *sattvic* mind, being too hung-up on *sattva* is just another *mithya* trap.

As for science, I would not hold my breath even if academia does find a way to measure the effect of the *gunas*. I read an interesting article today on my science feed that said researchers have found a way to measure brain activity after death, proving, it would seem to them, that we don't die when we die! All well and good, but that tantalizing bit of science means very little without knowing what it means to be the Self before or "after" death! The fact that consciousness is unborn and undying is just too much of a stretch. Science will never be able to understand consciousness, because its epistemology is the five senses, which are incapable of assimilating what it means to be consciousness, not merely to be conscious. Science can only objectify it.

Simon: Perhaps the book is a better idea, but it's a slow-burner. I'll let the knowledge do the work for now. I'm pretty sure St. Patrick was a Vedantin turned Christian due to imperial pressure. At least that will be my take on it. For example, *anam cara* (sounds familiar) is a well-known Irish phrase meaning "soul friend." I'd like to brush up on my Sanskrit too. Could you advise on how to proceed with that? I've been considering investing in Dayananda's *Home Study* books.

Sundari: Good thinking. I am sure there were (and are) many great souls in all world religions that did not and do not belong there, but hide in plain sight, out of necessity or lack of access to or knowledge of anything better.

There are many words in our common language that are seeded by Sanskrit. Language is a very interesting and important topic, especially regarding self-inquiry because Vedanta is very specific about the words it uses.

However, Sanskrit is not a prerequisite for self-inquiry or for Self-knowledge to obtain. The import thing is to understand the meaning of the teachings, which James has done so much to present to the world as clearly as possible with the minimum use of Sanskrit.

Dayananda's *Home Study* course is a good choice to learn Sanskrit. I have attached a few sources we use too.

Simon: I see the paradox of my statement "*adharmic* behaviour with the *karma yoga* attitude just isn't working so well for me anymore." What I meant was *tamasic* behaviour such as smoking; is it possible that smoking is a *prarabdha karma*? Anyway, like I said, I've stopped, so not so important. But on a side note, who's to say it's harmful/*adharmic*? It is traditionally viewed as a medicine, a symbol of the Self, if you like. In fact the traditional tobacco ceremony is similar to a mindset practice, but it's been totally misused and abused, like many things in our current society.

Sundari: All *vasanas*, good and bad, are *prarabdha karma*. A *vasana* is the momentum from a past action, the tendency to repeat it. It is purely a technical term. But *vasanas* can also sprout without any previously known tendency or desire because the seeds for all *vasanas* are eternal, they are *Isvara* (causal body), and therefore exist as potential in everyone. It may seem like "our" *vasanas* are personal and original, but they are not, and the same for our *karma*. *Isvara* churns both out over and over because there is really only one eternal *Jiva*, or Subtle Body, appearing as many seemingly unique individuals with seemingly unique "issues" and circumstances. They are not unique (although the ego likes to think they are) but generic and timeless. It is impossible to put a timeline to this logic, because as principles the *Gunas*, the *Jiva*, the *Vasanas* and *Karma* cannot be separated, as they exist "out of time," in infinite potential within the causal body, which is infinite because it exists in consciousness.

It's the same with *prarabdha karma*. *Prarabdha karma* is not only the momentum of our seemingly personal past actions, it also comes with the territory of being human and alive. When all *prarabdha* is finished, it's time-out for this *jiva*, we shuffle off the mortal coil. It could be that the smoking *vasana* is wired in for you, and of course if you indulge it, the *vasana* strengthens and becomes more entrenched, creating more and more *prarabdha*. You feel compelled to smoke: the habit is smoking you. Anything can be a symbol of the Self, but there is no denying that habits such as smoking harm the body, even though it's a habit probably as old as time. Many cultures employ it as part of sacred ceremonies, especially traditional cultures. But it is one thing to indulge it occasionally as part of a ritual or ceremony and to smoke a pack a day.

As I have said to you before and you know only too well, the basic psychology operating behind most of our unhelpful behaviours is fear, a sense of lack. A *vasana* for food is natural. A *vasana* for smoking is not. Eating is *Isvara* maintaining the body. I eat to live. But when I feel emotionally upset for any reason and use food to calm me, the *vasana* becomes a problem because it masks my real motivation. I am now living to eat. If my mind is clear, I can understand that I am using food to solve a problem not solvable by food (or anything else) and I can look for the solution elsewhere. However, if my mind is not clear and food works, which it does temporarily, I will repeatedly use food to manage my emotions. Same with smoking.

Always the motivation behind our actions are what counts, not the actions themselves so much.

Simon: Yes, there's only one way forward for me, and that's Vedanta. On that note, if *moksa* is not fully actualized at the time of death, does the causal body then transmigrate with the *jiva*? Giving rise to a subtle body, etc?

Sundari: The personal *jiva* never "transmigrates." The eternal *Jiva* is consciousness, so never goes anywhere. The personal *jiva* program ends at the death of the body. But its microcosmic causal body (which is what I take it you mean when you say causal body), or subtle body – *vasana* load – transmigrates into a different body. The *punya karma* from the previous birth will cause it to be born into auspicious, *sattvic*, circumstances fitting its level of growth. Krishna talks about this in the *Gita*. But what's the fuss when you know you are the Self, unborn and undying?

When inquiring into rebirth or reincarnation, one must ask: "Who is it that is reborn?" Vedanta says that rebirth is simply identification with *vasanas*, which come and go. "Transmigrates" is not really a good term. The subtle body is called the traveller because it transmigrates "between lives" as the *vasanas* that are stored in the causal body sprout. Identification with objects can only take place when consciousness has a subtle body. No thought happens without the subtle and gross bodies being present. Outside of the *dharma* field there is no causality and no influence of the *gunas*, as all is in seed form waiting for the right moment to sprout. And the right moment is determined by the *dharma* field and all the forces and laws that run it.

Simon: Now, I'm staying quiet, prioritizing *sattva*, and is great to be swimming deep in the ocean once more. I'm inquiring more deeply into *Tattva Bodh*, so basic yet such a rich text. It says volition is *manas*, but the description of *buddhi* seems to describe volition as well, that is, making a decision or determining; I understand *manas* to be the doubting function, and the part of the mind from which involuntary thoughts appear, due to its connection with *chit*, memory, and *ahamkara*, the doer, enjoyer and expecter of results; but not so much decision-making.

Sundari: Good for you, Simon. There is nothing else that fulfils us in this life, so why waste your time and energy in or on the world? Just do what you do with *karma yoga* and leave the rest to *Isvara*.

The mind is a complex object. It is a function of the subtle body and cannot be separated from all the other functions, such as the intellect (*buddhi*), memory (*chitta*), the I-sense, or ego (*ahamkara*, when the mind is identified with action or the enjoyer of pleasure and pain), the five gross organs of knowledge/perception (*jnana indriyas*: eyes, ears, mouth, nose, skin) and the five subtle instruments of knowledge/perception (seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching), the five gross organs of action (*karma indriyas*: speech, hands, legs, anus, genitals) and the five physiological functions, or *prana* (respiration, circulation, evacuation, digestion/assimilation and ejecting the subtle body at death, *udana*).

Mind basically has four functions:

1. It receives stimuli from its environment, the Field of Existence of which it is a part,

through the five gross sense organs and subtle sense instruments, *jnana indriyas*. It unifies and integrates the information into one experience. It decides which organ will function consciously or mechanically, which Swami Paramarthananda calls “the traffic cop function.” One sense organ cannot produce five independent experiences. For example, a blind person can still smell, taste, touch and hear. The world is known by the sense organs, but the sense organs are not known by the world. The sense organs are extroverted. They generally operate outside the body. But at certain times, the sense instruments perceive within the body because the body is non-separate from the five elements, i.e. the material world. Although the gross organs of perception, the eyes, ears, etc. are visible, the ability to hear, see, touch, etc. are not.

2. Doubting function: enquires into the merits and demerits of the objects perceived by the senses. A very important function, which overdeveloped or underdeveloped is a serious impediment to a happy life and to self-inquiry.

3. Emotes: it generates thoughts and feelings (feelings are always preceded by a thought) to activate the organs of action. When the mind is in a state of desire, indecision, dithering or doubt it is called *manas*. When the mind is controlled by involuntary thoughts and emotions, the intellect cannot function and suffering ensues. Constant observation of the thoughts and feelings appearing in the mind is called *mano nigraha*, an essential part of self-inquiry.

4. Modifies to or manages the *gunas*: it modifies to the *gunas* or manages them, depending on its level of Self-knowledge.

The intellect, or *buddhi*, is the cognitive part of the subtle body that discriminates, makes judgments, determines. It should be in charge of the mind, not the other way around.

Simon: Additionally, how come *chit* is not included in the visual descriptions of the *antahkarana*? Is it considered to be a part of *manas*?

Sundari: It is included. *Chit* is consciousness, the Self. *Manas* is possible only because *chit*, consciousness, illuminates the subtle body.

There are three “aspects” to the one indivisible Self:

1. *Sat*, existence.

2. *Chit*, consciousness, that which makes knowledge or ignorance (being conscious) possible.

3. *Ananda*, the bliss of the Self.

Simon: Then it is said that the three *vrittis* are said to exist in the causal body. I presume this means in their seed state, and as with *vasanas* can only be known as they fructify in the subtle body as thoughts that are known to me.

Sundari: Yes. There are three basic types of *vrittis*, or thoughts: (1) *priya* (I want); (2) *moda* (desired object obtained); (3) *pramoda* (pleasure, desired object enjoyed).

All *vrittis* originate in the macrocosmic causal body (*Isvara*), and not the microcosmic causal body (*jiva*/subtle body).

~ Much love, Sundari