

# Following Dharma

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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**Deirdre:** Dear Sundari, thank you for the latest instalment of your newsletter. It is always a pleasure to hear what is going on with you and Ram! And I appreciate the focus on teaching.

**Sundari:** Thank you, appreciation is greatly appreciated, to quote Ramji!

**Deirdre:** I wanted to share my thoughts about the complaint about the *guna* teaching. Your point is well taken that freedom is not free or fun when one does not deal with the *gunas* or *vasanas*. I have experienced that in the past few months with the depressive form of enlightenment sickness; as much as I knew I was not the depression, it was still very unpleasant!

**Sundari:** It is interesting that you call depression a “form of enlightenment sickness”; it is often the case that when the objects are known to be empty, the ego feels this emptiness and identifies with it. This passes once the awareness arises that you are the fullness that knows the emptiness.

Depression, as you know, is *tamas*, and it can also mask hidden feelings, such as anger (*rajas*). Where you find one of these two troublemaker *gunas* you will find the other. Maybe it is an anger that you have not given yourself permission to feel and it is surfacing for release now. The effects of ignorance do not disappear overnight “after enlightenment”; they take a while. Those patterns have been there for who knows how long, and it is obvious that they will take some “time” to play themselves out, the “blades of the fan” idea.

The most important thing is that you see the depression as known to you: you are the knower of the depressive feelings. Observe it happening, identify the cause and then see it as non-self, the play of the *gunas*. This does not mean that you do not have to address the underlying cause for the depression.

Facing a *vasana* is not about setting out to conquer it, it is not a doing. It is about the ability to see the conditioning, the value that underpins the *vasana* and the *guna* that underpins the value. With understanding comes the realisation that holding onto that pattern causes suffering, because it does not work. Therefore to make the choice for *sattva*, which could mean changes in your environment or in the way you see your environment or both.

And of course very important is the practice of *karma yoga*. What also helps is a devotional practice of some kind, meditation or anything that calms the mind and makes you feel good, peaceful. Deep *vasanas* are almost always a conglomeration of “programmes” that interconnect in the most complicated and often hidden ways. These are called *samskaras*, as you know.

**Deirdre:** But worse than that is the effect the unresolved *vasanas* have on the

people around us.

**Sundari:** There are no people around us, as there is only you, awareness. In the apparent reality everyone in our world is an extension of the *vasanas* we incarnate with, especially family and people we are close to. The whole field is run by the *gunas*; no-one is doing anything. This is why no one is innocent or guilty of anything; we all serve each other's purpose in the grand scheme of things by mirroring to each other what we came here to remember – that our true nature is the self. Suffering plays a big part in this, as it propels the apparent individual to begin to seek within for the answers.

That said, as *jivas* we do have contact with other people whether we are householders or not, and allowing the toxic waste of our unresolved issues to contaminate them is not *dharmic*, as it causes suffering to them and us.

**Deirdre:** Isn't it *adharmic* to refuse to deal with harmful *vasanas* and an excess of *rajas/tamas*?

**Sundari:** Relationships of any kind are fraught with so much unhappiness because people in them project their stuff onto each other and are in denial about doing so (*rajas/tamas* again). The price to pay, for those who have no self-knowledge and desire the object to complete them, is always suffering of some sort. There are no solutions in *samsara*, it is designed to break your heart and fragment the mind.

As said above, it is *adharmic* not to deal with harmful *vasanas*, as much because they harm others (who are not others at all), but because they cause injury to yourself. This is the whole point of self-inquiry: putting an end to suffering by freeing the *jiva* from its identification with objects.

**Deirdre:** I can see that if a *jiva* is not a householder and has little contact with others, there may not be much need to face psychological issues.

**Sundari:** What about the suffering of yourself? What difference does it make if you are a householder or not? Read what I said above: there are no others, only apparently so. There is only you, awareness. One could be on a tropical island in paradise, on your own without a soul to bother you, and be totally miserable because you are totally identified with objects. The only *samsaris* who have a reasonable chance of being relatively happy, even though they are not interested in self-inquiry, or *moksa*, are the *dharmis*. These are the people who follow the rules, always do what is right, clean up their act, have a *sattvic* lifestyle and don't injure themselves or others. It's not freedom, but it's a lot better than a lot of so-called spiritual lifestyles. James always says next to good manners *moksa* is the most important thing.

And in the big picture, seeing as there are no "others," enlightened or not, you have an impact on the big picture and it on you, whatever you do or don't do. The self is unconcerned about this; to the self nothing affects or modifies it. As a *jiva*, actualising the self in the apparent reality entails dealing with the effects of ignorance, as *Isvara* does not care if you are enlightened or not. The *gunas* continue conditioning the subtle body and causing suffering if unaddressed, even if you know

who you are and whether or not you have contact with a living soul.

**Deirdre:** But for those of us continuing as householders, it seems wrong and arrogant (and a big cop-out) to just dismiss the *gunas* and *vasanas* – because the *gunas*, the *vasanas*, the people around us: they are you and you are them. There is no difference. So why make their lives miserable, especially since they don't know who they are? What's the point of enlightenment if the *jiva* can't live ethically and in conformance with *dharma*? Is spreading my crap around suddenly okay just because I know who I am?

**Sundari:** It does not have anything to do with whether or not you are a householder. One only ever does things for yourself, even though it appears as though you are “doing” things for “others.” *Moksa* is for the *jiva* to be free of the *jiva*, not addressing your psychological issues causing *adharmic* behaviour, which ties you to the *jiva* and thus to suffering, enlightened or not, householder or not. So, yes, the point of enlightenment is in understanding what it means to be enlightened as the *jiva* living in the apparent reality. This is what we call self-actualisation.

**Deirdre:** My prayers for you and Ram.

~ With much love, Deirdre

**Sundari:** Much love to you too.