

Sticking with Your *Sadhana* No Matter How Hard

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Dan: Dear Sundari, I hope you are well and happy.

Thank you for putting me in touch with Christine.

She was wonderfully helpful and put me onto some great techniques.

I have learned a great deal already about my own insecurities coming from my parenting. There are so many of what James calls “love issues.”

I am now seeing them much more clearly in my relationship with my daughter, my partner Shizuka, my family and my students/colleagues.

The desire for love from an outside source is crippling and has been for all my life.

The tendency to be drawn into other people’s agendas and to draw them into mine is powerful. It is quite disgusting when you begin to see it clearly.

Having a negative relationship with this *jiva* is deadly and infects all other relationships. It is not comfortable to see but it is a relief to be able to.

To be able to take the position of the Self is essential or there is no way out.

At some moments there is dispassion and a sense of freedom, and then there are moments of sudden identification.

It is becoming easier to take the position of the Self, however. I see that in contact with others the ignorance manifests and there is an automatic return to old conditioning. This is seen a lot more though and there is less confusion. At times there is strong self-condemnation, panic and sadness about past actions, but again this is seen. I can see that there is no quick fix and that the work continues – I have to stop thinking about the end.

For years as a Buddhist I was hoping for a sudden ejection from *samsara* – I don’t know what I expected really except that the pain would stop somehow.

It is clear now that I must get increasingly wise to *samsara* – freedom from the *jiva*, not freedom for the *jiva*. There is sometimes a feeling of despair at the size of the problem, an idea that I must solve all the problems and it is a Herculean task. Really though, it is just being willing to pay the price of freedom – constant vigilance. Painful and daunting though it can seem, seeing the vulnerabilities of the *jiva* is essential.

I am my only sanctuary. The people I love are no more real or secure than I am. This is done one moment at a time – how else? I am grateful to you, James, the *sampradaya*, the teaching and (sometimes reluctantly) to *Isvara* for showing me the way. Without this perspective, I would be lost in confusion and compulsion. I am coming to see that I have to love this *jiva*. He has lived in self-loathing all his life, and it is time to get him off and help him out. There is some shit-awful wiring in him though, which needs to be patiently pulled out and replaced.

My love to you and to James, I hope we may meet soon, and I wish you all the best that *samsara* has to offer.

Sundari: Thank you, Dan, this is the “work” of Self-inquiry, it takes as long as it takes, be patient with it and kind to yourself. And above all, practise gratitude. Gratitude is such a beautiful emotion, the most beautiful in fact. It is the same as the feeling of love. Gratitude is a gift to us from *Isvara*, because *Isvara* does not need our gratitude. *Isvara* gives us the feeling of gratitude as a gift to experience the bliss of the Self. And it is the best attitude to have to everything. Start a gratitude journal.

Stick with your *sadhana* despite how counter-intuitive and challenging Self-knowledge can be. It reverses the reversal – which, to the unqualified mind, feels like it is ripping away everything you thought you knew. If you are conducting Self-inquiry properly, Vedanta is designed to turn things on their head. The good thing is that it is also there to take you through the next steps, which is why it is so important to have a qualified teacher. Just remember that *Isvara* is not cruel, though how things play out in the *mithya* world can seem so if you are looking through the lens of duality.

Yes, ignorance is a bitch, no doubt about that. *Karma yoga* is the only way to peace of mind. Make sure you practise it in every thought, word and deed, along with mind management, *guna yoga*. Have you read James’ book on the three *gunas*? Make sure you do if you have not.

Shame about anything, and its handmaiden, guilt, are *tamas* at its worst. There are many reasons why we feel ashamed, and all of them are destructive to peace of mind originating from and building on the lie that we are “flawed” and unworthy. Even if we were never indoctrinated by religion, shame finds its way into the psyche of most people; it seems to be part of the human condition. It causes an ugly, dark and thoroughly negative psychological condition attaching itself like a parasite to everything good about life or about who we think we are.

Self-inquiry is only helpful if you apply the teachings to your life, so keep up the good work! I salute you for having the courage to talk to Christine about the problem with your daughter, and I am so glad she could help you. May you find the clarity to let it all go and forgive yourself.

~ Love, Sundari