

The Joke

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Seeker: Hi, James. I'm always a little uneasy sending you my queries, since your time is limited and others have much more pressing needs than mine. As you can see, my questions are now mostly aimed at refining my knowledge concerning the teaching angle. Though I am not a teacher, I can maybe envisage a future day when teaching might happen. Whether I ever do teach or not is not a concern. If *Bhagavan* sees the need I'm sure He will set things up. If not, not.

In the same vein, your last response was excellent. What else to expect from His Highness? I follow your argument, although I have a problem with your ending statement, if you look at it in the context of teaching. "Consistency is for small minds"?

It seems to me that your success in teaching Vedanta comes precisely from the fact that it is a rigorous methodology, especially compared to the vague prattlings of the Neos. Correct me if I am wrong, but a good methodology is efficient because it is consistent. No need to tell you that the problem with the Neos is a complete lack of consistency. They blurt out a seemingly deep phrase and then turn around and contradict themselves in the next breath. This is why I initially recognized the remarkable distinction between you and a Tony Parsons (and if I didn't, I would still be nowhere spiritually). You are so successful precisely because you follow the Vedanta methodology.

Consistency can be seen as the sign of a small mind if it is imprisoned in a golden cage that doesn't provide for paradox in an exceedingly paradoxical world (*mithya*). That is clear to see. But in a world of seekers looking for an initial sense of security through a clear and coherent teaching, isn't a methodological consistent teaching helpful and necessary?

In the sense that the world is both real and unreal, that one is neither enlightened nor unenlightened, I totally follow your drift. My concern is for the seeker; or am I missing something? Please clarify whenever convenient.

James: What I meant in my last email was that you can't apply the either/or idea to reality. It seemed to me that this was the source of your confusion about my apparently inconsistent statements concerning *vasana* exhaustion and letting the *vasanas* be. People think *maya* and awareness should be "consistent," i.e. the same. But they are different orders of the one reality, so while they are one, they are not the same. If you take the verse "the one who sees action in inaction and inaction in action" and look at it from a logical, consistent mind it does not make sense. The ostensible meanings are inconsistent. Or if you look at the behavior of *jnanis*. A normal person would expect it to be consistent with the self. But this is not possible. The truth is more nuanced.

What you say about Vedanta, however, is right on. It consistently resolves the inconsistencies inherent in the juxtaposition of *satya* and *mithya*. It is consistent because everything is justified with reference to one thing, awareness. The Neos look at awareness from the point of view of a person who has realized non-duality,

but they do not think from awareness's platform. They have to be vague and talk about it or say you can't talk about it, because their knowledge is indirect. They only have their experience to resolve inconsistencies, but no individual's experience is broad enough to resolve all doubts. Ignorance is so much smarter than any individual. Insofar as a seeker gets stuck at the same point that the teacher got stuck, it is possible for the teacher's experience to be useful. But these teachers never relinquished the limited point of view. The best they can do it point to it. That is okay as far as it goes, but a proper teaching negates the pointer, the teacher.

To teach Vedanta you have to be the self. You have to think from the self's platform. Vedanta is the self speaking, not a person speaking about the self. Vedanta is beautiful because it provides cover. You get to speak as the self but it looks like you are just a person. It is just an act. I am so good at it I almost fool myself! I always had acting *vasanas* but felt a bit guilty until I watched my *guru* who was a consummate actor. Are you a fraud if you know you are a fraud? I only saw him forget his lines once. It was the strangest thing. It was in Taiwan, and he was very tired and he was just running along with the teaching and suddenly a sentence came out that had nothing to do with anything at all. He was just riding on automatic pilot and out it came from nowhere. He picked up on it right away and got back on track – no harm done. We looked at each other with one of those knowing looks.

It is always a joke because there is no *satya* and *mithya*, no liberation or bondage. All is just me. But it is fun to pretend that people are suffering and that they are being relieved of suffering and that you, whoever that is, has something to do with it. When Arjuna turns his life over to Krishna in the second chapter, the text says, "Then Krishna, as if smiling..." He knows the whole thing is a joke. He sees the self there shining in all its radiance and out of its mouth is coming the dumbest stuff – "I can't do it. I can't fight," etc. He knows how much Arjuna is going to have to go through to get free – when he is already free. It is funny. But we have to pretend that it isn't. Honestly, it has taken me a long time to learn how to keep a straight face. The essence of humor is the juxtaposition of opposites or of seeming opposites.

You have to love the Neos. They are so earnest and well-meaning, but they take themselves so seriously as teachers. In a way I hate to have to slag them off, but it needs to be done. Anyway, I digress, the *satya/mithya* distinction is the essence of *moksa*. Here is what Sundari said about your question:

"This inconsistency thing is a big one – and a vital one to get if true self-realisation is going to hold. The bottom line is truly understanding the relationship between *satya* and *mithya*. Only a mature intellect can grasp this paradox and live in it, as it is. The man who could not live with the image of the young Rwandan girl with her arm hacked off, for instance – if he could get this, he would understand that suffering is not real. I know that because I am the self. Even though I apparently live in *samsara*, horror does not exist for me. There is no horror in *brahmaloka*, the self. The horror seems to exist in *samsara* where bodies think they are real, and fear – False Evidence Appearing Real – abides."

Anyway, keep the emails coming. Don't worry about the others. If you take one person a thousand miles it is the same as taking a thousand people one mile.

~ Love, James