

Things My Mother Never Told Me

Part II of Q&A with Brahmachari Uddhav Chaitanya

There seems to be a lot of Vedanta in *The Matrix*. What was your take on the movie?

Yes, the first *Matrix* movie has a lot of Vedantic concepts in it, with some great scenes and great lines, like these:

- When you are ready, the teacher comes searching for you.
- 'Neo' unscrambled is the 'One.'
- When Neo is taken out of the matrix, they unplug him from the system. This unplugging is like *sannyasa*, wherein the *brahmachari's* tuft (hair) is cut off, symbolizing the cutting off of all attachments.
- The matrix world (*maya*) is like a dream world for awakened masters. The masters can come and go at will, and control it as they want.
- The red pill and blue pill are *preyas* (the path of pleasure) and *shreyas* (the path of goodness) from *Kathopanishad*. One keeps you in the dream world and the other brings you out if it.
- The agents (artificial intelligence) in the Matrix have the ability to pop up anywhere—the infinite and indescribable power of *maya*.
- There are three agents, just as there are three *gunas* through which *maya* functions.
- The evolved child, who was bending the spoon, said, "Just remember: There is no spoon." This line finds its resonance in *Mandukya Upanishad*. You can control your dream because 1) it's just a dream and 2) it's your dream.

What does it mean when we say everything is a dream? Does it mean you can walk in front of a truck?

(*Laughing*) Yeah, you could. It's your choice. But I wouldn't advise it.

The scriptures' reference to this waking world as a dream-like existence is to point out the non-existence of the ego, to remove the misconception that the Self is bound by the instruments of body, mind, intellect and the world of multiplicity. To transcend this waking world, the waker, waking, and waking world—all have to be renounced. Many of us are willing to give up the waking world in hope for a higher state, but we are not willing to disregard and discard the waker also. The only way out is to translate this truth into all our expressions.

How do we rightly translate this overwhelming concept into our daily life?

Like this: Any action being done, though done through the prompting of *vasanas*, should be done with one sole intention, in this order: to purify all instruments, to disidentify with all instruments, to get established in Being. At every moment, come to focus on the Existence that is, not on the apparent plurality. Focus on the essence, not the superficial. Practice is the only thing required.

When the scriptures talk of *sadhana*, the seeker interprets the goal as something he has to seek and attain by his active doing, which he labels as his '*sadhana*.' But by thinking like this, the whole purpose of *sadhana*—to stop becoming a doer and enjoyer—is defeated. So, for the 'doers' in us, the scriptures instruct us to purify the mind through *puja*, *japa*, and *dhyana*—the purpose of all three is purification. Here 'purification' means disidentification with the instruments and the ego. *Bhagavad Gita* states, "*Gunah guneshu vartante iti matva na sajjayet.*" *Vasanas* express through our instruments, which interact with the world. But for this interaction to take place, the existence of the ego is not required as such—it is all just 'happening.'

But if *gunas* or *vasanas* alone are 'doing,' and all desires, thoughts, and actions are just their automated expressions, then all identifications, choices, and even *sadhana*, are also *vasana*-prompted. So where does self-effort come in?

'Disidentifying' from the instruments and the ego is the process of allowing *vasanas* to express and exhaust themselves without any doership or enjoyership. Disidentifying from the instruments results in dissolving the misconception called ego. Learn to disidentify. Practice. This is self-effort. In and through all desires, thoughts, and actions, keep your focus on the Changeless, not the changing *vasanas* and their expressions; they will keep coming and going.

Raise yourself from *tamasik* to *rajasik* to *sattvik*. *Sattvik* desires, like the desire for *satsanga*, will automatically drop off when it is time. But *rajasik* and *tamasik vasanas* don't drop off automatically; it takes a lot of self-effort to overcome them. In the *sattvik* state, it is much easier to consciously disidentify, but in the *rajasik* and *tamasik* states, automatic disidentification is impossible; a lot of effort is required.

It's one thing that *vasanas* have to express and exhaust themselves. But how do you stop generating *vasanas*?

There was a parable circulated via e-mail; the author is unknown:

One evening, an elderly Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that rages inside people. He said, "My son, the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all. One wolf is evil. Its faces are of anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, lies, and ego. The other wolf is good. Its faces are of joy, peace, love, humility, generosity, truth, and faith."

The grandson reflected on these words for a few minutes and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf wins?"

The wise Cherokee replied, "The one you feed."

Stop feeding your *vasanas* and they will stop generating. Feeding means identifying with, getting worked up by, being influenced by, over-valuing.

But isn't this disidentification also the result of *vasanas*?

Yes. So develop such *vasanas*—this is the greatness of *satsanga*. *Satsanga* creates *sattvik vasanas*. There are *vasanas* (*rajasik* and *tamasik*) that keep you bound in the *vasana*-cycle, and then there are those (*sattvik*) that bring you out of it.

But if my *sadhana*, my going to *satsanga*, also results from *vasanas*, then if one has only negative *vasanas*, how can one ever improve and evolve?

Good question. Come ask this question after you have put forth effort, after have sufficiently developed *sattvik vasanas* and experienced their worth. You will be better prepared to understand then. Right now it will just sound like circular reasoning to you.

Most importantly, when, where, how, and why was the first *vasana* that started all this? How did 'i' ever come to be?

This answer is a fact, whether u like it or not. For sure, there is no first *vasana*. In fact, there isn't a second, a third, or a fourth. But until you see and experience this for yourself, you will keep asking about the first. All is consciousness alone. All that the *jiva* experiences, including the *jiva*'s very existence—all of it is imaginary. For now, when you hear statements in the scriptures about *vasanas* and *vasana*-purgation, sublimation, or exhaustion, just follow the scriptures. They will take you to a point of such acute awareness that you will see for yourself the truth behind all *vasanas*. But for now, the intellect cannot grasp it, and words cannot depict the total picture.

So since the guru and *ishta-deva* are both objects of my experience, they are also both to be eventually renounced, right?

Yes. But here, you don't do the dropping; they drop of their own accord.

These four things—guru, *daiva*, *tirtha*, and *shastra*—when they come to you in your dreams, don't consider them as ordinary dreams. They are visions. Yes, visions also are relatively real, but they are more significant for the seeker than just another dream. Such visions come in a pure mind, a highly *sattvik* mind that is awake and ready to receive instruction. This doesn't mean that all seekers who have pure minds have visions. These visions depend on individual needs. They just happen; you can't make them appear by wishing for them. Trust that you will get what you need when you need it.

***Bhaktas* speak of 'all this' (the universe and its play) as the Lord's *lila*, and that all this just 'is what it is.' Does this mean Self-realization is pointless?**

Depends on who is asking and who is answering. From the standpoint of Awareness, realization is pointless. From the standpoint of the *jiva*, realization is in two parts: 1) realizing that I am not finite and limited and 2) realizing that I am the infinite and unlimited (which defies description).

As the means to attain realization, we often hear two kinds of statements: "Do your *sadhana* with great fervor" and "Let go of everything and surrender to God." How should these be rightly interpreted? What's the bottom line: Are we puppets of divine will, or do we have free will? Is it one or the other, or is there a percentage of each? Or is it a different factor altogether?

It's one or the other. Believe what you want to believe. Believe what's easier for you to believe. In the end, it won't matter.

Option 1: Surrender and don't take credit for anything. Everything is the Lord's will, so there cannot be any doership or enjoyership—no ownership. This is the difficult one.

Option 2: Take full responsibility for your actions. Everything is your choice, your free will to decide your own fate—*karma*, *karma-phala*, *prarabdha*, *sadhana*. In this, you will see your efforts manifest as divine grace—they are not separate.

But keep your thinking steady: it's one or the other; it's all or nothing. No, there is no percentage, so don't conveniently keep switching from one attitude to the other. Either the

Lord holds the reins (you seek to melt in Him), or you do (you strive to realize your true Self). Gurudev described the realization of the *bhakta* as a melting in infinite love and fullness, and the realization of the *jnani* as an explosion in the white heat of meditation. Words will not suffice here; experience will teach you.

For the realized master, it is all divine will. For him, the instruments of body, mind, and intellect are all part of this unreal appearance called world. So if anything is to happen through any instrument, the master doesn't will it or desire it, as a *jiva* does. Whatever is to happen just 'happens' through the instrument. One perfect example of such a *jivan-mukta* is *Jada Bharata* (see *Shrimad Bhagavatam*).

In all practicality, how do you explain surrender and living in the moment, without planning, saving etc. to a householder?

Always remember that the purpose of living is to live, not to make a living. Make your life purposeful by living to realize the Self. The result will be clarity, fearlessness, and a sense of freedom in all aspects of life. Everything else will fall into place. Try it and see for yourself.

How do we put letting go of doership and enjoyership into practice? What exactly does 'letting go' mean? For example, does losing enjoyership mean you don't appreciate the taste of gourmet coffee? Does losing doership mean you win a game with the same attitude with which you digest food?

Losing enjoyership means not being influenced by, or a slave to, any sense object. In your example, yes, you can appreciate the taste of gourmet coffee, but what has to be guarded against is that no mental cravings result. Again, appreciation is fine, but you have to be very careful and alert that it doesn't become a dependency.

Losing doership means not being identified with the instruments of body, mind, and intellect. The moment you identify, doership is born. Yes, it means you play and win a game with the same attitude as you digest food, so that the action is done without any specific recognition that 'you' are doing it. Merely be aware that everything is just happening. This is the ultimate vision that helps us override all *vasanas*. Be an observer of even your own *sadhana*, which itself is a process of disidentification. There are paths in the maze that will keep you lost in the maze, and there are paths in the maze that will lead you out of the maze; *sadhana* is the latter.

What is a *sankalpa*? Is the thought to brush your teeth every morning also a *sankalpa*? If yes, then how can you live without making any *sankalpas*, which is prescribed by many masters?

Sankalpa is a thought with clarity, a decisive thought about anything. Yes, deciding to brush your teeth is also technically a *sankalpa*. To not make *sankalpas* means to let things happen; don't plan. When the scriptures advise us to live a *sankalpa*-free life, what they mean is to give up the sense of doership. Actions are not given up, planning is not given up, but the actor and planner are given up. This results in being guided through life, and yes, anyone and everyone can live this way. It is the most freeing, alert, and mindful living of all.

When you see a child fall in front of you, you run to him, lift him up, and take care of him. In this spontaneous action, there was no doership on your part, yet there was an action done. All of life can be practically lived like this. It's not just a vision or a way of thinking; it's a way of living.

From our birth itself we are conditioned and taught to live by making *sankalpas*: planning our timetables for school, striving to get straight A-s (a *sankalpa* for perfection), striving for a promotion, etc. How do we get out?

The easiest way, though not the only way, is *japa*. The practice of *japa* increases your overall concentration. When this concentration is turned toward your Source, your heightened awareness will help you disidentify from all your actions. This is how we come to appreciate and experience each action as it is, each time as the first time. This growth in, and bliss of, independent awareness is what helps us break the *sankalpa* cycle.

Does a realized master have *sankalpas*? Often we hear that a certain master had a *sankalpa* to have an ashram, and so it happened.

From a master's viewpoint, everything is just happening through him, not to him. He has no *sankalpa*—none whatsoever. People go with faith to a master asking for '*prasada*' to help them through a crisis. For the devotee, if this *prasada* is meant to come into his life, it may happen through this mahatma. But it is not by the mahatma's personal desire, will, or bias that a devotee's 'wish' is fulfilled per se.

Can a guru take on the karmas of others? If yes, then doesn't he do so according to his own will?

Yes, masters can take on others' karmas if they so wish. It is completely up to them. There is no rule that there has to be a certain environment, atmosphere, situation, etc. It is totally subjective. Most of them don't mess with an individual's *prarabdha*, but could do so if they wish. But by 'if they wish' here, don't misunderstand that this is their personal desire or will. They are guided to be of help to humanity as needed—it is spontaneous, but not random. There is too much detail and complexity behind the law of karma for the limited human mind to understand such things.

When masters take on others' karmas, is this what makes them ill?

Yes. The karmas they take on—that *prarabdha*—has to express somewhere and somehow, so it expresses at the body level. But don't make the mistake of thinking that masters have to take on karmas to help people. What masters give is on such a subtle level, and is so powerful and profound, that it cannot even be described. Their mere presence is all the blessings we need.

I knew a master who once saw someone in a lot of physical pain. He led that person, and the others who were with him, to a large stone. He said, "His (the patient's) karma I am putting on this stone and tomorrow you will see this stone broken." That's exactly what happened. The next day, the stone was broken and the patient was free of his pain.