



Worship of Isvara

We recently received an email, the first of its kind, from someone who not so subtly suggested that ShiningWorld is an evangelical-like organization driven by ambitious proselytizing missionary zeal. It forced us to set the record straight. Perhaps this person thought we were trying to join the ranks of the TV-centric Christian mega-churches. Evidently it was beyond imagination that anyone working as hard as we do, does so solely as worship of Isvara. There had to be something sinister—greed, ambition, power, fame, wealth—behind it!

But the facts are quite different. As James says:

In 2006 there was no ShiningWorld to speak of. I was just a simple guy living on good will and Social Security half the year in a small rented apartment in India and moving sadhu-like from one place to another in Europe and America. I felt my age and I thought that I should write a book about Vedanta before I died. I hoped that when that day came somebody would perhaps find the manuscript among my meager possessions, recognize its value and it would see the light of day. What happened between then and now?

If you weren't there with me every day, if you just looked at the website and saw my teaching schedule you might imagine that ShiningWorld is driven by personal ambition, but you would be wrong. The seeds were planted before I was born 74 years ago. *Isvara* brings us here for a reason. I wake up every day like everyone else and I do what the day demands, nothing more, nothing less. For the first twenty five years of this life everything I did was motivated by a sense of insecurity and insufficiency. This was destroyed by a powerful vision of myself and immediately supplanted by a burning desire to be free which forced *Isvara* to send me a teacher and a new lifestyle. It was no big deal. Every day I woke up as usual and served the situation laid out before me, as I continue to do. One day the seeking ended and I knew who I was. After that there was no reason to 'lay up treasures on earth where moth and dust doth corrupt' to quote the Bible.

Isvara in the form of my guru told me to teach and I taught long enough to satisfy him and discover the downside of small fame so I left the city and retired to the mountains and the life of a hermit sadhu for the next thirty some years. When I met someone who asked what I was about I told them about the self and

left it at that. I never tried to enlighten anybody but I never shied away from it either when the circumstances were conducive. There were very few opportunities. When the book was published the opportunities increased and I started holding small classes, simply in response to the demand. Responding appropriately to what the world wants from you is worship of *Isvara* because *Isvara* is the world. It is not ambition. Or if you wish to define worship as ambition, I plead guilty.

The difference between worship of *Isvara* and worship of the ego is this: the 'fruits of the sacrifice' i.e. the worship accrues to *Isvara's* account, not to yours. The world benefits, not you personally. Why? Because you don't have an account; you are the fullness itself and are no longer identified with the apparent person. The account is closed the day you understand who you are. I have nothing and am deep in debt; I have only a beautiful life on loan from *Isvara* and...the day of reckoning is at hand.

If anyone is greedy it is *Isvara*. It loves to be worshipped. ShiningWorld's success is solely *Isvara's* appreciation of the worship Sundari and me and, indeed many other dear devotees of *Isvara* worldwide, have offered. One day forty five years ago, completely out of the blue my teacher, Swami Chinmaya, who was prone to prophetic and sometimes seemingly outrageous utterances, made a very strange statement, the meaning of which has finally become clear. To a small group he said "Ram here, is smarter than Jesus."

He meant that I would not get hung on the cross. Actually, I'm not that smart; I have been hanging on the cross of the world's insatiable desire to know the truth for seven years now. It has its rewards, but it is also the death of a thousand cuts. My immune system is compromised. It has not been fun being sick. Even Sundari, who generally has energy in spades, has felt the effects. Although our work is never done and there is always more than we can cope with, we approach everything we do, from administrative work to teaching, with the same spirit of service. We have nothing to gain because we are the fullness serving itself. It is the highest dharma to serve *Isvara* in this way.

We can never stop worshipping because worship is *Isvara* worshipping *Isvara* as us. But we can cut back. We have eliminated the South Africa and India legs of our world tour for the foreseeable future. It is sad for us but it is necessary. From now on we will live mostly in Bend, Oregon and limit our foreign travel to Europe for a month or so in the spring and fall. We will hold seminars at our home, Trout Lake, Berkeley and other convenient places in the United States. We have been invited to Brazil next year and have accepted.

We are uncertain if we will continue the webinars. Although they are well attended they are a lot of work and are not well supported by donations. We do need money to live on and to keep ShiningWorld running. We are as committed as ever to serve the Truth but from now on we intend to work smarter, not harder. It is time for a bit of recreation. We have been gifted a beautiful home in a natural paradise. I recently purchased a small pontoon fishing boat and intend to float the rivers and fish the Cascade lakes. We got a nice workbench for Sundari and she has started work on a Krishna icon for our altar.

With the help of Don we are expanding our deck to seat more people so we can have seminars outdoors in the summer. We are looking into getting a lot across the street where we can put accommodations for people who want to come and visit, perhaps attend a morning meditation and an afternoon and/or evening class, for extended periods. This may sound ambitious but it isn't. It is purely service work. And as far as work is concerned the words of my beloved guru definitely apply...we will 'hasten slowly.' So we will give more by giving less. Not to worry. There is enough knowledge on ShiningWorld to enlighten the world a million times. We regularly hear from strangers from all over the world who inform us that Vedanta has set them free and transformed their lives. After all, freedom is just knowing the difference between what is real and what is apparently real and the means for knowing that is now available in clear modern English.

On A happy note.....



Making it Legal

After recovering from another round of nasty chest flu and related infections, Ramji and I recently tied the legal knot at a court house in Bend. The process that took us to this point has been a saga of note, too long and boring a tale to tell! Needless to say, we undertook to achieve this goal not because we felt we needed to legitimize our union as there is no other authority other than the self to do that. Being "legal," as they say, will put an end to harassment at the hands of

immigration officials and allow me to stay longer in the US. However, as much as we approached the day and the ritual with a blasé attitude, it turned out to be fun and rather sweet.

The judge who officiated turned out to be a juvenile judge, just like James' mother once was. He took his job very seriously giving us the whole spiel about

morality, values, community and service to each other, which made us giggle! James said he felt like his mother was lecturing him ☺! Actually, the Judge was preaching karma yoga but did not know it. Our good friend Don came as our witness with his friend Peter and these two wonderful souls represented all the souls worldwide we love but could not be present.

Afterwards, in spite of Ramji being in pain because of an ear infection, we celebrated over lunch with **a glass of champagne...**



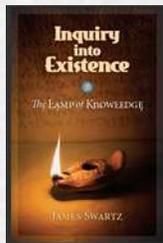
What's New in Shiningworld

Vishnu surprised us recently by resigning from ShiningWorld out of the blue. He has decided that administrative work is not for him and he wants to strike out on his own and concentrate on teaching. We thank him for his help in getting the new website up and running and for attending to his duties so efficiently and diligently. We wish him well and know that that Isvara will take good care of him.

Publications and Videos

We don't have anything new on offer this month, but Christian is hard at work on the tedious job of editing the Panchadasi Tiru videos. He is making great progress and we hope to have them available on the website before the end of July. He says that they are going to be some of the best quality videos to date, so be sure to look out for them. I think all who attended the talks in Tiru this year will agree that the teaching was of the highest quality as well. Ramji at his best!

Inquiry into Existence {Panchadasi} Hard Copy



The printed copy of Panchadasi is absolutely beautiful, but there was a small printing error on the sample, which we have corrected but we need another proof before we order. So it will still be a few weeks before it is available. Keep an eye on the shop.

Sante Fe Seminar



Spencer - Sundari - Ram - Paddy

Our dear friends, Paddy and Spencer from Sante Fe organised a wonderful seminar in their home town a few weeks ago. In spite of James being ill he delivered the teachings with his usual brilliance and panache. A great time was had by all. We loved Sante Fe and regardless of its reputation as a town full of New Agey “magical” thinkers, we found

everyone we met pretty wonderful. We took some time out to enjoy the plethora of art galleries stacked with high quality art and artifacts. Thank you Paddy and Spencer for hosting us with such generosity and loving care as well as doing such a great job with the organization of the seminar.



Upcoming Seminars – Berkeley and Trout Lake



Trout Lake 2014

We are gearing up for a weekend in Berkeley this month and looking forward to seeing our friends Erin and Vance Selover, another superb couple who every year give their best to ShiningWorld.

Next month our favourite venue of the year, Trout Lake is once again upon us. We hope to see many of you there. Luma has almost finished transcribing the Bhakti Sutras. James will be

teaching them for the first time. **Not to be missed !**

India 2015

After our decision to India next year, we some of the people registered for the study group and/or in our place. We discussions with Ted about teaching with approached him. He and has made his



the full period as advertised on our website at the same venue, Sunshine Guesthouse (see pic). Ted will not disappoint, as not only is he a proper jnani, he is a teacher by profession! And, he has a rather wicked sense of humour. So, those of you who are getting tired of Ramji's jokes will be hearing some new ones! ☺

cancel teaching in were approached by who had already event to set up a send another teacher already had Schmidt previously us in Tiru, so we accepted our offer plans to be there for

For those of you who have not registered yet, or whose registration has been returned, you must register or re-register as the case may be to help cover Ted's costs. He has to take unpaid leave from his teaching job has the additional expense of airfare, so, please support him. You can register online on ShiningWorld and we will pass the money on to Ted. Those who fail to register on the website must register at the door.

Ted has decided to teach the Bhagavad Gita and has written a summary of the text, see below.

For details of these seminars check the website.



James and Ted

Introduction to Bhagavad Gita Seminar

Given the fact that many of you may be unfamiliar with me, I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce myself and give you an idea of the subject matter we will be addressing in the upcoming Vedanta seminar in Tiruvannamalai this coming January.

My name is Ted Schmidt. I live in a southern suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota, where I work as a high school English teacher. After having engaged in intensive spiritual study and practice for over 20 years, it wasn't until my exposure to the teachings of Vedanta as properly unfolded by James "Ramji" Swartz that my seeking came to an end. Subsequently, I have received the blessing of Ramji's endorsement to pass on the teachings to others, which I do through both the Shining World website and my own website at www.nevernotpresent.com.

The text we will be studying in the seminar is the Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita is one of the three source texts of Vedanta, along with the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. Collectively, these three texts are known as the *prasthanas traya* or the "triple canon" of Vedanta. While the Upanishads are the original scriptures that contain the revealed wisdom as expressed by the ancient *rishis* or

seers, the Bhagavad Gita has become the most widely read of the three primary Vedantic texts—with good reason.

While the Upanishads, as mentioned, contain the most profound revelations concerning the non-dual nature of reality and the fundamental identity between the apparent individual, the manifest universe, and *Isvara* or God, they are written in terse language that is rather cryptic in nature, and they include very little guidance concerning how the student can best prepare his or her mind for the assimilation of this knowledge. In other words, they assume that the student has already gained a level of psychological and spiritual maturity that will enable him or her to grasp the intended or implied meaning of the words by means of which the truth is conveyed.

While unerringly aligning with the wisdom revealed in the Upanishads, however, the Bhagavad Gita takes an altogether different approach.

The text is written in the traditional form of a dialogue between teacher and student that characterizes many of the Upanishads, but in this case the student is not a highly qualified *brahmana*—that is, an individual who has undergone years of preparatory scriptural study and meditation that have qualified him to receive the teachings. Rather, the student is a *kshatriya*, a member of the warrior class. In other words, the student is a person whose occupational duties and social responsibilities require him to be actively engaged in “worldly” life.

In more precise terms, the Bhagavad Gita consists of a dialogue between Arjuna, a military general who is considered the world’s greatest archer, and Krishna, the King of Dwaraka and one of Arjuna’s closest friends, who has agreed to drive Arjuna’s chariot during the impending civil war in which Arjuna is about to engage. While Arjuna has always known Krishna to be a person of great honor, high intelligence, and keen insight, he has remained unaware that Krishna is actually an *avatar*, a divine incarnation, and as such a source of revelation for the highest truth.

Having asked to Krishna to pull his chariot into a position in the “no-man’s land” between the two opposing forces before the commencement of the battle so that he can get a look at the arrangement of the opposing troops, Arjuna is faced with the grim reality of the civil war in which he is about to engage. As he surveys his opponents, he realizes that the impending battle will pit him against and call upon him to slay family members, friends, and even his own beloved *guru*, the mentor from whom he learned all that he knows about warfare. In the face of this prospect, Arjuna suffers a psychological break, throws down his bow, and refuses to fight. And for the first time in his life, Arjuna seeks the spiritual counsel of

Krishna. With an attitude of complete humility, he announces himself as Krishna's student, and implores Krishna to tell him what to do.

Being the wise person that he is, Krishna knows better than to tell Arjuna what to do. Though he does urge Arjuna to fight, he is well aware that a simple directive will not resolve the fundamental problem with which Arjuna is grappling. He knows that what Arjuna needs is spiritual guidance, a proper unfoldment of the true nature of reality that will enable Arjuna to see the pointlessness of grief and empower him with the spiritual insight and self-knowledge that will allow him to make his own decision concerning what action is most appropriate for him to take. With the intention of helping Arjuna resolve his ailment at its source rather than simply temporarily treating its symptoms, Krishna leads Arjuna through a detailed analysis of the nature of reality that spans 17 chapters and includes well over 600 verses.

The battlefield certainly seems like a peculiar, if not altogether inappropriate, context for spiritual teaching. But it is important to bear in mind that the context serves as an analogy for "worldly" life. The Bhagavad Gita begins with the words, *dharmakshetre kurukshetre*. This phrase literally indicates that the battlefield at Kurukshetra is also referred to as the abode of *dharma*, righteousness or virtue, because of the intense spiritual practices that have been performed there in the past. On a symbolic or allegorical level, however, the apposition of these words implies that the plain at Kurukshetra represents the "battlefield" of daily life and the ensuing war that will be fought thereon the struggle for spiritual growth we undertake within its context.

The beauty of Krishna's teachings as unfolded in the Bhagavad Gita is that they serve as not only *moksha shastra*, a scripture on liberation, but also *dharma* or *yoga shastra*, a scripture that deals with both the practicalities of daily life in the workaday world and the spiritual practices that most effectively purify the mind and prepare one for the assimilation of self-knowledge, which is tantamount to *moksha*. The Bhagavad Gita shows one how to transform one's daily life into a continuous spiritual practice by means of which one cultivates the discriminative understanding that inevitably culminates in the assimilation of the knowledge that forever liberates one from self-abasement and suffering. In short, the Bhagavad Gita not only clearly indicates the nature of the goal, but also provides practical guidance on how to attain it within the context of one's everyday life.

As a forum for both profound spiritual insights and their practical applications, the seminar promises to be a powerful vehicle for spiritual transformation. I hope to see you there. With love, Ted Schmidt.

And on that note, we bid you all a wonderful month with the continued bliss of self knowledge.

Some comic relief from Dan from in South Africa, spreading the humour guna, keeping us laughing...

When you realise that you're whole and complete, and that you don't need anything to fulfill you, the *jiva* then no longer gets run by its desires. Instead, you become the master of your desires.



Keep smiling!

Love from

Ram and Sundari