

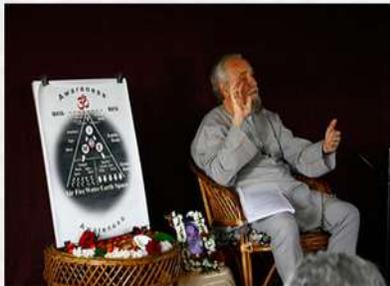
# ShiningWorld



**Newsletter**

**February 2015**

## **The Tiru Talks**



were a huge success and James carried off the teaching with his laser sharp intellect and wit, making many people very happy. We both picked up a virus in India, but James did not miss a beat and kept the

Vedanta flowing in style, nonetheless. I was not so fortunate and was laid low for over a month.



We loved our stay in India and have decided that we will teach there again in 2016 if there is enough interest and we can get our expenses covered. The dates are provisionally posted on the website.

## **Please Help!**

Anyone who attended the teaching in India in January who has reasonably hi-resolution pics, please send them to [sundari.shiningworld@gmail.com](mailto:sundari.shiningworld@gmail.com)



## **A Possible New Service - Cast Your Vote**

ShiningWorld is considering offering a video subscription service in addition to the regular video offerings. If you would be interested in a yearly subscription of unlimited video and audio downloads of the full video archive at a very reasonable price please click this link and cast your vote.

<https://www.quicksurveys.com/s/f4L7M>

If you have comments on such a service you can write Vishnudeva through the general contact email on the website: [inquiries.shiningworld@gmail.com](mailto:inquiries.shiningworld@gmail.com)

## **What's New**

James has finally finished his edit of Panchadasi and it has gone off the editor. Look for it on ShiningWorld website presently. It is an advanced text and a must read for those of you who are fairly familiar with the basic texts and who are ready for the “final” teaching.

## **What's Next...**

### **Guna Management**

James and I finally have the time to focus on the much-promised book on the Three Gunas. Sorry for the delay as we know many of you have been eagerly awaiting it for more than a year. ShiningWorld keeps on growing by leaps and bounds and time passes in a wink. In the meantime, here is a quick tip *guna*

management tip from ShiningWorld in case you feel that your Subtle Body is a bit too *tamasic*: take a walk or a cold shower or if you are in the library, give this ancient proven yogic exercise, the chair pose, a try.....It's the way I have been feeling lately! ☺



### The Chair Pose

## Videos of Panchadasi

Tom, a Vedanta student and professional videographer, came to India this year for the talks and brought his new camera so we will soon have some pretty awesome videos of the teaching. It really felt like this teaching was a truly important spiritual event. James worked tirelessly on it since Trout Lake so it was improved on that account and of course we had two more weeks to teach in Tiru, so he got deeper into it this time. Tom stayed on in India for an extra month just to soak up the culture so the videos will be delayed. Look for them sometime toward the beginning of April.

## Film on Devotion – Symbols of the Self



James, Tom and Petra spent many days around the Holy Mountain Arunchala filming a video on the topic of Devotion. India is the world's #1 Spiritual Superpower owing to the very public worship of a plethora of Pauranic deities, all symbols of the Self. James calls the deities 'the Vedas in code' as they reveal the fundamental teachings of Vedanta. They filmed the monthly circumambulation of Arunchala by hundreds of thousands of people, the Arunchalishwara temple and many other rituals. One of the most charming was Cow Pongal, a harvest festival offering thanksgiving to the cows, one of India's holiest symbols. The film unlocks the inner meaning of the symbols and rituals. Keep your eye peeled for this one!!!



HOLY COW

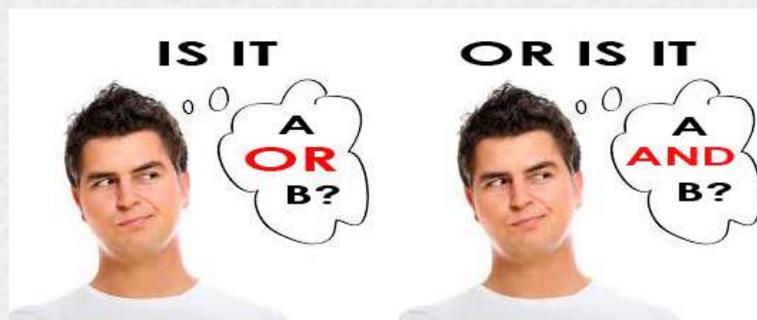
## Teaching Course

Seems like we are forever apologizing for something but once again we are behind with the teaching course due to lack of reliable internet in South Africa and India and the explosive growth of ShiningWorld. However, James will be in Berlin, Germany soon and we have scheduled a webinar on Chapter 8 of The Essence of Enlightenment, **“Karma Yoga”** on March 9th at 7pm. Germany is

GMT + 1. Check the internet to see how that translates into your local time. From now on, at least for the spring and summer months, we will be more regular with the webinars.

## **New Satsangs**

A new batch of e-satsangs from me and other shiningworld writers have been loaded on the new website. Our work load is gargantuan and we would appreciate it if you make use of the new search function on the website to find answers to your questions. If that doesn't work feel free to write. You will be happy to know that we have reinstated our old system of satsang replies; you are once again free to choose which teacher you wish to contact. The following satsang was so good I decided to include it in the newsletter. It is a conversation with a good friend that James met in India thirty years ago who always thought James was just James, his interesting 'spiritual' friend. When James' life changed as ShiningWorld grew he had less and less time to spend with his friend and recently received a long email trying to sort out the reason for the change in the relationship. He knew about the self but he did not know that his friend James was actually the self. This is an excerpt from an exchange of letters that have been just posted on the web.



## **Two Kinds of Thinking**

Bernie: I acknowledge that ShiningWorld's success is great for you on a personal level and for the many others that may have benefited from your efforts, and for the tradition that you have devoted your life to, nevertheless, if the focus is directly on the knowledge itself, I believe it

to be correct for me to be partly unmoved by what has happened to you.  
'Vedanta is Vedanta is Vedanta'

James: I never thought you should be 'moved' concerning what 'has happened to me,' Bernie. I think people are only concerned about what moves them, not someone else. Still I'm not sure what that statement means in so far as I am completely unmoved by 'what happened to me.' Actually nothing happened to 'me.' Jim's circumstances changed by no fault of his own and I witnessed the changes, as I always have.

I think the difficulty you are having with 'what happened to me' is that you are addressing James...fair enough...but you don't understand that I don't see myself as James. James is a secondary identity, an object... only a word that applies to your interpretation of events real or imagined that apparently happened to a particular body and mind over a limited period. So James is really just your projections. You interpret certain things you observed and heard over the course of our long relationship and you have a box in your head where you file James stuff but it is just your stuff. James exists...sort of...particularly to people who view him through his actions, and circumstances but he is as much an object to me as Bernie is. An object that is basically unreal, a mental construct. I observe him. I love him. I'm not particularly enthralled by him. He has been with me for 74 years and, well, he is not that interesting to me... perhaps amusing is accurate...to be honest. One thing I like about this change of circumstances is that I have plenty of very interesting people to relate to so that I really don't think about James that much. I don't think you really understand the distinction between pure consciousness/awareness and its reflection in the mind...the person. There is no conflict between them because they are in different orders of the one non-dual reality.

I'm not confident that you will understand what I am talking about because you have *no experience of yourself as awareness minus Bernie...* although if you thought about the reality of Bernie in deep sleep you might come to a different conclusion about who you are. How real can Bernie be if he only exists in one of the three states of consciousness? In any case, Bernie always comes along with awareness. Bernie is pervaded by awareness, like space pervades objects, and you haven't sorted out which one you are. The platform from which you are writing this letter is Bernie. And it seems that you think Bernie is real. Vedanta says that Bernie/Jim etc. exist, but they are not real. They belong to a particular ontological category that Vedanta calls '*mithya*' neither real nor unreal. Experienceable yes, but not real. The Bernie's and the Jims are dependent for their existence/consciousness on the silent non-experiencing witness.

I am writing this letter from the platform of who I am...the non-experiencing witness and I fear that you will dismiss it as some kind of intellectual or hallucinogenic malarkey. You are very much rooted in the earth, Bernie, whereas the earth is rooted in awareness, in you. I am probably the first person you ever met who is not a person. "There are more things in heaven and on earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, O Horatio."

Bernie: I have a couple of techie queries which I daresay, as per usual, you will swat away on the grounds of 'Let not the ignorant unsettle the minds of the wise' ☺ .

James: There are things that you do not understand about yourself and me due to a lack of ability to think from the non-dual platform. There is little sense expressing an idea that so far you have been unable to understand. but I will do my best.

Bernie: 'Limitless Identity' - I don't know whether this is a term that you still use, but it is one that you used in the American film that was made in 2008. The problem I have with this is that, limitless or not, it is still an identity - a discreet personal concept which someone can project their normal everyday selves into. And, of course, immensely cool and desirable for someone to say that about themselves.

Jim: 'Still use?' I teach Vedanta. The words are given by the science. I *have* to use them. It is not up to me. I am bound by the dharma of the tradition. These words are the essence of Vedanta. They mean that you are the non-experiencing silent witnessing observer, not the limited experiencing Bernie object. If you are qualified and you hear what Vedanta is saying, you do not assume a limitless identity, which I think is what you mean. You discover that you have always been limitless consciousness.

Having said that, there is a stage, once you have understood the teaching but have not yet reaped the result i.e. freedom from the experiencer i.e. Bernie where the tradition recommends taking a stand in awareness...as a practice to root out the opposite thought. The idea is that since there is no empirical evidence that there is a 'Bernie' apart from an irrational belief, the inquirer should take the scripture's word for it and take a stand as awareness i.e. think from the non-dual platform until he has removed doubts to the contrary using the non-dual reasoning of Vedanta.

Bernie: As I understand it, 'Identity' ceases to exist in 'pure awareness' ? That what the term 'Limitless Identity' really, really means is actually 'No Identity'? Relatively easy to say one has a 'limitless identity' but how very much more difficult it would be for a jiva to say they have 'No Identity'?

Jim: When one understands the teaching one's identity shifts from Bernie to awareness. Your identity as pure awareness is unborn so it never ceases to exist. It is not 'no identity' because how would 'no identity' be known? There has to be someone there to observe the lack of identity.

The difficulty you are having with Vedanta is that your whole thinking pattern is dualistic, Bernie. You are trying to understand the relationship between duality and non-duality from the dualistic platform. There is no conflict between non-dual awareness and the Bernie object...who is firmly rooted in the experiential dualistic reality. Non-duality and duality are not opposites. They exist in separate orders of the one reality, limitless awareness...you. They occupy the same locus. If a person is dreaming a very bright light in a totally dark room, does the darkness of the room hide the light? Does the light dispel the darkness? There is no contradiction. They exist in the same locus but in different orders of that locus. All contradictions are contained within awareness so they are not in conflict with it.

Bernie: Is it Limitless Identity or Without Identity? Or, what exactly is meant by the term 'Limitless Identity'. Is it not a contradiction in terms? Is it possible to be limitless and to have an identity?

Jim: It is not an either/or, Bernie. A thing and its opposite can be true. Reality is a 'both/and.' You, awareness, are neither limitless nor limited. These are concepts that we use to help a *jiva* that wants *moksa* develop discrimination. In the beginning you think you are limited in many ways and you suffer on account of this belief. Then you hear that you are limitless awareness and not the Bernie object. You contemplate on this fact in light of the teachings...you apply the logic that Vedanta supplies, logic that you have never been privy to owing to your karma. Eventually you see what Vedanta is saying. At that point

the ideas of limitless and limited no longer apply. How can they apply to you, non-dual consciousness? There is nothing other than you.

You don't know how to discriminate the apparent 'you' from the real 'you' so you have trouble understanding Vedanta. If you understand the apparent and real idea you don't need Vedanta. It is the essence of Vedanta. You think you are Bernie and awareness is something Bernie knows. This is just the reverse of the facts. It is called *viparaya*. The Bhagavad Gita says, "What's day for a wise person is night for a worldly person." They are in different orders of reality: the non-dual, the empirical and the subjective. I think you probably believe that the order of reality you inhabit is the only reality and that any other order of reality is...well...not real. How do you know that the reality you experience is actually reality? Because you trust your senses as a means of knowledge? Because you trust your feelings as a means of knowledge? Because you trust your beliefs and opinions as a valid means of knowledge? Because your interpretation of what has happened in the subjective and the empirical realities is a valid means of knowledge?

Bernie: Then there is the issue of karma yoga. I will probably be excommunicated for this statement but perhaps the terms used in the Bhagavad Gita debate about action and the results of action are confusing when they state that one cannot control the results of one's actions, when one patently can.

Jim: The confusion is all yours, Bernie. The Bhagavad Gita was never meant to be read. It was meant to be taught. If you actually listen to the teaching with an open mind as it is meant to be taught, you would not make such a uniformed statement. Just being intelligent is not enough to crack the existential code. It takes something more. You are very intelligent but you are also intellectually arrogant... you think you can

figure it out on your own. You can't. You need 'beginner's mind' to quote Suzuki Roshi. You got pretty far and you are pretty pleased with yourself but you still don't know who you are because you don't know what it means to be limitless awareness in terms of this apparent reality.

Bernie: The key spanner in the works is the expression 'the fruits of one's actions', the enjoyment of which one is supposed to relinquish. Seeing as actions are all about the results they are going to produce, it's very hard to accept this terminology. Why should people not enjoy the results of their actions when that is precisely what actions are for?

Jim: You are missing the point of *karma yoga* entirely. You read a few sentences without understanding the whole argument and came to an incorrect conclusion. For Vedanta to work in the first stage you have to suspend your point of view completely. In the second stage you dismiss your ideas that are not in harmony with the teaching. It is very difficult because a lot of what you think is knowledge is actually ignorance. And this leads to the third stage, assimilation, which may not take place immediately owing to deep *samskaras* that need to be rooted out.

*Karma Yoga* prepares an extroverted mind like yours to think from the non-dual platform. Prepares it for what? For receiving the teaching. It converts a *rajasic* extroverted 'practical' mind into a *sattvic* contemplative mind that is capable of non-dual thought. And only someone who understands what *moksa* is and has a burning desire for it will practice *karma yoga*. You cannot just bust into the Vedanta world off the street and expect to understand what we are saying. The mind needs to be retrained to think differently.

I'm not sure why I should answer kindergarten questions, Bernie, when, if you had taken the time to just sit down with the karma yoga video...or read my books, website, etc...and listened with an open mind it would

be clear to you. Thousands of people with IQs considerably less than yours, understand this idea. You refuse to take the time to subject your mind to the teaching in a systematic way and you want me to hold your hand and teach you the ABC's? Karma Yoga is not rocket science, yet it escapes you completely because of your doership issue, which is due to excess *rajas*. It is the basis of the whole Vedic spiritual tradition. You had plenty of opportunities over the years for me to teach you the basics but you were always too busy doing other things. Vedanta was never much of a priority for you. Now in your sunset years it seems you are giving it a bit more thought. Good for you.

Bernie: Is not what this is really, really getting at is that one should be personally detached from the results of one's actions, good or bad, as they play out in the world? Not because the results of actions cannot be predicted or enjoyed, but because it would be self-delusory to be so immersed in one's actions, as to lose touch with the overview of a greater awareness, with that which is non-attached or non-conceptual by its very nature.

Jim: You are a bit closer on this one, but still no cigars, Bernie. Your life is the results of your actions as they wend their way through the dharma field. You are always enjoying the results but as far as predictability is concerned you are not correct; probability is a better word.

Let me be frank with you. It is not fair to the many humble sincere people who are qualified and who have the proper attitude for me to spend my time teaching you the ABC's. If you want me to be your personal guru, then you need to fit your schedule into mine and come and let me get you pointed in the right direction. But if you want to save your money, then get the videos and watch them in the privacy of your

own home...that way nobody would know that you had a guru it would save you a lot of embarrassment 9.

Basically, you belong in Yoga because your whole thinking apparatus is not prepared for non-dual thought. I realized at 27 that I didn't know shit, that all my ideas and experience was useless in the enlightenment business and I subjected my mind to the discipline of Vedanta and I learned how to think from the non-dual platform and it set me free of Jim. It is not something you can figure out on your own. There is no hint of this ability in your writing or your questions. You wouldn't expect to understand what  $E=MC^2$  means without a lot of training. Non-dual thinking is way more difficult than the dualistic thinking which you and more or less everyone else is conditioned to. It is not conditioned thinking; it is deliberate thinking based on the premise that reality is non-dual consciousness and not the duality that it is thought to be when you rely on perception and inference for your means of knowledge. The great brains of the ages have been stumped on the 'Who am I?' issue.

Bernie: If so, this then brings into play a whole raft of options and techniques for maintaining that non-attached awareness in its non-attached state. As I am essentially unattached, I take a non-ideological stance towards these various options, and note that the difference between them is rather marginal. Vedanta is OK, Zen is OK - I don't go for the idolatry, the graven imagery of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity. So I strip out all the juju and go to the essence of the matter, and whatever is then relevant is relevant.

Jim: You may be unattached but you are not unattached from you. That is the point of *moksa*. It is freedom from the one who is attached or unattached. You, the self, are associationless by nature. No effort is required to be free of objects.

In any case you can't maintain that 'non-attached awareness' in any state, Bernie. Experience is not under the control of the doer. It is controlled by *Ishvara*. And secondly, who is going to maintain it? You are awareness. It is your nature. How will 'you' maintain it? You think awareness is a state of mind. It is the knower of any and all states. See your orientation. You think you are a doer, somebody who is going to maintain something. Honestly, Bernie, you would be better off with Yoga. Yoga is for doers. Vedanta is for qualified inquirers. This is why Krishna teaches Arjuna yoga after he has taught him Vedanta...he didn't get it.

Bernie: Then there is the values issue which we have been discussing lately which raises the huge issue of how can one be unattached to that which one values most?

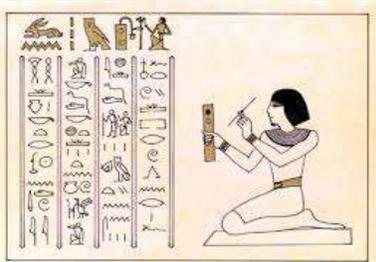
Jim: More dualistic thinking, Bernie. See the issue. It is a contradiction if values are real, but values are not real; they are apparently real; they only apply in the subjective reality. They don't apply to consciousness or to the empirical reality. If you are awareness you are unattached to what Bernie values. When you are born you are ignorant of your nature as awareness. You think you are the body/mind...and you are given a name, which always only refers to the experiences of the body mind. At the same time there is a 'part' of you...the self...that witnesses the body/mind Bernie person. It never changes. It is value free. Or put it this way, it is the ultimate value because without it Bernie and his body and mind don't exist. If you are the ultimate value you have no need for values. However, the apparent person with this knowledge will impeccably follow universal values.

Bernie: Thank you for listening.

Jim: Like I said at the beginning of the last letter, it is difficult to know what hat to wear when I am listening to you. You don't like the guru hat but obviously I am wearing it in this one. I am assuming that you are an inquirer and I am telling you what Vedanta says. Don't take it personally although it is addressed to you personally because you take yourself to be a person. Try to assume that I am impartially applying the teaching to your (rather difficult) case. It is probably lost on you that the style of teaching in the Bhagavad Gita is friendship. Krishna and Arjuna are old friends. But Arjuna doesn't understand who he is so Krishna is forced to tell him, because he asks. It is not always pleasant to hear because it runs counter to cherished beliefs, particularly the idea that the *jiva* is the self. As we are we are equals, Bernie, but as far as enlightenment is concerned I'm the expert and you're a novice. You have never subjected yourself to the discipline. A disciple is a disciplined person. But the discipline of Vedanta is not one that you can teach yourself. If you have the aptitude you can be taught. But it is not easy. And old dogs....well, they do tend to have problem with new tricks. In any case I'm throwing the Bernie canine a juicy bone.

Love,

Jim



### **Request for Transcribers**

We are still looking for transcribers; if anyone would like to get involved, please email Vishnudeva: [info@shiningworld.com](mailto:info@shiningworld.com) It is an excellent spiritual practice.

## Vancouver Study Group

Monte Honeyman from Vancouver would like to start a Vedanta study group. If anyone is interested, please email: [montios@outlook.com](mailto:montios@outlook.com).



## Teaching Course

### Answers Lesson 7 – The Ordinary Person

- (1) The *samsari* who has no self knowledge, the self realized *jiva* with indirect knowledge and unpurified *vasanas*, the self actualized *jiva* whose knowledge is direct and whose *vasanas* have been rendered unbinding.
- (2) Waking, dream and deep sleep. Because the waking state entity is exists temporarily. It cannot be real because it is not always present.
- (3) Because it experiences the self as limitlessness and bliss but is ignorant that it is the self because the intellect is not present.
- (4) Because both are inconstant factors with reference to awareness. *Jiva* comes and goes as it changes states and *Isvara* becomes unmanifest at the end of the creation cycle. Additionally, *Isvara* operates only on a small ‘fraction’ of awareness. It is less pervasive than awareness.
- (5) *Jiva*’s creation is *jiva*’s conditioning, its *vasanas*, which cause it to interpret *Isvara*’s creation...its life circumstances...in terms of its likes and dislikes.
- (6) *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Rajas* extroverts and scatters the mind and *tamas* clouds the mind.

- (7) A conflicted Subtle Body is structurally distorted. The three inner centers do not work together. How is the distortion corrected?
- (8) What is the one cause of negative emotions?
- (9) What is the base yoga, what part of the Subtle Body does it address and what does it do?
- (10) What are the two bedrock negative emotions that stand behind all emotions and how do they relate to action?
- (11) Because the field of existence controls the results.
- (12) What is the rule the field of existence uses to apportion results to individual wanters/doers?
- (13) What emotion arises when the field of existence fails to produce the desired result?
- (14) *Rajas* and *Tamas* working together create two psychological states are responsible for *samsara* i.e. suffering. What are they and how do they work?
- (15) It makes the mind clear and steady by transforming *rajas* and *tamas* into *sattva*. A steady clear mind is capable of receiving knowledge and applying it.

## **Lesson 8: Chapter 8 – Karma Yoga**

### **A Short Summary**

If Vedanta is going to work for you, you need to change the way you think. And while the light may go on when you hear these teachings, a single exposure to them will not change your thinking patterns. The teaching should become your life. It should be with you every minute of the day. So you need to completely understand the ‘big picture’ logic. Then, when you get stuck, you can bring up the road map and work out where you are and where you need to be.

We began with the statement that the joy we seek in objects actually belongs to the self and that seeking happiness in objects is a zero-sum game. The teaching about *Maya* reveals the psychology that causes us to seek happiness in objects. Objects, as you will recall, are anything other than the self. *Maya* makes the full and complete self think it is incomplete and dupes it into thinking that objects can fulfill it. This error constitutes the bedrock logic of *samsara*. If you can’t see it,

you are not ready for Vedanta and you are welcome to continue to pursue objects. If you keep chasing objects this logic will become clear as *samsara* grinds you down and forces you to accept it. The only way to win in *samsara* is to get out of it altogether. Every victory in the pursuit of objects is basically a defeat because it postpones the inevitable, the realization that the world is a dream. That it is a dream is very difficult to realize because *Maya*, like a wide-screen hi-definition TV, constantly projects beautiful sexy images that seems ever so real, exciting your fantasies. You can taste them, touch them, and smell them. So off you go, chasing experiences and accumulating *vasanas*. And your attention, which is just panoramic awareness reduced to a tiny pencil-like ray by *Maya*, becomes extroverted, riveted on objects. It is hard to miss the irony; you, the self, looking for yourself in objects, which have no self nature. What could be more absurd?

I am sorry to go on at length about this sad fact but we need to rub your spiritual nose in it because the basic truth of the apparent reality is completely counterintuitive. It 'feels' wrong. Not much intellectual power is required to understand that life is just an unconscious process of stimulus and response. On its most basic level it is just you paying attention to the world's reactions to your reactions to the world. We call going from desire to action and action to desire *samsara chakra*. It is like being caught in quicksand...the more you struggle to free yourself, the deeper you sink in. One meaning of *samsara* is 'whirlpool.' When you get caught in it, you can't wiggle out. In fact the more you move the more surely you are implicated. The momentum of your past actions keeps you tied to this *chakra*, this wheel. When it goes up, you go up and when it goes down, you go down. You are only concerned with getting what you want and avoiding what you don't. It happened to me. I was the living dead, a complete robot, a puppet on the string of my fears and desires mindlessly hopping up and down.

Before we show you how to get out of the whirlpool and get the self into your life, we need to add one more bit of unpleasant news. In the last chapter we mentioned that as the *vasanas* accumulate over time a structural distortion takes place in the Subtle Body. In a healthy integrated person the three centers are yoked together and cooperate with each other to help the *jiva* achieve its goals. But when the *vasana* load is too heavy, the Subtle Body becomes distorted, their connection is broken and inner conflict develops.

To get the self into the equation we need *Yoga*. We need to take our conditioning into account because it keeps us out of contact with the self. I cannot understand how the modern teachers can tell you that you are not a doer and that there is no work to be done. Of course it is good for business because the ego wants to hear

this message, but it is foolish advice. You are not happy for a reason and the reason is that your conditioning keeps you tied to the world of objects. So you need to practice *Yoga*.

How does *Yoga* work? It removes the *vasanas* that extrovert the mind and develops *vasanas* that turn the mind toward the self so that inquiry can bear fruit.

### **Karma Yoga – No Bad Outcomes**

If you know who you are, you will automatically act with the *karma yoga* spirit because you will be clear about what action and its results can and cannot do for you. So *karma yoga* is intended for people with spiritual *vasanas* who know that they are awareness but do not have full confidence in the knowledge. The lack of confidence is due to the veiling and projecting *gunas*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which cloud and disturb the mind to such a degree that it cannot enjoy the freedom that hard and fast self knowledge confers.

Although it is common sense to a sensitive person, the source of this idea is the Bhagavad Gita, one of the three pillars of Vedanta. In the Gita an extroverted person abandons his duty in the middle of a crisis and is taught self knowledge on life's battlefield by his friend, an enlightened person. His mind is too agitated to permit him to assimilate the knowledge so he is encouraged to practice *karma yoga*.

Without *karma yoga* self knowledge will not stick. You may very well have non-dual epiphanies and feel that you are enlightened but without *karma yoga* the feeling will eventually be compromised and you will seek once more to regain your 'enlightenment' ...such as it was.

You should also know that *karma yoga* will give you a happy life *whether or not you are seeking liberation*. Some people who are unconsciously in harmony with the spirit of the creation evolve *karma yoga* and practice it without knowing what it is. Before I unfold this teaching we must debunk another spiritual myth. *Karma yoga* is not selfless service. There is only one self and, in so far as it is doing anything, it is serving itself. As *karma yoga* is presented to Westerners familiar with the spiritual culture of India, it is little more than a clever ruse by gurus and their organizations to get free labor from unsuspecting spiritual neophytes.

If we are going to reduce our *vasana* load and turn the mind toward the self we need the *karma yoga* spirit. It is not a spirit you can successfully assume without understanding the logic behind it.

*Karma yoga* works on the ego, the doer. The ego is that part of the Subtle Body that does actions to enjoy the results. It is also the part that owns action and its results. The words “I do, I enjoy, this is mine” belong to the doer. For someone seeking freedom these ideas are obstacles because they build unhelpful *vasanas* and obstruct knowledge.

People love to blame their childhood and their circumstances in life for their uncomfortable feelings. It is good business for the psychologists. My wife calls it woundology. I suppose the expectation is that if they understand what happened and what it did to them, they might somehow be relieved of the bad feelings. But Vedanta says that you need not look that far afield for the source of your emotional problems. The explanation, as we said in the last chapter, is very simple: *you are not getting what you want*. You do what you do expecting the result to make you feel good. When you don't get the result you want, you feel some form of anger (*rajas*) or disappointment that can lead to depression (*tamas*). All the uncomfortable emotions are generated from *rajas* and *tamas*. It is very difficult to argue with this logic because when you are getting what you want you feel great. Getting what it wants all the time is the doer's idea of happiness.

We do not say that you should or should not get what you want. You do what you do *to* get what you want. There is a strange notion in the spiritual world... popularized by the Buddha's teaching that desire is the cause of suffering...that you shouldn't want anything. But it is impossible to not want anything. It is not up to you. You come to earth full of desire and desire motivates you from morning until night, usually till the day you die. A human being is little more than what he or she wants. So we are all for you getting what you want. All we are saying is that getting what you want is not straightforward.

### **Karma Yoga the Stress Buster**

Anxiety for the results of one's actions is a fancy term for stress. If you ask people why they meditate, most will say 'to remove stress.' Meditation does remove stress but it does not remove the cause of stress. This is why people meditate unsuccessfully for many years. And it is the reason so many meditators abandon meditation in favour of some other approach. *Karma yoga* removes the cause of stress by exhausting the fears and desires that produces stress.

## Results Not Up To You

Unfortunately, as we said before and never tire of saying, there is one small problem when you want what you want: the results of your actions are not up to you. This is unwelcome information. Although it never goes away, about every twenty years spiritual materialism becomes an obsession in the spiritual world in the form of a teaching like *The Secret*. The sole purpose of this kind of teaching is to make the ego feel like there is hope. That, having been a failure in the world, it can take refuge in the fantasy that there is a special way...a secret technique...that permits it to control the results of its actions and beat the *dharma* field at its own game. It is appealing because most spiritual people...everyone, in fact...are lazy and do not like the idea of being controlled by anything. When you see through this idea you are actually ready to listen to reason.

If the results of your actions were up to you, you would have everything you want. So what are the results up to? The law of *karma* and the *dharma* field.

In the Sixth Chapter we presented a rudimentary outline of the *dharma* field. I call it the ‘*mandala* of existence.’ It is a vast field. It is comprised of all the material elements, the Gross Bodies and the forces and laws that control them. It includes the Subtle Bodies and all the forces and laws that control the psychic, psychological and moral aspects of the field, the macrocosmic mind. And finally, it is ultimately controlled by the Causal Body and the Law of Karma.

And who am I? I think I am a very minute flyspeck of limited consciousness in this vast complex ocean of dream consciousness. As part of the field I seem to generate actions, tiny ripples on the surface of life. My actions do not fly off to some other universe to fructify there. They remain in the field. The field behaves as if it is conscious because it is situated in consciousness, just as the snake in our earlier example is situated in the rope and seems to be alive when it is perceived in a certain context. So the field responds. It produces *karma*. *Karma* means that something happens. And the *karma* returns to the doer of the action not always obvious ways. Or, as they say, “What goes around comes around.” It is expressed differently in the Bible, “As you sow, so shall you reap.” Everyone knows about *karma* but almost nobody understands it.

To refresh your memory, the big question is: on the basis of what does the field return my action to me? You cannot say that the field does not return action because my life is nothing but the happenings that the field of life brings to me. The field must be intelligent in some way because I don’t get actions that belong to

you. If you kill your spouse the police eventually show up at your door, not mine. If you drink alcohol I don't get cirrhosis of the liver. But what principle determines the result? *The field determines the result based on the needs of the field.*

### **Ignore the Dharma Field at your Peril**

This is a very difficult fact for the ego to accept because it only cares about the tiny part of the field that directly impacts on it. Some individuals are so egocentric they can't even get along with their families much less their neighbours, employers, etc. This is very short-sighted because everything that comes to us comes from others. Even those who do look after their immediate circle of others still cannot control what happens because what happens to the people around an individual is conditioned by the people with whom he or she is connected, and that wider circle is affected by an even wider circle until the circle opens up to include everything. That 'everything' is *Ishvara*. From its point of view, no object in the field is more or less important than any other. This is bad news for me if I want something that does not serve the needs of the total.

Everyone knows this in one way or the other. The religious people call it God. They say that everything is the grace of God. We more or less agree, but as mentioned we do invest God with human and divine qualities and set it up outside the *dharma* field. The field itself is God. We don't say that only the good *karma* comes from God, we throw in the bad karma as well because we know that reality is non-dual. There are actually not two separate principles operating in the *dharma* field, although *Maya* makes it seem as if there are.

### **The Secret of Action**

I understand that in terms of my happiness the field is all powerful and that dependence on it causes suffering. I also know that I cannot just walk away from it. The desire that is in me demands action and action causes desire. So even if I run off to a cave in India I have not solved my problem. My *vasanas* and my disturbed mind go with me.

What I don't understand is why action causes *vasanas*. The *vasanas* are caused by the attitude in play when I act. What is the attitude? The attitude is "I want. I don't want." In short, fear and desire motivate me. Although it is not my experience, it stands to reason that a different attitude may not produce the *vasanas* that tie me to action and its results. Is there such an attitude and what would it be?

Adults are not generally good examples, but children at play give us a hint. I was at the beach recently watching a group of children building a sand castle. They worked happily for about an hour with their little buckets and shovels and then as soon as it was finished, they happily destroyed it and ran off into the surf for a swim. A few years back I was in London at the National Museum and observed a group of Tibetan monks making a large intricate *mandala* out of coloured sand. Evidently they had been working on it for weeks and were, in a few days, about to blow it all away. What were they thinking? They were obviously uninterested in enjoying the *mandala* once it was finished. In both cases no binding *vasana* is created by such an action. What children understand intuitively and monks understand consciously is that action done in a certain spirit is liberating, not binding. What is that spirit?

Without too much introspection you have to admit that you do not want to die. People love life. One of my wife's relatives who had a particular type of cancer endured three chemotherapies and radiations before he succumbed. We want to live because life is beautiful. It is a great joy and privilege to be here, to be alive. Even a few moments in the embrace of the beauty of life and love is enough to cause us to endure great miseries.

Again, it does not take a genius to figure out that you did not give yourself life. You did not create the world around you. You did not create your body or your mind; much less do you perform the myriad unseen tasks that keep you alive. If you are honest you will have to admit that you created nothing. You appeared here one fine day and everything was set up, tailor made for your enjoyment. Who or what did this? *Isvara*, God, the *dharma* field, did. There is no other explanation.

### **Dharma is Appropriate Response**

When someone gives you a gift, what is the appropriate response? If you have culture, you will say, 'Thank you,' not to be merely polite but because you really do feel grateful. The body and mind can only act because they are blessed with the gift of life and with them you can seek success here. It does not matter what you do. Billions of hands and feet are required by consciousness to maintain this amazing dream. They all belong to consciousness and are on loan to you. You are here for a reason and you have been given the powers necessary to do your *dharma*, your duty. You are required to respond. It is not *what* you do. Only *that* you do, that you can do, matters. How generous, how magnanimous is God! How lucky I am to be here, to be alive! Each and every action that is done in this spirit backed by this understanding does not produce a *vasana*. So it is quite possible to

de-condition yourself if you act in this spirit. It is also possible to recondition yourself, about which more will be said as we go.

If you study enlightened people you will find that they create no *karma* and are non-attached to objects. They don't create binding *vasanas* because, being whole and complete, being one with consciousness...all life...they know that they don't need objects to be happy. They are satisfied with the self alone and they are satisfied with whatever objects they have or don't have. They act, no doubt. Nobody is free not to act. But they act from fullness...from happiness...not for happiness from incompleteness.

That I am not enlightened does not mean that I cannot become reasonably free of *karma* and *vasanas*. No big enlightenment experience need happen to destroy all my desires. Desire survives all enlightenment experiences. Even if an enlightenment experience destroys the desire for everyday objects, it creates a binding desire on the spot because it is so wonderful that when it ends...as they all do because all experience is in *samsara*...you want it back immediately. Non-dual experiences can be dangerous drugs.

To rid myself of binding *vasanas* all that is required is a change in the attitude motivating my actions. *Karma Yoga* is an attitude that you take with respect to action and its results that burns *vasanas*. It does not create them...except the *vasana* for *karma yoga*, which will eat itself when self knowledge arises in the mind prepared by *karma yoga*. This teaching is designed to create the understanding that will motivate you to practice *karma yoga*, assuming that you want liberation. Saying 'all that is required' makes it sound as if *karma yoga* was as easy as falling off a log. It is not easy if the idea that the joy I seek in objects has become a binding *vasana* itself. So to establish *karma yoga* there is an immediate resistance from none other than the very person *karma yoga* is intended to liberate...Mr. or Mrs. Ego.

### **Intelligent Ignorance**

The ego is perhaps the most *tamasic* of the three inner centers. It resists change tooth and nail. It cannot be forced to do *karma yoga*. *Karma yoga* is like putting yourself on a diet. It requires eternal vigilance. When you go on a diet, your will power may be strong and you may very well be clear about your goal, but the fat person inside is not your friend. It will do everything it can to sabotage your efforts. For instance, you see a tasty pastry in the display case at the coffee shop as you sip your coffee. You know very well that it is not part of your weight loss

program. You can tell the fat person that he cannot have it, but the fat person is cleverer than you imagine. He will convince the intellect that there are not as many calories in it as you think, that it is made of healthy organic flour and honey, which is so much 'better' for you than that nasty toxic white sugar, that you deserve a treat because you have been so 'good.' etc. And before you know it the gooey sweet pastry will be keeping your coffee cup company. Ignorance is very intelligent. It will have its way.

The way to deal with Mr. Ego to educate, not eradicate, it. This is why Vedanta... which is a pathless path...is superior to other paths. It does not tell you what to do. It does not tout fanciful escapes. It educates you, leads you out of ignorance. Once the logic is understood it becomes reasonably easy to do what has to be done. *Karma yoga* is *dharma yoga*, appropriate response.

### **Work is Worship**

So far we have explained the logic of *karma yoga*. But logic is only the beginning. Before we give *karma yoga* some teeth it is helpful to examine a recent misleading Yoga notion. It is natural to think that different *yogas* are intended for different personality types. This idea was introduced about one hundred years ago by Swami Vivekananda who could be said to be the father of 'New' Vedanta or 'Modern' Vedanta, the precursor to Neo-Advaita, the most popular iteration...dare I say corruption...of traditional Vedanta today. This fallacy is called the multi-path confusion and reveals a basic misunderstanding about the nature of the self. It arose about the time of Freud, hence its peculiar psychological bent.

To think that Vedanta and Yoga should adapt to the times is a mistake because people are fundamentally no different today from what they ever were: awareness plus three bodies. Vedanta addresses the core person, the universal person, not the conditioned person. Yes we have iPods and enjoy jet travel and live in complex societies but as the poet says, "There is nothing new under the sun." A human being is a human being. To add or subtract from the core logic or twist the teachings to make them fit with the experience of a specific human being or to conform to the times is not helpful.

The multi-path confusion claims that *karma yoga* is for active types, devotional *yoga*, popularly known as the path of love, is prescribed for devotional types and knowledge *yoga* is suggested for intellectual types. This 'teaching' is patently absurd because every individual has an ego, emotions and an intellect. So to

practice one *yoga* at the expense of the others only increases the structural distortion of the Subtle Body. All the 'centers' should be harmoniously developed in tandem, yoked behind a single idea...I am whole and complete ordinary non-dual actionless awareness. Additionally, when you understand the nature of reality you cannot distinguish between love, action and knowledge. Unfortunately, people identify with different aspects of the Subtle Body and develop limited identities based on the kind of activities their ignorance causes them to favour.

*Karma yoga* also is devotional *yoga*. It is simply love for one's self in the form of the creation. The love you have for life is not self created. It is not 'your' love. It is consciousness, which is love, loving in you and through you as you. In the case of *karma yoga*, the self, under the spell of *Maya*, thinks it is a person with love... which is just willing attention...to invest in objects and because this does not work, the attention it invests in life in the form of action, needs to be offered back to the creation in the same spirit in which it was given...to complete the cosmic cycle.

## **Consecration**

*Karma Yoga* is also *knowledge yoga* because to meaningfully worship life with my actions I need to appreciate the non-duality of reality. The love in me for objects is simply the self loving through me, misdirected toward objects. But is it misdirected? If I understand that reality is non-dual, aren't all the objects appearing in me...my life and everything in it...only me? Therefore, are not all the objects worthy of worship? Worship does not mean supplication. It is appreciative love. I am grateful for what I have been given, my self in the form of the creation, and I offer my actions to the creation with an attitude of gratitude.

*Karma yoga* unwinds the Subtle Body's grasping fearful orientation. This unconscious stance is there the moment an impulse to act arises and it is present with every thought, feeling and action. It is there when actions fructify, a constant silent companion. To shift a lifelong orientation to its opposite is hard work, a war with the ego. Consecration simply means thinking of the self, reminding yourself of your purpose here, invoking an attitude of gratitude to go with every action and then doing what is required without attachment to the results. When the impulse to act is met directly in this way, it is impossible to perform self insulting actions or actions harmful to others. We cause injury only when we are unaware of what we do. Nobody can become more conscious because consciousness does not change, but we can become more aware of our limited orientation and the unwanted results it produces.

Aside from the flawed logic on which their views are based, the proponents of experiential enlightenment would benefit greatly from *karma yoga*. The experience of the reflection of the self in the Subtle Body can be made more or less constant, brighter and intense if *rajas* and *tamas* are purified from the Subtle Body by *karma yoga*. The more one practices *karma yoga* the more pure the mind becomes and the more epiphanies take place in it, intensifying one's faith, assuming they are understood correctly.

### **A Gift from God**

Life is nothing but the fruits of one's actions after they have wended their way through the *dharma* field. To complete our understanding of the *karma yoga* attitude we need to take what happens as a gift from God. A nice model for this idea is temple worship. A devotee brings an offering to the temple, hands it to the priest who offers it to the deity and returns it consecrated. The devotee is free to do with it what he or she sees fit, usually distribute it to the beggars waiting outside the temple.

### **Peace of Mind**

Taking what happens as a gift is fine as long as what happens is what we want, but what should I do when the *dharma* field gives me something that I don't want? Should I become angry and reject it? No, I should take it as a gift. Worldly people are happy when they get what they want and unhappy when they don't but *karma yogis* are happy when they get what they want *and* when they don't, because their goal is peace of mind, not the ephemeral joys that come from objects. How does this work?

The *vasanas* appear in the Subtle Body as likes and dislikes. Likes and dislikes, attractions and repulsions, fears and desires are the enemies of the *karma yogi*. *Karma yoga* is intended to neutralize them because they continually agitate the mind, making it unfit for discriminative inquiry. The *dharma* field is a university meant to teach us who we are. We do not matriculate until we have learned our lessons. It instructs by delivering the fruits of our actions. As my wife, Sundari, says, "A *karma yogi* knows that experience is a decaying time capsule meant to deliver knowledge." Results never last but the knowledge hidden in experience leads us to the self. So when something happens, irrespective of whether it is what we want or not, we are meant to welcome it and learn from it. In this way the likes and dislikes are neutralized and the dispassion necessary for inquiry develops.

## States of Mind

Recently a friend recommended a 'good' movie. But it was very disturbing because it involved the senseless violence even though the good guy...who was a very flawed human being...prevailed in the end. I did not sleep well and the Subtle Body was upset the following day. So far I have presented *karma yoga* as a response to external events but *karma yoga* also applies to states of mind. The feelings engendered by the movie were the unwanted results of my action. I could not know how my subconscious would respond to the movie. Should I get angry with myself for taking my friend's advice to watch it and add another layer of suffering to the existing layer? Or should I look at the film and my reaction to it from *Isvara's* point of view and accept it gladly? I have a choice. *Karma yoga* is discretion with reference to action and its results. It should be practiced on the good and bad feelings that appear in me as well as the events that trigger those feelings.

## The Three Types of Actions

Karma Yoga is not only right attitude; it is right action. Actions can be classified in terms of how well they serve to prepare the mind for inquiry. They are 1) *sattvic*: those that give maximum spiritual benefit, 2) *rajasic*: those that are neither beneficial or detrimental and 3) *tamasic*: those that are harmful and lead one away from the goal.

The third class of actions, *adharmic karmas*, are not recommended for anyone and are definitely prohibited for a *karma yogi*. Although they may bring a particular physical or psychological gain to the doer, they harm the animate and inanimate objects in the *dharmic* field and bring the doer down spiritually. They are to be avoided at all costs. The second class of actions are not necessarily *adharmic*. They do not involve injury, except inadvertently, to oneself or others but are self centered, compelling the doer to ignore the needs of others. They don't bring spiritual benefit...or very little, perhaps...nor are they necessarily detrimental but they are directed toward material ends.

The first class of actions, *sattvika karmas*, are necessary if *karma yoga* is going to bear fruit. They are giving karmas, not grabbing karmas. The more you give the more you grow. You will remember that *vasanas* are created by a grasping attitude. Without putting too fine a point on it, they are undone when the opposite attitude is in play. *Karma yoga* involves actions that add value to every situation,

offerings that contribute to the well being the dharma field. These offerings are discussed in chapter 9.

The intention of a *karma yogi* is to enshrine *sattvic* karmas at the forefront of his or her life, to see that *rajasic* karmas are relegated to subordinate status and to eliminate *tamasic* karmas. Of course it is impossible to eliminate *tamasic* actions altogether. There are certain unavoidable situations that will cause the doer to injure his or herself or others. He or she should always strive to do *sattvic* karmas because they bring about maturity and spiritual growth by neutralizing the agitation that is born from the inevitable contact with unholy situations and people.

### **Chapter - 8 Questions**

- (1) Self ignorance causes the individual to chase objects which in turn causes bondage to action and an extroverted disturbed mind which prevents discrimination, separating the self from objects. What is the solution and how does it work?
- (2) Why is karma yoga not 'selfless service' as it is generally presented to spiritual aspirants eager to work on themselves?
- (3) Although karma yoga focuses the intellect and transforms negative feelings it focuses on the ego. What is the ego?
- (4) Psychology focuses on unpleasant factors in the childhood which it believes is the cause of the negative feelings that create the desire to act but Vedanta has a more simple and powerful explanation. What is it?
- (5) Karma yoga does not mean that the doer should not get what it wants. It does say, however, that getting what you want is not straightforward. Why is it not straightforward?
- (6) If the results of your actions are not up to you, what factor is responsible for them?
- (7) The field of life appears to each doer as its circumstances, basically its relationship with other conscious beings. Why is it foolish to ignore the needs of the field?
- (8) What field-centered principle determines the result?

(9) What is the attitude that creates the *vasanas* that bind the doer to action?

(10) What is the basic existential fact that is the basis of the *karma yoga* attitude?

(11) When you are given something valuable what is the appropriate response?

(12) What can you offer the field?

(13) What is the appropriate attitude?

(14) *Karma yoga* is an offering of one's actions to the field of existence in a loving devotional spirit before the action is initiated. With what attitude does the *karma yogi* receive the results of his actions?

(15) Does the attitude of gratitude apply to unwanted results? If so, why?

(16) My emotions are the results of my response to what happens in the karmic world. Does the karma yoga attitude apply to unwanted emotions? If so, why?

(17) *Karma Yoga* is right attitude plus right action. Actions are *sattvic*, *rajasic*, and *tamasic*. Which actions are beneficial, which are detrimental and which are neither beneficial nor detrimental?



**Love from Tiruvannamalai**