

Shining World

Newsletter February 2014



Theme for Newsletter

Health & Vedanta

The theme of this Newsletter is “Health and Vedanta” as many people have inquired about this difficult issue since hearing about Ramji’s medical condition. Ramji has written about his recent experience and I have added a *satsang* with an inquirer on the topic as well.

We apologise for being rather slow since the last Newsletter in November. *Isvara* had us on a rollercoaster which kept us otherwise occupied and for the first time in his life, Ramji had to contend with health issues which took precedence over everything else. No *jiva* is immune to *Isvara* and there is no choice but to face the momentum of past actions (*prarabdha karma*) without flinching. Even though Ramji has looked after his health impeccably for many years and especially in the last few years with my help, an inherited predisposition for heart disease had to play out. As serious as the health issues were, Ramji accommodated them with his usual dispassion and fearlessness, facing the surgeon’s knife untroubled by possible outcomes.

Above: *Sunrise over the valley below house in Spain*



Casa Major, Venue in Spain



Ramji with group in Spain Jan 2014

We are both so happy... as I am sure you are too... that *Isvara* has given him a new lease on life and that he is back on the road so to speak, as good as new... if not better! In just over five weeks after surgery he taught almost 70 hours of Vedanta at the seminar in Spain, without missing a beat... pun intended... and with his trademark humour and *joie de vivre*. He gives new meaning to the word "open-hearted" now that his physical heart has been tuned up. 😊

The heart is a symbol of the self, the seat of consciousness and the physical heart is located in it, meaning that the physical heart is known to it. Vedanta calls the "cave of the heart" *"the hridaya"*, which means the place the *Ayam*, the "I am", the true "I", sits. It does not suffer sickness and health. The cave symbolizes ignorance and the light of the awareness resting in it, removes the darkness. The temple experience in South India particularly is very much one of journeying into the darkness to discover the light.

~ News Relating to Shiningworld

New E-Satsangs

We have posted over 500 pages of new *e-satsangs* replies on the website, From Ram, Sundari, Ted, Tan and Isaiah.

New Publications

- Ramji's new book has been slightly delayed due to health issues but it should be ready for publication in the next month or so. It promises to be his best to date!
- Watch the website for a new edition of Shankara's famous text, The Crest Jewel of Discrimination: Vivekachudamani, written in clear, simple English.
- We have had many inquiries about our proposed book on the gunas, which we are in the process of outlining and hope to have available later this year. *Isvara* willing, we also intend making available our book on non-dual relationships this year.
- Healthy Lifestyle: We will soon be making available a book on the website that outlines the basic principles for healthy eating which takes the gunas into consideration. This is a guideline for inquirers who need to make adjustments for a more sattvic lifestyle.

~ Plans for Shiningworld

It has become clear to us that it is time to upgrade Shiningworld so that the wealth of priceless wisdom it holds is more readily available. We have had offers of help from two wonderful souls that *Isvara* sent to us who are both experts in communications, publications and management.

Welcome to Shiningworld Peggy Mackay and Peter Bromley, we are most grateful to you both as there is just too much for Ramji and me to cope with on our own.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our dear friend Amir Parmar for his great service to Shiningworld for the past three years. Amir has helped us generously in managing

Shiningworld website and is no longer able to do so. We are happy to announce that Christian Eberle will be expanding his association with Shiningworld and taking on the role of webmaster along with his great contribution to managing the video and audio orders.

~ New Ideas for Shiningworld

- Launching several new publications as mentioned above.
- Re-evaluating Shiningworld website with a view to making it more user-friendly. Any recommendations or suggestions in this regard would be very welcome.
- Regular Ramji mini teachings via social networks such as Facebook.
- A monthly *satsang* and Q&A with Ramji online which will cover a different topic each week.
- A themed Newsletter unfolding the basic logic of Vedanta in 12 monthly installments.
- An online Shiningworld Community (*sangha*) where satsangees who would like to communicate with other Vedantins can list their contact information. We propose that people interested supply us with a short bio, a picture and contact details.
- A forum for those of you who write to Shiningworld who would like to have your emails published under your name in order to engage in discussion with other inquirers.

Audios and Videos Available Shortly

Soon available: the audios and videos of Bhagavad Gita Trout Lake 2013; Vivekachudamani, Spain October 2013; Bhagavad Gita/Panchadasi Spain January 2014. We also have a great collection of 10 *satsangs* recorded in Portland 2013.

Upcoming Teaching Schedule for Europe 2014

{GERMANY}

Westerwald 2014

March 9 - March 14

Yoga Vidya

Contact: Narada

Email: narada@yoga-vidya.de
<http://www.yoga-vidya.org>

{GERMANY}

Cologne 2014

Mar 14 - Mar 16

Yoga Vidya Köln

Lübecker Str. 8-10
50668 Köln

Contact: Vedamurti Schönert

Telephone: +49 221 1394308

Email: koeln@yoga-vidya.de
<http://www.yoga-vidya.de/center/oeln/start.html>

{AMSTERDAM}

March 21 - March 23

Shiva Yoga Center

Lindenlaan 75
(MOC building)
1185LC Amstelveen

Contact: Hilbrand Gringhuis

Mobile: 06 1641 7270

Email: hilbrand1@hotmail.com

{GERMANY}

Berlin 2014

June 6 - June 13

Contact: Matthias Raetz

Email: ramjiseminar@gmail.com

{GERMANY}

Bavaria 2014

June 20 - June 22

Yoveda Centre Schondorf
Lake Ammersee

Email: Tan_tankalay@yahoo.de

Venue Website:
<http://www.yoveda.de/>

From James...

What's Up?



As most of you know I recently had open heart surgery on November 23, 2013. Two months later it is as if nothing ever happened... which it didn't in reality. A few veins were moved from my legs to my heart and that's about all. Yesterday Sundari and I climbed through the fantastic scenery of El Torcal a short distance from our home in Spain, an amazing climbers' playground set amidst a myriad of spectacular limestone pinnacles and spires. El Torcal is a range of 1100 meter mountains forty minutes from Malaga.

Just as I observed the life slowly drain away the last two years and the uneventful healing process knit the wound in my chest, shortly after the surgery I noticed that I felt ten or fifteen years younger. Such are the liberating effects of oxygen and the

freedom the mind enjoys when it is not burdened with an unhappy thought i.e. mortality. I acquitted myself well on the climb, although I am still no match for Sundari who blazed the trail gracefully hopping from rock to rock like the beautiful goats grazing there. So it seems that *Isvara* thinks I'm useful enough to keep me going for the foreseeable future.

I can't say that I was unprepared to shuffle off the mortal coil, although my *jiva* did not like the idea. Perhaps had my karma been different, like my friend Graham who had a miserable life and who died recently from it, I would have been happy to go, but the fact is that I have never been more in love with the miracles of life... you wonderful shiningworld truth seeking people, the magnificent earth and my darling wife, Sundari.

It is strange how you know what will happen without knowing what will happen. I was relaxed and unconcerned when they wheeled me into the operating theatre. After all, when you lay down to sleep at night, you do not know if you will wake up in the morning. Only *Isvara* knows.

But I somehow knew that I would wake up with a new lease on life. It helped to know that my surgeon had performed 9,000 open heart surgeries in his career, but it wasn't that. Knowing that the fruits of our actions are not up to us also helped, but beyond that there is an inexorable



James birthday lunch



Ramji in the mountains of El Torcal



James in hospital

logic to each life, one that really has nothing to do with who we think we are and, having discovered that logic through patient observation, I was not bothered. You could say that I honestly didn't learn anything that I didn't already know from the experience, in so far as I am that knowing which ends the need to know. The second day after the surgery was perhaps the worst day of my life. Pointless as it was in so far as *Isvara* had another other idea... life!... I really wanted to die. A profound *tamas*, way beyond mere psychological depression, which it seems is a common symptom after open heart surgery, descended on me for about a day, and then lifted.

I stayed in the hospital for five days where I learned quickly that the only road to happiness in that world of wires, machines, blinking beeping lights and an army of people

was to completely surrender my ego. In the "real" world there are options and a willful person like me can influence the flow of events to a large degree on the fly...but in the hospital, you are an idea in *Isvara's* mind and it has no sense of humour. It is the ultimate karma yoga... what happens *happens* and you have no say in it. It is good. I was quite amazed to discover just how much medical science knows and to see that knowledge in action. I was well looked after. The doctors, nurses, and nurses aids were efficient, friendly and kind. The members of the Portland *satsang*... thanks Dave and Kay, Bernadette, Susan, Hannah, Juanita, Barbara, Josh, Mike and Bill, ... were wonderful. My brother, Ed, looked after me for a week.

Slightly under a month after the surgery, I boarded the plane for Spain. Ben and Susan graciously treated me to business class... thanks so much! And I arrived in Malaga tired, of course, but none the worse for wear. On January 3, 2014 I gave a two week Bhagavad Gita teaching to a fine group and from the feedback it seems that I am still able to croak out the teachings to the satisfaction of all and sundry.

What's next? Since *Isvara* has been so kind to me I plan to discharge my debt by doing what I know best... teaching Vedanta and seeing to the needs of Shiningworld. It is our idea to take Shiningworld to 'the next level', so to speak. The website, books and videos badly need an upgrade. Several people have come forward offering their money, time and expertise because frankly it is growing beyond our capacity to keep up. Elsewhere in this newsletter is an appeal for help in the form of suggestions that will make Shiningworld more efficiently serve the needs of seekers everywhere.

James



Ramji and brother Ed

Health & Prarabdha Karma

Greetings Sundari, It's so good to hear that Ramji is recuperating just fine. It's obvious *Isvara* still needs a good and capable communicator. We need him too!

Sundari: Yes I could not agree with you more! We are in Spain at the moment, gearing up for the forthcoming seminar/webinar which starts Saturday 3rd.

Michael: Ramji's health issues are what prompted me to write this email to you. I'm 65 years old and have had Diabetes for over twenty years. In that time I have had numerous medications to control my blood sugar, as well as being on Insulin injections for several years. I am off Insulin now, and only take medication sporadically choosing instead to control my blood sugar through diet... mostly Vegan.

I have been trying to understand illness and well-being as it relates to *Dharma*. It seems to me that for those of us like myself, that have chronic long term diseases that carry serious complications, care of the body/mind assumes an overarching *Dharma* to which all other *dharmas* must yield. I found this quote from an ancient Greek physician named Herophilus, that seems to address this very thing. "*When health is absent, wisdom cannot reveal itself, art cannot manifest, strength cannot fight, wealth becomes useless, and intelligence cannot be applied.*"

Sundari: Health or illness is a result of karma. If one super-imposes what belongs to the Total or *Isvara* onto the individual or *jiva* then you are thinking as a person, not as awareness; which means that you think the karma comes to you and therefore that the suffering belongs to you...because you are identified with it. If you know that you are awareness, you see the suffering taking place in the mind (Subtle Body); so you are free of the suffering.

The karma comes to the Subtle Body, which a *jnani* knows belongs to *Isvara*. The *dharmafield* or Total Mind (*Isvara srsti*) remains unchanged if one is "enlightened" or not; which means *prarabdha karma* will play out according to the laws of the *dharmafield*. *Prarabdha karma* is the momentum of past actions that fructify as your life experiences.

Karma depends on who you think you are. There is no karma for an enlightened person (*jnani*). The individual or *jiva* identified as a *jiva* accumulates karma that seems to come to the body/mind sense complex; when moksha happens, the karma burns up. However, one has to look at what "burns up" actually means. Karma does not burn up for awareness as there is no karma for awareness because for it nothing ever happened. It is not a doer. Karma is not real.

Karma is just an idea in the Subtle Body that causes suffering. So "burning up" karma happens when the *jiva* is **no longer** identified with the Subtle Body and knows that it is awareness. This does not mean that the karma does not still play out for the *jiva*... remember the body delivering the fruits of *jiva's* actions, plays out as long as the *jiva* is alive. When *prarabdha karma* is finished, the body dies.

Karma “burns up” for the Subtle Body, because it is **only ever** “in” the Subtle Body, not the physical body or the self. The body is just meat; it is inert... so there is no karma for it. It is a counter across which experience is transacted. It seems to take place in the physical body because the physical body is “attached” to the Subtle Body. From *Ishvara*’s point of view (Causal Body) there is no karma. *Ishvara* is called *karma phala datta*: which means “the one who delivers the fruits of the action.”

Karma is just the impersonal playing out of the *gunas*, which do not condition the Total Mind/*Ishvara* because *Ishvara* is beyond the *gunas*. *Ishvara* is pure awareness (*Paramatman*) minus the *gunas*. *Ishvara* plus the *gunas* assumes a role and “becomes” the creator operating *maya*. There is no karma for animals for instance, because they do not have intellects so they are neither ignorant nor do they have knowledge; they are a program run by *Ishvara*. Therefore animals do not interpret their environment; they do not evaluate the things that happen to them, in them and around them. Animals do not think and they act purely on “instinct”, meaning according to *Ishvara*. Karma itself is value neutral. It is just action and its results. It only becomes meaningful when we evaluate it. We either like it or don’t like it or are indifferent to it. Only in the minds of human beings does action become ‘karma.’

Karma seems to be there for the *jiva* because *jiva* is ignorant of its nature as awareness and interprets what happens in its environment. **Karma is a matter of identification or interpretation**, although the body/mind may still apparently experience pain. Like Ramji with a heart condition and you with diabetes. This is *Ishvara*, nothing to be done about it. We know that it has nothing to do with us, so we are always above it, observing it, free of it.

Karma is real if you think it is real; it is almost impossible to understand because the one trying to understand it is in the *dharma*/karma field and part of the field. It is like trying to understand the mind of *Ishvara*; it cannot be done. Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: “On the topic of karma, even sages are perplexed”. That being said, of course it takes extreme dispassion to deal with chronic illness or any pain. Pain is born of *rajas* and its kissing cousin is *tamas*, so it is very difficult to maintain *sattva* when they are both active in the body/mind. This is where dispassion and *karma yoga* is so important; it is the only way to deal with chronic pain (or anything else) from the *jiva* or *jivanmukta* level.

Michael: I realize that these things are of importance only in the *Maya* world – as Ramji sometimes calls it and cannot touch the Self and that as the Self I am free. But for the *Jiva* or even the *Jivanmukti* questions of health and well-being should not just be blown off as *Maya* or *Mithya* and nothing more. *Mithya* as I understand it cannot be said to be real and yet cannot be said to be unreal, hence *Ishvara* has provided for us in the form of doctors and medications and surgeries when they are so indicated.

Sundari: Correct. Problems arise when the doer thinks it can make the body “whole” through its own actions... which one can, to some degree. But there are many illness’s that are not a result of one’s state of mind and are not in the control of the person because the body belongs to *Ishvara*. Take Ramana for instance: he was a great saint who lived a pure, *sattvic* life and had a great state of mind, yet he died of cancer.

One can work with *Ishvara* regarding illness by one's attitude to the thoughts that give rise to illness and to the thoughts which come as a result of illness. From *Ishvara's* or awareness's point of view there is no illness of course, while at the same time the *gunas* are what create the "imperfection" in the mind and therefore the illness. Remember that the mind and therefore the illness are both objects known to you, awareness. From the *jiva's* or doer's point of view there is appropriate action to be taken but that still does not guarantee any particular result. The results of any action depend on the nature of the action... NOT necessarily on the state of mind of the person taking the action; it is possible to get a negative result from a positive action and vice versa. Very importantly, the results of actions ALSO depend on the nature of the field...i.e. *Ishvara*.

Michael: For me to ignore my disease and its ramifications would be to ignore an important *Dharma*, not my *Svadhharma* but one that allows me to follow my *Svadhharma*. For lack of a specific name I call it an overarching *dharma*, an umbrella *dharma* – to use a different metaphor. Is there a name for this in Vedanta or is it covered in another Vedantic concept that I am unaware of. I would much appreciate some clarity here.

Sundari: From a Vedantic point of view and as I stated above, this '*dharma*' you speak of is *Ishvara, prarabdha karma*. You are right, chronic illness does form a kind of 'over-arching' *dharma* as you put it because it dictates what you can and can't do as an individual / *jiva*. Assuming you are doing all you can in terms of lifestyle (meaning doing what is dharmic for you in the circumstances such as eating the right food, exercise, taking the right medications etc), then apply *karma yoga* and take all results as *prasad*. You cannot fight *Ishvara*, it is pointless.

Michael: Love and Health to you and Ramji,
Michael

Sundari: And the same to you from both of us Michael,
Sundari

