

SHININGWORLD

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2016

HELLO, EVERYONE

from Sundari

WE HOPE YOU all had a great holiday season and wish everyone a very happy “new” year as the ever-present and unchanging self, watching the ever-changing show go by!



James at Loutro, Crete, where he made time to hike the mountains, enjoying the sun and quality time with Stewart, along with working non-stop on *The Yoga of Love*.

We both returned to Bend, Oregon, in November last year after successful trips abroad. James dispensed his usual magic throughout his European tour, leaving his trademark trail of happiness behind him wherever he went. He even managed a short “break” in between his busy schedule and accepted an invitation from Stewart, one of his oldest friends, to catch some rest and relaxation on the Aegean Sea in Crete – where he spent most of the time working on his latest book, *The Yoga of Love!* He taught

this text in Europe for the first time to the eager and growing *sangha* in Amsterdam. It is a very important text, which he will be teaching more regularly in future. See the website for details.

After Crete, James taught another two seminars back to back, first at the Yoga Vidya *ashram* in Westerwald, Germany, then Cologne, after which he went to Berlin to visit Matthias, another very old friend, and welcomed his newborn son, Emil, into the world. Next, he flew to visit our dear friend and sponsor, Dave, who hosted the first *satsang* in Atlanta, Georgia. It was a great success, and we will be back again for sure!

I spent some time with my daughter and granddaughter in Dubai, enjoying their *darshan* and getting to know a little bit more about the very different culture of the Emiratis. Of all the places James and I have visited, for me Dubai qualifies as the most unusual in some ways. Apart from the obvious – the ostentatious wealth, a desert populated by skyscrapers competing

with each other to be more, better, different, most trees and plants growing on buildings instead of in Mother Earth, no poverty, crime or dirt to be seen anywhere, and gigantic shopping malls – it's a place where people live and go about their lives, just like any other place. Some people love it, some hate it. We kind of fall in between the two. Coming from South Africa, where crime is rife and one has to keep a vigilant eye, it is a refreshing break to be able to go shopping and leave your cell phone or computer charging in a communal mall while you do so! 🌐



WHAT'S HAPPENING

SINCE WE HAVE been back in Bend, enjoying the silence and beauty of the river, *Isvara* exceeded all expectations by granting my wish for a very white, snowy Christmas. It started snowing since the day after I got back and basically did not stop. Although it caught us unawares at first and had us digging our way out of the driveway, we got accustomed to it and put the exercise and isolation to good use. Ramji has developed awesome biceps!

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The view from my daughter's apartment (notice the sea of concrete with a backdrop of the ocean, the Persian Gulf), which is opposite the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world and quite spectacular by any standard.



We have both been very busy with our usual ShiningWorld load and also finishing the books we have been working on. I am relieved Ramji finished his book because since he arrived home he has been so involved in writing *The Yoga of Love* that he might as well have been on a different planet. *Isvara* set it up perfectly because the snows made it virtually impossible to get out of the house. You can read the foreword below and click the link to order. I think it is his best writing yet. I have also put the time to good use and finished writing my book on the *gunas* and enlightened lifestyles. It is ready for the last copy edit and we will

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James shovelling snow – quite a contrast from warm and sunny Crete!

soon be offering that at the website as well. The good news is that I got my husband back last week and along with (almost) finishing off my book, this gave us the chance to ameliorate a nasty case of cabin fever and snow overload. Thanks to a generous donation, we were able to take off for a short trip to Oaxaca, Mexico, for a well-earned break from work and snow. ❁

WHAT'S NEW

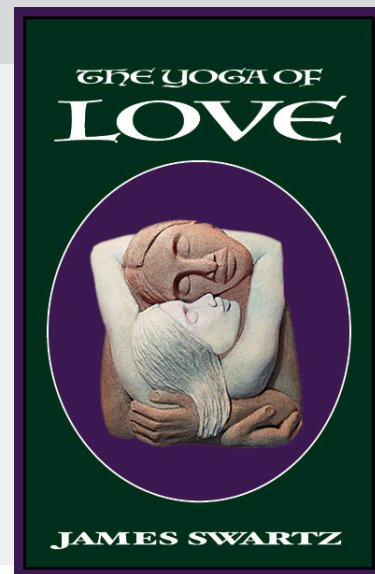
ENLIGHTENMENT AND NON-DUAL LOVE

THIS IS THE cover of James' new book. The picture is of a sculpture that I did for James commemorating our fourth wedding anniversary. The woman represents *maya*, and the man represents the self, locked in the eternal embrace of non-dual love.

Here is the foreword in which James explains how the book came about and why it is important:

WHEN I STARTED commentaries on Vedanta in the nineties, the first text I tackled was *Atma Bodh*, an introductory treatise on self-knowledge. I commented on *Narada Bhakti Sutras* next because success is not possible unless the head and the heart work together. My experience teaching Western people convinced me that although they had little trouble understanding the basic knowledge, their emotional lives left something to be desired, owing to their long-standing immersion in materialism. We experience emotional problems for at least two reasons: abuse and neglect as children owing to the breakdown of the extended family and lack of access to an intelligent religion capable of sublimating dysfunctional emotions into a positive devotional life, leading to self-inquiry, freedom and non-dual love. The subtitle of my first commentaries on the *sutras*, "The Logic of Love," is not an oxymoron, because knowledge and love are one.

The word "religion" comes from the Latin word *religare*, which means "to bind" or "to connect." A ligament connects two bones. Religion "reconnects" the individual "back" to God, implying a severed connection. The word "yoga" in the title of these commentaries connects the reflected self, the "soul," to use religious terminology, back to God, pure original consciousness/existence/love, setting it free of its bondage to the body and the material world. Vedanta is a means of self-knowledge that leads to freedom and non-dual love, so it is not a religion. However, it does not reject the religious impulse, one of man's most notable, noble



The Yoga of Love is now available at the ShiningWorld website.

and all-pervasive tendencies. Instead, it seeks to inform this impulse with deep understanding.

The *Bhakti Sutras* are verses by a great sage, Narada, on the topic of love. I was always attracted to them and had heard them unfolded at the feet of my teacher, Swami Chinmayananda, in 1969. Unfortunately, I only had an English translation from Swami Prabhavananda with the typical quasi-Vedic slant of the Ramakrishna Mission, which was helpful but not ideal. I wasn't a very good writer then, so my ability to communicate Vedanta was not as sophisticated as it is today. I always intended to improve the commentaries, but one thing led to another and it never happened.

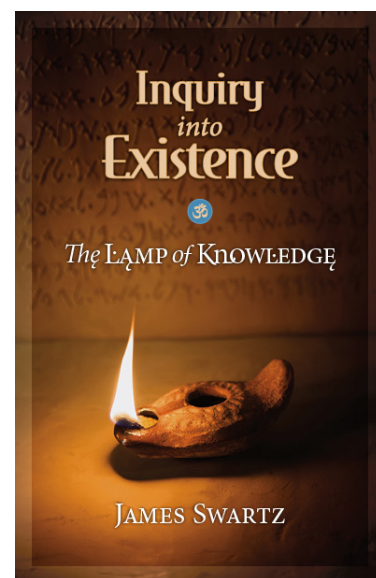
In the meantime, the internet happened, my writing improved and my books and commentaries began to attract an international readership.

Early this year I learned of audio talks of the *sutras* by Swami Paramarthananda, a *guru* brother and the foremost disciple of the great sage Swami Dayananda Saraswati, one of my teachers. My ShiningWorld duties, a hectic schedule of international travel and work on my most recent book, *Inquiry into Existence*, commentaries on Vidyananda's *Panchadasi*, prevented me from listening to the Swami's excellent talks. Fortunately, a young woman named Luma Muhtadie offered to transcribe them and did an excellent job. I finished *Inquiry into Existence*, and with the help of the Swami's talks have, I feel, done justice to this important work.

It is an important text, not only because Western seekers generally have love problems that Indian devotees avoid, owing to the pervasiveness of India's devotional culture, but because the many erroneous notions of devotion and liberation floating around in the spiritual world need to be properly contextualized to help devotees, East and West, achieve non-dual love.

It is also important because seekers need to know the benefit of self-inquiry: how Vedanta will transform them and their lives. The *sutras* give us an excellent picture of a self-actualized person, someone who enjoys complete freedom and non-dual love.

Finally, these days we see many self-proclaimed "enlightened" people professing to be free. Generally, this freedom is left undefined or amounts to freedom from social constraints and/or one's conditioning, which, depending on how you look at it, is not necessarily the kiss of death. However, I am not aware of any modern teaching that conflates liberation with non-dual (unconditional) love, which might fairly be said to be the next step after enlightenment. If Vedanta's definition of liberation (*moksa*) were adhered to, the number of "enlightened beings"



Inquiry into Existence: The Lamp of Knowledge is also available at the ShiningWorld website.

would shrink to imperceptibility and the many abuses visited on seekers by modern teachers would virtually disappear. In any case, these *sutras* are the last word on freedom and non-dual love.

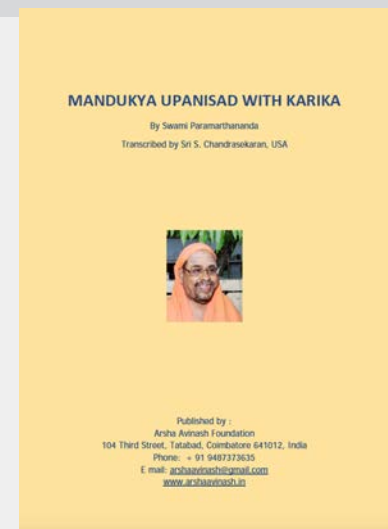
I dedicate this book to my darling wife, Sundari, who is an embodiment of pure love and who created the sculpture for our fourth wedding anniversary that appears on the cover of this book. ~ James Swartz, Bend, Oregon, December 25, 2015

To get your copy of *The Yoga of Love*, click this link: http://shiningworld.com/site/shop/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=142 🌐

MANDUKYA TRANSCRIPTION

SHININGWORLD IS HAPPY to announce the addition of an excellent 331-page transcription of Swami Paramarthananda's unfolding of the "king" of the *Upanishads*, the *Mandukya* and *Karika*, written by Gaudapada, transcribed by Sekar of Atlanta and published by the Arsha Avinash Foundation of Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, South India. This transcription is not Sanskrit-heavy but does require understanding certain basic terms, like *nama-rupa* (name and form), *raga-dvesha* (likes and dislikes), *atma* (the self), *brahman* (the self), *satya* (real), *mithya* (apparent), etc. This is a must-read for serious *Vedantawallas*.

Here is the link: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/index.php/publications> 🌐



Mandukya Upanisad with Karika by Swami Paramarthanda is available for free download at the ShiningWorld website.

FIFTY NEW SATSANGS

IN SPITE OF numerous other duties, we have managed to write fifty new *satsangs* since the last newsletter. James says that the *satsang* entitled *Does Enlightenment Fall Down from Heaven?* is an important one for everyone, particularly those of you who think you are finished with Vedanta and your *guru*. It discusses the difference between being enlightened as the self and being enlightened as the *jiva*. 🌐



Satsang is a compound Sanskrit word that means "keeping the company of the self."

THE STREAMING VIDEO SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE



The popular yearly video subscription service is available from the ShiningWorld website.

THIS IS JUST a reminder that daily exposure to the teachings is the only way to attack your conditioning and qualify for liberation. Worship of *Ishvara* in the form of *karma yoga* and self-inquiry (*jnana yoga*) are the means for gaining the required maturity. Vedanta gives clear knowledge of *Ishvara*, which negates the doer and sets you free. Unfortunately, *Ishvara* is the most tricky and subtle spiritual concept. Vedanta is the only path that reveals the nature of *Ishvara* in all its nuances. How *Ishvara* relates to you, pure awareness, and to *Jiva*, the apparent individual that you think is a real individual, is the essence of Vedanta. So *Ishvara*-knowledge is the key to liberation. Inquiry in the form of scripture study – reading and *satsang* – is absolutely necessary. To that end, ShiningWorld has instituted a yearly subscription service that gives you access to the video archives for pennies – 43, to be exact! – a day. A one-day subscription allows you to try before you buy. It has proven to be a very popular service. Sign up now. Here is the link: <http://shiningworld.com/site/members/index.php?r=site%2Finfo> ☸

GOT SOME FREE TIME?

AS MOST OF you know, the *satsangs* are perhaps the heart and soul of the ShiningWorld website because they address the typical problems that inquirers face in light of the teachings. We would like to publish a book of the 100 most popular *satsangs*. To that end, we would like it very much if you would copy two or three of your favourites and send them to us at: inquiries.shiningworld@gmail.com ☸



TEACHING IN INDIA

RAVE REVIEWS ARE coming in for Ted Schmidt from many ShiningWorlders attending the Tiruvannamalai, India, talks!

After a few grumbles from the die-hards who missed Ramji, everyone attending the talks settled in to enjoy the beauty of the teachings that stand independently of anyone,

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Ted Schmidt taught Vedanta in Tiruvannamalai, India, this past December.

delivered with the expertise of a qualified teacher. Way to go, Ted!!! The *sampradaya* thanks you.

Some comments from attendees:

“Ramji has taught Ted well, and it is clearly evident how thoroughly Ted has assimilated the knowledge and how thoroughly he prepared for the great unfolding that was given to each of us at the seminar.”

“Inexpressible thanks to you and James for ShiningWorld and for supporting Ted on his journey to becoming a truly great ‘purveyor’ of the Supreme Knowledge.” ❁

A NEW TEACHER

SHININGWORLD IS PLEASED to include Arlindo Moraes, aka Nagarjuna Anand, as one of our ShiningWorld teachers.

To find out more about him, read his bio by clicking this link: http://www.shiningworld.com/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&layout=edit&id=114 ❁



Arlindo Moraes (Nagarjuna Anand), our newest inclusion in the ShiningWorld teaching staff.

A BUSY YEAR AHEAD

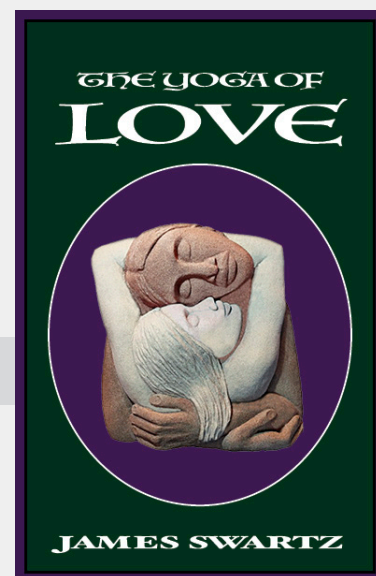
THIS YEAR PROMISES to be a busy one. James and I head back to Europe in February, and if you are in Portland, Oregon, and vicinity, James will do a one-day seminar on February 21 on our way out. For East Coasters he will do a weekend in Wilton, Connecticut; then in March for Europeans weekends at Amsterdam, Cologne and five days in Berlin. Next, a six-day retreat out in the country in April at Yoga Vidya Bad Meinburg, Germany; Brazil in May, Berkeley in July; and the annual camp-out at Trout Lake in August, always a real treat! Then back to Europe, including Norway, England and Belgium (all new venues) in October and November, along with Cologne and Westerwald, Germany. Check the website for details.

<http://www.shiningworld.com/site/index.php/events> ❁

THE YOGA OF LOVE HARD COPY?



ALTHOUGH WE HAVE made no attempt to advertise *The Yoga of Love* apart from listing it at the website, it has proven to be quite



popular and we have had many requests to publish it in print form. To that end, we are asking the ShiningWorld community to help. We need approximately \$1,000. Donors will receive complementary copies. ☸



THE YOGA OF DEATH

THE TOPIC FOR the next newsletter is “The Yoga of Death.” If you are not as happy with the idea that you will die one day as we are with these two skeletons, we recommend you look for this article in the next newsletter. ☸

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In Mexico, where The Day of the Dead is celebrated like nowhere else in Latin America.

BRRR... BACK TO BEND

SPRING IS JUST around the corner! Until next time, *hasta la vista, amigos.* ☸

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Views from our home in Bend, Oregon, including the beautiful riverbank.

