

A Few Guidelines on Living the Knowledge

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Sundari: *Dharma* is a tricky topic and one that has to be worked out individually, taking all the elements of life as a person into consideration. One cannot deny or overlook the personal element – even though as awareness it is has nothing to do with who you are. *Mithya* may be *mithya*, and it is imperative to know the difference between *satya* and *mithya*, but *mithya* does not disappear because you know you are *satya*. And it definitely will not work to impose *satya* onto *mithya*! As the person, one has to face and resolve *karma* in a healthy way for all concerned, if peace of mind is the aim. We have encountered so many inquirers who attempt to dodge the bullet of their *karma* by assuming the “role” of the inquirer. Unfortunately, it does not work. *Nidididya* is the name of the game – there is NO getting away from that. If freedom from (and for) the *jiva* is what we are after, we have to face, resolve and dissolve all the conditioning as it arises in the mind or we live with the inevitable blowback *karma*. Understanding the *gunas* and how they play out in the mind is key.

I usually add to a question about *dharma* the teaching on the three different kinds of *dharma* which are important to understand (attached is a *satsang* on the topic). As a mother, wife, worker and inquirer, one has different *karmas* to fulfil, which one disregards at the loss of peace of mind, as you point out. Being a woman has no relevance at all with regards to self-inquiry – or anything else. If one pays service to the belief in the man/woman idea, one is paying allegiance to the ultimate duality within duality.

But while taking into consideration all the *dharmic* roles we need to fulfil – our personal *svadharma* and our *dharma* as a householder or person living in the world, the *dharma* that is an over-arching *dharma* for all *dharmas* (if *moksa* is the most important value to us) is the *dharma* of an inquirer. The *dharma* of an inquirer is to sacrifice what you think is true about who you are in favour of what scripture says is true – assuming there is a conflict between the two. If there is not sufficient confidence (*shraddha*) in the knowledge “I am awareness” then one needs to take a stand in awareness “as awareness” until the confidence comes. If one is totally committed to self-inquiry and sticks to it no matter what, the confidence will eventually come because when one’s idea of who you are is in harmony with who you really are, experience confirms it.

Everything we do as inquirers needs to be done with the *karma yoga* attitude. Vedanta is not going to fix your life, but it can give you the tools to help you deal with anything in the life of the *jiva*. This is *karma yoga*. When practiced properly, *karma yoga* is really *dharma yoga* because every action one takes is dedicated to *Isvara*; it is a consecration, so one automatically follows *dharma*. ***Dharma* is nothing less than responding appropriately to what *Isvara* presents to you on a moment-to-moment basis.** Peace of mind only comes with the realisation that you are not in control of the *dharma* field, yet in taking the appropriate steps to act according to *dharma* (personal and universal) and then relinquishing the results, peace of mind is produced.

Another issue with regards to uncertainty over what is the most important *dharma* for us to follow is to determine what values underpin our lives by undertaking a fearless moral inventory. It is truly amazing how many people have never thought about this – yet what we value is such an obvious pointer for where our life as *jivas* is headed.

The inquirer you are writing to mentions the quest for perfection. It might be helpful to point out that the need for perfection is typical of *rajas* out of balance with *satya* and originates from an inadequate ego (*tamas* – low self-esteem) that appraises itself on results. It needs to prove its worth in everything it attempts to do and has no knowledge of *karma yoga* – or if it does, is not implementing it in every thought, word and deed on a moment-to-moment basis. If you are not experiencing peace of mind by relinquishing results, you are not relinquishing results. It's that simple – the doer is still there, afraid and small, still wanting a particular result, frustrated and afraid because they believe they need the result to be safe or whole and they are not getting what they want.

The thing to aim for in any activity is excellence, which is doing our very best in every situation, given the changing nature of the field (the *gunas*) and how it impacts the *jiva* enlightened or not, which makes our best different every time.

A couple of other things I would add to your email:

Prayer

Prayer or devotion, like gratitude, is a gift given to us by *Isvara* for the peace of mind of the *jiva*. Neither *Isvara* nor awareness need our prayers, devotion or gratitude, but these thoughts/attitudes give rise to sublime feelings in the mind because the *jiva* is actually worshipping itself.

Samskaras

Samskaras are deeply rooted conglomerations of *vasanas* (like complexes), or programmed unconscious ways of behaving, usually linked to *pratibandikas* – unconscious blockages in the mind. These blockages are the deeply buried unconscious content of the mind we are afraid of facing because of the pain/anger/fear that underpins them. The only way to deal with *vasanas/samskaras/pratibandikas* is to see where they originate from – *Isvara*, i.e. the *gunas*.

Again, as I said before, **the only way *vasanas* will “go away over time”** is if the unconscious behaviour is understood through dedicated *nididhyasana*: deep contemplation, reflection and resolution **in the light of self-knowledge – the *guna* teaching. Once one understands what the *gunas* are, how they govern the creation of “our” conditioning, we firstly see that it does not belong to us so we can dis-identify with them, then we resolve the negative tendencies by making intelligent life choices that cultivate the positive aspects of all the *gunas* and minimize the negative aspects.**

If the inquirer is a beginner, which clearly is not the case with this person, you can start off by emphasising the qualifications for self-inquiry and the importance of *karma yoga*, which does automatically lessen the pressure of the *vasanas*. Once *karma yoga* is understood, the progression is to move the inquirer into understanding *triguna vibhava yoga*, the key to freedom.

The *gunas* are objects known to you, awareness. But as *Isvara srsti* remains the same whether the *jiva* is enlightened or not, the *gunas* never go away, even when you know what they are. Because of the ever-changing, unpredictable nature of the environment the

mind is a part of, freedom requires constant vigilance. As you know, *moksa* is not about perfecting or changing the person but understanding them. The mind we have is made the way it is made – even though freedom entails rendering binding *vasanas* non-binding, it does not mean they necessarily go away. What does go away is the identification with “our” conditioning and the projection of the *jiva*’s subjective reality onto *Isvara* – the cause of all existential suffering. When self-knowledge has obtained in the mind, how we respond to *Isvara* (what arises in the mind and its environment) is always through *karma yoga*.

I hope this helps, and well done! You are a natural teacher.

~ Much love, Sundari