

Animals Cannot Attain *Moksa*

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Kumar: 1. Is it mandatory to be a vegetarian to follow the path of self-inquiry??

Sundari: No, it is not, unless it is part of your Indian culture and inherent in your *svadharma*. Read my article in Publications on the ShiningWorld website called *The Politics and Morality of Food*.

Kumar: 2. Is the animal cow an enlightened species, as all its life it is only giving and it gets nothing in return, examples given below:

The cow gives milk.

The milkman separates a cow from its calf so we humans can get milk or else the calf will end up drinking our share of milk (imagine if our children were separated from us??).

In Indian villages people drink cow urine, as it is good for health.

Cow manure is used as a disinfectant in households in India, and the floors are mopped using dried cow manure mixed with water, and it does not smell a bit.

Cow manure is used for cooking in India.

Cow manure is used to generate gas, called *gobar* gas, in India,

Cow manure is an excellent decomposable and good for the soil.

And finally, a cow, when it is of no purpose to humans anymore is slaughtered for meat!!

But the cow does not seem to complain, as I've never heard of a cow ever killing a man, and never gets or expects anything in return, which in a way is silent *karma yoga* and *jnana yoga*?? On that note, is it good or better for us humans to be inspired by a cow's life and to have the attitude of a cow??

Sundari: Animals are in the lower realm of creation, as are insects, microorganisms and plant *jivas*. Having no intellect (or only very rudimentary intellects), these life forms are totally *tamasic*, ignorant of the self. You could say they are totally bound or you could say they are totally free, one with the self. The *gunas* only bind humans, not animals, so animals do not have *vasanas*. They are not plagued by the usual thought/emotional patterns that limit humans: guilt, shame, regret, lack of self-esteem, to name a few. Animals have no power to analyze or think other than in terms of their desires. Therefore animals do not interpret their environment; they do not evaluate the things that happen to them, in them and around them. Animals act purely by "instinct," meaning according to *Isvara*.

The human subtle body has an intellect which reflects consciousness, but although an animal also has a subtle body which reflects consciousness, it does not have a developed intellect capable of self-reflection or “free will.” Animals do not feel incomplete or separate, so do not chase objects to complete them. Animals don’t worry, because they accept reality as it is. Fear of what will happen and worry is the nature of human beings. But animals do not have any concept of the future and do not fear it. Only human *jivas/viswas*, who are bound by a mixture of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, worry. Because of this, humans are always confused about what the truth is until self-knowledge removes ignorance.

Animals act purely by “instinct,” meaning in accordance with *Isvara*. They are programs and have no choice in the matter, whereas humans do have choice. We have free will and an intellect capable of doubt, so we can make choices not conducive to peace of mind, creating “bad” (*papa karma*). Well, we can question how free “free will” really is because the *gunas* are behind everything, but essentially we can seemingly choose one thing over another. We can choose to go against *dharma*, against *Isvara*, and suffer as a result. Animals do not feel incomplete or separate, so do not chase objects to complete them. Animals don’t worry, because they accept reality as it is. Animals don’t need scripture or enlightenment, because they are not bound by the *gunas*.

There is no *karma* for animals, because they are entirely ignorant, whereas humans are in the twilight zone with half knowledge (spirit) and half ignorance (matter). *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*.” But the downside is, to achieve *moksa*, a *jiva* must develop the ability to assimilate the meaning of experience. Animals do not have much merit, because they cannot assimilate the meaning of experience. A human subtle body also has the advantage in that it can analyze and do inquiry, and because of this ignorance can be removed from the mind by self-knowledge. Therefore a human subtle body is better than an animal subtle body because it is capable of *moksa*, whereas an animal subtle body is not. However, animals have the ability, given by *Isvara* of course, to evolve upwards. When the *prarabdha karma* of an animal/insect/organism or plant *jiva* is exhausted, it can be reborn into higher realms or levels within its realm, progressing upwards.

How is being inspired by a cow going to remove your ignorance of who you are? Have you ever seen a cow sitting on a corner in India unfolding the *Upanishads*? It is true that Ramana said that his favourite cow Laxmi was enlightened, but what he meant by that was that everything is the self. People believe that enlightenment is the same as the self, that it belongs to the doer and can be achieved by “doing.” In Vedanta literature, there is no talk about enlightenment as such, only self-knowledge. Enlightenment is an experiential term. Cows in India are very *sattvic* because they do not suffer the fear that other cows do in other parts of the world, where they are only kept to be eaten. But while it is good to be thankful for the bounty they give, a cow cannot give you self-knowledge. That is only possible by submitting the mind to an independent teaching such as Vedanta taught by a qualified teacher.

Kumar: 3. If a human was born in the jungle, e.g. Mowgli from *Jungle Book*, and never was exposed to humans, will he attain enlightenment much more easily than, say, an average human who has a lot of distractions every second?

Sundari: You ask strange questions. I guess it is possible that someone who has not been socialized or corrupted by the greed of so-called “civilization” will have fewer *vasanas* and fewer distractions, but they will still be ignorant of who they are, much like animals.

~ *Om*, Sundari