

Cleaning of *Karma*, Skilfully Managing Involuntary Thoughts

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2017-09-15

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3383>

Friedrich: Hi, Sundari.

I am glad that you dedicated your time to reply comprehensively.

Thanks for doing the correction. Sorry for the bad writing. I will take care of it.

To write in English about such a substantial topic is a challenge.

I will give my best to pick up the right terminology.

Hopefully I didn't overuse your friendliness.

Sundari: No problem, Friedrich, thank you for your consideration.

Friedrich: I used the terminology "on the Vedanta journey" because I like the terminology of being on the Vedanta bus, which James uses sometimes when he is talking about Vedanta. The terminology "being in the process" is more appropriate in the context of what we talked about (I wrote it directly after the journey).

I understand that I, the self, cannot be on a journey. But the *jiva* seems to be on a journey. Anyway, you made this point clear.

Sundari, I didn't write that I think enlightenment is experimental. I wrote that I always thought that there will be some fast switch. I know that I cannot become something that I already am. I had the presumption that if I, as this person, will practise for long enough, study hard enough, this person will dissolve itself or switch into another dimension where it is happy all the time. But this is not my presumption, this was my presumption.

Sundari: I am glad to hear this. I thought it might be just a language barrier – and I understand how hard it is to communicate in a foreign language. There is no fast track to *moksa*, it does not work that way. Yes, it takes qualifications and total dedication to self-inquiry for self-knowledge to obtain, but even then it is still up to *Isvara*. Many people realize they are the self but never clean up their act or lifestyle as a *jiva*, which will prevent *moksa*. Swami Paramarthanda says that the first two stages of self-inquiry, which are *sravana* (listening) and *manana* (contemplating/reasoning), can take anything from five to 10 years depending on qualifications, and the last stage, *nididhysana*, 15 years. The last stage is the hardest because it is actualising self-knowledge.

Friedrich: Since Vedanta, I stopped seeking and I started to enquire. The thirst for knowledge gets perfectly satisfied. Vedanta is a perfect Mandala of Knowledge. For every question is an answer. I am really fortunate to find James and ShiningWorld. I have faith that if I continue the

yogas and keep enquiring I can and will be free from depending on objects.

Sundari: Yes, you are fortunate to have found James and ShiningWorld. It is grace, and grace is earned. Complete faith in the teachings is one of the most important qualifications.

Friedrich: My mind was a little dull and confused when I wrote the last email. But I think the main topic/obstacles became pretty clear – unresolved *karma*, binding *vasanas*, thinking that I am the doer, and not permanent discrimination from myself and the objects appearing in me.

Sundari: Yes, that is correct. You have a lot of unresolved *jiva* issues and *karma* to clean up. The main thing is you see this which can bring your attention to what the scripture is saying as it relates to how you live your life. You cannot dismiss the *jiva* until you understand it and dissolve it in the knowledge.

Friedrich: I become more and more aware of the obstacles, the ignorance that is concealing my self. I'm in the process of cleaning up my life. Relationships, friends, work, food, sex. I start to look at the *vasanas* in the light of my (new) values. I'm assuming that the next time will be more than enough to do for me. ☺ I have some really strong binding *vasanas*, but the knowledge helped me already to manage some *vasanas* – by thinking through them. What will happen when I follow the instructions of this *vasana*? Really helpful for me is always to remind myself about the zero-sum nature of things. I find it also helpful to take a stand in awareness. Just observing/knowing the thoughts, feelings and sensations which appear/disappear in me, out of me, what is happening when the mind is in a clear, pure, *sattvic* state. Through that the objects/thoughts are sorted as what they are, and lose the power to dictate what to do.

Sundari: Good work, Friedrich. The knowledge is really powerful but it is useless unless it translates into every moment of your life – in other words, if you live it. Observe, determine, discriminate, assimilate. The path to freedom is the ability to discriminate yourself from the objects appearing in you 24/7, no fine print.

Friedrich: You wrote: “As the *jiva*, or ego, you cannot permanently recondition the mind. You can only permanently recondition the mind through inquiry into what governs it – the *gunas* – understanding them and managing them for peace of mind, *sattva*, i.e. through self-knowledge.”

Important point: what I was thinking of is that it also works the other way around. With conditioning the mind, I mean doing *yoga* – choosing voluntary thoughts that are expressing my highest value (a peaceful mind aka *sattva*). When I ask myself in any situation where I feel emotionally unbalanced (*rajasic* or *tamasic*) what thought is behind this feeling, and if I want myself to be peaceful, happy, I should choose a thought that is making me happy. Because it's in so can I manage the *gunas*, by choosing *sattva*. It's *karma yoga* because I take responsibility for my experience and by choosing peace for myself (everybody). By doing this I take actions which are in accordance with the universal laws.

Sundari: Excellent, and correct.

Friedrich: Another point I want to explain is this sentence, to which you reply that you don't understand it: "Because even if we say that only knowledge will set us free – no experience – we can identify awareness as being aware in our right-now experience."

When I'm in a quiet room with a clear, peaceful mind and enquire, I become clear that mind-body is known by me, that I am that unchanging entity through which everything is known. In these moments, I can discriminate the objects/forms from me, awareness. And it became clear that I am myself already. That I am what I am looking for. These moments, glimpses of being myself, are there. In daily life, with an agitated or dull mind, it's not working well.

Sundari: Yes, *sattva* is the *guna* to aim for, but remember – *sattva* is an object known to you. As the self, you are not affected or conditioned by any of the *gunas*, because you are *triguna-atita*. Don't make the mistake of thinking *moksa* is *sattva*. It is not. It is very easy to get stuck in the "golden cage" of *sattva*, thinking you are somehow superior. As the self, it does not matter what state the mind is in, the self is just knowledge and present no matter whether there is *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas* present. You always know yourself as the knower of the *gunas*. You observe them playing out for the *jiva* and either let them be without resistance or you manage the *gunas* by choosing the opposite thought/feeling, as you said above. Freedom is freedom from the *jiva*.

***Nididhysana*: Managing the Mind**

Nididhysana is managing the mind's involuntary thoughts as well as our habitual thoughts and feeling patterns, which are bedrock duality. The problem with feelings is that without self-objectivity and mind-management, these patterns hijack the mind without a moment's notice, denying the mind access to the self in the form of self-knowledge. There is nothing inherently wrong with involuntary thoughts but they tend to immediately morph into actions which are liable to create unwanted *karma* in the form of obscuring thoughts and emotions.

The practice of self-knowledge involves keeping it in the background during one's daily transactions. It is difficult if you have a lot of *karma* because the mind is easily lost in dealing with it. *Karma yoga* is a secondary form of *nididhysana*. It is constantly reminding the mind that one's *jiva* and the world are both *mithya* and that the *jiva* is only a contributor of action, while *Isvara* is the controller of the results. "You have a choice over action alone; never over results. May you not think you are the author of the results of actions. May you not have inclination towards inaction." (*Bhagavad Gita* 2:47) It is a fact that you don't have control of your body, mind, family and possessions, so leave them alone and accept the world as it is. You should always think, "It is a great blessing that I am never affected by anything that happens in mind or the world."

The obstacles to mind control are (1) sleepiness (*tamas*) happening during meditation, (2) a mind hopping from one thought to another (*rajas*), (3) subconscious problems (*samskaras*) that make the mind dull and (4) attachment to *sattva* produced by meditation. Once these obstacles are overcome, the mind permanently rests in the knowledge "I am limitless, unborn, ordinary, unconcerned, ever-present blissful awareness."

There's no magic to Vedanta. It all boils down to owning your mind as your primary instrument

and repeatedly and consistently reconditioning it with thoughts that are true – in other words, that produce peace of mind. Vedanta shows us that the mind is our primary instrument for experiencing, realising and actualising ourselves in this world. Any seeming failure to realise or actualise ourselves or to have a peaceful life is only due to lack of knowledge and incorrect thoughts that dominate the mind/emotions/intellect. The simple solution is reconditioning the mind with chosen thoughts that are aligned with the truth and based on self-knowledge. This is called volitional, deliberate thinking.

When skilfully managed, the mind will produce peace of mind and allow us to express and enjoy the beauty that we are in our day-to-day life, no matter what life dishes out to us. When you feel bad, for any reason, you can convert your emotional distress and mental agitation into gratitude and peace through managing the *gunas*. This involves observing the habitual emotional thought patterns dominating your mind – and creating your negative state of mind, emotional and mental suffering – like a hawk, and literally transforming those thought patterns into new thoughts of your own choosing.

Vedanta has a term for the constant management of the mind: *mano nigraha*. It involves the consistent application of *guna*-knowledge to the mind. It may sound like hard work, and it is, at first. As you know, ingrained, habitual patterns that have been in the mind forever are not easy to change. What price a happy peaceful life?

Constant vigilance is the price of peace of mind and freedom. You can be in the world and free of it by applying the only true power every single person has, which is the power of voluntary, deliberate thinking based on self-knowledge. But to do this, you need to understand the causal body, *Ishvara* – the forces that condition the mind, the *gunas*, along with the application of *karma yoga*. There is no getting away from this. Without *karma yoga*, you are dead in the waters of *samsara*. Make sure you understand what *karma yoga* is if freedom from suffering is truly what you want.

We have a brilliant course, available free on ShiningWorld, Christian Leebby's *5 Step Formula to Mastering Mind Control*. I have taken the liberty to adjust and flesh out this simple guideline for managing the mind, below.

Seven-Step Formula for Effective Mind Management:

1. Own your mind as your primary instrument.
2. Clarify your highest values by conducting a fearless moral inventory.
3. Take responsibility for every experience you have; it comes from your thoughts, not the world.
4. Your thoughts/emotions don't come from you; they come from the three *gunas*. Make sure you understand what they are.
5. Monitor your every thought and the emotion it produces, see the *guna* behind it.
6. Discriminate the habitual emotional thought patterns that compel you to act against your highest values, creating pain and suffering.
7. Evaluate your daily actions to discover those that do not support your highest values.

8. Change those thoughts and the actions they produce by conditioning new chosen thoughts into your primary instrument. Always apply *karma yoga* to every thought, word and action.
7. Relax and stop worrying, as your primary instrument automatically serves your highest values in your day-to-day life, no matter what unfolds.

~ Love, Sundari