

# Freedom is Freedom From the Doer

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Dear Jim I've been reading your website and like it very much. While I think that I have a good idea of it will you please say a few words on *moksa*, freedom?

Jim: Because it is not known that there is only one self and that self is always free, the quest for freedom is always formulated in 'experiential' terms.

What is experiential freedom? It is the idea that objective and/or subjective circumstance need to be in harmony with one's idea of happiness before one can relax and enjoy. If I feel unhappy for want of money, for example, I may believe that freedom is only possible when I have obtained a certain amount of money. If I want freedom from loneliness I will only feel free when I have secure relationships with others. If I feel obligated to do various activities I will only feel free when I have discharged my obligations. If I want freedom from desire I might pursue a spiritual path, the Eightfold Path for example, to rid myself of the subjective obstacles to freedom. The list of possible experiential freedoms is endless.

What is the defect of experiential freedom? It is not permanent. It is gained and lost over and over again as circumstances, subjective and objective, change.

If nothing can be done to gain lasting freedom experientially, perhaps the renunciation of activities will produce freedom? Should I give up my work, relationships and duties to gain freedom? No, because freedom is limitless. It cannot be produced by either an action or a non-action. Additionally, the doer, the one who does or does not do actions, is limited and therefore any action or non-action would only produce a limited result. Limited freedom is not freedom.

If, however, it is known that freedom is the nature of the Self, one can easily work, engage in relationships and do one's duties without a loss of freedom because the self is ever present. The self cannot be set free by action because it is already free.

The understanding that one is free by nature guarantees that one will be comfortable irrespective of the circumstances one has to face in life. Freedom is the knowledge that attachment to experience is bondage and that the 'I' is always free of experience.

What is the 'I,' the doer? It is the self identified with the *vasanas*. This identification is called ignorance. Why is it ignorance? Because the Self is ever free. If there is only one self and it is ever free and non-dual, how can it become a doer?

If there is no doer how do actions take place? Because the Self illumines the body/mind entity. Action is not possible without many impersonal factors: the self, the *vasanas*, the Subtle Body, the pranas, the senses and the material world. Therefore the belief that 'I' am doing this or that is not true. How can the doer, which is just an idea in the mind, be responsible for action and its results?

Is it possible to be free and to have *vasanas*? Yes, absolutely. Why? Because there is only one self and it is unaffected by subconscious tendencies, desires and actions. But when the Self is in

a state of apparent ignorance it identifies with the desires that it believes will bring happiness. . . not knowing that happiness is the nature of the Self. Desires that one identifies with to the point that they compel action are called binding *vasanas*. As long as certain *vasanas* are binding one is not free. The idea on the path of Self inquiry is to render all the *vasanas* non-binding through karma yoga or the application of Self knowledge. What is a non-binding *vasana*? It is a desire or fear one can easily allow to burn out in the Subtle Body without producing an adverse subjective reaction or a physical response. This is not to say that one cannot act on a non-binding *vasana*, only that one is not compelled to do so. If freedom curtailed activity it would not be freedom.

Stress is the most obvious manifestation of a binding *vasana*. What is stress? It is anxiety about the fruits of one's actions. It is the feeling that certain results are necessary for one's peace of mind. Put in layman's terms it is the worry that one will not get what one wants or avoid what one doesn't want. It is identification with the result of action. . . what happens. One wants certain things, does the appropriate action. . . no blame. . . and does not release the desire for the result once the action is performed. The desire remains in the mind until the result is or is not achieved. An unachieved result may remain in the mind as disappointment, another form of stress. If a person has many desires that require results and does not release the desire with the action, he or she will be continually agitated.

The most obvious symptom of stress is a heightened sense of time. Every minute becomes important for a stressful person. The result of stress is a diminished sense of appreciation of one's self and one's experience and other unwanted consequences.

Freedom is the 'unstrung bow.' As long as there is a sense of doership the doer is tense, like a tightly strung bow. When the sense of doership is removed through understanding, the doer, the ego, relaxes. One can as easily do action in a relaxed state of mind as one can in a tense state of mind.

Freedom is freedom from the notion of doership and attachment to the results of action. To get free the doer needs to understand the *karakas*. . . the factors necessary to produce an action: the self, the *vasanas*, the subtle body, the senses, the *pranas*, and the material world. When you understand the nature of the karmic process you see that 'doing happens.' It becomes clear that there is no doer that causes action and is accountable for the results. Bondage is the belief that there is an individual self that is the author of action.

Why is it difficult to understand that one is not the doer? Because the doer, the person who wants to be free, does not realize that freedom is freedom from the doer. Once it is understood that freedom is freedom from doership the doer abandons its search for freedom or continues to seek experiential freedom because to abandon the doer would mean the loss of one's whole relative identity.