

# ***Karma* and the Doer of *Karma***

Ram (James Swartz)

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Anything that changes is *karma*. All activities are *karma*. Thinking is *karma*. Feeling is *karma*. Breathing is *karma*. It is something that either happens or is produced by an act of will. *Karma* has both seen and unseen results.

You can create with *karma*. You can destroy something that is already in existence with *karma*. You can modify something by cleansing or purifying it or you can go from one place to another by *karma*. You can undo the effects of an action with *karma*.

In reality, there is no *karma*. It only exists in the mind of individuals. It is the result of likes and dislikes, attachment to pleasing things and the desire to avoid upsetting situations. It comes from the belief that getting something or avoiding something will improve my existential lot. Because this belief is untrue, *karma* is sourced in ignorance. I am forced to act because I do not know who I am.

If enlightenment is self-knowledge, what does *karma* have to do with it? Because reality is non-dual, *karma* and the self are intimately connected. Since everyone thinks the self acts, it is necessary to investigate *karma* to see if it is actually involved in action. If it is not involved in action, you are not a doer. If you understand that you are not a doer, your life will be happy and peaceful.

## **The Factors Involved in Action**

The basis of action is the body-mind/sense complex because the instruments of action and perception are located in it. Every perception requires a physical location. The body is the place where subtle body phenomena – desire, aversion, happiness, sorrow and knowledge – express. Desire manifests as efforts to satisfy it. Aversion manifests as actions intended to avoid things. The perceptive instruments are located in the body and deliver information that produces pleasure and pain. Because the body is only matter in various permutations and combinations, the science of self-inquiry refers to it as “the five elements.”

The second requirement for action is a conscious being. The conscious being initiates action and takes responsibility for it. It is called the ego, or the doer. It does actions so that it can enjoy the results. When it receives results, which it does constantly because life is nothing but the results of past actions, it is called an enjoyer, even if the results are unwanted.

The third factor is the means of action: the five perceptive organs, the five active organs, the mind that desires the result and the intellect that decides to perform the action. Together these are called the subtle body, or the inner instrument. The ten organs correspond to the ten instruments. The instruments are in the physical body and the organs are in the subtle body.

The fourth factor is *prana*, or energy. Without energy none of these activities is possible. There are five energy systems: respiration, evacuation, circulation, digestion and the power that reverses the physiological functions.

The fifth factor is the macrocosmic subtle and gross bodies, the whole of existence. It is the field in which individual subtle and gross bodies operate. It is made of gross and subtle matter and the myriad forces that control the behavior of the subtle bodies and the elements. These forces, or laws, are called *dharmas*. Everything in the field behaves logically and impersonally. This fact makes the physical, psychological and metaphysical sciences possible. On the level of the senses, eyes do what eyes do, ears do what ears do and the nose does what noses do. It is the same for everyone.

If all these factors are required to produce *karma*, how can the self, non-dual awareness, be an actor? If it could make itself incomplete, it might complete itself by action, but it is a partless whole. If it was limited in space, like an individual body, it could go to someplace it was not. But like space it pervades every atom of the universe. If it was impure, it could purify itself, but is not made of parts. When an individual says, "I am doing, thinking, feeling, remembering, dreaming, etc.," he or she is deluded. Why? Because the doer, the ego, cannot be the doer, as it is only one of the five factors required for an action. For the same reason none of the other factors qualify as a doer. If none of these five is the doer, who is the doer? There is no doer. Duality, which makes action possible, is only a belief that has no basis in reality.

If this logic escapes you and you still insist that you are a doer, consider this: an action is not conscious and therefore has no faculty of choice. It takes a conscious agent to perform an action. So action depends on a doer, but the doer does not depend on action. He or she is there prior to any action. If he or she is there prior to action, he or she is free of action.

To be free of action means that with reference to any situation you can act or you need not act. It is useful to know this because it frees the doer of the belief that no choice is involved in action. Many feel they have no choice concerning their actions. They believe they have to do this or that. They imagine dire consequences if they fail to fulfill their desires through action. Such beliefs cause suffering and prevent spiritual growth.