

See Action in Inaction and Inaction in Action

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Ulrike: Dear Ramji, thank you for your last *satsang*. I love the passage about the *karmic* traces, your statement that *karmic* traces do not have to go away, because I can go away from the *karmic* traces.

Ramji: I give you an A++ from the Sri Ramji School of Enlightenment. This is to me the whole point of the argument about purifying the *vasanas*.

Ulrike: I like this notion: I see a path with deep ruts that make it hard to walk or drive and also to leave the path, but I just step out of the ruts and onto the open field next to the path. You say this is accomplished by a clear understanding of the difference between the self as actionless awareness and the self as *karma*, action. Can you explain this?

Ramji: I love your “deep tracks, open field” image. It is beautiful. I will try to explain the difference between the self as action and the self as actionless awareness.

When you know that you are the actionless self you are free of the need to act. But being free of the need to act is different from saying that you cannot act. A person who is compelled to act because of the pressure of desire is not free. He or she will just keep helplessly going down the same ruts in the path, all the while longing for freedom.

But when you see that you are the self you can continue going down the same ruts and feel free at the same time because you know that you can step out of the ruts at any time and walk in the open field. Any course of action is equal to any other course of action because you know that happiness does not in any way depend on the activities you do. You know that freedom – happiness – is the very nature of the self.

From the highest standpoint, however, there are not two selves, one actionless and one active. There is only one self which is neither active nor inactive, but which can seem to be active or inactive depending on the point of view from which it is considered. If the self is seen as non-dual there will be no action in it because action implies duality. But if we assume the point of view of an individual caught in duality, the self will seem to be a doer, just like the moon will seem to race across the sky on a partially cloudy, windy night.

The *Gita* has the last word on the subject when it says, “The one who sees action in inaction and inaction in action is indeed wise.” This means that you can’t claim to be enlightened by simply giving up activities. Doing nothing is also an action. At the same time a *jnani* knows that when action is taking place things seem to be happening but actually nothing is happening. There is an old saying that neatly expresses this truth: the more things change the more they stay the same. This is so because in a non-dual reality action is an apparent reality caused by viewing reality through an apparently changing mind. When your vision is non-dual you cannot find action anywhere. This vision is called *ajatawada*, non-creatonism, in Vedanta.

Ulrike: And in the next paragraph you say: "In a non-dual reality there is only the actionless self, so the notion that you can be affected by *karmic* traces is itself illegitimate." So what about the self in action then?

Ramji: Well, the self is not affected by *karma*, whether it acts or does not act.

Or perhaps you might consider this: when you know you are the self there is no question of action at all. You understand that what seems to be action is just an illusion produced by a confluence of factors, like a mirage. The teachings need to include the idea of the self in action because they are aimed at people who do not know who they are, not at people who do. The self as action explains to those who do not see that there is no creation, no action nor any actors here, the relationship between the actionless self and the self as the ever-changing world, because it seems contradictory that the self which doesn't change can somehow cause change. People who are fed up with activities seek the self because they are looking for relief from the doer and *karma*. They need to know that things are being accomplished all the time without the help of individual doers. Then they can leave the world to itself and relax. When you relax, your mind naturally turns inward.

Ulrike: Ramji is only joking when he says he misses Ulrike desperately, but Ulrike is missing Ramji desperately. But instead of her suffering, she enjoyed Ramji's *satsang* as usual and is, as greedy as ever, hoping for more.

~ Love, Ulrike