

Svadharna

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2016-01-21

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2508>

Tim: So could the macrocosmic causal body be compelling a person toward a certain lifestyle that is in conflict with the individual causal body? Let's say, for instance, that in my heart I always wanted to be a musician but my *vasanas* were extremely *tamasic* and I hated practicing, so end up working a dead-end job and hating my life. Society says stick with the day job and maintain security, and my "heart" is screaming quit the job and focus on music. Now, of course if I could develop a *sattvic* lifestyle I could practice on the weekends and nights and slowly transition into guitar-playing. But the influence of the *tamasic* people I have surrounded myself with is too much to overcome and I never can extricate myself from my dead-end lifestyle, and so I continue on like a robot until I commit suicide or eat and drink myself to death, contract diabetes and die of a heart attack because I am so obese.

James: Good example. If your lifestyle is too *tamasic* or *rajasic*, you won't (1) be sensitive to the importance of following your *svadharna* in the first place and (2) be able to actualize it if you are. The scripture is *Isvara*, and *Isvara* says that a lifestyle that does not conform with your *svadharna* – your job/duty/small-self identity – and your *Svadharna* – your identity as awareness – need to change.

Tim: Does scripture say that this hypothetical person is doing his duty by working the job or ignoring his duty by working the job?

James: It's not as straightforward as that. On the one hand, if you need money to survive you have to do some kind of job. If you do it in the *karma yoga* spirit, *sattva* will develop and you develop the dispassion required to live on the edge and do what you feel "in your heart." I had a very dispassionate nature from an early age, so doing what I wanted was always more important than my physical comfort.

Tim: I heard you say once that we could never achieve *moksa* unless we fulfill the *karma* we are sent by *Isvara*.

James: The caveat here is the degree of dispassion. If you have the temperament of a renunciant, you can say, "Fuck *karma*."

After all, *karma* is only a concept. It is real as long only as you think it is real. If you know it is *mithya* you can easily walk away from it and let *Isvara* take up the slack. There is always someone else to do what needs to be done. If not, you have to do whatever is in front of you in the *karma yoga* spirit until the dispassion comes and your lifestyle becomes more *sattvic*. But don't pretend that you are some kind of renunciant because you are too lazy to clean up your *karmic* mess. If you do, the *karma* will cling to you like nothing else.

Tim: If I say I know I am the self but still feel stuck, and my desires are just being repressed rather than resolved by the knowledge “I am self,” then what? I suspect you will say, “Well, then continue chasing objects until it’s out of your system.”

James: That’s right. If you have dispassion in the first place, the objects will not be a problem. You can’t have your cake and eat it at the same time. If you think objects are so wonderful, then indulge. You will be proved wrong eventually. Smart people act from knowledge, not desire. It may not be as exciting, but it leads to happiness.

Tim: But then there is enough awareness to infer from past experience that even when the object is obtained it comes with its share of pain too, so there is an aversion to wholeheartedly chasing objects. But now depression sets in and petty binding *vasanas* become the opiate of choice: food, TV, sex, sleeping too much.

James: Got it in one! *Samsara* is a whirlpool, a catch-22.

Tim: Anyway, I’m just ranting now, but I think you know the point I am speaking of because you describe it quite well in your book. Becoming self-aware has ruined the illusion that objects can complete me, but I still have the *vasanas* and it seems like I’m engaging in them as a way of escaping the idea that they cannot complete me. All the while I feel like I just want to get away from the life I have constructed. All the people that I have built relationships of expectation with and all the layers of beautiful identity now are just a burden. Everything just feels heavy, gaining weight and sleeping too much. All the endeavors have lost their motivation. And even the *vasanas* are reasons to feel disgusted. The minuscule enjoyment is not worth the loss of *sattvic* awareness, but the ego is desperately looking for a final handhold, a way to maintain the chase.

James: If you weren’t a man, I’d sympathize, but that’s the way it is. Suck it up and do what needs to be done. Be clever, however, and slowly cut back on the *tamasic* habits. Or as my *guru* said, sin intelligently. Don’t feel sorry for yourself. It’s not your fault that you were born into a *tamasic* environment. Life’s a bitch. Vedanta’s a bitch. But what’s the alternative? *Isvara* woke you up. You can’t go back to sleep. You know too much.