

# Taking Care of the *Jiva*

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**Steve:** Hi, Ted.

I was just listening to James on qualifications, in particular *svadharma*. When he was talking negatively about fixing everyone else, I thought about my involvement with AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] and recently with NA [Narcotics Anonymous] at our local hospital. I have started an NA meeting recently and an AA meeting a few years ago. I attend both of them once a week for a total of about three or four hours. It feels like something that is worthwhile, and the time spent doesn't seem excessive. What are your thoughts?

**Ted:** Hi, Steve.

Keep attending the meetings. There is nothing wrong with attending to the *jiva's* needs and dealing with the *jiva's* issues. The point James is trying to make is that ultimately self-inquiry isn't about becoming a perfect *jiva*. The point is to realize that you – i.e. awareness – are not the apparent person you seem to be. Once you are able to discriminate between who you really are and the role you are playing in the apparent reality, then you can play the role to the hilt, but you won't suffer because of what you might feel are the apparent person's shortcomings or the losses or disappointments or injustices he undergoes. As long as there is *prarabdha karma* fueling the vehicle, you will be associated with the body-mind-sense complex. There is nothing wrong with or bad about that. The problems arise when you – i.e. awareness – identify with the body-mind-sense complex and claim its experiences as your own. The result assuming this limited identity is inevitable suffering. If you understand that you are merely playing a role or are navigating a vehicle you have been assigned, then you simply do your best with what you've been given. The point is not to deny or suppress life, but to negate it while at the same time engaging in it using a moderate approach inspired by common sense.

As for trying to fix other people, the point James is making is that it is easy to distract yourself from self-inquiry by trying to help others. In one regard, a person may use the excuse of helping others as a means of consciously or subconsciously, the latter being more often the case, avoiding one's own issues. In another regard, even if the help is legitimate, focusing too much attention on helping others leaves little time for one's own inquiry. It is best to help when called upon to do so, but to refrain from trying to play the role of savior, which is just another identity through which to reinforce the ego's pseudo-identity.

All the best, my friend. I'm off to my mother's house for Easter brunch.

~ Ted