

# The Burden of Doership

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**John:** Dear Sundari, all I can really say is thank you. Thank you for your brilliance, thank you for your light, thank you for teaching.

**Sundari:** You are most welcome, John, glad to be of service. It is Vedanta that is brilliant, not me.

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**John:** I am looking at your email and the question you posed and do not know the answer. I have a knee-jerk response, but for me the question is so subtle that about all I guess I can “do” is expose myself to the knowledge, keep rereading the email, be open to the knowledge and have faith the knowledge will work.

**Sundari:** Good thinking, keep up the good work. You are on the right track.

**John:** Something else has come up in the self-inquiry process that I’d like to mention, if I may. My inclination is that for me this is one of my most deep-seated *vasanas*. I have always had the thought “What should I do?” It’s always been there every second – a constant *mantra*, if you will. With these new skills I’ve been given, it has come up as worthy of being questioned. My first thought was, “This is silly, doesn’t everyone have that thought?”

**Sundari:** Yes, most people are totally identified with the doer-thought. That is why for the mind to assimilate self-knowledge qualifications have to be present or the knowledge “I am limitless, unchanging, ever present awareness” will not stick in the mind.

**John:** But with the backing of scripture the questioning didn’t seem so silly at all. Here I have Vedanta being taught to me through you, James and ShiningWorld that there IS NO DOER – the doer is an illusion – *Isvara* is the doer, and I’ve got an incessant, almost *mantra*-like repetitive thought, by its nature saying I must be a doer because the thought is always asking “me”: “What should I do?”

**Sundari:** The doer is always doing; as long as the *jiva* is alive, doing never stops, with or without self-knowledge. The question “What should I do?” is based in ignorance of one’s true nature, because the “I” is non-dual awareness; it has no organs of action and no mind. The right question to ask is: “Who is doing?” Once you dis-identify with the doer, you do what brings peace of mind, with the *karma yoga* attitude. *Karma yoga* as a practice is specifically for the mind identified with the doer in order to negate the doer. *Karma yoga* is not about doing or not doing, but surrendering the results of action because one has the knowledge that the field of existence (*Isvara*) is in control, and not the *jiva*. This does not mean that appropriate action for a given result is not taken.

As the doer you are just one factor in many that are the constituents of action. To quote Vishnudeva, our ShiningWorld writer, “The point of *karma yoga* is not to destroy the doer or, in some cases, even its sense of doership. *Karma yoga* is meant to clear the mind of enough likes and dislikes until it becomes composed enough to do sustained inquiry. Only inquiry removes the problem of doership because it shows that you, the self, cannot be the ego (doer) that is known to you. When that is clear, the doer can appear in you, even with a trace of doership, but you do not identify with it.”

If you understand what *karma yoga* really is you will know it always works no matter what result you get. This is because life is not about getting what you want. It is about the one who does not want. If control is what you are after, you do not understand this.

As far as the doer goes, there are appropriate actions you can take that are pretty likely (but not guaranteed) to give you what you want. We do have relative free will in that we can make choices to succeed. If this were not possible, it would not be possible to achieve anything in the apparent reality. As stated above, the point about *karma yoga* is not about action or inaction; it is about renouncing the idea of doership. Even though you may want a particular result and do not get it, one accepts that this is for the best because *Ishvara* is always taking care of the total, not just our personal needs. If we act taking the *karma yoga* attitude halfheartedly, but really, we know that deep down the *vasanas* are making the choices, well, then there is no escape from ignorance and there will be no peace of mind.

**John:** It also didn't seem so silly when the idea that in challenging this thought I would be facing annihilation or death. Then it became not so silly at all.

**Sundari:** Who would be facing annihilation or death? As awareness you are unborn and undying, ever-present, limitless and unchanging. How could a thought appearing in the mind – when both the mind and the thought are objects known to you – possibly annihilate you, the knower of the mind and the thought, silly or not? It is only the ego that fears annihilation.

**John:** I guess my question would be, if I may ask, “Is that thought, in your opinion, a *vasana*?”

**Sundari:** Yes, you bet it is! The doer-thought is the most tenacious *vasana* there is.

**John:** That one thought (or more, my responding to it) I sense may have been a source of much untold misery in my life.

**Sundari:** The burden of doership is the cause of all existential suffering.

**John:** I trust by the tone and energy and clarity of your email that you are on the other side of your recent spate of illness (at least I hope so).

Much love to you and James and ShiningWorld. Thanks, Sundari.

**Sundari:** Thanks to you too, John. Actually, I wrote my last reply to you when I felt so ill that discarding the body seemed like a really good idea. The clarity comes from *Isvara*. Thankfully, I am finally on the mend now, although the recovery process had been somewhat slow.

~ Much love to you, Sundari