

Visesa Dharma, Svadharma and Viveka

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Ash: I apologise if my message on Facebook messenger was not very clear.

What I mean is that I have been studying Vedanta (ShiningWorld foundation and beginner's courses) and some Direct Path teachings (Rupert Spira), much of which has been wonderful and very clear. Ramji is such a great teacher and *The Essence of Enlightenment* was a watershed in providing clarity where previous teachings (Buddhism, Siddha Yoga and other Neo-Vedanta) had caused confusion.

I'm at the stage where I need to communicate with someone who is qualified to teach, who can help resolve some doubts.

I have written to Sundari once on the topic of suffering, and she was very helpful. But I suspect she is probably already really busy running ShiningWorld.

I work with people who are suffering, as I'm a clinical psychologist. I specialise in helping people who are transgender (i.e. lots of mental health problems, suicidality, stigma and social disadvantage). As I help them to transition medically, there is legal risk with my work. The legal risk puts many psychologists off doing this work. But I view it as *karma yoga* and detach from the outcomes. I focus on doing a good job, according to international best practice, and leave the results to *Isvara*.

Daniel: Great email, all clear. ☺

We're all available to help resolve doubts, so please feel free to write to me, Sundari or any of the other endorsed teachers anytime.

Ash: I am currently reading the *Bhagavad Gita* (translated by Eknath Easwaran). It is usual for me to want to go to the source of information to see if what I am being taught is correct. It's an amazing read, but it is also clear in describing the need for a teacher to help resolve doubts.

I have a doubt, for example, about what appears to be a contradiction in the text. I recognise that this is likely to be a result of my own ignorance. At 5.20, the text seems to be saying that qualified people "...are not elated by good fortune nor depressed by bad." This seems to be consistent with the message about equanimity of mind.

Daniel: Correct. A mind that's identified in awareness as awareness is ever steady. Awareness knows no opposite and is always full. Nothing can be added or subtracted from you, awareness.

In other words, though a qualified person still experiences *mithya* (the limited world of opposites), he/she does not get fooled by this apparent projection (*Maya*) and continues to rest the mind in reality (*satya*), in that which does not change.

Another nice explanation to add to is this: “Sameness of mind towards success and failure with respect to action is another definition of *yoga*. When a result is looked upon as a success, attachment arises, and when it is looked upon as failure, aversion arises. In fact there is no such thing as success and failure. Every result is in accordance with the laws of action. Laws are not made by anybody; they are made by the *dharma* field, or *Isvara*, so they can never go wrong. Every result is a right result. The more you appreciate the laws, the more you are in harmony with the things around and you can find your place in the scheme of things. Action never really fails; it only produces results. A given expectation may be said to have failed, but the one with the expectation has not failed. That I have failed or that the action has failed is the wrong conclusion – only the expectation is the problem. Nobody fails. It is only a matter of wrong judgment because we are not omniscient and we cannot have the knowledge of all the factors that shape the results of the actions. Only *Isvara* has all knowledge of these factors.” ~ Sundari

Ash: But then in 6.32 the text reads “When a person responds to the joys and sorrows of others as if they were his own, he has attained the highest state of spiritual union.”

So, are we to maintain a detached equanimity when responding to the joys and sorrows of others or are we to participate in the joys and sorrows of others? It reminds me of the passage in the Bible that says, “Weep with those who are weeping...”

Daniel: This statement describes a person in whom the vision of non-duality is firm. It means that the *jnani* sees no difference between his/her *jiva* than and the one sitting across the room. In other words, you see yourself in everything as everything.

“Responds” in this context does not necessary mean to act out, but rather to simply and silently acknowledge non-difference when engaging in the world of apparent split.

Ash: This issue goes to the core of my work. I am often working with *jivas* who are completely fused with their thoughts and feelings, and who experience life as a big drama. They’re not looking for someone who sits with them in a space of equanimity. They’re looking for an ally – someone who can help validate their feelings of injustice and sadness, which are often justified in a worldly sense.

Anyway, that is an example of the sort of issue I would like to discuss with someone who knows a lot more than myself about the teachings.

So I am wondering if you are available to help? My point about donations is that I am very happy to make small donations to a teacher, not by way of payment, but by way of sustaining the opportunity to teach myself and others.

I hope that is clear. Thanks for your consideration.

~ Warm regards, Ash

Daniel: Clinical psychology is your *svadharma* – at least for now.

Living your duty motivated by quality of work – whilst offering it in a *karma yoga* spirit – is spot on,

Ash. It's also your duty to comfort your patients in a way that serves them best.

“Let not the wise disrupt the minds of the ignorant who are attached their story.” ~ *Bhagavad Gita*

In other words, don't bother about bringing the teachings of Vedanta into your consultations, it's of no service to an unqualified mind and will only result in agitation. Continue to play the role of compassionate ally whilst applying non-dual thinking to your own mind.

You can adapt to the *samsari* (e.g. patient) whilst knowing very well that it's just awareness in an apparent form acting out a certain need of the Total.

There is also no contradiction in offering “dualistic compassion” whilst concurrently maintaining an equanimous mind. You are free to seemingly respond to dramas whilst simultaneously understanding your freedom from the story: freedom from both the patient's story and your *jiva's* apparent response.

To add something about *karma yoga*: it's not really about the action itself, but rather the attitude we take towards the action. In other words, it's not about doing “good actions” but simply applying the knowledge of *Isvara* before, during and after each action. Whether it be brushing one's teeth or helping transgender transitions, it's all *karma yoga* when the appropriate attitude is applied.

I hope this helps a little.

~ All my love, Dear Self

Ash: Thank you, Dear Self.

My understanding of your points is that the answer lies in *viveka*. I see now that I have projected my own issue onto the passage, but it is actually quite clear. Very helpful answer. Thank you, Daniel.

And thank you also for Sundari's commentary. It is reassuring and instructive.

If I wish to make a donation to your treatment, etc. can you please supply the account again? I did this once before, not too long ago, but cannot find the actual account details any longer. How is your recovery going?

~ Warm regards, Ash

PS: Actually, replace the word “*viveka*” in my email with “*visesa dharma*,” although I guess both apply. ☺

Daniel: You're most welcome, Ash. And please feel free to reach out anytime.

Spot on – both *viveka* and *visesa dharma* apply.

Visesa dharma is how you interpret universal laws and apply them to your life in the apparent reality: how you relate to people and the environment you live in. It varies for everyone depending on their *svadharma*. So for example, your *visesa dharma* will accommodate your current role as a clinical psychologist, something which you're clearly already living up to.

Viveka, on the other hand, is the 101 practice for attaining *moksa*, and like all of the other qualifications, should be applied on a momentary basis. Discriminating yourself (awareness) from the objects that appear to/in you is the key to liberation.

Remember, an object includes the *jiva* who's following *visesa dharma*. I like to call the *jiva* the "action figure." Objectively watch your action figure called Ash perform her duty whilst understanding your total freedom from her.

Recovery is slow and challenging. It's a full-time job and has put me horizontal much of the time. But I'm most grateful for all the support and blessings that *Isvara* continues to send me. Gratitude.

Ash: Thanks, Daniel. Love your work!

I understand what you say about "attitude" being the defining quality of *karma yoga*. As far as work is concerned, I think I am just doing something that needs to be done.

It belongs to *Isvara*.

I'm so glad that you are teaching, Dear Self.

~ Love, Ash

Daniel: All my love, dear Ash. And thank you for the kind donation. May *Isvara* kiss your *jiva* all over.

Ash: Dear Danielji, you are welcome. I had hoped to schedule a small fortnightly donation to support the teaching but cannot see a way of doing that automatically. Could you please let me know if there is one?

I'm going to send a separate email with a question that Action Figure Ash keeps ruminating over.

☺

~ Love, Ash