

The Soul Is the Self

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

2014-11-04

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/1898>

Mirella: Hi, Sundari. Thanks to both you and Ram for Trout Lake. I continue to feel gratitude for these teachings, mainly because I had prayed for “the truth” for many years. The doubting part always questioned whether anyone or anything was listening. Now I know: *Isvara* is conscious and it’s *Isvara* who wanted “me” to know... And of course I am the truth.☺ Ram’s clarification of *dharma* and *svadharma* relieved the anxiety I was feeling about following my inner urges to stop working as a lawyer and find work that leaves my mind calm. I could have spent years in therapy to reach this point!

Sundari: Lovely to hear from you, Mirella, and so glad that you are making it to India. It is grace that brings us to Vedanta. You must have been ready to know the truth – no amount of therapy would have brought you to it.

Mirella: I have at last finished *How to Attain Enlightenment* and admit that I was rationing it because I didn’t want it to end! However, *Isvara* has requested that I must pass it on to my mother, so I hastened through the pages.

Sundari: I am glad that you finished the book and passed it to your mother, but it is not a book to hasten through. Unless the mind is ready, it will not comprehend it and if the qualifications are there, one needs to sign on to the logic and read it slowly without skipping, preferably a few times.

Mirella: One semantic question remains. In the middle of page 171, Ram refers to “the soul’s desire.” Does this simply mean the *vasanas*? What does Vedanta consider a “soul”?

Sundari: No, the soul is not the *vasanas*. The soul is the *jivatman* – awareness manifesting as a subtle body. The subtle body is eternal because awareness is eternal, and although it appears as if there are many subtle bodies, there is really only one appearing as the many. When *maya* appears, awareness plus the *gunas* appears in the “role” of Creator (*Isvara*) wielding *maya*. *Maya* is a power that exists in awareness or it could not be unlimited and the creation comes into manifestation through the *gunas*. Awareness then identifies with the subtle body, “becoming” the self under the spell of ignorance, believing that awareness is something to gain.

The “soul’s desire” is for the self to know itself as the self, *jivatman*. The *vasanas* disturb the subtle body but do not create it.

From the Christian point of view, the soul is taken to be “the part of man that is God,” God being taken to be the ultimate reality, as Christianity does not understand that God (*Isvara*) and the creation are reflected awareness: that awareness – you – are prior to “God” and the creation.

Mirella: As long as they're in line with *dharma*, should one follow these desires if they lead to a calm mind, whilst continuing to inquire before manifesting the impulse?

Sundari: Following *dharma* means taking the appropriate action at the appropriate time with the *karma yoga* attitude.

Krishna in the *Gita* says, "I am the desire that is not opposed to *dharma*." *Karma yoga* is performing one's duty, cultivating the right attitude toward life, thus one is conforming to the pattern and harmony of creation and one becomes alive to the beauty of the cosmic order. When *sattya* (the true nature of the mind) predominates, the mind becomes clear and one is able to see the natural order of creation. Then every action taken will be with the right attitude.

The right attitude is not a path. It is a commitment. *Karma yoga* is not a path. It is a life committed to performing action as *yoga* and it takes skill to perform action with the right attitude, which is doing what is to be done whether you like it or not. Thus likes and dislikes – how I feel about the situation – do not come into play. Your likes and dislikes often prompt you to perform an action which is not conducive to peace of mind so a *karma yogi* refrains from performing it because it is not proper for them. So performing actions in harmony with the natural order (*dharmic* actions) and avoiding actions that disturb the order (*adharmic* actions) is *karma yoga*.

Karma yoga is keeping one's attention on the motivation behind one's actions and adjusting one's attitude when it is found to be *vasana*-producing. When *rajas* is strong, the mind cannot observe itself. It is caught up in the future, the thought that things need to be different, so the mind acts to correct the situation, usually in negative ways. It does not act to correct itself. When *tamas* predominates, the mind is too dull to discriminate; it is prone to denial and avoidance. *Rajas* and *tamas* always work together. Where you find projection (*rajas*) you will find denial (*tamas*).

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. So 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.

Karma yoga, when practiced properly, is really *dharma yoga* because every action you take is dedicated to *Isvara*; it is a consecration. It is understood that peace of mind only comes with the realisation that you are not in control of the *dharma* field, yet in taking the appropriate steps to act according to *dharma* and then relinquishing the results, peace of mind is produced.

Karma yoga means fully dedicating your every thought, word and action – before they are performed, on a moment-to-moment basis – to the whole, or to *Isvara*, with an attitude of gratitude, knowing that the results are not up to you. Even though as a *jiva* one cannot not take action (even no action is an action), *karma yoga* is an attitude towards action.

Mirella: Many thanks.

Sundari: You are most welcome, Mirella, it was really lovely to meet you. Such a beautiful, pure mind you have.

~ Much love to you, Sundari