

# Stop Wanting Moksa

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Cathy:** In *mithya* there are three states: the waking state, the dream state and the deep sleep state. Can we say that these three states stand at the same level of apparent reality? Meaning that in the apparent reality they are all three as “real” as the others?

**James:** Yes. They are all equally unreal. The teaching negates all three and shows that the only invariable factor in all states is you, existence/consciousness.

**Cathy:** If that is true, does that mean that:

1. Although the unenlightened *jiva* experiences the waking state as “real” and the dream state as “unreal,” actually the ideas and action of the waking *jiva*, and the dreams of the dreaming *jiva* are at the same level of apparent reality, they both hold the same level of ignorance; they have exactly the same differentiation from *satya*.

**James:** Yes.

**Cathy:** 2. It makes no difference to *Isvara* whether or what a *jiva* does, thinks or dreams.

**James:** Correct. *Isvara* is a principle, like gravity. Gravity doesn’t care if an object is small or huge.

**Cathy:** 3. Doing *karma yoga* will clean up ignorance and unfold the qualifications for the assimilation of Vedanta; these **sattvic** qualities should not only have an impact on the waking state, but also on the dream state and on the quality of deep sleep (that last one is still a source of pain for my *jiva*!).

**James:** *Karma yoga* won’t clean up ignorance. It is a kind of necessary ignorance or, you might say, a useful kind of relative knowledge. Only knowledge cleans ignorance. *Karma yoga* is therapy. It cleans up emotional stuff so that *jnana yoga* can remove the ignorance.

**Cathy:** It seems that the more *sattvic* my mind becomes the more disturbing dreams arise. Why?

**James:** The more *sattvic* the mind becomes the more disturbing dreams arise because *sattva* purifies the filter between the conscious and the unconscious mind so there is very little repression. If you process the dreams in light of Vedanta, their content will become more *sattvic* over time. If the mind is *sattvic* and there is still a

lot of *rajas*, sleep will be a source of pain.

**Cathy:** When you say that *sattva* purifies the filter between conscious and unconscious, do you mean that it makes the filter “slowly disappear”? The more *sattvic* the mind becomes, the more there is understanding about the equal unreality of both the waking state and the dream state, so that this filter has no reason to be anymore. It seems to be a process of understanding from duality to non-duality, wherein different barriers gradually drop, until existence is seen as only one *maya*-entity, that as a whole, is seen as unreal.

**James:** What you say about *sattva* with reference to the waking and dream states is true, but it is not what I meant. I meant that there is a natural mechanism that filters out unnecessary causal body content in the waking state. There are a lot of negative things – shadow content – that can erupt from the causal body and disturb the mind, so the *tamasic* aspect of *Isvara* 2 represses these negative impulses so that the mind can respond appropriately in the present in the waking state. If the filter is *tamasic* it doesn't necessarily do its job so well, so the hidden stuff erupts into the dream like a volcano, whereas in the waking state it will manifest in subtle ways. The hidden stuff is psychological content that the *jiva* is not proud of, content that contradicts its good opinion of itself and that it doesn't want to acknowledge and definitely doesn't want others to see. Psychosis is closely related to this filter. If it is damaged in some way, all manner of negative feelings explode into the subtle body willy-nilly, destabilizing it and causing serious problems in the person's relationship with the world and with themselves.

**Cathy:** So *karma yoga* will first clean up the emotional stuff of the conscious/waking state, and gradually also clean up the unconscious/dream-state stuff? The cleansing process being dependent on the amount of *rajas* still in play?

Of course all this only makes sense from a *karma yoga* and *jiva* point of view because from the perspective of awareness, this is all unreal.

**James:** The cleansing process is affected by *tamas* and *sattva* too, not just *rajas*. There is no difference between the dream and waking state from the point of view of the *vasanas*. Everything is the same except that the physical senses are suppressed in the dream state. If you burn out a *vasana* in the waking state it doesn't go back into the causal body, and therefore it won't appear in the dream. But unless you do *karma yoga* the *vasanas* will just keep coming back over and over and disturb both the dream and the waking states. This is why you have to keep doing *karma yoga* if you want to get rid of bad habits.

**Cathy:** The Cathy part of me has a lot of *rajas*, yet it is only since self-inquiry became such an important part of my life that my inability to sleep has moved from merely painful to a real pathology. The burning desire for understanding is so intense that I can't find the mind's “off” button and get to sleep. Even as a child I could stay awake hours at night, days in a row, trying to understand, reflect and analyze existential matters... I felt like I should not lose time to sleep because there was so much to understand and to be joyful about!

**James:** It was the same with me for the same reason when I was young. I stayed up all night reading books under the covers with a flashlight so my parents couldn't see that I wasn't sleeping. Life was so exciting I didn't want to miss it. But I eventually developed *tamasic* habits, and that ensured that I could sleep. I can sleep anywhere at any time now.

**Cathy:** For years I practised all kinds of techniques of *hatha yoga*, healthy food and meditation... and guess what? They also these made me feel so happy, joyful and energised... read: sleepless! And now that Vedanta came in to answer all the existential questions and to turn the individual love into a Self-love, it creates not only a tremendous motivation to go on and on, but also an indescribable joy, a joy too big to be contained in this tiny body... Combining this with some *rajas* energy, it really creates a kind of "Big Bang." ☺

Two years ago, because of a stroke due to sleeplessness, I was put on medication. In the beginning this felt like a relief, I finally discovered what it was to experience deep sleep for a longer period of time (six hours or longer). After some time, there was some guilt about taking these chemicals. This guilt is now fading, since it helps me to sleep well, work well and study Vedanta in a more peaceful way. If some day my inquiry process brings me to the point of letting go completely those medicines, it will happen; if not, then not! I remain alert for the potential side effects and for not increasing the doses.

**James:** Probably, as long as you keep a good diet and take liver-cleansing herbs, you can get away with the drugs without too many side effects. The other option is to give up the desire for *moksa*. It is a desire after all, and if you understand the value of Vedanta and you can do inquiry leisurely, you can "get there" just as fast. To people who had this problem my *guru* used to say, "Hasten slowly." You are the self with or without your *gunas*, so what difference does it make if you do slowly or fast? So you can change your idea of *moksa* from an event, something you are going to attain by hard work, and see yourself as already free. We call it taking a stand in awareness. If you take a stand in awareness you don't have to do anything special. You know that desire is unreal, so you don't act on it unnecessarily. You know that you have nothing to gain by action.

It seems your *jiva* is obsessive. Obsession can be a good quality if it is motivated by noble values – which yours is – but nothing, including *moksa*, is worth losing sleep over. Of course if this kind of *rajas* has been with you since childhood, it is going to take some time to overcome it. You will have to do some serious inquiry into it to discover what negative ideas are supporting it. *Rajas* can function like *tamas* – in some ways they are identical twins. An incessant stream of thoughts can hide the truth as well as a dark cloud.

**Cathy:** Before the start-up of the medication, I was either in the waking state (reflection, prayer, devotion, love and action) or sleeping very little. I rarely had dreams to remember, and if I had, they were rarely nightmares but rather positive and loving dreams. And since the start-up of the medication, I have had very few dreams.

But in the last few weeks it all changed. I do have dreams again, which I remember.

And all the dreams and my day-thoughts come down to one topic: I feel extremely lonely, intolerant and somehow excluded when I'm surrounded by my close family and relatives, I feel extremely in "oneness" when I'm doing my favourite activities (teaching, coaching, studying Vedanta, *yoga*, sport...) or when I travel alone.

I experienced how unconscious dreams and conscious thoughts always come back with the same kind of message: it's time to change your lifestyle (or mindset) now! And there is nothing to feel guilty about... it just scares a little bit...

Actually, it was the constant similarity between the thoughts and the dreams in the last few weeks that brought me to the questioning of the equal unreality of both.

**James:** I understand the situation now. It is a common problem for spiritual types. The spiritual solution, of course, is to see your family as the self and/or realize that the feeling when you are around them is *mithya*, unreal. I suppose this puts the doer into a quandary: Should I move out and live alone or should I maintain the householder lifestyle?

**Cathy:** Where I get stuck: when a *jiva* acts, thinks or dreams something, does it add equally to the *vasana* load of the subtle body?

**James:** It depends on the nature of the thought and the degree of attachment to it. You have many thoughts every day that are not important to you. They don't create *vasanas*. Only thoughts that you deliberately think and thoughts with which you consciously identify create *vasanas*.

**Cathy:** Cathy's obsession with sleep means that there is more work to be done to break my identification with it.

**James:** You can look at the problem through the love filter. Can you learn to love that lonely, intolerant, little person within? Can you love the people whose presence brings out this unhappy feeling? You need to be careful not to focus on what is wrong with Cathy but what is right with her. Believing feelings of inadequacy is not wise. Yes, they are there but when that feeling comes up, ask yourself, "Is it true?" You will discover that it isn't.

**Cathy:** If a *jiva* leads a seemingly *sattvic karma-yoga* life, but in its dreams commits or experiences crimes, violence or cheating, how will that impact the *vasanas*?

**James:** Those events are *vasanas* expressing in the dream state. They are the result of repression, unacknowledged and unconverted *rajas* and *tamas*. The dreams will continue until the issues they bring to your attention are addressed.

**Cathy:** And what would be the difference between a *jiva* who commits violence in a waking state, but dreams peacefully?

**James:** Expressing violence in the waking state works it out temporarily, perhaps, so there is no need for *Isvara* to call the *jiva*'s attention to it in the dream. But usually violent people also have some violent dreams. People are always a mixture of the *gunas*, so to the degree that a *guna* predominates, to that degree the *guna* will manifest in the dream state.

**Cathy:** It seems to me that the second case is a bigger ignorance problem than the first one, and has therefore a heavier *vasana* load. It seems that *rajas* and *tamas* are influencing the impact on the *vasana* load too.

**James:** Yes, from the spiritual point of view. But people with heavy *rajas/tamas* usually don't know they are ignorant, according to our definition.

**Cathy:** That's true, and that makes it sometimes difficult to associate with these people. That's where compassion and love comes in, that's where right discrimination comes in... That's why *Isvara* *brings* me food for reflection now, through thoughts and dreams... 😊

So could we say that from a *jiva* and *karma yoga* point of view a non-violent action ranks higher than a non-violent thought or non-violent dream? But from the perspective of awareness all actions, thoughts or dreams are equally unreal.

**James:** If you value peace of mind, then non-violent waking and dream experiences are more valuable than violent ones. If you don't value peace of mind, then no.

**Cathy:** Could you fine-tune my thought process so that I get back on track?

**James:** Do you feel guilty because you have violent dreams? If you do, take the dreams in the *karma yoga* spirit. They are *Isvara* calling attention to something that you need to investigate and resolve.

**Cathy:** I believe that my whole life is seen in the *karma yoga* spirit since I met you. I just feel hugely grateful for the process that is going on since a very long time now. I feel grateful for all the intermediate steps on the way to understanding, but my *sadhana* only became sharp, clear and conscious since my first seminar with you. I now see existence through the glasses you gave me! Thanks to *Isvara*, thanks to the self for being, thanks to all the *jivas* for their "doing," thanks to the *karmic* laws.