

# More Yoga and Vedanta Debate

Ram (James Swartz)

2014-06-24

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/38>

**Ramesh:** Dear James, your statement that the teachings of Patanjali depend on achieving states of mind, and is experiential, is a misconstruing of his teachings. In the very first verse, Patanjali has made it clear that the self is pure consciousness adventitiously identified with the mental states of right knowledge, wrong knowledge, misconception, sleep and memory. Patanjali has made it clear that both bondage and liberation pertain only to the unreal conjunction of the pure consciousness and the material intellect.

The pure consciousness by virtue of its being aware of the material intellect passes on its illumination to the intellect, that reflection being transmitted back to the pure consciousness, as it were, one confounding these false experiences of the reflected consciousness to be that of the pure consciousness itself. Yoga, according to Patanjali, is no more than the discriminatory awareness being aware of the distinction between the psychological observer undergoing bondage and liberation and the pure consciousness bereft of any experience, the unconscious melange of the two alone constituting bondage, which is not for the pure consciousness, but for the spurious intellect referred to as the "I" thought by Bhagavan Ramana. Advaita is by no means superior to yoga. Vidyanaraya Swami, a down-to-the-boot *advaitin*, in his tour de force *Jivanmuktiviveka* has conceded the need for "*asamprajna samadhi*" as the sine qua non for intuiting one's true self, lest it be a ship bereft of a ballast.

**James:** Dear Ramesh, thank you for the clarification. However, my point is that if you view *moksa* as yoga, i.e. *chitta vritti nirodha*, it is not *moksa* because the self is free and can be known as one's self whether or not the *chitta vrittis* exist. Yoga is good for removing the *vrittis*, and it can successfully be argued that it is in fact superior to jnana insofar as it is highly unlikely that a yogi will discriminate the intellect from the self if the *tamasic* and *rajasic vrittis* have not been attenuated by yoga. It may very well be that Patanjali characterizes *moksa* as *viveka*, confusing the subtle body (intellect) with the self, but if this is so why does he not present the Vedantic *prakriyas* that reveal the unexamined logic of the inquirer's experience to make this possible? True his *sutras* are on yoga but he could at least mention Vedanta if he understood its value as a means of knowledge for *moksa*. Irrespective of the view that *moksa* is *viveka*, I have yet to meet a Western person who is familiar with Patanjali who does not have the idea that *vritti/vasana kyshaya* is suitable for *moksa*. Vidyanaraya Swami says - and I agree - yoga may be a "leading error" insofar as a yogi working on his or her *samskaras* and achieving various *samadhis* may after some time convert the desire to experience *samadhi* into an inquiry that will lead to *viveka*, discrimination. But it is the exception rather than the rule, because yogis tend to take up yoga with the belief that *moksa* is *samadhi*, not discrimination.

It is best if you look at this issue in the context of the totality of my writings on yoga and Vedanta. When I say that Vedanta is superior to yoga, it is only in the context of the knowledge/experience debate about the nature of *moksa*, not because I have a bone to pick with yoga. Most seekers want to relieve their suffering with some kind of beatific experience and are attracted to yoga for that reason. If they are

occasionally successful they tend to continue to put forth effort to gain subtler and subtler *samadhis*. They tend to end up frustrated because no *jiva* can control experience – that's *Isvara's* job. And they tend to have big egos because they can more or less achieve high states of mind with willpower.

A lot of the argument between yoga and Vedanta is centered on the meaning of the word *samadhi*. Does it refer to a state of mind that is gained through yoga practice or is it a word that refers to the self? Is the self *sama* (equal) *dhi* (*buddhi*), meaning it values everything equally because everything is only consciousness?

I would be happy if you were to send me the verses where Patanjali says that *moksa* is discrimination, with English translations.

~ *Om* and *prem*, James