

# Speech *Dharma*

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Terry:** Hi, James. During the seminar I noticed that you frequently praised Carl but didn't praise others who have served ShiningWorld for many years. This doesn't sound right, and I wonder if you use proper reasoning when you praise him. He is passive-aggressive and uses non-dual statements, claiming not to be a *jiva*. Knowing this I would be doubly careful with your praise. This goes in hand with your endorsement of Mark because of his excellent technical understanding of *jnana yoga*. I would be doubly careful endorsing anybody who has his political views. Furthermore, he did other things that should raise your suspicions regarding his values and thinking patterns. These examples should give you enough to chew on concerning your priorities. That's just some critical thinking on my part.

**James:** The letter is actually about you, not me, Terry. It is best if you have firm knowledge before you offer an opinion and it is good to think about whether the person for whom it is intended will actually benefit from it. Honestly, it is a violation of speech *dharma*. You might also profitably ask why you need to feel morally superior to others.

**Terry:** I didn't mean to be morally superior. What is speech *dharma* compared to the values of truthfulness and honesty? When am I allowed to speak up? I am confused by what you wrote. I must say I feel a little bit sad by your rather short and abrupt letter. I expected a more well-balanced letter. I even feel put down by your response. You gave me the feeling that I am not good enough, judgmental and an *adharmic*, arrogant person. I must also add that the way you respond to me changes my perception of the Vedanta lineage. I probably had inappropriate expectations.

**James:** Do you know what empathy is, Terry? It means that you are sensitive to the feelings of others and therefore you treat them with love. You say you feel bad, but you don't seem to care about my feelings at all. I have treated you with great love and respect, yet you disrespect me by suggesting that I have bad judgment, that I make people feel uneasy and who knows what other sins you imagine. You should feel bad, because friends don't behave like that.

At the beginning of every seminar I make an important talk about how to listen. I mention that people can't help judging what they hear in light of what they think and how difficult it is to overcome self-centered judgments. I also am very clear about what kind of questions are actually permitted in Vedanta, i.e. questions concerning the teachings. I explicitly state that I am not interested in people's problems. But you're not relating your issues to the teachings at all. By criticizing me, you deflect attention from your own mind. I explain the Byron Katie work at most of my seminars. Perhaps you think it doesn't apply to you.

You should know the difference between teaching questions and irrelevant personal questions. If you have a suspicion, you can't expect me to resolve them, because you will be suspicious of any answer I give. Go to one of the other *swamis* in our lineage and you will appreciate how much personal care I give you. I'm one of the

top people in our lineage. Swami P sent his *pranams* through a mutual friend last week. *Swami TV* asked me to teach one of his *satsangs* recently. Of the hundreds of dedicated inquirers I am in touch with, you are the only one who consistently thinks it is appropriate to question my judgment. Once or twice, okay, but this has gone too far. When people ask why I give you so much attention, I always speak highly of you. One's thinking needs to be constructive and focused on one's own shortcomings, not the perceived shortcomings of others. If someone questioned your judgment, you wouldn't like it either. As the saying goes, why worry about a splinter in someone else's eye when there is a big stick in your own?

I have good reasons for doing what I do. It is none of your business who I choose to praise and why. It's none of your business who I associate with. I mostly accept everyone that comes to me because *Isvara* has some reason for us to meet, irrespective of their *karma* or character. Even bad people rightly resolved are to be loved and respected. I'm a successful, highly-respected person because I am empathetic and sympathetic. My whole life is dedicated to helping others. You didn't even bother to find out the backstory about my relationship with the people you criticized before you wrote that letter. From now on I don't want to hear reports from others concerning your complaints about me. People tell me everything. You should hold yourself to a higher standard.

Ask yourself how you feel when you write that kind of letter. It is not written out of fulness. It was written out of smallness and insecurity. When you left my home Saturday night, you were friendly and respectful. I thought we had a nice time. Were you just putting on a face? It would have been an ideal time to get your doubts resolved in person. They say familiarity breeds contempt, and I am starting to wonder if I have been a little too friendly toward you. Everything is fine as far as I'm concerned, but this is a warning. Don't second-guess me anymore. You can use your time much more productively. If you think I am a problem, you can find other friends.

**Terry:** The Sufis advise us to speak only after our words have managed to pass through three gates. At the first gate, we ask ourselves, "Are these words true?" If so, we let them pass on; if not, back they go. At the second gate, we ask, "Are they necessary?" At the last gate, we ask "Are they kind?" I failed at part three.

**James:** Yes. They were not intended to make me feel good. They were intended to hurt me. You also failed at parts one and two. They were neither necessary nor true. They were just negative judgments about people, myself particularly.

**Terry:** I think that the cause behind my anger is a sense of anxiety that you and others might think badly of me. As a consequence, there is the fear of losing your trust, losing the *sangha* and losing my spiritual orientation.

**James:** Well, it's rather strange that you think questioning my judgment is going to endear me to you. However, this letter shows why my faith in your spirituality is justified. Inquiry into one's psychology is an absolutely necessary qualification for Vedanta *sadhana*. The only way you can protect yourself from hurt is to trust *Isvara* and do your *sadhana* properly. One needs a *guru* but the relationship to the *guru* should be friendly and professional. The *guru* is not an emotional crutch.

Transferring one's emotional dependency to *Isvara* is the proper way. *Tvameva mata cha pita tvameva. Tvameva banduscha cha sakaa tvameva. Tvameva vidya dravinam tvameva. Tvameva sarvam mama deva deva.* "You are my mother, father, friends and relatives. You are the giver of Self-knowledge. You are my light of lights." This is called *bhakti*. It heals you and purifies your relationship with people. I'm a successful, respected person because I treat people with love. It is not because I am enlightened or because I teach Vedanta. I knew your negative thoughts about me for years, but I treated you with love anyway. I bent over backward to encourage your spirituality. Your thoughts did not disturb my *shanti*. Everything has to be resolved between you and yourself.

**Terry:** In your e-*satsang* you replaced my name, which is fine. But the *satsang* contains another sentence by which I can be identified by the ShiningWorld *sangha*. I would prefer that you don't upload our *satsang*. Is that possible?

**James:** You seemed a little surprised when I said that your letter was a violation of speech *dharma*. Perhaps now you have a better idea of what I meant. As you know, you can't separate *karma* from *dharma*. When you break a *dharma*, *Isvara* gives you bad *karma*. It's a simple thing. So are you saying that you aren't proud of "squeaking up"? If you speak the truth you are happy to stand by your words, but when you insult yourself with unkind speech, you want to avoid the consequences? It's pretty hard to miss the irony: asking the person you insulted to protect you from the results of your actions. Actually, many people in the *sangha* already know that there is a nasty side to your mind. Everybody has a nasty side. But cultivated people keep unsubstantiated opinions to themselves. If somebody asks if you wrote that letter, why not just admit it? Why try to hide it? You can just say, "I'm a fool. I regret it. I apologized to James and I made a vow to own my projections. James always treated me with respect. I feel very bad about it. It's amazing that he didn't write me off. If somebody did that to me, I wouldn't speak to them again."

A pure mind has no secrets. See the fear. It comes when you break *dharma*. It doesn't mean that you are a bad person, it means that you made a mistake. Let's see what you have to say now.

**Terry:** I don't see how I got bad *karma* from sending you the email, James.

**James:** The bad *karma* is the continued worry that you might be exposed as a judgmental person.

**Terry:** I am sorry that I thought I could involve myself in your business and relationships. That was a clear misbehavior. My email was not based on love and kindness, another misbehavior. But I don't see it as bad *karma*. I see it as a learning curve, at your expense, unfortunately. Bad *karma* to me would have been to say nothing and repress my anger and fear that I was projecting. That to me would have been bad *karma*, as I would not have had the possibility to learn from it. Do you agree?

**James:** If you mean converting bad *karma* (meaning fear of exposure) to good

*karma* (taking it as *prasad*), yes, I agree. That is the correct way to see it. I accept that you're at the beginning of the learning curve as far as self-control is concerned. The goal is to think through every course of action that involves relationships with others to see what probable effects it might have. *Karma yogis* are planners. They think ahead. Obviously I don't know what the result will be in terms of our relationship if I don't remove the sentence, but since I see you as a friend asking a small favor, I'm going to remove it. When your mind is pure you won't judge others and you will like yourself a lot. It's hard to think highly of one's self when you hurt others. Remember, most statements about others backed by negative feelings are generally statements about one's own self. You will do this again, hopefully not to me. You can't help it - that is what *vasanas* mean. They compel action without asking the *jiva*. Just knowing that should make the *jiva* humble and increase one's love of *Isvara*.