

Does an Enlightened Person Get Alzheimer's?

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Ted: Greetings, James.

I know, no small talk so I do have a question that has arisen lately from reading your book *How to Attain Enlightenment* that hasn't had an obvious answer pop up.

The teaching says that life is a zero-sum game yet in the *karma yoga* teaching you say that with the manipulation of the *gunas* a predominately *sattvic* mind will gain success in any field, worldly or spiritual and that a *sattvic* mind is a guarantor of success and that one who does this will attain a basically happy life. To me that suggests a win situation.

The only explanation I can see is that for the enlightened there is no *karma yoga* to be done to gain anything and that the "manipulation of the *gunas*" is only for the *jiva*. Will you clarify for me, please?

James: Yes. The *yoga* of the three energies is for the *jiva*/mind. The Self doesn't have any *gunas*, i.e. energy, or qualities. Energy/qualities are supplied by *Maya*. Vedanta is the way out of the zero-sum nature of the *samsaric* mind. *Karma yoga* removes *rajas* and *tamas* and increases *sattva*. So that is zero-sum: one thing is lost and another is gained. The gain of a *sattvic* mind is necessary to assimilate the teaching "I am the Self." It is also zero-sum: knowledge is gained when ignorance is lost.

Assimilated Self-knowledge is a win-win because the Self is "*tri-gunatita*," beyond the mind, i.e. *guna*-free. So, yes, there is no *karma yoga* for the Self, because the Self is not a doer. An enlightened person is the Self. There is no reason to manipulate the *gunas*, although an enlightened person is free to manipulate them. If he or she wasn't free to do so, he or she wouldn't be free.

Ted: One other concern: I can read and reread your books and keep finding jewels. I know I've read and heard it before but the joy or the "aha" is like I'm seeing it again for the first time. This is because I recognize that my memory is really failing. Perhaps I have dementia or Alzheimer's. I can read something and immediately not be able to recall it even though the gist is understood.

Vedanta is teaching me not to identify with the memory or any other aspect of the subtle body, but it then gives rise to frustration. I know, this provides the opportunity not to identify with the frustration, which is all fine and dandy but it might land this *jiva* in the Alzheimer's ward because my children don't appreciate my discrimination and dispassion. I guess it is just another opportunity to for the *jiva* to develop a non-binding *vasana*?

James: A non-binding memory *vasana* perhaps. The good news is that "I am the Self" is not remembered knowledge. People with Alzheimer's remember their names. If they can remember their names they can remember the Self because any

name given to anybody is the name of the Self because there is only one Self. The Self remembers "I am the Self" when its ignorance is cleared because every experience produces a memory.

The assimilation of "I am the Self" is hard and fast knowledge that happens when the doer/*jiva* is clearly objectified; a *samsari* thinks the *jiva* is the Self and the Self is an object, insofar as he or she has heard of it. So it doesn't matter if the *jiva*/doer remembers its name - or anything else, for that matter. *Isvara* remembers and forgets. In other words, memory is out of the individual's hands even when the Self is deluded and thinks it is a doer. You don't think, "I will remember," before you remember. Nor do you think, "I will forget," before you forget. Remembering and forgetting happen.

If the loss of memory gives rise to frustration, you are not doing your *karma yoga*. Dementia is not under an individual's control. It happens by the grace, some say will, of *Isvara*. An enlightened person will not be affected by dementia, because he or she is the awareness of the dementia. Therefore he or she is okay with any state of mind. With or without memory you still exist, you are still conscious and your nature is still bliss. Others can remember and forget for you. If they don't want to, they can put you in a nursing home. It won't be a problem, because you will still be you in the nursing home. And if you forget that your children are your children, that's fine too because they were never your children in the first place. They are always God's children. So God will look after them anyway.