

A Mandate from God

Ram (James Swartz)

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Gary: Dear James, your advice means everything to me. I am lost without *Isvara*.

Today in my morning meditation I read in Swami Dayananda's *Home Study Course*, Chapter 5/10, that *karma yoga* is *dharma yoga* and what is called *bhakti yoga* is actually *karma yoga*, as you wrote in *The Yoga of Love* also. To offer my actions to *Isvara* means to understand that *dharma* is *Isvara*; all my actions depend on the field, the field/existence depends on *dharma* and *dharma* and the field is *Isvara*.

James: Yes, the field in which we live is a conscious moral matrix, owing to free will. There is *dharma* for sentient beings – although not animals and plants – because they are blessed or cursed as the case may be, with choice. So all actions involve moral considerations.

Gary: He goes on saying that one either takes *dharma* as a mandate (master-servant relationship) or as *Isvara*. That's how one becomes a devotee – the *dharma* or the mandate is non-separate from *Isvara*. But isn't the danger of a mandate that one can follow it without understanding what one is doing and sooner or later that leads to resistance because who wants to be pushed around without understanding the reasons?

James: It depends on your knowledge of *Isvara*. If you understand that the force that put you here is a benign, compassionate power that knows best, you gladly accept what happens. If you think life is a threatening place and that you are solely responsible for your safety, then you are going to be full of anxiety because you are playing God, usurping Its function. *Isvara* knows everything, *jiva* knows very little with reference to the totality of life. The point, however, is that nobody understands *Isvara*'s thinking, because *Isvara* isn't a big *jiva* in the sky with likes and dislikes. It creates the world and the populates it with conscious beings and leaves action in the hands of conscious beings. It has one more function: it delivers the results of individual's actions, which *jiva* doesn't control, but which *jiva* influences by the type of action and the intention behind it. So if you have resistance, your trust in *Isvara* needs work. I just do what I'm told. If *Isvara* says jump, I ask "How high?" My life is extraordinary, fantastic actually, solely by the grace of *Isvara*. People whose love of *Isvara* is imperfect don't necessarily suffer much but their lives – such as they are – are more or less boring and conventional. Yes, they have a leg up on *samsaris* who have no love of *Isvara* and who live lives of quiet desperation, but they more or less just bumble along worrying about stuff they needn't worry about.

Gary: I am still mostly in the listening and reminding phase, at the same time the contemplating phase cannot and need not be avoided, the urge of putting two and two together and see how and where the knowledge applies in my life, this *jiva*'s daily experience. The assimilation also happens slowly and I guess because completion of the first two phases is responsible for the momentum of the assimilation; is that more or less correct?

James: Yes. *Karma yoga* and *jnana yoga* are not mutually exclusive practices. You are always acting and you are always thinking. If you act with *dharma* in mind and have full faith in *Isvara* and you discriminate properly in every moment, you are doing as well as you can do. Remember, *karma yogis* are planners. They are interested in reducing their *karmic* load so they are always thinking about how to simplify their lives so that their attention stays on *Isvara*, the goal being to think of nothing but *Isvara*, in which case they rapidly burn down the house that ignorance built. If they still want worldly stuff or are too lazy to clean up their *karma*, then they progress slowly.

~ Much love, James