

Karma Yoga and Prarabdha Karma

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Laurence: Hi, Sundari. I posted the following at the ShiningWorld *Facebook* page a few days ago and was directed to email it to one of the email addresses at the site, so I hope you will be able to help me a little.

Here is the post:

"I have a general health question, so if any one can help it would be much appreciated. For four years I have suffered from chronic pain in the solar plexus area; it fluctuates between a dull, tight pain like a drum to red, raw pain that makes me keel over in agony. It effects my digestion; my stomach seems to struggle to eat foods that I ate in the past. I also have heartburn often. On the subtle-body level I seem to leak nervous energy; my energy levels are easily affected by small events and I am constantly burnt out. I also have anxiety and some panic-type attacks. The reason I post this on this page is because it started after I had a big epiphany that blew my life as I knew it out of the water. I became aware of the self, and the life of vice I had been living up to that point changed completely. Since then I have stumbled upon Vedanta and have been studying it avidly for two years now. Conventional medicine (here in the UK) has had little or no effect; antidepressants, antacid and other such things only serve to put things out of balance. It seems that before my understanding of Vedanta can go any deeper this body-mind needs to achieve some further level of balance. Any recommendations would be much appreciated. With thanks, I hope that you will be able to point me in some direction; it feels as if I have been stuck in this situation for a long time and am stagnating.

"I want to thank you and James so much for all you put in to ShiningWorld. Although I have not contacted you before, I have been studying James' books and listening to his *satsangs* for over two years now. Like any sincere searcher having found Vedanta, the relief of having finally found a teaching that resonates totally and I trust is breathtaking and I am welling up just thinking about it. It is the most beautiful thing in the world and to have found it at such a young age I feel totally blessed. So thank you again."

Sundari: Hello, Laurence. I have great sympathy for your situation and understand that this must be difficult to live with. The body is made up of the five elements and is governed by the three basic energies in creation that make up the field of experience called the *gunas*, which means "ropes" because they bind the mind to experience. These *gunas* are the very fabric of the Total Mind, or *Isvara*, and they are what creates and governs your particular *vasana* load, meaning your conditioning, or likes and dislikes. The body seems to feel, think and act because the light of awareness is shining on it but the body is inert; it only seems to be alive.

I am not sure what your *sadhana* consists of but if you have not read James' book *How to Attain Enlightenment* I strongly advise you to do so. Read the e-*satsang* pages at the ShiningWorld website as every question you could think of has been asked and replied to there. Also watch as many of the DVDs as you possibly can.

If the mind is qualified subjecting it with great dedication and commitment to self-inquiry into the scripture (Vedanta), self-knowledge, will remove the ignorance, which is what causes identification with the subtle body, or Laurence, to obscure your true nature as awareness and is the root cause of suffering on all levels. This should produce a gradual release from the pressure of the *vasanas*, which is what is meant by rendering the binding *vasanas* non-binding and negating the notion of doership. In order to achieve this one needs a very good understanding of *Isvara* and a dedicated practice of *karma yoga*. The importance of this cannot be overstated. I have attached articles outlining these vital teachings.

If the mind is not sufficiently purified, meaning if what is running Laurence's psychology, his stuff, has not been fully understood in the light of self-knowledge, this will prevent you from being free of Laurence, which is what *moksa* is all about. It sounds to me like this could be the problem in your case.

Everyone's conditioning is governed by *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*. *Sattva*, the energy of revelation (clarity, peace), is the true nature of the mind before *rajas* and *tamas* arise. This makes *rajas* and *tamas* the real problem makers in terms of what constitutes ignorance. The articles I have attached go into detail about the *gunas*, which are all very predictable; they operate the same way in everyone as they have very predictable patterns of thinking, feeling and acting. The *gunas* are running the show, so to speak, until we understand what they are and how they govern the creation of the *vasanas*.

The symptoms that you are describing are very consistent with *rajas* and *tamas*.

We call these two *gunas* "the terrible twins" because they always work together; *rajas* is the projecting energy, responsible for extroversion: fear, anxiety dissatisfaction, desire, to name a few. *Tamas* is the concealing energy, responsible for denial: blame, shame, depression, dullness, guilt, etc. You can see why they work together. As soon as one projects onto anything or anyone (*rajas*) *tamas* is there to deny or obscure this from detection.

It could be that you are still judging yourself for actions taken in the past; these are *vasanas* which have formed very deep *samskaras*. *Samskaras* are a conglomeration of *vasanas* which form *pratibandikas*, meaning deeply ingrained obstructions. What is very important in order for you to make progress is to forgive the *jiva*, or person called Laurence, for any past acts with the understanding that if he had known better he would have acted differently.

Vedanta does not say that freedom means one has to perfect the person; it just means you have to understand the person in the light of self-knowledge.

This often means that adjustments must be made to one's lifestyle. In order to experience peace of mind, *sattva*, one has to follow *dharma* at all times in ALL areas of life. *Dharma* means doing what brings peace of mind which, of course, requires non-injury to yourself and all so-called others because, being a non-dual reality, there is only you, awareness. Laurence did not know better, and he was not the real doer - his *vasanas*, given to him by *Isvara* in the form of his conditioning - created his life situation.

As stated, if you have not done so you will have to muck out the sewer of the subconscious in the light of self-knowledge. There is no way around this if you want to make progress on the path to freedom from Laurence. Traditional therapy can help to identify the unconscious patterns and is helpful but as it does not have an

understanding of *Isvara*, so it will not help you to dis-identify with the person. Only Vedanta offers self-knowledge in the form of a complete, independent and valid teaching; however, for self-knowledge to take place the mind must first be purified. It is certainly grace that has brought you to Vedanta.

Make a fearless moral inventory of all your values as they are what underpin the creation of the *vasanas*.

What is always at play for everyone is *prarabdha karma*, which is to say the momentum from past actions; there is no way to fight this. These are the effects of ignorance and they have to play out. We also all have to accept that we have a certain personality and predisposition as the person and that the person does have an apparent reality, even though they are not real. "Real" being defined as "that which is always present and never changes." Only awareness fits that description. There will be things at work in the life of the person that we cannot change but have to accommodate.

So even though *moksa* is really freedom *from* the person and not *for* them, it is also freedom for the person. Although the person may know that their true nature is awareness, they do not stop being the person. *Moksa* is for the *jiva*, not for awareness as awareness has always been and will always be free. The whole point of self-actualisation is that self-realisation transfers into the life of the individual/*jiva*, or person. The self-actualised person is the *jivanmukta* or the self no longer under the spell of ignorance, apparently appearing as a *jiva* in the apparent reality but free of both the person and the world.

Your anxiety and physical pain is a product of *rajas*, and possibly the unseen psychological problem it arises from is a result of *tamas*. Although you can most likely reduce most of the negative symptoms through understanding, some of them will still have to play out. What is most important is to practice *karma yoga*.

Karma yoga is surrendering with an attitude of gratitude every thought, word and action on a moment-to-moment basis to the Total, knowing that you are not in control of the results and taking the results that do come as a gift. There is no other way to negate the notion of doership.

There has to be congruence between how you are living as a person and self-knowledge. It does not work to impose *sattya* on *mithya*, the real on the apparently real; in other words, the self onto Laurence. Unless the groundwork has been done, which is cleaning up your act, the knowledge will not stick in the mind no matter how many epiphanies you have, how much you meditate, experience *sattvic* states, study Vedanta or objectify Laurence. Please refer to the many *e-satsangs* at the ShiningWorld website pertaining to *karma yoga* as it has been very well explained there as well as in James' book and videos.

Another factor often at play for many people is free-floating anxiety, which is more common than most people realise. Remember that FEAR is an acronym for "False Evidence Appearing Real." It is the very nature of *rajas*. It is part of the fabric of the macrocosmic mind (causal body/*Isvara*/Total Mind), and the *jiva* is an extension of it, so these unnamed and gripping fears emerge from the depths of the causal body like monsters arising from the deep. They seem real but they are not.

We call this free-floating anxiety because it is born of *rajas* and *tamas*, the main components of ignorance. It seems like they belong to us but they don't. The *gunas* belong to *Isvara*, and have nothing to do with you as awareness, or with Laurence,

for that matter. Laurence has a story and has suffered, as have all *jivas*, because in *samsara* there is no escape from this as long as one is identified with the apparent person. Fear stalks the apparent person every step of the way and the pitfalls of *rajas* and *tamas* are waiting to engulf you.

This fear is the big one, the king of all *vasanas*. We call it primordial beginningless ignorance (*tamas*), or *maya*. A more user-friendly term we use is free-floating anxiety. What it means is that because self-knowledge is not firm there is a non-specific, unnamed existential fear, dread. It is sometimes called the fear of being and becoming. The Christians call it original sin. It is always present yet hidden in the causal body and it is looking for objects to attach to (*rajas*). It is related to others; it is the ultimate experience of duality or otherness. Not everyone experiences it intensely like you seem to do, although many do. In *samsaris* it works out in petty, mundane and indirect ways all day long, year after year. You will notice that it is called “beginningless” ignorance. The implied meaning of this phrase is that it is not endless. As you have experienced, it disappears and then reappeared, so you know that it is not real.

Unfortunately, there is no quick, easy fix so you are going to have to somehow embrace it. By that I mean that it will be helpful to use it to motivate yourself to practice knowledge, which means the practice of (1) *jnana yoga* (self-inquiry), (2) *karma yoga* (you are not the doer and not in charge of the results of your actions), (3) *triguna vibhava yoga* (applying the teaching on the *gunas*: the true nature of and origin of your conditioning).

Please feel free to write to me any time if you have any further questions. I hope this helps!

~ *Namaste*, Sundari