

# Unconscious Resentment and Karma Yoga

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Lee:** Dear Ramji, it's been almost ten months since I came across the teachings of Vedanta. I am very thankful to you for this. Since then I've been listening almost every day to your audio seminars, reading your book and all available articles and *satsangs*. I'm currently reading the third part of Swami Dayananda's *Gita Home Study Course*.

This having taken almost all of my free time and even part of my busy time, I can say that the desire for *moksa* is very strong. Otherwise, I have a quite normal life with a lovely, intelligent wife, smart and healthy children, a more or less good job and most of the material needs reasonably satisfied. My personal history is that of a normal, functioning, middle class family with typical materialistic values.

Since I no longer expect worldly stuff to provide me with happiness, and yet I haven't realized the self, sometimes I feel as being in a kind of empty, meaningless space, which soon feels depressing. This is when I turn on the witness and just watch the show; I was about to write "enjoy" the show but it is not true; it does help me, however, to avoid unconsciously singing the "I'm depressed" song. It's a pity that the witness seems to always be in standby mode and must be activated by an act of free will or when grace appears to remind us of the free available service.

**James:** Yes, that witness is just the ego trying to cope by detaching. There is another witness that is always on, the non-experiencing, non-doing, non-attached witness – aka awareness, i.e. the real you.

**Lee:** Following your recommendation I have been trying to develop the *karma yoga* attitude but, I have to say, without much success. I mean it lasts for maybe a few hours, luckily, a day but no more. After a few days I remember again. So I have to face it, *karma yoga* does not seem to come naturally for me. I have tried to find out more about it and the following came up: *karma yoga* is like praying, in the sense that it is an action without visible results, therefore you can only pray if you have a value for it. If you don't, it is like trying to quit smoking without valuing living a smoking-free life. Then I tell myself: "Hey, Lee, how can you not value this when Krishna says this is a great value and Ramji tells you it will neutralize the likes and dislikes?" So this is where I am, noticing that after a few times *karma yoga* just becomes an empty, mechanical ritual. I think that the value could develop out of a feeling of gratitude for life but, to be honest, I find this difficult too. When somebody pleases me and I can see her eyes or listen to his voice I feel gratitude and a need to reciprocate in some way arises. However, thanking God, or the field, for this life – no doubt, beautiful to do – is something I can only repeat without much conviction and feeling. Is that the result of conditioning, lack of intelligence? Or is it just that I'm not the religious type? I have no idea. Then can I still go for *moksa*, applying the knowledge which will remove self-ignorance? Shall I just focus my attention in applying discrimination? If I were to continue trying *karma yoga*, how can I do it without having the feeling I am reinforcing doership?

**James:** This is a tricky issue, Lee. I think you have the wrong idea of *karma yoga*. *Karma yoga* burns up your *karma* by exhausting the *vasanas* that create it, making the mind peaceful. I think it is a lifestyle problem. Perhaps you just have so much on your plate, so many duties connected with a middle class lifestyle, that you can't really reduce your *karmic* load. If this is true, you are in a difficult place because you can't just walk away from your *karma* and you can't get enough peace to discriminate. It sounds like there is perhaps some kind of subconscious resentment to your situation, that your desire for freedom and the sense of obligation seem to be in conflict. It is clear you think you are a doer.

The question is, why do you care about anything in life, your wife and kids, etc? It must be because you think life is valuable. You love to live and you want to live a long time, maybe forever. Why did you get married and have children? You think life is valuable. If this is true, why? Because life is beautiful and you are beautiful. You do everything for yourself because you love yourself, and this love and the person called Lee were given to you. You did not bring yourself here nor are you actually keeping the whole thing going by your small efforts. At best you are contributing but you are not the author of your actions or of your incarnation. So *karma yoga* means that you appreciate the gift of life, that you are happy with what you have been given and that appreciation is reflected in your attitude. If you are not grateful it means that you think you are responsible and that the responsibility is a burden. This is called doership. If you think about it clearly you will see, for example, that even your breath is not dependent on you. You are being allowed to breathe by someone or something that created you and looks after you breath by breath, thought by thought. That is an amazing thing. *Karma yoga* is just a conscious acknowledgement of this fact. Think about it and see if the understanding doesn't change your attitude. Gratitude is the only appropriate attitude.

But if you can't feel it, keep up the discrimination and try to reduce your *vasana* load any way you can.

~ Much love, James