



Shining World

Newsletter May 2013

This Newsletter has been somewhat delayed due to our schedule these last 3 months. It has been a very busy time for James and I, travelling teaching and finding a base in Spain. Ramji is almost finished with his European teaching schedule, which has been a particularly busy one covering seven seminars in 5 weeks. Priya, our lovely friend from Israel travelled with him for a month doing her sadhana and she has been a great help to him. As always the seminars have been very successful, with Ramji giving of his best. I don't know how he does it; our Ramji is a force to be reckoned with! I joined James for the Berlin seminar and have just returned to Spain, where in March we found the base for Shiningworld, and our new home. It is a beautiful 120 year old country villa, called a Finca, situated in the Axarquia mountain range in Spain, just outside of a town called Colmenar. It is only 30 minutes from Malaga, near a hamlet called Solano. The name Colmenar means the place of bees; and it certainly is that. The countryside at the moment is a riot of colours with all the wild flowers and fruits trees flowering.

Above: *Sunrise over the valley below house in Spain*



Ramji and Sundari in Tiruvannamalai



Ramji teaching in Europe



Ramji and Priya in Germany



Our front door vista

was 'the one' and we looked no further. Dave our sponsor came to spend some time in Spain with me to see the house and he loves it too. However, buying has proved to be somewhat more difficult! The Spanish land laws are positively feudal and so complicated it is enough to make one weep. We are making progress though and hope that the deal will be sealed as they say, in a few weeks time.

It consists of two houses, high up a mountain road, overlooking a spectacular valley, very private and secluded, with only the sound of the birds and the bees to break the silence. I have seldom seen such a beautiful place. It has a feeling of being in a heavenly realm, *Brahma loka* is what James calls it. We are planning some modifications and renovations to make it more suitable for permanent occupation, and so that we can house friends and people who come to spend time with us. We have posted several pictures in the gallery on the website for those of you who wish to see our new home.



Ramji teaching in Europe

which is about 30 minutes from Malaga. It is a beautiful Yoga studio and Retreat Centre, run by Deirdra and Bill who are committed to offering their venue in the spirit with which they live their lives, which is with openness and love. Deirdra is a qualified yoga instructress who will be available for yoga classes on request. Deirdra and Bill do their very best to keep things

Finding the right house was the easy part, *Isvara* took us straight to it. It was the very first one that James and I put on our list last year when we started researching houses on the internet ourselves. We arranged to rent it to start off with when we finally got to Spain to begin our search, as we thought it would take a while and we needed a base to conduct our search from. We had a very long list of houses to look at that our dear friend Stan had compiled after months of loving labour, all to no avail. This place found us; we simply trusted *Isvara* and knew straight away it

We are planning to run seminars in Spain on a regular basis and have already located the perfect venue to host them, twenty minutes from our home. We have 3 dates booked, the first being for later this year. We have decided not to teach in India next year and will be holding a two week seminar in Spain instead.

~ Venue In Spain

The venue for our seminars in Spain is called Casa Mayor, situated near Comares



View of the valley below our home, Spain

as affordable as possible and offer very reasonable rates for board and lodging. They are also prepared to give a reduced rate to people who could help with the cleaning and catering. For more details and booking information, see teaching schedule below or check events on shiningworld website.

~ Feedback On The Teaching Endorsements

We have had tremendous success with our teaching endorsements, all of them bar one finding their way and proving to be highly qualified. They are all dedicated to Vedanta and doing an excellent job of replying to e-satsangs. Thank you to all of you who have given us such positive feedback. We now have Team Shiningworld growing stronger by the day! It is a great pleasure and an honour to have these four wonderful people give of their time and love in service to self knowledge and to Shiningworld. James and I are very happy with how this is working out and how beneficial their inclusion as Vedanta teachers is for Shiningworld.

We have opened a section on the website titled: "New Endorsees", Click on the button and all their names appear on the side. Each endorsee has their own page with their bios, a picture and all their e-satsangs. You can also go to the Contact's page and click on their name and it will take you there. Ramji's and my replies are posted as per usual, in the New Satsangs section on the website.

James and I will be hosting Ted, Isaiah and Paul at the Trout Lake seminar in August. We have offered to pay the costs for the three of them so that they can join us for Trout Lake as we

are planning a mini-teaching seminar for our endorsees prior to the main seminar. Tan is doing his best to make it as well, and our editor Edwin will also join us for this. If anyone would like to make a contribution to help cover the cost of the airfares for Ted, Isaiah and Paul it would be much appreciated.

~ Another Brilliant Writer for Shiningworld

We would like to introduce a good friend of ours who has become a frequent writer for Shiningworld, Edwin. He chooses to remain anonymous for now. He is an editor by profession, a brilliant one at that, and he has kindly offered to be Shiningworld's official English editor. We have opened up a page for him alongside the New Endorsees where we have posted some of his articles; all of them valuable contributions to Vedantic literature.

~ Thank You

We thank Christian Eberle for his dedication to the production of the videos, great work Christian, we are so grateful. We also thank Christian, Tan and Matthias for their contribution to our German Translations.

Ram and I would like to thank everyone who has contributed so generously and is helping us to keep Shiningworld growing the way it is. We are all 'in this together' as they say!

Newsletter Design – And we also welcome the lovely Leora Krowitz from Australia, who has kindly offered to help with the design of our Newsletter. Thank you Leora and welcome to Shiningworld team. :)

~ Frequently Asked Questions

We are planning a new strategy for the website, which we will introduce as soon as we have gathered all the relevant material. The team and I are working on a list of topics for a Vedanta FAQ. We will gather all the existing replies to these on the website and put them together in one folder. We will post them in a separate section on the e-satsang section of the website. We will then not be replying any longer to these questions as they have all been exhaustively replied to already.

~ New E-Satsang Upload

We have just made a massive upload of e-satsangs, probably one of the biggest ever. So, to make up for the late appearance of the Newsletter, this is a bumper e-satsang feast! Between Ramji, me and the endorsees, we must have over 500 new pages of pure Vedanta for all of you to enjoy.

~ Interview with James on Consciousness TV

Information TV Showcase 2 (on Sky channel No 192 here in the UK) broadcasts our programmes every day between 8.30pm and 9.30pm. Interviews were shown on Sunday 21st April and will be repeated twice more in the next three months.



Ramji teaching in Tiruvannamalai



Sundari & Leora in Tiruvannamalai

~ New Items in Shiningworld Webshop

We have the video and audio material of both Panchadasi and Bhagavad Gita from Tiru 2013 available for order through the shiningworld webshop.

The mp3 recordings from the latest Berlin talks are available for free on U-Tube, link: <http://www.youtube.com/user/shiningworldvideo>

We will soon have available the video recordings of Atma Darshan and Atma Nirvritti by Atmananda, which Ram taught in Berlin for the first time. Please Note // We have several German translations available on the website.

~ German Publications

See Tan's e-satsangs in German on his page in New Endorsees. See also the German translations in Publications. For German speaking people we have a link to Sylvia Wetzel's German translations of several Vedanta books on her website;

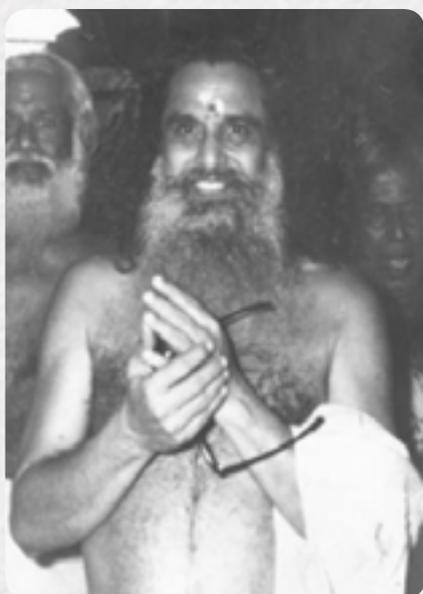
<http://www.sylvia-wetzel.de/schriften.htm>. Sylvia is a well-known Buddhist teacher who is a friend of James. His book "Meditation, Inquiry into the Self" was instrumental in her quest for enlightenment. Sylvia has translated a few Vedanta books into German and posted them on her website and we encourage you to make use of them.

~ Value of Values

We were informed by a few people that it is extremely difficult to get copies of Dayananda's "Value of Values". We have found a website where they are available for order: The Company is called "Parihara," and their website is Parihara.com. The book can also be ordered from Arshavidya Pennsylvania. I have been informed that it is also possible to get a free download copy from this site: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/12991965/Value-of-Values>

~ Feedback on the Theme of the Last Newsletter

As mentioned above, the response to our endorsees has been hugely positive and all the feedback has been great.



Swami Abedhananda

With regards to the complaints that I wrote about, we also had mostly very positive feedback. I would like to clear up a few things so that everyone is very clear about our position on this issue, and then leave it to rest. The importance and relevance of bringing this up at all is only with reference to a teaching, as James and I never focus on negativity of any kind.

We heard back from one of the complainants who wrote to James saying that James "surely does not need me to defend him". This man missed the point; but yes this is indeed a fact and I made that very clear in the last Newsletter. James does not need any defending.

While it is true that I do stand strongly in support of who James is, how selflessly he gives of himself and the value

of his service to Vedanta; the point was that it is not him that I am defending. I defend the integrity of the *sampradaya* and what it stands for, like James does. Ignorance being what it is a few guard dogs at the temple gates are quite useful. Along with our team who have the same commitment to Vedanta and the tradition as we do, we make a great pack!

We also had feedback from a good friend of ours with regards to this issue. He felt that by making such a strong point of the complaints, this will discourage anyone from ever complaining again. I presume that by this he implies that people have the right to complain.

I suppose that is true in most situations, but since participation in Shiningworld is entirely voluntary, it seems rather churlish to make issues. I agree with him that my opinions about the complaints that were mentioned were strongly voiced and they were my opinions; but they reflect the position both James and I have regarding this issue. My main point in voicing the complaints was not to complain about the complaints per se; neither was it to defend James. We certainly do not take them personally and James and I are not offended by them; quite the contrary. We have deep empathy for the people involved because we understand the source of the complaints.

We do not see people involved in these or any other 'issues'; there are no people "out there." There is only *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*, the *gunas*. That's it, that is the entire "story" and when you see that, everything dissolves in the light of self knowledge. To repeat: the complaints are interesting only insofar as they are a teaching because they highlight how impersonal and insidious *rajas* and *tamas* are. We have made the theme for this Newsletter the teaching on the *gunas* as they relate to the *Isvara-jiva-jagat* identity, for this reason.

Even though we understand the source, we wanted to address the 'issue' because of the nature of the complaints. They were not in keeping with the tradition of Vedanta and not right because the people involved had gained so much from James' teaching. I felt that gratitude was the appropriate response.

What real reason is there to complain about Shiningworld? It upholds the purest Vedantic teachings and only wishes to serve. James and I, along with our endorsees, offer our services freely. James has done this for the last 40 + years of his life. He has taught all of us who write on his behalf for shiningworld to be scrupulously careful of not bringing ourselves into the teaching. He has taught us to teach according to the great tradition of the *sampradaya*. The evidence of this is clearly visible in the quality and style of the endorsees e-satsang replies. James and I and our team are dedicated to vigilantly upholding the integrity and impersonal nature of Vedanta.

We had a complaint from one person who accuses Shiningworld of becoming a corrupt organization because he did not get the recognition he wanted from the endorsees. This in his eyes disqualified the endorsees because they were therefore not 'genuine. It was such blatant projection and denial that it provided us with a very interesting opportunity to see *rajas* and *tamas* in operation at a level of refinement we have seldom witnessed. Ignorance is indeed highly intelligent!

Here is what Ramji had to say to him...

“Shiningworld is not an organization. It is a group of likeminded friends whose *sadhana* is serving Vedanta. It confers no status to be part of this group. The rules are established and enforced by *Isvara*. I encouraged others to write satsangs to refine their understanding and their ability to communicate because *Isvara* has other duties for me. The idea is only to respond to queries from seekers, not to complain about the qualifications of the endorsees. We encourage communication as friends. The *dharma* of friendship is the *dharma* of Shiningworld as it is the *dharma* of Vedanta teaching. Krishna and Arjuna were friends. Friends treat each other as equals. They do not set themselves apart by doubting each other’s authenticity. Friendship is based on the non-dual nature of reality.”

This sums it up. Shiningworld is a friend to everyone and has no agenda other than to be of assistance to those who are seeking self-knowledge. Those of us who uphold and support shiningworld do so because of our love for the truth and we make no claim to be perfect or beyond reproach as people. We all have our characters and particular style that may offend some people. However Vedanta has nothing to do with who we are as people, although as qualified teachers we share a common goal and work as a team. We are only doing what we do to serve the truth and the people that come to us, to the best of our ability. Ramji has dedicated his life to the dissemination of Vedanta and has left a trail of happiness in his wake. He gives tirelessly of himself to anyone who comes to him. What is there for anyone to complain about? So, please note that in future all complaints will be taken from this position, meaning they will not be taken seriously at all!



Peering in from the sky, Spain

Teaching Schedule

2013/2014

{USA}

Toronto.

14th – 16th June 2013

Contact: Paul Newton, Email: panewton@gmail.com

Text: Self Inquiry

Princeton, New Jersey.

21st – 23rd June, 2013

Contact: Christine Abrahams

Email: christineabrahams219@gmail.com

Text: Self Inquiry

Golden, Colorado.

28th – 30th June 2013

Contact: Christian Leeb,by,

Email: christian@yogaman.com

Text: Self Inquiry

Berkeley, California.

19th – 23rd July

Contact: Martina Schneider,

Email: martinaschneider108@gmail.com

Text: Bhagavad Gita

Oregon, Trout Lake.

1st – 6th August 2013

Contact: Sundari

Email: Sundari.shiningworld@gmail.com

For Venue information contact: Kay Coryell

Email: coryell@hevanet.com Text: Bhagavad Gita

Salt Spring Island, Vancouver Canada.

23rd – 27th August 2013

Contact: Indica Jehman, Email: indica@prakaasha.ca

Text: First session: 23rd - 25th: Self Inquiry

Second session: 25th - 27th: Panchadasi

Kripalu, Massachusetts.

30th August – 2nd September

Venue: Kripalu Centre

Contact: http://kripalu.org/program/view/ISI-131/introduction_to_self_inquiry

Text: Self Inquiry

{SPAIN}

Malaga.

19th – 26th October 2013

Contact: Sundari

Email: Sundari.shiningworld@gmail.com

Venue: Casa Mayor: for accommodation information and reservations, contact: Deirdra Crowley:

Email: casamayor@yesterdaysbread.co.uk

Link for venue: <http://www.yesterdaysbread.co.uk/Venue.html>

Text: To be announced

Teaching Schedule

so far for 2014

{SPAIN}

Malaga.

3rd – 18th January 2014

Contact: Sundari

Email: Sundari.shiningworld@gmail.com.

Venue: Casa Mayor: for accommodation information and reservations contact: Deirdra Crowley

Email: casamayor@yesterdaysbread.co.uk

Link for venue: <http://www.yesterdaysbread.co.uk/Venue.html>

Text: To be announced

{GERMANY}

Westerwald.

9th – 14th March 2014

Contact: see events on shiningworld website

Venue: Yoga Vidya

Text: To be announced

{SPAIN}

Malaga.

5th – 12th April 2014

Contact: Sundari

Email: Sundari.shiningworld@gmail.com

Venue: Casa Mayor; for accommodation information and reservations, contact: Deirdra Crowley

Email: casamayor@yesterdaysbread.co.uk

Link for venue: <http://www.yesterdaysbread.co.uk/Venue.html>

Text: To be announced

{NORWAY}

Norway.

28th May – 1st June 2014

Contact: Bjarke Nautsdal

Email: ask@retreat.no

Venue: Scandinavian Yoga and Mediation School;

Text: To be Announced

{GERMANY}

Germany, Berlin.

5th – 13th June 2014

Contact: Matthias Raetz

Email: ramjiseinar@gmail.com

Venue: Rosenwaldhof see events on shiningworld website for more details

Text: To be announced

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Theme for this Newsletter

Isvara – Jiva – Jagat & the Gunas

We have been focussing on this topic for quite some time now as it is such an important one that it cannot be over-stated. James and I have been gathering material for a book and the following e-satsangs that I have added to the Newsletter form the broad strokes of the book. The first one is one I wrote a while ago and have since re-written and developed. It still has to be properly fleshed out and the first few paragraphs especially are possibly hard to follow. This is because it is difficult to explain such subtle information in such a condensed format. Below mine I have added two e-satsangs that Ramji wrote on the same theme. These two e-satsangs beautifully paraphrase *Isvara*, *Maya*, the two creation theories and the topic of evil, as only Ramji in his inimitably clear, concise and powerfully succinct style can do.

~ **Isvara Jiva Jagat and the Gunas**

Isvara-Jiva-Jagat Identity (Aikyam): The four 'Orders of Reality':

Awareness before the projection of *Maya* is referred to as 'pure' consciousness/awareness or *paramatman*, amongst many other names, including *Isvara*. 'Pure' serves to define awareness as having no qualities, but is not actually a good word because it implies that awareness could be 'impure', which it cannot. However what is important to understand is that it is used to distinguish 'pure' awareness from awareness plus *Maya*. The word 'before' is also not correct because there is no before or after in awareness. Ram explains this beautifully in the e-satsang below mine where he unfolds two creation theories. Time and space do not apply to awareness as they are objects known to it. As Edwin our editor beautifully puts it: Definitions are the stuff of duality, but they bring the clarity that helps us transcend it.

~ **Maya** is a power (*shakti*) that exists in awareness, or it would not be unlimited. It only 'covers' a small 'portion' of awareness. We have to use the words 'covers' and 'portion' in order to teach, but they are not strictly speaking correct because they have spatial and temporal implications while awareness is beyond space and time and has no parts. *Maya* is the principle that gives rise to duality. It is also called ignorance.

~ **Isvara** Once *Maya* is operating awareness 'assumes' the role of creator and apparently identifies with *Maya*. Awareness in association with *Maya* (ignorance) is then referred to as *Isvara* or 'God,' the creator, preserver and destroyer of the objects in the *dharmafield*. As such it is also known as the macrosmic mind, the causal body or the deep sleep state. *Isvara* or *Maya* is a 'limiting adjunct' for awareness in that it causes awareness to appear as the limited world. Again this implies a sequence of 'events' which is not correct, because it infers time; we describe it so because we need to understand the distinction between the real and the apparently real, *sattya* and *mithya*. (Read James' e-satsangs below; he explains this beautifully).

~ **Jiva** Awareness, under the spell of *Maya*, identified with the subtle body, is called *jiva*. The subtle body is an *uphadi* or limiting adjunct for awareness. The *jiva* is the microcosmic mind or individual. The subtle body is made up of the mind, intellect and ego. Sometimes the *jiva* is defined as awareness plus the five sheaths: the physical sheath (*anandamayakosa*), the vital air sheath (*pranamayakosa*), the emotional sheath (*manomayakosa*), the intellect sheath (*vignamayakosa*) and the bliss sheath (*anandamayakosa*). There is only one *jiva* because there is only one awareness appearing as many apparent *jivas* or individuals.

~ **Jagat** Awareness appears as the creation (*jagat*) when ignorance (*Maya*) is operating. It is an effect and is called the apparent (*mithya*) reality. It includes all the gross and subtle objects in existence, the objective empirical world and the subjective psychological world.

~ **Gunās** The creation comes into existence with the emergence of the 3 *gunas*: *sattva*, *tamas* and *rajas*. *Sattva* is intelligence and knowledge; *tamas*, a heavy dense energy is matter the substance of the creation; *rajas* is the dynamic active energy also known that transforms objects. Psychologically it is known as the mode of action and desire. The *gunas* make up everything in creation, from thoughts to gross objects. In effect, the *gunas* is another word for *Isvara*.

~ **Isvara plus jiva and jagat** make up the *dharmafield*. Their common identity is non-dual reality, awareness, out of which these four 'orders' arise. Although they share a common identity as awareness, they are not the same as pure awareness. However all the orders and the objects within them depend on awareness, but awareness is always free of them. A good analogy is H₂O. Water is pure H₂O. So are the ocean (*Isvara*) and the wave (*jiva/jagat*). But while the wave and the ocean are dependent on the H₂O, the H₂O is free of both the wave and the ocean. Pure awareness is free of *Isvara*, *jiva* and *jagat*, but *Isvara-jiva-jagat* has a dependent existence on awareness.

~ Self Knowledge, Self-Realisation, Self-Actualisation and Moksha:

Moksha is discriminating awareness from the objects in it. Understanding the *Isvara-jiva-jagat* identity (*aikyam*) is of paramount importance because the *Gunas* are *Isvara*, meaning the environment, which includes the *jiva*. It is important not only to discriminate the self from the objects, but to actualise what it means to be self realised in the apparent reality.

This is because self-realisation is not moksha. Hear that again.

~ **What is Self-realisation?** Self-realisation is an experiential term and means that one has understood that one's true nature is awareness. However self-realisation is an experience. It is therefore not real in the light of Vedanta's definition of what constitutes reality as that which is always present and never changes. Meaning you can 'lose' your self-realisation, if the knowledge "I am awareness" is not firm.

~ **What is self-actualisation?** To be self actualized means (1) that one has fully discriminated the self from the objects appearing in it (the *dharmafield*, one's conditioning) and (2) that that knowledge has (a) rendered the *vasanas* non-binding and (b) destroyed one's sense of doership. *Moksha* is discriminating the self from the not-self. Through discrimination,

the *jiva*, the individual under the spell of self ignorance, understands that it is actually the self, limitless awareness and not the person it thinks it is. *Moksha* is for the *jiva* because the self is already free. This knowledge allows the *jiva* to live free in this apparent reality. This means that the *jiva* is not bound by his or her conditioning.

~ The Gunas or the Ropes

The word *guna* means rope, aptly named because the 3 *gunas* are bound to each other and they bind the person to objects. As the components that make up the *dharmafield*, the *gunas* govern the creation of everything. This of course, includes the *vasanas* that motivate the individual and the individual's relative nature (*svadharmā*) that gives rise to 'their' conditioning. This conditioning is then reinforced by their environment and life experiences, which is also made up of the *gunas*. So managing the *gunas* is nothing less than understanding how to relate to the totality of your environment, your gross and subtle bodies. The *gunas* are not a problem unless you identify with them or if you are unaware of them. The *gunas* are always present and operating on the *jiva* and the *dharmā field* because the causal body is there whether the *jiva* is present or not, enlightened or not. The *gunas* condition the *jiva* or subtle body at all times other than in deep sleep, *nirvikalpa samadhi* and of course, once the self is actualised as one's true nature.

~ The Three Forces in Creation

Sattva, *rajas* and *tamas* correspond to the three forces in creation: *Rajas*, *vikshepa shakti*, which is the projecting energy; *tamas*, *avarana shakti*, the concealing energy and *sattva*, the revealing energy. When *Maya* operates, *sattva* (pure knowledge-intelligence) is the first *guna* to emerge. It is known as pure *Maya* and becomes the nature of the mind. *Tamas* and *rajas* appear next. *Rajas* and *tamas* are the main cause of ignorance; they extrovert the mind, turning it towards objects. When a person is *sattvic* the mind is turned inwards toward awareness, its nature. This happens when *rajas* and *tamas* have been largely eliminated. *Sattva* feels very good. With *karma* yoga and the practice of self knowledge it can become the person's predominant *guna*. Purifying the mind is to aim for a *sattvic* mind.

Liberation or self-knowledge means that you have assimilated the knowledge that you are whole and complete and that the 'person' that you used to think you were is no more than a notion in you, awareness. When ignorance (*avidya*) of yourself as awareness has been removed by self-knowledge, *Maya* (macrocosmic ignorance and its effects still obtain and the *gunas* continue to condition the subtle body (the 'person')...but they are rendered non-binding as the doer has been negated by self knowledge. They have nothing to do with you, awareness, because you know that you are not the Subtle Body, the person/doer. You are *trigunatita*, beyond the *gunas*.

~ Macrocosmic vasanas

The *gunas* are called macrocosmic *vasanas* i.e. they belong to *Isvara* or the total, the creation, not to the person. As an apparent person or *jiva*, (the self under the spell of ignorance) they are in the driver's seat, so to speak. The person thinks he/she is a doer so they drive him/her relentlessly until he/she gains the direct knowledge of his/her true nature as awareness.

There are basically four stages to the *guna* teaching, which can be applied to people at different levels of their spiritual development.

~ The Four Stages of the Guna Teaching

- **Stage 1.** The *guna* teaching is very effective for doers (*karmi's*); these are people in the world, not going for *Moksha*. As a *karmi*, one uses the knowledge to accomplish things in the world and get what one wants. One can gain knowledge of the *gunas* without realising the self and use this knowledge very productively to live a better life. It is possible to 'un-couple' the *guna* teaching from Vedanta and apply it "on its own", so to speak. This would be very useful for people in the human resources field, as well as a more enlightened approach to psychological counseling and related therapies.
- **Stage 2.** This is for the application of *karma yoga*. As a *karma yogi*, how does one really understand what giving up the results of your actions are, unless you understand what makes up the *dharmafield*? Also, the *karma yogi* uses the *guna* teaching to purify the mind as well as identify their conditioning. This is the most powerful way to negate the doer.
- **Stage 3.** Once the mind is purified, one uses self knowledge to discriminate the self from the not self. This means that your conditioning does not belong to you. At this stage, unless one really understands the *gunas*, many highly qualified inquirers get stuck with the most subtle teaching of all, the relationship between pure awareness and *Isvara, jiva* and *jagat*. Remember, it does not work to superimpose *satya* (pure awareness) on *mithya* (*Isvara, jiva* and *jagat*). If superimposition happens, even though the self is known, it will remain indirect knowledge i.e. the self will still appear as an object. And one will still think one has to "get" it. Or one will still wait to have that final experience that will prove he or she is awareness! Direct knowledge and self actualisation is the difficult part. Therefore, full understanding of the *Isvara-jiva-jagat* identity (*aikyam*) and the *guna* teaching is of paramount importance.
- **Stage 4.** In the fourth and final stage self knowledge has fully removed the ignorance of your true nature and you know without a doubt that you are beyond the *gunas*. This means that knowledge and ignorance are both 'gone'; they are simply objects known to you. Only, you, the self remains. This is *moksha*.

~ Typical Symptoms of Rajas, Tamas and Sattva

Start observing them. Each of your thoughts and feelings are *guna* driven. See which ones are *sattvic*, which are *tamasic* and which are *rajasic*. Understand the implications of identifying with each kind of energy and the thoughts they cause. Start observing all objects (the world around you or your environment) from this perspective. It will be obvious that no-one is doing anything; it is all a play of the *gunas*. You will be amazed how clear it all becomes once the *gunas* are identified: it is like having 20/20 vision.

When *rajas* is operating, the person will be projecting, arrogant, passionate, angry, frantic, over-stimulated/active/driven, extroverted, jittery, can't sit still, afraid, dissatisfied, insatiable, possessive, jealous, controlling, can't sleep, bored, wired and tired... (to name a few) *Rajas*

triggers fear based thoughts and actions; the person will project their stuff onto 'others' or the 'world' and he/she will go "unconscious" (*tamas*). One tends to speak too quickly, do things too quickly, drop things, bump into things, break them, have accidents and injure oneself. In the extreme he/she will be totally extroverted, driven by passion and desire to gain whatever object he/she is fixated on, certain that the joy is in the object. The mind is turned completely outwards.

When *tamas* is operating, the person will be in denial, blaming, holding onto the past or using it as a reason to justify action or inaction, or as an avoidance strategy to deny his or her fears, making excuses for why he/she can't be honest or make decisions, rationalising, dithering, living in potentia, can't wake up or get out of bed in the morning, exhausted, complaining, dull, lazy, depressed feeling a victim, feeling the wrongs of the world on his shoulders, unloved or that the 'world' is unloving or a bad place, cruel, uncaring, self absorbed etc. Here the mind is clouded, dull.

When *sattva* is operating, the person is peaceful, calm, clear thinking, balanced, compassionately honest, loving, secure, taking appropriate action, owning all projections, cleaning up his/her *karma*, dispassionate (especially about his/her own thoughts and feelings), unconcerned, untouched by the opinion of others or the results of his/her actions, enjoying objects for what they are i.e. fully aware of all their inherent defects, satisfied, whole and complete... etc.

~ How Do the Gunas Function?

The *gunas* are programmed ways of thinking and acting. They are totally predictable. All the *gunas* build on themselves, so *rajas* will create more *rajas*, as will *tamas* create more *tamas* and *sattva* more *sattva*.

The *gunas* all work together and at any given time, one of them will predominate. *Rajas* and *tamas* are inseparable. I call them the 'terrible twins'. James calls them 'incestuous bedfellows'. For instance, when *rajas* is operating, the mind will be projecting outwards and *tamas* will be right there to deny it. They are just the programmes that run the individual (and everything else). They are a problem if you do not have the knowledge of how the apparent reality functions, or if you identify with them. For instance, if you find yourself saying "I am *rajasic* or I am *tamasic* today", you are identified with them. The person may be *rajasic*/*tamasic* today but you, awareness, are not.

Remember, you are the knower of the person; therefore you are the knower of the *gunas*. Again, whenever you find yourself saying "I" press pause and ask yourself, "who is talking here... which perspective am I identified with, the reflected self (the person) or me, awareness?" If you can consistently do this, it will change your life forever.

All three *gunas* have an upside as well as a downside, as does everything in this apparent reality. Without *rajas*, you would never get out of bed in the morning or accomplish anything. *Rajas* is the active, creative 'force'. It is the mode of passion and desire. Not all desire or passion is bad however; you need a passion for self inquiry and a strong desire for *Moksha*. It is one of the qualifications. *Tamas* is the very substance of matter, a heavy and steady energy.

Without it you not be capable of endurance. You would not have the staying power to complete anything and would more or less float off the planet. You would not be 'earthed'...and you would never be able to sleep.

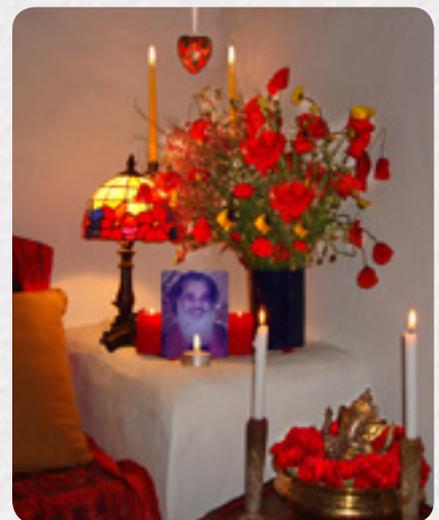
With too much *sattva* you can get stuck in a golden cage of experiential bliss, thinking happiness is the Holy Grail and that you are quite special. *Sattva* is not the be all and end all, even though *sat*, awareness (of which *sattva* is the most subtle manifestation) is actually the true nature of the mind. *Sattva* however, is a state of mind that is experienced by the doer, the Subtle Body. It is purely experiential and therefore does not last. It certainly will not free the person from dependence on objects or end the subtle existential suffering that comes with it. It is the last object to be released before *Moksha*. Yet it is a valuable energy for inquiry and should be cultivated as it is the *guna* springboard for self-knowledge. 'After' *Moksha*, *sattva* or peace of mind no longer needs to be the goal, although one will still make choices in alignment with it. However once all the objects have been negated along with the doer, it will be there naturally and if it should not be, that is fine too because you know that as awareness you are beyond *sattva*.

~ Is it Self-Inquiry or a Spiritual Lifestyle?

Many spiritual seekers are looking for a way to cope with their unresolved psychological issues or as a balm to solve their emotional wounds. Often, they have the vanity to think they are pure and holy because they have had some kind of transcendental spiritual experiences or because they have walked away from a *samsaric* life when their 'renunciation' is actually escapism. They build a 'spiritual' identity that makes them feel less small and afraid. This is one of the negative effects of *sattva*. Being "spiritual" becomes a lifestyle.

~ How to Manage the Gunas

Other than gaining the knowledge of what the *gunas* are and how they operate, which is half the battle, you can do a great deal to manage them through self knowledge. This means that you know that there are appropriate actions to maintain peace of mind for the *jiva*. If you are feeling brain dead, depressed or lazy, you can do something physical, like take a walk or exercise. If you are bouncing off the walls with extroversion, stress, fear or anxiety, driven by desire or action....slow down. Skip the coffee, cut down on sugar. Find some time alone where you can sit quietly and breathe in light. Once you have calmed down, meditate, sit in silence or light a candle, do a *puja*, chant or pray.



Our altar in Spain

Many enlightened people do not bother managing the *gunas* and simply accept whatever transpires in the *dharmafield*, knowing it has nothing to do with them. This practice is fine if the underlying motivation is not a refusal to face binding *vasanas*; or a way to camouflage the doer. If the mind is agitated or dull because of your life choices or lifestyle, freedom will not be that

free unless you acknowledge the cause of the agitation in the light of self-knowledge. This is a common trap for spiritual seekers and one the ego likes. Often it is not lack of self-knowledge that is the problem. It is just that the 'self-realised' person is avoiding doing what it takes to change their behaviour... meaning staring down their *vasanas*, and getting their actions and lifestyle to conform with *dharma*.

~ Practical Lifestyle Management

Take a look at your lifestyle and change what you can. Diet is very important for *guna* management. Learn which foods cause which *guna*. Examine what you do for a living, how you recreate, spend money and exercise. Stop hoarding unwanted 'stuff' (psychological and otherwise). Examine your relationships with people. Don't keep company with people who bring you down. Or, if you can't avoid them, see how the *gunas* run them. See where they want things to be different and the pain it causes. People can't help being true to their predominant *guna* when they are unaware that there is choice.

The practice of seeing how the *gunas* operate in yourself and 'others', will put you in a whole new world of perception. Of course there really are no 'others' as there is only one self with three *gunas* - manufactured bodies. By that I mean that they work the same way in everyone. The *gunas* run the show for everyone who is identified with the body/mind and the story of personhood.

If the predominant *guna* is *tamas*, clean out your cupboards; give away everything you don't really need, stop staying up or getting up late, stop eating *tamasic* foods, get some exercise. Educate yourself about proper nutrition. *Guna* management is just common sense. Avoid depressants such as alcohol, sleeping pills and drugs. Be constantly on the alert for denial of any kind.

If the dominant *guna* is *rajas*, be on constant alert for mindless activity, aggression, arrogance, projection, desire and extroversion. *Rajas* and *tamas* are the real problem makers. Check your diet. Too much sugar, coffee and other stimulants exacerbate *rajas* and induce it. So do many over-the-counter as well as prescription medications. More than half the planet seems to be on some kind of tranquiliser and it is not hard to see why. James says that *rajas* is the disease of the 21st century.

If you observe too much *sattva*, stop pretending that you are 'special' because you have 'out of this world' epiphanies, spiritual knowledge and lots of bliss. Or stop pretending that you are very holy because you meditate, chant for hours or have an enlightened guru, (or worse, that you think you are an enlightened guru). Or you think you have the moral high-ground because you are a vegan/vegetarian and live on sprouts.

Get real, keep it humble and keep up the practice of self-knowledge. The point here is that everyone has a predominant *guna* which will not only create their most entrenched tendencies, (i.e. *vasanas*) but it will also be what has conditioned them to have a particular kind of nature. There is no right or wrong here, no better or worse. We do not make ourselves the way we are; *Isvara*...the *gunas*...do. The 'work' involved in self-inquiry is identifying the *gunas* through self-knowledge and allowing the knowledge to help 'you' manage the *gunas* by dis-identifying from them and standing as awareness.

~ You can Choose the Guna

Once you find yourself acting a particular *guna* out, just observe what is going on. As a person you have relative free will to choose what action to take to achieve a desired result and thus success in the world is possible. One can make 'the best of one's life' as a *jiva*. However, those choices themselves are determined by your conditioning, i.e. *Isvara* or the *gunas*. Don't judge or beat yourself up, be dispassionate about whatever is going on... it's a movie after all. Trace back the train of events, thoughts and feelings to their source and identify what triggered them.

The practice of knowledge, the 'work', is keeping an eye on the person and his/her likes and dislikes. Make a note of the *guna* and adjust it in light of the kind of mind you are trying to create. Make peace of mind your aim at all costs. Each time you do this, it will get easier to manage the *gunas* and it will be easier to recognize them quicker when they appear as your likes and dislikes. Consider the likes and dislikes appearing in your mind as red flags, ways to identify the *vasanas* that keep a particular program running.

It is like playing a computer game: although it appears as if you are making the moves, all the moves that are possible are already programmed into the game. If you keep up the practice of knowledge, before long, you will have de-activated the like or dislike that keeps the program running. It will no longer condition the subtle body, although it may still appear. You will no longer be a robot acting out unconscious motives by reacting to your environment. If the *vasana* is still there but you do not have to act on it, it is considered non-binding. As stated above: understanding the *guna* teaching means that you understand the nature of your environment, (meaning *Isvara*) which includes you as a *jiva*. It is also important to remember that it is impossible and unnecessary to de-activate all *vasanas*. Not all *vasanas* are bad; you need a *vasana* for self inquiry and other to motivate yourself. As long as a *vasana* is not causing excessive agitation in the mind, it is *dharmic*. Knowing the nature of the *gunas* and *vasanas* renders the doer non-binding.

Quote from Edwin on the Gunas

As it is with all the teachings of Vedanta, knowledge is power. Sadly, many people try to control the gunas without understanding them. This can lead to a painful exercise in what is called "will power." When we do things we recognize as harmful, but don't understand the mechanism at work, we make resolutions, manhandling our psyche, so to speak. Sometimes these resolutions are kept; often they are broken. And we suffer accordingly.

As the gunas are Maya, they are illusory. They draw us into the world of objects – including thoughts and feelings – and lead us to identify with these objects. The whole point of identifying the gunas, (which are also objects) and managing them is to understand the gunas, not to be afraid of what is bad or become attached to what is good in the gunas.

~ A Fearless Moral Inventory

Conduct a fearless inventory of your likes and dislikes and see which *guna* values they represent. Be totally honest, without shame, blame or fear as you investigate what you are invested in. Be really alert, like a sharp bird with an acute monocular vision; witness the person you think you are and what goes on in his/her mind and life. *Triguna vibhava yoga* (managing the *gunas*) is a great way to purify your mind and prepare it for enlightenment. All the *vasanas* and *samskaras* (a conglomeration of *vasanas*) are nothing but the results of the *gunas* and their conditioning. They become binding obstacles (*pratibandikas*) when they are not understood and controlled.

~ Prarabdha Karma, the Effects of Ignorance and Karma Yoga

If the effects of ignorance are playing out (*prarabdha karma*) and you cannot change it, accept it. Don't resist. Do what you can to ameliorate them with equanimity and through *dharmic* lifestyle choices. Know that it is not you and it will pass; this is what *Isvara* is bringing your way as the *jiva* and you must flow with it. Resistance keeps you tied to the person and is a guarantee of more suffering. The *gunas* are constantly changing and impersonal, like everything else in the apparent reality; what use is control? *Karma* yoga is the only solution as there is no way to fast forward this process.

It is common that people who have realised the self, still struggle with stubborn *samskaras* and with fears that seem to have no origin. The effects of ignorance take as long as they take to subside; it is not up to the *jiva* or to awareness. Fear is an acronym for False Evidence Appearing Real, and is the very nature of *rajas*. It is part of the fabric of the macrocosmic mind and the *jiva* being an extension of it has unnamed and gripping fears that emerge from the depths like monsters from the deep. *Rajas* and *tamas* are impersonal and together these two form the main problematic components of ignorance. They are not real. They belong to the causal body, not to you. It only seems like they belong to the *jiva* because there is always a corresponding story that comes with them. The *gunas* belong to *Isvara* and have nothing to do with awareness or with the person. The person has a story and has suffered; there is no escape if you are a *jiva*. As long as one is identified with the person, *rajas* stalks you every step of the way and the pitfalls of *tamas* are waiting to engulf you.

~ Following Dharma

The knowledge of how the *gunas* function alleviates existential pain and guilt and gives you X-ray vision into yourself and everyone else. It shows that no-one is doing anything...or ever has. You can stop blaming yourself or anyone else for anything you did or anything that happened 'to you'. Those who think that they are doers have no choice but to follow their natures. When you know you are not the doer, you can choose to drop "your" story'. This is not to say you do not take appropriate action when required or that you would do harm to any part of the creation. You would naturally make choices that give peace of mind, (*sattva*) and causes no injury, not because you feel guilt or duty bound, but because you are doing what is right. This is what following *dharma* means.

Om and prem, Sundari



Maya or Isvara Which Comes First?

**It is said in Vedanta that Ishvara wields Maya.
Isn't it the other way around?**

James: This is a tricky one because the word *Isvara* refers to both Pure Awareness without *Maya* and Pure Awareness in conjunction with *Maya*.

Ken: First, there is only pure awareness. Within pure awareness is a potential called ignorance, *Maya*. *Maya* manifests. Because of *Maya*, a small portion of pure awareness projects itself. The totality of this projection is called *Ishvara*. *Ishvara* is not a 'person' but the total aggregate of creation which appears as a result of the projection. *Ishvara* is the structure or system or mechanism or 'machine' of the whole of creation with its inherent principles and laws that hold govern and run creation. It is because of *Maya*, ignorance that *Ishvara* appears. That is, *Maya* precedes *Ishvara*, the creator. The sequence therefore is: awareness -- > *Maya* -- > *Ishvara*. Hence *Maya* wields *Ishvara*.

James: In the first place we cannot really speak of a 'sequence' because time has not happened at this level. Time is the interval between events. But the Causal Body (*Maya, Isvara*) is the first event. We need two more events to come up with time. The third event gives us a way to evaluate the time/distance between the first two events. In fact creation is simultaneous. It all comes out at once and there is no time involved. That is why we can negate it. It is not an actual temporal creation. It is a projection. On the Causal 'level' there are several things to consider: consciousness, ignorance, the three *gunas* and the five elements. You can make different arguments for various sequences but the fact remains that all of these factors are required and they exist in potentia before time.

Your definition of *Isvara* is reasonable. Panchadasi presents both views of the relationship between *Isvara* and *Maya*. Remember it does not have to be one way or the other because Vedanta is a means of knowledge and the way it is presented can be tailored to the doubt that is presented by the student. But your view presents a certain logical problem. Please consider the following:

Consciousness...*Isvara*...is conscious. Therefore it can wield *Maya*. Wielding implies a doer, a conscious agent. So in association with *Maya Isvara* becomes the Creator (Jagat Karanam) and the dispenser of the results of actions (*Karma Phala Datta*). But it is not a doer like *jiva* is a doer. It 'does' by its association with *Maya*. Its presence causes things to happen. It is like fire. It does not burn in the sense that it does not reach out and grab you and burn you. You get close to it and you get burned. So you can say it burns...but it doesn't burn.

Maya is not conscious It is neither consciousness nor not consciousness. It is something altogether different. *Maya* is ignorance, the apparent non-apprehension (*Avaranna* or veiling) of *Isvara* of itself brought about by Macrocosmic *Tamas*. *Isvara* ignorant of its nature is called *Jiva*. *Maya* has another power called projection (*Vikshepa*). When it is operating, *Isvara* saliva

under the spell of its own *Tamas*, takes the objects reflected the Subtle Body to be real and because it feels incomplete owing to the veiling power of *Maya*, it chases objects and suffers. If *Maya* is just ignorance and not conscious, how can it 'wield' *Isvara*?

The limitation of this model is the fact that *Maya* is made of three *gunas*, not two. So how do you account for *sattva*, the revealing aspect of *Maya*? It accounts for knowledge, in our case self knowledge. It appears in *Maya* as Vedanta and reveals awareness by removing ignorance about it.

Your view is OK. It is: both *Isvara* and *Jiva* are projections brought on by *Maya*. This is true because everything is awareness and it is unborn i.e. it never did manifest the world. Or to use the popular teaching, 'nothing ever happened.' So, in fact there is no *Jiva* or *Isvara*. But if thesis true there is no 'sequence' either.

Summary: Vedanta presents creation both as evolution and as superimposition. They are both useful to remove ignorance. So you are right and you are not right. :)

Love,
James



Question

You said that awareness shines on the *sattva* of the causal body first, then on *rajas* and *tamas*. Also, that the problem of evil does not belong to awareness but is due to ignorance (*rajas* and *tamas*). I'm paraphrasing and maybe I didn't fully get your drift as this went by quickly and was not elaborated upon. But isn't the Causal Body made of the three *gunas*, as it is itself the direct result of ignorance (i.e. *Maya*)? So, why would awareness shine on *sattva*...first?

James: It doesn't really. You have to remember that the purpose of the teachings are to remove ignorance of the self, not to give a description of an object, the Causal Body, for example. Yes, the Causal Body is the three *gunas* but it is more, not that there is anything more than the *gunas* when you are discriminating awareness from experience.

But this teaching is not for discriminating awareness from experience. Although the creation appears all at once because it is just ignorance, for teaching purposes we speak as if there was a sequence because the inquirer understands things in terms of the apparent reality where time is operating so we need to have *Isvara* appear as pure *sattva* before *rajas* and *tamas* emerge to avoid the problem of blaming *Isvara* for collective evil. Of course, if any blaming or explaining is necessary, which it isn't...'evil' is just ignorance of the nature of reality...*Isvara* as the three *gunas* is to blame. But the very idea of creation is ignorance in so far as reality is actually only non-dual pure consciousness.

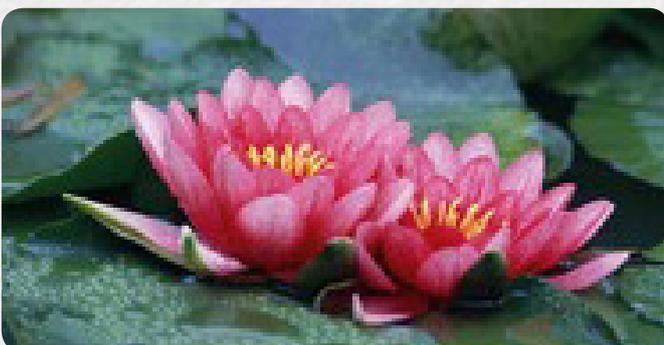
The teaching that *Isvara* is pure sattva is meant to point out that the creation is pure knowledge, uncontaminated with *rajas* and *tamas*. *Rajas* and *tamas* too are just knowledge in the hands of *Isvara*, but when they show up in the Subtle Body they apparently delude awareness and it thinks it is a *jiva* and it subsequently suffers projection and denial. The idea is a set-up to convince the *jiva* that it needs to manage *rajas* and *tamas* for moksa since sattva, the substance of the Subtle Body... where ignorance is located *jivawise*... is required for moksa. It should not blame *Isvara* and do nothing. You would be surprised how many so called 'spiritual' people won't do sadhana because they believe that the effects of ignorance... their conditioning...which stands in the way of the assimilation of knowledge cannot be changed. Usually these people think that just knowing the Self changes their conditioning automatically, confers some kind of special 'state' that solves all problems.

From the relative perspective, *jiva* and *Isvara* share more than just their identity as pure awareness, sat. Their upadhis intersect or overlap in such a way that certain *jivas*, those with a high degree of sattva i.e. relatively less *rajas* and *tamas* also 'wield' *rajas* and *tamas* to varying degrees with reference to the bit of *Isvara* i.e. the life stream...read environment...they inhabit. They are 'little' *Isvara*'s (avatars), meaning they have a greater impact on their environment than ordinary *jivas*, who do not have *rajas* and *tamas* under their control. Of course they do not manage macrocosmic ignorance, just their personal ignorance.



As well, isn't so-called evil inherent and therefore inevitable in *Maya*? I mention this because it sort of came off that evil in the world could be otherwise. Like, if everyone knew they were awareness, evil wouldn't exist. We both know that is not going to happen. Could you clarify when you find the time?

James: Yes and no. It depends on what you mean by evil. It is ignorance of *Isvara*, i.e. dharma. If you understand that you are awareness in more than a purely intellectual way, your *jiva* will appreciate *Isvara* and align itself with the dharma field (*Isvara*) in such a way that unnecessary conflict will disappear. Unnecessary conflict is conflict born out of gratuitous likes and dislikes. It does not serve the evolutionary needs of the total. Of course conflict will not be eliminated because creation does not work without *rajas*.





Ram and Sundari at Sans Souci



Friends at Sans Souci



Sunrise over the valley below our house in Spain

