

KARMA YOGA: THE PATH OF ACTION

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INTRODUCTION – CHAPTER 1

“How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” This is Jesus’ response in Luke 2:49-51 to his parents’ questioning his disappearance. Even as a child Jesus knew that his highest duty was to look after the business of God.

Today’s people, in today’s busy world, need to be reminded that there is no greater duty than one’s duty to God. But how does one accomplish this goal, and still be “of this world”? The ordinary man thinks of his family and his work as his business. The spiritual man knows that duties to family and business are to be carried out as service to God. In this thesis I explore the ideas surrounding that path offered to us that enables us to experience nothing less than Union with the Divine. This is the Yoga of Action. This is Karma Yoga.

As a Hatha Yoga teacher for the last 16 years, and an ordained minister for 2 years, I am most interested in taking the yoga practice to a deeper place of spiritual wisdom. It seems that more students can be reached if they are encouraged to embrace the obligation of duties of the world. The key is to act selflessly, working not for one’s own sake, but for the welfare of all. When we act in a selfless spirit, dedicating each act to one’s Higher Self or God Within, we do so without the entanglement of whether things work out to our liking. Rather than avoiding work, we perform duties without selfish attachment to the fruit or outcome.

If the student practices Karma Yoga, then there is a widespread upliftment effect. To wish for enlightenment is not a selfish motive, for everyone is really One. Each individual has the opportunity to benefit others by practicing a suggestion made in the Yoga Sutras by Patanjali, considered to be the Father of Yoga, – “Ishvara-pranidhad-va” (devotion to the Supreme Lord). When one gives his life and identity to God, he lifts his heart into that consciousness where Divine love is felt. We are reminded that “Tat Tvam Asi” (Thou Art That) or said another way – “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). It is our minds that create separation and isolation between ourselves and others, as well as between ourselves and the Divine. Our minds keep us from seeing that everyone and everything are simply the Divine manifesting in different ways.

Karma Yoga is known as “self-transcending action” or “selfless service”. You can make any practice Karma Yoga by devoting the fruits of the labor to God, as described above. But selfless service can also take the form of performing actions that benefit all beings. In addition to seeing the Divine spark in each being and dedicating our actions to that entity or essence, we can also use this as a practical method for reducing the suffering in the world. This helps us engage our deep connection to others. My hope is that any professional metaphysicians and pastoral

counselors who read this paper, or hear my talks given on this subject, will be inspired. Armed with this information they may be able to reach more people, who, in turn, will go out into the world with a sense that what they think, speak, and do really does make a difference.

In the BHAGAVAD-GITA (Song of God), that most influential text of Indian wisdom, Krishna (the Lord himself) tells Arjuna (the Lord's eternal friend) that he should fight in the upcoming battle. Arjuna thought he should withdraw and, therefore, be a good or non-violent man. But Krishna shows him that to act on behalf of the Supreme is to act without attachment to the result. This is a perfect action, and is transcendental to all reaction. Krishna further explains that "whatever action a great person performs, common people follow, and whatever standards that person sets, all the world pursues." Those parties who have reached Krishna-consciousness or Christ-consciousness may not have any interest in this world, but might stay here in order to teach people how to act and live. They are known as Bodhisattvas in the Buddhist tradition. Bodhisattva is a Sanskrit word of two parts. Bodhi means 'awakened' and sattva means 'a being.' Together they mean a person committed to awakening, and committed to the well being of every creature. This is one who remains in the world to help others escape from suffering. He vows not to enter nirvana until all creatures have been helped. Even so, it is said that nirvana can be reached in this life by finding fulfillment now – doing what we are doing, being what we are being. The saying goes – "What is satori (nirvana)? – Walk on". Said another way – "The kingdom of heaven is within you" (Luke 17:21).

If one can allow this identifying his consciousness more with God's energy, he will feel more aligned with the divine flow. This offering your plans to God will result in the understanding that the universe is really His responsibility, not yours.

Returning to the BHAGAVAD- GITA, in the fourth chapter it is written that he who has let go of the results of his actions is content and free of dependency, knowing that it is not he who acts even when performing actions. If we dwell on the result we want, often we can't get our best action. Free action is without this taint, so - "Not my will, but Thy will be done." In this essay, I want to show that each of us is afforded innumerable opportunities to simply give our best for the sake of giving, and everyone is benefited when we do!

REVIEW OF LITERATURE – CHAPTER 2

During my training to be certified to teach Jivamukti Yoga, my teachers, Sharon Gannon and David Life, told us that the only real qualification to teach Yoga is to be enlightened. They said there was hope for us if we hadn't realized that state, yet. We must connect to a lineage, have a regular practice, and have a sincere wish for other people's happiness and enlightenment. We were told that we are spiritual teachers. We are responsible for creating a satsang or elevated atmosphere, by right thought, action, and speech. We must hold a belief that liberation is possible. These thoughts, along with other insights, can be found in their book, *JIVAMUKTI YOGA – PRACTICES FOR LIBERATING BODY & SOUL* (2002). This wonderful book has been called "purifying, liberating, and uplifting". I have been greatly influenced by it, and feel very blessed to have been in direct transmission from these teachers for the last 7 years.

When discussing the topic of Karma Yoga, the *BHAGAVAD – GITA* (Song of the Blessed One) is the premier source. This sacred text is sometimes called the Bible of Hinduism or the Hindu New Testament. It is a 700-verse section within the largest epic poem in the world – the *MAHABHARATA*. The "Gita" is a conversation between Lord Krishna (the bhagavat) and his friend Arjuna, who is facing such questions as 'What is my purpose in life?' There are hundreds of translations of the text published in English alone.

Two great translations are by Eknath Easwaran (1985) and Stephen Mitchell (2000). In Mitchell's translation he includes 'The Message of the Gita' by Mohandas K. Gandhi. Each of these works offers practical commentary on every verse. The Gita is a book of personal instruction. The central theme is letting go of the fruits of action. It gives the reader a glimpse of what it is like to be one who has totally let go, an enlightened human. Then we are told how to accomplish this, and encouraged that it is possible for each of us. The poet realizes that different people will respond to different ways of approaching this endeavor, so the reader is introduced to several paths (karma yoga, jnana yoga, raja yoga, and bhakti yoga). Another illuminating contribution comes from Jean Griesser (1999). She draws from the works of her direct teacher, Bhaktivedanta Swami, and her years of practice of bhakti yoga, to create her living translation of the Gita. She blends an easy to read style with a collection of photographs that illustrate the philosophical points. She explains that we should do everything for and offer everything to the transcendental service of the Lord. He is the proprietor of everything. Krishna consciousness (being one with the God-Mind) brings one into spiritual life even while one is of the material world.

Judith Lasater (2000) has written a book of essays and guided practices, based on selected verses from the YOGA SUTRA and the BHAGAVAD-GITA. She shows us how to apply the messages of these ancient teachings to our contemporary lives. She reminds us that in order to rediscover our true nature we must commit to self-transformation and self-transcendence.

One book that many consider the Bible of Hatha Yoga is LIGHT ON YOGA by master teacher B.K.S. Iyengar (1966). Although Mr. Iyengar states in his preface that his intention was to include instruction as simply as possible on the asanas (postures) and pranayamas (breathing disciplines), he was most effective in explaining philosophical and moral principles, too. He reminds that in ancient times all higher achievement of man were part of religion and were assumed to belong to God.

A.S. Dalal gleaned from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for LOOKING FROM WITHIN (1995). Here, we are instructed that one of the best ways to help others is to work on oneself. It can take the form of a difficulty that needs changing or concentrating on one's own spiritual growth. Starting with one's substance with which one's being is built is the most important place to begin. In this situation, we affect others in two ways, as an example, and as a radiating power that compels the rest of the world to transform.

One superb example of a Karma Yogi is Ram Dass (formerly Richard Alpert). He began his study of consciousness in the 1960's as a psychology professor at Harvard. He continued his study when he went to India in 1967, where he was given the name Ram Dass (Servant of God) by his guru, Neem Karoli Baba. It was then that he wrote his most influential book BE HERE NOW (1971). He introduced a generation in the West to such concepts as cosmic consciousness, meditation, attachment/detachment, ocean of existence, and Karma Yoga. He explained that even after experiencing liberation, the bodhisattva will continue to chop wood and carry water, but they dedicate the fruits of the work to the Divine. The individual renounces the attachment because that is what the harmony of the universe requires. Then everything is done without attachment, or as 'consecrated actions'.

Ram Dass has integrated the Eastern spiritual philosophy into Western thought. In 1973 he founded the Hanuman Foundation, and in 1985 he became Chairman of the Board of the Seva Foundation, both of which create and staff service projects. He and Paul Gorman wrote the book HOW CAN I HELP? (1985). It is a practical primer that provides support and inspiration to anyone who is a helper, volunteer, or activist trying to meet others' needs. Here, we are made aware of some of the rewards of conscious service, but are also reminded of some of the pitfalls. The "delusion of consciousness" as Albert Einstein terms it, that we are separate from those

we assist, as in ‘the helper and the helped’, is a big one. Sometimes the quality of our helping suffers from the hold our sense of separateness has on us. But these roles can dissolve and what is left as Real is the helping, that process in which we’re blessed according to our needs and our place at the moment. This is really the essence of the spiritual path of devotional service. Service becomes an offering, first to those nearby, then to the greater Source in which we are all joined. A beautiful and inspiring example of this is Mother Teresa holding a dying leper as she calls him “Christ in all his distressing disguises.”

Ram Dass is featured in Alan Reder’s (2006) article, “Do Yoga, Do Good”, sent to me in the YOGA JOURNAL NEWSLETTER via the magic of the internet. Reder investigates the differences between Karma Yoga and volunteerism. He shows how volunteering looks much different when it is performed from a higher level, “soul to soul.”

The underlying intention determines whether any act is liberating or binding. That intention should serve the Higher Self, the God-Mind, not the small self (ego, etc). Dan Millman (2000) discusses the need to apply bold action at the right time. He suggests that we not act without thinking or think without acting. He says since we never really accomplish anything on our own, and we are in this together, that we should offer and accept a helping hand.

Edward Hoffman discusses in his article “Do Good, (feel better)” (2006) how everyone benefits from any altruistic practices. He states that when you try to make the world a better place the volunteer is actually enhancing his own well being, not just that of the recipient.

It is better to live a life of service in a spiritualized environment conducive to thoughts of God than in a material world filled with evils of the mundane. Paramahansa Yogananda (2004) assures us that any environment can be spiritualized with the presence of God. So, in spite of what our worldly duties are, the mind should be with God. In THE SECOND COMING OF THE CHRIST, Yogananda presents Jesus’ teachings in an interesting way. Matthew 20:28-29 is often quoted as ‘even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’ But Yogananda explains that in this quote Jesus is saying that the ‘Christ-Consciousness in me came not to be served but to serve, and to offer divine light through the example of sacrifice and ideal living, that others following may be deemed and attain the infinite kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness.’ Jesus makes it clear that the Christ Consciousness in him materialized so he could offer the highest service to us by demonstrating divine consciousness in acts of physical, mental, and spiritual sacrifice. Jesus stressed that according to divine law the superior position is that of service.

Working for the good of the whole or the “collectivity” is just one of the ways presented

in the chapter on Karma Yoga in LIVING YOGA. This collection of works edited by Georg Feuerstein (1993) includes the thoughts on such subjects as the relevance of Karma Yoga (the path of self-transcending action) and how to embrace our work while developing a new inner attitude toward it. It is through the mind that we can transcend action by shifting our focus of identity from the ego to the Self. When we practice Karma Yoga we practice the art of self-surrender in all our deeds. This is possible when we remember “who” is the true “doer”. The Self shines through all our work when we are able to recognize the artificial nature of the ego that tries to insert itself as the center of all of our actions. One of the authors in the LIVING YOGA collection is Peace Pilgrim. She believed that everyone has a calling, which they discover when they attune themselves to the Higher Reality.

Swami Kriyananda (2002) reminds us in his work RAJA YOGA that activity is a part of being human. To this end, it is most important to engage in wholesome, creative work. It is this activity that creates attunement with the Infinite Creator, not the denial of the manifestations of His Power within us. Kriyananda was a direct disciple of Yogananda, the first yoga master to live and teach in the West. For 50 years Kriyananda has shared these teachings. One such teaching is the advice that we be careful about our energy environment. Everything we do affects our energy, so we should create satsang with positive people, music, books, etc. The Karma Yogi tries to redirect wrong impulses into wholesome channels and to become aware of the divine energy flowing through him as he acts. He is taught that the spirit in which he serves is more important than the service itself.

Deepak Chopra (1999), the physician and author, reminds us in EVERYDAY IMMORTALITY that the core of my Being is an intelligence that organizes the activity of the body and mind of each and every other Being. This pure intelligence is the real me and the real you. Although Chopra has authored over 2-dozen books, this work is most precious. It is written in the form of koans or sutras, threads of insights that lead to the next statement. Considered a “concise course of spiritual transformation”, this book invites us to “Be still and know that you are GOD (Generator, Organizer, Dispenser) of all reality”.

This same idea is put forth by Chatterji (1992) in his examination of the Vedas. The Veda is considered the most ancient wisdom of India. It regards life, its origin, purpose, and goal. It is from this source teaching of the Hindu tradition that sprang the branches of Vedanta, Yoga, and Tantra, and evolved the Buddhist religion. The Vedas examine the nature of the universe. Its conclusion is there exists within us an immortal and eternal being that pervades the entire universe. After many reincarnations a soul will have developed a strong character and a need to

progress back to Ultimate Being. This is where the practices of Yoga prove effective. This stage helps keep us intensely active, but challenges us to eliminate any selfish notions and personal interests that may be looked upon as separate from interests of others. For, we are taught, that these are not really others, only ourselves in different forms. So, we don't need to change our outward life as much as our entire attitude. This includes our thoughts toward what we are doing and in our relations to the rest of the universe.

The Buddha says in the DHAMMAPADA: 'We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world. Speak or act with a pure mind and happiness will follow you as your shadow, unshakable.' Jack Kornfield (1993) tells us that the heart is our garden, and along with each action there is an intention that is planted like a seed. We can become more aware of our intentions and the state of our heart as they arise, along with our actions and speech. He teaches that there is only one person's karma that we can change in the whole world, and that is our own. But what we do with our hearts affects the whole world. So as we lessen the suffering of our own hearts we can bring healing to another, because we are all interconnected. We can make the whole of the earth more peaceful as we pay more attention. We can bring about beneficial circumstances outwardly through our work and creativity. By bringing a spirit of love, openness, and freedom to every situation we allow our being to transform the world around us. When a reporter asked Mahatma Gandhi for a message to the Indian people, his reply was, "My life is my message".

This review of literature on Karma Yoga and other associated topics is a brief sampling from the huge library of offerings. These authors come from wide and varied backgrounds, but the message of each is the same. The experience of Union with the Divine is available to everyone, and it is available now.

FINDINGS – CHAPTER 3

Karma Yoga – What is it? Who should do it? Who benefits from it? Where do I fit into the plan? The answers to these questions will be presented over the next few pages. As a yogi, and especially one who practices Jivamukti Yoga, I fall into a special “breed” of people. This is not a passive practice, but one that encourages using the body and mind as tools for liberation. The term ‘jivamukti’ come from ‘jiva’ (individual soul) and ‘mukti’ (liberation). So, ‘jivamukti’ means ‘liberation while living.’ The Sanskrit word ‘yoga’ comes from the root yuj. ‘Yuj’ means ‘to bind’, ‘to tie’, ‘to unite’. Yoga means ‘union’ but also ‘discipline’. When we combine these two connotations we define yoga as ‘unitive discipline.’ So, you see, our motive for practicing all forms of yoga is simple; liberation! It is when the jiva realizes it is Absolute, or in union with the Divine, that there is liberation from all karma. As Krishna, the chariot driver, tells Arjuna, the prince in the BHAGAVAD-GITA (Gita), we must act perfectly and devote the fruits of our actions to God. Our actions are not to be selfish, because most of the world’s problems stem from selfishness. When we relinquish selfishness, the potential for true happiness opens up. Through service to all beings the bliss of the end of suffering is expressed.

The word “karma” means ‘deed or action’. It comes from the Sanskrit root kr, which means ‘to act’. This includes all movement of the mind as well as the body. These movements, when attached to desires and ambitions, accumulate as karmic results (action and reaction, or cause and effect).

As long as we act out of egotism, action or karma is thought to bind consciousness. This is known as the doctrine of karma, which is one of the most basic teachings in the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures. This leads to desire, which obscures our true nature. Karma Yoga seeks to break the vicious cycle. Even Jesus warns of the karmic consequences of wrongdoing in Luke 12:58-59 – “... I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.” Divine souls who live on earth identified with Cosmic Consciousness create no human desires, and, therefore, no binding karma. At death, they become one with Spirit. People who live to gratify the ego accumulate earthly karma. When they die, they must reincarnate again and again to resolve all of the unresolved karmic consequences. Only when the soul realizes the Self can one be freed from every desire. Through enlightenment no karmas can bind you, so yogis strive to perfect all actions. They do this by allowing actions to come from a place of selflessness. The whole philosophy of karma is contained in the second part of the Lord’s Prayer. “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:14-15). It is the individual who actively seeks

God, as in Karma Yoga, whose will is united with God's Divine Will.

The BHAGAVAD-GITA (Gita) explains the term Yoga, and stresses the path of Karma Yoga (the attainment of yoga by the path of action). It states that one is privileged with work but not the fruits of that work. We are not told exactly which duties we should perform, and are offered no guarantees regarding our enlightenment. The Gita describes Karma Yoga as a mysterious process that reveals its true nature only to those who pursue it. We are encouraged to work in the name of the Lord, abandoning selfish desires. We must realize that we can control our efforts, but not the outcomes. This becomes a lesson in attachment and detachment. We learn from both experiences. Ram Dass explained their coexistence in the following way, "In this moment I love you as much as I have ever loved anyone – and I don't care if I ever see you again" (Millman, 2000). This equipoise is called Yoga.

To 'abandon all selfish desires' is a pretty tall order. Where does one begin? To perfect our actions, we must first perfect our thoughts, because the material universe begins in thought. And the finest vibration of divine consciousness is thought. The universe of thought manifests itself on a grosser level of vibration as energy. In other words, your life is the outward manifestation of your own consciousness. Our outer circumstances are often the outcome of other people's energies as well as our own, for we attract those energies according to the quality of energy we first manifest.

The soul is free. It is when thoughts are focused enough to generate a flow of energy that can result in outward action. The nature of the action is what can bind the soul. An affirmation of bondage is created – 'I am this ego, this body.' In order to perfect a thought we must let go of selfish motives, such as anger, greed, hate, and jealousy. This does not mean that we do not recognize the ego and body. They can be very important to us to do good works. We simply want to establish a new balance between these and the Self. Ramakrishna, the great Indian saint, told this story to explain the situation between ego and Self. He tells of a coach where the driver (the ego) sits on top, in charge of a team of horses. The owner (the higher Self) sits quietly inside the coach. Because the driver has never seen the owner he thinks he is in charge, until the owner lets his presence be known. Then, reluctantly at first, the driver takes on the role of servant. Eventually he finds joy in the greater attuning to the proper place it holds in the big picture of the universe. The ego finds peace in this proper station, and the Self is freer to guide all work. "Not my but Thy Will, O Lord" (Dass and Gorman, 1985).

Peace Pilgrim, the woman who spent almost 30 years on foot proclaiming the values of peace and love, made the suggestion, 'that you keep your feet on the ground and your thoughts

at lofty heights, so that you may attract only good. Concentrate on giving so that you may open yourself to receiving; concentrate on living according to the light you have so that you may open yourself to more light' (Feuerstein, 1993).

Sri Aurobindo (Dalal, 1995) pronounces that the outer form of our work can vary greatly for different personalities, but it is the spirit or consciousness in which the work is done that matters most. Any work done carefully and with the consciousness that it belongs to the Divine Power is a means of self-dedication through Karma. We will know that the activity is right action if it brings us to a divine state of inner freedom. Our type of effort is not dictated, but rather, the manner of effort should be one that allows us to remember that we are merely instruments of the Divine. By acting in this way we perform so as to neutralize our feeling-waves. This is what leads to the inner freedom. This energy put into the work will reflect the energy that is an aspect of God. In turn, our efforts bring us more into divine attunement. The more in tune with the divine power flowing through us, the more we can serve others, by being a conduit of the messages from the Infinite Source.

When we take the role of a selfless person, we are in service to the Cosmic Will. In this role, we may help shift the consciousness of an entire age. Those who allow the message of Divine Source to come through them, such as Jesus and the Buddha, create work that endures beyond their physical presence. Virtuous devotees behold the Christ-Consciousness within all others, as well as themselves. They serve the Christ Spirit in all who hunger, thirst, ail, and suffer. "By loving Me in My every form, you are everlastingly in My eternal love and eternal protection" (Matthew 25:40).

An enlightened person does not distinguish among species. It is said, "every soul in this world is dressed with a material body and cannot be recognized by material vision" (Gressier, 1999). But what about the rest of us? What about those who have not reached self-realization but hunger for it? Since this enlightenment is exceptional, there are steps we can take that will help lead us in the right direction. Sri Aurobindo (Dalal, 1995) tells us that we can find temporary occupations that help with the progressive harmonization and transformation of each being and its activities. As stated in the Gita, "no step is lost on this path ... and even a little progress is freedom from fear."

When we haven't reached that state of realizing our Oneness we can follow the example of the Hindu deity Hanuman. Every act he performs becomes an offering to Rama (God). "When I know who I am, I am you. When I don't know who I am, I serve you" (Dass, 1985). Neem Karoli Baba, Ram Dass's guru, gave just one instruction to his devotees: "Love everyone, serve

everyone, remember God”. (Reder, 2006) For many, karma yoga seems to start as a gnawing from inside. It is as though karma yoga chose them instead of the other way around.

The act of awakening our heart of compassion to all circumstances is to become the Buddha. This awakening within us can lead to our awakening to a universal force of spirit that brings compassion to the whole universe. Gandhi called this power Soul Force (Kornfield, 1993). Peace Pilgrim calls us “cells in the body of humanity” (Feuerstein, 1993). In this same book, *LIVING YOGA*, Omraam Aivanhiov encourages us to work and spend our energies for the good of the collectivity, that group made of the whole universe, God Himself, and, of course, each of us individually. He proposes that it is not selfish, and is indeed intelligent, to work for the good of the collectivity because each member benefits, and that includes you.

There is scientific evidence that altruistic behavior is good for your health. Those who show kindness enjoy better mental and physical health than those who are less kind. The 3,000 volunteers surveyed in a 1991 study reported less stress in their lives. Another, more recent, study showed that giving help is a better predictor of health among older adults than receiving help. “Altruistic people have fewer physical complaints and tend to live longer than self-centered individuals” (Positive Living, 2006).

Maybe this is the true meaning of the term “being successful in life”. This is living with an open heart that allows that connection with the Divine within us and in others. This does not preclude our enjoyment of any worldly or material successes. The true challenge is finding the balance between enjoyment and not identifying with them.

At the heart of the action of service is choice. Each of us can serve the world by doing small, unsung actions. We may need to determine what is possible in the present moment. The answer may be directed by physical health limitations, or your abilities. We must use common sense, tailoring our schedules to fit whatever stage in life we find ourselves. We may find that at one point we can be very engaged, and at other times we need to be really inside ourselves. And there might be times when we can balance both. Also important is continuing to check within and determine motivations. We may find that we are face-to-face with what is called the “shadow side of service.” (Reder, 2006) The shadow takes different forms for different people. It can resemble a need to “fix” people, a need to overwork causing us to neglect our own families, or an experience sometimes called compassion fatigue. As Sri Aurobindo said, “Work done in an egoistic spirit, however good for people in the world of the Ignorance, is of no avail to the seeker of the Yoga.” (Dalal, 1995). Ordinary volunteerism is often performed to feed the ego. It can develop or foster an unequal relationship (helper and helped). It can involve

negative judgments where the helper believes that the helped must have done something wrong to get into this situation. Ram Dass states that when he is involved in his hospice work he waits until his spiritual self takes over, and then he is working on a higher level, soul to soul. Even the smallest acts of caring can be a means of affirming the greater unity of life in love. We have to communicate this spirit to others, in addition to whatever else we are doing for them. For we help through all we do, but we also help through who we are.

We find that the volunteering in Karma Yoga furthers our inner work, and vice versa. “So we work on ourselves, then, in order to help others. And we help others as a vehicle for working on ourselves” (Dass and Gorman, 1985).

Each of us is a being construed outermost to inmost of a mixture of substance, a field of work. We are accumulations of a certain number of vibrations and it is up to us as to what we do with them. We are privileged to have these vehicles we call our bodies. We are given this means so we can transform it by learning to work with it. Only if we can do something with ourselves can we do it with others. If we see a defect or difficulty with someone, the best way to change it is to change it in yourself first. Then you are strong enough to change it in others. If one wants to help others and the world, the best thing one can do is to be whatever you want others to be. Gandhi said, “Become the change you want to see in the world.”

DISCUSSION – CHAPTER 4

What kind of world would it be if society understood that the world around them is a reflection of the world inside them? It is the responsibility of the professional of metaphysics to spread the word regarding this phenomenon.

One of the Yoga Sutras (II.33) states, “When disturbed by disturbing thoughts, think the opposite.” If we notice what we pay attention to we can see who we appear to be. What we pay attention to grows. This is why it is important to give up all results of actions – “Not my will, Thy Will.” If the goal is happiness, then we should never cause unhappiness in any way to others. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Einstein’s famous equation demonstrated that energy and matter are interconvertible. Everything in the world is different forms of energy. The forms change, but the underlying essence does not. It is when we forget that there is this Divine thread streaming through us that we feel isolation. This is when we feel most distant from our Divine joyful nature.

We metaphysicians have a duty to encourage parents to start early with their children. The children need to be nurtured in spiritual ideals and practices. Spirituality needs to be encouraged by example, devoting time to silence and divine communion. This is what the Gita calls “inactively active” – where the outer body is engaged in doing the Lord’s will and the inner body is free of desire-induced entanglements. We can teach the meditation techniques that would enable individuals to have a personal practice and they could pass these techniques on to their children.

Children can become involved in helping others. “Love thy neighbor” really tells us to work for all beings, but simultaneously, “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” Parents can teach the children ways to be proficient in doing everything with God-Consciousness. This includes offering assistance in the spirit of equality, never coming from a superior position and seeing others as “poor them.”

Everyone, especially children, must be reminded that each of us must do our part in the grand scheme. There are no big or small ventures in the spiritual truth. All endeavors are equal in the eyes of Spirit, as long as they are done as sacrifices to the Divine. We can do our best, surrendering to the will of God – as the Arabic proverb says, “Trust in God but tie your camel.” Or as one of my teachers puts it, “How you do anything is how you do everything.”

How beneficial it would be if we could pass along the understanding that the more inwardly defined you become, the less you need to outwardly succeed, and therefore, the less

stress you feel. It is as though the less you need success, the easier it comes. And the less you need to acquire power, the more power you realize you already have. What kind of world would we see if children fostered these ideas?

Another important point that the professional metaphysics educators could teach to greatly impact our society is that being born of a human form comes with privilege and responsibility. We acknowledge that all other forms have the same essence that we do, but when we become humans we have powers other species do not. Our activities are not controlled by nature; we are co-creators with the Divine. Yogis don't believe in "out of body experiences." We believe in fully elevating the one we have been given. This can be enhanced by such activities as our diet. A vegetarian diet is the one that benefits the greatest number of beings on the planet. If we encouraged the children of the world to eat less animal protein this would impact everything from the higher vibrations our children's cells experience, to the quality of life experienced by the animals, to the extent of world hunger, all the way to the consumption of oil.

As metaphysicians, we must be living examples of the message "What the outstanding person does, others will try to do." (Easwaran, 1985). My pet project is the betterment of conditions for animals living in shelters. One of my practices is clicking on the Animal Rescue Site website each day, where my visit purchases a ½ bowl of food for an animal. The other is holding yoga classes to raise money for our local animal shelter.

Another way professionals of metaphysics can impact the world is their activities as educators. Whether we are in a one-to-one counseling situation or in front of a classroom of students, we must make them aware of their choices. If we can encourage these subjects to take advantage of their available options, and not fall into a victim attitude, how empowered they become! If we can teach that a man in one sense becomes whatever action in which he takes part, we can teach that he, at his core, is not that objective role with which he may identify. Our consciousness merely manifests itself in different ways. Peace is one of the goals of Yoga. But this is the Peace of Victory. The setting for the spiritual path in the Gita is a battlefield between the forces of light and darkness in the consciousness of man. Jesus said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." (Matthew 10:34). Yogananda said, "A saint is a sinner who never gave up." (Kriyananda, 2002). We must be constant reminders, cheerleaders if you will, in our clients' fight for Ultimate Joy. "The sage helps the ten thousand things find their own nature." (Tao Te Ching, Dass and Gorman, 1985).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS – CHAPTER 5

In our work-oriented society, the path of Karma Yoga is the most practical method of achieving Union with the Divine. It applies to just about all yoga practitioners in this contemporary world. Since this is the “yoga of action”, we are able to use ordinary events in our lives as a means of “waking up.” This includes less seemingly important duties such as cleaning our house to more “important” activities like raising our children or engaging in our “outside the home” careers. Swami Vivekananda (Feuerstein, 1993) taught us “No man is to be judged by the mere nature of his duties, but all should be judged by the manner and spirit in which they perform them.”

When we let each act be an act of dedication, there is a releasing of the personal ego and a replacing with the awareness of the Universal Self. Along with this our compassion grows, making us keener to suffering around us. It is as though the pain of others becomes our own. We help because it is no longer I needing to help you, but because it is “We.” This comes as each of us moves into a greater sense of Unity. It is as though the “fact of our unity becomes more real and powerful to us than the belief in our separateness” (Dass and Gorman, 1985).

But in all of this, the yogi must be aware that effort does not equal control. When we realize that we can control our efforts, but not the outcomes, then we will experience more serenity and patience with the process. “Effort is success” (Millman, 2000). And we must pay attention to our own inner balance. To serve effectively there must be an acceptance that there will always be suffering in our world. It is healthier to serve with the idea that we can offer kindness, and not really solve anything.

Keeping our own inner tanks full is important. We can work so hard at caring that we run dry and the caring stops. It is important to combine karma yoga with contemplative practices such as asana, meditation, and prayer. Simplifying your life can be helpful, such as minimizing creature comforts and keeping our schedules manageable. Edward Hoffman suggests, “Exercise your talents. Go at your own pace. Do it with a friend or relative. Make it a habit. Find the best activity” (2006). Says Mirabai Bush, one of Neem Karoli Baba’s best-known American followers, “Be brave, start small, use what you’ve got, do something you enjoy, and don’t over commit” (Reder, 2006).

I know that if these messages were taught children from an early age, our world would certainly be better for it. It starts by adults setting the example. “What the outstanding person does, others will try to do. The standards such people create will be followed by the whole

world” (Easwaran, 1985). Programs such as the Virtues Project of the Ba’hai Faith encourage children to reflect on their own inner gifts. Each day they choose a virtue on which to reflect. This allows them to be mindful of the spiritual gifts this virtue offers. They look for things to happen in life which call on them to practice that virtue. What a wonderful opportunity for children to practice mindfulness, gratitude, service, and having a positive self image. As it says on the cover of the magazine *Positive Thinking* – “Attitude is Everything.”

It is important to continue the research on the elderly volunteers. More important, in my view, is research conducted on our junior volunteers. They are vital components in the state of the world.

As a yoga teacher, I have seen a trend in what I choose to teach. It is usually that subject that I need to learn. Researching and writing this thesis has opened my eyes and mind to what Karma Yoga really is. Of course, my understanding of the subject is still on the surface. But, I look forward to more research, in the form of reading the works of the masters, putting it into practice, and simply being “still” with it.

One practice I am consistent about is the way I end each yoga class that I lead. There are two phrases that I say with the class participants. These help us carry with us the ideas from class. One is “Namaste.” It means, “I honor that higher place in you. That is the place of light and love. And when you and I are both in that higher place, there really is only One of us.” The other phrase we say was taught to me by my teachers, Sharon and David. It is, “Om, bolo sat guru bhagavan ki! Jai!” Loosely translated this means, “And God is the only real teacher here! Alleluia!” In my opinion, that declaration sums up the total meaning of “Karma Yoga”.

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