

FROM KARMA TO MOKSHA*

Introduction

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These two simple aims I will approach in the simplest of ways: by exercising reason merely to analyse, step by step, the move *from* doing things *to* achieving the liberation in question. That what I say is simply said, should be no demerit. Complexity is simple to achieve; simplicity is far more complex.

Karma and its Traces

It is sometimes said that all actions leave traces inside, or in what I will call "the psyche", to avoid the scholarly point whether *manas* or (as I believe) *buddhi* is correctly the "repository" spoken of here. And whilst it is not clear that *all* actions do this, nor clear that the "inside" spoken of here is a repository *in fact*, rather than the sum total of these traces and other states

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of consciousness (as Buddhism normally would tend to say), without doubt at least many, and probably most things we do, leave such traces.

These traces—call them “memory traces” if you wish—or such of them as are associated with likes or dislikes, give rise to inclinations or dispositions to behave in a certain way when we find ourselves in future situations similar in appropriate ways to those which led to these traces. *How* they do this is no doubt a matter for psychology, or some other appropriate science *describing* what we are, inside. But it is easy enough to see *why* “memory traces” of deeds we liked or did not like should be used by us to formulate standing policies of warming-to or fleeing-from such deeds, or the situations which evoked them, in the future. Nothing is more natural than avoiding what we do not like and seeking what we do. These inclinations or dispositions are called *vāsanās* or *samskāras* by Hinduism, and, normally, *samskāras* only by Buddhism. They are “*karma*”, where this means “what we accumulate inside, on doing deeds”, rather than merely “deeds”. “*Karma*” is a very ambiguous word with several clear *meanings*, of which these are two. Here the meanings are so distinct that they have different referents—something outwardly observable, or normally so, in the one case, and something inwardly lodged, or “rooted” in the psyche, as a result of this outward observable thing, in the other.

Now, those traces which incline us *towards* things bind us to these things by being *of the essence* of our attachment to them, where this attachment is a mental rather than a physical thing. We can be bound to something physically, by a chain or a rope, or mentally—perhaps “emotionally” would be a better word—when the bond would be nothing so tangible, but rather more often in terms of inclinations to possess, or be in the constant presence of, what we are thereby bound to. To be bound to my wife, or my job, or my *Ishta-Devatā*, is constantly to want to possess, or be in the presence of, what these things are, or stand for, or to be in fact, perhaps reluctantly, possessed by these things, in the sense that one’s perhaps reluctantly imposed—drive to be in their constant presence determines one’s policies of action.

Accordingly, the kind of *vāsanās* I have, will in part depend on the kind of situation I find, or put, myself in. In which

case, because it is overwhelmingly true that most situations I am in are worldly, finite, limited ones, and because it is “only human” to like at least very much what is worldly, it would be *vāsanās* entailing attachment to things worldly, finite and limited I will overwhelmingly incline to cultivate. Let me call these “attachment”.

I will, then, be bound overwhelmingly by my own deeds and their consequences to this world of limits, a world which, on the whole, and in the eyes of most, is riddled with unsatisfactoriness. That it is so is not something I will try to argue in this paper, even if it did not seem to me to be obvious. Certainly our world is imperfect: and to most, this differs but little from *finding* it unsatisfactory. Strictly speaking of course, “being imperfect” is a property of the world, whereas “being unsatisfactory” would seem to be rather more a property of how we *find* it. But the difference is marginal, for finding *imperfection* satisfactory—and I do not mean “satisfying”—when *perfection* is possible in scarcely rational. Still, *dukha* is the term I have in mind in speaking of “unsatisfactoriness”, and though this relates to how the world *effects* us, it also refers to how it *is* that it should affect us this way—that it *should* cause us suffering, pain, disquiet, anxiety, imbalance, and a sense of incompleteness or “wrong-centredness” (the *lit.* translation of *duḥkha*). It is no mere accident that we suffer *dhukha* in this world. We suffer it in part *because it is* this world, and not another.

To most, then, the quest for what is satisfactory will involve a reaching beyond or in some way out of this world, and hence an effort to shatter our bonds of attachment to it. In Hindu terms, it will involve an effort to be rid of binding—*karma*, that is, of all those *vāsanās* which chain us to this world, and hence to unsatisfactoriness.

How do we achieve this shattering of bondage to attachment? Well, one obvious thing we can do at least to stop the uprising of *vāsanās* is to stop their source, that is, *action*. But this is, firstly, only a way of stopping the rise of new ones, and does nothing to rid us of the ones we have. And, secondly, whilst embedded in this world, action of some kind is unavoidable. In the words of *Gita*:

*na hi kascit kṣhanam api
jatu tishtati akarmakṛt
karyate hi avasah karma
sarvab prakṛtijair gunaiḥ* (III: 5)

No one, even for an instant ever abides (in this world) without doing deeds (*akarma-kert*), for one is forced to do deeds, regardless, indeed, all (beings) are, through (the influence of) the *gunas* born of *prakṛti* (that is, because of what it is to be enmeshed in matter, to have a body in a world of bounded bodies.) Accordingly, “a body-bearing being simply cannot abandon (*tyāga*) action altogether”.¹

And thirdly, if *karma* is one’s chosen or appropriate *yoga*, or path to “union” through *moksha*, action is doubly unavoidable. So, on both counts, we must find some way of *acting* which (i) does not make new *vāsanās*, and (ii) gets rid of old ones.

Karma and Dharma

On (ii)—acting to get rid of existing “attachment”—a few brief remarks must suffice for now, as it is by way of approaching (i) that our aim in this paper—of relating *moksha* to *karma*—will best be satisfied. Broadly speaking, existing *vāsanās* are to be eradicated, or “burnt-out” (*dagdha*) to use the *Gītā*’s term—by doing *dharma*, where this means, “action designed to establish right-centredness (*sukha*), integration or proper-order”. *Dharma*, of course, comes from “*dhr*”, “to uphold”, “sustain”, “support”, “nourish”; hence, “to bring together”, “to integrate”. In Professor Nikam’s words, “*Dharma* is like the centripetal force in nature which keeps things to the centre; *dharmā* is the centripetal force in man, society, and the universe.”² This very much echoes St. Paul’s words about all *creation* “groaning” in bondage, awaiting “salvation”.

Professor Nikam is of course using the word *dharma* to refer to the underlying drive all things have towards right-centredness, or, in the words of modern science, the tendency a system has to maintain balance, or equilibrium. In passing, I note the apparent puzzle—since seeming exception—presented by the doctrine of “entropy”, the suggestion, now widely made by modern science, that the Cosmos is running down, and coming to a halt. This is of course exactly what Hinduism teaches in saying we are now

1. *na hi dehabhrtā sakyam tyaktum karman aseshtah.*

2. N.A. Nikam. *Some concepts of Indian Culture*, (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1967) p. 25.

in the *Kali-Yuga*. For this is that “dark”—age when all things are decadent, on the brink of dissolution (*Pralāya*), when, in the words of the masterful Irish poet much influenced by Indian thought, W.B. Yeats:

“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world”. (*The Second Coming*)

But this is no real puzzle, being properly understood in terms of a higher order, and a deeper centre. It is centring things in the Ultimate that truly matters; and That in the end stands outside of time and space, or the *samsara-cakra*, wherein alone things can fall apart and fail to hold.

Now, this “centring”, or “balancing”, or “integrating” in the case of mankind naturally means, “living in terms of what he really is (*ātman*)”, a knowledge of which he will not achieve until *moksha* gives rise to Enlightenment or, in the wonderfully succinct phrase or the *Gītā*, *Brahman-Nirvāna* (B.G. II: 72; V: 24-26). This latter, it is important to stress in passing, is no tendentious claim, wanting in justification, but a simple one, based on one scarcely disputable premiss—that what I presently *think* I am is not an accurate picture of what I really am. It is clear to most of us that we do not understand ourselves very well, to most, indeed, that we understand ourselves very ill. So that what we are has yet to be found out. “Enlightenment” is simply a word referring at least to what we will find out in knowing ourselves properly.

Dharma, denoting the cosmic order, when applied to man implies a threefold meaning:

- (i) deeds needed to integrate, or establish proper order, within himself;
- (ii) deeds needed to integrate, or establish proper order, within or of society;
- (iii) deeds needed to integrate, or establish proper order, within or of the Cosmos.

And these, I believe—thought at least the first raises questions I cannot deal with here—could be summarized as: (i) authentic *art*; (ii) authentic *morality*; (iii) authentic *religion*. And because, what I mean by “art” is, “an effort truly directed to expressing and promoting what one is”, and by “morality” and “religion”, a similar effort to express or promote, in the first

case, what others are, and in the second, what the Cosmos ultimately is, all such behaviour must, *eo ipso*, be directed away from any stress upon, and hence attachment to, what these things are not, and so away from unsatisfactoriness. In which case, *dhārmic* behaviour, which is what this now clearly is, must lead away from, circumvent, or, if you wish, “burn out”, all presently existing *vāsanās*, since it is explicitly behaviour which in no way flows from them. They may continue to exist as psychic (or whatever) realities, but the person, whose ones they were, has disowned and detached himself from them.

What now, though, of how to be sure that no new *vāsanās* arise, especially given that at least many, perhaps most of our deeds do not appear to be any of (i) to (iii), in the sense in which these terms are understood to *mark off* forms of behaviour from other forms? Normally, artistic, moral and religious behaviour fall into quite specific categories which mark them off from probably most of ordinary daily, deeds we do. So that, whilst *dhārmic* behaviour which truly directs itself to what these things (one’s person, that of another, or the Cosmos) really are—and we must remember that our *dhārmic* efforts can be more or less successful, or, if we do not want to call behaviour which tries to direct itself properly, but fails, “*dhārmic*”, then, our efforts *to be dhārmic* can be more or less successful—whilst truly *dhārmic* behaviour will not accumulate new attachments, being behaviour which breaks attachment by leading away from what we are bound to, or by, the problem nonetheless remains. Therefore, much and likely most of our behaviour seems not to be *dhārmic* in this quite specific sense.

The answer here is a simple one. Part of the genius of most wisdom profound in its “life-style”—altering effect is its simplicity. It’s what one should expect, of course, given that the life’s wisdom is directed at changing are not merely those of deep-thinkers, but predominantly those of simple people. The simple secret, then, is that of adopting a certain attitude—the attitude of simply not wanting the “fruit” (*phala*) which might come from this bounded world of unsatisfactoriness, as a result of acting in it. Any worldly products which might come are neither here nor there, a matter of total indifference. (See, for instance, B.G. II:47-51). Whether, in other words, one’s deeds succeed or fail of their worldly aim is not a concern which in any way troubles their doer, whose attitude is one of *utter detachment* from any worldly product deeds may bring. His attitude to them

is “stabilized” or “samed” (*samo bhūtvā*; B.G. II:48). This is the attitude, or orientation of person, the *Gītā* advances as *nishkāma karma*, or “desireless deeds”.

The actual term “*nishkāma karma*” occurs nowhere in the *Gītā* but terms very close to it do, and the doctrine unmistakably does. Perhaps the most cogent expression of this doctrine is centrally located in the very final chapter, showing its importance to the author. In the words of the second *śloka* of this chapter:

*kāmyānam karmanām nyāsam
samnyāsam kavayo viduḥ
sarvakarmaphalatyaḡam
prāḡbus tyāgam vicakḡshanāḡh* (B.G. XVIII: 2).

This I would render as follows:

The renouncing of desireful-deeds the Sages regard as true *samnyāsa* (i.e. authentic renunciation of unsatisfactoriness); ‘all action-fruit’ abandonment the Wise declare to be true *tyāga* (i.e. authentic abandonment of unsatisfactoriness).

Or again: “a body-bearing being simply cannot abandon action altogether; but he who abandons *karma-phala* is truly called a *tyāgi* (authentic abandoner of attachment to unsatisfactoriness).”

*nī hi dehabhrtā sakyam
tyaktum karmāni aśeshataḡ
yas tu karmaphalatyaḡi
sa tyāgi iti abhidhiyate.* (B.G. XVII: 11)

The doctrine is clear; and is made clearer still in the context of the rest of this chapter, especially *ślokas* 1 to 17. (See also, II: 47-48; III: 4; V: 18-28).

In brief, then, acting with no desire (*kāma*) for the worldly, and hence unsatisfactory “fruits” of one’s deeds, is the simple key to action which produces no further attachment. It is in the end also the key to being rid of the ones we have, or at least being rid of their influence, to not being a prey to attachment. For if one acts with *nishkāma*, one thereby acts in a detached way, so not in an attached way, *so not in a way motivated by attachment*.

And when one’s deeds *also* are *dhārmic*, then, not only do they lead away from the domain of *vāsanās*, by creating no new ones and abrogating the influence (at least) of old ones, but they

also lead one towards *moksha* by, of their very nature, promoting that right-order which is proper self-understanding.

Kāma, Nishkāma, and Mumukshutva:

One word is perhaps needed here. In teaching that deeds must be “desireless”, or not motivated by any “inclining traces” (*vāsanās*), the *Gītā* is not abrogating all “desires”, where by this let us now more explicitly mean, “drives to get or achieve or possess something for oneself”. For, in the *Gītā* as elsewhere, one desire is explicitly advocated—namely, and simply, desire for release from the bondage of unsatisfactoriness, that is, for *moksha*, and hence for release from the bondage of all other desires. It is this “desire” which Saṅkara in his *Vivekacūdāmani*, and Sadānanda, in his *Vedāntasāra*, specify as one of the important pre-conditions an authentic *sishya* must satisfy to be worthy of teaching—namely, *mumukshutva*, which the latter work quite explicitly defines as “*mokshā-desiring*” (“*mumukshutva-mokshecca*”, *Vedāntasāra*, sect. 25).

In brief, then, all attachment-promoting, possession-acquiring *kāma* is here spoken against, which in effect means, overwhelmingly most *kāma*. All, indeed, but that single desire (*mumukshutva*) in the name of which all other desires are deplored. And it is as well to note that since the single exception has the Spiritual goal as its end, it is not a desire for something one even could get attached to or jealously possess. It is a desire for full realization, through full knowledge, or *what you really are*; hence not for something you might *have* which would, *eo ipso* differ from you. And whilst you can, in a sense, be attached to your *vision* of this goal before you get there, *when* you get there, *what* you then “get” is no possession, but simply *what you are*, now properly understood. What you are is not a thing you can *have* like other things, for *having* things involves a certain *twosome*: the *haver*, and *thing had*, (which differs from him). But there is clearly no sense in which what you are, the making consciously real of which is the goal of the Spiritual quest, can differ from what you are, as *haver* or otherwise.

What is more, it is claimed—though I will not argue this case here, which is anyway only provable *in and through* the realization in question—that what is then attained to *proves* to be unbounded, indeed, of the nature of *freedom, per se*. If so,

it cannot be “possessed” for yet another reason—that you cannot “possess” something with no boundaries.

Now everything I have said of course means that when you do achieve the Spiritual goal of *moksha*, then there assuredly is absolutely no *kāma*, in the sense of “drive to get or achieve or possess something for oneself”, because then, not even the only kind of laudable desire—*mumukshutva*—is any longer either relevant or possible. One could have no reason for desiring something one knowingly has; and unless one were in some strange way divided against oneself, as the realization in question would *of its nature* ensure one was not, nor could one even *possibly* desire something one knowingly has. And it is this, the absolutely desireless nature of the *jivanmukta* (living-released one), or *siddha* (perfected-one), which sometimes leads to puzzles about the possibility of such a one *acting* in our world.

The American philosopher, W.T. Stace, well presents these puzzles in the following dialogue between himself and a Buddhist monk:

Stace: Nirvana is said to be the cessation of all craving. But a man cannot act, cannot even breathe, without desire, so how can Buddha walk, eat and sleep without desire?

Buddhist: He will have the usual desires, but he is detached from them. His desires will not be egoistic.

Stace: Is egoistic the same as selfish, detached the same as unselfish?

Buddhist: No. In detachment the desire is ‘rootless’. It is not rooted in the self. Action takes place and is motivated by desires, but the inner personality remains withdrawn and not involved in the desires. If the desires of the man who is detached are not fulfilled he remains serene and unaffected because his personality is not involved; but those who are still attached may become neurotic, as so often happens, especially in the West.

Stace: It is difficult to understand how a man can have a desire and not be involved in it. It sounds like having a desire and yet not having it.

Buddhist: Yes. I think this kind of impersonality has to be

experienced before it can be understood. It is part of the 'enlightenment' experience.³

And whilst I would prefer to speak of "attainment" or "realization" and not "experience", for the latter in its usual usage involves a twosome—experiencer and his object—whereas the former two need not, the message here is clear namely, *that* people we have every reason to believe are Enlightened act in the bounded world is beyond doubt, even should *how* they do prove baffling, indeed.

But these are issues I will return to later, and for now it is relevant only to note that, though there may be no *desire* present to a *siddha*, in the sense of, nothing he *wants* or could want, to get or achieve for himself, he still may well have some *purpose* in acting—namely, what he would *like others* to get. Briefly, though action by a *siddha* cannot in any way relate to promoting *moksha* for *this* being—because *this* being has it—it can relate to promoting it for others. Some of this is a little premature, however, and I want to expose it gradually by now addressing another seeming puzzle about *moksha* so far left untouched, and also by relating what I now want to say back to our earlier discussion of *dharmā*.

Moksha, Nirvāna and Ātma-Vidyā

At first it may seem not to follow that *moksha* necessarily ensures *ātma-vidyā*, and so at least the necessary pre-condition for wisdom about right (*dhārmic*)—behaviour in its regard—for except by extraordinary chance, doing what is best for a person involves *knowing* what will "fulfil" him, and this must involve a knowledge of the "him" to be fulfilled. Merely being rid of what binds me to ignorance (*avidyā*) about my true nature—i.e., merely achieving *moksha*—may not *of itself* ensure or bring with it full *knowledge* of this nature. Certainly, though, at least the portals to Enlightenment would now have been opened, for nothing now could influence me other than in the direction of proper self-knowledge. And something which removes all hindrance to

Enlightenment—it will prove important now to note—cannot be other than "right-order" (*rta*)—promoting, since, by definition, it does none other than remove obstacles to truth—the truth about one's person. And it is acting in terms of "truth", in the sense of the true nature (*tattva*) of things, which establishes right-order, *ex hypothesi*.

But despite this cautionary note, there is no real reason to doubt that *moksha* will do other than *always* result in what the *Gītā* aptly calls "*Brahman-Nirvāna*", that is, the Enlightenment of full *ātma-vidyā*. For if all obstacles to my self-knowledge have been removed, so nothing could influence me but to satisfy the Delphic Oracle's injunction, only one other premise is needed to conclude that I will, because must, know myself—namely, that what "I" am as *ātman* always shows itself when nothing stops it doing so. And I believe we can offer a simple argument to vouchsafe this premise. Briefly, if nothing stops it, if all the obstacles to its knowledge and expression have been removed, then what is there, wakefully present to me (or to my awareness), must simply *be* what it is. For I always am what I most truly am (*ātman*), whether this is hidden by these obstacles *from* me (my wakeful awareness), or not. And, simply, if it is not hidden, if nothing keeps me from It, It just is there, as "object" (as well as "subject") of any self-awareness I could have. Nothing could be simpler. And *if* what it is just is there—since nothing now clouds or fosters delusion about its nature—it not only now is true that nothing hinders my clear view of it, but also true that only what it is, *and nothing else*, can be present to me *as* what I am. If so, my self-knowledge must now be truly of what I am, must, that is, be *ātma-vidyā* perforce.

Moksha and the Purpose of Action:

Returning now to the issue of action and its purpose, we note that what is *not* being said in advocating *nishkāma karma* is that one should not be concerned about results of action. Indeed, it is being affirmed that, in *nishkāma karma*, one is, or should be, *wholly* concerned that results of one's and of others deeds be of one quite specific kind—*moksha*—promoting. And this, we have noted, comes down to saying that one's concern here must extend to:

- (a) seeing that one's deeds are *of a kind* that are *dhārmic*;

3. W.T. Stace. "The Oriental Conception of Detachment & Enlightenment", *Philosophy East & West*, Vol. 2. p. 25

and (b) seeing that one does this *kind* of deed—roughly what we would call “good” as distinct from “bad”—so that, in detail, they are *dhārmic*.

This is why the common translation “being *indifferent* to success or failure” for the *Gītā*’s “*siddhyasiddhyah samo bhūtvā*” (II:48), is likely to be misleading, and why “stabilized” or the more literal “samed” are better. It is not that one should be *wholly indifferent* to outcome, no matter what, for one’s concern should always be that *moksha*, its possibility for oneself or another, either be enhanced or not hindered by one’s every deed. It is rather that, in the first place, one remain steadfast (*stanu*), tranquil, unmoved, or “the same”, whatever be the outcome, success or failure, of one’s deeds, and, in the second, that *worldly* fruits, or their lack, be a matter of no concern.

Accordingly, justifiable purpose in acting can be twofold:

- (i) *moksha*-promoting for oneself; and
- (ii) *moksha*-promoting for others.

Which leads to one very important, though very simple corrective to the very common misunderstanding that achieving *moksha* can leave no room for justifiable action, no room, that is, for acting with justifiable purpose or intent. Professor Ingalls, for instance, could be guilty of this blunder when he remarks, “*Moksha* is a state where there can be no change, where there can be no plurality. Accordingly, *moksha* excludes action... One must get rid not only of immorality (*adharma*), but of morality (*dharma*) also.”⁴

Two obvious things bear comment here. Firstly, the initial fact that *moksha* is not a “state”, being rather the more abstract pre-condition for the “state” of Enlightenment or *Nirvāna* presumably in question—and it is obviously doubtful that “state” is the right word, in any case, even for these. *Moksha* is “the being liberated from obstacles to this ‘state’”, and not the then resultant “state” itself. Secondly, it is anyway obvious that only one of the purposes one might justifiably have for acting has been rendered redundant in achieving *moksha*. And whilst Ingalls’s objection is in part the unexciting *metaphysical* one that, in

a boundless, changeless “state” action is not possible, there is all the difference in the world between acting *in* that “state” (which is metaphysically impossible), and acting *from* it, *in* another.

His objection is clearly more than this, though, he goes on to say that “one must get rid not only of immorality (*adharma*) but of morality (*dharma*) also”, making it clear that, in achieving *moksha*, one goes beyond he believes *dharma* altogether. But this is not true, or at least need not be, for there is clearly a form of *dhārmic* action not only open to, but also to be expected of the *siddha*, or Perfected One—namely, *moksha*-promoting for others. Given that others cannot break themselves into Enlightenment without aid, it is clearly incumbent, *metaphysically* more than morally, on the *siddha* to assist them in doing so. It is ever true that God cannot leave us comfortless. In part, confusion here is due to the fact that the notion of a being acting *from* the *siddhi*—“state”, *in* another, has two aspects not clearly disengaged by careless statements like “*moksha* excludes action”—namely, *how* such any one might act in this way, and *why* he should.

How a being who achieves *moksha*, and so really dwells in *Nirvāna*, can behave so that he also at least appears to dwell and act among us, may prove most difficult to fathom. But it is not a problem peculiar to Hinduism, but the general puzzle of how the Ultimate, being Infinite, can ever be incarnate. This Kierkegaard described as Christianity’s central paradox, and its greatest scandal; and St. Paul as, “foolishness to the Greeks (whose logic could admit no such possibility), and a stumbling block to the Hebrews (whose tradition could not admit an incarnate *servant*-*(Messiah)*.” And though mystery in the quite literal sense of *mysterion* (“hidden”) it may well be to the less-than-Enlightened, the fact is that it nonetheless is claimed, and quite clearly evidenced to be. For there is about the truly Enlightened One, the *buddha*, the *jivan-mukta*, or *siddha*, that which can only be adequately accounted for on the hypothesis of him being as claimed. Any *jivan-mukta* or *siddha* is simply too wondrous and marvelous in all his ways for any less mysterious, more mundane explanation to hold good about his person.

The seeming “hiddenness to mind” (*mysterion*) of *how it is* that a *siddha* operates in this world is well brought out by the dialogue I quoted earlier between Stace and the Buddhist monk. For the latter’s final reply to Stace’s disingenuous suggestion that desireless action seems inconceivable is, “Yes”. I think this kind

4. Ingalls. “Dharma and Moksha”, *Philosophy East & West*, Vol. 7, P.42.

of personality has to be experienced before it can be understood. It is part of the "Enlightenment experience." In other words, how a being who is detached from those things which once bound him to this world can nonetheless continue to *act* in this world, may prove hard to grasp for those still attached, perhaps even impossible for all but the *wholly* detached, or fully Enlightened Ones. And yet, on one simple level, part of the puzzle would seem to be a certain obtuseness on the part of Stace; for there seems no obvious reason why a person must be attached to, in the sense of "possess", something to *act* in its regard. And if there is not, no puzzle whatever remains about how a person might act towards something he is wholly detached from. For at this simple level, detachment is merely a matter of disowning, of counting as no part of one's essential person (*ātman*). And this I think goes much of the way towards dispelling puzzles about *how* detached persons may act in this world, by showing the fact of *detachment* need present no problem.

What of course must remain obscure is *how* a being whose now understood essence transcends our bounded world can nonetheless be found *in* it. But this obscurity is not, as often thought, a *logical*, oddity, but an *ontological* one, even if we accept Kierkegaard's term of "paradox" for it. It is not a matter of any suggestion confounding or contradicting logic, but of being beyond the reach of any understandings we presently have, since beyond the scope of any *experienced being* our world has opened to us. Despite what is often said, there is nothing logically strange about the possibility of levels of "being" beyond the limits of any we presently know. Nor is there any logical reason why these levels should not embrace our own *as well as* transcend them. This phenomenon is common enough, not only in science, but even in the commonest experience a mature person has of life. Maturation is very much a matter of achieving levels of understanding which reach beyond the one we once had, by explaining everything the latter could, but much else besides.

And that there should be *levels of being* whose understanding gives us more solutions to how things are other than such levels, and so are more ultimate in that way, is not at all odd. Whether there are such, remains, a matter of realizing them; and in that degree, how the being of a *siddha in fact* relates to our bounded world must remain "hidden" to all but another *siddha*, as the nature of colour is "hidden" to the blind. The latter is

more *logically* odd than the former. Both are matter quite simply of *realized ontology*, practical problems, not logical ones.

On the other hand, *why* such a one *should* so behave, *should* act *in* our bounded world, though being not *of* it (in the way *we* are), is no mystery at all. He does so because the second justifiable purpose clearly applies in his case. He does so, in other words, to lead others to *moksha*. There is, in other words, a very simple way in which his action could be *dhārmic*—the way in which his every deed could, and, by the nature of the case, would be *moksha*-promoting for others. This is of course entirely the *Buddha's* philosophy of "compassion", and the reason certain *Mahayana* Buddhist monks and nuns take the *boddbhisattva* vow namely, the vow not to dwell eternally absorbed in *nirvāna*, but to rather dwell "in" (though not of) this, our bounded world until all creatures have achieved *moksha*.

But of course, though he may be spoken of as "doing *dharma*" the *siddha* can no longer be said to be "doing *karma-yoga*", since having achieved the goal, he is no longer *on the way*, so no longer in need of a method (*yoga*) to take him, or keep him, there.

And yet, he is also that being the *Gītā* describes as "the true *Yogi*", the One, and the only One, who is "truly Unioned".