

# **Karma and Karma Yoga: Same Same but Different**

**“I don’t think you understand how unattractive hate is.” Steve Martin *L.A. Story***

What would you like to see change in the world?

What service could you provide to help facilitate this change?

Where does your passion for change come from?

What is the driving force behind this passion?

What sustains this driving force and how do you connect with it?

Karma is the theory that all actions have a reaction, all causes have a consequence. All thought and doing create a karmic reaction, energy is created from the action and carries forward. All actions are caused by preceding karma. Karma can be changed by Stillness and Non-being. By changing habits in the mind and in body karma can dead-end. Karma is also the re incarnation of unsettled desires, ignorance and habitual patterns in previous life times resurfaced in the present time (or from this birth to this very moment.) Karma ends when the small, relative mind joins with the Big, Absolute Mind, where all actions and desire cease, when there is nothing to be gained or lost. When the wheel of our personal suffering ends we no longer are controlled by our karmic patterns and will no longer return to this form to fulfill Relative needs and wants. Karma Yoga is doing action without thought of its consequence, which strangely sounds like the *mode of operation* of children! But actually Karma Yoga happens when we dedicate the fruits of our labor to something other than our selves (namely God, or Humanity) and when we ultimately know we are not the doers of our actions, but simply the body that moves.

As a Yoga teacher I am not interested in you changing the world; I am interested in your relationship to your own Wisdom and the Greater Self that contains even the cruelest parts of humanity in our own beings. As all violence is an expression of unmet needs, we too contain these needs and must first identify within ourselves the urge for fulfilling and expressing various needs. To truly understand and empathize with those who commit crimes and violence to others, both systematic and personal, we must understand our own longings and strategies. Working toward a peaceful world and just society is possible when we first meet our own needs for love, peace, joy, safety, etc. According to Yogic philosophy creating a sattvic lifestyle, or Sattva in society, can be dependant upon using rajās. In other words, movement and energy, caused even by anger, frustration and sadness, are useful at times to spark the flame of service, to foster the care and contemplation that’s needed for spiritual growth in the world. Yoga does not recommend doing nothing in the face of suffering, but asks us to choose the most sattvic path to creating sattvic change; meaning, choose what’s most beneficial for our own and other’s well-being during the moments of our daily lives. Turn off the TV, watch our minds and be kind to others!

Yoga is a way of *being* in the world that at the same time is not dependant on the world for the self’s transcendence. Yoga is like the Energy of the Earth, a force that supports

the beings and planet it houses but is not affected by how life takes shape upon its surface. So as a Yoga teacher I am interested in how your search for external change brings you to the deeper longing of our small selves to be in union with the Greater Self. And as we see how this process changes us we are no longer affected by what we fear and what we want changed, and allow our new selves to be “the change we hope to see in the world” and for ourselves to be the model for Peace, Joy and Happiness. And of course, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Yoga’s most deeply loved story illuminating the 4 Paths, inspired Gandhi himself.

Karma Yoga is one of the four major paths of Yoga. In essence it is selfless service, dedicating our actions and their results to the Harmony and Grace of the Greater World. Can you serve without thoughts of your self? If the feelings of happiness, satisfaction, or joy arises during service that does not mean you are serving selfishly, as long as those feelings are not the motivation. Can you imagine that type of service, giving without regard to the state of your own being? And so what if you serve with the intention of feeling satisfied? That’s OK too! Just know that Karma Yoga in practice is the offering, the sacrifice, of what you gain. Give, give, give!!! If at this time in your life, this type of service is not applicable or appropriate, then choose another path that will lead you to the greater peace you desire. Each of the 4 Paths specifies a practice to reaching our ultimate goal of living our Peace and being Happiness. These Paths offer ways of being in the world that uses devotion to God, wisdom of self and others, service, and study of self as the foundation for our everyday lives and moment-to-moment choices. They serve as support for our lives as well, providing us with ways of grounding and connection. If you want to see a happier world, become happy, if it’s Peace you seek, become Peace. This is where the 4 Paths lead: to the actual practice of what we Are and who we want to Become.