

“The Carrot”

So why strive for *Moksha*?

In attaining *Moksha* you are liberated from the continuous cycles of *samsara*, and the burdens and sorrows, the fears and pains associated with the desires of the finite life. You are liberated with the oneness of the Infinite, with bliss and ultimate joy. You dissolve your individuality into the oneness of *Brahman/Atman*, or rephrased, you are as a rain drop falling back into the great ocean, your distinctiveness as an individual droplet lost in the vastness of the great water, your essence reunited with the perennial truth and meaning of its ultimate being.

But dissolution into the Infinite?

Are you still asking, “I don’t get it?”

**What’s in it for me? What’s the carrot? Why should I seek
Moksha?**

Some considerations (“a teaching moment”):

1. **“What’s in it for me?”** Let’s first consider the phrasing of our question and its implications. I’m not sure a Hindu would even ask such a question, as rephrased, I’m not clear in what I would get from pursuing such a course of action? What’s **“in it”** for me if I do this? What’s the **“carrot”** to be earned? What’s the consequence of my actions

The pivotal Hindu proposition, “Act, renouncing the fruits of one’s action,” clearly redirects one away from looking for rewards, for fruits, of one’s actions. As we’ll **more fully discuss** when we discuss *Karma Yoga*, but for now we can perhaps appreciate the awareness, that to do so ultimately results in holding onto the attachments of ego desires, which prevent us from moving toward Divinity.

Part of our challenge in appreciating this proposition is on the nature of the causation upon which it is predicated. A core American value revolves around being **goal oriented**, driven by anticipated rewards and avoidance of possible

punishments. It encapsulates the Aristotelian notion of **final causes** (material, efficient and formal). One asks what the consequences, the effects, the functions of something are in order to understand the cause, the motivation of an action. Certainly our sciences are driven by searching out consequences of experimentation, a new cure, a new energy source, a new technology. Capitalism is driven by market forces that reward effort. Some forms of Christianity focus on motivating parishioners' actions by considering of the consequences of one's action, the rewards of everlasting life or damnation to hell. This is all very distinct from **formal cause**, which asks what the original design, pattern, and essence of something are in order to understand the cause, the motivation of an action.

So the issue of what motivates people can still be addressed, just stated differently. As the consequences of our actions are not the motivations for moving people along the path toward *Moksha*, the motivations for the Hindu derive from an acknowledgement of and adherence to one's social and spiritual *dharma*, one's authentic intentions and responsibilities, one's essence, formal cause. It is the "seed," the unfolding germ potentiality, of the carrot that is the motivating force, rather than the carrot itself, the "fruit."

Thus re-stated, the Hindu would more likely ask, "If I am true to myself, my essence, my *dharma*, my pure intentions, how can I do other than strive for *Moksha*, of allowing the seed to germinate and grow to its ultimate fruition?"

2. "What's in it for me?" The next challenge comes from our attempt at even conceptualizing the nature of *Moksha*, or specifically, a critical aspect of the nature of *Moksha*, i.e., the dissolving of one's identity. The possibility of the death of one's "individuality" goes against the core values of our American cultural. "Individuality" is the dominating social and spiritual construct, anchored to our political axioms (individual rights and freedoms), our economic axioms (individual producers and consumers, maximizing gains and minimizing losses), our educational axioms (graded on individual merit), our philosophical axioms

(individual volition, free will, ethical responsibility), our religious axioms (redemption of individual souls, held accountable at the “day of judgment”). “Individualism” is the quintessential construct of our American culture. Why would we ever want to surrender it? Why would anyone? We must get beyond our ethnocentric bias in order to begin to grasp the nature of *Moksha*. In the “want’s in it for **me**,” the “me” is part of the challenge. The “**me**” has to go if you are to reach *Moksha*.

3. **The Playing the Field.** A third consideration has to do with where this drama unfolds, and its implications. The playing field, the realm within which the journey from continual *samsara* toward *Moksha* is occurring is already **within** you. The great debates and challenges, the strivings and sufferings, the joys and sorrows, the great questions and the heroic quests are all unfolding within you – the exchanges between Krishna and Arjuna, the journey from the finite *maya* to Infinite *Brahman/Atman*.

There is no dualism – no God, out there, which we seek to become one with; It’s already within, albeit veiled and extremely difficult to realize.

4. **The Becoming.** So when Krishna, in chapter 10:41, states to Arjuna: “Whatever is glorious, excellent, beautiful, and mighty, be assured that it comes from a fragment of My splendor,” and continues in chapter 11:12, “Could a thousand suns blaze forth together, it would be but a faint reflection of the radiance of the Lord God”

As the “My” (the Krishna, the Brahman, the Atman) is already within you, it is a journey of **removing** your accumulated *karma*, of **dissolving** your ego attachments and desires, of **adhering** to your *dharma*, of **transcending** the illusion of the *maya* all around, including the clinging to your own “individuality”

and of finally realizing what you have sought all your many previous lives, of **becoming, of knowing**, that which is . . . “glorious, excellent, beautiful, and mighty” all that is the Infinite.

All your greatest **questions are answered**; all your most noble **quests are reached** and fulfilled. (Of course your questions and quests become meaningless upon dissolution into the Infinite.)

If all that is truth, glorious, excellent, beautiful and mighty is *Brahman/Atman*, reached upon becoming *Moksha*, would you not want to merge with it?

As a drop of rain returning to the great ocean, your essence reunited with the truth of your being?

Implications:

Can you reach *Moksha* if you are searching for “**rewards**” for your actions?

Can you reach *Moksha* shackled to your “**individuality**”?

Can you reach *Moksha* without acknowledging that *Brahman/Atman* already exists **within** yourself?

Can you reach *Moksha* without holding that the **ultimate realization** is “glorious, excellent, beautiful, and mighty, be assured that it comes from a fragment of My splendor, . . . could a thousand suns blaze forth together, it would be but a faint reflection of the radiance of the Lord God”?