

Looking for Love

Hi Ramji,

Atma Bodh begins with:

*"I am composing this treatise on Self-Knowledge
for those who are purified and peaceful,
calm of mind, free of craving,
and desirous of Liberation."*

"Free of craving" - including craving for happiness? I thought that equanimity is one of the qualifications necessary for self inquiry. Isn't **any** desire a hindrance?

Ram: No, definitely not. You always have desire. Without desire you die. The most important qualification for enlightenment is a 'burning desire.' Vedanta is about you. That is all that it teaches. Who is the one who has the desire? And why do I desire?

Mike: I know I'm still stuck in Buddhism. 20 years of Zen practice have an effect. I thought that happiness is a by-product of the path, but not the goal. Happiness just happens. The happiest moments in my life were always when I did not plan them. Example: My 4-year old grand-daughter, Charlotte, took a nap at our place. When it was time to get up, her mother woke her by cuddling with her. Charlotte woke up slowly, and her mother left the room. I put my hand very gently on Charlotte's head, barely touching her. I wasn't sure whether she had gone back to sleep or not, so I slowly pulled my hand away. Charlotte reached out and pulled my hand back on her head. The happiness I felt at that moment was beyond any description; absolute pure joy. The point is though, there was no desire in advance for that happiness. It just happened.

Ram: This is circumstantial happiness. It is fine but it does not last. The

happiness actually comes from you, not the object. It is your nature. See it in yourself and every moment will be filled with it.

Bill: What I do desire, though, is to understand what Vedanta teaches. I heard so many times, "I am unconditioned awareness". I hear those words, I understand what they mean, but I just don't feel the truth of them. I suppose that I'm not fully ready yet, not fully qualified, and have to stay with karma yoga for the time being until I am ready. And the way I understand karma yoga is to do my duty, offer my efforts to Bhagavan, and be dispassionate about the results.

Ram: Vedanta only teaches that you are love. There is no other teaching. It makes you happy to seek happiness, doesn't it? Try to stop seeking happiness and you will see that happiness is your heart and soul.

Bill: I have a very difficult time putting into words on the screen how to express what I'm trying to say. Yes, I'm looking for love, but I'm not after it. Does that make sense?

Ram: No. Maybe you want to want love, but you need to do what it takes to find it. That example of the child pulling back your hand is an example of love. See what it did for you. Where is this love coming from?

Bill: As far as my wife goes, we had issues in the past, but they are mostly worked out. Right now the biggest problem is her total disinterest in spirituality and self inquiry. Well, not really a problem, but a hindrance in trying to get closer.

Ram: Why does she have to be into what you are into for you to love her? It sounds like you are putting conditions on it.

Bill: My joy comes from other, random sources, like the little girl in a shopping cart at the Target store on Sunday. As her parents pushed her past me, she looked at me, then suddenly her face beamed with the biggest smile as if she recognized me as a long lost friend. Or the exit checker at Best Buy a few weeks ago, who was talking with a colleague, but when I walked by, she turned toward me, made *namaste* and bowed to me. What was that all about?

Things like that could not possibly happen if i desired them and tried to make them happen.

Ram: See how you are looking outside for it. See the need for love. What is this need about? Is it because you do not love yourself? You can feel this way all the time if you love yourself. The child, the checker, etc. are only symbols of your self. They open the door to you, to love. You do not need someone outside to do it. You can do it yourself.

Ram