

Hi Ram and I hope you are well....on all levels....!

Ram: Sorry, no levels, Nancy my dear. Did you forget that the great Sri Ramji is non-dual?
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Nancy: I was going to wait until you came to ask you a couple of questions, but I have just read the second chapter of your book, which I downloaded from Stillness Speaks, and felt compelled to write to you. It is absolutely brilliant and I thank you for it, as I am sure will anyone who reads it, although the first part left me feeling slightly challenged at my own inadequacy of maintaining the state of Awareness I was beginning to glimpse in Tiruvannamali towards the end of my time there. I am now waiting for the book to be delivered from Amazon.

When I came back everyone commented on how different I seemed. Even my yoga tutors acknowledged that there was a huge shift and I seemed 'lighter'. I was feeling really confident, happy and relaxed about things. Then as life happened around me I observed I was getting sucked back in. By last week my mind was going really fast - something that hasn't happened for years - almost as if the mind was fighting against the Vedanta teachings and all that I was trying to put in place. I found it very hard to detach from this and was disturbed to find this happening so started applying all the yoga techniques I knew to help me to gain a quiet mind again. I also went through my notes to remind myself that, whatever apparently happens, I am happy and have all I need and that I need to let go and trust....which I am able to grasp again, but only sometimes. It always seems easier in India, although I know that sounds ridiculous.

This, then brings me to my question. I then picked up The Power of Now, as this book has really helped me in the past. (I am very interested in your very well reasoned argument about 'now' being a synonym for Awareness in relation to this book.) The main thesis of the book is, as I am sure you know, that we need to stop thinking and get the mind still in order to move beyond it. But, as you have rightly pointed out during your classes and in chapter two, this is nearly impossible. So I am now wondering where I am beginning to go wrong; that I am slipping back into experience, projection and desire in spite of my intentions to not let that happen. (But I am trying to watch myself an intervals when this happens.)

Ram: Nancy is always in experience but sadly, the experience that is upon her at the present is not the experience she wants. That is all. You, awareness, are always beyond experience. You can't slip into it because you always out of it. The conclusion is that if you

are Nancy...that is to say what Nancy wants (what is Nancy apart from a bundle of fears and desires?)...you should ask why Nancy wants her experience to be something other than what it is. The high came from the satsang environment and the teaching where the old vasanas were temporarily submerged. When you leave that environment the old vasanas come into play once more. If you stay in the satsang environment for a long time, the vasanas will become non-binding and you can go into the world without backsliding.

Nancy: So has Eckhart Tolle (my previous inspiration) got it wrong? It certainly seems to me to be so hard to keep the mind still. Should I just let the mind carry on? (Actually, I seem to have little choice, apart from practicing pratyhara when I can....if only there were an off button!). Then I question how can I teach others when I slip up so easily.

Ram: Now you understand the teaching about the mind. It is not directly under the control of the ego i.e. what you want. In the Twelve Step Program they make a big point of this, "Will power is not enough." Iswara is the Causal Body and rajas comes from it. You cannot control it. In the Twelve Step Program they then bring God, Iswara, into it. You have to appreciate the role of Iswara. You have to pray and you have to follow dharma and you have to let go of your anxiety for what you want. This is surrender. There is an article on Dennis Wait's website that deals with this. I have appended it to the bottom of this email. The language may be a bit difficult, but I think you can sort it out.

If Eckhart says what you say he says, he is wrong. Desire, rajas, is like a big strong wild horse. It takes a very long time to train it. You can only bring the mind under control **indirectly** through the yogas we discussed in class and this **may take years depending on your eligibility**. It is very easy to spout a theory in a book. Putting said theory into practice is something else entirely. Meditation, pratyahara and other 'techniques', presuppose a light vasana load with more or less non-binding rajas and tamas. Only then can you withdraw from the mind (or withdraw the mind) more or less at will.

I understand how you feel about teaching, but if people are getting a benefit and they are not being harmed you should continue. Just be honest about how difficult it is to tame the mind. Western culture is so spoiled. It wants what it wants and it wants it immediately. This may work for material objects but it does not work with subtle objects, like the mind. I suppose that if you are too honest your business will suffer because everyone that is suffering wants a quick fix. There is no quick fix. My mind is especially quiet but I have worked on it for forty years. It is all I did since I woke up. It was my career. Ramana sat in caves for twenty five years. See how long it took him to get it under control.

Psychologists and psychotherapists have the same doubts. They have done studies that show that the health of the psychiatric community is the same as that of the the general population. Yoga teachers are yoga teachers because they have found that yoga helps them to manage their minds. But only up to a point. Unless you understand the big picture – how the three bodies work i.e how the vasanas are created– techniques like yoga are only a superficial temporary fix. I have several friends who are very rajasic and who love Eckhart but have been completely unable to bring the mind under the control with the ‘be here now’ technique.

Usually Eckhart’s book is a big inspiration at first and then ends up collecting dust on the shelf. His technique suffers the fate of all techniques, the homeostatic effect i.e. they work in the short run and then wear off. Then you need another technique. It is the same effect you have with pills. I have a friend who is very rajasic and suffers insomnia who has run through dozens of different sleep medications. One works for a week or two, then ceases to work. So she gets another one. It goes on and on. Diets are another technique that only works in the short run.

It is not a question of ‘letting’ the mind do anything. It is going to do what it is going to do. But I know what you mean, so yes. Leave it alone and observe it. This is the meaning of surrender to God’s will. The mind is controlled by Iswara, the Causal Body. You have to accept it and not fight it. To bring it to its knees you need karma yoga, bhakti, sama and dama and an understanding of vasanas and karma. The greatest aid is self knowledge. But as I said above with the exception of self knowledge and meditation...which only work when the vasana load is light...these are indirect means. It takes years, particularly when the mind as rajasic as yours. I know, it is not nearly as rajasic as it once was. That is good. It shows progress. Yoga is evolutionary, not revolutionary. Progress is measured in decades, not days. Arjuna had this kind of mind. This is why Krishna spent four chapters teaching him karma yoga. K-Yoga reduces the pressure from the Causal Body that extroverts and disturbs the mind.

Nancy:(At this point I am wondering if you see Mr Tolle as a neo-advaita in which case you will probably advise me to throw the book in the bin, or worse!)

Ram: It does not matter what Eckhart says. If he can show you how to control the mind, great. But you are starting to realize what you are up against. This is very good. I am not

going to put down Eckhart or inspire you and make you feel good by pandering to your beliefs and your desires. You need wisdom. It am glad you wrote me.

Nancy: I have also been watching some of the interviews on Conscious TV - the one with Suzanne Foxton is really interesting, but it makes me wonder why some people are blessed to have direct knowledge so easily while others like me struggle. I know it is 'Grace of God.' But why?

Ram: Where were you when I spoke of qualifications? **This is the most important teaching.** It explains everything. She had the requisite qualifications, so it was easy. If you are not qualified, it is very hard. I do not know you very well but I suspect that you are the kind of person who wants what they want when they want it and get angry or depressed when you don't get it. The way you reacted to that unsuccessful business matter shows that. If you were really dispassionate, you would not have lost a moment's sleep. It would be just a house. Dispassion is the number one qualification. Without it you cannot discriminate and your mind will not be controllable.

The reason millions read Eckhart and hundreds come to Mooji is because they do not tell the truth about the qualifications - if they know the value of them. They must have had the qualifications themselves but do not realize the importance of them. Or they are just interested fame...because you will not be famous if you tell the truth about enlightenment. Very few people are interested in Vedanta because it is completely truthful about what is required. People who think controlling the mind is easy are like people who think they can understand String Theory by reading an article in the Science Section of the New York Times. It is not going to happen. Here is a quote from the first page of Mooji's book *Breath of the Absolute*, "Here (meaning Neo-Advaita) you are not being told that you must be fit for this journey."

Of course he will not insist on maturity. He would be out of a guru job. What he says is patently untrue. Thinking you can just break in off the street wet behind the ears and conquer the holy mountain of enlightenment is like a weak pasty office person showing up in Nepal in tennis shoes and shorts to conquer Everest. It is not going to happen. You have to be fit. More than fit.

Nancy: And I know you say not to ask why. But why?! For God's sake, she had this when she was just washing the dishes, which is pretty prosaic, and makes me wonder why I am practicing yoga! (Apart from the fact it makes me feel good and happy.)

Ram: You are wrong about the why. Spirituality is all about the whys. It is your yoga teachers that tell you not to ask why. They don't want you to ask because they do not know the answers. Vedanta reveals the why of everything.

The prime characteristic of a rajasic mind is called matsarya. It means comparison. It is always comparing itself to others, to what it doesn't have, to anything. In this case you are envious. Envy is rajas. Instead of thinking about all the wonderful gifts you have, you get yourself upset because somebody else got what you want. The way out of this is to keep your head down and keep your nose to the grindstone with the k-yoga attitude and just do what is in front of you at the moment. If this is what Eckhart means about being present, then it is correct as a sadhana. As you clean up the things that present themselves on a daily basis, a path opens up and you get a sense of where it is leading. You should not frustrate yourself by fixating on results. You already have a very nice life. Just do it and enjoy it. Now you want a new house and a nice long vacation etc. etc. Sit your desires down and enter into a lifelong dialog with them. Let them know who is boss and **why** they will not deliver what they purport to deliver. It seems they are pushing you around.

Nancy: On the plus side my teaching is going well, which always helps to centre me and brings me back to my true self. A lot of work is flowing to me now without me having to chase it. However, my tutors on the course I am on are trying to get us to go back to writing lesson plans in advance which I am resisting, as this is teaching from the mind not the heart, and then I feel my classes don't go so well.

Ram: Look on the bright side of life! Count your blessings. Stick with what works and be happy. Do not believe your desires. From what you want God won't save you. Save your money and go on a world cruise. No yoga or Vedanta allowed!

Nancy: In spite of my work being good, (for which I am really grateful as I can design my own life around how I want to work), having read your chapter I am wondering if I should plan to take a year out in 2011/2 for self enquiry. Do you think this would be helpful? Or is it a bit drastic? But maybe very important?! Or maybe I should wait for the book to be delivered from Amazon to read it all first and stop asking questions.....!

Ram: No. You should not take any time out for self inquiry, not even five minutes. You do not understand what self inquiry is. **You should do self inquiry all the time as you do what you do.** In the case of a rajasic person, self inquiry is the understanding that getting what

you want will not make you happy, unless what you want is self knowledge. Self knowledge will make you happy because the self is happy. Self inquiry is the application of self knowledge. Did you every study the Bhagavad Gita? This is precisely Arjuna's misunderstanding. He wants to run off from his life and do self inquiry. It does not work. Read my book. Hopefully, you will get an appreciation of the big picture and you will relax. And when you get done, read it again.

You have a very good mind, but you are willful. Take some time to understand things before you rush out to accomplish things. Be smart, not ambitious. Ambition is one of rajas' most unbecoming traits. We will talk about it when I come. This takes time, Nancy. Hasten slowly. Impatience is rajas. This is why patience is one of the qualifications for moksa.

Nancy: Sorry for the long email - I just feel in need of some spiritual guidance right now and I can't ask my mentors here any of this. I hear that your satsangs are really full and that they are continuing to enjoy them greatly.

Ram: I'm sorry I had to be a bit firm with you in this letter, but rajas makes a person pig headed.

Nancy: Looking forward to seeing you in February; let me know your flight details some time, and I would appreciate your views on the usefulness of Eckhart Tolle.

Ram: It is entry level stuff. It is yoga, but it is not proper yoga. It is cooked up for a Western audience. But if he can show you how to control your rajas in a short time I will take down my website, burn my books, put on the hair shirt and become his disciple. It's going to take you a while to see the limitations of yoga. But it seems there are cracks in the wall. It has been like a religion for you because it saved you from a lot of suffering. It is good for that. But it does not cancel the doer. The real yogas are karma yoga, jnana yoga dharma yoga and triguna vibhava yoga. The rest are just daily techniques that the ego uses to solve small daily problems. Nothing wrong with them. They do not affect the deeper layers of the mind.

Ramji's thought for the day: Dissatisfaction is rajas. Ask yourself **why** you are dissatisfied.

Hint: Because I believe I am.....?

Love,

Ram

Necessity of Iswara for Moksha

Peter is a London student of traditional vedAnta teacher, svAmini AtmaprakAshAnanda, a disciple of svAmi Dayananda Saraswati.

1. It is essential to be clear that lasting happiness will only come from understanding that 'I am *not* limited'. This understanding will *only* come to stay when I discover the truth of myself. Knowing the truth of myself is what is essentially meant by mokSha. With the appreciation that no amount of action aimed at acquiring pleasures (material, intellectual or aesthetic) or security (material, intellectual, psychological, etc.) will ever deliver me from the sense that 'I am small, I am limited', I come to realise that the notion of limitation needs to be addressed differently. This is when, if lucky, one stumbles across a teaching and a teacher that says that the notion of smallness is a mistake and the search for the truth of one's identity becomes the main aim of life (without any need to give up doing what is necessary in the world to meet the needs of daily life). This realisation is called 'puruShArtha nishcaya'.

2. It is essential to understand that without puruShArtha nishcaya there is no spirituality – there is either a life spent in pursuit of pleasure and security (with or without discipline), or a religious life which adds an ethical dimension – values and god – to the same pursuits. A spiritual person is one who is clear that mokSha is the ultimate and choiceless goal of life. He or she is invariably a religious and disciplined person; but a religious and disciplined person is not necessarily spiritual. For a spiritual person, mokSha is the primary 'driver' of activity.

3. mokSha, the freedom from the self-perception of smallness and limitedness, in other words 'happiness', is a cognitive step. The cognition changes from 'I am limited, insecure and unhappy' to 'I am limitless happiness itself'. This cognition is born from right knowledge. Happiness is realised to be not a state of mind delivered by experiences, but in fact my essential nature which needs to be understood. The ONLY means of this knowledge are the words of shAstram. By shAstram is meant Vedanta; by Vedanta is meant *upaniShad-s* in the Indian tradition. The only means of Self-knowledge are the words of the *upaniShad-s* whose sole subject matter is the nature of Reality.

4. The words of shAstram cannot reveal their meaning through mere reading (self-study) or through a non-qualified teacher. The qualified teacher is described in the *muNDakopaniShad* as 'one who is versed in scripture (shrotriya) and established in brahman (brahma niShTha).' The teacher is necessary because the words of shAstram are not easily understood. In the Indian tradition the purity of the meaning of the words is preserved by a system called sampradAya in which the vision of the teaching is passed on unchanged in an unbroken line from teacher to student. (In this way the Indian tradition is unique in preserving a teaching methodology that is largely absent from other traditions which may have the teaching but not the teaching tradition). No study of ad-hoc technical terms or imposed disciplines or 'esoteric' practices can reveal the truth of the Self.

5. Even if one does have access to the words of the *upaniShad-s* and a qualified teacher, however, it is not a given that understanding will result. This is because the mind may not be prepared. An unprepared mind is one that is (a) impure and (b) unsteady. By 'impure' is meant 'under the influence of rAga/dveSha (love and hate; I-want or I-want-to-avoid)'. By 'unsteady' is meant 'the inability to focus on one thought for a length of time'. These impediments need to be cleared before the mind is fit for Self-knowledge.

6. The antidote to mental impurity is karma yoga (an attitude to activity that involves the dedication of the action to the Lord, Ishvara, and an acceptance of the outcome of action with equanimity). Without purity of mind (i.e. freedom from the influence of rAga/dveSha) the mind is not fit for Self-knowledge. Action (karma) without Ishvara can never be a purifying yoga. It can only result in puNya/pApa (merit/demerit which requires re-birth in order to be exhausted) or heaven at best (which is a temporary stop).

7. The antidote to mental unsteadiness is dhyAnam (meditation – mental activity focused for a long period of time on any form of the Lord as a symbol of the Ultimate Reality) and upAsana (worship and prayer). Meditation without Ishvara is just a technical exercise in concentration and is not a yoga that contributes to mental quietude. All experiences of stillness, expansion, lightness, brightness and the rest are merely experiences of states of mind. (As long as there's an observer witnessing and enjoying these states, it is obvious that what is being witnessed is not 'I'.)

8. Thus, without Ishvara, the mind is not qualified for Self-knowledge. All disciplines required to prepare the mind for knowledge only make sense in the context of Ishvara – in acknowledgement that the Lord is dispenser of the fruits of action. No Self-knowledge, no mokSha. In order for the mind to be turned towards Ishvara it is essential to know what Ishvara is.

9. In *Tattva Bodha* Ishvara is the name given to 'brahman together with the universe' [Ishvara at the universal level is mirrored at the individual level by 'jIva' which is Atma together with gross and subtle bodies]. The Sanskrit root of the word 'Ishvara' carries the sense of 'ruling' – the universe ruled by law. Ishvara is the universal law and order, personified in the Vedic tradition as Rama, Krishna, Siva, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Ganesha, etc.; Jesus in the Christian tradition.

10. Everything that happens is within the law; nothing unlawful exists – even so-called 'unlawful' behaviour is a result of the lawful coming together and interaction of various factors. Whatever results are obtained from action cannot exist outside the law. Everything in creation is an expression of law – the law of matter, of gravity, of movement, of physiology, of chemistry, of psychology, etc. Ishvara is the sum total of the laws in the universe. That is why Ishvara is called 'karma phala data' (giver of the results of action). Can the law be escaped? No. So why bother with establishing a relationship with the lawgiver? Because the severity of the penalty can be softened or the beneficence of the grace magnified. How? Because of the change of attitude engendered by such a belief.

11. Establishing a relationship with an abstract concept is difficult for one who is embodied – even Krishna says so to Arjuna. The Indian tradition has provided a 'relationship bridge' by personalising different aspects of Ishvara: Ganesha removes obstacles; Dakshinamurti is the first teacher; Siva is auspiciousness; Rama is righteousness; Lakshmi is the bestower of wealth; Sarswati of wisdom; Medha Devi of the power of intellection. If that which is worshipped stands for the Absolute Reality, the activity is called meditation. (In this sense, meditation isn't a practice for two half hours – it is taking place any time the mind is turned to the Lord.)

12. Worship of these symbols of Absolute Reality has immediate benefits: (a) the ego admits its helplessness in being able to deliver the fruit of action; and (b) the creation is seen as full of potential instead of as a source of threat. One who is not graced with these benefits is possessed by the belief: 'I am the doer and enjoyer' despite 'hearing' the teaching of shAstram. Prayer and worship help reduce the blocking power of doership and enjoyership by re-orienting the mind away from the ego. Ultimately, prayer is auto-suggestion because, in truth, there is no 'other' to pray to; but to arrive at this realisation one needs the teaching of shAstram. The characteristics of one who has such an understanding, the sthitapraj~na, the man of steady wisdom, is described in the *bhagavadgItA*, (2.55 onwards). Without this understanding, the repetition of the statements of shAstram is mere babble.

13. Prayer's effectiveness is magnified if there is clarity about what it can deliver and what it cannot. Clarity in this context means being able to distinguish between three activities: concentration, meditation and contemplation. All three involve focusing the mind on a single object for a length of time. The object of focus in concentration could be any worldly thing – work or cooking or music, etc. – it develops mental discipline only. In meditation, the object of focus is saguNa brahman, Ishvara, a symbol of Reality. It leads to mental steadiness, a pre-requisite for knowledge. In contemplation, nididhyAsanam, the object of focus is one's own true nature as brahman. It alone leads to mokSha.

14. nididhyAsanam is for assimilating what has already been ascertained through the words of shAstram. It starts from an acceptance of the unity of individual and brahman, which implies clarity about what brahman is. This clarity is delivered by shravaNa (systematic study of shAstram with a qualified teacher) and mananam (reflection on what has been studied to remove all doubts about its veracity). As we have seen, book knowledge or self-study cannot deliver this. And, as we have also seen, the mind needs to be qualified for knowledge. And this is impossible without Ishvara. This in turn requires shraddhA, (faith in shAstram and the teacher). And shAstram (*bhagavadgItA* and *upaniShad-s*) and the teacher (in our case, Adi Shankara) all enjoin worship of Ishvara. If the grandsire of advaita, Adi Shankara, recommends prayer, if Krishna's advice to Arjuna was the worship of saguNa brahman, then shraddhA involves having trust in them, despite my 'experience' or understanding of what Self-knowledge and unity implies.