

A Minor Setback

Ram (James Swartz)

2011-10-21

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/135>

Peter: Dear James, first, congratulations on your marriage. I am very happy for you. It's a lovely photo of you both.

I've been wanting to write for some time, but my head (by which I mean my thoughts and emotions) has been all over the place. I seem to have got myself lost somehow.

So I really want your advice. When I last wrote to you I was working in a shipyard to get the money to come to India in December. Inquiry was happening a lot, and I was applying self-knowledge (or so I thought).

Little by little I became more and more frustrated (I'm sure you're familiar with it: When is this going to happen for me?/Oh, no, not another bloody day in *samsara!*/Will I ever be free? and on and on) and life became more unbearable. I began to hate it.

The upshot of all this was that I finally got drunk (I had been sober three years), and afterwards was put on antidepressants by my doctor. (I don't know if I actually need them, but I am taking them at the moment.)

Anyway, I'm sober now, and have been since the beginning of the month, and I have just taken a moral inventory, and what's become apparent is that in the weeks leading up to getting drunk I was dominated by pride, egotism, low self-esteem, ingratitude and non-acceptance. I had stopped relying upon God (and I no longer treated life as a gift from God, but as something to be escaped from) and was running almost entirely on ego.

Being enlightened had become something with which "I" was trying to fix myself.

The thing is that I can't reject self-enquiry and forget all about it. It is not possible nor do I want to. But six months ago I was positive that I was qualified for enlightenment, and now I'm not so sure.

Can you give me some advice? I have the ticket and visa for India, but I'm not sure whether to come or not. What I really want to know is whether I'm qualified for self-enquiry or if there's any advice you can give me to put into practice now.

~ Love, Peter

James: Hi, Peter. This is a minor setback, going down on the way up. Save your shekels and come to India! It seems that you are right on track. There is nothing dramatic about self-inquiry. It is evolutionary, not revolutionary. Apparent progress is measured in millimeters, not miles. Little by little your confidence in yourself as awareness chips away at the *vasana* accretions and the sense of doership slowly fades. Keep at it – not that there is any other option – and take it easy.

~ Love, James