

A Normal Vedantic Obsession

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Butch: Dear Ram, I am talking from The Butch, not from the self. Please help clarify and guide me with the below topics. My words and expressed understanding may not be perfect, so please be flexible.

About age two, when I was first exposed to the knowledge of non-duality, without choice the mind naturally has been consistently and obsessively directed on a journey of self-enquiry, with a mission to firm the knowledge. From the moment I wake throughout my whole day till the time I close my eyes, the intellect is burning with non-stop Vedanta practice. This continues operating intensively during sleep state and in my dreams. I am talking about 24/7!!!

Question: Is this a “normal” Vedantic obsession, keeping in mind that my character has always been very obsessive?!

Ram: Yes, it is a normal obsession for an obsessive person. I have been obsessed by Vedanta for forty-three years. My obsession does not seem to be abating.

The Butch: However, despite the “obsessiveness,” it is a clear blessing, as the nature of the self has been understood and “revealed.” The liberation and calm that has resulted from this is operating much of the time, keeping in mind that I am mindful and clear as the observer. Admittedly, I have 22 years of conditioning, thus consistently educating the mind is still needed. However, snapping out of the egoic state becomes easier and easier.

Is it correct to suggest that once the self has been understood, from then on it's just “maintenance” and keeping up with enquiring into one's true nature/what's real versus what's not?

Ram: Yes, indeed. Inquiry should be a way of life. You need to keep the mind occupied with good work and inquiry is good work. It brings great benefits. Keep it up till the day you die.

The Butch: *Karma yoga* has been another thing that my obsessive monkey-mind has sunk its claws into! This has caused me a bit of worldly and mental stress at times – as the ego appears to have adapted this kind of “good versus evil,” “reward versus punishment” system with regards to following “correct” *karma*.

Depending on my choices and actions, I often find myself observing unpleasant inner conflict. It is like having an angel on one shoulder and the Devil on the other. It is like fear that the Devil will give me hell if I don't do right actions according to *dharma* or act out of selfish desire. I guess in a way the “Devil” is good then?!

Ram: Yes, the Devil is good. It keeps you on the straight and narrow. It is the self, but the self is not the Devil.

The Butch: It seems that my ego wants to adopt a pure Buddha persona or the need to dedicate everything, purification of the mind, and won't allow for flexibility.

Ram: This is a bad idea. Just be Butch. The Buddha is the Buddha. Butch is Butch. Don't mix them up.

The Butch: This at times makes my life situation feel/appear pressurised.

Ram: Yes. It is a waste of time trying to be something you aren't. Stick to Butch and his *dharma*.

The Butch: From what I understand, results are not up to me, so The Butch's destiny and plans have already been designed and catered to?

Ram: Yes, just relax about Butch and about the Buddha. If Butch is going to become a Buddha, *Isvara* will make it happen in its own good time. In the meantime, just be The Butch.

The Butch: I do not attach guilt or "bad" to any thoughts that may arise, as I am well aware that thoughts are just thoughts and I am not my thoughts.

Ram: Good. This is correct.

The Butch: I am referring purely to actions that may result in guilt feelings. This may sound contradictory, as from what I understand feelings are also merely just feelings, not me.

Ram: Yes.

The Butch: Sometimes I do things that are not right, which causes guilt.

Ram: Usually, if you feel guilty it is because you are going against your nature in some way or perhaps you are going against social *dharma* or legal *dharma*, etc. Guilt is good because it points to areas that need inquiry.

The Butch: When I smoke dope there is a little egoic devil-man that lectures me from every side. I know inquiry needs a clear mind.

Ram: You are young. A little weed won't hurt you. If you smoke it a lot then you should feel guilty because it is stupid.

The Butch: Eating meat, even with gratitude and for good physical reasons, makes me feel guilty.

Ram: A little meat is not the kiss of death. Don't worry about it.

The Butch: At times I have to practise holding back my tongue.

Ram: This is a great practice. If you don't keep it under control you will get a lot of suffering.

The Butch: I feel that I am going to get punished for smoking. Is this a logical feeling?

Ram: Yes. Because you are injuring the body. It is breaking *dharma*.

The Butch: I read a book about *karma*-free eating, and ever since I get alerts to bless my food. Where does that reminder come from? (It never fails!)

Ram: From the self. It is natural to feel gratitude. It is a good idea, but perhaps you are taking it too seriously.

The Butch: I am quite intuitive and recently I had the feeling that The Butch is going to die soon. It is a challenging feeling. Is this symbolic or intuition or just my monkey-mind? I wrote to my parents that in the event that it happened I would like to be cremated.

Ram: I wouldn't make too much of it, Butch. Your mind may run and take a thought to its logical conclusion without any basis in reality. Having said that, anyone can die anytime. It is totally out of our hands. The question is if you are living up to your highest potential right now.

The Butch: I also have nightmares in which I find myself in vulnerable situations and in conflict with myself.

Ram: It is probably just excessive fear that is bringing on the "death" thought. I don't think it is predicting anything.

The Butch: I have dreamt about my *guru* (Ram) on a few occasions (perhaps this is due to listening to your audio whilst going to sleep; however, it appears to be other than that. In one I

was attending a school of “self-enquiry and Vedanta teachings.” I was in the “general” class. There was another section to the school with all the “purists” and what appeared to be the “real self-realised students.” I remember looking through the window feeling very sad that I was not in that class. I woke up feeling guilty/disappointed, thinking perhaps it was because I had smoked dope the night before.

Ram: When you smoke dope it makes you *tamasic*. When you are *tamasic* you have thoughts of low self-esteem and unworthiness. I think you should blame the dope. You are an amazing guy, Butch. You are a very spiritual guy. Don't doubt it.

The Butch: Please suggest a method or tip as to how to respond and deal with people who I come in contact with – without appearing arrogant or “cold-hearted” – who are into small talk, bullshit dramas and all that other pointless stuff. It's funny at times, but, wow, it gets repetitive and rather frustrating, keeping in mind that I would like to take part in social and family life.

Ram: Just play the role they want you to play when you are with them, Butch. They will never understand who you are. Be kind to them and bless them with your good energy. They pick up on bad thoughts and it hurts them. So be jolly and have a good laugh and don't think about it too much.

~ Love, Ram