

A Zero-Sum Game

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Greg: My beloved teacher, this is another cry from the bottom, and I am not sure if my letter qualifies for spiritual guiding at all. In best case, I would hope for your supreme counseling.

It was a wonderful retreat in Tiruvannamalai, but whatever purification was gained now seems lost. In Tiru I had some *sattvic* moments of peace and joy. No drinking, no sex, talking only a little. But even then there was an undercurrent nagging me, a constant battle with my *vasana* for a girlfriend. After being alone for a year, not talking to a single woman, I somehow longed and hoped to exchange with a nice woman, which I didn't. Well, I kept silent and alone most of the time, at your advice, so obviously that didn't make it easier.

But guess I fucked it up even more up now by going to Thailand once again. I met a super-cute girl, staying alone with her for one month and had super sex all day and life was a play. Every day I felt drugged on the ecstasy of being, rarely talking to other people, a total rush of pleasure on all levels. I believe it was not only sex, because this time I felt like never before a deep exchange of heart energy, physical and emotional. And she was truly happy with my undivided attention and care. We were both deeply in "love," I believe.

But all illusions come to an end as the money ran out. And now reality hurts so, so bad here alone in America. I am like a junkie now, an emotional wreck. I cannot sleep more than five hours. I am constantly brainstorming solutions, but it all seems only mental. I can't get any grip on reality at all.

My sense of center is lost, the bittersweet emotional energies in my heart and stomach are overpowering me. I drink not to hurt too much. I'm constantly checking Facebook for her message, crying many times a day because I don't know when or if I will stay with her again.

The plan was before I left for India to start a new life. And I managed to sell my business to my ex-wife. I sold everything and got out of all debt with this deal. I am lucky to at least have this now.

HOW could I fall into this trap again, despite all warnings, I promised never to? Now I have to get my life back, if I ever had a life at all. It is cold turkey, total breakdown.

I don't know what I want. I can't be a *sanyassi*, because I am too addicted to comfort and a woman's company, tried for some years, but gave it up after my last intense effort in India, which was supposed to change my life for good. I've really tried intensely for some years now. And I can't be a householder, because I tried that already, and I don't like to work.

I never really take responsibility for my life and I live in the dream of playing with my lover and girlfriend forever. I am an instant-pleasure seeker, looking for a quick fix. After four months of traveling, being totally spaced out and high on energies, I feel like a drugged zombie on an emotional rollercoaster. Reality is screaming that I am an incompetent loser, which I am because I cannot care about anything. I am living in a dream world. I have no direction in my life and cannot take a job.

But I need a job to go back and get my fix. All discrimination is lost. The most scary thing is that I probably will go back, first making some quick money at “the meatpacking factory,” and rush to see my girl, if she does not have another man. And do everything again, with the chance of getting bored again when the trivial relationship and the endless hunting for money starts.

But the most absurd thing is I can get 100% in the enlightenment quiz. I know all the spiritual answers, and worked them out before. Hopefully, I can start to get discrimination again soon, and find my *dharma*. I left my old life without any plan.

Now I am hopelessly in the grip of a big woman-*vasana* that you warned about so clearly. Thank you for everything you gave so far.

~ Your fallen disciple, Greg

James: Dear Greg, lovely to hear from you, although the news isn't so wonderful. As you know, certain qualifications are necessary if you want to be happy, and the first and most important qualification is dispassion. It comes from understanding that life is a zero-sum game. You have obviously not figured this out, so the only advice I can give is to keep trying to satisfy yourself with the women until you are one hundred percent convinced that it doesn't work. Or as the saying goes, “Let your wicked ways correct you.”

I will give you something to think about though. Why do you want the love of a woman? You want it because you do not love yourself properly. You may be surprised to know that if you do love yourself properly you will have to get a stick to beat the women off.

Why can't you love yourself properly? Because you can't see your real self. You are fixated on Greg and his needs for love. This is absurd because your nature is love – *parama prema svarupa*. It does not make a person feel good if they see themselves as a wanting, lacking being when they already have everything.

But you cannot see yourself properly until you are dispassionate. And you can't force dispassion. Only when the fruit is ripe does it fall off the tree. This is why I recommend that you get some more money, go back to Thailand, have your fun till the money runs out, then come home and feel rotten, and get some more money and head back to the Thai party until it runs out and then come home and feel terrible, and keep doing this until you really get fed up. It may take a few more years. I think it is best to leave the idea of love out of it because those girls in Thailand can only love as long as the money is flowing. The good news is that there is always another one, so if your true love is off having a good time with someone else you can get another true love for a few dollars.

The other possibility is that you “man up” and decide to kill this stupid *vasana* once and for all, and then face it down whenever it arises until it quits controlling your life. You do not know the amazing pleasure that comes from a pure mind and a righteous life. If you commit yourself to a spiritual life, you will not be disappointed.

And the third possibility – and the quickest and easiest – is to stop believing this sad story you have cooked up. You are fine as you are. This is a minor problem, not even worthy of mention. Finally, think about this – it may set you free – if you know you are a loser, are you a loser?

Anyway, I do not feel sorry for you. You feathered your own nest. You have a great teaching and

a teacher, and you know who you really are and what is to be done. So you can choose to see yourself as the self or you can identify with Greg and feel miserable. It is up to you. No matter how you see yourself, I love you as you are. It is all okay. Some people take longer than others to realize that life is a zero-sum game. You are just a slow learner. Let me know what happens. I like stories, even sad ones, so keep me informed.

~ Love, Ram