

All Seeking Is for Love

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Bill: Hi, Ramji. Thanks for the audio of the *Tattva Bodh* teaching series. I started listening to them. She makes the point that knowledge of reality is knowledge of happiness, which answered the question you asked me yesterday about why I got to your *satsang*. It's knowledge I'm after, not primarily happiness. But according to that lecture, that's really the same thing. It's just that I feel that going after happiness is going away from equanimity. But knowledge of reality, knowledge of who I am, is the real goal.

Ram: Hi, Bill. It seems you picked up some ideas about the self and the quest from the self from Buddhism that are not very helpful. Yes, self-knowledge is not about knowledge as it is generally understood. It is about happiness. What is the point of anything, if it does not make you happy? Because the self is uncaused, non-circumstantial happiness and it is always present, knowledge of the self is happiness, although "happiness" is not quite the right word. Buddhism got you in the ballpark, but its lack of confidence in defining the nature of enlightenment leaves wiggle room for the mind. Vedanta has no such reservations. It states the goal clearly from the beginning.

Equanimity is a result of enlightenment. Yes, if you live your life fully – accepting all challenges and not settling for less – it will produce a kind of equanimity. We call it dispassion. Then, with teaching, you can begin the inquiry into happiness. There is a Buddhist *sutra* – I forgot the name – that says the desire to love and be loved is the root of all suffering. Is this the cause of your suffering? It means that love is happiness because we only want love or to love for the happiness it brings. Is there something in your relationship with your wife that needs to be resolved?

Bill: 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?

Bill: I know I'm still stuck in Buddhism. Twenty 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 four-year-old granddaughter 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.

Bill: I started Zen practice 20 years ago to deal with a great deal of emotional pain. That path took me a long way, but didn't really explain "what it's all about." The problem was that there wasn't much explanation: "JUST SIT!"

I don't remember if loving oneself was ever mentioned, it certainly was not treated as something important. It was David Waldman who made this the center of his teaching, but he still was short on explanation and means. Your explanation of the *vasanas* and of *karma yoga* made tremendous sense, and I'm practicing the attitude of *karma yoga* as often as my ego does not sabotage this intention by making me forget about it. About that ego – the idea that killing the ego is not a goal, nor even desirable, is very new to me. In the past, fighting with and trying to, if not killing, then at least subduing the ego, left no room for love. Now that I realize that that fight was unnecessary and undesirable, I try to make peace with my ego (sounds weird, doesn't it?). But there is a lot of damage and mistrust from that long fight.

Ram: You tried to subdue your ego because you love yourself. You now want to make peace with it because you love yourself. You love yourself very much. You can't see it, because the word "self" refers to a very negative idea you picked up a long time ago. Just like you argued in the *satsang* that this world is real and experience in it is real, you believe that there is something wrong with you. And without examining the belief itself you are looking for a solution. The looking for a solution is motivated by self-love. You don't like to suffer, because you love yourself. Everything you do is out of self-love. You are curious because you love knowledge. See the love.

Bill: That's it. I don't love myself. Years ago I went to a seminar with Gangaji (yes, I know...). During one of the workshops, she had us sit opposite of another person, look into their eyes and feel love towards them. After some time, I could do that and felt real love towards a total stranger. Then she said, "Now here's a tough one: feel that same love toward yourself." A groan went through the audience. Apparently I wasn't the only one who found that one tough-to-nearly-impossible. What you are saying I've heard many times before. It was the central theme of David Waldman's *satsangs*. I can tell myself that I am love, but I feel like such a phony for suggesting that. I can't force myself to love myself, that doesn't work. And so far, nothing else has worked either.

Ram: If you didn't love yourself, why are you going to so much trouble to find out who you are?

Bill: Curiosity?

Ram: You tried to subdue your ego because you love yourself. You now want to make peace with it because you love yourself. You love yourself very much. You can't see it because the word "self" refers to a very negative idea you picked up a long time ago. Just like you argued in the *satsang* that this world is real and experience in it is real, you believe that there is something wrong with you. And without examining the belief itself you are looking for a solution. The looking for a solution is motivated by self-love. You don't like to suffer, because you love yourself.

Everything you do is out of self-love. You are curious because you love knowledge. See the love.

Bill: That is profound. I have to let it sink in.