

Avoid Negative People

Ram (James Swartz)

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Uma: Dear Ram, thanks for the opportunity to share my doubts about some issues.

In January this year we came to Tiruvannamalai to see Mooji. First he cancelled his trip and then he came later, so someone took us to you and for some days we came to your *satsangs*. It was totally different, but so clear and obvious and particularly nice without storys from the people, that now I am very happy Mooji came later and we discovered you with the Vedanta!! I read your book, saw the DVDs, read *Atma Bodh* and watched your videos. In April we visited you in Amsterdam where we live.

From childhood on I knew there must be something other than the world we know and the things all people striving for. I am not interested in career (work in education four days a week), having children, a big house or other things to make one happy. Then searching started with different *gurus* and now eventually finding Vedanta. I can say the urge to realise the self is strong, the most important matter in life.

Some doubts trouble me. My lifestyle is quite simple, with time to meditate and contemplate Vedantic issues. But in a big city like this, life is stressful, also with a “normal” social life.

It is impossible to avoid all negative people, especially in a work situation, as you recommend in the chapter about lifestyle. You say the best is to associate with the inner self in solitude and contemplation. In the past few days I saw your YouTube video *How to Attain Enlightenment* in which you tell about being with your *guru* almost the whole day! Then I think, how to do it within this “normal” life? At school we have holidays we cannot choose, so no possibility to come to Switzerland and not to think of India! But I have to do my duty in life and going to the cave is not THE solution, I read in the e-*satsangs*... please, can you advise?

James: With the kind of *karma* you have, the only solution is to take the *karma yoga* attitude toward everything you do. At the same time you can look for small ways to make your life simpler. Create more time for yourself and make a “cave” in the middle of your busy life for solitude, contemplation, meditation and scripture study.

Uma: The other question is about contemplating on the self. Several times in your book you talk about changing your attention to the self, discriminate between not-self (three bodies and the states) and the self, enquire into the substrate. Each time I read that, there is a doubt about how I know that I contemplate on the right “thing,” what no-thing is.

James: Turning your attention to the self means thinking about the self all the time. Since you have to do so many actions because of your busy lifestyle, you should dedicate every action to the self, release the results to the self and take whatever happens in an attitude of gratitude. This should keep your mind on the self all the time and burn up your *vasanas*, making your mind more contemplative. Keeping the mind on the self means thinking about who you are, not meditating

for some kind of experience.

Uma: Is it true that when there is no attention to any thought, feeling, sensation, etc. then what is left (a sort of space) is the reflection of the self??

James: Yes.

Uma: And there I have to stay... because I am the self, I can only experience the reflection of it in a clear and peaceful mind?

James: No, you do not have to stay there. You cannot stay there, because “there” is an experience. It will always be impermanent. When you are in that state you are meant to look for the witness of that state, the one who sees the reflection – you, awareness. Liberation is not an experience. It is the understanding that you are the witness of every state of mind.

Uma: Throughout the day the discrimination is going on as often as possible; is it important to spend all the time left to meditation?

James: Meditation can't hurt, but discrimination and *karma yoga* are best. The important thing is to reduce your *karmic* load little by little and get a more simple lifestyle. It may seem impossible, but there are always small ways to make the mind more contemplative.

Uma: Thank you so much in advance for giving some advice! Hope you have a nice trip in northern New Mexico.

James: You are welcome, Uma.

~ Love James