

No “Man of Steady Wisdom”

Ram (James Swartz)

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Bill: Dear James and Sundari, I never thought that “knowledge of the self” would be just that – to know that I am and always have been the self. Many thanks for your last emails to me since it was exactly what I needed to hear, and what I heard was “those things that you speak of as apparent desire and temptation, etc. are not the self and no amount of improvement of that or an excessive will towards purity, etc. will change the fact that you are and always have been only the self. You are already free.” And the other thing that I heard was that “inquiry is always going on, and it is the self that conducts inquiry.”

I am just now winding up a month in the UK and France, and in the midst of this busy-ness, eating in restaurants, drinking lots of coffee and wine, eating meat and all of the rest of it, there has been this joyful dawning that what I always thought I was is only a very small locus of sensation and thoughts and desire and fears in the vastness of what I am. The very first intimation of this was when I was enjoying my barbeque pork and broccoli in a Chinese restaurant in London. At first I thought, “This is just some sort of an epiphany that will not last, so let me see what this is about,” and while it’s true that “it” did not last, this sense that I can only call “knowledge” and what I think that you are calling “the hard and fast knowledge that I am whole and complete, unconcerned, ordinary, actionless awareness,” has somehow lodged itself more deeply into me such that it feels like it’s taking up a final home. My sense is that this knowledge is not yet “*sthita prajna*” but over the last weeks this part of the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* has called to me, and when I finally re-read it this evening I realized that this is the final destination, a destination that I never have really left. For me, when Krishna describes the man of steady wisdom, he is really not referring to a man who became or achieved wisdom. He is referring to that which is and always has been wisdom, that which is and always has been free of desire, that which is and always has been free of attachment.

These days I will find myself walking, as I did today, and feel a fear or desire tugging on me and immediately, almost without effort, comes the conviction “but I am whole and complete,” or some variant of that thought, and it is as if the perspective shifts from this “locus of sensation,” etc. that I described earlier to just simply wholeness. And it’s not as if I need to convince myself that I am whole and complete. I simply find that it is true. Or sometimes I witness the thoughts going on in my mind, as they have for as long as I can remember, and I ask myself, in the most sincere way, “Who is hearing/witnessing these thoughts, has always been witnessing these thoughts?,” and in that simple question comes a wordless answer that points at awareness, what I am. All of these years I have been looking for some sort of a big experience that marks the boundary between my unenlightened and my enlightened self only to realize that, as you put it, “I do not have an experience problem, I have [had] a knowledge problem.”

Words are really failing me right now. There’s only a sense of deep gratitude for the words and actions that you both have given me just at the right time and for my good fortune to have the sense to pay attention to them. And there is an abiding joy that transcends anything else that is going on. And perhaps I still need to hear that even this is some sort of a subtle epiphany, but if it is I am gladdened and encouraged by it.

~ With love and gratitude, Bill

James: Hi, Bill. No, words do not fail you. You are one of the most eloquent people I have had the privilege to meet. I am so happy the knowledge is there. Yes, Krishna is not talking about a person with a certain kind of knowledge. He is talking about you/me – awareness. It is only knowledge. It is there all the time. It has been uncovered by your diligent inquiry. I cannot say that you are on the right track because there is no path to you. The path is finished or finishing. I am so glad that you have seen through the *sattva* trap, the purity trap. When you eat pork you are eating you. When you are romancing the ladies you are romancing yourself. Life is grand. It is meant to be enjoyed as it is. I am very happy for you. Vedanta rocks!