

Pleasure and Renunciation

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Mia: In the *Sutra Samhita* it is said that those desirous of enjoyments and yet yearning for liberation are surely bitten by the deadly serpent of *samsara* and therefore dazed by its poison. I saw the latest YouTube video of the rest between sessions at your home in Bend. How do the lush surroundings at your location comply with the above *sutra*?

Sundari: Yes, that is true. It applies to people **seeking** freedom. If you are no longer a seeker, you are no longer afflicted with desire for objects, so all objects are fine. Desire is only a problem if it is *adharmic*, if it does not serve the peace of mind and agitates the mind, projecting it outwards towards objects. If you know you are the fullness that needs nothing to complete it, desire ceases to bind you. Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "I am the desire that is not opposed to *dharma*."

What do our surroundings have to do with the self or with teaching Vedanta? What is wrong with beauty and enjoyment, when you know it is you? The underlying aim of *moksa* is freedom from bondage to objects to end suffering and to enjoy life as the *jiva* living in the apparent reality, as the self. Everything in this world is *mithya*, but it is also the self, although the self is not it.

As the self, we can be anywhere; it makes no difference to us if we live in a simple hut or a mansion. We see beauty in all of *Isvara's* creation. Our external environment is a reflection of the self, but it is not who we are. As we are not seeking *moksa*, because we are *moksa*, our minds are free of desire and not seeking anything, so we enjoy everything. Whatever *Isvara* sees fit to give us on the *jiva* level is gratefully and graciously accepted and enjoyed for what it is – *mithya*. We are *satya*, always.

However, the quote you ask about is true if you are still bound and seeking *moksa*. If the mind is still extroverted towards objects and believes that the joy comes from anywhere other than you, the self, then you are caught in "the jaws of the crocodile" – another name for *samsara*. And yes, desire will poison you, keep you bound and suffering.

There is nothing wrong with pleasure and sensory enjoyment (*tamas*). However, if you are not free, it can pose a dangerous slide into bondage and suffering because it builds entrenched *vasanas* so quickly. If *moksa* is the aim, your life has to conform to a pure, simple and *dharmic* lifestyle or self-knowledge will not stick. This does not mean you have to renounce the world or beautiful objects. It means you have the ability to discriminate the self, you, from the objects that appear in you, 24/7, with the knowledge that the joy is in you, not the objects.

When self-knowledge has obtained in the mind, there are only *bhoga* (enjoyment) *vasanas* left. The enjoyment, pleasure and bliss of the self is experienced all the time, anywhere, no matter what is or is not going on in your environment. It all comes from and belongs to *Isvara*, not to the *jiva*.

If you believe that renouncing the world or objects will result in *moksa*, you are right and you are wrong. It is good to see and understand that there is only temporary bliss to be gained from

objects and to stop chasing them. But it is not the objects themselves that pose the problem. It is the desire and need for objects to complete you that creates bondage. Objects are value-neutral. They have nothing to give you. But the blind belief that renouncing them automatically makes you more spiritual is a myth.

Both powers, renunciation and action exist in everyone. Individuals constantly act and they constantly let go of things they no longer value or desire. The only issue is the nature of that which is to be renounced. If an individual wants freedom, which Vedanta defines as freedom from dependence on objects, renunciation can become a problem because individuals value things that conflict with the desire for freedom. And liberation requires a very subtle renunciation: renunciation of the renouncer, the one seeking freedom.

~ Love, Sundari