

Plot Your Escape

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Carl: Ramji, I finished *Mystic by Default* this morning. So many experiences you shared struck a chord with me, too many to mention. But to summarize: I see a direct connection between your psychedelic experiences and my use of peyote as a Native American. You are absolutely right that drugs are a crutch. I see that I have devoted far too many years in the egotistic pursuit of spiritual glory too. The elders in my tribe have passed over me even though I have surpassed them in knowledge. I have to hide it. As I plot my escape, my mind is moving away from its futile obsession for recognition and towards more inner realities.

James: Recognize yourself. There is a Chinese proverb: when doing evil, avoid punishment; when doing good, avoid fame. It has its downsides.

Carl: I haven't drunk alcohol for twenty years, because it had such a bad effect, but the other day I had some wine with my wife and a curious thing happened. It didn't affect me AT ALL. I felt my mind dull and the body become a little sluggish, but I remained totally unaffected. After a second glass just to make sure, I decided it was a useless pursuit and dumped it down the drain. My wife enjoyed the relaxed me for an evening but didn't care either way.

James: It didn't affect you because your identity has shifted to the self although you are not sure about it. Nothing affects the self.

Carl: I have always had an aversion to the pursuit of "purity," which to the rebel in me seemed like an egotistic and boring pursuit as evidenced by the holier-than-thou, self-conscious, smarmy, fake spiritual types that are obsessed with it. But recently I realized that my perception of purity as an object is flawed. Purity is the absence of mental objects, leaving only myself (awareness) to be experienced, unfettered by an impure mind. Eureka!! So I feel strongly that maybe I need to achieve a prolonged state of relative purity in order to achieve *moksa*.

James: Beautifully expressed, Carl. You're pure enough for *moksa*. The best reason to live a pure life is the joy of experiencing a pure mind. A relative definition of purity is "a mind that has no secrets." I appreciate you sharing this info with me, particularly your admission about the morality of your livelihood in your previous email.

It's good to confess your sins, no doubt, but be practical. You have the wife and kids, and live in a major metropolitan area. If you stop thinking of yourself as a medicine man, that takes the hypocrisy away. If there is no real danger from the law, then what's the big deal? Having said that, it is always good to be ready to let go of things; now that the desire to be free is burning more brightly, you can move forward more confidently to alter your *karma*. When *Isvara* makes it clear what has to be dropped, there is no anxiety. You just move on. Women (as per our previous

conversations) are a zero-sum game, like everything. If you keep the defects of any *samsaric* pursuit in mind, the *vasanas* will slowly burn out. But be smart. Plot your escape from *samsara* carefully. Don't be in a hurry, in a big fit of spiritual enthusiasm, just patiently take one step at a time.

~ Love, James