

Psychic Powers

Ram (James Swartz)

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Barry: Dear Mr. Swartz, thanks in advance for taking the time to consider my thoughts and questions.

Although I've pursued spiritual goals for a long time, most of my life, I have just discovered your teachings. I have watched several short videos and started reading the meditation book, as well as read a few other passages. Most all of what I have encountered makes sense to me and I like your style of teaching. However, one consistent theme I see is that the attraction of this path is to be happy. While I can see that this would be many people's goal, I am not sure that this is what I am seeking. I am seeking freedom of perception. I want to be able to perceive other worlds and energies than the one we have been conditioned to see as humans. I feel that the idea of stopping the mind aligns with this goal, but I am unsure if I should pursue this path, because the objective in the end seems to be different. Perhaps you could shed some light on my dilemma.

James: Dear Barry, are you not pursuing happiness because you are already happy or are you unhappy but believe that there is something better than happiness, i.e. freedom of perception?

Let me ask you another question: Why do you want freedom of perception? Don't you want it because you are not happy with the limits of your present perception? Once you get freedom of perception – actually, you already have it, but not in the way you imagine it – will you be happy? Vedanta contends that you want what you want for the happiness that it will bring you. Nobody is pursuing their desires to make themselves unhappy. Incidentally, Vedanta conflates freedom with happiness.

As far as your idea of perceiving other worlds, etc. is concerned, what exactly do you hope to accomplish by this? And even if you did attain a few *yoga siddhis*, so what? You still will not know who you are. It will just boost your ego, make it feel more powerful, more knowledgeable. It will not pay the rent or remove whatever psychological problems you have or make you a more selfless and loving person.

Furthermore, even if you could gain a lot of *siddhis* you could not gain all the *siddhis*. What if you only got a few low-level *siddhis*? Wouldn't you strive for some of the serious ones? Do you want to walk on water? Your knowledge will always be limited. Only God has all the powers, all knowledge. Do you realize that the more knowledge you gain the more ignorance is revealed to you, setting you out to gain even more knowledge? When does it end?

Also, you should know that what you gain, you can lose. Psychic powers are like every other power. You have to keep doing what you are doing to keep them. As you get older your mind becomes weaker and the powers in it start to decline. If it means a lot to you to have these powers you are going to be very disappointed when they pack up and leave. You will have to cook up something else to make you happy.

Here is another thing to consider: Do you want this knowledge solely for its own sake or do you want it for power? You might not know it, but the more power you get the more you realize how

limited your power actually is. And if you get the power, what are you going to do with it? Cure cancer? Relieve world poverty?

And how do you know that you have the kind of mind and the immense discipline that is necessary to develop psychic powers? These things generally only come after many, many years of hard work, sometimes decades. You would have to devote all your time to it. You cannot expect to get freedom of perception on the weekend or by taking a mind reading course on the internet.

And in this area, there is no guarantee you will get the results you want. It is even more difficult than getting results in the real world. It is better to have a more noble goal and discipline your mind behind it. If powers come, you can see them for what they are – temporary epiphenomena. If you read Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* you will see how these powers are gained and you will also be warned of their downside. Many of these powers come to me – not because I sought them, but for another reason – but I can honestly say that it has not enhanced my life one bit.

Finally, you mention above that you have pursued spiritual goals for a long time. If you achieved them, why were they not enough? Why do you want this new goal? It is the view of Vedanta that there is only one goal worth pursuing and that is freedom from perception, not freedom of perception – and even beyond that: freedom from the perceiver.

So my suggestion to you is to carefully examine your motivations and see why you want “freedom of perception.” I don't think you have thought it through properly.

You may not understand what I am about to say, but I will say it anyway. Actually, even if you get freedom of perception as you conceive of it, you will discover a bigger problem. How will you get free of the person who wants freedom of perception? This person, Barry, who wants “freedom of perception,” is not who you really are. Once he has what he wants, he will just want something else. And once he gets that, he will want something more. And he will go through his whole life wanting things. Would not it be better to look into this wanting part of yourself and see if it is worth the trouble cottoning to the belief that satisfying your wants will make you happy?

~ All the best, James