

Purification Will Not Make You Pure

Ram (James Swartz)

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Cathy (quoting Ram from a previous email): “You move around and avoid attachments, your pursuits are purely spiritual (note how contemptuous you are of the idea of relationships, which is typical of a renunciant) and you have abandoned worldly duties, except small daily duties.”

Cathy (replies): I do not deliberately avoid attachments. I was born with natural, in-built detachment for most things and people. The only people (no objects at all, ever) that I was ever almost unreasonably attached to were my entire family: mother, father, sisters and son. That’s it. No one else. I guess there are degrees of attachment and that one is as ill-founded as any other. But it is receding rapidly, truly. Certainly, non-attachment may not have been perfected yet, but I’m working on it and I think if I had to be tested on this, I would come through with flying colors. There is attachment to the higher concepts, like the limitless self.

Ram: You are the limitless self. But if you insist on being Cathy – that sounds right. I wonder if you can attain non-attachment or perfect it by practice. And why would one want to do this when one already has pure non-attachment in spades – as the self? In fact you say, “I was born with natural in-built detachment” – I don’t believe that Cathy was born with it but that you, the self, had it all along. I see you as perfect. Why not you?

Please don’t think I’m trying to hector you. What I’m trying to communicate, if it’s not clear, is this: Isn’t it time to give up spiritual practice, *sadhana*? How about writing off Cathy? Isn’t it time to claim one identity only – what you actually are? How long can you keep working on yourself? Are you convinced that you are actually getting better? Is there “better”? On the basis of what dissatisfactions do you opine that you need work? Why not renounce the dissatisfactions and save yourself all the work?

I don’t think you need work. The problem with this whole spiritual practice idea is that as one evolves, one’s dissatisfactions get more subtle and one is forced to take up even subtler practices to resolve them. When does it end? You will recall in the story of *The Princess and the Pea* that even after thirty mattresses had been piled on top of the pea she could not get a night’s sleep – not because the pea was bigger with each additional mattress, but because her sensitivity just kept developing. The spiritual world is full of the most incredibly useless practices, practices that just keep the ego alive and nothing more. I was speaking with a guy today who is so spiritual, kind, loving and compassionate that he makes Jesus look like a Attila the Hun, and he was telling me about the long and difficult process of forgiveness he had to go through to neutralize the sense of lack that he discovered when he lost his hat! Honestly. I said, “Why didn’t you just go out and buy another hat?”

In the last few years I’ve met dozens of people who came to India twenty or thirty years ago and have been doing *sadhana*, as they saw it, all along. And you know what I’ve been hearing? “In spite of all my years of *sadhana* I’m just the same as I always was.” One woman realized it when we were walking around the mountain and in two weeks she left India for good, went home,

reclaimed her apartment and started living the life she had walked out on twenty years before.

Cathy: Yes, I must admit most of my pursuits are based on the desire for the soaring heights of metaphysical gems that emanate from the teachings of the Masters.

Ram: You are the only master. Your first paragraph was scripture, as good as any *Veda*. Step up and claim your prize.

~ Ram