

Ramana and Nisargadatta

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Tom: Hi, Sundari. I haven't actually finished *The Essence of Enlightenment*. I got bogged down and distracted for a while. I am back to it and loving it! I struggled understanding the chapter "Beautiful Intelligent Ignorance." But since then it has become clearer to me. I am on "ropes" now and loving it as well. I know I am at the beginner stage.

Sundari: You are doing just great, Tom. James always says, "Slow and steady wins the race." You have humility and a genuine, open mind focused on the self, which is one of the most important qualifications for *moksa*.

Tom: I don't know if I mentioned my Grandpa Hoyt to you, but I think he was like James described, not enlightened, but I think he said self-realized in a sense. He was very kind and honest, a simple farmer from Utah. I have wanted all my life to be like him. It has taken so long for me to really get it in my heart I just need to be – myself! (I know you're going to say I can't not be myself. ☺) I knew it mentally, but in my heart I did not get it. I even had him come to me in a dream and say we had all forgotten the way he showed us to go. I still did not get what he meant, but I think this way is as close as I could see. I also describe him as most unusual in that he "automatically" did kind favors without the slightest trace of wanting a thank-you or reward or recognition of any kind. The purest individual I have ever known, as far as I can see. James' book is helping me to get it on a deeper level.

Sundari: Your grandpa sounds like a happy man. Even if he was not "enlightened," so what? He lived a good honest life following *dharma*, not wanting more than he needed by the sounds of it, and not needing validation for his innate goodness. Great souls come in many guises. We feel that genuine *dharmic samsaris* beat phoney "spiritual" seekers by a long shot. You are fortunate to have known him and had him as an inspiration.

Tom: I also have been an enlightenment-seeker in my life. I have had some marvelous experiences in my "tradition" but could never figure why I could never get back to it. I'm so thankful James is describing why. I don't deny my experiences of course and only can sometimes describe myself as manic-depressive with a lot of faith and hope, if that makes sense. (How did my ex put up with me?) I spent all my spare time in the desert studying, praying and meditating to try and get out of suffering. My brother is living with me and going through a divorce. He has no faith in God and I think he has stuffed our traumatic childhood. He hardly remembers a thing, even the good stuff. It's strange to me *karma* has brought us together like this. We help each other a lot.

Sundari: To find Vedanta is grace, and grace is earned. *Isvara* works in strange ways, and *karma* is impossible to understand. Regardless of the form or the path it takes, the search for wholeness is built into the psyche by *Isvara*. If we are graced with the good *karma* to "find"

Vedanta, we are blessed indeed. Suffering has its place, driving the mind towards cynicism and insanity or to freedom. I am happy for you that it was the latter. Your brother clearly is not so fortunate, but he is fortunate too because he has you. However misguided your seeking was, it was genuine and your desire for answers ran very deep, which is why Vedanta found you.

Moksa, freedom, is the ability to discriminate between *satya* and *mithya* – between awareness and the objects that appear in awareness (you) – 100% of the time. When you do, you have no problem with the person or the world, because you understand them both, what makes them the same and what makes them different. They exist in two different orders of reality: the knower, that which is real, always present and unchanging (*satya*), and the known, the person, that which is apparently real, not always present and always changing (*mithya*). What makes them the same is that they are both awareness. What makes them different is that objects depend on awareness to exist, but awareness does not depend on the objects – like the wave and the ocean are both H₂O, but the wave depends on the ocean while the ocean is always free of the wave.

Understanding the world means you understand *Isvara*, the Creator (the *gunas*). Understanding the world (*mithya*) also means you understand the *jiva*'s conditioning in the light of self-knowledge (the *gunas*) – and this is how you negate it. There is no need to change or perfect the person or the world, because they are not real and cannot be perfected; they are *mithya*. *Moksa* is for the *jiva* because as the self you are already free. But to be free of the person so that you can live free as the self (while still appearing as a person) means that you have rendered their binding *vasanas* non-binding and negated the sense of doership, with *karma yoga* – which is the most important teaching for self-inquiry. Without *karma yoga*, self-inquiry will not work.

Tom: I saw my ex-wife today at a family thing of our children and have to say I felt not a twinge of regret or longing. Of course twelve-step programs have helped me with that as well. I'm thankful I can say this, only being divorced two-and-one-half years after thirty years of marriage. And also glad I don't need her approval or anyone else's as well. Anyway, I'm rambling on this. Tell James I'm very thankful for you all!

Sundari: I am happy for you, Tom. This means the knowledge is working for you and the *jiva* is much happier as a result. There are no mistakes in life. The *jiva* is here to work out its *karma* and will get the appropriate life situation for this. The fact that you can move on with dispassion means that you have no more *karma* to work out there. You have learned the lesson – only you, awareness, can validate the person. As the self, you validate everything.

Tom: I first came on to Vedanta by being recommended Nisargadatta. I think that's how you spell it? I never see a word in all James' writings about him. I'm just curious as to why that is. But really, I don't want to waste your time but feel like I need to get a few things out of the way.

~ Love you all!

Sundari: Although Ramana and Nisagaradatta were *jnanis*, neither of them were proper teachers, not that they claimed to be teachers. Ramana didn't make clear the distinction between Yoga and Vedanta and their relationship to each other, so his devotees generally have a knowledge-and-experience confusion (see Chapter II of James' book *The Essence of*

Enlightenment) which could be easily removed by the *satya/mithya* teaching.

Love to you too.

~ Sundari