

# The Trap of Worldly Success

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**Kurt:** Just expressing the moment:

Every day I read the *satsangs*, *The Essence of Enlightenment* or both. I also listen to James at YouTube through the Bluetooth in my car. I am using “I” because I don’t know what else to do, although saying Kurt-“*jiva*” does feel more appropriate.

**Sundari:** It is perfectly sensible to refer to the *jiva* as “I” when you know to what it refers. There is only one “I” after all, and the *jiva* is also the self, albeit a reflection. The important thing is not to confuse the two. The *jiva* may be the self, but the self is not the *jiva*.

**Kurt:** I was vice president of a marketing agency for 23 years. I resigned June 1 and am now senior vice president at another agency, a big change that couldn’t have made without the teachings, especially the story of Arjuna and Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. I want to know more... let me know. *Jiva* Kurt is very happy with this move and had a killer first month there financially. This makes me proud because of the struggle which I was up against. This feeling, although positive in experiential nature, is not who I am, which is awareness.

**Sundari:** Good for you, Kurt. Success in the material world is satisfying and rewarding for the *jiva*. The main thing is to be very vigilant about owning the success and to remember that we achieve nothing solely by “our” efforts. If you think about the constituents of action and the many factors that have to be present to achieve anything at all in the *mithya* world, it is very clear that we cannot be the doer. And, very importantly, all worldly success is *mithya* too.

**Kurt:** So the next step is to bring awareness to it.

**Sundari:** The next step is always discriminating between the experiencer and the knower of the experience. You cannot bring awareness to experience, because no experience is possible without awareness.

**Kurt:** This seems to change the nature of experience.

**Sundari:** Taking a stand in awareness as awareness will always change the nature of experience because you are observing it as the non-experiencing witness.

**Kurt:** I have become more *sattvic*. When I am in focused concentration on a task or meeting, I revert back to habitual thoughts, feelings, actions, words, which sometimes serve well and other

times don't.

**Sundari:** You don't become "more *sattvic*." *Sattva* is one of the three *gunas*, but it is also the nature of the mind, so you cannot gain more of it. You can only remove what obscures it. It is the *guna* springboard for awareness, so it is important to aim for *sattva* at all times – by bringing *rajas* and *tamas* into balance with it. When *rajas* and *tamas* are out of balance with *sattva*, the mind is in turmoil. The habitual thought patterns returning is normal. Ignorance is hardwired and very tenacious – but we don't have to get rid of the thoughts, just be aware of them and disidentify with them, thinking the opposite thought when necessary. As you may know, all the *gunas* have predictable as are the habitual thoughts that accompany them. They all belong to *Isvara*, and run eternally. The easiest way to disidentify with the thoughts is to identify the *guna* from which they arise and how it is playing out in the mind. With the objective observation of the *guna* and the thought patterns it generates comes the ability to discriminate the experiencing entity from the self, you.

**Kurt:** Practices: being acceptance is great. Accepting the path *Isvara* planned whether it's good or bad helps clear the clouds of habitual thoughts feelings actions and words.

**Sundari:** Standard *karma yoga* and the most essential practice to free the mind from the identification with doership and lessen the pressure of the *vasanas*.

**Kurt:** Being love is great. Loving others regardless of their response back to me feels great. It provides feelings of openness, freedom, empty of the *vasanas* that bind free, natural expression.

**Sundari:** As the self you are love and need no response, because you are the love that makes love possible. The *jiva* often needs work in this department because so many people have unresolved love issues.

There are two kinds of bliss: *ananda*, which is experiential bliss, and *anantum*, which is the bliss of the self. The bliss of the self – that which is always present, unlimited and unchanging – is not an experience, because it is your true nature, *anantum*. It does not feel like anything, because it is knowledge. Awareness is present whether or not *ananda* is present. The bliss of self-knowledge (*anantum*), however, can be experienced as a feeling, such as the bliss of deep sleep, which is inferred when you wake up, or as *parabhakti*, where love is known to be you, your true nature, meaning consciousness, the self. *Parabhakti* is having all you could ever want and knowing that it will never leave you. It is love loving itself, experienced as limitless satisfaction by the *jiva*.

The nature of the self, awareness, is *parama prema svarupa*. *Parama* means limitless; *svarupa* means nature, and *prema* is the love the makes love possible. In its presence, even spiritual love comes alive; however, spiritual or human love, no matter how pure, is dualistic. It is a transaction between a subject and an object, a feeling of love, for example. When I know I am awareness, I am *prema*, limitless love. This love is knowledge because awareness is intelligent. *Prema* is only known when the doer has been negated by self-knowledge. The feelings that it creates are an effect of my true nature and are great for the *jiva*, but they are not me, and I am free of the

feelings.

Because of the nature of the *gunas*, which make up and govern the creation of everything, the nature of the field of existence is constantly changing. Having a peaceful (*sattvic*) mind is not something one can hold onto indefinitely. One needs to gain the knowledge that you are always fine no matter what is going on in the mind, even though one aims for peace of mind at all times. Making sure one's life conforms to *dharma* in every way is of great importance if peace of mind is the main aim. A highly *rajasic* or *tamasic* life is definitely not conducive to peace of mind and will make self-inquiry impossible or at best very difficult.

What living a *dharmic* life gives you is an experienceable, peaceful mind capable of inquiry. However, what *moksa* gives you is the bliss of self-knowledge, which is very different from experiential bliss. When *moksa* has obtained in the mind, one may and usually does feel experiential bliss regularly, but one does not depend on it, because you know you are the bliss. In fact you could be sick, in pain and half-dead, broke, jobless or stuck in a situation you do not enjoy but cannot change – and feel blissful regardless of what is going on in the mind or around it. That is not to say that experiential bliss disappears when self-knowledge is firm. It just does not matter whether the experience of bliss is present or not, because the bliss of self-knowledge is always present and known to be your true nature, keeping the mind steady, dispassionate and confident.

**Kurt:** Performing *seva* is great. To serve others is similar to loving others. It helps dissolve or lessen the sense of self.

**Sundari:** Who else is there to serve but the self if there is only the self?

**Kurt:** So time spent in awareness – always watching Kurt-*jiva* – is my home, my true identity.

**Sundari:** Yes, the self is your true identity, but your statement implies that you could spend time outside of the self – which is not possible. The self is beyond time and space, and both are objects known to it. You are only ever experiencing the self, nothing else, whether you are aware that you are “spending time in the self” or not. It is quite common in the early stages of self-inquiry that the ego tries to experience awareness, when it is, in truth, always the other way around.

**Kurt:** Yet at work in particular, the Kurt-*jiva* seems to take over more than it doesn't. And because of the success I'm having, it's gotten worse even though I know Kurt-*jiva* is not who I really am.

**Sundari:** Most likely, you are having trouble with Kurt's success because he is identified with it. There are probably still some self-worth issues lurking in the background, which have attached themselves to the idea of Kurt being successful. The ego won't let go. Don't feel alone in this; all *jivas* struggle with the need for validation until self-knowledge is firm.

**Kurt:** At this moment, it seems as though the key to *moksa* – for me – is discernment,

discriminating between awareness and experiential awareness, and continually going back to awareness, then existing from there and repeating over again.

**Sundari:** You are right – *moksa* is the ability to discriminate what is apparently real (Kurt) from what is real (you, the self) 24/7. To discriminate requires the ability to understand Kurt's conditioning and the environment he lives in, the *gunas*, in light of self-knowledge.

**Kurt:** Acceptance, gratitude, love and *seva* seem to bring a more *sattvic* state. Discernment seems to be the practice that changes everything. So should I just keep on keeping on?

**Sundari:** Indeed, the ability to discern and discriminate is the key and changes everything for the *jiva* – as is the committed practice of *karma yoga*, *guna yoga* and *jnana yoga*. You are doing very well, Kurt, keep it up! With practice, self-knowledge translates into the life of the *jiva* as the default. It never fails. I am just finishing off the book on the *gunas*; it will be available later this year. In the meantime, I strongly suggest you read as much as you can on this topic. James has written extensively about the *gunas* in all his books; this teaching is the key to a happy, free life for the *jiva*.

**Kurt:** Any thoughts would be appreciated. Also – if I can ever help/assist you or James, please let me know.

~ Much love and gratitude!

**Sundari:** Thank you, Kurt, much appreciated, we will keep that in mind. I hope we get to meet you one of these days!

~ Much love, Sundari