

# You Are the Problem

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Mani:** Dear Ram, thank you very much. I had read your message and, honestly speaking, your reply did not answer my question. Yet I remain in debt for your kindness. As for the books on “life” are concerned, I had read every book available in the market right from the time of Shankara towards Ramana Maharshi and recently James’ books, not to mention ones on *karma yoga* alone.

Anxiety, tension and childhood abuse seem to offer no justification for my repeated and deliberate acts that end inevitably in despair and nothingness. It seems to me something much deeper is the source of ill-ease and more subtle that I could not imagine, and that is what I beg you throw light on.

This burdensome loneliness, aloofness, pennilessness keeps me busy with the struggle at every moment. I dread to wake up to the day, from fear of possibility of high emotional payment I may have to endure. As such, I see that the above aspects don’t seem to be problem when considered in isolation, but together they assume immense difficulty. Each problem seems to have a specific method to deal with (child abuse = self love, loneliness = acceptance and friendship, etc.) but as a whole, after dealing with each problem, no problem seems to have been solved. It is a never-ending loop I cannot break.

Suiting myself to a petty job, and living with sufficient means and never ever any dream to cross my thought would be a solution. But there you go, as I mentioned earlier, the whole ego-sense will be attacked brutally through such an act. Its like a merry-go-round of suffering, misery and despair. Tired. Very tired. And sick of myself.

OCPD (obsessive compulsive personality disorder) describes the situation quite well. If I take that as a relevant argument to explain my sense of ill-ease, then I would be forced to admit that every person in the past who was anxious to see the “center” of his being suffers from OCPD. The difference between them and me is simply conviction and desire to reach the goal. I know lots of theories, but I don’t “know” them or have any desire left to devote myself in their search. Least of all Realization & Co.

It’s simply that I am very ill at ease with myself, and yet I cannot get away from it in spite of being aware of the condition. Whether I need reason to help me or love to save me or knowledge (of oneself and one’s limitation as a being) to cure me, I don’t understand. It’s simply that I am playing with myself turning others’ life around me miserable and unbearable through incessant parroting.

(By the way, I am working for a doctorate degree at a reputed university. As a person I see the world as a threat, like a five-year-old child. From what arises the threat and for whom and why, I am too afraid to inquire. In another perspective I am fully functional as a being in society, and very far from any psychological explanation.)

**James:** Dear Mani, I am sorry I did not answer your question to your satisfaction.

This email makes the problem more clear. It sounds to me like you are quite depressed. The tone of the letter is the tone of someone who is quite wrapped up in his problems and seems to feel sorry for himself. There is really nothing that Vedanta can do for you. It is not intended to fix psychological problems. It is a means of self-knowledge for psychologically healthy people. I don't think you read my book very carefully, particularly the chapter on qualifications. You are not actually qualified for self-knowledge. Self-knowledge does not mean psychological knowledge, which it seems you need. You do not understand your psychology properly. I think you need professional help in sorting out the many issues that you face. I cannot do that. I am a teacher of Vedanta.

From a spiritual perspective the basic problem is that you believe your thoughts about yourself. You think you have problems, but in fact you are the problem. The only ray of light in this bleak picture is your last sentence. "In another perspective I am fully functional as a being in society, and very far from any psychological explanation." All that I can suggest is that you take this perspective and not the perspective of a person with problems. If you want my honest opinion, the basic problem I see here is a lack of gratitude. When I read between the lines I see a person who actually has a good life but who is habituated to complaining, always taking the glass to be half-empty when it is actually half-full.

A person qualified for freedom (from himself) is basically a cheerful person who feels fortunate to have a human birth and an intellect that he or she is willing to dedicate to self-inquiry. In short, you have a bad attitude. How can Julia or I fix it? I can fix my attitude, Julia can fix hers and you need to fix yours. Once you get in a good frame of mind about yourself and your life, reread my book, particularly the first chapter on motivations. If you can sign on to the logic there, then perhaps Vedanta is for you. But as things stand, if you can't find a way to fix your attitude and you want to take your "problems" seriously then I suggest you spend a couple of years in talk therapy. If you really want to work through your problems, it can be done.

I am sorry if this is disappointing news. I hate to be the one to say it. Julia is too polite to say it, I think, but I am not quite so well-mannered. Think of what I say as tough love, Mani. I wish you well and get back to me if you can see your miserable self in a different light.

~ Love, James