

Joy, the Near Enemy

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John: Hello again, Ram. I finished *Vivekachudamani*. Thank you for pointing it out. I will likely return to it soon for another pass in a little bit. In the past couple of weeks I have been devouring this knowledge. I have obtained hundreds of hours of discourses by *swamis* Paramarthananda, Chinmayananda, Dayananda and others, and have been spending many hours a day listening. The odd thing is that somehow this is not interfering with my life or marriage. It is hard to explain why that is so, but I am staying alert to that. The kitchen stays clean (cleaner, actually), chores get done, things get taken care of, my wife feels my affection and love, I manage to shower every day, etc.

I feel like I am getting rearranged. I think I have question for you; it seems like sometimes I “get” or grasp a Big Idea, such as that the world is a product or derivation of “me”; I not only shine on it, revealing it, or that is in me, but that it IS me, the way I can extend my arms out and my fingertips are still me even though they are way over “there.” Other times (in contrast) I get emotional reactions or worries or concerns, and I am beginning to use that as a signal, as you suggested; I try to find the thought of limitation behind the feeling, when I remember to.

So is it just a matter of purification that lets the Big Ideas enter and stay revealed? I can see how the princess-and-the-pea syndrome could make someone want to keep purifying themselves forever.

I look forward to getting your video set; I should have the arrangements in place for that in the next couple of weeks. I feel like a little Pac Man character chewing through the substratum, like an alcoholic wanting to reach the bottom of the whiskey bottle, except I am not passing out.

Ram: It is a combination of the intense self-study, keeping the mind on the idea of the self and its relationship to the objects (like the body) appearing in it, seeing that while the objects are it, it is free of the objects, and *karma yoga*. It sounds like *karma yoga* is working because it is not disrupting your relationship with your wife, the dishes are getting done, etc. and you feel good. The more you purify, the more *sattvic* the mind becomes. The more *sattvic* the mind, the more the big-picture insights happen and self-confidence grows. Self-knowledge is the direct purifier. *Karma yoga* is indirect, but you need both. *Karma yoga* is actually knowledge too: it is based on the fact that what happens is not up to you, so you can let go of the worry and keep the mind on the self in the form of what is happening. It sounds like you are on the right track.

Purification will become a permanent lifestyle once you see the value of it. Very few people understand the value of a pure mind. There is nothing like it. You can forget “enlightenment.” It will happen gradually or suddenly according to the intensity of your efforts. Just move forward with *karma yoga* and self-knowledge. You can’t lose. The only “danger” in spiritual practice is that you can get “stuck” in happiness (some problem!), meaning that your interest in liberation might wane a bit for a while. But the self will not be denied and you will get bored with happiness and make the final small step. In Vedantic literature *sattva* is called a “golden chain” because you get attached to purity and goodness. Once I saw it referred to as “joy, the near

enemy” in a Buddhist text.

Yes, get the videos and go through them slowly. And keep chewing through the substratum. It is the best intoxication. No hangover.

~ Ram