

A Bear Story

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Marilyn: Hi, Ram. I have just discovered your website and it's awesome. Thanks so much for making all this wonderful information available! I appreciate it very much. I have been very interested in Vedanta and have read some books on it in the past. I recently had an experience and was thrilled by it. But of course it leaves you with a feeling of wanting more of it, and that there is still more to be realised. I was reading your story in *Mystic by Default*, and find it fascinating. I too drank and smoked like crazy for years, amongst other things. I gave it all up rather unwillingly, though just to buckle down and "survive" in the world. The experience I recently had was subtle but wonderful. Maybe you could shed some insight on it, if it means anything in particular or if it was just a nice thing that happened. I will try to keep this short...

Over the course of the last couple of months I had really been trying to work on "positive thinking," as I became recently unemployed and was feeling extremely fearful of the future. I was listening to a call on a radio show. The host that day was telling all the callers that joy is already inside them, that it is your nature. But I did not believe or understand that really. I called in and told the show host that I am always trying to create lasting joy and stay positive, but seem to constantly default back to being angry, annoyed and depressed a lot. And always searching for something to fix it. The host told me to "STOP trying to create joy for the next week" and that to simply notice when joy pops up as best as I can.

Well, I didn't really think it would do any good, to be honest. But a couple of days later I was feeling a lot of anxiety and fear about financial issues and stuff. I got my mind off it as best I could, started looking at pictures online... of animals at a zoo on a very hot day. Then I saw this picture of a polar bear in the water with his paws up; he was floating around, trying to stay cool in the hot summer heat. When I looked at that picture I felt joy/love rise up in me. It was slow, and I could almost physically feel it rise up from the middle of my chest. It was almost as if it was being shown to me. After I felt it the thought came to me "there it is, there is the joy that he talked about, it is inside." ...hmm. I thought it was very nice but didn't think much of it.

Later that evening I started thinking... I feel so peaceful, I had a sense of well-being and a feeling of ease. Then I realised why I had this sense of well-being... all the FEAR I had been feeling earlier was GONE. It was like it had dissolved. . The undercurrent of fear and anxiety I have lived with my entire life seemed to have just evaporated. I love that this undercurrent of fear I have always had is gone. But I do notice that I can still scare myself if I start thinking scary thoughts again about future situations. So I just try to stay with the thought that joy is always in me and I can never lose it. I would love to hear any thoughts or comments you have on this, if it means anything in particular. I feel like my perspective has shifted, and I think that I would love to experience more of it!! Thank you so much for reading this, I am sure you are very busy.

~ Marilyn Smith

Ram: Dear Marilyn, that is an awesome story, "...in mysterious ways His wonders to perform," to use an expression not in vogue these days, through the radio of all

places! Well, it just shows that you were ready to hear the truth and that you are a good inquirer. But this is how it is when you are suffering. You open up and become sensitive to the signals around you that are telling you what you need to know. That the joy is in you is the essential message of Vedanta. And your analysis of what happened is great. It is the fear-thought that is the cause of all suffering. When you recognize it for what it is and do not “go there,” as they say, the joy that you are becomes obvious.

There is a bit more thinking that you need to do, however. You need to find the root of the fear-thought and address it. The root is the belief that you are not okay, that this is not a benign universe, that you are not looked after. I would imagine that you have never had to sleep on the streets, that you have had adequate food and clothing all your life. If that is true, then your worry about money is not justified, is it? Even if it is not true, the anxiety over what will happen is completely a waste of time because what happens is not up to you. If you are doing the best you can to find work, then you have taken care of your end of your contract with life. And even if you do end up in reduced circumstances it will not make any difference, if you stay in contact with the joy that you are. You want the security so you can feel the joy, but if you have the joy, what use is the money?

So what should you do? I suggest you continue to monitor your mind carefully. When the fear-thought comes up, let it go and let the joy come. You are going to have a battle on your hands, Marilyn. That small, insecure, fearful part of your mind is not going to surrender to the joy without a fight. But this is the work you have to do. It is good work and you will prevail.

At the same time, you probably need to do a bit of soul-searching concerning your values. Have you turned luxuries into necessities? Is life about happiness or is it about feeling secure financially? I say that the greatest security is happiness and that if you have that it trumps all other forms of security hands down. I have a monthly income of six hundred dollars, no home, a 12-year-old van, and I do not worry one bit about the future – because I know that I am the joy. That is the next stage. You are now experiencing it. Work on making it more or less permanent by staying away from the fear-thought and this will lead to the next stage: the discovery that you are it. Then you are really free. If you are the happiness, you can never lose it, because you can never lose you.

Oh, yes, I almost forgot. Positive thinking without knowing why you should think positively does not work. Without the reason it is just magical thinking. You should think positively because this is a benign universe and you are very much looked after. It is a great privilege to be here and to participate in the miracle of life. If you do not see it that way, no amount of positive thinking is going to help. If you do, all your thoughts will be positive.

Also, although this is a very welcome discovery and you will experience more and more peace and happiness, you would probably benefit by a more structured approach to your seeking. Have you read my book *How to Attain Enlightenment: The Vision of Non-Duality*? It puts all the information at the website into a very nice logical structure. It will help you get the big picture, I believe. Pay special attention to the section on *karma yoga*, as it goes into the issue that is troubling you in detail.

Anyway, I am very happy for you and particularly happy that you shared this with me. I love these stories!

~ Much love, Ram