

# The Meditator Who Could Not Handle the World

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**Tom:** Hi, Ram. May this find you in good stead.

Reading your book on meditation has helped inspire me to sit two or three times a day now. Clearing *samskaras/vasanas* is work, as you say, and I am involved in that process. Sitting does not cut much ice right now, as monkey mind holds sway, but no matter.

I seriously need some input, if you are willing and think you could guide me. First let me give a little background so you know where I am coming from on this. I am 43 and live in the Philippines, an American expatriate for over eight years now. I am single, have no kids or family, never married, loner, broke. I am very relational, but I have only slightly and marginally participated in life to this point. But I do not want to waste the remainder of my life.

I rent a small room in a crowded and somewhat noisy boarding house which is not conducive for sitting. I need to move to a quiet place. I eat a sparse diet of cheap produce, eggs and *kefir* (top probiotic culture) made of fresh raw milk from pastured cows and beet *kvass* (fermented beverage). I have an arrangement with a friend here that so far has brought in enough money to survive, but it looks like that source of income is about to dry up and I have no marketable skills, except I could teach English to stray individuals as an amateur who never taught anything and has no degree. I can write but would rather not if I had a choice and I do not want to field customer complaints as a wage slave in a call center. I want to be much less mental than I ever have been to this point.

My preference would be, on the one hand, to live in the country here in a tiny house or even a big tent and tend a flock of chickens that would supply enough eggs for my use and a couple goats for kefir and butter. A simple sane life in nature that leaves me plenty of time to sit in formal contemplation. At this point I have almost no one I interact with, as the few foreigners I have known here are all bad company, worldly, materialistic, clueless, egoic, money-food-sex-cheap-thrill addicts, to put it bluntly, whereas I am a natural renunciant, not in the least entrepreneurial or competitive.

On the other hand, I now see the crucial importance of being able to enter *samadhi* as often as possible, and it makes the greatest possible sense to spend as much time sitting in extremely empowered communion halls as I possibly can amongst a group of committed and experienced meditators. I understand this is the number-one advantage to being able to attain and maintain access to states free of body-mind identification, which is the most auspicious and expeditious means to awaken to the self over time. Full or even partial awakening may not occur with the baggage I carry that needs to fall away in the years that remain, but I want to gain at least a toehold before this body bites the dust.

This is obviously not the best place to find such empowered halls or groups of intense experienced meditators I could freely access, although I do not know this for a fact. There are many intentional communities here, none of which I have ever visited.

Finally, my question: Given my life situation, personal history, lacking practical functionality and life skills, extreme lack of funds, what would you suggest? I mean, could you point me to a place anywhere on the planet that fits my ideal description (country life with hens/goats AND intense group of meditators in a powerfully empowered hall) that you think I could access and possibly do some service task that would garner me enough simple food, shelter and clothing and plenty of time to sit and to do self-investigation/exploration? That's all I want at this point. In lieu of the hens/goats in a bucolic setting, the empowered hall and *satsang* of intense meditators would rank first on my list of most desired situations.

I know you have traveled all over India and spent more than 30 years there. I imagine I could get there with the funds I have or to some other near or far-flung location, including back to the USA. I have no one and no roots. One thing that gives me pause is that the four or five full *ashrams* or small groups I have spent time in have been very cultic, very egoic and run by a phony *guru* or self-styled *swami* whom I saw through quickly or eventually, and I do not want to repeat that fiasco.

Okay, that's about it for now. If you made it this far I appreciate it and hope to read your precise and valuable counsel at your earliest convenience, if you are willing to comment.

Be well, Ram.

~ Sincerely yours, Tom

**Ram:** Dear Tom, I wish I could help you, but I do not know of such a place in India. And the places that are available tend to be cultic, have rigorous work requirements and are usually disturbed by politics. I think considering your situation and needs, India is not for you. You would not want to get stuck there without money.

I know you did not ask, but here is a little feedback on your idea. You say you want to be able to attain and maintain access to states free of body-mind identification, which is the most auspicious and expeditious means to awaken to the self over time. Although access to such states can be helpful, they can be as much a curse as a blessing. In my view, meditation should be used for self-inquiry, not for experiencing states free of body-mind identification. You can just as well not identify with the body and mind in the waking state. And indeed non-identification would only be helpful if it applied to the waking state, which no one can avoid. Many meditators who experience such states often become incapable of living in the world and become a prisoner of meditation. There was a *swami* I knew who meditated all his life in a cave in India, high in the Himalayas. One day he got sick and they had to bring him down to civilization to treat him, and he could not cope! He was completely attached to his state. Everyone who knew him could not help laughing. What kind of meditation is it if you can't function in the world?

Honestly, I think you are barking up the wrong tree, insofar as any state you might access is only as good your understanding of it and any and all states end. Enlightenment is not a special state. I have copied in the second chapter of my new book *How to Attain Enlightenment* below. Please read it carefully, signing on to the logic as it unfolds. I also think that the best meditation is *karma yoga*. Once you get the hang of it, you will experience identification-free states naturally. Get back to me with your comments on Chapter II. Once we get the enlightenment thing sorted, I will explain *karma yoga*.

~ Sincerely, Ram