

# There Is Nothing Like a Pure Mind

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Seeker:** Dear Ram, thanks for sending the *satsang* on practice... It seemed too much to think about for a while because it seems I have quite a resistance to actually thinking about things sometimes. I depend on inspiration from the self to keep me going. I don't have a lot of confidence in the mind, though I do listen to the little voice that guides me. I have some remarks and questions - maybe I don't understand it as well as I thought.

Isn't the self expressing through everything, including the mind? And isn't truth a form of the self (beyond duality) which is expressed freely, and in the self, as much as the mind of the self is able to receive and transmit? I think that the mind cannot transform itself by itself, only become more open to the transformation that occurs naturally by the self, in cooperation with the self...

Oh, it's so difficult to express this clearly...

It seems to me there are certain ideas which are closer to truth than others, which carry energy, that do transform the mind... and that by aligning myself with those ideas, more of the self is expressed in this ego life.

But if nothing is practiced in the life to overcome...

**Ram:** I'm not exactly sure what you are getting at, but here is how I read what you say. I think the positive and the negative forces tend toward balance in the long run. When you look into anything in *maya* you can't really make a definitive statement about what it is, because, like elementary particles, it is all in a state of flux. The positive often has negative effects and the negative often has positive effects. We wouldn't have this much-needed resolve on the part of the peace-and-freedom-loving nations to confront the scourge of terrorism if those fanatics hadn't caused such horrendous loss of life, for example. On the personality level too you find that everyone has positive and negative qualities, not always in balance, but tending toward balance.

Still, I agree that those of us that think of ourselves as conscious beings have a duty to ourselves to make life as pain-free as possible. There is a man who lives next door who chain smokes. I hear him coughing painfully throughout the day and all night long. I was thinking about why he kept doing something that was causing him so much pain and it occurred to me that he didn't like himself very much - insofar as he could quit smoking and experience health.

So in a case like that, by confronting his negativity and doing something about it he could make life better for himself and ultimately for others. In some people there is a great imbalance of the positive and negative, so you have Osama bin Laden on one hand and the saints on the other, but I think most people are pretty equally balanced between their positive and negative traits.

Nonetheless, I didn't mean to suggest that conscious beings shouldn't purify themselves. In fact it is smart to purify negative tendencies. There is nothing more

pleasurable than a pure mind. What I was trying to say is that one can work on the mind in a dispassionate way without getting identified with either side, seeing the bad in the good and the good in the bad, without letting oneself think that one is nothing more than the play of the positive and negative forces.

When you take yourself to be the mind you put yourself in an impossible position. You are forced to continually “change” because the mind is nothing but the outpicturing of an apparently endless store of very dynamic *vasanas*. There is no rest for people who are trying to change themselves. And there is no rest for the people in their lives, because it is disturbing to be connected to dissatisfied people.

That the quantity of one’s negative *vasanas* is unknown makes it particularly difficult to sustain a program of purification. I meet quite a few persons who have been on the path for twenty to thirty years who have simply given up trying to change, because no matter how much they transform or overcome there is always more coming up from within. Furthermore, The Princess and the Pea syndrome is always operational; the subtler and purer you get the more subtle the negativities become. Vedanta says that the purification of the mind is always plagued with conflict because the mind is by nature dualistic. So at some point, as most of the texts point out, one needs to shift one’s focus from fixing something that will never in the long run be still and pure to inquiring into the one thing that is always still and pure, you, the self.

When you see that you are the self, and not the ego, the positive and negative forces operating in and on the mind are no longer an issue. You can let them play on their own, transform them or simply revel in the bliss of the self, i.e. ignore them. I think that the problem of purification/transformation of negativity as a path to enlightenment comes from an incorrect understanding of Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutra*s, which two thousand plus years later is still the definitive work on the subject. In it he seems to equate enlightenment with a pure mind.

And while you can’t argue with the logic of the idea that if the mind is cleansed, destroyed, suspended, only the self will be left over, in practice the *vasana*-less gaps in the mind which produce the experience of transcendence always eventually, sometimes within seconds, get filled in with *vasanas*, thus once again obscuring the shining of the self. So the path of purification is always frustrating and eventually has to be taken off center stage *sadhana*-wise.

One needs instead to make an inquiry into the nature of the mind and/or the self, not with the idea of becoming better, purer or happier, but with the idea of understanding what the mind and the self are. When one actually understands what the mind and the self are one is set free from the belief that one needs to do anything to be happy. This is so because the mind need not be taken seriously in light of the discovery that one is fine as one is, i.e. the self.

I hope this clears up your confusion. At some point you’re going to have to pack it in on cleaning up your mind. You’re not an ax-murderer, a child molester or a strong-arm robber. You work hard, look after your family and are kind and honest. What more can one be on the relative level? I’m sure that you will come to this conclusion before long. You’re certainly pure enough for me.

~ Love, Ram