

Sadhana, Working on a Sticky Mud-Hole with Knockout Fumes

Ram (James Swartz)

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Virginia: Dear Ram, thank you very much for your instant answer. I liked the *satsang Follow Dharma*. It seems to me like a clarifying elaboration on one sentence from the *Bliss satsang*: "Experience does not alter thinking patterns. What changes thinking patterns? New thinking patterns."

I actually can often use a hint. My mind might come up with some intelligent thoughts if I nudge it from slumber. One problem actually seems to be that I don't think. I basically just find myself again and again in the thicket of "I have to do something so that it's getting better so that I am getting better" without having the faintest clue about how I got there in the first place. The process seems totally unconscious and I sense that coming to a conscious state (*sadhana*) is a lot like coming up from a sticky mud-hole filled with knockout fumes. Martina says that emotions are just fat thoughts (that's a Tibetan view), and it does seem so. In fact these muddy thoughts are so thick they block the view to any *sadhana*-thought. It is a mystery that I actually "wake up" sometimes despite those knockout fumes. How does that happen, that waking part? Why do I actually sometimes seem to notice what is happening?

Ram: Well, the mind has three modes or energies, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, with which you are perhaps familiar. (In my book, in Chapter III, I tell about them and how they relate to *sadhana*. Have you read *Meditation: Inquiry into the Self*? If you haven't and would like to I will send you a copy either a hard copy or a digital copy.) Even someone who lives a *rajasic/tamasic* lifestyle will have periods of *sattva*. When *sattva* is the dominant energy you feel awakened, connected, pure, happy, light and spiritual. That sticky mud-hole with knockout fumes is *tamas*. It is usually brought on by extended periods of *rajas*. These energies cycle through the mind throughout the day. Your description is one of the best I've heard. When *rajas* comes into the mind one gets hyped up with excitement and passion. When *tamas* enters you slide back into the sticky mud-hole. The person who is doing this is not you, the self. It is the mind only.

You think it's you because you identify with the mind, with experience.

You notice what is happening because you are the self. It is beyond the mind, that is, it is the observer of the three states of mind. It is the self that notices this waking-up event.

Sadhana is the patient removal of *rajasic* and *tamasic vasanas*, resulting in the increase of *sattva* in the mind. *Sattva* doesn't actually increase, because the mind is just the self (*sat*), but it seems to be less because there is so much *rajas* and *tamas* occupying it. You should not think of *sadhana* as you getting better, since you are fine as you are. You should think of it as the mind purifying. A purified mind makes experience rich, intense and beautiful.

If you want to be relatively free of *tamas* you are going to have to change your

lifestyle. It is not something that you can accomplish overnight, but it is certainly worth it in the long run. You have a strong spiritual *vasana* and are at an age where you still have the energy to do it. If you apply yourself diligently you should get results pretty quickly, but if you don't the *tamasic* and *rajasic vasanas* (meaning unconscious forces) will just become more and more entrenched, later on you will feel the full weight of them and it will be very hard to get out from under them.

Sadhana is not particularly easy unless you understand the value of *sattva*. There is no pleasure on earth that is equal to a pure mind. The mind is not easy to purify, because of the belief that there is happiness in sloth and passion. Probably some of your relationships are based on *rajasic* and *tamasic* energies, so friends will not want you to purify. It will basically spell the end of relationships with *tamasic* and *rajasic* people. Sad but true.

You should also be careful not to do your life as *sadhana* in a *rajasic* way. I don't think this is a danger with you, but there are many people who go for it because they can't wait for results – they want enlightenment now! This is not only ineffective, it is ugly. Just patiently think about where you can make changes and make them in a timely way.

Notice I said do your life as *sadhana*. Most people make the mistake of thinking that they are doing *sadhana* as a special activity, one among others. But *sadhana* is the way to live your life, the purpose to which it is dedicated and the way one goes about fulfilling that purpose.

Virginia: When we met you said (and it is also in *The Mystery Beyond the Trinity*) that one has to wish. One has to tell the self that one wants to wake up. That does not make sense to me. It is not that I don't want to wish for it, I can't help but do so. But the wish seems to have been always there without my doing anything about it (who would be that one anyway!) and even without my knowing any of it. It has been there always and just "walks" me through all sorts of experiences, waking me up.

Ram: Beautifully expressed. I don't think I said you have to, I think I said that it can be helpful if you consciously wish. But if you can feel the power working in you leading you along, then there is nothing to be done.

Virginia: Writing about it now, I have the impression that a good *sadhana* would actually be to just peacefully watch Virginia wake up. I know that this is not a clear question, but please remember the fumes here...

Ram: Yes, the best *sadhana* is to just watch Virginia wake up. But if you want to clear away the obstacles more quickly, you can accelerate the process. Invoking the self is one of the methods used to purify the mind. It acts as a kind of connector between the conscious and the unconscious parts of yourself. The self is waking you up, no doubt about it, but as long as you see yourself as the one being woken up, then you may want help. So it is useful to intensify your longing and to insist on help. This gives you the energy you need to make the necessary changes. On the other hand, longing for God/enlightenment can become a very pleasant occupation. While there is absolutely nothing wrong with thinking of oneself as a devotee, it is a kind of bondage too insofar as it is another limited identity.

Virginia: Thank you for all the inspiration so far...

~ Love, Virginia