

Desire Desiring Desire

Ram (James Swartz)

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Jerry: Dearest Ram, though I know that *jnana* and *bhakti* are one, or at least not-two (an *advaita* joke), I have mostly sought understanding in this life, sometimes without expressing the gratitude/adoration that would have been a sign of more spiritual maturity. I am deeply grateful for the teaching as you express it.

I long ago started only reading stuff (I seem to have a powerful *vasana* to know and be truth) that had to be read slowly. I am reading your book slowly (though I can't wait to hear more about *karma yoga*). After finding David Godman's *Be As You Are* book on Ramana, I found no better expression of this teaching until now. Thank you!!!!

My path thus far has had no real *samadhi* type experiences, and I know this may not matter.

Ram: It can be just as much a hindrance as a help. There is not one experiential qualification listed in the Vedanta texts that lay out the qualifications for enlightenment. Spiritual and worldly experiences are only as good as your ability to interpret them. And since the ultimate point of view is the self and you want self-knowledge, the only way is to look at them in its light. From the self's point of view experience is just experience. It is an object appearing in awareness. The *samadhis* are no more useful than the hangovers.

Jerry: I have this drive to get liberated, though I have other powerful *vasanas*, including:

(1) my grand vision of romantic partnership, (2) a desire for perfect physical fitness, (3) a desire to be free of money worries by having lots of it, (4) an egoic tendency to believe I'm special (truly wise) because I've "found" such great practical wisdom in my life (like your teaching), (5) a feeling of loneliness for "real" connection (I know what you might say about this one. It feels like wanting to be saved by the perfect womanly companion sometimes. A lot of this comes down to the desire to be loved, which I think you mentioned somewhere is the cause of suffering?).

Ram: All the usual stuff. Behind all these desires is the desire for freedom from desire. Just go for the freedom directly. It is much easier and less time-consuming. Even if reality saw fit to fulfill all your fantasies, you would still not be free, because the source of the desire – ignorance of your wholeness – is only removed by self-knowledge. The way out is, as I said, seeing the desire behind the desires and addressing it – which you are doing. When you have a desire, look to see if it cancels you. You are there behind every one, watching and desireless. Working through gratuitous desires is a waste of time.

Jerry: I have been reading some of *Am I a Nutty Guru or What?* today. It gives me such a strong "taste." The self may be actionless, but my ego is *rajasic* (though

sometimes towards achieving *sattvic* things). I am capable of pausing in my doing, and your writings make me stop a bit.

I think/imagine that I live a pretty *sattvic* life (somewhat simple, never too much work, always thinking about Advaita, balancing activity and rest, treating the physical objects in my care as if they were sacred, following my conscience (the true internal one, i.e. the Golden Rule) and trying to remember to express unconditional love (I definitely do not always do this one)).

I'm guessing that simply pondering and reminding myself that I am doing nothing, ever-present, lacking nothing, including everything, awareness (self) will not set me totally free by itself but who knows, maybe it will? Like I said, I'm looking forward to hearing more about *karma yoga* and ANY feedback you give me.

Ram: If you are already free – which you are – then the only thing that will work is seeing if what scripture says is true. That you are bound is just a belief. Ask yourself why you think you are not free. Is it true? Who told you, apart from your feelings, that you are not free. Thinking you are not free is like the bird that stays in its golden cage when the door is always open. The only thing standing between you and what you seek is this thought that you are not free. What other options are there except to contemplate the meaning of “I am whole and complete, non-dual, ordinary, actionless, ever-free awareness”?

Maybe what is standing in the way of assimilating this knowledge is that some part of you is still holding out for the worldly stuff – health, wealth, love – etc. If that is true then you maybe have some more suffering in store. Eventually you will see the defect in these things, the defect being that they are all *samsaric* preoccupations and nothing in *samsara* is real. You get the woman and that is not the end of it. She does not supply endless and continuous emotional satisfaction. You get the money and then you worry about keeping it. Et cetera. There is no solution here. Life is a zero-sum game. You cannot win. And it sounds like your life is pretty darn wonderful, so what's more to get? It is just desire desiring desire. Ram says count your blessings.

Jerry: Sometimes I feel like I know so much but cannot totally “be” what I know.

Ram: There is nothing to be. There is only something to understand. You are just fine as you are. See the beauty in it.

Jerry: I have looked for real truth since I was a little kid, starting with science, then psychology, then Eastern philosophy. I feel like I have found some of the best written material (like your stuff) available on the planet. Along the way I have used my fine mind (ego again) to achieve several worldly goals without too much effort), but can see that maybe in truth there was no me doing this, that all of my egoic self was conditioned by *Isvara* the Puppet Master... I did realize even as a serious math student that solutions to proofs came from who-the-fuck-knows-where, etc.

I think I know that right now, as my thoughts can still, that I am only awareness, no objects whatever are me (I may be making my sense of awareness an object, who knows???). The tendencies are so strong though!

Ram: They may be strong, but you survive and transcend them. You are there before they arise, while they pull toward objects and you remain once they are gone. Think about that. When you consistently take a stand in awareness as awareness, they gradually diminish in frequency and intensity. If you are *rajasic*, it is hard to take a stand in your ever-free self. If it gets too painful to resist, act them out with the *karma yoga* spirit. When you get what you want or what you don't want – be objective. Did you really change? I think you are starting to see that the whole business of life has nothing to do with you. This is good. It is all *Isvara*. Trying to get what you want here is like eating cotton candy. It looks great but the joy lasts all of a few seconds.

Jerry: Don't they say that the fastest way to realization is hanging out with the realized??? (And I know that books/DVDs provide a certain means of hanging out.)

Ram: It's true. You see that it is really possible to be happy with nothing but your self. It is inspiring. My *sadhana* was short and sweet because I hung out with a *mahatma*.

Jerry: Don't let this get to your ego, but I really do bow at your feet, Ram. Thanks so much.

Ram: If you bow to Ram, you are not bowing to a person. If you are bowing to a person, it goes on to Ram. I am glad you are enjoying the Vedanta à la Ram. Feet means "understanding." The truth is what stands under you. So you are bowing to the truth. Insofar as I am the truth, you bow to me. As far as my ego is concerned, it is so big now that one more bit of worship doesn't make any difference. 😊

Jerry: Maybe what I am trying to say is that your words ring TRUE!!!!

Ram: My words are Vedanta's words. I plagiarized them. Everything is *Isvara*. There is nothing else.

It was very nice to hear from you. Appreciation is always appreciated.

~ Love, Ram