

# Fear Is Not Smart

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Lynn:** Dear Ram, I've been fighting with my fearful mind for a long time now and the progress is very slow. Do you have any suggestions to help me?

**Ram:** One needs to apply the opposite thought all the time, until ego's back is broken. Opposite what? Opposite the belief that you are vulnerable and that life is essential hostile. So the opposite thought is: "I am indestructible." This is the message that Krishna gave Arjuna when he was about to go to war. Only by carefully monitoring your mind will you be able to catch the fear-thought, dismiss it and assert the opposite.

But before you do that you need to understand how painful your fears and desires actually are. Indulging one's fears and desires is not smart. If you think you are very clever because you have your butt completely covered, you are actually saying that you are lugging around a large frozen superstructure of fear in your mind. You may feel that you can defeat the disease demon with your radical cleanses, but you cannot - because the actual disease is fear. Look how much you spend on organic food and the latest trace elements, how hard you work to support these fears - yet the fear continues.

Say you have your diet right up to the mark. You are taking the recommended daily doses of any number of vitamins, hormones, trace elements, blood purifiers, amino acids - you name it. One day a pamphlet at the "health" food store talks about a new study that has discovered that city dwellers have a new worry - depleted levels of a hitherto unknown amino acid that is responsible for proper brain functioning. You deal with this information by buying a concoction derived by boiling the leaves of an exotic rainforest vine and exposing the residue to the sun's rays at an altitude of more than eighteen thousand feet. "Scientific" studies have conclusively proved a statistical connection between levels of this amino acid in the blood and the atoms in said rainforest vine. It's a new product, so it costs sixty instead of the usual thirty dollars for such remedies. You hate to pay so much but your fears think it is a good idea, so you pony up and start the regime.

You feel good. You kick back and turn on the TV. Then you catch a funny new smell and wonder what it might be. Did you turn off the stove? You check. Stove is off. The smell persists. Your mind takes a few giant steps in the fear direction and you become convinced that you are breathing in a strange microbe that has been living under your mom's fifty-year-old carpet. You start to experience unpleasant symptoms. So you tear up the carpet and refinish the floors. Smell gone. Whew! A few days later you read in the science section of the paper that the particular type of varnish you used on the floor contains a toxic chemical that is suspected to cause an exotic cancer. You call the refinishers and have the floors stripped and sanded again. This sets you back a pretty penny. The refinisher is a very nice guy and asks you out. When he brings you home you French kiss him on the doorstep and can't sleep at night - not for love. You imagine that you picked up a weird tropical disease because he just came back from his vacation in Costa Rica and...

You can live with fear for a long time. It is not against the law, but it is against the

spiritual law. It will incarcerate you mentally and emotionally for as long as you let it. At what point do you just give up and accept that this is a benign universe? Do you know how good it actually feels to get up in the morning and not have the day all structured to assuage your health fears, your financial fears, your X fears? My brother, who used to watch a lot of TV, once said that the TV was one hundred percent fear. I hadn't thought of it that way but I watched for a couple of hours with that idea in mind and he was one hundred percent correct. Everything is based on the idea that it a very threatening universe and you better buy the remedies the world has to offer if you want to sleep well at night. It's shameless. "Because so much is riding on your tires," says a voiceover accompanied by the image of a fat little baby sitting inside a Michelin tire. And TV is American culture. And our minds are TV minds.

Yes, it is an uncertain universe. Things are constantly changing. I'm not saying not to be prudent and sensible. You find yourself walking in the ghetto in a low-cut dress, your body laden with gold jewelry. Your mind tells you that you are about to get raped and robbed. It has a point. But if you live a sheltered life in a well-to-do neighborhood for fifty years and have never been raped or robbed and get up in the middle of the night to see if the back door is actually locked, the fear is probably illegitimate. At a certain point it would seem to me that the weight of one's illegitimate fears would be intolerable. You don't put your letters in the postbox for the postman because of some fear. So you have to drive to the post office and post them there. Why stop there? Why not fly to the Visa office in Arizona with your check in your hand? But then maybe even that wouldn't be enough. You would have to trust the secretary to enter the payment in your account. If you went through all of your little rituals and decided to abandon the fear-based ones, you'd have so much time on your hands you could take a nice long vacation.

You've heard this before. Please don't take it as a judgment or criticism. I'm telling you this because living without fear feels very good. And because I love you I'd like you to experience the freedom that stands above fear and desire.

**Lynn:** My intention is to just be aware, moment by moment, and as far as possible not getting involved in the doing. And when I don't reach my ideals, remembering to give myself permission to make mistakes.

**Ram:** That's good. Awareness is the key. It takes time. I was lucky because I had an innate contempt of fear from early on. I hated my mom's petty worries. And my father was completely fearless. He got it into me that the world was my oyster, that life was a lot of fun. And when I realized the self I understood in a very deep way that fear was completely inappropriate.

**Lynn:** And I must admit, though I have opened to the possibilities of greater vistas in some areas, it is slow work making changes. Though I entertain the thought that opposites may be true, the old *vasanas* reappear. For instance, though I can say to you that I am noticing changes in my attitudes toward health and food, I find myself doing another cleanse. So I am still spending energy trying to preserve this mass of flesh from its slow demise. I've considered stepping off the soap box though...

**Ram:** Well, that's progress. Nothing more boring than somebody who thinks that

what's good for them is good for everyone. I probably should amend that. Everyone thinks what's good for them is good for everyone else, but people with compassion understand that their prescriptions are only useful when solicited. I'm continually amazed at how human beings want so desperately to be right.

**Lynn:** And thanks for the wonderful *satsang*! It's so clear. And it's just what I needed to hear at the present time - it's very helpful. I seem to be interested in reading and thinking Vedanta again, and in exploring meditation from a different perspective. There is some greed in that though. I've been listening to some of our old *satsang* tapes, and they are very interesting. I got out one of your meditation tapes the other night, and went to sleep following your instructions. And occasionally I am slowing down.

~ Much love to you, Lynn