

The Idea of Freedom and Real Freedom

Ram (James Swartz)

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Marilyn: Hi, James. Thanks for the generous *satsang*. There are several concepts that you've mentioned that are real pearls, and which I'm already applying.

"So there is always this tension between your perceived short-term needs and your long-term goal." ~ James

This is so perfect and such an important idea to have in mind all the time! I can see a friction that starts due to that tension, but once I'm aware of that idea, it seems easier.

James: Yes, the long-term goal is liberation and the short-term goal is peace of mind; discrimination doesn't work when the mind is emotional. This is where *karma yoga* applies. You offer the results of every action to *Isvara* and the mind is immediately resolved. When the mind is resolved it is difficult to make mistakes. You do your actions in an appropriate and timely manner. When the result comes you take it as a gift, and so the mind stays resolved. Your life becomes simple and ordinary - no dramas. At the same time, as you listen to the teachings the revelations come spontaneously.

Marilyn: "Less is more... keep things simple... one thing at a time." ~ James

Yes... thank you! I can totally feel very high levels of *rajas* when I start multitasking. And how at many occasions I can actually could have said "no" to most of the ideas that I had (or people around me) in the past months. Yes, it's a discipline indeed. And that thought already calms my mind.

James: One of the metaphors for the practice is called "riding the steed of *yoga*." You are seated on a very powerful, energetic young horse that wants to run. It is dangerous to run with the mind. So you have to keep the reins firmly in your hands and keep constant pressure on them to keep the mind from running wildly. Eventually, the horse realizes that it is not in control and moves deliberately.

Marilyn: "One should always renounce the gratuitous needs as they arise and focus on the most immediate need, working patiently on it with the understanding that the result is up to *Isvara*." ~ James

Patience. That must be *sattvic* quality, I guess, because one can't be patient while in identification with the pressure of *rajasic* and *tamasic* thoughts/actions, which makes me think that working patiently, keeping in mind the long-term goal - freedom from all identification with the *jiva* - despite the sometimes juicy short-term gratifications, should naturally lead to a *sattvic* mindset in which one would be more capable of proper discrimination... yes?

James: Yes. Patience is *sattva*. *Rajas* is the mind crying out in pain. It thinks an object is required to remove the pain of its desire, so it is always in a hurry to get objects. Since the object momentarily relieves the pain it thinks pursuit of objects is legitimate. *Rajas* – desire – is born of *tamas*, ignorance of one’s wholeness.

Marilyn: “...brick by brick, no shortcuts.” ~ Swami Chinmaya

Yes, James, and that leads me again to the importance of patience in this path, and how much I need to nurture that attitude. Even though Vedanta for me IS the shortcut itself, I understand what you mean.

James: Good. Understanding desire is the most fundamental building block for one’s *yoga*. Desire is not bad, but it is not good either. It is an inevitable fact of life and needs to be managed, not slavishly worshipped by performing the actions it dictates. Slowly the *yogi* converts it into desire for peace. Before you even know about *moksa* you love objects. When you realize that objects are controlled by *Isvara*, you start to love *Isvara*. You no longer ignore Him/Her/It. As your understanding of the importance of *Isvara* in your life increases, you want to know more about *Isvara*, so you start to love knowledge of *Isvara*. As your knowledge grows you come to realize that *Isvara* is you and you end up loving yourself. So this desire for objects is actually desire to know and love yourself. It is quite extraordinary that the modern teachers in general don’t address the topic of desire.

Marilyn: “The only way you can get rid of your *karma* is to shuffle off the *jiva*, and the way you do that is to understand that you are the self. If you really understand – if you have accepted all the logic of the scriptures – then whatever *karma* the ***jiva*** has doesn’t matter to you.” ~ James

James, I do understand, agree and believe in it, and follow the beautiful logic implied to it with all my heart. But that recognition alone didn’t set me free... yet.

James: The objectification of Marilyn, the *jiva*, comes in its own time. Take the *karma yoga* attitude toward *moksa* and work patiently. In the meantime, enjoy your life. As Swamiji used to say, “Hasten slowly.”

Marilyn: Especially when I think about money, things get cloudy because I feel, honestly, that it still matters. I’m 47 and don’t own a house or a car, and didn’t save money for a rainy day... nothing. This scenario creates a certain amount of insecurity in my mind, even though there’s no actual lack in my life (and there never was), since I live a fairly comfortable life, with no luxuries, but all the basic needs being met. There’s a pressure, there’s a thought coming up very often lately: “You need to quit this dependency on others and trust that *Isvara* will take care of your getting and keeping,” as it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Even in Vedanta it is said that before you have security in the world it’s very difficult to have energy to properly dedicate yourself to *moksa*.

James: There is some truth to this, but you need to be very discriminating if you have this idea because there is always the question of how much security you

require to live a life of inquiry. I just had a Skype chat with a man the other day who heard the teaching and became very inspired and his inspiration attracted a woman whom he felt he needed to support, so he put this inquiry on hold and went after money, thinking that when he was financially secure he could dedicate his time to self-inquiry and *moksa*. His inspiration deserted him, the woman deserted him and he fell into a big depression. Then he realized that his life should be centered around *moksa*, not *moksa* centered around his life. And everything is working wonderfully, now that he is clear about what he wants. People don't realize that what they want when they want security from objects is *moksa*, since it is the only security. The self is called *paramarthika*, the supreme wealth. When you realize that you are a partless whole, you are free. You know that nothing that can be added to you or subtracted from you, so you are indifferent to objects. You can take them or leave them.

Marilyn: But I've always had this *vasana* for freedom, for knowing who I am, never fitting in as a *jiva*, always asking questions about what is the purpose of all of this "getting and keeping" since the bodies are all going to the grave, sooner or later. And this urge for freedom is getting stronger and stronger, James... and it's impossible to let it aside, waiting until the moment I get my security needs met.

I'm not so clear about my remaining experience *vasanas*, but I don't feel like buying a lot of stuff, travelling, knowing places in the world, not even India. But when I think about eating properly, providing good education and experiences to my daughters or being able to get in touch with the knowledge that is helping me to lighten the *vasana* pressure, then something shines inside.

James: Good for you! Desire for *moksa* is love for yourself. The one that shines is *Isvara*. It is happy when you seek it. The only problem was that you did not know how to seek. Now you know. Vedanta is a formula. It may not always be easy to apply, but it works.

Marilyn: If it is true that "I always have the right amount of money" (and, technically, I agree), the only problem lies in how I interpret this life situation... yes?

James: Yes. How you interpret your situation depends on your values. If *moksa* is your primary value, then the importance of everything else is known. So you always need to keep the value for freedom enshrined in your mind.

Marilyn: So when you say "you seem to have some work to do on your *karma*," what do you mean exactly? Is it a work of reinterpreting the situation from the self's perspective or is it a doing in the form? Or maybe both?

James: Both. Look at your circumstances from the self's point of view, and at the same time work patiently to resolve the transactional issues that are crying for attention. You have to resolve your *karma* physically too. Recently a man realized who he was through Vedanta - I helped him a lot and I thought he was clear about who he was. He was so enthralled by Vedanta that he began to neglect his duties, particularly his wife. He thought, "I am a great sage. The world is unreal. My wife's

feelings are *mithya*," etc. Actually, he had a habit of neglecting her all along, and although she went along with it, behind the idea that he was more spiritually advanced than she was (and that emotions are unspiritual), she was not happy. If you love someone and they ignore you in favor of some silly scriptures, how happy will you be?

Then one day I got an email from him that was so spiritually stupid that I had a hard time keeping a straight face. It was very clear that his discrimination had deserted him and that he actually thought he was the *jiva*. So I suggested that he had a bit of *karma* to work out, meaning that he should resolve the love issue with his wife. After all, if he was free, he was free to give his wife the love she required. He didn't like that idea, and suddenly Ramji, the great *guru*, didn't know what he was talking about.

So once you know, you need to respect ignorance and clean up your *karma* or, as the *Bhakti Sutras* say, "there is danger of a fall." I don't know for sure, but I suspect that he just memorized his *moksa*, that his freedom was the idea of freedom, not real freedom. Even if you are really convinced that you are free, you may not enjoy the fruit of the knowledge owing to unresolved *jiva* issues, usually money and love. Everything is *Isvara*. If *Isvara* in the form of your husband, wife or children wants something, it is wise to think about it and, when appropriate, address it. If you are really free, you are as free giving your wife or husband the love they require as you are when you are immersed in contemplation of the scriptures. *Moksa* is *moksa* in spite of *samsara*. The world is here as long as your body is here. It is wise to acknowledge it.

Marilyn: "With a heart that knows no otherness, keep your mind on me alone and I will take care of your getting and keeping." ~ *Bhagavad Gita*

I'm meditating on this one...

~ Much love and gratitude, Marilyn