

Feeling Sorry Is Not a Qualification for Liberation

Ram (James Swartz)

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Karen: Hi, James.

To be honest, I really suffer at the moment from the issue with Swamiji. I see it is a story. So what? We are always in a story. No way out. As long as this body is there, there is a story. I always play one role or another.

James: Actually, the story is in you, awareness, Karen. But if you take yourself to be a *jiva*, then you are right, everything is just a story. The Vedantic *guru*-disciple story is very tricky. While you can choose a *guru*, you don't actually have a *guru* until the *guru* chooses you. So what are the criteria that influence the *guru's* choice? The qualifications – because Vedanta is for qualified people. Some teachers may help you to get qualified and others don't. I don't know the *swami's* reason, but I have been a Vedanta teacher for over 45 years and have taught many people. Every year I have to disassociate from two or three who claim that I am their *guru* because they have a combative or competitive or possessive or entitled attitude that is usually sourced in their relationship to their parents. Naturally you are disappointed when you don't get what you want but you need to learn how to take rejection as *prasad*. Otherwise, it will drain your energy and make you cynical.

Karen: Suffering is optional. Yes, but so is happiness. Why bother? I do not find interest in anything. Why bother about doing something to feel good? I am tired of the whole game altogether. Maybe one should not start a spiritual journey when one was happy before. You end up in suffering. Never change a running system.

James: Well, you don't really consciously start on a spiritual journey. Things happen and you are gradually attracted to the idea of freedom and, even though you don't know the ropes, unpleasant things happen. I put a lot of energy into my first *guru* and I discovered that he was a fraud. Then the very day I gave up seeking, based on that disillusionment, I met Swami Chinmaya. The whole point of *karma yoga* is that you don't know what will happen when you make choices and you don't control the outcome. So the *karma yoga* attitude is the only way to handle the anxiety and the disappointments.

Karen: And the most funny thing is that if you have a preference for the impersonal, you end up in the personal.

James: Well, part of us is personal and another part is impersonal. *Moksa* is knowing the difference between the two so as not to confuse them.

Karen: Control is for me a word. I don't know what it really means. I know what is a police control. I cannot trust, because I never learned what is basic trust. The only law in my world is love. Real love. Not a personal love. I am so disinterested in any

kind of human interaction – the spiritual path made me like this. I did see and feel everyone as my brother and sister. Now I sit, for example, in a *satsang*. I feel like in a circus and utterly out of place.

James: Well, how about loving your way out of this *tamasic* state of mind, Karen? It's not your fault. You needn't feel guilty for making a mistake. There are no mistakes, only something to learn from what happens.

Karen: I am aware of Karen, I am always aware. How can one not be aware? I will never understand that. When I sleep and work hard to get really drunk, then there is a nice absence.

James: Yes, but where there is absence there is presence. You can never get rid of the person for good, only momentarily. The road to the impersonal Self leads through the personal self. If you don't come to terms with its limitations, you will never get beyond them. Don't give up. Study the qualifications in my book, pick one that you need to work on and make that your *sadhana* until you actualize it.

Karen: So if I do not identify with the person, what happens than to the *vasana*?

James: Identifying with the person is the most difficult *vasana* to overcome, Karen.

Karen: Then it is just "shit happening," and you ignore it?

James: Yes. Why do you take responsibility for the shit? Why take responsibility for the good stuff? What happens is the will, some say grace, of *Isvara*. It's none of your business. Just ignore it. You are obsessing on this incident. How long are you going to carry it?

Karen: Maybe I have a *vasana* for understanding then. Because if I would just not care about what happens and not start to enquire, then it just appears and disappears.

James: Yes, you do have a *vasana* for understanding. That is why you are attracted to Vedanta. But knowledge only takes place in a qualified mind. That is the basis of Vedanta *sadhana*. Your anger and disappointment about what happened with the *swami* is keeping you from understanding. I'm trying to give you the Vedantic way to look at it. It's the only way out. What happened is not the problem. Karen's understanding is the problem.

I'm not saying it's easy to get Self-knowledge. Sometimes it takes even qualified people many years. But it certainly will never happen without *karma yoga*: right attitude and right action. I can see that you don't have the right attitude, Karen. You can't turn this over to *Isvara* and be happy with the outcome. You are beating yourself up over it. You are not being fair to yourself. Even if you fucked up, so what? We all fail. It's no big deal. So stand up and fight this soul-destroying emotional

malaise, O Mighty Arjuna!!! Take a stand in your true nature.

I think that I have said everything necessary about this situation, Karen. I have been very patient, explained things clearly and have repeated myself many times. So when you are over it and have a sincere question, you can write if you wish. Feeling sorry for yourself is not a qualification for *moksa*, sweetheart.

~ Love, James