

Misplaced Love

Ram (James Swartz)

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Frank: Dear Ramji, I do hope this mail finds you well. I continue to listen to you every day and take note of the teaching. In the last weeks something has been steadily changing and I need to ask you a question.

Ramji: Nice to hear from you, Frank. Yes, things are going very well here. The Trout Lake seminar was a big success, and it seems that our living situation is about to be resolved. My health is good, the weather is great. It seems God is in His heaven and all is right with the world.

Frank: It seems for the first time in my life I can observe (not all the time) my own ego and the way it got influenced at an early age and since has “led the dalliance” with me up to now, in my waking state maybe 95% of my life so far. It also seems that the ego is an inert thing, yet when I “power it” or it gets triggered, it will pull me all over the place until I am exhausted and running on its tram rails to some bullshit destination.

Ramji: It is inert, only an idea in you. Powering it means that you, awareness, identify with it. Identification is an unconscious process, one that your inquiry seems to be unmasking. Good for you. If you don't keep your eye on it, it will get triggered when particular *vasanas* are active. Again, the “triggering” is unconscious.

Frank: For example, it wants “love” from someone or “confirmation” at work; it wants utter exclusivity. But it is not love, only a craving for attention because it just wants it for no reason other than maybe at an early age it got taken away and, poor thing, like Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings* it constantly wants it back – because it was taken – but perversely, as soon as it cons someone into giving it, “I” feel sick as a dog!

Ramji: Indeed, there is no rational reason that it wants love except probably, as you say, it was neglected by parents, etc. The ego is a perverse thing and a con man of extraordinary talents, no doubt. It is good you feel sick when you catch it at its perverted little games. It shows that you are onto its tricks. It probably craves attention because you haven't been paying enough attention to it, or perhaps because you are paying too much attention to it, and/or you have been paying more attention to the real you, which is always a good thing for you but not always for Mr. Ego. I got an email yesterday that I copied in at the end that you might enjoy insofar as it points to the fact that *Isvara* rarely allows the emotional vomit to pour forth until one's self-knowledge is reasonably firm.

Frank: Questions: 1. Being free of those cravings is actually far more special. The liberation is palpable. In *Vivekachoodamani* it says the ego must be annihilated, but I find I can only (and with some diligence) discriminate it (with dispassion), often

almost hourly. But I cannot actively shrink it even though I would love to. If I try I to force it, I get lost. Why is that?

Ramji: It will shrink by itself in the fullness of time as you continue with your inquiry. You should know that the complete “annihilation” of the ego is not required for *moksa*. Annihilation is complete confidence in the self, i.e. the knowledge that you are not the ego. This doesn’t mean that the ego disappears, only that its perverse habits ameliorate over time. You can’t “shrink” it consciously because it is not real. It is *mithya*, an apparent entity, pesky no doubt, but only shrinkable by knowledge. It is best not to try to shrink it because paying attention to it keeps it alive. What you resist persists. It is best to worship the self and show compassion to the ego.

Frank: 2. It seems the ego is never happy, and when it gets what it wants (in anything, but especially love or work), then “I” feel sick. What is this “feeling sick”? It lasts only briefly but the whole body is tight, vision fogged and the mind agitated.

Ramji: I don’t know. It seems quite strange because usually people feel good when they get what they want. Maybe it doesn’t feel worthy. It’s good you put “I” in parentheses. It shows that you have objectified the ego, which is very good, although understandably there seems to be some kind of attachment to it. Train it to be gracious and grateful. It is worthy because it is you, and you are worthy.

Frank: 3. Logically, the ego would not cause its own demise by discriminating.

Ramji: That’s right. Ego is not only a doer, it is an enjoyer. If it is not there to enjoy the fruit of discrimination, it will not discriminate. You can’t get rid of it. It is just the self under the spell of a few wrong notions, i.e. “I am small, unworthy, incomplete, insecure,” etc.

Frank: Yet the self cannot either?

Ramji: The self is fine with the ego, no matter how perverted it is. The self is the one writing me this letter. It has objectified the ego. Frank is a bit identified with his ego and not particularly happy with its games for good reason, but Frank should probably just love the poor fucker. Probably all it wants is a bit of positive attention. It doesn’t hurt to feel a bit sorry for it without becoming maudlin. At the same time, enhance your separation from it. It is an object known to you, a mere thought arising in you from time to time. It is the product of self-ignorance. Tell it that you know who you are. Assert your completeness and love the ego at the same time. Liberation from the ego is not an “either/or.” It is a “both/and.”

Frank: So “who” is doing that? Who is my ally in discrimination whom I can trust?

Ramji: Only the knowledge “I am whole and complete. I need nothing to be who I am.” As Krishna says in the *Gita*, “Lift yourself up by yourself,” with the help of this knowledge. There is no one else. It is yourself that is writing me and yourself that is

answering. I'm sorry you have such a difficult *sadhana*, but as you say, "It's a battle for sure worth fighting." Stand up and fight, mighty Arjuna! No need for thanks. It's what I do.

Frank: Thank you so much for the previous response and this incredible *satsang*. They both help a lot. As I read it, I almost burst into tears: that is 100% how it has been for the last year. *Isvara* in its mercy is very precise. It only makes things happen when they will have the best result. When I first realized who I am and my messy emotions were revealed, I felt utterly overwhelmed, yet I knew that I was seeing only what had been completely unconscious my whole life and it explained all the troubles and idiocies to date. The idea that it would again become unconscious is much worse than any pain I experience now!

The pressure of the past is out of the system, although sometimes it is still overwhelming, but I am getting used to it knowing that liberation is minutes or hours away. The gratitude is indescribable when that happens. It is as if all the misplaced love has finally found a home and I just want nothing other than to be right there where I am.

You also helped me clarify that sick feeling. Yes, I do feel good at first when the "I" (ego) gets what it wants but the sick feeling comes afterwards; I feel trapped and arrested. The gap between the upside and the downside seems to be closing. Sometimes just as the happy "getting" feeling comes, the unhappy please-go-away feeling comes minutes after. The result is a standstill: maybe "I" (ego) want it, and "I" (awareness) don't want it almost at the same time, depending on which I identify with. I can feel seasick between the two.

You said, "I'm sorry you have such a difficult *sadhana*." Thank you, but I knew it was coming for a long time, almost inevitably. Now it is simply wonderful that real lasting change is possible.

~ Much love, Frank