

Mr. Do-Gooder and Self-Duty

Ram (James Swartz)

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Terry: Dear James, it's a good feeling to receive your email. It's encouraging and a step in a new direction for me, and I get the sense that you understand what I'm trying to explain. Thank you.

This personality of mine has always been very worried, anxious, shaky and distrustful of life, people and welfare of myself and others. I've had constant nightmarish thoughts just going off every second for many many years, basically. When looking into the concept of co-dependency, it hit me like a bolt of lightning that I've been "living other peoples lives, feeling other peoples feelings, trying to manipulate in thousands of ways circumstances, things and people." I am quite famous in my city as Mr. 12-Step Do-Gooder, fixing everyone.

This co-dependency pattern was totally unknown to me until about a year ago. My understanding of it deepens as it unfolds. I grew up in very stressful and abusive circumstances in a family with heavy addictions, violence and co-dependence. This personality of mine is slowly but surely separating from all this now, and every year I seem to be able to live life on new levels of ease and comfort.

James: One of the most important qualifications for enlightenment is called *svadharma*. It means "self-duty." Self-duty means taking care of yourself first. If you look after everyone else, you not only do not take care of what you need to take care of for yourself, you actually enable co-dependency so the people you take care of never look after themselves, so they do not work out the *karma* they need to work out. Nobody benefits with this do-gooder mentality. At the same time the do-gooder identity is a spiritual trap because it makes the person feel virtuous, as if he or she is a cut above all the "selfish" people. Do-gooders are just as self-centered as the rest of us. They only help because it pleases them to do so.

It is good you figured it out and became disgusted with it. One problem that comes when you see through the do-gooder story is that it is often hard to figure out what you need to do for yourself, because you have ignored your own needs for so long. I do not know you well, so I cannot say this applies in your case, but very often the do-gooding impulse is motivated by a desire to be loved. The subconscious thinking is that if you help others they will pay attention to you and need you. This makes you feel powerful and it makes you feel complete. It assuages loneliness.

The problem with it, however, is that it masks a deeper problem: you don't love yourself. When you realize you don't love yourself it is often very painful. Now you have to face the fact that somehow you have picked up the idea that you are not okay.

Nobody is unlovable. Love is the nature of every being. It is not surprising, considering your family situation, that you got low self-esteem. Your parents did not love themselves. The idea that you are not okay is first just a belief and then it unconsciously becomes your identity. So the desire to be loved operates behind everything. It is very frustrating because nobody else can fill the emptiness. Only you can by seeing your true nature.

Your nature is love, so you do not have to seek it outside, only learn to appreciate it. The helping nature is the self-nature, but when it gets caught up in a dysfunctional psychology it becomes ugly. Once your psychology is unmasked all your actions become helpful, but there is no sense of doership, no identity attached to it. Then helping is beautiful.

Terry: I run a couple of businesses, and have a tendency to get very stressed. Before I got sober I had full-blown panic attacks every day and could not function at all in life. When starting to meditate a few years ago, I encountered some very strange “energies” that move around the body. I’ve gotten some kind of ability to feel other people’s energies, even if they don’t tell me what’s going on.

James: Take your time with the *karma yoga* section of my book. It will show you how to remove the stress.

Terry: I get visions about the workings of the world and the mind frequently, and I try to write them down when I can. All this sounds perhaps very serious, but I’m a pretty happy guy, laughing a lot and living in amazement at this new freedom I’ve been given.

James: That is good. You can’t really do inquiry if you are unhappy. There is really nothing to take seriously in this life. It is just a dream, a joke really.

Terry: This body seems to get “over-excited” very quickly, and this is very handicapping and painful. Sometimes I read and hear that “spiritual people” go through various kinds of “physical transformations” and perhaps I confuse simple stress-symptoms with these things.

James: I think that is probably right. Spiritual people have a tendency to “spiritualize” things that are just ordinary phenomena. A long time ago I stayed in a Siddha Yoga *ashram* where these “*kriyas*” were considered a sign of advanced spirituality. They do happen spontaneously sometimes when the *shakti*, the energy, is intense, but most of the people there faked them so others would think they were in a high state. It was pathetic.

Spiritual people are very funny. A friend came to visit me last week, and a year ago he was invited to Russia by one of his friends, an energy addict who was a student of a Chinese *chi* master. The *chi* master offered to burn my friend’s body with the *chi* energy without touching him. The master did a silly wind-up with his body like a baseball pitcher and then made a gesture as if he was shooting an arrow and let go a big sound. The energy made my friend’s shirt catch on fire and burned a spot on his chest about two inches across. My friend said it was very painful. I saw the video of it.

The shirt was actually smoking. There was another demonstration on a fellow whose shirt was off and the burn appeared almost immediately after the *chi* master did his routine. I asked my friend what he thought of it. He said it was nothing. He could as easily have burned himself with a match. Even if this kind of thing is not ordinary, what does it actually accomplish? It accomplishes a nasty burn on one person’s

body and a fat bank account for the *chi* master. I asked about how the *chi* master got the power and my friend said he suffered like a dog under his master to get it. Now he goes around making money. And people actually think this kind of thing is spiritual.

Terry: Example: I've been reading Nisargadatta for some time, and things happen to my body and energy field. Some very, very dense energies seem to come up, move around and then leave me. It's been going on for at least five years. My spontaneous guess is that it's what Eckhart Tolle refers to as the "pain body" that is being slowly cleaned out of the system. I mean, it's been 30 years for me in some pretty deep, dark vibes, both my own and my family's.

James: Well, things don't really clear up *karmically* unless you are aware of the root causes. Yes, *karma* does exhaust over time, just through the process of living, but new stuff takes its place. I would be more inclined to view them as *bhakti*, a devotional reaction to the ideas. But it is difficult to say. If your mind is dense, *bhakti* is experienced in this way.

Terry: I hope I answered your question. I have already ordered your book.

James: Good. Take your time with it. Only read a few pages at a time. Make sure you can sign on to the logic as it unfolds. Don't move on until you understand clearly what is being said. This book will make sense of everything you have experienced and read. If it doesn't, I will refund your money.

Terry: Again, thanks for writing, and I'd love to meet you sometime. Malaga sounds nice, I got a friend there as well.

James: I am doing seminars in Germany and Holland in March and April. Maybe you can attend one.

~ Love, James