

One Without a Second

Ram (James Swartz)

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Nitya: Dear James, hi, my name is Nitya. I am writing this email because I have a few questions. I have read your book *How to Attain Enlightenment* and it reinforces a lot of things I have experienced over my 30 years of existence. I will get to the questions in a moment. First, a brief bio about me.

I am a resident of Pune, Mahastra, India. I am currently involved with art full-time. I have a small home studio, which is doing okay. Apart from that, I went to the best schools. Also, money is not an issue. And I am not married. I stay with my parents, as is the case generally in India.

I have read a lot of books in the past, meditated on and off and have had a few experiences. However, now I know those experiences are just by-products of meditation, and not true knowledge.

James: Good for you, Nitya! This is a very important qualification for someone seeking *moksa*. (I assume that you are meditating because you are seeking *moksa*.) That experience will not set one free is the primary qualification for a seeker. Seems you have jumped perhaps the biggest hurdle.

Nitya: The experiences could sometimes be counterproductive and somewhat distracting. Please correct me if I am wrong.

James: You are right. Experience is only as good as one's interpretation of it, and individuals are subject to confusion as to the nature of ignorance and knowledge, therefore their understanding of the meaning of spiritual experiences is usually wrong.

Nitya: Also I feel there is a lot of misinformation in various spiritual books where they try to complicate very simple knowledge. This is where your chapter on meditation helped a lot.

James: This is true. Knowledge is very simple and the point of view of most authors of spiritual books is dualistic, even though many claim to be non-dualists.

Nitya: I just finished your book. Meditated a few times. And it dawned on me that the knowledge is really simple. This is where I need your guidance so that I know that I am working in the right direction.

To best put it: when I meditate I have this feeling that another floor in my brain has been opened, which is looking down upon everything else. I am able to discriminate between things for what they are.

James: Meditation gives you access to the self. This is the view from the point of view of the self; you are the awareness that observes (looks down) at objects. This clarity with reference to subject and object is called discrimination.

Nitya: I generally meditate lying down. All the sense of space around me dissolves quite quickly, but the mind doesn't. That is okay.

James: Yes. The mind need not dissolve, only be experienced as an object.

Nitya: But my body grows really heavy, and I feel as if I'm watching over myself.

James: The body is *tamas*, dense matter. You are just experiencing it apart from consciousness. When your consciousness is in the body, the body feels light because consciousness "enlivens" it. Alone it is just meat. By "myself" you mean the body. You, awareness, observe the body. You are a *saksi*, witness of the body.

Nitya: It is like something over my head is watching everything.

James: That "something" watching is you, the reflected self.

Nitya: How does the non-duality aspect come into practice here? Is the thing watching over me separate from my physical body?

James: Yes. It is separate. Now for the hard part; maybe it will be easy for you because you are intelligent and well-educated: The experience of the body and the witness is duality, a subject and an object. But there is a third factor, that because of which the subject and object are known. That third factor is pure awareness, i.e. you. Both the subject and the object cannot be you because they are both objects known to you, awareness. This awareness is non-dual. This means that there is not another awareness watching this awareness, etc. ad infinitum. It is "one without a second." Knowledge of yourself as this simple, non-dual, non-experiencing witness is *moksa* because this awareness is always present, is not subject to decay and is always non-attached to the objects that present themselves to it.

Your meditation experience shows clearly that you are pure awareness. Having said that, shifting your identity from Nitya or the body to awareness may take some time as the tendency (*vasana*) to view yourself as the Nitya/body is probably rather strong. This is not an experiential shift although it has experiential ramifications. It is only a shift in understanding. When you say or think "I" you should know that the "I" is this pure witnessing consciousness and not the object that is witnessed. If you cling to that understanding, you are a *jivan mukta*, liberated while living. It may not be too hard to accomplish this shift, because you are quite young and it seems you do not have a lot of worldly *karma* to distract you, i.e. money and women, etc.

Nitya: I know I have not been able to explain everything properly, but please help if you can.

James: You explained things perfectly. It was easy for me to guru you.

Nitya: I hope I have not offended you in any way. Did not mean to. But you are going to say that as awareness you cannot be offended.

James: Even as James I cannot be offended. When you are a public figure, you develop a very thick skin because you often have to deal with idiots.

Nitya: I am looking forward to your help at this crucial time.

James: I hope this was helpful.

~ *Om and prem*