

Slow and Steady

Ram (James Swartz)

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Jonas: Hello, James. I don't know if you remember me. I'm the musician you met at Lake Merritt about a year ago. I haven't written in a while because I know you're swamped with emails and I figured I'd try to study and contemplate as much as possible and write only when I get hung up on something.

James: I do remember. Nice to hear from you, Jonas.

Jonas: I've recently been going over *Tripura Rahasya*, and the notion of not seeking pleasure or avoiding pain came up, and I have a question relating to this topic. I have always been interested in health issues and specifically the mind/body connection, so the question: Does the attempt to alleviate physical pain by working with the subtle body (whether it's meditation or positive versus negative thoughts/feeling states, etc.) just reinforce not knowing who you are as the self?

James: No. Why should it? You have to take care of the body. It is the self in a form. It is the temple of the self. As such it should be looked after. If your sole obsession is fixing your health, then you won't be inquiring into the self, but if you have a miserable body, you probably need to try to fix it to make inquiry easy. However, you need to have the discrimination to know whether a problem is actually fixable. If it isn't then you should ignore the body and inquire into the self.

Jonas: There seems to be quite a bit of scientific evidence regarding the mind's/thought's (subtle body) effects on the physical (gross) body. I guess what I'm asking is, where does the attempt to alleviate pain through more holistic means (versus popping a pill) fall in the scheme of Vedanta?

James: It's fine with Vedanta. Popping a pill is also fine. God made pills too. They have their uses.

Jonas: And finally I just want to say thank you, thank you, thank you so much for doing what you're doing (teaching so many). My favorite part of my day has become my daily walks listening to the audios of the teaching. I've developed a *vasana* for this that has replaced my some of my less helpful *vasanas*. I have a long way to go, but slowly *karma yoga* is helping with the removal of ignorance like the peeling away of the layers of an onion. Thank you again.

~ Your slow but sure student, Jonas

James: I am so happy the Vedanta is working for you, Jonas. It couldn't happen to a nicer guy. Slow and steady wins the race.

~ Much love, James