

Surrender to God

Ram (James Swartz)

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/776>

Mary: Hello, Ram and Sundari. I am assuming this is finding you well. I doubt you have been unwell for some time now, being the self. I first found out about Vedanta and you from a random encounter with one of your friends at a café. It was a sunny day and I was sitting alone at one of their benches outside, eating and reading. Ben came out of the café looking to find a place to sit but all tables were taken so I offered him a spot with me. At the time I was reading Eckhart Tolle's *A New Earth*, found for 50 cents at a yard sale a while ago. Ben noticed the book and we got to talking, and eventually over the course of a week of knowing him and a few bike rides later he told me about your Portland location for *satsangs*.

It took a while for me to sit in on one but I finally got there five minutes late, completely interrupting the beginning chanting as I stumbled in noisily. Anyway, that's how I came to know of you.

I remember finding relief and comfort at times reading Tolle's book. I find I am in alignment with the teachings of Vedanta (as I understand them right now). I have read your book cover to cover once and have gone back choosing random chapters or passages from time to time to make the material more ingrained.

I sat in on one *satsang* with my friend Joe in Princeton in May of 2012 and also attended the Trout Lake retreat. Afterwards I noticed an interesting "body-feel" for about a week. It was a heightened sensation throughout my body. It was strange only because I wasn't used to the feeling.

Do you know what takes place when a heightened sensation occurs after being in the presence of one who knows and understands Truth, the truth that one and consciousness are the same (is the same)?

What happened to me (the new sensations) from being in your presence?

I understand that feelings and sensations come and go, and I don't think I attached to them but I am just curious.

James: Hi, Mary. Sorry for the delay. I have been so busy that I am making mistakes and misplacing things, and your email got shunted off to one corner of my desktop and I overlooked it. I got a day off yesterday and was cleaning up computer and found it. My apologies. I remember you well.

Yes, the heightened sensations are the result of a mind that is in *sattvic* condition. In your situation it was brought about by the intense inquiry. We build up quite a strong *sattvic* energy as a group, and the mind is continually directed to the self, so a lot of obstructions to the flow of energy are resolved by the teaching, which often produces pleasant physical sensations. After a while out in the world the *rajas* and *tamas* creep in, the *sattva* recedes and the sensations are not noticeable anymore.

Mary: One of your *satsangs* on the Web you say that in order to practice Vedanta

effectively you need to already have a healthy ego. If one comes to the teachings of Vedanta and the knowledge seems to be “right up their alley” but one is still caught up a lot with attachments to objects or being the doer doing things (*rajasic*), how can one purify, so to speak, the ego in order to assimilate the information?

James: *Karma yoga* is the best way. See that your lifestyle is *sattvic*, take the *karma yoga* attitude toward action and its results and when you start to feel a little distance on your problems take a stand in awareness and see the problems as objects – which they are. If they are seen as objects they can’t be you, can they? When you see that they are not you, you can stop identifying with them and they will slowly become less important.

Mary: When do you recommend therapy over giving a Vedanta teaching?

James: When *karma yoga* doesn’t work. Actually, you can do both. If you are quite identified with your problems, whatever they are, *karma yoga* and *jnana yoga*, applying self-knowledge to dismiss them as objects, doesn’t work so you need to bond with someone who is dispassionate, who can look at you objectively, and gradually, by identifying with them, you will see yourself through their eyes and start to become objective about yourself. It takes time.

Mary: And do you ever recommend both sitting meditations to “calm the mind,” bring peace of mind, along with discrimination/objectivity while “living life” (when not meditating)?

James: Yes, definitely. Meditation and discrimination are great but they are both difficult if you are too emotional. The key to getting an objective view of yourself lies in understanding your environment. If you look at the world you inhabit at some point it should become clear that you did not consciously choose it. It was presented to you from outside. For example, two people decided to have sex. They weren’t even your parents when this happened, people who loved each other or were just horny. This gave you a body. When you came out of the womb there was already a psychic environment – all their likes and dislikes, their positive and negative behavior traits, were in place. You had nothing to do with what they threw at you. You had to take it at face value to survive. You probably didn’t start making decisions on your own for a long time and even when you did they were based on everything you had unconsciously picked up. So if you turned out to be a mess you definitely can’t blame yourself. Once you realize that you are a mess then you are responsible for remaining a mess or making choices that will lead to peace. But understanding that you are not to blame is the most important realization you can have. We call this surrender to God, meaning your environment. It is the same as forgiveness. You give back the responsibility to the field – the past, all the factors that shaped your dysfunction. Self-inquiry is just a choice that you make to get objective about yourself. It starts with *karma yoga* and develops into meditation and discrimination.

A healthy ego is just one that is objective about itself. It knows its strengths and weaknesses and doesn’t identify with itself.

~ Ram