

## Detachment

**The practice of detachment can bring much happiness and santosha into our lives.** Detachment is not renunciation. It does not mean that we cannot have the luxuries of life whatever that looks like for you. It is only when we get attached to these things that causes the unhappiness. It is only when we compromise our spiritual advancement to get these luxurious items that will then cause unhealthy attachment and inharmonious karma. What is spiritual advancement? In yogic philosophy spiritual advancement means to remember who we are; we are spiritual beings living in a body (Ram Dass would say we have taken form of a spacesuit) with an ego that allows us to heal those parts of us that create unhappiness and more constricted karma. We are really here to soften our own karma and in doing that we help others to soften their own karma. In this teaching I hope to: 1. Communicate to you ways in which we all tend to cling, desire and attach to things in an unhealthy way that creates unhappiness and discontent. 2. Encourage you to become self-aware of these attachments to things, ideas and thoughts. 3. Give you some ideas on how to move away from these attachments to find freedom and contentment in your everyday living.

**Attachment to worldly goods and worldly possessions:** May you always have what you need and find joy in what pleasures life has given you. This is my message. The American Dream is to own property, a fancy house, at least 5 vehicles (cars, SUV, ATV, boat, snowmobile, ect...) and for every household, all the furnishings, appliances and tools to boot. In Eastern tradition (and I bring this up because there are many studies that suggest that Eastern countries are happier than Americans), it is ok to have beautiful furnishings and pleasures as long as you share your bountiful and give equally to those around you that do not have these pleasures. Of course in India you so often find the higher caste living in palaces right next to the slum neighborhoods. And it is said that the people living in the slums are the happiest of folks. Some awareness and self reflection questions: If you had the fanciest, most comfortable overstuffed chair in the world, would you covet it and not let anyone sit in it except you or would you invite every inhabitant whether guest or foe, that enters your house a sit in your fancy chair? And when the neighbor accidentally spills wine on your chair, do you get angry with your neighbor or just for the fact that the precious chair is stained or can you detach and see the stain as a reminder was a sharing of such between friends? If you had a new boat that could sail the seas, would you invite the world to go sailing or would you keep it for yourself and a few of your sailor buddies? These are just a few reflections on how attached you are to the idea of luxuries verses the idea of being fortunate to have luxuries that you can share with others. So how do you detach from worldly possessions? Detach from the clinging to them. Ask your self what do you really need and what pleasures will bring you happiness and bring happiness to those around you. Getting obsessed with washing and caring for your new car is an obsession. It will not make the car run any smoother and it is a cause of stress.

**Addiction is attachment, addiction is suffering. Ram Dass, a well known spiritual preceptor, tells a famous anecdote about the way you catch a monkey in India.** You drop a handful of nuts into a jar with a small opening, he explained. The monkey puts his hand into the jar, grabs the nuts, and then finds that he can't get his fist out through the opening. If the monkey would just let go of the nuts, he could escape and be free. But he won't. Attachment leads to suffering, Ram Dass concluded. It's as simple as that: Detachment leads to freedom. Addiction is the nuts in the jar. We know what we need to do but we just can't let go. And the more we try and fail, the more we become attached to whatever we are grasping. Attachment is a mental state. It is not the objects themselves that are the problem or the karma. The nuts are not the problem for the monkey. It is the mind and attachment to the thoughts that the monkey needs the nuts that causes unhappiness and constriction. Having coffee in the morning and a glass of wine in the evening is not the problem, it is the mind's attachment to the coffee and wine that is the cause of suffering. Start to become self-aware of what you substances you cling to. When you get stressed or tired what substances to you go to? What are your daily habits and can you switch it up just a bit? If you check the news everyday while you are having lunch can you eat in silence just one meal a week? If you drink coffee every morning, can you have a cup of tea instead of a cup of coffee once a week?

**Detachment of stories and emotions.** Emotions arise in the mind all the time. We see something or hear something that reminds us of a past experience and we emot. We might bring up the memories and stories of the past experience and we cling to them, we name them (oh, I am so sad, oh I am so angry, oh I wish I would have done differently), the stories go around and around in our mind which produces more emotion and produces more

karma or intensifies the original karma. We use up much of our energy life force worrying about the past and what should have been. Feeling pain in our bodies triggers mental anguish. We might be practicing Hatha Yoga and we do something that is painful to the shoulder. Then the emotions and stories start coming about how that shoulder become hurt. People vocalize this a lot. How the bad shoulder was injured in a car accident involving really bad people. So even though the accident happened 25 years ago, the unhappiness and sorrow is still coming up. And when the stories come up, mindfulness no longer exists. How do we detach from our stories and emotions? Stay with the feeling of hurt in the body or stay with the feeling of the emotion in the body. Listen carefully, mindfully. No shame or blame. No judgment. Drop the story. Just hold space for your dis ease. What does *hold space* mean? It means to get out of your ego and listen from your spiritual heart (intuitive center). Meditate; start to become self-aware to when you are clinging to a story and the emotion attached to the story, and then sit and meditate. Draw your energies inward and upward and ask your higher self for guidance on what lesson the story had to offer you. How can you heal from this happening, or how can you heal from this karma? Forgiveness ritual perhaps? More mindfulness perhaps? And then go do that. If you are not sure what to do, ask another way in your meditation, pull some tarot cards or ask someone who is spiritual alive to help you. Then you can drop the story and allow new stories, happier stories to come into your horizon of awareness. In the SR Emotions vs. Feeling States there is more information on how to process emotions, and under Kriya Techniques the Forgiveness Ritual is given. It does not work to just shut out our emotions and bury our stories because they will live in the unconscious mind and the physical body. You have to process and let go, forgive, and then move upward to a place of spiritual maturity.

**Detachment to things that are out of your control causes great suffering and unhappiness!** I was on vacation on the North Shore with some people years ago. We checked out of our cabin and headed to Betty's Pies like we did every year. Breakfast at Betty's, what a perfect way to end the vacation before we parted. When we got there somewhat after 11 am, breakfast was no longer being served and the lunch menu was being handed out. One person of our group started arguing with the waitress that "we come here every year and always have breakfast, this can't be." The waitress said that the kitchen had already switched over. But that wasn't enough, this person actually suggested we go somewhere else because they would not serve us breakfast. The rest of us were like "we are hungry, we are staying. Betty's Pie is our place." This person clung to their attachment of how they thought things should be through the entire meal and for years later. That is suffering. That is really needless suffering. Things go beyond our control and to fight that is attachment. Santosha is contentment in a way of just being happy in the present moment. There is a menu before you. Do you happily choose something from the menu or do you cling to the idea that the menu is not what you wanted so you complain and drag everyone else into your misery? You can practice detachment by letting the menu be a surprise. Enjoy the excitement of something new. Enjoy having a menu of options to choose from>

**We have expectations for ourselves that are a source of clinging and attachment.** As a wood-fired potter, the process of clay to finished pot is a very long process. When I first starting potting and firing, I had all these expectations of what the pot would look like coming out of the firing. Around the first few firings, when I opened the kiln, my pots did not look exactly how I wanted them to and I got so down and was ready to quit pottery! I hated the pots. I set them aside on some back shelves and thought that the whole firing and all my effort was a failure. Then after a few weeks, I walking by the pots and started to look a bit closer at the pottery ware and little by little, week by week, I thought, "well, these aren't so bad." Once I let go of the expectation of how I thought they should look, I found the beauty in the pottery ware. And I eventually found the beauty in wood firing where pottery pieces come out looking unique every time. At this point I chose not to be attached to outcome but instead let each piece be a surprise. It was so fun and somewhat like Christmas and opening gifts where you have no idea what is under the wrapping paper! Detachment through pottery was a huge and surprising element in my spiritual growth. Who knew that we live our lives so dang attached to the end product. Begin to have self-awareness of when you are disappointed in the outcomes of your projects and your feelings about yourself. If there is disappointment then there were more than likely expectations involved. As a practice try a new recipe or art project and let the finished project be completely new to you and a surprise. Practice surrendering to the process of doing something and letting the end result be what it is. Love the journey. I love to cook. I love to find ways to modify recipes to make them more healthy and with ingredients that I have in the house. Nothing is ever that bad that I cannot eat it. And in the process of cooking I sing and whistle. If you are more in tune with the process or the journey then the finished project will be perfect in all its imperfectness!!

**Spiritual detachment is detaching from thinking you know what is best for another.** This does not mean a parent caring for their young child or similar circumstances. This means the endless strife on thinking that your friends or loved ones need to be more healthy or live a life more in line with your own (ego). In Kriya Yoga philosophy it is believed that you and you alone can soften your own karma. That does not mean that you can't lend a listening ear or lend a helping hand IF it is asked of. But really how do you know what is best for someone else's karmic and divine plan. How can you understand the spiritual evolution of a friend. If you are a very intuitive astrologer you may have some ideas of what this lifetime has in store for yourself and others, but still there is always many ways to approach our karmic plan. But people tend to worry and dish out sage advice for everybody but themselves, without any idea of the divine path. My best example of this is listening to how people pray: "Oh dear God, please let Mary live and heal quickly." Mary was just in an accident that might leave her paralyzed or leave her with brain damage. Detachment to the divine plan would look like this, "Oh dear God please surround Mary with your love and support so that she might receive what she needs at this time." A mother knows what a child needs in the moment, they can feel it and intuit it but other than that we do not know what is best for another. Sometimes they don't know themselves. How can you be there for them without telling them what to do or letting your ego get in the way? Some suggestions: 1. Pray as in the above example. 2. Mindful listening; let go of your ego and listen from your spiritual heart (intuitive center). 3. Ask them if there is anything you can do to help and then listen to their request. 4. Hold space for them; be there with them without judgment and preaching. That means have compassion but not pity. Believe that they have the courage, knowledge and the strength to move through their lives with intention when the divine timing has ripened. Om Shanti, shanti, shantih!

**Another form of Spiritual Detachment is non-clinging to the rewards of the action.** This is a pretty big stuff. I just saw a post on FB about a person who spent like 500 hours on a quilt to give to their best friend's son. The best friend returned the quilt saying that this was not at all in the son's idea of cool and would not use it. Well, what do you think? The article said responses were split in half about the best friend giving the quilt back. Spiritual detachment would mean that if the person who made the quilt was sincere in wanting to please the son by gifting the quilt then it is done. Whether the son liked the quilt or not, the person making the quilt remains detached from the outcome. Karma would say if your intention was loving, it's done. UNLESS of course you get upset because the quilt was returned. But that is not spiritual detachment. Spiritual detachment would say "oh do you know someone else who would enjoy that quilt, please pass it on. And then **detach from what happens to the quilt.** Let me repeat: The intention and the vibration or the act of giving is the karmic deed. If you are only giving because you; 1. will get your ego blessed 2. receive some reward in the kingdom of Heaven or 3. receive some kind of favor in return, then you just produced inharmonious karma. Intention and attitude is everything when we are talking about karma, spiritual maturity and happiness!! There is a word in yoga that is discussed in the Bhagavad Gita about detachment from the rewards of the action. **Yetna.** Yetna is doing for the pure joy of doing without attachment to any rewards for doing and without attachment to any expectations. That is very hard to do! While spending a great time preparing a gift for someone we are always thinking how excited the person receiving will be. And we might have in the back of our mind how now we are one up on the receiver. This can cause unhappiness if the receiver doesn't react as expected. How can we practice detachment from the rewards of our actions? Give cash to the food shelf in an unsigned envelope, telling no one. Do a kind deed for another, telling no one. *Paying it forward* is a new and exciting concept. People just giving not to be rewarded or to receive back from the receiver, just giving because it is joyful to give! Spiritual detachment is giving \$5000 to the Girl Scouts, not to get your name in the paper, but because you truly want to give to the Girl Scouts. When you begin to mature spiritually you begin to do things for the sake of doing rather than for the rewards.

**From *Strands of Eternity* by Vasant Lad, pg 65 Awakening:**

In every moment you have the power to awaken.  
But where you have expectation, desire or the need to achieve a result,  
there can be no awakening.  
Desire and expectation keep you stuck in the dream.  
The vastness of your true self is no longer free,  
but is chained by memory and desire.

**Detachment from our ego.** Our ego serves our healing journey by exposing to us what needs to be healed. It plays a very important role. How was I to know that the big piece of karma that I was to heal in this lifetime was an addiction to alcohol if I wasn't wearing a spacesuit born into an alcoholic family having inferiority issues? My personality played right into that addiction piece and my personality also was the key to my healing journey from addiction to now!! Wow!! I often hear "do you ever wonder what your life would have been like if you would not have wasted 25 years of it wasted away in Margaritaville?" But I would not *be here now*. Isn't that crazy?! Be grateful and accepting of your ego, your personality and your spiritual evolution. Love yourself! But also move away from it. Become self aware of what is ego and what is spirit. All these pieces of attachment involve the ego. Desires of worldly possessions comes from the ego attaching and clinging to the senses and to the thoughts of having to keep up with the Jones. Addictions to mind altering substances (alcohol, drugs, sugar, coffee, ect.) comes from karma producing attachment to temporary pleasure of the sense organs. Habitual clinging to our past stories and wounds keeps us constricted to our past stories so much that we cannot enjoy the present moment, nor allow new stories to develop. To be here spiritually means to live in the present moment. Free from the confines of our karma. Free from the personality that prohibits healing and growing in maturity. Free from our limited beliefs of who we are in our spacesuits. To detach from our ego means to be able to step back and see our ego with all its good qualities and not so good qualities and learn how to move through life more harmoniously. Spiritual maturity, or Santosha, is moving away from your ego to begin a life of freedom. Freedom is Ananda!

***Attachment written by Vasant Lad in his book Strands of Eternity:***

Attachment is the food of the mind.  
Attachment is the anchor of the mind.  
Through attachment the mind anchors  
to many thins in this world.

Such a mind is jailed mind.  
Where there is attachment there is no freedom.  
Where there is attachment there is no love.  
The attachment you feel to a particular outcome is like a vehicle.  
Let the vehicle take you on a journey  
but when you arrive, you must leave it  
outside the door  
and enter the destination alone.

Some have become unhappy with attachment  
so they decide to practice detachment.  
This detachment is but  
another face of attachment.  
It is based on control.  
The stem of attachment has given rise  
to the sprout of detachment.  
Both stems spring forth from  
the root of ego.

You may have given up outer clinging.  
You may practice spiritual austerities.  
But have you given up the inner clinging?  
The clinging to enlightenment  
prevents the transformation you so desire.

You cannot force open the flower  
of spiritual freedom.  
It blooms on its own accord.  
If you force it, it may appear to bloom.  
But in reality it is already dead.

Where there is attachment, there is no awareness.  
Give complete attention to your attachment.  
Apply your whole body, mind and emotions to it.  
A space will open  
and that attachment will drop by itself  
like a mature leaf drops to the ground.

### **How can we begin to find freedom in detachment?**

- Kriya practices and meditation lay the ground work in our everyday lives to promote detachment. They promote self-awareness which allows us to begin to see our attachments to outcomes, possessions, ego and emotions. Once we see how our attachments cause stress and unhappiness rather than freedom, we can begin the process of healing.
- Our 'Loving Awareness Practice' lets us be present with our emotions so that they can dissolve and then we can see what needs to be done to heal fully. A daily practice of just sitting with ourselves in quiet, non judgmental self-awareness is the beginning of detachment of our emotional mind.
- Create space between your breaths, create space between your thoughts. Make room for your highest self to shine through. Aham Brahmasmi; You are the creator of your life.
- *When I let go of who I am, I become who I might be.* ~ Lao Tzu
- Moving inward and upward brings us into a balanced state of consciousness where we act from our spiritual heart for the benefit of all living beings rather than to gain any kind of reward or satisfaction.
- And when this type of spiritual maturity unfolds, there is a beautiful reward: Santosha! Balanced State of Consciousness! Happiness! Bliss! Ananda, Ananda, Ananda!!
- Oh, but remember not to be attached to the Bliss!! Yikes!! Relax into it!! You are already blooming on your own accord. It is already happening! The symbolism of the Lotus Flower is that we all can come up from the muck to unfold into greatness and beauty. Enjoy the journey!!

**Enjoy your journey. From my spiritual heart I wish you triple blessings on your path to happiness and Santosha  
My deepest Shanti!**