

## The Life of a Zero

Dear James,

I read your biography on your website and it was breathtaking story. I couldn't stop until it was finished. I notice that you haven't adequately covered your last 10 years of evolution. You have kind of stopped the story after your experience with the Bhakthi yoga with Swami Abhedananda in Kerala. I am really interested in reading your further evolution into Sri Ramana Maharishi's self-inquiry method and your specific experiences in that process. I think, in retrospect, your main style revolves around self-inquiry and so that part of your evolution needs to be adequately chronicled which will be of immense help and guidance to your disciples like me and many others. Hope you will take sometime in the future to write that part of your life. You have the God-given gift in story-telling with an amazing flow and a superb language. For example, your 'Meditation' book is like Bible for me, my everyday reference for a while now. When time permits, I intend to memorize the entire book. You have given a whole library worth of content in one book. That is an amazing contribution to the humanity!!

Joe

Hi Joe,

I'm glad you find my writings so helpful. I've had other requests to bring the autobiography up to date but I've resisted them not only because I've been busy commenting on scripture and teaching Vedanta but because essentially nothing of substance really happened to me since I realized who I am and the amazing inner experiences that led up to my Self realization dried up.

Since that time experientially there has only been the light and the silence of the Self shining in my mind. This doesn't make for a good read. I can't say that life has not been rich and full and interesting but I haven't learned anything important from it since I realized who I am.

Yes, I've developed speaking and writing skills in expressing Vedanta, the path that set me free, and picked up a few practical skills to keep this body alive, but that is about all. Self realization is 'the knowledge that ends the search for knowledge'... and everything else for that matter.

I am like a big Zero. It is not interesting to read about big Zeros. There is nothing to learn. When you become a zero you will understand. Honestly, I can't remember much of what happened since I woke up. For me every day is the same as every other day. The sun comes up and the sun goes down and I remain the same. It's not boring at all but it certainly seems boring from the outside.

There is one misunderstanding in your statement above "I am really interested in reading your further evolution into Sri Ramana Maharishi's self-inquiry method and your specific experiences in that process." Self inquiry set me free. I learned it from my guru, Swami Chinmayananda. Vedanta is Self inquiry. It has been around for thousands of years before Ramana came on the scene. And his formulation of it is only a portion of the complete method. This is not to take away from Ramana's greatness. He was definitely a realized soul and an exceptional one at

that. But he did not invent Self inquiry. Self inquiry is called Brahma Vidya, the inquiry into Brahman, the Self, and it comes from the Upanishadic portion of the Vedas. It consists of the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita and thousands of subsidiary texts particularly those of Shankara. The first mantra of the Brahma Sutras is 'atato brahma jignasa' which means, 'Therefore the inquiry into Brahman, the Self.'

Joe: "Meditation" book, in the first chapter, you have given a brief comparative analysis on 'Vipassana' meditation. I have been to 2 of their 10-day long trainings in North Fork, CA and try to practise it whenever possible. The teacher Goenka claims that Buddha became enlightened by this method. Also, I have read at least 2 books so far where the author claims that he has achieved the lasting happiness using vipassana. A book called 'Meditate' by P.C.Jhalani narrates the author's experience of simply observing the breath and how he manages to see through the maya and self-realize. It looks like Vipassana is more powerful than what you are ascribing to in your analysis. Do you have any afterthoughts on your analysis? You are welcome to post this email in your website as part of your satsang.

James: I'm not an expert on Vipassana although I did one ten day sit with Goenka at Igatpuri over thirty years ago. It is a good method and it does work if you are highly dispassionate but it is essentially experiential...no blame...and has the limitation that it does not teach the Self from the outset. Many people who have come to me for Vedanta teaching have come from either TM or Vipassana and they all have told me that while their mind's were benefitted by the practice it did not produce Self realization for them. I'm sure some people do realize the Self through this method. A highly qualified person will realize through almost any method or non-method.

After I went through that sit I said to myself that if this was what was required for enlightenment I was not up to it. I wanted something a lot easier. So I stopped the practice. It was a good decision because the Self sent me a very easy path that did the trick in style in a short time.

Robert: Looking forward to meeting you when you are here after May 15th. I will email you as we get closer to get your schedule. Thank you very much for showing light on my path.

James: It's my pleasure, Joe. I look forward to meeting with you too.

All the best,

James