

Dear Ramji,

And I was afraid of a false guru....hahhhaa!!! All my love and respect to you Ramji!! Although you are already love and I am too, I don't 'get it! Your website is amazing. Your explanation of Vedanta is beautiful. Om Namah Shivaya. It is amazing that it is here for us seekers to find.

A shift in existence happened since I got your response to my email. Actually, after your first email there was this huge energy around me. I wasn't sure if I should mention it but since now I have almost finished your Mystic by default, I think you won't freak out if I do. Also there was more energy in me or space, like in a meditative state. Awareness?

Ramji: Yes, Awareness, has blessed you with an introduction to Vedanta. You are open to the truth and it is working in you. Truth has its own action and if you surrender to it, it will carry you along. I am happy for you.

Marlena: Also, I checked your schedule when you are in Europe. I REALLY want to meet you.

Ramji: I'm sure we will meet, if not in Europe then in India. Keep an eye on the website that tells my itinerary and let me know where you will be and when and maybe Bhagavan will arrange a meeting.

Marlena: Now to my questions. You say, "Absolute knowledge is only absolute with reference to what is relative. But there is nothing 'relative' in our non-dual reality so the idea of absolute and relative knowledge is actually a form of ignorance". Why is nothing relative?

Ramji: Because reality is non-dual. Non-dual means that there is only awareness and nothing else. But when you look at reality from the standpoint of a person who does not know that he or she is awareness...someone caught in Maya (ignorance of the nature of the self) it seems to only be relative. It seems like there are a million different things and they can only be understood in relation to

each other. Each thing is relative to the other. On a personal psychological level this means that you are not someone made up of a lot of parts, each one relating to the other. It does seem like that, but it is not actually like that. In reality there is just you. All the apparent parts are made of the same substance...you.

Marlena: I haven't got your book yet. They sent it yesterday so I hopefully get it on Thursday. So I will stick to your web site and jump from here to there. This email is thus still illogical. Sorry about that. I understand that you don't maybe want to get back to me until I have started the book and then have questions.

Ramji: Yes, it seems your mind, at least in this letter, is a bit scattered so I am going to ask you to read the book carefully starting at the beginning. DO NOT HOP AROUND to Chapters that interest you more than others. If you do that it will make my job very difficult and you would not want to give poor old Ramji more trouble than is necessary, do you? Do not be in a hurry. Read a few pages at a time and sign on to the logic that is presented there. Vedanta is a very systematic complete teaching. We go at it step by step.

Marlena: It is clear for me that feelings are the self and the Self is not the feelings, but it's more tricky to accept that thoughts aren't the Self because then it makes me think that the Self should be no thoughts and no words. And yet at the same time everything is the Self, even mind. And worse, I evaluate these thoughts now, thinking this is good and this is bad. It doesn't help. Could it be said that the Self uses the mind to make the inquiry, to get rid of ignorance?

Ramji: Yes. The mind is ignorant and it needs to remove its ignorance with the help of the teachings. It needs to learn to think differently, from a different point of view. It is not easy. If you believe that the solution is to stop the mind or kill the mind or transcend the mind, I am afraid that I cannot help you. It is carefully explained in my book in Chapter 2 why killing the mind and the ego does not work. Chapter 2 is the most important Chapter. If you do not understand what is being said there, it is no use continuing with Vedanta, assuming you want moksa.

Marlena: Do you separate intuitive knowing from gut feeling?

Ramji: No. All feelings are suspect. They can only be trusted when they correspond to truth. The reason self knowledge is so difficult is that it goes almost completely against your feelings. We say you are limitless and you say that you do not 'feel' that way. It is true that you do not feel that way. But this does not mean that the way you feel is true or right or even intelligent.

One feeling you can trust is the feeling you felt when you came across my website. This exciting, inspiring feeling is your heart's reaction to the truth. If you follow this feeling you will succeed. But giving in to feelings that arise out of a sense of frustration, inadequacy and incompleteness will not help. So you need to see what the source of your feelings is. If you don't love yourself properly, you will feel a lot of pain, for example. And the cause of this feeling will be the idea that there is something wrong with you. If you feel that there is something wrong with you, you feel that you cannot love yourself. So to get rid of this feeling you have to inquire into the belief that there is something wrong with you. There is nothing wrong with you, in fact. You just picked up some bad ideas here and there about yourself and when you contemplate on them, you start suffering.

Marlena: I read these satsangs and I tell myself I know this! yes, yes. But why did I forget it?

Ramji: You have been conditioned to think of yourself incorrectly. It is a strong tendency. Now the mind needs to be trained so that it is in harmony with who you really are. It takes time and it is hard work.

Marlena: So one starts by learning the terms. Does it happen that you can learn the teaching like 'I am whole and complete actionless Awareness' and still not get it?

Ramji: Yes. Whether or not you get it depends on your eligibility. You need to have a certain kind of temperament. Vedanta is not for everyone. It only comes into your life when you are ready for it. Chapter 3 explains the qualifications in detail. If you are not qualified, then you should give up on Vedanta and learn how to count your blessings and get on with the business of enjoying your life as it is.

Many people who are interested in spirituality are not actually ready for it. I meet many people who have been doing various spiritual practices and been a part of many spiritual groups and visited many teachers and for a very long time and yet have not changed one bit. It is not their fault. They have dull minds and believe all the notions they have picked up about themselves. They chant the same mantra over and over. "I'm like this. I'm like that. I'm a Scorpio. I'm a something." I have a friend, a beautiful woman inside and out, whose favorite self knowledge is "I am emotional." She actually thinks **she** is emotional because she gets upset when she does not get what she want or thinks she is going to lose something she has. Everyone is like that. It is no big deal. They are just emotions. She has never considered that she is not supposed to get everything she wants, that it is the wants and fears that are the problem.

When she says "I am emotional" what she actually means is "I am an unhappy person." Vedanta will work when you accept that you have failed, when you see that the way you see things is the problem. I have tried over and over for years to help her see things differently but there is something in her that does not listen, that does not believe. It is so sad. As long as you believe that the solution has something to do with your worldly situation, it will not work.

I met a Brazilian woman in India once who had been doing spirituality for thirty years and she told me that she had completely failed, that it had all been a waste of time. She thought maybe Vedanta would work. She was very surprised when I told her to forget Vedanta. I told her to go back to Brazil and resume her life and be a normal person. By God's grace she had not sold her house...it was still there. There was nothing wrong with her at all. She was lovely. Everyone liked her. But she did not like herself. Usually, this belief in your unworthiness, your inadequacy is so hard wired that you cannot shake it. It bedevils you all your life. I generally don't give advice unless I am asked and when I do it is almost never appreciated, so I was under no illusions that she would respond to my suggestion. But she did! It was amazing. She got a ticket, went to Brazil where her life started unfolding beautifully. She sent me an email a year or so later telling me how grateful she was and how she had the wrong idea about spirituality all along.

Marlena: The word 'objective' appears here and there in your writings. In the art world it has been renounced as impossible. What does objective mean in Vedanta?

Ramji: It means seeing things as they are, seeing from outside the subject's point of view. It means seeing things from awareness' point of view. The art world is a good example of the subjective ego-centric approach. It is all about how you see things as a person, a human being, how you interpret things according to your conditioning. You are meant to be honest and authentic if you express your feelings truthfully. This subjectivity is a big problem because reality is nothing but a complex web of impersonal, objective forces and laws. So there is always friction between the subjective view and the way things are. The subjective view means your beliefs and opinions, dreams, etc.

Marlena: Talking about semantics and the west, no wonder we're lost....it has always puzzled me when people speak about love.

Ram: Why has it puzzled you? What do you think of when you think of love?

Marlena: I did your enlightenment test and loved some of your options, like 22 d, buahahaaaa!!! I scored about 78, so, help!

Ram: After the marvelous wondrous Sri Sri Ramji Mahamandalishwara is done with you, you will score 100%. No doubt about it!

Marlena: You say, " Let's start with a word. Conscious. Does this word apply to you?" and I say, "Yes, but not all the time."

Ramji: And Ramji says that you are wrong. You are always conscious. Consciousness is not a condition of your mind. The mind is sometimes very dull and it does not 'feel' like you are conscious but you are: you are conscious of dullness. Consciousness is not something that happens or something to strive for. It is what you are.

Marlena: You say, "Do you last?" and I say Body-mind no. Soul, I have no idea. This is a question of belief, no? It's Sunday and I do not have to work. I will think this through because I want to be completely honest with myself. And you.

Ram: The self, awareness...you...are unborn. You are eternal. So you last. It is not a matter of belief. You need to investigate the "I" and see if it is subject to change. In the meantime is it good to believe that you are eternal. You are correct on one point, however; the body mind does not last.

Marlena: OK. It's Tuesday and I believe in reincarnation. I had a dream when my brother's first kid was about to be born that a baby was floating in space and talking with adult woman's voice, giving orders how to take care of her. I mentioned it to my brother's wife just after the kid was born and she said she had the same dream. It lasts as an awareness, I have had glimpses of this, but then one only knows when one knows, no?

Ram: It's a very funny dream. I love it. This is not what I meant. There is not 'an awareness' to use your words. You are awareness. If you are awareness, do you last? That is the question. It is an important question because all the problems in life come because you believe that you are a finite being caught up in the world of time, that you are living now and will die one day. You think you are changing and you worry about what you are becoming. You want to be something different. You want life to be different. It all comes from the belief that you are a changing entity. We are asking you if this is true. Is this really the way it is? You will probably say, 'yes.' And we will say, "Why?" and you will say because it 'feels' that way.

Marlena: You say, "Were you in the moment, or was the moment in you?" and I say, "OK, the moment was in me."

Ram: This is correct. Do you know why?

Marlena: ...maybe both at the same time? It was at a distance from myself, but simultaneously in me. I mean, there was in and outside, everywhere.

Ram: That's good. So how did you know this?

Marlena: I had an experience where everything was all perfect, in peace. Also time didn't stop but didn't exist? It's a bit schizophrenic, but I was everything, and yet somebody lived to tell the tale, so I was a witness to this all. Which 'I' is this?

Ram: Good logic! This is you, awareness, the witness. You are the one who is aware of time. This is the answer to the question above. You knew it because you are aware. The next question is, "Are you awareness or is awareness something that comes and goes?"

Marlena: I actually think my problem is lack of logic, semantics. I tend to think visually as well which is not surprising because I am an artist.

Ram: I think you are right about the logic bit. Your mind is like a grasshopper. It is excessively rajasic. It hops here and there. Vedanta will be difficult for you.

Marlena: I don't try to suppress my irritation about my body's problems but try kind of to forget it, ease my days if I can, be gentle to myself. I was in a Catholic school, so I know that suppressing means 'cheeks twitching' and some day an explosion.

Ram: Are you the typical Western rebellious artist type, doing things impulsively, not taking care of business?

Marlena: No, I wouldn't call myself impulsive artistic type. Not anymore. I have lived before that way, experience addicted. I live nowadays very tranquil life. I hardly drink, quit smoking. No drugs. I have experienced highs in my life. OK, during strawberry picking I have some beers, I relive my youth a bit, or at least still last year, but the rest of the time I do yoga, eat fruit etc.

Ramji: Sounds good. You need a sattvic lifestyle for proper self inquiry.

Ram: You identify with the bodily sensations? How do you get out of them? Do you have a way to climb out of your emotions or do you just have to wait until they change on their own?

Marlena: Yes, I have to say I do easily identify with bodily sensations. I left for France to do my masters degree because I was so into phenomenology. But I realized it didn't provide the answers for unspecific questions. Yoga did. But yoga again creates bodily sensations, and I guess what you would say is to identify with peace. Not being the peace. I get out of my bodily sensation by turning my attention to something else, sometimes going for the pleasure-sensation (though I don't do one-night stands anymore) or being conscious and they dissolve. I have no specific method, I just react haphazardly.

Ramji: The best method to get out of feelings and body sensations is to turn your attention to the self.

Marlena: I mentioned a friend, who has been spending years in Benares, a Mahayana Buddhist, that I am 'getting into Vedanta' (I like to be provocative at times and self-irony and just not taking things so seriously)and he replied:

'Ou là! Vedanta is a very deep topic... the only way to really study the Vedas is by learning the Sanskrit. I have several friends who are students Benares Hindu Universitywho are learning Sanskrit since many years, in order to be able to understand properly the Vedas. But anyway, it's always so interesting to learn about, even through another language, one of the most ancient knowledge of mankind. So what do you say? You studied all this in Sanskrit or in English?

Ram: Vedanta is about life. It is simply the knowledge of reality. If life is profound, Vedanta is profound. It does not require Sanskrit although Sanskrit can be helpful. It requires a burning desire for freedom, a scripture to direct your inquiry and a good teacher. I was taught in English. Don't be intimidated by the word Vedanta. It is quite simple and practical.

Marlena: I am on page 74 in your Mystic by Default. I have to say you're whacked!, or you have been.

Ramji: Was. That whacked person is no more. I'm a boring old Vedanta computer these days, very logical, very sensible, very precise.

Marlena: I'm gonna continue it now, I'm sick and need to chill out for a while.
Oh, what do you think about Joseph Campbell's metaphor of the light bulbs in regard to Vedanta?

Ramji: I have no idea. I don't know it.

Om and Prem,

Ram