

A Teacher's Course

Ram (James Swartz)

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Questioner: Dear James, it seems to me that what with all the people who are realizing who they are and whose lives have been transformed by Vedanta offering some suggested course of study for potential teachers is a natural third step following the introductory and advanced courses you now have up at ShiningWorld. I know it may seem a big project. At the same time you offer such a valuable and unique perspective on the teachings for Westerners. What better way to support the development of additional voices who have a fuller understanding than the voices of Neo-Vedantins, etc.

And as you point out, perhaps you believe the best way to do this is to encourage the teaching of the logic contained in your books. Of course from a selfish point of view I find it an interesting bridge to try to go from the logic of those books to answering people's queries, as you do in your *satsangs*. As I review them though, I understand your responses still sometimes from another direction through the knowledge comes to me when I ponder what my response might be before I read your response.

And so I thought to ask if there were other suggestions you had in this regard. As the knowledge organically does its work, more people inquire about the changes that are happening in their lives. I simply answer their questions to the best of my current ability. And just allow their questions to flow.

James: I thought about making a teacher's course, but I haven't got the energy now. The basic idea, however, is to get the big picture logic very clear and then as you do, listen to the question; what comes out will be the truth as expressed by the *jiva*. Your *jiva* is there listening because *Isvara* understands that the way you formulate the teaching is important for the specific *jiva* asking the question. So a teacher should always do his *nididhyasana* to cement and expand the knowledge. If the motivation for teaching is correct the teaching will be effective. The real trick to becoming an effective teacher is to really understand the doubt of the student. The wider your knowledge of the structure of the teaching, the easier it is to see what teaching is appropriate: zero-sum, *karma yoga*, *satya/mithya*, the three states, *gunas*, etc. This comes with experience.

Yes, you shouldn't "teach." You should listen and respond according to your understanding. You are on the right track. If a particular response doesn't work, probe the questioner. You should never feel that they should understand your answer and that if they don't there is something wrong with them. I sometimes don't get it right even though I am very experienced. One thing you need to watch out for is the pat, generic answer that gives you an opportunity to pontificate.

~ Love, James