

# A Great Secret

Ram (James Swartz)

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**James:** This is an entertaining two-year *satsang* between an American Indian ceremonial leader, “Big Chief of Many Desires and Misfortunes,” a name I gave him, and “Big Big Chief of Many Knowledge,” a name he gave me. A committed dualistic doer/enjoyer with a heavy *karmic* load, the document chronicles his exposure to the superlative teachings of non-dual Vedanta. He starts out worshipping the Great Spirit and ends up with a Great Secret. His fierce integrity is a joy to behold.

## A Great Secret

**Jason:** Dear Mr. Swartz, I wanted to thank you for your book *How to Attain Enlightenment*, which I just finished reading. This is the first book I have read that has expanded on ideas I have been studying for many years in another book called *The Holy Science* by Swami Sri Yukteswar. Until now I have never found anyone living who has been willing or able to speak to these ideas of Self and Creation in the way you have.

I’m writing to you because I have come to realize that the symbolism contained in the ceremony of the Native American Church is a ritual expression of these deeper truths and have been laboring for many years to connect the dots between the ritual/healing aspect of the ceremony itself and the teaching expressed by it symbolically. I feel this is so important because after the cultural and physical genocide the Native American people have lost many elders that understood the deeper teachings and also the language barrier between the younger generation and elders is getting wider. This leaves us with a purely experiential form of spirituality but hardly any teaching of substance with which to understand the experiences we gain through the practice. The result is the continual watering down and changing of the ceremony by ignorant, well-meaning people; this in turn leads to a myriad of con-artist spiritual leaders exploiting ignorant people for various types of profit, social and financial. The end result is that the ceremony loses all its meaning and we are progressively less spiritually aware as a group. The practice is becoming excessively dogmatic as people begin to worship the ritual itself. Add to that the ego-reinforcing ideas of “Native Pride” and the veil gets pretty thick.

On the upside we have a medicine that cracks open the heart, suspends the mind and heals the body combined with a ceremony that symbolically explains the Creator, the dualistic nature of creation, the five elements, five senses, the action of divine love upon creation, and seven levels of awareness (elemental, plant, animal, human, divine human, Holy Spirit, and Creator) graded from ignorance to awareness as we go from night-time to sunrise. In short, the entire creation along with the proper placement of where human beings are in the grand scheme, where we came from and where we are going.

But no one, until me, has ever seen the connection. And if they have, they have never shared it with the people. The crappy part is that I will most likely be ostracized and condemned for even

suggesting that another culture outside of our own could hold the keys to spiritual knowledge that we once had and have lost. But I feel compelled to share this understanding, at some point, once I can put all the pieces together, mainly in an effort to help give meaning to the ceremony and direct people to the inner reality it is pointing towards rather than the external ego trip it has become.

I know you are a very busy person, so if this sounds of interest to you I welcome a chance to receive your input and ask you more in-depth questions if you have the time.

**James:** I read your letter with interest. Yes, Vedanta is the science of consciousness – the “Great Spirit” in Indian lingo. It is the knowledge behind all the spiritual and religious traditions. I think it is admirable that you would like to bring the knowledge back to your tradition; but you are right, it will meet with fanatic resistance. When people believe that ignorance is knowledge, they tend to be – well, a bit irrational.

Unfortunately, I can’t help you. I am extremely busy. I think the way around it is for you to keep up your inquiry into Vedanta. You may begin to question your need to wake up the great Indian Nation. Probably the only way to make it work would be to claim you went off on a vision quest – fasting, etc. and present it as a series of revelations coming from the Great Peyote medicine. Tweak the Sanskrit lingo a bit – you would know how to do it – and say it came from within, which it did – sort of. You would probably get elected as the Chief of All the Tribes. ☺

**Jason:** “Chief of All the Tribes!” Why does that make me think of the big red-nosed Indian chief in the *Peter Pan* cartoon? Thanks so much for your reply. I really dig what you do. I’m hearing you loud and clear. Maybe it’s meant for me to go for my own growth primarily anyway. Who knows what Spirit is really up to? Never mind saving the world, I was actually hoping you could clarify something more important: until I conquer every single *vasana* and gain complete control over my thinking, am I basically stuck?

**James:** No, not at all. You can’t conquer them all. You need only work on the binding *vasanas* and that takes time.

**Jason:** I have been very successful in my meditations but it never sticks. I’m feeling a bit frustrated, like the deck is stacked against me. I mean seriously. In order to stabilize my mind I have to conquer the darkening power of God itself??

**James:** It won’t “stick,” Jason, because experience is not under your control. It is under the control of “the Great Spirit,” to use Indian lingo, meaning the total mind or if you want Vedanta language, the three *gunas*. It might “stick” a little longer if you are doing your life as *karma yoga* but there is no discrete experience that sticks. You are barking up the wrong tree, I’m sad to say. Enlightenment is not an event, an experience. You are already the limitless awareness. You have a doership issue – you believe you can do some action – meditation in this case – to get what you already have. Your approach is futile. Yes, you have to conquer the darkening power of God but there is a much simpler way – assuming you are qualified.

**Jason:** The realization that I have been wasting my time my entire life with every single desire I ever had (including spirituality) is sitting on me really heavily. Why put us here just to watch us chase our tails? Why do I feel like throwing in the towel all a sudden now that things are becoming known?

**James:** You are at a very important moment in your spiritual journey, Jason. You perhaps can't see the upside right now, but you will. People generally have to get disillusioned and disappointed before they change their ideas. Life is a zero-sum game. You can't "do" your way out of it. And yes, sometimes one's spiritual desire is a big impediment but not really, because it got you here, meaning it has revealed that your approach to spirituality is inherently unworkable. You can't get what you already got by meditating – read Chapter II of either of my books on the topic of knowledge versus experience. There is a small book in the ShiningWorld shop for \$5 entitled *Knowledge and Experience* that you should read. It is a compendium of *satsangs* on the topic. You can throw in the towel, and I think you should now that Vedanta has come into your life, because self-inquiry, not meditation, is a proven way out.

**Jason:** You're right about me beginning to question my need to wake up the "Great Indian Nation" also. It's a totally egocentric desire, just because I see the connections and want to tell everyone like an old woman with a piece of gossip. Ninety-nine point nine percent of the people I would be teaching aren't qualified to understand it. And for that matter maybe I am not qualified either. I don't know. Is this a normal reaction to learning about non-duality? You're definitely right when you say that Vedanta brings the "bad news."

**James:** If the Great Indian Nation comes to you with a written request signed in triplicate by Great Chief Top Dog and notarized by the tribal council, then maybe you can wake them up. As the *Bhagavad Gita* says, "Let not the wise unsettle the minds of the ignorant." You are right, they could use a bit of education but it is not up to you. The change you seek in the Great Indian Nation is a change you are seeking for yourself.

This feeling of disillusionment is totally fine. It means that you are ready to convert your desire to experience the Great Spirit into the desire to discover the simple but well-hidden fact that you are the Great Spirit. It means that you are starting to appreciate non-duality and the zero-sum nature of the apparent reality. Disappointment is a great gift.

**Jason:** I'm sure you have a lot of emails to answer other than mine, but just felt a need to reach out.

**James:** Yes, I am very busy, but somehow the Great Spirit wants me to take time for you. Read the knowledge and experience argument. In fact, read the first two chapters of *How to Attain Enlightenment* or *The Essence of Enlightenment*.

**Jason:** Okay, I will reread the first two chapters of your book, James. Thank you very much. I feel like I traveled a million miles and just barely arrived at the beginning, if that makes any sense.

Like just maybe God is not gonna leave me out in the cold after all.

**James:** That's always the way it is, Jason. I went through the same thing. You can't DO your way out of this life. You can only see that you are already free of it.

## **A Subtle Topic**

**Jason:** James, let me start by saying how grateful I am to have found you in this lifetime and I do truly feel that my searching it over. The obvious simplicity of Vedanta continues to wash away my confusion as I continue to listen to your recordings every day. It seems like that is all I am really interested in.

**James:** Good for you. Obsession with liberation is the most important qualification.

**Jason:** I also realize that my loved ones in the Native community by and large are not qualified to accept the true meaning of the symbolism they so highly value, due to the unfortunate fact that they lack dispassion. That is to say that they are too attached to form, as it pertains to their own identity, and that in itself prevents any intelligent discussion.

**James:** There is a quote from the Bible that says something like, "He who has eyes, let him see." There was an old saying that my father used considerably: "You can lead horse to water but you can't make him drink." Ritualists are dualist extroverts seeking experiential results, not freedom from the doer. They do not even know they don't know who they are. You are absolutely right, they are not qualified to know. At some point, however, inquiry dawns because the ritualistic approach does not remove suffering. It is just a Band-Aid.

**Jason:** Am I to understand that awareness is not the polar opposite of ignorance as I previously thought?

**James:** Yes, indeed. I don't think you have the correct notion of awareness. I think you mean reflected awareness, the mind. Knowledge and ignorance are known in the light of awareness. It is free of both. However, you cannot know, nor can you be ignorant, without awareness. Knowledge is the opposite of ignorance. Maybe by awareness you mean knowledge. You are on the right track but we need to establish a proper terminology for our communication to be useful. I think you are interpreting Vedanta according to your previous ideas. No blame. Everyone does it. If you come to the seminar I think you will get a clearer idea of how to listen. Maybe we can have a Skype chat.

**Jason:** But rather desire is the polar opposite, and awareness shines on the result?

**James:** Now I understand your confusion. Awareness has no polar opposite. It is beyond duality. It is completely free of things and their opposites. The mind is in duality. It thinks in terms of opposites: good/bad, right/wrong, up/down, here/there, etc. This is the result of a division in the mind brought about by ignorance of the self. You cannot bring awareness into the mind. It is always free of your thoughts, feelings, perceptions, etc. Self-knowledge – knowledge of awareness and its relationship to experience – removes duality. Awareness is like a mirror and the mind is like a reflection in the mirror. Although you cannot physically separate the reflection from the mirror, they are not the same. The reflection has no impact on the mirror. When you remove the object that is reflecting in the mirror the mirror is unchanged. The reflection leaves no trace on it.

**Jason:** Very subtle topic but still eluding my grasp.

**James:** Yes, this is the most subtle topic. The mind needs to be purified for it to understand *satya* and *mithya*, the relationship between the apparent (objects) and the real (awareness), the subject. There are only two ontological categories in our non-dual reality: the subject (awareness, i.e. you) and the object (Jason, reflected awareness, i.e. experiencing entity). There is no contradiction between them, because they are in different orders of the one reality. A wave is different from the ocean but it is not opposite the ocean, because both it and the ocean are water. Similarly, Jason and awareness are not the same, but they are not different either, because they are both awareness. Jason is one small wave in the ocean of awareness and God is the “big” awareness of everything but they have one factor in common: they are both aware. They cannot be aware unless awareness exists. Awareness is existence. It is always present and it was never created. Out of it the world and the conscious beings that experience the world appeared as if by magic.

**Jason:** You are right. I am trying to understand based on the diagram I found in *The Holy Science* and trying to see how it fits with the ceremony symbolism. But I am starting to wonder if the diagram that the Self Realization Fellowship created to expound on Sri Yukteswar’s text is flawed somewhat, as is maybe the ceremony. More likely, it is my understanding that is flawed. But you are the only person I know who has said anything intelligent about any of it. So please forgive me for asking questions without clear definition.

I would love to Skype chat whenever is good for you. I guess I am obsessed. No one else will really talk to me about this stuff. It makes them tired/bored.

I’ll attach the diagram I am talking about so maybe it will make sense to you. It’s the only diagram I have. I know you have your own but I have only seen it on the videos.

**James:** I am familiar with this Vedanta derivative. It is a mishmash of Yoga and Vedanta. It is entirely experiential. The placement of *chit* and *ananda* below *sat* is completely flawed; they are synonyms. The rest has all the right words but the concepts they represent are all mixed up. It doesn’t make much sense.

Let’s make it simple. If the fundamental premise is that reality is non-dual, then how do the ideas represented by this chart provide a means of liberation? Actually, the book is not a scripture on

liberation at all. It is an attempt to show the unity of all religions. It was one of the first books in the modern era by an Indian that came out of the New Thought Movement or Transcendentalism in the last half of the nineteenth century: Science of Mind, Unity and Christian Science when the West was just becoming familiarized with Vedic spirituality.

## **None of My Feelings Are Real**

**Jason:** James, I know you're busy, just wanted to say had a little breakthrough yesterday. The thought occurred to me that none of my feelings are real. I have had so many attachments and disappointments in my life, all of them I got over eventually and all of the perpetrated by following my "good ideas."

So if I can manage to resist acting on my self-centered thoughts maybe I won't have to suffer the consequences and I can eventually be free as I continue to let go of the feelings associated with not getting my way in the past. Am I on the right track here?

**James:** Yes indeed, Big Chief of Many Desires and Misfortunes. All the thoughts you expressed exist but they are not real. They belong to ignorance, not to you, the Great Spirit, the seer, the knower. Why believe them? You only act on them when you believe they are real. Now that you know they aren't, why would you act on them?

**Jason:** Oh, Big Chief of Many Knowledge, I want to know how is the puny ego supposed to decide which desires to pursue? Seeing as how we have been previously instructed to avoid attachment to inaction along with attachment to outcomes of actions, the list of approved activities seems to be getting mighty short.

Clearly there are desires to do actions that are necessary to avoid the suffering of those I am not supposed to be attached to. Even though many of the desires of others are ALSO based in their own attachment. That is, many people would feel disappointed and hurt if I stopped conducting ceremonies on their behalf. Or my children would feel abandoned if I failed to meet my obligations to them as a father. But also I could strip my actions down to the bare minimum of bread and water and a cardboard shack while I pursue *moksa* instead of financial security.

~ Thank you, Little Chief of Bad Decisions

**James:** If you want *moksa* you need a simple life and a quiet mind so you look at the desire that is bothering you at any moment and you think it through. Will the actions you take create a peaceful happy mind or not? So you look at everything: food, sex, money, friends, family, etc. and you patiently remove those activities that produce *rajas* and *tamas*. At the same time, you increase *sattvic* activities: prayer, meditation, service to others, scripture study, etc. Study the qualifications in my new book, particularly the *svadharma* qualification. It seems you are worried about the feelings of others. In any case, why should you stop the ceremonies? They are good spiritual actions. Do them without concern for the result. You can't give up your duties to your children; you have to see them through. In fact you should want to see them through. If you love

them, then you need to contribute your love to their lives. Going to the cave and living like a *sadhu* doesn't work for people like you who have a lot of *karma* in the world. You are not a *sanyassi*. If you do *karma yoga* properly, your *karmas* will exhaust and you will become contemplative. But it takes time.

**Jason:** I've been reading the texts a lot. Now that I read the stages of devotion I see that I have been stuck in stage two, making short visits back to stage one, getting my hand slapped and running back and then trying to take refuge in stage three while my mind bounces around like a monkey in a cage pissed off that we left stage one. I have only had a couple of glimpses at the serenity of meditation. So I think I have found my place on the map. The time to grow up is right.

## You Are Not an Indian

**James:** Good for you, Jason. On the topic of polygamy that you mentioned, there is nothing agitating about it in the right context, but the context from which it evolved in the Native Indian world no longer obtains. The Indian Nation is a very tiny subset in a much bigger nation whose values are different. So you can't argue that because you are an Indian, Indian values necessarily trump the values of the culture. You are not living in your wigwam in on the breaks of the Salmon River kowtowing to Chief Joseph. You are a modern person, you drive vehicles, live in a major metropolitan area, etc. so that part of you needs to be taken into consideration too. Also, there is the issue of whether polygamy is a universal value. It isn't. Again, it is a very miniscule subset of *Isvara's* natural order, which is set up to produce children, nothing more.

This argument aside, however, there is another issue that I think you probably haven't resolved – correct me if I'm wrong – but that is the fact that you are not an Indian. "Indian" is just a concept, a limited identity like "gay" or "American" or "mother/father," etc. So that whole identity needs to be deconstructed too. See how much of your thinking is driven by this concocted identity. Before you gain freedom it is wise to take up a provisional identity and follow the rules that it demands. So you should think of yourself as a devotee of *Isvara*, an inquirer, and make your choices from that platform, not from the platform of Jason, the Native American, etc. Thinking you are Jason is the problem, and it is not easy to assume a more reasonable identity, owing to the fact that you have been thinking of yourself in this way all your life. The *samskaras* are deep.

**Jason:** I've been meditating every day in an effort to prepare my mind for a proper attempt at self-inquiry. So if I am totally honest, my first hurdle is the very first teaching. What do I want?

Everything in my life has more or less played out exactly as described. I sought fame early in my life because I was (am still?) emotionally insecure. As it would happen God blessed me with just enough talent to realize that the attention of others was not fulfilling me.

So I sought pleasure through drugs and sex, and I got a sense of freedom for a while because I was bucking the system by rejecting virtue. AGAIN, God blessed me with just enough good looks to get myself in trouble but then drugs took their toll and I hit an emotional, physical bottom in little under two years.

Since my family was there to pick me up I decided to seek fulfillment by striving to be virtuous in their eyes. I got sober, got married to a very wonderful girl I was not in love with, had a couple of kids and started devoted my life to learning our traditions so I could further be of service.

## **Totally Fucking Bored**

**Jason:** Fifteen years later I am comfortable, overweight and have achieved a modicum of financial security. Everyone says how wonderful I am doing and I have the respect of my community. Life is great, right?? Wrong!! I'm totally fucking bored and I started an affair with a gorgeous 30-year-old who proceeds to make my life miserable because she wants me to leave my family and start over with her, and I lose her because I cannot bring myself to take the plunge no matter how attractive the proposal seems. Why?

Well, for one I am attached to my status and I am afraid to hurt my children and feel responsible for them and my wife. And my final nagging thought? It's not gonna work anyway!! I'll get tired of screwing her or she will get pregnant and I will be changing diapers again and who knows what the fuck, it doesn't matter because the end is always the same: it won't make me happy permanently. In fact it will just make me miserable, which it already has. All of it makes perfect sense, mentally. The truth is I am still emotionally insecure and not sure what to do about. The subtle body has a mind of its own, it seems, and doesn't give a shit if the real me is actually pure conscious awareness! *Vasanas* are ruling my life. It doesn't matter how many epiphanies I have or how many people I have helped along the way. Totally screwed.

**James:** The first thing to do is to resolve the moral issue. How can you be happy if you are carrying on like this? Greed is certainly not conducive to peace of mind. It seems it doesn't stop at food. Honestly, you have no business even thinking about liberation until you get your house in order. Read the chapter on qualifications. Vedanta is for mature people. It's time to grow up.

**Jason:** James, I just wanted to write to give you an update. I have been working on my inquiry as diligently as possible and I am noticing some changes.

I notice that every time I walk into a given situation my mind immediately begins to compare my ego/personality with everyone else: height, weight, social status, physical ability, etc.

I notice that the undertone of that comparison is a feeling that if someone is "better" than me at a certain something, my mind instantly moves to negate the value of it or to convince itself that it could achieve that state (whatever it is: physical beauty, musical ability, charisma) if it wanted to, and then proceeds to project a negative persona on the people around it (my mind) to make itself feel better. Essentially my mind is still a five-year-old brat constantly saying, "I could do that," "mine's better than yours," blah blah blah.

Or if the perceived desired object is something that I am attempting to obtain, then competition ensues. Which results in negative thoughts toward myself for not being, doing, having the object of desire already, i.e. feeling less-than.

Then, if the envy-driven effort does not yield immediate results, the mind becomes despondent and begins to emote thoughts of self-pity and worthlessness, which is why I have a long list of projects that are never finished.

All of this happens within fractions of a second and would normally cause a chain reaction of action and emotions that is just stuck on repeat.

So... my *mantra* lately has been “there is nothing to get” every time I hear my mind go into its song and dance about how much it wants the object that is appearing in it. I try to remind it “there is nothing to get.” Every time I start feeling sentimental or nostalgic about a certain person or situation I am saying, “No, that won’t work either.” Then sometimes if that doesn’t resolve the feeling I play the situation forward in my mind. It usually goes something like this:

**Mind:** Oh, man, I want to screw her again.

**Me:** If you do that you AND she will want to do it again, then you will get attached and start worrying if she is fucking someone else. And/or she will get attached and start calling you all the time, complaining that you don’t spend enough time with her. Then she will get pregnant and you will be paying child support, then you will start arguing over money, then she will get old and her tits will sag, then you will both die and it will be so sad, and yada, yada, yada...

**Mind:** Oh, okay, well, maybe it’s not such a good idea.

**Me:** Yeah, maybe not.

Anyway, the effect seems to be that I have a lot more energy. And I feel more positive and enjoy the things I am doing in the present more. I am still experiencing bouts of frustration here and there with the kids when they start arguing and the dog when he is being a needy jerk, but all in all much more time and energy seems to be the effect.

## On a Better Track

**Jason:** I’m really feeling like I’m on a better track than before. But I want to check in and see if I am on the right track and or is there more to inquiry that the process I have just described.

Also, the last thing you emailed me was all about the *Gita*. So am I to understand that the war is between my ego and the objects appearing in me? Meaning the daily process of deciding how to act? What habits to slay and facing my attachment to the objects, overcoming my unwillingness to accept that they must be destroyed?

**James:** Yes. You got the message. There is a bit more to Vedanta practice, but this is perfect for now. You are on the right track. Keep it up. It will take a while for the tendency to define yourself

with reference to others to ameliorate, but you have the essence of *karma yoga*, apart from the gratitude aspect, which will come in time. Keep me posted on your progress and keep reading the *Gita*, the website, the *satsangs*, etc. If you do ceremonies, do them purely as a worship of the Great Spirit and ignore all other considerations. If you do, the magic will come back.

**Jason:** James, thanks for the response. I'm still reading *Essence of Enlightenment* and listening to the *satsangs* every day.

I have had a few very strong waves of peace and sense of well-being come over me, and this is very nice. I feel a sense of freedom from worrying about whether or not people are happy with me or not, which is huge for me. As I go forward all the questions I had about the symbolism of ceremony are being answered as I listen to the teaching. The perfection of the ceremony as a vehicle to metaphorically teach Vedanta is something that continues to astound me.

Although I don't feel the need for teaching anymore, I'm looking forward to your visit in July, and thinking about taking the courses you have at the website, although when I looked at the curriculum it seems I am already in the process for the most part. I wish I could go to India and do this shit full-time. It seems like the only thing worth investing energy in really. Who knows? Maybe I'll get to go some day.

One question maybe you can answer for me. As we go forward I notice that there are many numbers associated with the meanings in Vedanta: 1 (self), 3 (Creation), 5 (elements/senses/*pranas*, etc.). Is this something I should think about?

**James:** Actually there is no significance for numbers in Vedanta. It is not a mystical system. People get fascinated by numbers, etc. and project meaning. We call it magical thinking. It so happens that the self creates many objects, so human beings can assign numbers and imagine that the numbers themselves "mean" something. The eighteen mouths are the instruments of experience; they "consume" experience. They are the five active organs, the five perceptive organs, the five *pranas* (energetic systems known in the West as the physiological systems), mind, intellect and ego. It means that the human beings are completely extroverted and are totally dependent on "food," i.e. objects. Your emotions, for example, are a greedy, hungry mouth. Now your intellect is getting hungry for Vedanta but it has been very hungry for the opinions of others, etc.

**Jason:** Yeah, that is one of the reasons I'm attracted to Vedanta, the practicality of the teaching. I've had it up to my neck with magic. The Native community is so thick with spiritual magicians I can't stand it. The funny thing is that you can see that the ancient medicine men who created their systems knew about the self just by studying the ways and teaching they left behind. But about 99.9% of the "lineage holders" don't know their asses from holes in the ground. But I am interested in the knowledge behind the form. That's why I ask about the numbers. Thanks. I suspected it to be something along the lines of "eating" experience. It makes sense.

**James:** Having said that about numbers, they have a general meaning that reveals the fact that the creation is consciously designed. It is predictable patterns of energy that could, I suppose, be reduced to numerical equations. But getting into that stuff is a waste of time.

## More Centered and Peaceful

**Jason:** I've been a little bit since I wrote. Things are moving along nicely. I'm still listening to the *satsangs* and reading every day. I'm starting to feel more and more centered within myself and peaceful. I heard you say in one talk that *sattva* must also be let go of. I'm starting to contemplate that there really is no doer. It's a strange concept to think of my ego identity as temporary. So much belief is built around preserving that identity even after death.

Anyway, I'm here at Sundance, basically the summer solstice renewal ceremony. *Tamasic* people everywhere. My issue is this. Being around poor Natives who can't think a day ahead to save their lives, I typically fall right into the role of saving everyone, giving money and resources to feel like I'm doing good.

Now that I'm letting go of the result of being appreciated and validated by others for my codependent charity, I seem to have lost my willingness to give money and I am starting to wonder how many people around me are just using me for money and favors. Casino gambling is a huge *vasana* here on the reservation, and even the elders who are in charge of the ceremony spend all their free time at the casino, my main teacher included even though he is one of the most *sattvic* people I know. I don't think he is altogether free of the doer.

Question: Should I continue to give money as a form of worship to God even if it is being misused? If I refrain from giving money and instead buy food and gas or whatever as an offering, it is appreciated but it feels like giving a drunk a cheeseburger. He's like, "Thanks, but whatever." I don't want to cling to the results, so I don't care if they appreciate me anymore. But am I harming them by supporting such bad habits? I know it will lower my position in the ceremonial order once I start to reject these accepted roles of give and take but maybe it's not worth it anyway? Honestly, it's hard to continue with ceremony as a form of worship with so much religious pecking order and inner politics infecting the process. Thoughts?

**James:** Here is a quote from the *Gita*: "It is better to die imperfectly performing one's duties according to one's own *dharma* than to perform the *dharma* of another well. The *dharma* of another is fraught with danger."

*Karma yoga* is not changing the world by doing good for others in an attempt to remove a sense of low self-worth. If you are constantly looking after other's needs, it is dangerous because you will not look after your own. You need to work out your desires if you want to grow. Trying to change the *karma* of the world is an insult to God, insofar as the results of one's actions cannot be avoided.

It is good to give charity for one's own growth but it is not good to give charity that keeps the doer tied to *tamasic* situations and people. If you want to give, give to victims of war or some good environmental cause, etc., not to drunken, materialistic Indians.

If you want to help *tamasic* people, help them to understand who they are, not enable their negative *vasanas*. Since they are not interested in self-knowledge you cannot truly help them even if you want to. They are completely unqualified. Let them suffer their *karma* until the Great

Spirit chooses to wake them up.

At some point you will probably have to give up the idea that you are an Indian. It is a limited identity that the doer needs to give it some sense of purpose; you are the self, everything that is. I don't think I am a white man or an American or a teacher or a man or anything at all. Or if you want a provisional identity until you have realized that you are free of all identities, think of yourself as a *karma yogi* and form your associations based on that identity. You can make spiritual friends who are into Vedanta. We have a forum at the website so you can contact people. I'm glad to hear that Vedanta is working for you. Keep it up. It will set you free.

**Jason:** I honestly have no attachment to being an Indian or any other identity, for that matter. My role as a ceremonial person is really a role of service. Unfortunately, there isn't anyone seeking freedom through ceremony. They want "God's stuff," as you say, not God itself.

I thought about what you said with someone coming to me with a request for help: signed in triplicate. Essentially that is what happens when someone offers me tobacco and asks me to help them. It is a form of formal request. The problem is they want help the way THEY want it. They are not looking for *moksa*, so I don't ever talk about it. But it does seem like there is room to steer people away from selfish *adharmic* thoughts and actions that will cause them more pain. Anyhow, I'm still trying to determine if this is a good way to practice *karma yoga* or if it is just too mired in bullshit superstition and ritual to do any good. I've been running peyote ceremonies since my uncle passed away when I was 26, so the novelty has long since worn off. But would I be walking away from my *dharma*? That's what I wonder.

**James:** No, you'd be walking away from an unhealthy environment. However, one of the obligatory rituals for a *karma yogi* is serving people. Helping others doesn't mean doing what they want, if what they want is *adharmic* in the first place. It involves the use of your discrimination. Your *dharma* changes when you commit yourself to self-inquiry. The *dharma* of an inquirer becomes primary and you only do actions that actually add value to situations and produce a quiet mind. Handing out money to drunks and gamblers is *adharmic*. Yes, you should do charity but do it impersonally, for the right reason and to noble causes. I'm looking after a poor, virtuous Indian family. If you want to help, I will give you a name and you can send some money via Western Union. Give your money where it actually makes a difference. You feel bad in that situation because you are not doing the highest thing you can do for yourself.

**Jason:** Thank you for the reality check. I felt that I need to put inquiry first and start removing the situations that demand unhealthy participation. I will have to disappoint some people that have relied on me very heavily, but that is okay. There is no shortage of deserving people to help. I just needed to get clear about where the boundaries are. Also, yes, if you have someone you are helping I would be happy to contribute.

**James:** It's good for dependent people to be forced to rely on themselves. Enabling them only serves to dig them deeper into dependency. It is important to be able to say "no" for the right reason and not feel guilty.

**Jason:** Recently I had a discussion with a very passionate young woman about the subject of rape and objectification of women. She argued that young men should be taught not to rape and not to objectify women. I conceded that teaching young men to respect women was a good idea. I didn't bother telling her about the self and the difference between objects and self, but it did make me think later...

If all objects are appearing to self and are imbued with attraction and repulsion, then is it even possible to refrain from objectifying objects, including women? What then would be a more accurate way to define what feminists mean by the often quoted *mantra* "women are not objects"?

Maybe what they mean is that women's bodies are not objects to be sought after. But this is obviously not true in nature. Women are naturally attracted to men's bodies and men are attracted to women's bodies as objects appearing to self.

Not that I wish to teach Vedanta to feminists, but there is obviously some way that *dharma* is expressing itself in the statement "women are not objects." What would be a more accurate way to express this ideal?

### **Objectification Is an Unconscious Process**

**James:** Objectification of women – or anything else for that matter – is an unconscious process that really only ameliorates when the person sees through their own experience, that it does not deliver what it purports to deliver – lasting satisfaction. So you can't really "teach" a person not to objectify. It will create a conflict and he or she will have to repress the tendency. However, inquirers can gain control over the process by understanding it and controlling the tendency to identify with it.

Actually, the objects are not imbued with attraction and repulsion. All objects are value-neutral. If the attraction and repulsion were in the objects, then the same object would produce the same attraction or repulsion in everyone. An individual's likes and dislikes create (objectify or project) positive or negative values on objects. It is an unconscious process. A gay man, for example, is not attracted to a woman's body. People are just attracted to getting their desires satisfied – the object be damned – and in many cases a man will use deceit or violence to satisfy his sexual desires.

What women mean – and Vedanta agrees – is that men should not assume that they have a right to sex. But tell that to a very randy man. There is a solution but it will never be attractive, because it involves women and men developing enough dispassion with reference to physical pleasure that the women don't put themselves in compromising situations and men learn to appreciate the right of women to say no.

**Jason:** So then "objectification" is quite literally the projection that an object can give us pleasure or pain, and then we act compulsively on these beliefs based on our likes or dislikes?

**James:** Yes. It is an unexamined belief. Objects are value-neutral.

**Jason:** The way out is to understand that our idea is faulty. And what gives us pleasure will inevitably give us pain as well?

**James:** Yes. For pleasure to be pleasure there has to be pain. How can you evaluate pleasure except with reference to its opposite? This is what is meant by duality. Liberation from duality is pleasure without pain – it is steady bliss.

**Jason:** So if I have never come in contact with an object, I should have no like or dislike for it unless I have been taught someone else's likes or dislikes?

**James:** Yes and no. Yes, if you haven't had previous births, but you wouldn't be here if you didn't have previous births, so your likes and dislikes are already in you. Then they are reinforced by your environment. But since you don't know that they are in you already it looks like you pick them up anew from your parents, society, etc.

**Jason:** How then do we explain the fact that so many people have such common preferences? Take the taste of sweet, for example. All children (at least the ones I have met) love candy instantly and dislike anything that tastes bitter. Most young men will prefer a fit woman to a fat woman. Everyone loves the sight of sunrise and fears the dark to a greater or lesser degree. Animals who are not supposed to have an intellect seem to have natural likes and dislikes. So if all likes and dislikes are from conditioning, why do we see such broad general preferences?

**James:** There are universal likes and dislikes and personal likes and dislikes, *Isvara's* conditioning and *jiva's* conditioning. All ducks behave the same. All humans have certain tendencies in common, owing to the fact that they belong to the human species.

**Jason:** Are we acting out preprogrammed instincts hardwired into the physical/subtle/causal bodies based on thousands of years of natural selection?

**James:** *Chitta* has two meanings, Jason. One is memory. It is one of the basic cosmic principles. The others are the five elements, the ten senses, the five *pranas* or physiological systems, mind, intellect, ego and *chitta*, or memory. This makes twenty-four. But *chitta* also can mean *prakriti*, the "mirror of matter," the substance of the twenty-four principles. *Chitta* is *chit*, consciousness as the most subtle reflective form of consciousness. Out of it everything evolves. So everything experiencible is *chitta* and what can't be experienced as an object but is experienced as the ever-present subject is *chit*, pure consciousness, the "Great Spirit."

**Jason:** So is *chitta* what we experience as the bliss sheath? And if *chitta* is the bliss sheath, where memory is stored, then is *chitta* the basis for the causal body? And if *chitta* is the bliss sheath, where memory is stored, then is *chitta* the basis for the causal body?

So from the perspective of *chitta* (reflected consciousness) would you say that the uncontrollable mind-expansion experience I had before was my mind losing its grasp on my particular ray of reflected consciousness and merging into the nearest rays of consciousness in proximity to my physical body? Sounds crazy, huh?

**James:** It's half-crazy. When the mind dissolves for whatever reason it merges into the *sattvic* aspect of the total mind so there is a loss of individuality. The one to whom this dissolution is known is pure original consciousness.

**Jason:** The reason I ask about differentiation of the bliss sheath. It doesn't seem hard to differentiate between myself and my emotions, myself and my thoughts, etc. And it seems simple enough to tell the difference between myself and being happy. But this strong love experience is so all-encompassing it seems difficult to imagine that it could be differentiated, meaning, I suppose I am taking the word "differentiate" to mean a type of dismissal, as if the thing to be differentiated (thoughts, feelings) is of no real substance. But when it comes to this powerful experience of love during meditation, how is it that it could be dismissed if the knowledge of me is no longer there to dismiss it? It doesn't seem to be an option to differentiate myself from the experience until after the experience is over.

**James:** Good question. Ask if the experience of bliss is conscious. Does it know you or do you know it? Is it there continually during the waking and dream states? The answer is no. So it can't be you. It is an object known to you. You are the witness of it. Before you meditate you witness the absence of this bliss. During the bliss you witness the bliss and after the meditation is over you witness the absence of the bliss or at least the bliss seems diminished. The self, you, the non-experiencing witness experiences the bliss sheath. It is experienced in various intensities owing to the degree of *sattva* in the experiencing entity, the subtle body.

**Jason:** So by that logic, would it be correct to determine that only knowledge is conscious? Or is knowledge the result of consciousness? Maybe they are inseparable?

**James:** Knowledge is not conscious. Consciousness is not knowledge. It is that because of which what is known is known.

**Jason:** So it's just the means of understanding. Got it. Although consciousness doesn't know object, objects can't be known without it. So it's only through reflected consciousness that objects and experience comes into the picture at all? Somehow I always had the idea that God knew what was going on. But if awareness is impersonal consciousness and isn't even paying attention, then why bother praying at all?

## The Power of Prayer

**Jason:** So if consciousness does not experience objects except through the vehicle of reflected consciousness, then praying to the Creator seems a little futile, doesn't it? I mean if it's not even aware of the object called prayer.

I guess then it makes me wonder. Who if anyone has the ability to grant the requests of all the people who engage in prayer? I heard you mention that the earth was a Middle World. So that makes me wonder about the "little people" that medicine men often pray to. They call them spirits. We pray to the peyote because in my opinion it is pure *sattva*. We assume it's aware of our prayers, but maybe not in the way we think? I'm not sure. I know none of this necessarily pertains to the knowledge "I am the self," but the idea that pure consciousness does not experience objects is a new one to me. Can you clarify?

**James:** Pure consciousness associated with *maya* hears prayer. But it is limited by the matrix of laws the Creator put in place in which the devotee finds himself. This is why you don't always get what you pray for. God is that part of you that knows what you are asking for. Prayer is useful – or not – depending on what you want and whether or not you put forth the actions required to make the prayer manifest in your life. You can't sit on your ass and ask the Lord for stuff and expect to get it.

**Jason:** Ramji (it feels more affectionate to address you this way), I hope you are well and enjoying whatever it is you are doing. My question today is about the causal body.

Recently I came across a self-styled comedian/motivational speaker named Kyle Cease, a very funny man with an interesting message that seem to be derived from the modern self-help ideal of "getting what you want" and overcoming your fears, etc.

**James:** The individual causal body just facilitates *karmic* choices. The macrocosmic causal body imprints one's basic self-nature. He is talking about the macrocosmic causal body, but for *rajasic* and *tamasic* people it is very difficult to find out what their nature is. His idea is just pop culture's idea of relieving subconscious pressure. It is more or less useless without *karma yoga* and self-inquiry and a scripture to guide your choices because it is very easy to misunderstand unconscious impulses and not every "heart" impulse is benign. What if you have criminal tendencies? You can follow your heart and end up with 15 to life. He may be a funny man but his idea is particularly funny. It's barely worth mention, although it may be useful for particularly fearful people to act out things they fear to see that their fears are unfounded.

**Jason:** So could the macrocosmic causal body could be compelling a person toward a certain lifestyle that is in conflict with the individual causal body? Let's say, for instance, in my heart I always wanted to be a musician but my *vasanas* were extremely *tamasic* and I never practice, so I end up working a dead-end job and hating my life. Society says stick with the day job and maintain security, and my "heart" is screaming quit the job and focus on music. Now, of course if I could develop a *sattvic* lifestyle, I could practice on the weekends and nights and slowly transition into guitar-playing, but the influence of the *tamasic* people I have surrounded myself with is too much to overcome and I never can extricate myself from my *tamasic* lifestyle and continue on until I commit suicide or drink myself to death or contract diabetes and die of a heart attack because I am so obese.

**James:** Good example. If your lifestyle is too *tamasic* or *rajasic*, you won't (1) be sensitive to your *svadharma* in the first place and (2) be able to actualize it if you are.

**Jason:** Does scripture say that he was doing his duty by working the job or ignoring his duty by working the job?

**James:** It's not as straightforward as that. On the one hand, if you need money to survive you have to do some kind of job. If you do it in the *karma yoga* spirit, *sattva* will develop and you may have the dispassion required to live on the edge and do what you feel "in your heart" without being disturbed by it. I had a very dispassionate nature when this was an issue for me and I didn't care if I had to live in my van and suffer. Doing what I wanted was always more important than physical comfort.

The scripture is *Isvara*, and *Isvara* says that a lifestyle that does not conform with your *svadharma* – your job/duty/small-self identity – and your *Svadharma* – your identity as awareness – need to be changed.

**Jason:** I heard you say once that we could never achieve *moksa* unless we fulfill the *karma* we are set out to achieve by *Isvara*.

**James:** The caveat here is the degree of dispassion. If you have the temperament of a renunciant, you can say, "Fuck *karma*." *Karma* is only a concept. It is real as long as you think it is real. If you know it is *mithya* you can easily walk away from it and let *Isvara* take up the slack. There is always someone else to do what needs to be done. If not, you have to do *karma yoga* until the dispassion comes and your lifestyle becomes more *sattvic*. But don't pretend that you are some kind of renunciant because you are too lazy to clean up your *karmic* mess. If you do, the *karma* will cling to you like nothing else.

**Jason:** If a person is in conflict, we are supposed to do *karma yoga* to resolve the conflict, correct? Okay, so... try to be a good boy and play nice, but still not quite happening.

If I say I know I am the self but still feel stuck and my desires are just being repressed rather than resolved by the knowledge "I am self," then what? I suspect you will say, "Well, then continue chasing objects until it's out of your system..."

**James:** That's right. If you have dispassion in the first place, the objects will not be a problem.

**Jason:** ...but then there is enough awareness to infer from past experience that even when the object is obtained it comes with its share of pain too, so there is an aversion to wholeheartedly chasing objects. But now depression sets in and petty binding *vasanas* become the opiate of choice: food, TV, sleeping too much.

**James:** Got it in one, Jason. *Samsara* is a whirlpool, a catch-22, the logic goes round and round.

**Jason:** Anyway, I'm just ranting now, but I think you know the point I am speaking of because you describe it quite well in your book. Becoming self-aware has ruined the illusion that objects can complete me but I still have the *vasanas* and seems like I'm engaging in them as a way of escaping the idea that they cannot complete me. All the while I feel like I just want to get away from the life I have constructed. All the people that I have built relationships of expectation and all the layers of beautiful identity now are just a burden. Everything just feels heavy; gaining weight and sleeping too much. All the endeavors have lost their motivation. And even the *vasanas* are reasons to feel disgusted. The minuscule enjoyment is not worth the loss of *sattvic* awareness but the ego is desperately looking for a final handhold, a way to maintain the chase of all the objects.

**James:** If you weren't a man, I'd sympathize, but that's the way it is. Suck it up and do what needs to be done. Be clever, however, and slowly cut back on the *tamasic* habits. Or as my *guru* said, sin intelligently. Don't feel sorry for yourself. It's not your fault that you were born into the Native American community where *tamas* rules the day. Vedanta's a bitch. But what's the alternative? *Isvara* woke you up. You can't go back to sleep. You know too much.

**Jason:** Ramji, so let me get this straight. *Isvara* and the macrocosmic causal body is the aspect of awareness that is concerned with answering prayers, and we pray to *Isvara* (God) thinking that we are the *jiva* but in actuality we are awareness, which is the only consciousness there is, which in turn affects *Isvara* and then the *jiva* thinks God answered its prayers (or didn't). If this is true, then we are essentially praying to ourselves and answering our own prayers?? I find this extremely funny. I couldn't stop laughing when this realization dawned on me. It's just so ridiculous. I was laughing so hard I was crying. My wife thinks I lost it totally. Is this really all it is? So I am God pretending to be Jason??? That's hilarious... ha ha ha.

**James:** It is absolutely correct. That is why I said in my short email that you "got it in one." There is only you. When you are talking to God, you are God talking to God. The whole thing is a big joke. I've been laughing for fifty years.

## **A Sense of Anticipation**

**Jason:** Ramji, it's been a while since I wrote. I guess I've been absorbed in the slow, steady mourning of my earthly desire as I sample them all to make sure there really is no real lasting pleasure. At the same time, I feel a real sense of anticipation as I feel the spirit moving again, like something is going to change but not sure what. For so long I've been stuck in the ritual world hoping to gain some kind of worthless recognition from other recognition seekers.

I'm coming to grips with the fact that I have long ago surpassed my ritual teachers in the realm of knowledge, but at the same time it does no good without application. What can I say?

There is nothing to do but I'm still not totally free from the doer. He clings to patterns of habit in futility, living the life of a father, a husband, a spiritual guide, etc. Desire and fear seem to have given way to type of melancholy. Only meditation and prayer seem to alleviate it. My body is badly damaged from years of construction, so that tends to cut my meditation short most days. I'm reading your book *Mystic by Default* and enjoying it immensely. Wishing you well. Good health and abundance. Sorry to dump all this on you.

I finished *Mystic by Default* this morning. So many experiences you shared struck a chord with me, too many to mention. But to summarize: I see a direct connection to your psychedelic experiences and my use of peyote. You are absolutely right that it is a crutch. I have known this for some time. In fact it is one of my biggest points of contention that people don't even use it right, but whatever. I agree natural is the way to go. The Native American Church is what it is and will likely not change much. For whatever reason the spirit has seen fit to reveal its true meaning to me but I fear that the full significance of the revelation will be lost on most people. But who knows what God is up to? For myself I am just a cog in the wheel, translating Vedanta into an indigenous spiritual frame work already laid out by the Ancestors who were quite obviously spiritually enlightened.

As I "plot my escape," my mind is moving away from its futile obsession for recognition and towards more inner realities. As of late I felt a desire to drink wine privately with my wife. Mind you, I haven't drunk any alcohol since I was 22. I hate pot because it dulls the mind and that NEVER appealed to me at all. Alcohol was never really a problem as much as amphetamines and opiates back in the day. Anyway, a curious thing happened. It didn't affect me AT ALL. I felt my mind dull and the body become a little sluggish but I remained totally unaffected. After a second glass just to make sure I decided it was a useless pursuit and dumped it down the drain. My wife enjoyed the relaxed me for an evening but didn't care either way.

## **Purity Is the Absence of Mental Objects**

**Jason:** This brings me to another point. I have always had an aversion to the pursuit of "purity." Being a rebel at heart, purity always seemed an egotistic and boring pursuit, especially when I observe the holier-than-thou, self-conscious, fake quiet types who seem obsessed with purity. But recently I realized that my perception of purity as an object is flawed. Purity is the absence of mental objects, leaving only myself (awareness ) to be experienced, unfettered by an impure mind. Eureka!! So I feel strongly that maybe I need to achieve a prolonged state of relative purity in order to achieve *moksa*. So with my dreams of medicine-man glory safely out of the way, two major obstacles still remain: money and women.

I must now confess something that I have yet to tell you. But I feel I must let you know If I am to progress. My main source of income is questionable and I do quite well. Anyway, it's an issue that has produced business *karma* that occasionally drags me down and forces me to mingle with types I would otherwise never speak to. I feel the need to unburden myself of these types of activities but I still have the family-and-children *karma*, which is exceedingly expensive these days. So that is still yet to be fully dealt with.

Regarding women, there are a number of women who seem intent on weaseling their way into my life. For the last few years I have avoided sleeping with any of them and by some miraculous

power I have lost interest in pursuing their attention. This is by far my major weakness. But I realize what you say is true: everything I do incurs *karma*. If I give them attention I am setting in motion wheels of subtle energy that distract me from God. This will no longer do. At this point I feel like anything that is distracting me from God needs to be removed or mitigated as much as possible without incurring more *karma*.

## More Than Anything I Want to Be Free

**Jason:** Ramji, I am telling you all this because I feel like it is time for whatever reason to open myself to the reality that I must do whatever is necessary to achieve my goal. Up to this point all the pursuits of my life not related to spirituality have only created obstacles, and I want to be free. More than anything I want to be free.

I felt a very strong presence of love when reading about Swami Abhedananda. I have a strong desire to be around someone like this but never had the opportunity. Once I saw a movie about a normal stiff who went to India, investigating *yoga*, and he met some *swami* on the move, and I felt an instant devotion and love for the *swami* as if I should go meet him. I felt the same thing when I read *Autobiography of a Yogi* towards the description of Sri Yukteswar, which led me to *The Holy Science*, which led me to you.

**James:** There is a Chinese proverb: when doing evil, avoid punishment; when doing good, avoid fame. It has its downsides. Recognize yourself. I really like your statement, "Purity is the absence of mental objects, leaving only myself (awareness) to be experienced, unfettered by an impure mind. Eureka!! So I feel strongly that maybe I need to achieve a prolonged state of relative purity in order to achieve *moksa*."

You're pure enough for *moksa*, Jason. You're doing fine. The best reason to live a pure life is because it feels really good to have a pure mind. A relative definition of purity is a mind that has no secrets. I appreciate you sharing this info with me. It's good to confess your sins, no doubt, but be practical. You have the wife and kids and live in a major metropolitan area. If you stop thinking of yourself as a medicine man, that takes the hypocrisy away. If there is no real danger from the law, then what's the big deal? Having said that, it is always good to be ready to let go of things, and now that the desire to be free is burning more brightly, you can move forward more confidently. When *Ishvara* makes it clear what has to be dropped, there should be no anxiety. You just move on. Women are a zero-sum game, like everything. If you keep the defects of any *samsaric* pursuit in mind, the *vasanas* will slowly burn out. But be smart. Plot your escape from *samsara* carefully. Don't be in a hurry, just patiently take one step at a time. Keep your eye on the website shop for my new book *The Yoga of Love*.

**Jason:** Ramji, I'm still struggling with the *vasanas*. Food, sex and recognition seem to be my addictions. It feels very reminiscent of the days when I stopped drinking and drugging: waves of self-pity and heightened emotion, realizing how much I have let ego run my life, always wanting something, always up to something. I can hear him planning to be a great *mahatma* even during my meditations. It's fucking relentless. As I look at my life I feel more and more demoralized as if none of it really means anything. It's all been one long pointless ego trip of desire and pleasure.

Seeking. Half-ass identities stacked on top of self-induced denial while plotting to get my way. It's hard not to start feeling like a total piece of shit. Every time I fail to exercise self-control over my *vasanas* I feel weak and pathetic. You're right, enlightenment isn't something to be proud of. It's just the realization that I've been an ignorant jerk my whole life.

**James:** You will hate it when I say that we had a chuckle at your tale of hardship and woe. Look on the bright side, Jason. You are not your life. Right now it is just a bunch of negative ideas and once you have gained a bit of self-mastery, it will be a happier story, but it will still not be you. I went through this – I could have written the words – when I was twenty-five. We all go through it sooner or later. The fancy words are “dark night of the soul.” Don't let it get you down. Stand up and fight, O Mighty Arjuna!!! It takes time to burn down the house that ego built.

**Jason:** Ha ha! Well, at least it was worth a laugh or two. And it does feel good to know you went through the same thing. It's like when you come home and the dog has shit all over the house and chewed everything up and you feel like an idiot for letting him have the run of the house for so long, if that makes any sense. Anyway, I'm soldiering on. I hope you guys are enjoying yourselves wherever and whatever your up to. Tell Sundari I said hi.

**James:** I love your honesty and the artistic way your mind works – the dog shit, etc. is a good metaphor. The thing is that you can't really justify the negative emotions, because you didn't didn't set out to make a mess. The environment shapes you when you are least able to discriminate. And of course *maya* makes everything interesting, novel and exciting and makes sure your mind is properly deluded. You work your way out thought by thought, action by action. At some point the *tamas* starts to dissolve and you don't feel so heavy and hopeless.

## **Monkeys Regurgitating the Teachings of Some Realized Person**

**Jason:** That's true. It's hard to take credit for the results when I was totally asleep when I set them in motion. I heard you say in one talk that an arrow doesn't stop in mid air just because the hunter realizes that the deer he shot at is actually a cow. Ha ha ha! I laughed so hard, thinking of all the arrows I have in mid-flight. Every time I find myself upset about something I realize it was my own egotistic desire that set the stage. So funny though, I'm starting to see this knowledge all over in every religion but soooo poorly taught, just monkeys regurgitating teachings of some realized person, but they never got the most important part. I'm very thankful for this knowledge, even if it is ruining all my plans.

**James:** Well, Jason, it's supposed to ruin your plans. There is only *Isvara's* plan, sad to say.

**Jason:** I'm glad its ruining my (ego) plans. They sucked anyway. Ha ha! I've heard you say that Vedanta should be studied professionally. What does that mean? Certainly it doesn't mean I can get a 9-to-5 job studying scripture? Is there a formal education that one can receive?

**James:** It just means that you should take a professionally systematic approach. Yes, there is a formal Vedanta education. There is a two-year and a three-year course in India at the *ashram* of my two *gurus*.

**Jason:** Or is that just the long way around? I have heard you talk about Shankaracharya and that there are beginning, middle and advanced texts on Vedanta. Am I just poking around at the teaching?

**James:** Yes. You are picking and choosing what you study and when. You wouldn't have asked those questions about the elements and the subtle body if you had studied it systematically. Ordinarily I don't answer such questions but I like you and decided to indulge you a bit until you are completely hooked on Vedanta.

**Jason:** Do you suggest a more systematic approach?

**James:** Yes, indeed.

**Jason:** The self seems to be revealed in every teaching.

**James:** It is revealed in every teaching but there is more to *moksa* than just knowledge of the self. Vedanta is a science. It deals with the self, the world and the *jiva* and how they relate one another. Anyone can realize the self. It is pretty simple and straightforward. But how the self relates to the world and the *jiva* is where the freedom comes in. Until your knowledge of reality is complete, you will have doubts and feel incomplete. See how these *vasanas* still torment you.

**Jason:** I listen and read.

**James:** That's good, but until your knowledge is complete ignorance will cause problems.

**Jason:** But it is apparent that you have a classic education in the subject matter. Does one have to travel to India for that kind of thing?

**James:** No, but it is possible. On the other hand, you can get caught up in the study of Vedanta and get even more lost. Several people who got introduced to it by me ended with nothing but Vedanta-knowledge, not self-knowledge. Remember, the subject matter is you, the self, and you, the *jiva*, and how you live in this world.

**Jason:** Okay, thank you. I would much rather be on a guided path than meander around bumping into things. I very much appreciate your kindness in allowing me to approach the teaching in

such a half-assed way. Being already accustomed to the teacher-student relationship via Native ceremonial customs, I am actually much more cognizant of the dynamic of respect that must be present in order to proceed. So in that light I also appreciate your patience with my ignorance in how to proceed. I will start on *Tattva Bodha* as you suggested and make my study a more focused and serious approach. The idea of going to India and studying full-time is very attractive and I don't rule it out, but I also still have young children who need me, so maybe that will have to wait. For now, I am just grateful to have a means of knowledge and access to real teacher. Although it seems a little modern, being that our interaction is mostly via email, tuning into your energy and the spirit of the teaching doesn't seem to be hindered by the lack of physical proximity. The recent events of my life have been like a continuous closing of doors one by one as I realize that the objects I have been chasing are not providing me with the fulfillment I was chasing.

I am also aware that Vedanta is not another feather in the ego's cap. I am beginning to see that no one can understand these teachings unless they are ready, so allowing the ego to plan a course to greatness through Vedanta is not going to work. I am beginning to see how everything I have ever engaged in has just produced more useless *karma*, always trying to be someone I'm not in order to get something that won't produce happiness.

## **The Lies That Habitually Arise in My Thought Patterns**

**Jason:** So to summarize, self-knowledge is what I'm after. I know what you are saying about Vedanta-knowledge not being enough. Even as a child I hated math because the teachers couldn't explain how the equations worked. I always needed to have a clear intellectual understanding before I would value the equation. In that way, I see how my habits produce thoughts that my intellect uses to convince my ego that objects are going to work. And Vedanta has given me the weapon to guard against the lies that habitually arise in my thought patterns. Although, as you say, ignorance is hardwired, and I don't always win the argument with my habits, I have clearer view of what is happening. At this point I feel like I have never really known the real me or what my true *svadharma* is. But maybe it was to seek liberation and never was any if this other crap I have been chasing. Anyway, now I'm just ranting.

## **Is Vedanta Gay or Straight?**

**Jason:** Ramji, I have a theory and question based on observation that I wonder if Vedanta speaks to at all. In my dealings with people in the spiritual realm of Native healing I have run into many gay and lesbian people who are very screwed up emotionally and looking for help, especially in the Bay area.

**Ramji:** It does and it doesn't speak to it.

**Jason:** I know that a female plant that is stressed out due to environmental factors will change

into a hermaphrodite and attempt to pollinate itself. Is it possible that the subtle body in plants and the subtle body in humans reacts similarly?

**Ramji:** Yes. There is only one subtle body. It is more complex in animals than plants and even more complex in humans, but the basic structure is the same. The subtle body is in the creation where duality is the coin of the realm. Its nature is desire. Pleasure and pain are native to the subtle body. When it experiences pain it immediately tries to compensate; it seeks pleasure, i.e. “healing.” Perhaps most people don’t think about it, but desire is painful. This is why one tries to satisfy it as quickly as possible.

**Jason:** Meaning there is some kind of stress that causes the subtle body to identify with the opposite gender as a survival tactic? I notice that even in gay couples there is always a masculine and a feminine partner. So to me it seems that the subtle body has re-identified as the opposite sex while the physical body remains the same. I’m sure gay people would probably reject the theory. But what do you think?

**Ramji:** I agree. And in each individual there is a “psychic” man and a “psychic” woman, meaning there are apparently conflicting impulses insofar as men and women are believed to be opposites, which they aren’t. They are complements. *Isvara* as the creation needs them both equally. Homosexuality is one of *Isvara*’s little paradoxes – the unenlightened might call it a perversion – because it defies *Isvara*’s creation logic. How can the species survive if semen doesn’t find its way into a vagina?

But in *maya Isvara*’s logic is not always appreciated. *Jivas* develop their own peculiar forms of logic. So if in this life or in a previous life the *jiva* had a problem with a parent, he or she might associate the behavior of the parent with the parent’s sexuality and develop a strong aversion to the sex of the parent. Whether a person is kind or violent has nothing to do with their sexuality; you find both characteristics in both sexes; they are human, i.e. subtle body characteristics. At the same time, the sexual impulse is so deep that it precedes circumstances, i.e. parentage, so it can run to the same sex, even if the default is the opposite sex.

Gays are the last people in the world to understand sexuality objectively because of their extreme attachment to it as a solution to the problem of *samsara*, meaning suffering. There are very few gays in the Vedanta world because sex is a *vasana* that in general they are loath to subject to inquiry. I once was stupid enough to tell a gay person that he wasn’t gay before I had time to explain that I meant he was the self, and he got furious and called me a religious bigot. Having said that, I notice that more and more gays are open to Vedanta, probably because the gay world is maturing; dispassion is developing toward their sexuality.

Nothing in *maya* is actually about what *jivas* think it is about; it is always about freedom. Sex, gay or straight, does not solve the suffering issue, obviously, because I am a *jiva* caught in duality before I am a body. From *Isvara*’s point of view sex is sex and flesh is flesh. It is just the five elements which are consciousness apparently rubbing itself. So there is no problem on that level.

The only problem is attachment to the belief that a particular type of body-mind can make you happy. It can, if you obey your likes and dislikes and if you are happy with temporary happiness. But since nobody is satisfied with temporary happiness, sex – gay or straight – is a solution to

nothing except the scrotal itch.

**Jason:** Ramji, as I notice my fleeting thoughts of wanting attention from women, I'm starting to realize it starts as a feeling of boredom or feeling like the present moment of living in my own skin is not enough. So that feeling turns into a habitual train of thought that I experience as a knee-jerk desire to get laid. So when I deconstruct the thought/feeling "get laid" it is coming from a place of insecurity. That is so crazy to me because immediately after ego is scrambling with thought preparations for how it can "appear" good enough. And then if I should encounter a situation where a woman is flirting with me, the whole insanity ensues. It's such a place of weakness and uncontrolled emotional puking that is a wonder anyone stays together at all as couples. It would be nice to live consciously and know why you are doing something.

**James:** Yes, craving sex is born of insecurity and does not deliver what it purports to deliver. The sad part is that it takes real love off the table.

**Jason:** What do you mean by real love? Is that even possible between a man and a woman or do you mean a general feeling of appreciation ?

**James:** I mean unconditional love. Yes, it is possible between a man and woman. Watch the non-dual relationship video at the website.

## **Immense Love for the Dance**

**Jason:** Ramji, I came home to the reservation to visit my father and take part in the annual mid-winter ceremony where we dance and give thanks for the natural world. I had a wonderful experience that was really unexpected. Now that I have recognized all the little egocentric games my ego plays for acceptance and validation, I have no more motivation to seek that type of interaction with other tribal members. At the same time, I don't see myself as an Indian anymore. So as I danced I was overwhelmed with the immense gratitude and love for the dance itself, feeling the gravity and the rhythm of the dance. It's like I had to stop being Indian before I could really "feel" what the spiritual essence of the culture was all about before it became an identity. I'm still studying *Tattva Bodha*. I just wanted to say thank you for sharing the truth with me. The work continues.

**James:** You never were an Indian, Jason. You are always only pure consciousness. The gravity of *Isvara's* dance of life is wonderful indeed, and gratitude is the only emotion.

## **Fried by the Laser Beam of Inquiry**

**Jason:** Ramji, it seems I'm starting to answer my own questions as I go. The instinctual thought vibrations that enter my subtle body are being fried by the laser beam of inquiry as soon as they begin to produce an experience that is other than peace, almost like a motion detector that is slowly becoming more sensitive to the intruders entering the center of the room of my awareness.

As the more blatant assholes of ignorance are being tackled, handcuffed and shown the door, I am becoming aware of much older and insidious characters lurking in the corners of my past waiting for a chance to whisper fear or desire in my ear. But I'm enjoying the relative peace that a lack of agenda provides, even in the most benign interactions. It's funny that it is easier and easier to see other people's agendas when you finally admit and arrest your own. Inquiry seemed at first a whimsical tool akin to being "in the now." But now that I can cognize the function of the causal body and how unconscious it is, it seems a simple process of reprogramming a computer that has no will of its own apart from the information I feed it via confirming or denying its preset assumptions. Fascinating.

Of course there is always the thought, "Yeah, that's an easy one, wait till some REAL bad shit happens. Then let's see where your peace is at," as if somehow ego is trying to plant a flag in permanence. I can hear him in the background sometimes screaming, "You'd be nothing without ME!!!" Ha ha ha, what an asshole. Anyway, another beautiful day in *Ishvara's* Creation.

**James:** I love the way you write, Jason. I'm so happy that inquiry is working. This sentence is the essence of *jnana yoga*, "But now that I can cognize the function of the causal body and how unconscious it is, it seems a simple process of reprogramming a computer that has no will of its own apart from the information I feed it via confirming or denying its preset assumptions."

**Jason:** Ramji, across the board, tribal societies maintain taboos about women participating in rituals during menstruation. The touching of sacred objects is considered also taboo. The reason that is given is that the woman body is tied to the moon's cycle and that it is in a period of cleansing. The sense I get from many other ceremonial leaders is that if you allow a woman who is menstruating to handle ceremonial objects that it will have some kind of negative result, although no one has ever been able to explain this belief to me in a way that makes any sense. Is there any reference in the scriptures to this topic? Maybe some kind of subtle energy reality that would explain these beliefs? Or are they just a relic of times gone by before tampons? It comes up quite a lot now, especially with many young women challenging the old customs. I feel like if there is no reason for a custom to continue, then why defend it? On the other hand, if there is actual energetic powers in play that could inhibit the effectiveness of the healing practices then I would like to understand them. Any thoughts?

**James:** I don't think there is anything particularly mystical about it. Maybe it came from the idea that menstruating women are often *rajasic/tamasic* and don't always follow the ritual properly. If you don't do it in the right sequence with the proper pronunciation, etc. it doesn't have the desired effect.

**Jason:** Ramji, great word: matriculate to move the ball up the field. My whole life I have been trying to "score" happiness by attempting to move the entire goddamn field and all the players into position, when all I had to do was move the ball (myself). Stay in the end zone, stupid.

Beautiful metaphor.

**James:** It seems you have cracked the code, Jason. The field and the goalpost stays where it is – you move. Duh.

**Jason:** It makes me laugh because now I understand why you said it's nothing to be proud of. I'm not getting something I didn't already have. Also, I can see why things like fasting and meditation work to produce a happiness experience. If you sit still long enough you eventually experience yourself minus the objects, which equals happiness. Me - objects = happiness. What a trip. And the entire normal world is missing that simple point. *Isvara* really is a kid burning ants with a magnifying glass.

**James:** I like the formula Me - Objects = Happiness! *Isvara* is one pesky fucker.

**Jason:** Ramji, slowly as people around me are starting to notice a change in my attitude some of my friends are asking me what's up. What has changed? Obviously nothing has changed but my position, but what to tell them? Should I try to explain about objects and whatnot? Obviously most are unqualified anyway. But what of the ones that seem to have enough intelligence and dispassion to entertain the basic idea? I guess what I'm asking is when is it appropriate to share the truth with someone? I understand about not disturbing the minds of the ignorant and whatnot. But every now and then it seems clear that *Isvara* is appearing before me in the form a person requesting to be given the key. I personally do not want the job but I also do not want to resist the flow of *dharma* if that's what is being asked of me. As always, an upside and a downside.

**James:** I think you should try to teach, Jason. It is the best way to discover what you are not clear about. I think you have the basic logic now, so keep it simple. Because Vedanta is just simple analysis of experience, most everyone understands it to some degree. There is enough of a change in you that people are starting to notice and become curious about. Just keep it simple, speak from your own experience. And don't be too eager to share – there is so much spiritual stuff around that people are rightfully cynical – heard it all before – so you have to be a bit cagey and reluctant but inviting at the same time.

**Jason:** Ramji, would you say that *Isvara* is a lower order of reality than the self? Or at the least a more external order of reality?

**James:** *Isvara* is the self with reference to the Creation. It is the same but different. With *maya*, the self in the form of *Isvara* creates the world. It is a lower order but it is not a lower order. It is a lower order like a wave is a lower order of H<sub>2</sub>O. A wave is H<sub>2</sub>O, so it is not lower than the ocean, but in terms of magnitude there is a difference.

**Jason:** Ramji, I am experiencing an unexpected side effect of inquiry I think or maybe I'm imagining things? As my mind becomes more clear it seems like I am receiving emotional

vibrations from other people, particularly people who have a negative feeling toward me. I feel it as a subtle disturbance in my mind, and the thought of a certain person will enter my mind. Ego instantly reacts with a defensive emotional vibration. It happens fast too. Like, buzz – who is it? – oh, yeah? – well, screw you too! If I actually get to interact with the person their body language seems to confirm the “hit.” Anyway, it also happens with people feeling warmth and gratitude toward me or people wanting something from me.

I will get a “hit” and a minute or even seconds later the phone will ring and it’s them. Anyway, what to do about it?

It’s a little hard to really recognize how distorted and sick other people’s subtle bodies really are, particularly when someone is pretending to be a friend. The more I become aware of my own ego’s petty feelings the more obvious other people are becoming. I know it pointless to judge them. They are just as unaware as I was. But is it wrong to focus in on someone who has entered your vibrational field of vision? Part of me is wondering if it’s a kind of violation of privacy? Or I’m losing my mind and just imagining all this?

**Ramji:** When the mind starts to get quiet from inquiry it often becomes sensitive to the total mind (*Isvara*). It’s a good sign that the filter between you and the world is breaking down. It is good in that it gives you an edge as far as how to respond, but it is bad because if you act on it – particularly if it is someone else’s thought about you – you will run into resistance because the person does not know that they are projecting – or if they do they assume that you don’t know how they “really feel.” A person can’t be held responsible for their unconscious content.

So, what should you do? Turn your mind to the self. The positive thoughts are fine in that they harmonize the mind but the negative thoughts disturb it, so you shouldn’t dwell on them. You should think, “I want to be happy. This thought is disturbing me. How can I get rid of it? I can find the upside and convert it to a positive thought. He or she wouldn’t be thinking of me in the first place if they didn’t care about me. She is in a bad mood, poor dear. She wants love. Let’s see if I can find a way to love him/her. In any case, feelings and emotions are not real. They wouldn’t think such thoughts if they had control of their minds, because negative thoughts injure the thinker as well as the object of thought. Why do I care what people think? I must have low self-esteem. I should keep my mind on the self, as it is the one thought that is always good, etc.”

**Jason:** On other news, I was wanting to move on to the *Gita*. I’ve been sitting with *Tattva Bodha* for a while now. Is that appropriate to move to the next text when I feel ready?

**Ramji:** Yes, go ahead with the *Gita*. Watch the *Gita* videos, read my *Gita* translation out loud daily. Identify with Krishna.

**Jason:** This is a particularly subtle topic of interest for me due to the fact that I have become aware of at least two people who have let their projection of me deteriorate into an all-out psychic attack, mostly due to jealousy. I have begun to cut these people off, which is new because they are used to continuing to call me and or ask me to help them with this or that. So in a sense I suppose I am acting on “inside” information but this seems to have only intensified their projection.

I feel like it's easy to love them because they are ignorant of the cause of their feelings, but is it not appropriate to remove individuals from your life who are hating on you?

**James:** Yes, write them off. They don't have to know the reason.

**Jason:** Ramji, would it be correct to say that there is no such thing as the present? That what we call the present is simply awareness aware of itself rather than the externalized time perception caused by desire?

**Ramji:** Yes, indeed. There is only awareness. Time, space and causality are ideas that come into play when we add *maya* to awareness.

### **Grateful, Unassuming Awareness**

**Jason:** Ramji, a progress report: *vasanas* are becoming easier to control. Actually, not control, but I am just losing interest, like a toy I'm tired of playing with. The "poor me, I'm so lonely, nobody loves me, better get laid by a fine woman" routine continues to well up and overflow my mental space every now and then. The longest it survives seems to be about a day or an afternoon before I snap to and deconstruct it again. I am very surprised at the resiliency of this thought construct. It appears to have a life of its own, and if I didn't know any better I would think it did.

**Ramji:** That pleasure *vasana* is a real killer. Deconstruct away!

**Jason:** But between these pugilistic rounds of duality I am experiencing a very simple, innocent type of grateful awareness. At first it seemed to be resting on my perception in the head but now seems as if that is backward. I think maybe perception is resting on IT.

**Ramji:** Good for you! Perception is resting in it.

**Jason:** Anyway, this simple, grateful, unassuming awareness, that would seem to be childishly naive according to the ego, is actually quite pleased resting in itself. And anyway, breathing seems to be a joy in and of itself. I have become really tired of the ego's poor-me routine. But it is definitely hardwired, as you say. I'm guessing at some point these mental habits will begin to unravel the longer I refrain from acting on them.

**Ramji:** Renunciation is the essence of devotion to *Isvara*. It will go away.

**Jason:** Ramji, the most amazing thought settled into my mind yesterday, like a leaf that has been

falling from above somewhere and finally came to rest.

## **I Don't Need Anyone to Love Me**

**Jason:** All my life I have been attached to the idea that finding and having this love. But suddenly it's like – blip – no more. I am the love I was seeking. Pay attention to myself! You told me before to “recognize myself” with reference to seeking approval, and that really started the ball rolling. I began to see all the little ways I was seeking approval and recognition and eradicate those actions as the desire arose.

But with love it seemed harder. I wasn't really conscious of the fact that the subtle underlying dissatisfaction I felt was because I was stuck on this idea that I needed to find a suitable love partner, one that was “all that and a bag of chips,” as they say. And every little imperfection in my wife was a poke in the side of this idea, like, “Hey, remember me? If you had ME, THEN you would be happy.”

But when I realized I am the subject then it got all fucked up till this idea finally came to rest. I don't need love, because I am love. I don't need anyone to pay attention to me, because I AM attention itself! How can I add more attention to attention??

In order to GET love I need to be this pathetic needy person with his dick in one hand and his heart in the other looking for love while I pretend to have it all together! LMFAO!! And I always ended hurting myself or someone else.

Well, I know I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. I just wanted to share that with you that I understand it now.

**James:** This is very cool!

**Jason:** Also, I think the sex *vasana* is rooted in this idea of needing love, so it makes sense that I must overcome the neediness before I can really work on the symptoms it creates. Vedanta really is amazing. It just goes deeper and deeper, and it all connected.

**James:** Cool. There are two aspects to the sex *vasana*: *jiva* and *Isvara*. You can't do anything about the *Isvara* bit except endure it in good humor and indulge it occasionally if you please; it's about keeping the species alive. But the *jiva* bit is more complicated. It is related to the idea of needing love. *Jivas*, men particularly, equate love and sex. They think if they rub on a woman long and hard enough they will be loved. Women, not so much. But there is definitely a connect between low self-esteem and the need for sex. Keep inquiring.

**Jason:** Ramji, recently experienced a very busy time selling a property I was holding for about five years, lots of agitation raising teenagers who like to talk back, and before you know it I'm feeling very *rajasic* and my negative *vasanas* are making a comeback. Add to that some physical

body pain from overexertion at work and inquiry seems only a distant knowledge that is basically only serving to keep me from engaging in any new BS desires, which I suppose is good long-term. But feeling busy and *rajasic* is really lame compared to the serenity of *sattva*. I feel like a drug addict who has been on binge.

Question: Do *vasanas* store up some kind of potential energy in the causal body and wait till you're at some kind of weak point to spring out? It sure kinda seems that way.

**Ramji:** Well, at least the knowledge is keeping you from engaging in BS desires. It is good long-term, as you say. But the *karmic* chickens from previous BS desires seem to be coming home to roost. Unless you simplify your life the *rajas* and *tamas* is going to keep bedeviling you. You live in a major metropolitan area, have two smart-ass teenagers, a wife and business interests, not to mention your tribal stuff. So *Isvara* will continue to make your life miserable from time to time until your lifestyle is simplified. Yes, *vasanas* are potential energy. When there is stress in the subtle body, the negative *vasanas* use the opportunity to strike. This is why lifestyle is so important. So man up and face the music!

One more thing, what applies to negative *vasanas* applies to positive *vasanas* as well. The causal body just recycles states of mind. So even though a lot of worldly things are grabbing your attention, be sure to meditate, do small rituals and read twenty minutes of scripture every day for the same reason that time passes slowly when you are suffering and races by when you are enjoying. You want the pain to end. In any case you are not on a downward spiral. You are that in which upward and downward appear. The *jiva* isn't you.

**Jason:** You're probably getting really busy these days, I'm guessing. I'm here in Wyoming for the annual solstice ceremony, better known as Sundance.

**Ramji:** I'm always busy as hell, Jason. ShiningWorld keeps me occupied. I've always got time for you.

**Jason:** I can't help but contemplate why I still attend these ceremonies. More out of a sense of duty and commitment, I guess. It's good for the kids to be out of the city for the summer but some part of me can't help but feel like the ceremony itself and all the time and resources that go into them are pointless. Many have spiritual experiences but, like you say, they don't have the knowledge to correctly interpret them. But nor do they want the knowledge. They like being dualists!

**Ramji:** Absolutely. They have no idea that reality is non-dual, except sometimes during their epiphanies. And if they did they wouldn't know how to seek it. It makes them feel safe in some way to feel small and ignorant. Once, when I was encouraging a very *tamasic* person to get his shit together, he said, "Well, Jim, it may be shit but its warm and it's mine."

**Jason:** I ask myself, could *Isvara* have really stuck me in a *dharmic* role that prevents me from really helping people? Just so I can sit and watch them turn in circles?

**Ramji:** It seems *Ishvara* did, but you can say no to *Ishvara*; it won't mind. Maybe you ought to figure out why you want to help people, not that there is anything wrong with it, but in the enlightenment business results come slowly. It sounds like you have a do-gooder *vasana*. No blame, but usually helping only works when one's help is requested.

## Carrying a Big Secret

**Jason:** I feel like I'm carrying this big secret and my prescribed role prevents me from revealing the obvious fact of true spirituality without causing a huge ruckus.

I know, I know, "Let not the wise unsettle the minds of the ignorant." What is it inside me that feels the need to shake things up?

**Ramji:** I used to be like that, but one day my *guru* said, "Do you realize that you are only rebelling against yourself?" That cured me. *Ishvara* loves ignorant people. It manufactures them non-stop. That is why the world is in such turmoil. Yes, we all want it to be different. But it can't. If someone asks for a bit of help and is willing to listen, respond. Otherwise, let the world be. Take care of your own *karma*, simplify your life and go fishing.

**Jason:** I don't want to walk around feeling more knowledgeable than everyone, but it's seriously like spending time in a kindergarten class all day. Even the most basic knowledge of truth would be laborious to convey.

**Ramji:** Be grateful the knowledge has liberated you and leave the rest to *Ishvara*. When and if the time is right to enlighten people *Ishvara* will set it up and you and it will work.

**Jason:** For the first time in my life I feel like walking away from this so-called culture and relieving myself of all its trappings. I have climbed to the pinnacle only to realize I was climbing the wrong hill for the wrong reasons.

**Ramji:** I had a friend who realized the truth and got depressed for two years behind this idea. You are not the doer. You didn't climb. *Ishvara* "climbed" you. So the wrong reasons were the right reasons because it led you to know the truth. Knowing what you know is good enough. The rest is up to *Ishvara*. Take it easy.

**Jason:** Of course I can sit quietly and watch, waiting for some unsuspecting person to get fed up and snap them up into non-duality (so to speak) like a bull frog snatching a fly, but it doesn't feel like a bold stance in the self as the self.

It feels like a cheap replacement.

**Ramji:** So you fancy yourself as some sort of spiritual warrior? That's all a tad dramatic I'd say. If you want to do battle with other people's ignorance, you're into a long, hard slog. See how difficult it is to confront you own.

**Jason:** Of course I could just go out on a limb and boldly state from my newly ascended mountaintop, "Hey, assholes!! God is not way over there somewhere." But I could likely get shot or worse end up with people trying to put me on a pedestal.

**Ramji:** Look at what shooting off his mouth got for Jesus. Take care of your stuff and leave the rest to *Isvara*, Jason. When the world needs a savior it will give you a call.