

A Hard Sell

Ram (James Swartz)

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Mike: Thanks for *Vivekachoodamani*.

I haven't an inquiry but simply wanted to write to express thanks for the most excellent publication, *The Crown Jewel of Discrimination*. Truly, it has been a wonderful and precious find that arrived (as it usually does) at the right moment. Being new to Vedanta but already on a long journey that took me through the teachings of American Transcendentalism, Buddhism and most recently, Neo-Advaita, I didn't know what to expect.

Prior to reading Edwin's book, I had been wrestling indirectly with many of the teachings presented in the *Vivekachudamani*. Reading it along with Edwin's comments was, as the title suggests, the real "crown jewel of discrimination" for me – that is, the book to crown all books and all teachings (and I've read and listened to a lot!). I count myself fortunate to understand mostly all of Edwin's comments and will continue to use them as frequent reminders of the self.

I also wanted to thank James for going out of his way to address a Western audience and speak truth to ignorance. His writing in particular is imbued with clarity and intelligence. As he said in one of his talks, "Vedanta is a tough sell," and in my opinion, made even tougher by the fact that most people aren't able to see Vedanta's value until towards the end of a very long spiritual journey.

James: I'm so happy that *Vivekachoodamani* rings your bell, Mike. If you are prepared – which obviously you are – it is all you need for *moksa*. You make a tremendously important point when you say most people aren't able to see Vedanta's value until towards the end of a very long spiritual journey. Most get lost along the way believing enlightenment myths and associating with unqualified teachers. But if your desire for freedom is genuine you will persevere, and *Isvara* will bring you to Vedanta or bring Vedanta to you, as the case may be.

You didn't ask for a teaching, but I will gently suggest a small alteration to this sentence, "I count myself fortunate to understand mostly all of Edwin's comments and will continue to use them as frequent reminders of the self." It should read, "I count myself fortunate to understand mostly all of Edwin's comments and will continue to use them as frequent reminders that I am the self." Liberation is converting indirect knowledge – "of the self" – into direct knowledge, "I am the self." When you can say that with confidence, you are the jewel in the crown.

~ Much love, James