

A Leading Error

Ram (James Swartz)

2013-01-28

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/132>

Andrew: Hi, James. “Epiphany *wallas*”! What a fantastic phrase. ☺

James: Yes, it is good, even if I don’t mind saying so myself. It just came to me as I was writing you. God is great!

Andrew: I didn’t know that Jung had an opportunity to meet Ramana. Oh well, almost a “meeting with remarkable men.”*

As we discussed lately, the Vedantic view is that a *samadhi* experience, while interesting, is not mandatory for enlightenment. How do you handle *yogic*, experiential types who are really married to the idea of “getting *samadhi*”? Reason I ask is this is because on Tuesday evening our Theosophical group (of which I am secretary) had a guest speaker in. He’s doing a tour of various Theosophical Society centres around the country and promoting his new book. Anyway, in talking about his book he got onto Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* and I.K. Taimni’s commentary on same [*The Science of Yoga*]. The punchline of the talk was that spiritual growth was dependent on meditating oneself into *samadhi*. For added measure, he was also a big Eckhart Tolle fan.

[*Editor’s note: Probably a reference to Georges Gurdjieff’s *Meetings with Remarkable Men*.]

James: We don’t argue with them. They are not actually qualified for *moksa* but we encourage them to practice meditation, although it doesn’t get them anything but a bit of stress relief and a – hopefully, *sattvic* lifestyle – although most of them are more or less terminally *rajasic* doers. Vedanta encourages *yoga* for purification of the mind and as preparation for self-inquiry. It also can lead to *moksa*. We take it as a “leading error.” It leads the seeker in the direction of the self, and if they stumble around in the *samadhi* states long enough and get properly frustrated trying to achieve *samadhi* to make it permanent – ha, ha – then their dim-bulb intellects sometimes start to question what they are doing and they become open to the logic I present in Chapter II of my book. You are wise to keep your mouth shut. As the *Bhagavad Gita* says, “Let not the wise unsettle the minds of the ignorant.” We love them – the poor dumb fucks – and let them persist. Most of them have a religious mentality, which is not always conducive to inquiry. ☺

Andrew: From my recent studies, our discussion and a very useful MP3 from AVG specifically on this subject, I am now at odds with just about everyone I’ve ever met (or will meet) who has done any sort of meditation. It was the Jung Society all over again... LOL... so I keep my mouth shut because I don’t want to be disrespectful to our guest nor come across as a contrary a**hole. While I can keep the Vedantic view straight in my own mind, I do not believe I could as yet make a solid exposition of it for other people. That’s aside from the already uphill battle one faces when dealing with the fact that lots of people are into *yoga*, the *Yoga Sutras* and that I.K. Taimni’s work is highly thought of within the Theosophical Society.

James: The logic is all there in the second chapter of my book. There is a short book that presents the whole argument against the experiential view at my website – see the shop – for five dollars called *Knowledge and Experience*. It is a collection of *satsangs* on this topic. We are about to put out a series of teachings I just did on *Panchadasa* here in India earlier this month that is pure Vedanta but *yoga*-friendly. In it the “leading error” idea is explained. Keep an eye out for it. It should be up in the shop in a week or two.

Andrew: Obviously, devoting one’s life to mastering *yoga* and meditation is no small achievement, and it would be churlish and inaccurate to suggest that it was a waste of time. It’s got to be working well for someone, somewhere, right? Is this something that can be reconciled?

James: It works as a lifestyle. It is fine. It doesn’t work for *moksa* because the *yogic* idea is that *yoga* is freedom for the doer when instead it is freedom from the doer.

Andrew: I get why “experience is dumb,” why *samadhi* is just another experience (albeit unusual) and why it won’t do anything to address the fundamental notion of “I am small/limited” if the person concerned hasn’t rooted that out. I think I can even see why so many (self included) could get sucked into “experiential” spirituality even when evidence for it doing any good was thin on the ground. What to do?

James: Everyone is experience-oriented. Chasing experience is not optional until you have had enough of it to realize that it does not set you free. When that happens you start to think – or get depressed and go on meds – and then you are open to inquiry.

Andrew: As always, your advice is greatly appreciated.

~ Best wishes, Andrew

James: I hope this is helpful. Take it easy, Andrew.