

# A Leading Error

Ram (James Swartz)

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**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.