

Am I a Nutty *Guru* or What?

Ram (James Swartz)

2010-05-25

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/1809>

Cecelia: Dear James Swartz, I should like to order the whole set of videos about Vedanta that you so generously offer. I think I have some basis for the quest into Vedanta, as I have studied Indian philosophies, especially Ramana Maharshi, since 1986, and stayed in an *ashram* with a bunch of other spiritually-inquisitive minds who were an intellectual delight and an emotional support when things got tough.

But after I have come to know your very fine DVDs from the *StillnessSpeaks.com* website and your home page, I have realized how lopsided and intellectually unclear my knowledge about Vedanta is. Dear James, I am a shy person, so it really takes lot of courage to write to you and ask you questions about Advaita Vedanta, although I get the impression that you are a warm and supportive person.

I have downloaded your autobiography. Your life has certainly not been boring! What I found most exciting was your description of what *nirvikalpa samadhi* is like. You are a fortunate person to have had that state of consciousness! I don't even dream of attaining it till some far-off incarnation. What are the prerequisites for getting even a short glimpse of *nirvikalpa samadhi*? Was yours the result of *guru* grace?

Have *mantras* any function in Vedanta? My first *guru*, Swami Satyananda Sarasvati, a disciple of Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, gave to me a *mantra* in 1984. Later he made me a lay monk. He was a mixed bag for a *guru*. As a teacher he was brilliant, knew very much and expounded it clearly. As to ethics, he was lacking. I saw him the last time in 1996 when he told me to find somebody else from whom to get advice.

Now to the question: should I continue repeating this *mantra* or not? Does it interfere with self-inquiry? By chanting it will I acquire his flawed ethics?

After the arrival of your DVDs I have experienced moments of tremendous peace. All is well. There is no reason to criticize myself or anybody else, or worry about the future or regret the past. When this peace falls upon me, I do not want to move, fearing the feeling will be lost. If only I would get it more often!

Then I would like to ask you something embarrassing. Sometime after I had ordered the *Self-Inquiry* DVDs, while I was sitting in my living room, quite out of the blue I felt that I love you tenderly. Well, I really have not met you personally – so why these feelings?? That would suit a teenager. In my teens I fell in love with Lord Byron, a very handsome man. Later I loved Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, Emperor Augustus' right hand man and best friend. He was also handsome. There was a statue of him in the university, where I went to admire him.

Well, back to love. Does this feeling tell me that we have met in some previous life? Or is that kind of conclusion just sentimental nonsense?

James: I'm glad you overcame your shyness. I don't bite. I love to discuss non-duality with

people and you have some interesting questions. Give me two or three days to reply. I just arrived in England and am experiencing a bit of jet lag, and my host has some events planned this weekend. But rest assured, I will reply soon.

Cecelia: Dear James, what you wrote about non-duality thrilled my heart when I read it for the first time. I noticed how attached I was to my personality though I have long been convinced that everything is consciousness. Ideas and feelings do not always meet! I also realized again how true is the last impurity in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*: hatred. Much to be cleaned in the "spiritual washing machine"!

I have realized that you are a bit contradictory in how you write about the *vasanas*, *samskaras* and *karma*. You say "If you do not want to come back again to the earth, you must cancel the doer with self-knowledge, which closes your *karmic* account." Where have I, or anybody else for that matter, acquired a personal *karmic* account if we stay within the boundaries of non-duality??

James: I am glad that you noticed an apparent contradiction. Let me explain it. There is no *karma*, etc. if you see yourself as awareness, the self. But if you take yourself to be Cecelia, a limited individual, then you need to cancel the doer with self-knowledge assuming you want freedom. Vedanta is not an intellectual teaching. It is not striving to be intellectually "consistent" although when you understand the complete teaching you see that it resolves all apparent inconsistencies. Anyway, it accepts the fact that ignorance exists and that everyone who is caught up in it cannot just throw it away at will. So it provisionally accepts you as a doer and suggests that you take up certain subtle *yogas* to prepare your mind for the understanding that you are unborn, that you are not a doer.

Cecelia: Yesterday I watched your DVD about the self. There you taught that we have our private *karmas*, *vasanas* and incarnations. Are these parallel explanations – a more austere one and a more lenient one? From a logical and philosophical point of view, the first mentioned is more believable. (Dennis Waite seems to accept it too.) But very few will opt for it, I think. As a psychotherapist I have some experience about how easily people choose the comfortable and easy instead of the true.

James: Yes, these are provisional explanations, as I said above. Until things make sense on a personal level, a person will not accept the non-personal explanation. So we tell them about the *vasanas* and how they control your life and then we introduce the fact that the *vasanas* actually do not belong to the individual at all. They belong to God, awareness operating *maya*. The purpose of this teaching is to get the person to stop taking responsibility for them, to stop identifying with them. If they are given and I accept them as "mine" out of ignorance, I can dis-identify because they belong to the world, not to me, the self.

Cecelia: Then to the *mantras*. What does *pragjanam brahma* mean?

James: "Consciousness is limitless" or "*brahman* is consciousness." If you think *brahman* is the self and you are seeking it, you need to know that the self is limitless, meaning not a person. And

what is it's nature? Consciousness.

Cecelia: My personal *mantra* is *Om Ram*. I have used it in my morning practice after having chanted some Sanskrit *mantras*, like *Gayatri* or *asato ma sat gamaya*, etc. Swami Satyananda told us that *japa* was a way to keep contact with him and his transmission. Actually, its effects are nil for me. The real benefactor is meditation. I meditate eyes-closed concentrating on the brow *chakra*. Would you suggest something else?

James: That whole business about the *mantra* keeping you in touch with the *guru* is a clever gurugic manipulation to keep the devotees devoted and the *guru's* pockets lined with gold. They associate the *mantra* with the *guru* rather than with their own self. *Om* means "the self" and *Ram* means "the one who revels in the hearts of all," aka "the self." In the spiritual world I am known as Ram.

Cecelia: What are the effects of this practice?

James: I cannot suggest something until I understand what this practice does for you. Does it put you in contact with the self?

Cecelia: The love business is still going strong, but it is more mental and less emotional. It is *bhakti*, devotion; you are right. You are for me the symbol for Truth, Wisdom and Love. I have longed for an aeon to get in contact with a person like you, fearing I will never again meet anybody to guide me spiritually.

James: *Bhakti* is *jnanam*, knowledge. This knowledge will have an emotional impact depending on the purity of your mind. It has an impact because emotions start their life as thoughts. If you think you are a wreck, you will be angry and/or depressed. If you know that you are the self, you will feel bliss, peace and love.

Cecelia: Experiences of peace also continues. I cannot cling to them as they come and go whenever they will. But I want to tell the last one. A peace overwhelmed me suddenly and I felt a dispassion I have not experienced earlier. How easy, how calm life would become, if I would attain dispassion for keeps! But I was also frightened by it. It was somehow uncanny, an experience from a different world.

James: The definition of dispassion is "indifference to the fruits of one's actions." You will not be indifferent as long as you think the world has something to offer. You will only believe it has something to offer when you think you are incomplete. So you gain dispassion by contemplating on the meaning of the *mantra* "*Aham Purna*." I am fullness. I am whole. Nothing is missing. There is no need to chant it. Just chanting is mindlessly hoping for something to happen is useless. This kind of *mantra* is meant to wake you up to the reality of your existence. Expose your mind to it, let it cook. See the truth in it. You will get very dispassionate.

Your attitude toward experience is correct: they come and go.

Cecelia: Dear Ram, I want to turn the tables and not be so self-centered. How are you, Ram? What is your everyday life like? On your way to Tiruvannamalai? What is your teaching going to be?

Ram: I am fine. I am always fine. Even bad days are good days. I am Ram, not a person who has realized Ram. But since this may be a bit too much for you to swallow, I will pretend that I am a person and speak as if I were. I know how to do that because for a long time I thought I was a person and I learned how to be one. It is hard to forget that you are a person but I managed it after a lot of work. I get up and brush my teeth. Then I boot up my computer and check my email. I answer the emails promptly. Sometimes people see that I am online and we have a chat. Last night I had a long chat with an Indian woman in Canada who has been much affected by Vedanta, the videos, the website, etc. This morning I had a long chat with a young Indian man in Chennai who has a big spiritual *vasana* and easily goes into *samadhi* without trying. I joke a lot, tease people, make them laugh. And I help them to get their understanding of who they are correct if they ask. If not, I just joke around. I am not a save-the-world fanatic. For me the world is just fine as it is. At noon I eat lunch. After lunch I do whatever I want to do. It does not matter. I have no schedule or any duties. I don't have a house or an apartment and very little money so I take walks, nap, waste time in many ways. I am very creative at wasting time. I always enjoy myself and the world. I like my mind. It is very funny and works very nicely. If it gets out of line I sit it down and have a nice talk and I set it straight. It always says, "Yes, sir," and behaves. Now it is properly trained like an old dog and it does not give me trouble. In the evening I have a meal. Afterwards I work on my writing if I have a project going or I chat with friends or watch movies. I don't have any fixed schedule so a day can be anything. For some time I have been out in nature camping, just knocking about here and there, nothing special. Now I am visiting friends in England. I often stay up late chatting on the internet with Vedanta people. I am going to Tiruvannamalai on December 8. My *satsangs* are traditional Vedanta. I take a text and unfold the verses, then we discuss it. It works. People benefit from them.

Cecelia: There has been a chaos in my mind lately, but today I woke up feeling calm and rested. Today, when I think of you, I feel peace – neither doubts nor a too-emotional sort of love. Yet the love stays.

Ram: That is good. If you think of me, you attain me because I am your self. I am always present. I am peace.

Cecelia: You asked me what I am aiming at with my spiritual work. I have thought that by meditating the mind calms down and step by step I will meditate deeper and deeper hoping to enter *savikalpa samadhi* and, if I am really lucky, *nirvikalpa samadhi*. I have thought that by attaining *nirvikalpa samadhi* one becomes enlightened.

Ram: Please read the following. It may be difficult for you to digest. It deals with this topic:

Ram: Ramana's teaching is not Ramana's teaching. It is called *vichara*, inquiry, and goes back several thousand years. The purpose of inquiry is knowledge, not the physical removal of the mind. If he had been teaching *yoga* as a means of liberation, he would not have encouraged inquiry because *yoga* is committed to the experience of *samadhi*, not understanding that one is the self.

Premananda: This is interesting. I never heard it stated this way before. But I thought the goal was *sahaja samadhi*.

James: Contrary to conventional wisdom, the *samadhis* are not the final goal. *Sama* means "equal" and "*dhi*" is a contracted form of *buddhi*, intellect. So it means a mind that values everything equally. *Sahaja* means "continuous and natural," so it is a mind that has continuous non-dual vision. Perhaps you can gain this kind of mind by the long and difficult practice of *astanga yoga*. I don't know. But why go to all this trouble, when you actually have this *samadhi* naturally all the time, without doing a lick of work.

Premananda: Oh, how is that?

James: As the self. Self-realization is not continuous because the self is out of time, but it is natural to the self. It is your nature. Anyway, no *samadhi* is equivalent to enlightenment, because *samadhis* are only states of mind or no-mind, no-mind being a state of mind. *Samadhi* helps purify the mind by burning subconscious tendencies and is a great aid to inquiry, but if you remove the mind, how will you make an inquiry? *Who* will make an inquiry? You make an inquiry with the mind for the mind, so it can shed its ignorance and no longer trouble you. The mind is a very useful God-given instrument. Would God have given us a mind if He had intended for it be destroyed? And, in fact, *yoga* isn't about killing the mind either, because how will you experience a *samadhi* if you don't have a mind? The mind is the instrument of experience. If you argue that you are aiming at *nirvikalpa samadhi* where there is no mind, fine. Unfortunately, a fly landing on your nose can bring you out of *nirvikalpa samadhi*, not that there is anyone there to come out of it. And when the you who wasn't there does come back, as I just mentioned, you are just as self-ignorant as you were before. Why? Because you were not there in the *samadhi* to understand that the *samadhi* is you. If you are the *samadhi*, you will have it all the time, because you have *you* all the time. Therefore there will be no anxiety about making it continuous or permanent.

Premananda: Okay. You're saying that *samadhi* is not the goal, that it is just the means?

James: Yes. Not "the" means, "a" means. There are many other ways to purify the mind. Misunderstanding this teaching is perhaps responsible for more despair, confusion and downright frustration for seekers than any other. It is commonly believed that all the *vasanas* need to be physically eradicated for enlightenment to happen. And many people believe that Ramana had achieved that extraordinary state. It may be extraordinary, but it is not enlightenment. If you study Ramana's life, you will see that by and large he was a very regular guy, head in the clouds, feet firmly planted on the earth. He walked, talked, cooked, read and

listened to the radio. I love the story of him returning to the *ashram* at 1:00 in the afternoon, to see a sign saying the *ashram* was closed from noon until 2:00 pm. What did he do? He sat down outside and waited for it to open. If he did not have a mind, who or what was doing all these things?

No *vasanas* means no mind, because the *vasanas* are the cause of the mind. How did he go about the business of life? So I think we need to look at the word “removal” in a different way. Ramana was called a *jnani*, a knower of the self, because he had removed the idea of himself as a doer – it is called *sarva karma sannyasa* – which happens when you realize you are the self. Or you realize you are the self when you realize you are not the doer.

“Not the doer” means the self. It doesn’t mean that the ego becomes a non-doer. The ego is always a doer. As the self, he understood that while the few non-binding *vasanas* he had left were dependent on him, he was not dependent on them.

How can a thought or a feeling affect the self? For a person who thinks he or she is the doer, allowing the *vasanas* to express or not is not an option. Actions happen uncontrollably, because the ego is pressurized to act in a certain way by the *vasanas*. They happen without the will of an enlightened person too, but acting on them is entirely elective. So the removal that Ramana talks about is only in terms of understanding. He often uses another metaphor which he borrowed from Vedanta: the snake and the rope. In the twilight, a weary, thirsty traveler mistook the well rope attached to a bucket for a snake and recoiled in fear. When he got his bearings and his fear subsided, he realized that the snake was actually only the rope. There was no reason to take a stick and beat the snake to death, which is equivalent to trying to destroy the mind, because the snake was only a misperception. When he calmed down and regained his wits, he inquired into the snake and realized that it was just a rope. And in that realization the snake was removed.

Cecelia: Well, as I have meditated for decades, my hope has faded.

Ram: It is good the hope has faded. Now you are prepared for Vedanta. I get mostly ex-meditators.

Cecelia: Definitely meditation calms the mind, so I persevere at practicing it in the morning. Maybe I have overestimated my qualification for any kind of *samadhi*.

Ram: Yes. You would have made much faster progress with *karma yoga*. You would not have a mind to calm if you understood *karma yoga*.

Cecelia: Getting mail from my former *guru*, telling how he has now a *tantric* dog, Bhairavi, to whom he serves whisky and meat and tells us, the former devotees, that a dog is not far from God, just turn the name “dog” upside down and it becomes “god.”

Ram: I am sorry to say it, but this is not a proper *guru*, as you know. And he traffics in stale bad jokes too. If he knew what God was, he would not talk that way.

Cecelia: Sticking to a vegetarian diet and taking no alcohol are a part of my practice. So is trying to be as honest as possible and helping people in need. That latest case is problematic, as I may end up overworked.

Ram: What is the motivation for this helping? What do you get out of it? If you get burned out, it sounds like there is some ego invested in it. Are you well-paid for it?

Cecelia: I have twice really become burnt-out.

Ram: Do-gooders often feel compelled to save the world because they think there is something wrong with it. But there is nothing wrong with it. It is all *Isvara*, giving measured doses of joy and sorrow to purify the mind.

Cecelia: Now, thinking about you while writing an email to you makes my mind so calm that it is difficult for me to form words; the thoughts simply disappear. I just want to stay in that calmness.

Ram: Yes. I am the eater of thoughts.

Cecelia: I am practicing *Aham Purna* (I am Fullness).

Ram: Contemplate the meaning. Let it work on you. It should destroy the doer. *Yoga* is for doers. Vedanta is for people qualified for *moksa*.

Cecelia: Hoping you are staying well and pleased with your life!

Ram: Thank you for the good wishes. My life is wonderful. If I tried to explain it, you would not believe it. It is too good to be true.

Cecelia: How much can you, as a spiritual person, be content with life and the world?

Ram: First, I am not spiritual. And as I said above, I am not a person. It is a waste of time to concern oneself with the world because it cannot be other than what it is. You should only worry about something that you have control over. God (*Isvara*) controls the world. There is a good reason for everything, both the good and the bad. If you want to change the world, remove your own suffering since it is contributing to the aggregate of suffering. You have control over how you see the world, that is all. So expose your mind to non-duality and the world will appear as only a dream.

A dream is not real. This is why you cannot fix it. It is not anything objective that you can tinker

with and improve. There is a lesson in the world and either you learn that lesson or you do not. If you are content with yourself, you are content with the world. The world has nothing to do with you. It is not making a statement about you in any way. When it is good, it does not mean that you are doing something right. When it is bad, it does not mean that you are doing something wrong. It is just something to be figured out, not something to be changed. Forgive me if I am a bit stern with you, but it seems you have some beliefs that need to be looked at more closely if you are going to become peaceful.

Cecelia: Dear Ram, falling in love with you caused my subconscious to react with fright and alarm. The origin of the panic I felt originates from my experiences in two marriages which ended in catastrophe. By the way, my spiritual life and interests began when I could not bear the life at home.

Ram: Nothing like a bit of suffering to spiritualize a life.

Cecelia: I read Krishnamurti's *The First and Last Freedom* in a nearby park. At this time I also found out that I could enter to a different state of mind (although I did know the name for it) by sitting between two loudspeakers playing *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band*.

Ram: Ah yes, the good old days when a bit of psychedelic music could change your state of mind.

Cecelia: After half a year of life as a divorced person I had a nervous breakdown, and understood that I needed psychotherapy. This was a beginning of a six-year-long therapy and also the beginning of my career as a psychotherapist. The second marriage was with a psychiatrist whom I met during my studies. He looked quite exotic in all those Indian shirts, studying Sanskrit and mystics like Evelyn Underhill and Paramahansa Yogananda. He had just joined the Communist party from which he hoped to get the solace he did not get from his Indian studies. What I did not know was that he changed both his working places as well as wives almost yearly. When I returned next summer from Switzerland, where I had been listening to Krishnamurti, he had found an author that was also a fervent Communist. End of story.

Ram: As we say, not without irony, in the States, "You sure know how to pick them," Cecelia. Seriously though, what do we know when we are young?

Cecelia: At this point I decided subconsciously never to trust men. Well, I can trust them in every other way, but not to live with them. I could be their friend, but that's that. I settled to making myself a career woman. I had also realized in my own psychotherapy how I repeated in my marriages some maladaptive patterns from my own dysfunctional family.

So now you can understand my negative reaction to some of your comments about love. Of course, you are in no way infringing on my freedom! It was a projection, as you said. I also exaggerated some themes in your letter, so they "supported" my conclusions that men are bad. I

will return to this later. Nice to hear you want to protect your freedom. So do I. I want to make my love towards you unconditional. So feel free to be whatever you are.

Ram: Unconditional love means that it has nothing to do with me. You love no matter what. It is the love that is important, not the love object. Conditional love means that I am obligated to behave in a certain way, i.e. I am not permitted to break the love bubble with the truth, for example. So to keep the other's love I need to be very careful. This kind of relationship is like war, actually. It is like walking in a mine field; you never know when you are going to step on a mine. I did not consciously intend to upset you. I am just very non-attached, so what to me is just a normal question or a dispassionate statement from the self's point of view may seem like a criticism to someone who is identified with his or her feelings.

As I understand it, psychotherapy is basically about learning what a projection is and owning it as a projection. The kind of love you have for me is very interesting if you think about it because it is really self-love. I don't mean that it is selfish love. (Selfish is a bad word and should be banned; all actions are self-"ish," that is, they are for the sake of the self and there is only one self, so there are no "others" to love). In any case, in this example I don't have any "real" existence for you, apart from some words and some images created out of pixels on a DVD. The words created an idea in your mind – one that fits with your spiritual *vasana* – and you fell in love with it. If you think about it further, your mind is nothing but your awareness, your consciousness. And if you think even further, your consciousness is not separate from you. So the "Ram" in your mind/heart (the feelings are just a reaction to the idea of love; they are not independent of it) is actually you. You are just loving yourself, but because of *maya*, you think that it is someone else.

Cecelia: One theme I would like to discuss with you more thoroughly is reincarnation.

Ram: It is not a topic that interests me, actually. But here is my view. If you think you are Cecelia, a person, then reincarnation is a reality for you. In fact, Cecelia, does not reincarnate, although it seems as if she does. It is actually the causal and subtle body (which are the same in everyone) that reincarnate. When the *vasanas* re-sprout at a different time and in a new environment; a new "person" emerges. The new person is different from the old one because the personality is just a reaction of the subtle body to the new environment. There is a sense of continuity because the *vasanas* are the same. In fact, it is the *vasanas* that bring about rebirth. If I may be so bold as to say so, I think your lack of understanding of the actual mechanism and the nature of the *vasanas* permits you to use the idea of reincarnation incorrectly. By this I mean that first of all the *vasanas* are also not personal. Yet everyone assumes that they belong them. In fact, they are just *Isvara*. *Isvara* is consciousness in conjunction with *maya* operating the macrocosmic mind. In other words, you are not the actual author of even one of the unconscious things that you take to be "yours." Everything that seems to belong to you came from the outside, i.e from the macrocosmic mind through Mom and Pop, the society, etc.

When you think that *Isvara's* stuff is actually your stuff and that it came from a specific cause, i.e. your family, and you try to resolve it; you end up with a big problem because you cannot "undo" the past? You can only undo it by forgiving yourself for being ignorant. But what kind of forgiveness is that? Ignorance is not a conscious act. It is totally impersonal and something that everyone who is born here is subject to. The way you undo the past is by realizing what

ignorance is and understanding that, considering the conditions at the time when you did innocently swallow the beliefs and opinions that became your likes and dislikes, there is no way you can be responsible for it. This depersonalizes your suffering. What a relief it is! And it is a great aid to self-inquiry because you can now get on with actually keeping your attention on the self, not on all the supposed things that you believe are standing in the way of it. In fact, the uncomfortable stuff that comes up from within can be welcomed because it is a sign that you are out of kilter – which will allow you to go into *yoga*, i.e. connect with the self – which is always available.

If you believe that the self is a particular experience like a *samadhi* and that you cannot access it until your *vasanas* (read: subconscious stuff) is eliminated, you are condemning yourself to endless suffering. In fact, I think this is how you see it, judging from your statements about the difficulty of attaining *samadhi*. I think that implicit in the story about “your” past life is the idea that you have something to account or atone for in this life. This is only true if you believe it is true. It is not actually true. Why? Because what happened then had nothing to do with you, i.e. the self (there is only one self, Cecelia, not a self and an ego). What happened was just *Isvara* creating, sustaining and destroying the world, so the actual problem is not the *vasanas*, it is identification with your likes and dislikes (which is how the *vasanas* work out in your conscious mind). And identification with mind stuff is caused by ignorance, nothing else. And since knowledge, not action, destroys ignorance, the way out of identification, i.e. suffering, is through understanding how *maya* works and why. And once that understanding is in place, there is *karma yoga* to help you deal with the stuff in such a way that the *vasanas* are burned out. Only when the *vasanas* are excessively *tamasic* and *rajasic* and there is strong identification with them do they stand in the way of self-realization because the self is always present.

I think you should know that if you want me to teach you, it will probably change the way you see psychotherapy. And you should know that Vedanta is not just another intellectual, philosophical, religious or psychological system. It is the science of existence. In other words, it is how things actually are, not how human beings think they are. You may be too attached to your views to give it a go, and that would be understandable because you have invested so much in it. Jung, for example, said he did not visit Ramana Maharshi when he was in India because he had invested too much in his psychological views to change them at his age. In any case, anything is okay with me. I am not longing to enlighten you or fall in love with you or anything else. I do like you, however, and I like to communicate with intelligent people with spiritual inclinations. I very much like the tone of this letter and I appreciate the fact that you can see that you were projecting.

Cecelia: I have not been able yet to watch all your DVDs because all of them overwhelm me both intellectually and emotionally. Yesterday I watched *The Three States* with a spiritual friend who could not stop praising the DVDs and your lucid style. I hope you are back to your “*kutir*” in Tiruvannamalai, though this may be too early. I should like to hear more about your cottage and the mountain Arunachala. You have certainly visited Ramana Maharshi’s *ashram* many times. I have subscribed to two monthly publications pertaining to what is going on in the *ashram* and also reminiscences of Ramana Maharshi. What I think is sad about the *ashram*, is that it has become a very typical Indian *ashram* and has not continued to be the somewhat ascetic version, what it was while Ramana Maharshi lived. Ramana Maharshi is my most beloved Indian saint. What is the atmosphere there? Please, tell me your impressions.

Ram: Actually, I did not come here for the Ramanashram. I only went there twice last year. It is not a proper *ashram* any more. It is a pilgrimage center, overrun with people. Hundreds, sometimes thousands, come and go every day. They want *darshan* of Ramana's *samadhi* and then they leave. It is so bad that there is a big war between the *ashram* and the regular meditators over a cell phone jammer that the meditators claim makes meditation impossible. It is a circus. Still, there are moments when it is quite nice, *parayana* chanting, special festivals, etc.

Cecelia: I have read page after page of how that mountain is an aid to self-realization. Do you feel anything special while living there?

Ram: It is "special" in a certain sense. You can say it is the mountain, but I think it is the idea that the mountain represents that attracts people. I think the *bhakti* of the people make the mountain what it is, not the other way around. What can a mountain do? It is just the five elements. Every mountain is the self but the self is not a mountain.

Cecelia: I wonder a lot over my almost obsessive interest in Vedanta. When I ordered Waite's *Back to the Truth* from *Amazon.com*, I felt a strong feeling that "my Bible" is coming. When it arrived, I read it every evening long into the night. I always felt very happy while reading it. Then you bumped into my life. Waning of my interest in Vedanta is not in sight.

Isvara is a most interesting individual. Ramana Maharshi has said that *Isvara* decides which portion of a person's *karma* will sprout during his/her present lifetime. Patanjali writes that *Isvara* is a *purusha* that is not bound by the impurities and *karma*. You say the world is *Isvara's* dream. Dennis Waite is giving the world a semi-real status, so it is not completely a dream. But what is the relationship between *Isvara* and *brahman*?? I have never read a line about it.

Ram: *Isvara* is *brahman* associated with *maya*. It is the macrocosmic causal body, the cause of everything, assuming the existence of the universe. All those statements above are true about *Isvara*. But in the end it is just another apparent entity. The self, *brahman* or consciousness, is beyond *Isvara* and *jiva*. It lends consciousness to both *jiva* and *Isvara* so they can play their parts in *maya*, one to create, sustain and destroy the forms and the other to pretend it is a human being. This is why you are greater than *Isvara*.

Cecelia: I am wondering at some inconsistencies in the way you use the term "self." When you say "I am love," I cannot quite understand what you mean. When all that is, is the self, yes, we are, all of us, love. Why make it an attribute of you particularly?

Ram: Love is not an attribute. It is the nature of the self. If I say I am love, it is just a statement of fact, of identity. If I say that I "have" love, love becomes an attribute. Love is just another word for the self. It indicates that the self is non-dual, that it is a partless whole. It is not a feeling although it manifests as a feeling in the mind/heart.

Cecelia: More suspect is that you say, "I am your self." How can that be? I am in *brahman*, so are

you, as well as seven-billion other human beings.

Ram: If you see me as your self, then what is the *bhakti* you have for me? It is only self-love. It has nothing to do with the form, Ram. I say I am love so you will not think I am somebody other than you, someone who can potentially cause you problems. In a recent letter you said you were falling in love with me. I took this to mean that you thought I was someone other than you. I say I am your self. *Brahman* is the self of everything. Self means “essence.” What is your essence? *Sat chit ananda*. What you say is definitely true, but the whole question is what does that mean in terms of how you live day-to-day, moment-to-moment? The proof of this knowledge, like the proverbial pudding, is in the eating. Is your mind peaceful? Do you remain as the self when problems arise? Etc.

There is one big problem with your statement from the Vedantic point of view. You say “I am in *brahman*.” But you are not in *brahman*. You are *brahman*, meaning “consciousness.”

Your question “How can I be your self?” means that you believe that you are a *jiva*, an individual. I can make that statement because I am not an individual, as I mentioned at the beginning of our communications. You evidently did not take that statement seriously, did not understand what it meant or you forgot who I am.

There are apparent contradictions in my speech, Cecelia. It is not that I am unconscious of the level on which I am communicating. Sometimes I speak as if I was only a human being because the person to whom I am speaking does not understand that I am the self. It would not help them to speak this way. But they can understand love of God. Then I can help them build a bridge out of this duality into the non-dual vision. I am not like a solid person. I can be whatever I need to be to help people understand. I have no attachment to being the self or to being a person or to being anything at all.

Cecelia: When I heard you speaking about non-dual love, it felt fantastic. Now I have a name for those blissful states that overwhelm me from time to time. A short description of them: first I feel that I love something intensely, but what or whom? Then I see how the world is immensely beautiful, beyond any description, and all people look holy. When I am in that state during work, I notice that all my patients hang onto me and want to start therapy with me. But, of course, I cannot transmit that non-dual love to anybody, so it ends in a disappointment for them.

Ram: This is very interesting. Thank you for sharing it with me. The problem here is the idea that you can transmit non-dual love. They hang onto you because they see non-dual love in you. It transmits itself automatically. There is no ego that can control this transmission, apart from *Isvara*. They are disappointed because they have not been taught what it is and that they are it. People with psychological problems are not ready for non-duality. They have to get back to normal first. The job of psychotherapy is to return them to normal by removing their projections. Someone who does not know who they are will project their own love onto objects, as you did at first with me.

When you are “in that state,” you are in *sattva*. In fact, you are not in that state, that state is in you. Think about it.

Cecelia: By the way, will my letters end up in a *satsang*? The way you break up the letters to a dialogue between us makes me suspect it. Thank you for erasing my email address from my mails but why do it, as they are just personal mail to you?

Ram: If you don't want them to help others, it is fine. I have no shortage of letters dealing with the same issues. So far I have not had one request to remove a letter. They are all disguised to "protect" the writer. I can turn you into a black man who lives in Antarctica, etc. If you think they are personal, it shows that you have not really assimilated non-duality, but that is fine with me. I respect it. In the meantime, since you want me to teach you, I suggest that you give some thought to what "personal" means. Is there one thing that you think is yours that you actually created? Did not everything you call "yours" actually come from *Isvara*? Your body is food. It is totally dependent on *Isvara's* body. You have no idea what you are going to think or feel in the next minute. If your thoughts and feelings were "yours" then you would have control of them. But you don't. They all come from *Isvara*. They come at the will and pleasure of *Isvara*. In fact, you own nothing. As Krishna says in the *Gita*, "What use is control?" I think it would be good for you to share this communication with other people. You say you are a helping person. Why not help in this way? It is good to let others see openness to the truth, your *bhakti*, etc. It gives them faith. I encourages them to contact me. It is all for the good. It sometimes removes their doubts because everyone has the same doubts. But if you want to keep it between us, that is just fine with me. I get nothing out of it one way or the other, Cecelia. If it makes you feel unique and special, that is fine with me.

Cecelia: I just woke up and was still half-asleep when I opened my computer this morning, and found there your email. Having read it through, I was overcome by a feeling of guilt and shame about my pettiness about the emails I have sent you.

Ram: It's natural to want to protect your privacy. On the other hand, as I pointed out, what actually is "private" anyway? Plus, if you do things for the right reasons, *Bhagavan* takes care of your issues. When you associate with *mahatmas*, everything is taken care of. You do not have to worry about the small things. You need only meditate on the self or a symbol of the self and keep your mind and heart locked there, and everything moves forward as if on greased wheels. Although your self recognizes me, your ego is naturally suspicious and self protective. No blame.

Cecelia: So I wanted as soon as possible tell you that I had changed my mind on this issue. Please, put them in your virtual *satsang*; they may help somebody.

Ram: Recognizing pettiness for what it is and overcoming it shows good character.

Cecelia: Yes, I have thought a lot about what is personal. Your conclusion that there is actually nothing that I can consider "my own" seems right.

Ram: Everything we have is given to us. We did not create one thing. It is just a fact.

Cecelia: The *bhakti* I feel towards my idea of you has not stopped yet. Nor has a certain detachment which I notice daily. I am also much more peaceful.

Ram: Very good. This is a proper use of a *guru*. And you see the results. There is no downside to this path. It is completely up to you.

Cecelia: I am having one of those states you describe so funnily in the *Value of Values*, down, down and being afraid of almost everything. I have tried to combat them, but now I am asking you to say if I am on the right track or going nuts.

Ram: You are going nuts on the right track. Stop worrying about results. Watch the *karma yoga* video again. It seems you have not properly assimilated that teaching. The results of your actions are not up to you. Where is your faith in *Bhagavan*? Just do your work, whatever it is, and leave the rest to *Bhagavan*. The whole point of *karma yoga* is to remove anxiety.

Secondly, stop worrying about the state you are in. You are not in any state. The states are in you. Think about it. Take whatever state that is occurring as *Bhagavan's* grace and remain calm.

Cecelia: Why do you consider me to be qualified for Vedanta?

Ram: You said you were obsessed with it. If you are not an qualified, why are you obsessed with Vedanta? True, your dispassion (*viragya*) needs a bit of work, but it will come. Calm down. Go out to the movies. Or have a few beers at the local pub and get a good night's sleep. Neurosis does not suit you. I don't know how you can say you are helping people with psychological problems if you make up imaginary problems yourself.

Cecelia: In your last mail you said about the path to self-realization: "There is no downside to this path. It is completely up to you." But what if I miss it? What if I do something unforgivably wrong and miss my chance? I have so many flaws and weaknesses of which you don't know.

Ram: These are stupid judgmental thoughts about yourself. See them for what they are. How can you miss yourself? This is just anxiety. Whatever you do to relieve your patient's anxiety, do to relieve your own.

Cecelia: Then to what I am anxious about.

Ram: Whatever you are anxious about is not what you are anxious about. The anxiety is "free floating" to use a psychological term. Meaning that it is not about what it is about. It is just existential anxiety that comes from not knowing that you are whole and complete. You think you are a small person, a weak person, someone who does not esteem herself properly. This produces anxiety because it is not true. This anxiety is not known for what it is, so it grabs onto

various objects.

Cecelia: I am so often now in a mental state where I am very introverted, thinking and speaking and writing letters very slowly. Or I am completely absent. It is a state of mind that is peaceful and enjoyable, but I am so impractical!

Ram: My God, Cecelia, this is ridiculous! You are unhappy because you are in a peaceful and enjoyable state? Please, dear, get a grip on yourself. Why is the glass half-empty? It can just as well be half-full. This state is called *antar mukka*, the mind turned inward. Enjoy it, for God's sake, you silly twit.

Cecelia: Yesterday shopping was an ordeal. I picked up the wrong things or forgot altogether something essential. I could not describe the product I wanted to the shop assistant, etc., etc. Related to this is an inability to read anything a bit lengthy. This suits me fine, as my interest in politics, economy, ecology, etc. is waning but I have to be able to write a psychologist's opinion.

Ram: Read something you like to read. You will not have trouble concentrating. I have trouble reading boring stuff too. I don't know how you can consider yourself a psychologist if you can't see through this silly state of mind.

Cecelia: Most frightening is a certain feeling of being in or out of contact with you.

Ram: If it bothers you so much, break off the contact. When you feel good about it, reconnect. Please don't write about it. This whole letter shows it very clearly. Your mind is just neurotic.

Cecelia: My self recognizes you, but my ego is suspicious and self-protective.

Ram: So what? That is the nature of the ego. You seem to know it quite well. Let it be suspicious and protective. As Krishna says in the *Gita*, "What use is control?" It doesn't seem to be very useful for you to recognize me if it doesn't make your mind quiet. So your job is to recognize you. Where is your *bhakti*?

Cecelia: I made a mistake when I sent my last email to you. You don't have enough of information about my life to judge correctly why I was so anxious. I should have solved the anxieties on my own.

Ram: It's good you did dump them on me. It shows your tendencies. But please don't do it any more. I will just not respond. I am not a psychologist and I am not here to offer support for your "stuff." Any qualified seeker takes care of his or her own stuff. That is the sign of maturity. Putting your stuff on others is fine for children but not for adults. I have a friend who always dumps her stuff on her friends but it does not help because she is back some time later dumping the same

dumb stuff. It is not appropriate for me to try to fix you. I show you the truth and it fixes you. It's fine this time but this is not therapy.

Cecelia: What you saw rightly was that it was to some extent free-floating anxiety. Add to this a fear of what is happening to my mind when I am just blissful all the days but am not able to do my daily tasks. I have to choose between money and spirituality, and I have chosen spirituality.

Ram: There should not be a conflict. You should learn how to do your work peacefully and blissfully. It is not a good choice. Your life is your spirituality. *Karma yoga* means that your work is a worship of the self. There should not be an anxiety for the results. This choice is like Arjuna wanting to leave the battlefield and become a renunciant. It won't work. You will only worry about the money. Master *karma yoga*.

Cecelia: If you only knew how grateful I am to you! And the *bhakti*. It has not vanished anywhere. I still love you despite your contemptuous "silly twit." It did hurt me much. Do you have a problem with anger?

Ram: No, you did not make me angry. Contempt was the best I could do. But it was a gentle contempt with a bit of incredulity thrown in. I cannot understand how someone who helps others with their neuroses is herself neurotic. And if you get angry with me, I won't accept it because I have done nothing to make you angry. I have simply expressed my feelings honestly. What you do with them is up to you. Do I get angry in general? No. I get angry about once every one or two years when somebody violates *dharma* with reference to me. The last time was two years ago this month. I am not against it per se. It depends on the reason. But in general it is a useless emotion. The world is not here to make us happy.

Cecelia: Then to *antar mukka*. *Antar* is inner, but what is *mukka*? I have to learn to live more slowly.

Ram: *Mukka* means "face." It means "face turned inward." Your mind is turning inward. That is why it is slowing down and why you feel peace and *bhakti*. But you are right about your life. You have a lot of desire and want a lot of stuff, so you are rushing. Swamiji used to say, "Hasten slowly."

Cecelia: I deny being neurotic. In the beginning of your last email you said that you are not a psychologist, so you will not handle my "stuff" in the future. No problem. But the self-same person makes later in the email a diagnosis that I am a neurotic. Laymen should not make any diagnosis. My letter about my fears was written after two sleepless nights and under much stress. You ought to have been able to recognize that it was fears about my ability to proceed spiritually that it centered around. Of course, a letter like that should not be sent to anyone else except a close friend. I thought that you were a close friend but I seem to have made a mistake.

Ram: I think we have different ideas of the meaning of the word “neurotic.” I define worries and fears as neurosis. Sleepless nights and stress are signs of neurosis, in my opinion. It may not be the medical definition but that is how I see it. Secondly, I don’t think we know each other well enough to say that we are friends. We have never met in person. I was just offering you an unsentimental view of your state of mind from the point of view of Vedanta. That letter did not show any discrimination, dispassion, clarity of mind or confidence in your desire for *moksa*. The teachings of Vedanta are only helpful when the individual has a certain degree of control of their mind. What can I do if a person has this kind of agitated mind? How will you understand what scripture says if your mind is not settled? I’m sure you have other friends who are happy to hold your hand and commiserate, but I do not want that kind of relationship with you or anyone else.

Cecelia: The second problem is that you may express your honest feelings but I may not. Why not? I cannot understand this.

Ram: You are certainly expressing your honest feelings now, aren’t you? I am not keeping you from expressing your honest feelings. I just do not like those kinds of feelings. They do not help you, nor do they help me. They are just negative feelings that go nowhere. Maybe you feel that your love entitles you to share whatever you want with me, but we need certain ground rules if we are going to have a proper communication. You don’t go to a spiritual teacher to have your feelings validated and appreciated. Good fences make good neighbors. You speak of compassion, but how compassionate is it to lay that kind of “neurotic” stuff on someone you barely know?

Cecelia: “I am telling you my honest feelings and opinion about this topic, believe me; do as you want.” This kind of frankness causes a lot of pain. Polite people do not use it.

Ram: I do not quite understand what you are saying, except that I hurt your feelings. I did not intend to do so. It is a good lesson for me to see how attached you are to certain feelings. Nonetheless, I apologize. However, I ask that you compose your mind before you write. Vedanta is not about fixing you or your feelings. It is about understanding something. You have to keep in mind that I am just a voice in cyberspace. You do not know me, nor do I know you. The role I am playing is that I help people to see themselves in light of the truth of who they really are. There is nothing personal about it. For enlightenment you need to be qualified and an emotional, neurotic mind is not one of the qualifications.

Cecelia: Thank you for telling me that I have much spiritual desire and I am rushing. I try to calm down, diminish my rushing. Advaita Vedanta has one defect: it has almost no compassion. Compassion is a trait that is beautifully interwoven in Buddhism, a religion that is almost as ascetic as Vedanta.

Ram: On the contrary, Cecelia. It is totally compassionate. Buddhism is a tiny chip off the tooth of the *Vedas*. Being honest is not compassionate? Think of it as tough love. Hopefully you figured out by this that I don’t want to get involved with your feelings and I discovered that you are very sensitive. I do not yet know how I will deal with this. We will just have to see if it comes up again.

Chögyam Trungpa, who was a Buddhist, called the kind of compassion you are talking about “idiot compassion.” People have such low self-esteem these days that they have become incredibly self-protective. One of the qualifications listed in Vedanta is a masculine temperament. One way to look at it is to see the upside in everything and move forward – seize the day! I do not have a habit of telling people off. But before we even think of becoming friends you need to understand that I do not put up with excessive emotionality. It is okay to have feelings and emotions but you need to consider the context when you are expressing them. It does not help me to hear of your problems. But it is good that I see where you are at as a person so I can either make helpful suggestions or suggest that you look elsewhere.

Cecelia: Of course, I am not yet at the summit of dispassion. I have desires and so on. But I have decided to work in the spirit of *karma yoga*.

Ram: That was the point, Cecelia. I can't teach someone who is excessively emotional. Therapy is for healing emotions. Vedanta is for self-realization. I did not criticize just to criticize, Cecelia. I offered a solution: *karma yoga*. If you had this understanding and practiced it, you would not be stressed and worried. It is precisely the medicine that the *rishis* gave for stress and worry. I brought my emotions under control with *karma yoga*. You can too.

Cecelia: In the beginning I want to say please have some forbearance with those character traits in me that you do not like. I will do the same with yours. You see, if you concentrate on my weak sides my stage-fright to write to you grows and grows. That would be a shame.

James: I'm quite forbearing actually, Cecelia. There is no reason to let your fears get the best of you and make an issue out of this. Your character is fine. But when you use the idea that you are stressed and overworked to explain your emotional state, it seems ridiculous to me. Why? Because nobody but you is taking on too much work. You do not need to work so hard. You choose to do so for reasons that are only known to you. This is not a character flaw, it is just bad judgment brought on by excessive fear or desire. What is behind this?

If your *vasanas* are controlling you, how can I teach you? You need to control your *vasanas*. I am not saying not to work, only to work leisurely and carefully. Give yourself time to recreate. You do not need the money, nor are you going to save the world. Relax, sleep, take it easy. Vedanta does not work if Cecelia is the issue. Ignorance is the issue and Cecelia needs to have the kind of lifestyle that is conducive to self-knowledge. Otherwise, I have to spend all my time dealing with Cecelia's problems. I am interested in why Cecelia thinks she has problems, not in the problems per se.

Cecelia: You wondered in your last mail what I meant by “The second problem point is that you may express your feelings honestly but you do not allow me the right to do the same.” I was quoting your mail where you said “and if you get angry with me, I won't accept it because I have not done nothing to make you angry. I have simply expressed my feelings honestly.”

Ram: You cannot get angry unless you want to get angry, Cecelia. If there is anger in you, it will

be looking for an excuse to come out. When I said you were neurotic, you did not have to accept it. It was up to you. If you were not neurotic, it would not bother you to hear from a veritable stranger that he thought you were neurotic. Yes, we do want to be thought highly of by others, usually because we do not esteem ourselves properly, but a self-confident person is not bothered by the opinions of others. What I am telling you is that your petty worries and fears are not appropriate topics for a *satsang*. We get nowhere by taking them seriously. You can have them if you like, but keep them to yourself or share them with your therapist – if you have one – or your friends.

Cecelia: Of course, I accept your apology. Do not make my emotionality and “neurosis” (according to your definition) a big drama! It was just a day when my fears took over. That is not often. When asking for feedback about what I am like, people generally say that I am so calm and dependable. When I ask them about my emotionality they almost all of them wonder what I am talking about or say that they don’t see it. I just wonder at how well I hide my emotions.

Ram: Okay, I accept it. But you need to understand that a healthy person like me is continually bombarded with silly emotional stuff by neurotic people. I did my share of psychological work, Cecelia. I am good at it, but I got fed up with it years ago. You get a person reasonably normal after years of hard work and they still have the mentality of a child. “Mommy, Mommy, I don’t feel good! Please listen to me whine and complain about how hard my life is.” I’m an adult, Cecelia. If I had any issues I would keep them to myself. It is good to keep your emotions to yourself. The whole point of the *Qualifications* DVD is about maturity. If I had shown any kind of weakness around my *guru*, he would have asked me to leave. *Moksa* is for mature adults who have their minds reasonably well-controlled. They are looking for a spiritual solution, not a psychological solution.

Cecelia: And then to my sense of entitlement. I don’t think I am entitled to anything special because I happen to love you. I am just happy about the love, because it seems to act as an express train to self-realization. And it is much nicer for me and everybody around me to think about you and love you than to worry about the climate change or next year’s taxes.

Ram: Okay, I accept it. At this stage I do not know you very well, so I have to guess. Sometimes my suspicions are not correct. I am not attached to them. I like being wrong. Still, love works best when the boundaries between people are respected. I was just letting you know what irritates me and why.

Cecelia: Then I do understand that you as my *guru* have the right to express unsentimental opinions in order to let me see such sides of me I may not want to see. And I quite agree with you also to keep the discussion on spiritual topics. Just keep in mind that I am not one of the laid-back Americans, but one of those complicated Europeans all tied up in knots.

Ram: Okay.

Cecelia: Then to my theme. Today morning when I woke up, I was saying to myself in my mind “I am nobody” several times. I started to wonder why this? Being nobody felt good. Then I wondered why it felt good and not frightening as one would suppose. Then as I rose up, my ordinary personality took over.

This evening I listened to your *Value of Values*. I slowly entered the *antar mukha* state. I listened to what you told in the end about what it feels like to be self-realized. “You have no personality” felt so right. I quite understood (to some extent) what it is: actually, that having no personality/being nobody feeling is going on now. I feel empty as one of those Matuska dolls the Russians produce. But never mind, it feels fine. I am not going insane.

Ram: Good. Great! There is no person, actually, as you can see. So you are not neurotic. At least not right now.

Cecelia: I am so happy about having met you last summer! Yes, yes, just virtually, but nevertheless. How would I have dealt with these different states of consciousness otherwise? I am certain I would have been afraid that I am really going nutty. Or is this what you once told me, that in the company of *mahatmas* one is taken care of by higher powers? So I got the idea to buy your DVDs and got your expertise at a crucial time in my life?

Ram: Yes, the self planted the idea to contact me and to get the DVDs, etc. It knows what you want and need even when you don't.

Cecelia: How have you spent Christmas?

Ram: Same as every other day. I have not celebrated it since I was a teenager. I have always been out of the country and don't have a feeling for it.

Cecilia: Ram, I think I am in “difficulties” at present. The *antar mukha* state has returned so many times; I understand I have to live with it.

Ram: You need to describe it to me more carefully, Cecelia. It sounds like it is a problem for you. If it is actually *antar mukha* it is highly desirable, assuming you want *moksa* and know how to inquire. But if you are still attached to the doer and your worldly life, it may cause problems.

Cecelia: Well, I am not at all complaining! On the contrary, I feel blessed!! This is a wonderful state (don't start with a semantic analysis of where the state is, please!) so much joy, such a happiness!! Incredible! Totally incredible.

Ram: Good. It sounded like it was a problem when you said, “I understand I have to live with it.” No need to describe it. I see you explained it below.

Cecelia: At the same time, I am looking at my body from a totally impersonal point of view, as we do watch somebody else's body. Lots of detachment. I also notice that I see or I realize the space between the objects in my flat somehow more clearly.

Ram: That's very good. It is a lot easier to function in the apparent reality when you view it from a distance.

Cecelia: What do you know about *antar mukha* in theory? Is it a prelude to some other state? I definitely want to keep this state, as it is so joyful. What should I take into consideration? Do you know any precautions to be taken? A small detail I have noticed: when I am in company with other people, *antar mukha* wanes to the background.

Ram: The purpose of this state is for self-inquiry. You should slowly cut back on your worldly duties. It moves to the background because your attention is extroverted when you are in contact with other people. *Antar mukha* means "turned inward" or introverted. The mind is seeking the self. It should be fixed on the reflection of awareness in this state and you should inquire. You can ignore the bliss. The purpose of this state is not to feel good. You will feel good, no doubt, but this is a by-product. It is for self-inquiry.

Cecelia: I hope you will answer me as soon as possible. I hope you are not asleep already!

Ram: I cannot always answer right away. I have a sketchy internet connection, an ongoing *satsang* with quite a few people and other email *satsangs* in the queue. Teaching is a hobby for me, not a profession, so I only do it when I feel like it. I understand your eagerness and will do my best to reply promptly but sometimes you have to wait.

Cecelia: To be forthright, Ram, your last letter frightened me. What? Am I that far spiritually?! I do not want any kind of prominence or publicity. I will allow myself (the expression is unfortunate because the self is the one who/which decides that... but you understand) to become enlightened quite privately, but not anything like the enlightened person who is gossiped about! I have been close to becoming a public figure at one time and I never again want anything like that!

Ram: Could you explain to me why you think that what is happening is in any way connected to anyone else? The only person who knows what is happening with you other than you is me. And I have absolutely no interest in telling anyone who you are and what is happening because it is just a natural thing that happens to many people who are spiritually-inclined. Almost everyone I meet is in this state. It is no big deal. Additionally, anyone who did not understand what was happening and what it meant for you, would simply think you were crazy or full of ego. Please do not make a big deal out of this in your mind. It is a natural occurrence and it is just the beginning of a long spiritual process. Keep it to yourself. Isn't the mind funny? Something that that should be a cause for celebration it finds "frightening." I wonder if you don't have a bit of a dramatic

tendency. Perhaps you were an actress in a previous life.

Cecelia: So tell me how self-inquiry is done. Although I have read much about it, I don't know the procedure. It has been a mystery to me! But my mind seems to know it spontaneously, as the "I am nobody" incidence shows. By the way, I have after that morning, daily inquired as to how much personality I have left.

Ram: Please don't think that getting rid of your personality is a sign of spiritual growth. Your personality is perhaps a little dramatic and sensitive, but it is fine. Forget Cecelia and her stuff. Concentrate on your self, awareness. I cannot go into it in an email. It is too complex a topic. What did you get from the videos? They are about self-inquiry. My new book, which comes out in about two weeks, explains it in detail. In the meantime, what is your mind meditating on? You say it is turned inward. What is it looking at?

Cecelia: You say "It should be fixed on the reflection of awareness in this state and you should inquire." What do you mean by "reflection of awareness"? Where is that reflection? In the heart? In the spiritual heart, some inches to the right from the centre of the chest, as Ramana Maharshi says?

Ram: No. Try to figure out why the mind is blissful. It is blissful because it is looking at something. What is it looking at? Inquiry is figuring out what the inward-turned mind is looking at that composes it and makes it happy. You have to investigate it. Forget "reflection." That is over your head now. I should have not used that word. See what the mind is fixed on that makes this state so blissful.

Cecelia: Please, enlighten me on this topic! I have bought *Arunachala Shiva*. I will study it closer. It is a fine book, worthy of Ramana Maharshi.

Ram: That is good. If you have any questions, write to me.

Cecelia: I have just some minutes ago listened to what you told about Swami Abhedananda on your last CD. It was so wonderful a story, the most beautiful story I have heard for years. I should like to have such a self-realized mind as he had. So now you know what is my deepest wish. Because I am still in the *antar mukha* state my memory is not working and finding words is difficult. But you understand! What is my mind looking at in *antar mukha*? Something spiritual, but it has no form or name except that it is luminous when I close my eyes.

Ram: Okay, this is what I wanted to know. That is the reflection of the self in the mind. As the mind gets more and more clear the light will shine more brightly. Keep your attention on it. See if you can see it with your eyes open. It is shining in the waking state too. If not, don't worry.

Cecelia: Actually, I could describe it better by telling you what I am freed from during *antar mukha*. I am freed from my everyday identity, which is a huge burden, my obligations, my patient's expectations, feeling to be very different from ordinary people around me by my choice of lifestyle and spiritual goals. I am also freed from the self-doubt that pesters me. Getting into *antar mukha* is paradise for me.

You see now why I was so happy about being Nobody. When I told this to you, your first reaction was "Great." Now in your last mail, "Please, don't think that getting rid of your personality is a sign of spiritual growth." Why did you change your opinion? Has it changed because now you know me better?

Ram: I did not change my opinion. It is nice to be free of stuff that you should not have had in the first place, but this euphoria will disappear as you become accustomed to living without it. It will seem quite natural. The point is that you focus on the self. Whatever is supposed to drop off will drop off. It does not really matter what Cecelia is or is not. Don't think about her. Think about the self.

Cecelia: I know now a bit better which role *antar mukha* has played in my life. I have entered this state also earlier in my life. I have called it "a higher state of consciousness." My visits to Krishnamurti's talks in Switzerland caused infallibly that after his first words in the beginning, I went into *antar mukha*. After the talk I walked up in the mountains, tremendously happy and seeing the world in a different light. I remember how I gave a road the name of "Road of Wisdom." But I never remembered what he had spoken about. That did not matter, as I had read his books thoroughly.

Ram: You do not want to get too wrapped up in how this state feels. You want to know who you are. You are not the experiencing entity, Cecelia. You are the light shining in the *antar mukha* state. See if you can figure that out.

Cecelia: The same with your videos! Up into the *antar mukha* state and no memory of what you spoke about.

Ram: This tendency to get fascinated with what you are experiencing will come back to haunt you, but it is probably too early to expect you to remember the Vedanta. It will come in very handy when you are exploring this state. When things go wrong, you will need it. I can see that it will be very hard to teach you because you do not retain knowledge. When you are having some kind of inner experience, you stop thinking.

Cecelia: Next, some academic questions: I wondered why you did not use the "*pancha kosha*" model?

Ram: The "three bodies" is the same as the *pancha kosa* model.

Cecelia: I am also very relieved that you support the friendship model of “guruship.” I will take a look at the videos for a second time. All in all, when you went through the different topics of Vedanta, I realized what a vast amount of knowledge Vedanta is and how right Christopher Hebard was in the video clip at *StillnessSpeaks.com* saying that people get intimidated by it. I am so happy that I have some theoretical knowledge of it because I believe it is the roadmap to *moksa*, as you expressed it.

Ram: This is correct. In the end, when the *antar mukha* state has served its purpose, you are only going to be left with knowledge, Cecelia. You will appreciate the Vedanta more as time goes on. It will put together all your experiences and knowledge into one beautiful bouquet. It will finish all your questions.

Cecelia: I am distressed to hear that there is something related to reflection of awareness that you cannot teach to me via email.

Ram: No need to worry. I told you everything you need to know above in this response: “Okay, this is what I wanted to know. That is the reflection of the self in the mind. As the mind gets more and more clear the light will shine more brightly. Keep your attention on it.”

I do not read minds, Cecelia. When you describe your experience and reveal your knowledge or ignorance, then I know what to tell you. It does you no good for me to know something that you do not know, unless you show me that you are ready to know.

Cecelia: Lately the *antar mukha* state has changed its emphasis. I have it almost continuously nowadays. But I am most of the time an outsider, a witness of my body moving, speaking and so on.

Ram: This is good. It means that you are identified with the self. The self is the witness.

Cecelia: But who is this being living in this body?

Ram: I think you will have to just observe what is happening and figure it out as you go. It would take me months to help you stabilize your understanding. In any case, I will say a few things that might help you make sense of what is going on. There is no “being living in the body.” The body is living in you. Try to see what this means from the experience you are having.

Cecelia: How do I move it?

Ram: You either move it by your will or you see that it moves on its own.

Cecelia: The only thing I am feeling as being me are the eyes through which I am witnessing this strange body.

Ram: You are not looking carefully enough. The eyes are not you either. You are the witness of the eyes.

Cecelia: I have been trying to figure out it all, but to no avail.

Ram: One day when it is all over and you have leisure, you will be ready for Vedanta. It will put it all together for you.

Cecelia: The light of the awareness in my mind is sometimes weaker and at times clearer (usually in the evenings). I wish it to grow. I cannot yet see it in daylight.

Ram: The more simple your life and the quieter your mind, the more it will shine.

Cecelia: I forgot to mention two issues that happen at the same time, when I enter the *antar mukha* states. The first is *kevala kumbhaka* when my breath stops for a time. After it I breathe much more slowly and become much calmer. The second is that I start to repeat mentally and slowly *Om*.

Ram: Good. Don't worry about any of this. Just let it happen. It is all good. One day it will make sense.

Cecelia: I feel that what you told me: withdraw slowly from outer duties is good advice!

Ram: Absolutely. You don't have the confidence to handle both the inner and the outer worlds simultaneously. Your mind is not strong enough.

Cecelia: I am not able to handle therapy well. An usual pattern is this: I start to say something to a patient. In the middle of my sentence my mind withdraws to the *antar mukha* state of blissful and peaceful thoughtlessness, and I have by then completely forgotten what I intended to say. I want to know who I am, but I want also to know

what the world and universe is fundamentally.

Ram: If you cannot keep your mind on your outer work, then drop it. All you need is food, clothing and shelter. Later, when this inner work has stabilized, you can go back to work.

Cecelia: How are you, Ram? Do you have many persons in your *satsangs*? Your story of your epiphany in the post office in Hawaii, in the *Arunachala Shiva* DVD, was deeply moving. Have you heard the adage that the worst sinners become the best saints?

Ram: I am just fine. Life is great! Yes, I have excellent people in my *satsang*. I am not a saint, for sure, Cecelia.

Cecelia: As you do not have time to stabilize my *antar mukha* state, tell me what I can do myself. Is it proper to name my state any longer an *antar mukha* state?

Ram: Call it whatever you like.

Cecelia: I experience now far more often being in the witness state, which is emotionally neutral and also clear and thoughtless. Should I try to get the euphoria back?

Ram: This is the state you want. It is better than *antar mukha*. You should not try to get the euphoria back. It is a distraction.

Cecelia: What does this imply, that the bliss is waning?

Ram: It is still there, but it is subtle. Don't worry about it.

Cecelia: One factor is that I have to be more extroverted, though I try to minimize it.

Ram: Since you have worldly duties, you need to be somewhat extroverted. If you get too extroverted you will lose the witness state.

Cecelia: I have got a new fear, the fear that I will somehow lose contact with the self. Is it possible, Ram? I consider this the most catastrophic thing that could happen to me.

Ram: You will definitely lose it. Anything you gain you will lose. But it is no big deal. You can get it back. The self is always available because it is you. Why worry?

Cecelia: If you only knew how I have battled in my mind about God, his existence or non-existence. A psychotherapist sees too much of the seamy side of life to have faith in a benevolent deity.

Ram: You put yourself in an unhealthy environment and then you say that it keeps you from faith

in God? This is pretty vain, Cecelia. All that dysfunction serves a spiritual purpose. You just have ideas that keep you from seeing it.

Cecelia: But now things are so much better through the mystical process that started when I came in contact with you! Tell me honestly, are you somehow involved in it, caused it? You must somehow be in this “plot,” as I become my worrying old self, if I start to criticize or doubt you, or doubt Vedanta.

Ram: Forget about me. Pay attention to your own experience and think about what I say.

Cecelia: My feeling about myself has changed. I have now a conviction that we are spiritual beings living in a meaningful world. That has removed most of my problems and cured my pessimism and depression.

Ram: Good for you, Cecelia! Don’t forget it.

Cecelia: How would I purify my mind? Diminish my *vasanas*?

Ram: Did you watch the DVDs?

Cecelia: I have been planning to come to visit you in Tiruvannamalai in February. Actually, this journey depends on my spiritual friend who will help me because of my health. What do you think about this plan?

Ram: Not a good idea, Cecelia, although I would enjoy meeting you. India is a very difficult environment even for healthy people.

Cecelia: I will modify my statement that you are a saint. You are a refreshing rascal saint!

Ram: Okay, I accept it. I’m sure your opinion will change at some point.

Cecelia: You have become extremely perspicacious about me and my spiritual progress! It is amazing! Yes, the witness state is better than the *antar mukha*. The euphoria was really a distraction, although it was so intensely delightful. Yes, the euphoria is continuing in the background, and I feel it from time to time – and realize how fortunate I am.

There was in your last letter a passage I could not make sense of: “You put yourself in an unhealthy environment and then you say that it keeps you from faith in God? This is pretty vain, Cecelia. All that dysfunction serves a spiritual purpose. You just have ideas that keep you from seeing it.” What ideas do you mean? In which sense am I vain?

Ram: You chose to live in an environment where most of your contacts are sick people; no wonder you don't have faith in God, although God doesn't have anything to do with it. It is people's ignorance of God, not God, that makes all the ugliness in the world.

Cecelia: Yesterday I had a whole day when I was not able to enter the witness state and that felt horrible. Today it has come back to my joy. A patient called me this morning to tell that his car had broken down and he had to cancel today's appointment. This means I will have just one patient today. So I can concentrate on connecting the witness, writing to you and read *Arunachala Shiva*.

I don't want to stop or hinder the spiritual growth that is taking place. Okay, I may end up in the queue at the social security office. But to stop this process is for me a grave sin! Now when I have an enlightened *guru*, time for spiritual work and probably losing my worldly desires – finally free!

I have the feeling that the self is slowly ending my job as a psychotherapist. People drop out of therapy, one by one, and new persons do not call to book a time.

I sent you a short message on my realization. You did not comment it. I read it again this morning and I understand why you did not say anything. I remember how difficult it was to write those lines as I was deeply in a spiritual state during which the cognitive functions are always affected. I entered suddenly a state where the world became quite different from the ordinary one. I just SAW that it was all unreal. The world was quite like a cardboard box, empty inside. All the furniture, chairs, etc. were a seamless mass of unknown material. I felt that the world is just a film, quite like the film which I had watched a moment ago (the film on TV was not spiritual in any sense). All these happenings made me intensely happy. I called a spiritually-interested friend, but he was just upset by what I told him. You certainly know how difficult it is to transmit a spiritual experience!

Whatever it was, "unknown name," it was wonderful, not uncanny in a negative manner. After two hours it started to fade away. Why did you not write? I am tired of balancing between my metaphysical states and the ordinary reality.

Ram: I am sorry for the delay. You cannot expect prompt replies for the next three weeks. I am completely overcome with *karma*. I have become quite well-known and can barely keep up. The *satsang* is getting bigger every day, the emails in my box are overflowing, my book is out and it is just impossible to keep up. I put everything in a queue and work through it patiently. I have not forgotten you, nor am I ignoring you.

The way you balance these states is to inquire into the one to whom they are appearing. This one is free of both states. There is peace there.

Cecelia: Sorry for adding one email more to your mailbox. Today after I received your email, I got again the same experience I described to you in "The witness state and other phenomena." I realized again how the world is unreal, myself included. The world felt again also empty, quite like a liquid film covering a huge emptiness.

Of course, this is joyful but also disconcerting as I feel I am in a new terrain without a map. This means bye-bye to some friendships as stable points in my life. Same with patients, nor do they appear real any longer. Trying to help them with psychotherapy feels like cheating them.

In an unreal world you do not have motivation to do anything, just to stay silent, observing the implications of what has been revealed. I feel like going into hiding and not seeing anybody for some time. As you consider yourself to be just an appearance in the awareness, like me, speaking to you will not feel like a series of misunderstandings.

You wondered why this fuss about my states. I have told them to you because I have thought they will tell you how far I am on the spiritual path. With this information you would know how to give advice or warn about dangers. A second reason is that I am really interested in what they tell about man/human beings in general. I have studied philosophy in the university, and that interest has stayed.

Should I go into hiding? Any other advice? I was thinking that I would quit my work and become your secretary. What do you think?

Ram: It is very kind of you to offer to help but there is a woman who generously donates her time to Shining World.

Cecelia: I hope you can keep up despite the inordinate attention you are getting. I, for my part, am sad that I cannot become your secretary nor meet you this spring. Try to manage some time for it next autumn.

You may not realize what a momentous shift in me our correspondence and your teaching has made. Earlier, for many years there has been a fundamental despair in my soul and mind. Maybe, I have thought, the world is what the materialists think, just matter and some chemical and biological processes.

Now I know that this is not true. And I know it not because I have read or heard something, but through my own experiences. I will certainly never forget the unbelievable experiences of seeing my surroundings and the world changing into something utterly different, hollow and empty and unreal, something totally different from the ordinary view. Also, the joy these experiences awakened in me! It is so fantastic to have this lightness, this optimism and this joy in me!! Never will I become so desperate as I have been.

One of the results of this all is that I cannot be a psychotherapist. I simply do not have faith in psychotherapy any longer. I do not mean that I will stop “giving therapy.” I mean I will do it from the point of view of a compassionate philosopher.

According to the Indian tradition, disciples are supposed to support to the livelihood of their *guru*. I will do that. I cannot bear the thought that you are poor. I am not rich and it seems that *Bhagavan* is closing the door of my practice so that I will have more peace to listen to your DVDs and meditate. But to the extent I am able to help you, I will. Tell me, if you feel I have become too interfering in your life.

Ram: It is okay – so far.

Cecelia: My dearest *guru*: I sent you this evening an email about how I felt that I was losing touch with my self-realization/enlightenment and somehow “forced” to return to my previous *samsaric* identity. With “forced” I mean doing things I have been doing before my self-realization: living in the same old flat as before with the same habits, and associations... people who know me but don’t know me anymore. Well, you understand.

So I mailed you an email pretty hesitatingly (separation-fear from my childhood). You may not have read it and are (so I hope) enjoying the company of your friends and resting yourself after some strenuous months in India. But the thing that I wonder at is, that after having sent the email I have regained the happiness, the full knowledge and the feel of that experience, I haven’t yet received any mail from you! What a wonderful contact there is between you and me!!

Ram: I just got your email last night and it was too late to reply as I had to give a lecture to a group of *yoga* people. What I was going to say is that you do not need to worry about losing it because you can always get it back. It is simply your own self – which is always available. The best practice when you find yourself out of touch is to think “I am the self. I am awareness and not what I am presently experiencing.” Contemplate the meaning of the words and they will take you back to awareness. In the meantime, when you are connected go about your business with the *karma yoga* attitude and simplify your life.

Cecelia: However crazy I am from a *samsaric* point of view, I simply HAVE TO COME to your meeting in Switzerland or I will become crazy. Really! I cannot live any longer in *samsara*, viz. “enjoying” coffee parties with gossip and shopping. No, no, no! Not even my proficiency as a psychotherapist gives me joy. The four months you have been teaching me have been paradise from a spiritual view. Finally, a *guru* who can advise me and lead me! I know how fruitless solitary effort is. Some glimpses now and then. But that is not enough in order to arrive at a real self-realization. And I know that you have to meet your *guru* physically in order to become fully self-realized/enlightened.

Do you have any idea about what went amiss with the self-realization that I had on the 18th of February? It was so strong and clear and convincing. As a by-product, I also saw what my ordinary reality identity was like: heavy, dramatic and negative. But the identity as self was so light, clear and peaceful except the part of losing the “I” that hurt. All was well until three days later when it started to fade.

Ram: You may have lost the experience, but have you lost you?

Is it true that enlightenment is an experience? Don’t all experiences come to an end? If it was not there before, it will not be there later. You were there before you had the experience. You were there for the three days the experience was going on. And now you are here when the experience is gone.

Cecelia: But the identity as self was so light and clear and peaceful except the part of losing the “I” that hurt.

Ram: This shows that the experiencer is still there. Enlightenment cancels the experiencer, so it does not matter what kind of experience is appearing to you – awareness. If you are awareness, how can anything hurt? I think you need to read my book more carefully, particularly Chapter 2 on knowledge and experience and Chapter 10 on enlightenment and the assimilation of experience.

Self-realization is not about how Cecelia feels. She can feel any way. It is about you. Why do you care what she feels? Why is what she feels any more important than what Ramji feels? Both Cecelia and Ramji are objects to you, to awareness. This may be difficult to understand, but think about it. See if you cannot assimilate the meaning. Cecelia is an object to you. Feelings are an object. Experience is known to you. It is an object. The subject cannot be the object. Liberation is self-knowledge. When you know you are awareness, you are free of Cecelia and her experiences.

Cecelia: I have simplified my life, meditating more. I have affirmed my identity as awareness. The reflection of the light of the awareness in the mind is stronger and I often feel non-dual love, when the world looks so incredibly beautiful and all human beings look lovable and blameless and holy. Yet I cannot get back the experience and the conviction I had 18.2. Cecelia is back, somewhat modified. How to proceed?

Ram: You are doing everything right. Keep up what you are doing. This experience may never come again. The whole point about experience is that it is meant to bring understanding, not just about the impermanence of experience but about the nature of the self, the one to whom experience presents itself.

The key to this issue is presented by you in this letter. You say, “I cannot get back the experience and the conviction I had...” The experience will not come back, at least not in the same way, but the conviction is the real issue. The conviction that you are awareness is enlightenment. If you have this conviction it does not matter what you experience. Anything is acceptable. The fact that you lament this experience and the loss of conviction is very good. It means that you know how valuable it is.

But think about it, Cecelia. Has experience changed you in any way? Are not you the same as you were when you were a child? Are you not the one who sees, the one looking out from behind your eyes?

Cecelia: Hi, Ram. Your last email was a gem! I don't want to answer to it before I have read in-depth what you asked me to read from your book. I am now reading about knowledge and experience in Chapter 2.

Ram: Good. This is the big issue that you have not understood: knowledge and experience. Think about it carefully. All the logic is there in the first two chapters. Vedanta only works when you have understood this. It is understandable that you would not get it because you have been in the *yoga* world and you are completely enthralled by experience.

Cecelia: I am at best feeling a great love towards all human beings, you and myself included. It is much easier to love other people than oneself. Do you agree?

Ram: No. See the duality. Love means that you see everything equally, that you love everything equally.

Cecelia: I haven't yet been able to read all the pages you asked me to read. But my spiritual life has been otherwise really fantastic!! The state that I had on 18.2. has returned on and off several times since I wrote the last letter. It can be just a light touch that ends quickly because I have some work to do, to almost a full-blown copy of the first experience.

Yesterday I had a full-blown merger with the awareness accompanied by tremendous joy, while downloading an eBook from *Nonduality.com*. I did not want to go to bed, but stayed awake until 2:00 am. You may disagree with me, but I think and feel that my epiphany/experience on 18.2. is stored in my memory, and it will enter my mind whenever I touch, write or think and look at anything spiritual, for instance, now when I am writing this email to you. Of course, they are "only" experiences, but they teach me how I am a part of awareness and there is nothing separate although our ordinary reality is dualistic.

Ram: Okay, good. Now I understand what you mean. Our disagreements are almost only caused because we use words differently. I would not express it the same way, but you are right. The self is always available and simply by thinking of it you can experience it. And yes, every time you do it creates a *vasana* for self-experience, so it happens more and more often.

As for the idea that you are "part" of awareness, you are not correct. Awareness has no parts. You are awareness. You either understand what that means or you do not. But for now, it is fine to think of yourself in this way. As you develop, these words will make sense.

Cecelia: I was suddenly jolted to the same experience I had in February. No Cecelia anywhere, everything just IS. Somehow everything is one substance. Inexplicable! Very peaceful.

Ram: It's lovely until it disappears.

Cecelia: Okay, it disappears, yes, but it gives so much while it lasts! You know where to aim and proceed. You lose this "I" and what a relief it is!! And you know that we all are of the same substance, although the mind and intellect cannot fathom how.

Ram: That's true. Here is something to think about, Cecelia: your happiness is defined in negative terms, i.e. the loss of Cecelia. What is wrong with Cecelia that you enjoy being away from her so much? Ram says, "What is the positive message in these epiphanies?"

Cecelia: Yes, you are right. Somehow I cannot get rid of a negative image of myself. It's roots are in my childhood, My mother did not like me. My sister was her favourite. She told me that I was

clumsy. She was afraid I would never learn needlework, etc., etc. She also had constantly a bad conscience about her strong sexuality and harried me for the same trait in my childhood and youth. Add to this the fact I was my father's favourite daughter because we shared intellectual interests. She was jealous of me.

My two trials of living the life of a married couple ended badly, as you know. They really undermined my self-confidence. Unfortunately, my psychotherapist had, despite his sincere willingness to help me, a sadistic side to his personality that injured me. Nowadays, I have come to the conclusion that protracted therapies cause an endless groping for motives that is not healthy. It would be better for them to extrovert their mind and interests for some period.

As an adult I have received approval and commendation during my studies in the university and later as a psychotherapist. Many men have courted me and women have generally kept their distance from me for reasons which I don't quite know/understand. But, Ram, is this relevant matter for an answer to your question? Anyway, it is a partial truth, although there may be other factors as well.

Now it is 12:15 and my brain is shutting down. I will tell to you tomorrow if I find out what is the positive message of the epiphanies. Would you not also tell me, what kind of positive message there is in them, from your perspective?? Please, do!

I have today somehow dropped my last resistance to you and Vedanta. It engendered a happy and relaxed feeling, the opposite of the sad Cecelia we have been here discussing. I also read some 90 pages of your *How to Attain Enlightenment* and will continue tomorrow.

Now I have been thinking and analyzing myself why being away from Cecelia is a relief. What's wrong with me that I enjoy being away from myself so much?? On a general, philosophical level, life in *samsara* is suffering. Buddha was right. It is wonderful to lose that desire-and-fear baggage we all walk with, although just for a short while. On a more personal level, Cecelia suffers from lack of an understanding partner, warmth and sensual pleasures. As somebody said: "Hermiting is hard, in the long run."

Ram: It is hard if you don't have the temperament for it. It is easy if you do. Why do think that you have not been given an understanding partner, warmth and sensual pleasure? Why try to be a hermit when you are not suited to be a hermit? You should give up your fear of being hurt, love a man with understanding and you will get an understanding partner, warmth and sensual pleasures. It seems to me you are hiding from life and using your spirituality as an excuse. Life is not going to give you what you want just because you want it. You have to put the energy into it and often suffer a lot of disappointment before you get what you want.

On a deeper level, you do not really want those things. You want to be more understanding and warm toward yourself. But you can't do it because you do not like Cecelia that much. You think there is something "wrong" with her, maybe because she is unable to get the love she wants from someone else. You don't give her the understanding that is not forthcoming from others.

Cecelia: You asked what is the positive message in my epiphanies?! So Ram has an answer to that question!! Tell, tell me!

Ram: What good does it do for me to tell you? The whole teaching of Vedanta is the answer: “You are the self.” What good are these experiences if they don’t convince you that you are the self and cause you to live as the self?

Cecelia: There is one answer I would say myself: I have somehow the knack of easy access to the spiritual realms. I have noticed how I always seem to get some spiritual realizations meeting saints, *gurus*, etc. when people around me experience absolutely nothing. It is a blessing.

Ram: You also have a knack of longing for worldly things. These experiences are a blessing if they don’t give you what you want spiritually or emotionally? It seems to me they are also a curse.

You say life is difficult for want of an understanding partner, warmth and sensual pleasures. These spiritual experiences are basically useless as long as you want worldly things like love, pleasure, etc. Did you read my book? It seems you didn’t read it. Or if you did, you did not understand it. Study Chapter 2 about the distinction between knowledge and experience. The conclusion you should come to if you can see the logic of the argument is that you should be pursuing knowledge and practicing knowledge and not thinking about your spiritual experiences insofar as they are no more useful than any other worldly experiences.

Cecelia: Now you are cruel, blunt and far too outspoken. Now I understand why you are called controversial. I have had the good fortune to know many men during my life, but I have always felt that I need something other than marriage. Yes, I have also found the answer. It is spiritual life, knowledge about metaphysical truths and practices. Spirituality is something that can be well combined with a human life. Yet I have excluded many things from my life that do not suit a spiritual life. Celibacy for 20 years, meat and alcohol. (You have had such a varied life with women, both before and after your enlightenment, that one wonders at your violent reaction.)

I must say you believe too much in your own judgment. So you do not ask me how far I have proceeded in your book? YOU know I have not read it, because you happen to be angry at me. I do consider that you should calm down and reread my both emails. An apology would be appropriate.

Ram: I do not know where you got the idea that I am angry, cruel, etc. If you look at what I said in light of your statements about yourself and in light of the teaching of Vedanta, you would see the wisdom in them. Issue #1 – which we have been talking about for quite a while – is the issue of your epiphanies. Vedanta’s view is that they can be useful or unhelpful, but that the real issue is self-knowledge and the practice of knowledge. If you are not clear about the relationship of knowledge and experience, I cannot help you. I have very patiently gone over this point several times.

The second issue is the statements you made about your dislike of yourself and the subsequent longings that this caused. Vedanta’s view is that if you understood yourself properly, you could only love yourself totally. And if the love of a man or woman is an issue, then you are not qualified for self-knowledge.

It seems you want your teaching handed to you on a silver platter, Cecelia. That is fine with me. I'm sure you can find someone who will tell you what you want to hear the way you want to hear it. I am sorry that you took it this way, but Vedanta is for mature, non-attached, discriminating individuals with a burning desire for liberation. It is for men and women with a masculine temperament (see *Vivekachoodamani*), not those who are easily upset by straight talk.

The statements I made in the last email should be addressed rationally on the basis of their merits, not on your emotional reaction. In any case, I am glad this happened because it is clear to me that I cannot be of further assistance to you. I wish you all the best.

~ *Om* and *prem*, Ram

Cecelia: You are so blind to your personal problems! For instance, you consider yourself as the final authority on Vedanta. There are people who are well-versed in Vedanta, who know as much or more than what you do. Your "papal authority" style of communicating is repulsive. Some modesty would be fitting. Nowadays, people want to have their *guru* as a friend, a companion on the Path.

Ram: Dear Cecelia, Vedanta is not about personal problems. If you have personal problems, you should go to a psychologist. Vedanta is for mature, discriminating, dispassionate, individuals with a burning desire to be free of the person who thinks he or she is a person with problems. A *guru* is someone who reveals the knowledge that the person is not a person but is the impersonal self. This is not my opinion, it is simply the contention of scripture. It has nothing to do with being an authority on anything.

You were certainly happy to think that I was a very wonderful person for a long time. Now when you feel insulted because you heard something you did not like, you think I am a cold, unkind, uncaring person. If I said "There, there, you poor dear" when you were whining about your problems and made you feel loved, you would be happy with me. I listened carefully to you and replied to you for several months. I told you things and sent you energy that gave you certain spiritual experiences and then helped you to understand them. Is not that an act of love? Does a little straight talk cancel all that in your mind? You paid me all manner of compliments. At

one point you offered to be my assistant. At one point you worried about my financial condition and sent money. So who am I, Cecelia? Am I the one you loved or the one you despise now?

The fact is that the *guru* you thought you had was only a *guru* as long as it fit into your *guru* fantasy, as long as he told you what you wanted to hear in the manner you wanted to hear it. I am not a politician or a social worker. I am not here to make you feel good. I can only say what scripture says. I am not your father, your mother, your lover or anything else. Actually I am a better friend to you than you are. If you were a good friend to yourself, you would have addressed the issues that I brought up and thought about them dispassionately. I told you what I thought in a straightforward way. If what I said was not true, I doubt that you would have reacted as you did. You're the psychologist. Look at your own psychology. Some part of you loves your "poor me" story.

You have been wallowing in your sense of what you don't have, longing for the love that only you can give yourself, hoping that someone outside would validate you for a long time. Probably you

have it all figured out how one or both of your primary caregivers failed to love you properly. And fifty years later the story persists.

Freedom is freedom from Cecelia, from her sad story. You think you are Cecelia and you now have one more unhappy experience to prove to you that you were right all along. Isn't that true? You can think what you want about me. I did a good job.

~ Love, Ram

Cecelia: Dearest Ram, let's bury the hatchet! You have been a good Vedanta teacher to me. You are also knowledgeable about different states of consciousness. We have different opinions on some issues, but which two persons have not? So would you continue to be my teacher?

Is it not useless to squabble over my weaknesses and your weaknesses after having had such an inspiring correspondence for half a year? Totally unnecessary! If you do not forgive me, I will cry every time I watch your DVDs.

~ Much love and *Om*

Ram: Hi Cecelia, actually, from the self's point of view nothing ever happened. It is not a matter of forgiving anyone. I did not think we were friends or enemies. I am not looking for friends. I have many very good friends whom I have known for many years. But I am always happy to make another friend. However, if you want to be my friend, then we have to know what friendship means. In my case, when the friendship is based on me being a teacher of Vedanta, friendship can only develop when I see that the other person is paying attention to what I say, considering my suggestions and after careful consideration putting those suggestions into practice. If the person does not respond to the ideas or does not like the ideas and their implications and ignores them, I cannot keep up the communication. I am not teaching Vedanta for me. I already know Vedanta. I am a free person. I do it for others. Longtime spiritual people like you who have had much experience are sometimes very difficult to teach, more difficult than younger, inexperienced people because they think they already know something. They have picked up unhelpful beliefs and opinions along the way, but they think of these beliefs as truth and they are often reluctant to examine them. So they ignore things that do not fit in with their idea of *moksa*.

If you want to *moksa* and you think Vedanta is the way to *moksa* and you think that I am a competent teacher, then you become a student of Vedanta, not me. To be a qualified student of Vedanta (*adhikari*) there are certain qualifications. Those are listed in *Tattva Bodh*, which is on my website, and *Vivekachoodamani*, and are carefully discussed in my book. If you are not qualified and you still want *moksa* you can get qualified. Vedanta teaches *sadhanas* that will make you qualified. The teacher is the one who determines whether or not you are qualified, not you. An experienced teacher like me can see exactly where the student needs work. I make suggestions. If I have to repeat myself many times on a particular issue, I understand that the student is not qualified and I suggest something else. For me teaching is not a profession. I do not need to do it. I like to do it but it can give me nothing that I don't already have. It is like a hobby for me. And it so happens that I am successful so there are quite a few people who want to be my students. So if I find that someone does not listen properly and gets overly emotional when he or she hears something unpleasant, I simply put my attention into someone who is more qualified. It is nothing personal. It is just common sense. I wish the person well and pray that they

find someone else.

Now if you understand this and you still want to continue, here are the two things that you need to think about and respond to. The first, as I suggested in a very recent email, is the distinction between knowledge and experience. You have not understood it. I want you to carefully study the argument unfolded in the first two chapters of my book. Then I want you to write a synopsis of the argument. This is so that I can see if you get the overview. Whether or not I continue to teach you depends on your understanding. If I decline to teach you, I will tell you why. Then you can think about it carefully and see if you can't grasp the idea. When you get it, I will tell you what you need to look at next.

The second issue, as I also just mentioned, is the business of your attitude toward yourself. My *guru* did not even ask my name until I had been with him for six weeks. He was not interested in my story and when he did ask, I had five minutes to tell it and he made it clear that he had heard enough and that I was not to bring it up again. The basic reason for hearing a person's story is to see what their attitude is. The story itself is never interesting. It is the same for everyone. I have been very patient with you and tried to make you feel comfortable but there is limit to how much hand-holding I will do. I do not want to hear about your psychological problems – your low self-esteem, your lack of self-love, how difficult things are, etc. It is relevant but you seem to be quite attached to how you see yourself – as evidenced by your reaction to my “cruel” statements. And I will not argue with you about it. You can have your opinion but if it gets in the way of my ability to teach you, I will have to sign off. After all, Cecelia, Vedanta is about you. It is all about how you see yourself. If the way you see yourself was satisfying and true to who you really are, you would not be interested in a *guru*.

If you see this email as very stern and unforgiving, and you think that I am a power-hungry *guru* out to impose my will on you, we obviously have a problem. This is straight talk. Vedanta is not my profession but I do it professionally so I have to lay out the ground rules unemotionally. So think about this, read the first two chapters and write a synopsis of your understanding of what they say. Then I will ask you some questions. In this way we proceed step by step. If this is all too much, I wish you well and there are no hard feelings on my side. There never were. I said what I said the way I said it to get your attention. That is all. The student does not set the agenda. The teaching sets it. You surrender to the teaching. It has nothing to do with me, personally. I am just a Vedanta machine.

Cecelia: How can you be so relaxed, humorous and understanding with your audience in the DVDs, but with me you are unrelenting? Send me a virtual kiss, and all my longings will be satisfied for 20 years. (Happy smiley from Ramji's mind.)

Ram: Okay, but look at your psychology, Cecelia. It is very childish. It's okay to love me, but I don't need it. I want you to love Vedanta. The love you have for me is just love of the self. It is nothing personal. We have never even met, Cecelia. This whole communication is going on in cyberspace. I am just a bunch of pixels on a screen. I am thinking of you by telling you this. I am an old man. I could die any day and then what will you have? This love should be going to you. You should give yourself these kisses every day.

Cecelia: Hi, Ram, I see from your email yesterday that you think that I have made a conscious

decision to love you. I have not.

Ram: The love you feel for me is actually just the love for your own self. Don't confuse the two. It is just a feeling that comes in your mind when you think of your idea of me. Or you have an idea of me and this brings on the love. But who is the love for, Cecelia? I am saying that the love you think you have for me is actually the love you have for you, so what do I have to do with it? If you can see that it is your own self-love, then you will not be bothered by what I say and how I say it. You will look at our relationship in its completeness and these little irritants will not be an issue for you.

Cecelia: There is a transmission between you and me and that transmission decided that I should love you. The whole thing is automatic; I have no choice as to what I should feel towards you. Loving you is not a result of "my childish psychology."

Ram: I don't accept this explanation. Transmissions are not conscious. They do not decide. They appear in you, the self, and they are interpreted by Cecelia's *vasanas*. You have complete control over how you relate to this transmission. I don't dispute what you say although the word "transmission" reveals a dualistic orientation, but aren't my words part of the transmission too? And if they are, then why don't you accept them and the feelings that they cause as *prasad*. If you take them as *prasad* you will try to figure out what the self is telling you rather than making a personal issue out of it. By "childish" I mean taking things personally and then defending your views. If you don't like what I say or the way I say it, please take it as tough love, see the lesson in them and move on. An adult takes full responsibility for his or her feelings. He or she does not put them off on some factor beyond his or her control, like a "transmission." It is true that nobody is in control of what impulses spring from the unconscious, but you are in control of how you relate to them, what you do with them.

Cecelia: Actually, this transmission has frightened me, especially in the beginning. It was the reason why I sent you the mail that you are intruding on my privacy and therefore I wanted to stop our correspondence. It is not nice that somebody outside yourself can affect how quickly your heart beats and what you feel! In the case that you do not know about this, tell me!

Ram: Nobody outside yourself is doing anything to you, Cecelia. It is all a big fantasy. It may seem that way to you, but it is not that way at all. There is nothing outside you. There is something "outside" Cecelia and that is her unconscious mind, and it is the impulses from her unconscious that frighten her because it shows that she is not in control. What you are describing is a kind of angelic possession. I think this feeling must have been with you

most of your life? I do not want to get mixed up in it. I am not a psychologist. I am a Vedanta teacher. For me to teach you, you have to be in control of your mind. You have to take responsibility for what you say and what happens, and you have to play by the rules of the Vedanta *sampradaya*. Did you read the chapter on qualifications?

Cecelia: Then a few words about my "attachment" to my life story. The whole thing is beyond any

attachment, it is just a plain fact. I asked you what kind of an answer to your question about why I always feel relieved, when I get free from myself, you wanted. You could have told me that, no psychological explanations, please.

Ram: It may be a “fact,” but so what? What does it have to do with self-knowledge? What you think is you, is not you. This is why you have a problem with me – and probably with others as well. The whole idea of Vedanta is about your identity. It is another way to see yourself. The psychological explanation does not work or you would not be interested in spirituality. See the duality in all this if you can. There is you and there is the transmission from someone or something else, and you are scared. I cannot teach a frightened person. You can have your fears but you have to manage them. You have to see that they do not intrude on our conversation. Everyone has fear, but this is no reason to be afraid. This is what I mean by “a story.” It is identifying with your feelings.

Cecelia: Also, you did not answer to my question about what a message there is to me in my epiphanies!

Ram: The answer is “I am the self.” What else would it be? The point is that if you do not come away with this understanding, what good are the epiphanies? You make such a big deal of these experiences and then they disappear and you want them back, and they come back and you are happy and they go away and you are not happy. What is wrong with this? *Moksa* is not what you think it is. That is clear to me.

I am not going to reply to anymore of your emails (except the one that is in my box now) until you read the first two chapters of my book and write a synopsis, like you promised. This communication has degenerated into an argument and I am fed up with it. I have put a lot of work into it and it is not going to continue in this vein. I have many other conversations that are reasonable, pleasant and happy and where people discuss the issues like adults. The issue is not how you feel about me, nor how I feel about you. You take care of your feelings and I take

care of mine. I do not give you the power to make me feel bad and you should not give me that power. But if you can't see that and you want me to love you the way you want to be loved, then do what I suggest and relate to what I say, not how I say it. I am sorry I have to be stern with you, but you are very emotional and stubborn and if you don't get what you want, you get emotional. This whole story you have cooked up about me in your mind is getting in the way of our relationship.

Cecelia: I am feeling that I am falling into a mire of criticism and dissatisfaction in me by my patients as well as you. If my next patient is angry at me, I want just to retire and “lick my wounds.” Would you, please, say something nice to me? Our latest disagreement has jolted me out of balance. So this evening I will study *Tattva Bodh*, something ancient and peaceful. Love to my Gurujii!

Ram: Dear Cecelia, see your psychology. You blame the world for your emotional upset. The world is not making you upset. You have some irritation in you and something outside triggers it

and you blame the world. Blame yourself. Love yourself. Say something nice to yourself. Do you want to be dependent on something outside yourself for your feelings? *Moksa* is freedom from dependence on objects. Feelings are objects. I suppose this email is not something “nice.” This is what I mean by “immature.” This is what children do – they want mommy or daddy to be nice to them. I’ve been nice to you for five months. I am still nice. I am trying to get you to understand.

Cecelia: Dear Ramji, my beloved *guru*, I have just stopped watching *The Values of Values*, Part Two for the third time. I listened especially to the discussion in the end, where you spoke about how being enlightened felt for the person in question.

Ramji, is there a way for me to speed up the process? You told me last year in some of your mails that “You have so much desire for self-realization, you are rushing. Swamiji used to say ‘hurry slowly.’” But I cannot help myself, I am like that. Nothing (almost) else motivates me. So can you help me to hurry a bit more? (I don’t know where to look for a smiley in my computer so, please, add one in your mind!)

Ramji: Okay, there is a smiley face in my mind, particularly because of the question. What is wrong with your life now that you want it to change? Relax and enjoy yourself. The fruits of the action are up to *Bhagavan*. What can I do?

Cecelia: When you spoke about enlightenment in the DVD, I understood how tiny a peek at the goal I got the evening of 18th February, when I wrote to you how I was suddenly transported or overcome by self-realization. It was fantastic, as I understood how I am the self, or awareness (a term which, for some unknown reason, I prefer). What joy, lack of all ambition and desire for anything in this world. You answered me: “Yes! Good for you.”

Ramji: I am copying in an email that I wrote a few days that has a lesson for you about epiphanies. Notice this person’s attitude toward his epiphanies. This is the correct attitude. Here it is:

Cecelia: Hi James, the essay you attached and your comments re scripture put a lot of things in context and clarified the Vedanta method. I have started into the *How to Attain Enlightenment* book and it’s so straightforward that it makes the reader focus on the main issues. I am reading it relatively quickly first-time round and will then begin a detailed study. I expected to have lots of questions but so far I have been able to grasp it relatively easily. Probably if I had read it prior to contacting you I would have had fewer questions. It certainly helps me psychologically to have a tried-and-tested approach built on a foundation of logic and examined experience. Otherwise I think I would just be floundering around, wasting time and energy. The book’s absence of hype and its matter-of-act approach are really what a student needs, not page after page of subjective vagueness.

There were two things recently that I would like your comments on. I had finished a 30-minute period and was relaxing when I gradually got a strong “I am awareness”-type experiential insight that lasted for about 15 or 20 minutes. I was able to own it and apply it to myself. But what was extraordinary about it was how ordinary it felt – natural, no big deal (it was quite late at night and

my brain started closing down for sleep at that point). Would it be correct to assume that it is this type of experiential understanding, repeated many times over many years, which the mind would require before the knowledge sticks and remains permanently?

James: Yes and no. This kind of insight is indeed valuable. The more the better. But why waste the time between insights waiting for one? Why not keep the idea in your mind all the time – assuming you have a lifestyle that favors it? I don't mean to repeat the idea over and over like a *mantra* but to apply the knowledge "I am awareness" whenever the mind becomes unsettled. If you do this you will notice a positive shift from the relative point of view to the self's point of view.

Michael: The following night there was a much more intense one, almost ecstatic at times, lasting about two hours; it kicked in towards the end of the 30 minutes. In summary, it was I suppose "bliss/joy of knowledge" or "informed bliss/joy." My mind was quite clear throughout and focused, though a bit slowed down. The whole thing was definitely knowledge-based. It seemed to be a strong reflection of being-conscious-bliss in my mind; I was able to own each aspect of it and know it as an expression of myself. My mind was engrossed but not overwhelmed, though it seemed like it was going that way at times. There was also an experiential recognition that there is no doer, just the *gunas* doing their thing in the world. I could intuitively understand and verbalize the insights to myself. What is the purpose of these types of transient experiences?

James: You are definitely qualified in the dispassion department. The clarity with which you report the workings of the inner self is remarkable. And the insights are the ones required, particularly "I am not the doer." If you think about it, the "you" that is reporting these insights can only be the self because the intellect, where the insights happened, is an object.

Experiential insights are valuable for the knowledge they bring. Once you are convinced that you are the self, you can practice knowledge all the time as I suggested above. It is the most direct way to burn out the binding *vasanas* if indeed you have many left. The idea is to make the self-inquiry *vasana* constant. By "inquiry" I mean looking at the mind, determining what kind of thought is operating there and neutralizing it by looking at it in light of the knowledge "I am whole and complete, ordinary, actionless awareness." The word "ordinary" is confirmed by your experience. Enlightenment is no big deal. It is just a shift in perspective.

Michael: Encouragement/motivation/confirmation that one's practice is going in the right direction/a way of slowly re-educating the mind and creating new patterns/inexplicable?

James: Yes, indeed. Epiphanies do not change thinking patterns, i.e. the dualistic orientation. Changing the way you think changes thinking patterns, what the intellect knows should be in harmony with the nature of reality.

Michael: Something that long is not something that honestly I would want on a daily basis. Probably because of the study I have been doing recently, I was better able to understand, appreciate and facilitate it.

James: I think you are right.

Michael: However, I wonder if, paradoxically, the shorter experience of the previous night was actually the more significant of the two.

James: They are both equally valuable but as I pointed out above, if you keep the idea of who you are in your mind all the time, there will be no need for the self to create the experiential conditions that bring on the knowledge. You can rely on knowledge alone. Experience is just the container, not the contents.

It may be that your lifestyle will not permit this kind of intense inquiry in which case you should take the *karma yoga* attitude in your work until such time as your binding *vasanas* are neutralized. Based on what you have told me, you are very close to what you are seeking. The important thing is the desire and the devotion to inquiry. It should be smooth sailing from now on.

Michael: In your translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* at chapter 6.24 it reads “With all thought-motivated desires renounced and the senses restrained by the mind, hold the mind on the self with great perseverance and think of nothing else. Gain control of the mind by bringing it back to the self over and over again.” Would it be correct, at one level, to read the underlined portion as a description of self-attention?

James: Yes, absolutely.

Michael: If so, is the *Gita* giving explicit approval to it as a form of meditation and, on that basis, should self-inquiry be a lot more popular than it is?

James: Michael, this method is only for *sanyassis*. You have the temperament of a *sanyassi*, so it is suitable for you. But most people are *karmis* (doers) and they cannot practice it because their minds are extroverted owing to binding *vasanas*.

Cecelia, please read this several times and try to get the meaning. This person has the correct understanding and attitude about spiritual experiences. This is very important. The future of our relationship depends on whether or not you understand this.

Cecelia: Do you happen to know why I always feel that there has been such an unbearably long time from your last email? As I have now opened the folder where I store your emails, I see I have received an email from you last Monday, an answer to my complaint about the sad fact that the experience I had on 18.2. has vanished. So I have spoken about this topic to you also earlier!

Ram: Do you think I read minds? How would I know? I'm just a normal person. Maybe you are thinking too much about me and not enough about the self. The self is always there sending you emails every second. Open up your heart, look inside and you will see billions of emails to you.

They all say the same thing: you are wonderful.

Cecelia: You ask in your reply why I care about how I/Cecelia feels. I quite agree with you that it does not matter what Cecelia feels. Cecelia is an object to me, in the same way as Ramji also is an object (but a more loved object than Cecelia, who is by herself as she is very critical of herself). That Ramji and Cecelia are objects of the same order for her is not at all difficult for me to understand, although you thought so.

Ram: Why are you self-critical?

Cecelia: But here we come to the linguistic problems that you also have spoken about. What does “me” refer to, how to separate the “me” of the ordinary dualistic mentality from the “me” of a self-realized person? You criticized my choice of words when I spoke of me myself as a “part” of awareness. How should I speak? Expressions like “you are love” or “you will never die” can play havoc on a person who does not know the Vedanta vocabulary.

Ram: I’m sorry you saw it as a criticism. It was not a criticism. I am trying to teach you who you are as awareness. The way you expressed yourself shows me that you do not understand who you are, what awareness is. It has no parts. You have no parts. I don’t see a Cecelia. I see the self when I talk to you. I know that the self (temporarily under the spell of *maya*) thinks it is Cecelia – poor self – but this is not how it is. There are not two selves, a Cecelia self and a true self, although that is the way it seems when you are conditioned to dualistic thinking.

They will not play havoc if you endeavor to understand the meaning instead of reacting to them emotionally.

Cecelia: Oh, I have written to you for two hours now. I should like to continue, as writing emails to you gives me the feeling that I am closer to you. “*Upanishad*” means sitting close to a *guru*.

PS: You are forbidden to ask me not to worry about you! I worry because you are someone precious. I would worry even if you were a bum. How else do you think people choose to become psychotherapists?

Ram: How can I be close or far away? I am you. Think about this. It is better to use your discrimination on your feelings rather than long for something that you think you don’t have. You are just feeling sentimental. Here are some words from a friend of mine who gives the method of self-realization. I put it in bold:

Cecelia: Dear Ram, I am the self, awareness, the infinite boundless self. I am the self. It is nothing but me who is always here, forever here, the loving, endlessly loving, me. Nothing separates me from me, from love, from peace. I am love. I am peace. Knowing this, all doubts disappear like clouds in the sky. Ignorance disappears as a real world. A beautiful epiphany that is sweet, sour or bitter seems so real but it never lasts.

So, my dear friend, if you discriminate the real from the unreal, you are always be free, boundless and in peace. It is ignorance that makes you believe it is not so. Knowledge, all one, opens the eyes to the truth.

I am deeply grateful that I met you, dear Ramji, for sharing Vedanta which is nothing but love!

Something has changed since Tiru. Even if it seems that actually everything is the same like it always is, something has changed... and this is very important... the feeling of loneliness and the longing have disappeared. And, most important, there is a new clarity about my perspective. **Being awareness, the self, gives me all the fulfillment.** Good news!

I am much more clear about the means, the *karma yoga*, the *vasanas* and the standing point. People are asking good questions. Vedanta is a great help. So for me there is a lot more to learn, for making things clear and transparent. This is a great adventure. Feedbacks are astonishingly good. This is all a great gift from *Bhagavan* and of course from my Ramji, big chief. Oh, thanks so much!

Ram: It is better to think about why you are worrying about me when you should be worrying about why you are not discriminating the self from the not self. This *guru bhakti* for me is the lowest level of *bhakti*. The highest level is to put the words of the *guru* into practice. Nonetheless, you are forgiven. You are a tad romantic and sentimental.

Cecelia: Hi, Ram, I am totally fed up with trying to figure out what my understanding about Advaita Vedanta is lacking, as you have pointed out in many emails. My brain is unable to work on this issue. I just want to rest without all this speculation and thinking!

I seem to understand very well Colin Drake's *Beyond the Separate Self* which nicely tells us how we are victims of an erroneous self-image and shows us that we are the awareness, the background of all that happens. Drake is a non-dualist.

Maybe I am a victim of too much reading of your book. One can read oneself blind. Preaching to the converted is counterproductive. So I am going to rest and listen to good music.

~ Love, Cecelia

PS: Please, don't put too much pressure on me, that is also counterproductive.

Ram: Okay. All the best.

Cecelia: I hope you do not make this a final ending of our companionship. Will you be my friend in the future also?

Ram: Sure.

Cecelia: Dear Ram, my Guruji,...

Ram: If you are going to call me your “*guru*” I think you should have an idea what that means to me. It may be that we have very different ideas of what a *guru* is. Many say that Ramana is their *guru* but what does that mean since Ramana is dead and gone? I don’t think of myself as a *guru*. It is not my identity. It is a role that I play when I am asked certain questions. If you have read my website, my book and my emails it should be clear to you that a *guru* is for *moksa* and that *moksa* is gained through self-knowledge. And since Vedanta is the most direct means of *moksa*, I teach Vedanta. Vedanta only works when student is qualified and when the teacher knows what the student knows. For me to do my job properly I need to know what your idea of *moksa* is. I have my opinion based on our long correspondence. But I need to hear it from you. It seems that the basic thrust of our relationship is about what I think of Cecelia. I have my thoughts, but they are not important. I want to know what Cecelia thinks *moksa* is. It is very difficult for me to have a relationship with someone when they somehow manage to avoid responding to my questions. I want to know what your view of *moksa* is based on the two ideas that I present in the second chapter of my book. I cannot help you unless I know. I have a good idea what you think but I need to hear it from you. Instead of just reading the chapter and writing a reply, this email is about how you think I feel about you and how you feel about my feelings about you and how you feel about you. Why can you not just sit down, read the chapter and say what you think?

Cecelia: Many persons who come to my therapy are often attached to their “poor me” stories, but I am not among them. I have not a penchant for self-pity. I think problems should be solved, and after that one should proceed in life. How unfortunate it is that you asked me why I have a negative view of myself!

Ram: You whine when you come out of *samadhi*. You complain that I misunderstand you. This is feeling sorry for yourself in my opinion. If I wasn’t so busy I would go back through the emails, cut out all the complaints and email them to you.

Cecelia: The solution you offered, that I should love myself more/better, is really good.

Ram: At least we agree on one thing.

Cecelia: I am really not hiding from life, etc... what you wrote. Otherwise I would not have received the six proposals of marriage that I have received. I am not putting you on my list of men that were a disappointment to me. You are not my lover in any sense, you are my *guru*.

Ram: This sentence is an example of someone who is interested in setting the record straight about how she wants to be seen. I don’t pay any attention to what a person says about themselves. People have their own reasons for seeing themselves in a certain light. It is accurate in some respects and not accurate in others. This teaching is not about how you see yourself. It is about the standpoint from which you see yourself. In this case, it is Cecelia seeing Cecelia. It is not helpful. I need to know how you see *moksa*. It is your relationship to the self and to the teaching that interests me, not who Cecelia is. I get quite a few psychologists – I am coaching two right now in California – and they almost always think that the ego – Cecelia – is the self.

This is what you are saying. So unless you are open to another idea of who you are, I cannot help you.

Cecelia: You are, by the way, making me a borderline person. I mean that you think I am a black-and-white person in my appraisal of people. No way. I don't hate you nor have I stopped loving you. You have a tendency to jump into sudden acts and sudden, unreflected verbal statements.

Ram: This is a very untrue statement, Cecelia. It is not only untrue, it is very stupid. It is coming from the same place that the statement that "the transmission" made you do something. I have no power to make you into anything. You are what you are. I am trying to discuss the self and *moksa* but you do not seem to be interested. It shows a lack of boundaries, helplessness and low self-esteem. God made you what you are and you see yourself a certain way, and it has nothing to do with me at all.

Cecelia: Thank you for the energy and the spiritual messages that you have sent.

Ram: Thank you for not answering my question.

Cecelia: I am not writing the synopsis, yes, because I want to be 100% sure that I have understood everything right. Otherwise, your next step would be to behead me.

Ram: This is not true at all. You are making a big story up here, Cecelia. You are in a fantasy world of your own making. This is the most stupid statement I have ever heard. It would be a good joke – if you were joking. It is a paranoid statement, an excuse not to give me what I want. My request was a simple request for information. You would do this for a friend, why won't you do it for me? You have an idea of what a *guru* is that is not even close to my idea.

Cecelia: I have decided to stop to be a perfectionist and I will tell what I think at present, although I haven't read everything.

You want to know what I think *moksa* is. It is understanding that the separate me is an illusion. It means that one sees that all there is, is just awareness and one melts with joy into it. This realization is also the end of fear of death. One realizes that one has not been born either. Quoting you: "One sees that other human beings are also you, through whom the light of awareness is shining." My *samadhis* have given me some insight into this. There will be some more facets to *moksa* besides what I know that belong to the experience itself and cannot be expressed verbally.

Ram: Here you are saying that enlightenment is some kind of experience when you say "...that belong to the experience itself..." Is this correct?

Cecelia: Is enlightenment an experience or knowledge? You seem to argue that it is a matter of

knowledge. No doubt it must be something steady, like knowledge, because knowledge is irrefutable, but experiences come and go. Yet I think you underrate experiences. They give to the one who experiences a wonderful insight into the subtle realms of existence. They also motivate one to continue with spiritual practices.

Ram: Never mind what you think I underrate. What conclusion does the logic of ideas presented in Chapter 2 lead to?

Cecelia: Yet there seems to be different layers to self-realization, before the new identity has become fixed.

Ram: What practice can you do to fix your identity as the self permanently?

Cecelia: I will probably send you a second email after this one. I noticed that I must read again the second half of Chapter 2, which I have already read but partly forgotten. Something interesting happened while I was writing this letter. I seem to end up unemployed quite soon. Well, maybe not “interesting” but actually quite shocking. I have to reflect on this all.

Ram: Assuming you are interested in *moksa*, I suggest you reflect on the answers to my questions and let God take care of your employment situation.

Cecelia: Somewhere in the middle of Chapter II I realized what has been a cause of frustration for you. Enlightenment is something to be known, not to be experienced. Knowledge sounded too intellectual, so I thought enlightenment must be something deeper and more spectacular. And what a letdown it is, the enlightenment! No firework display, no flowers from heaven as in Buddha’s case. Love and gratitude to you, Ram!

PS: Let’s see if I still have it tomorrow!

Ram: Finally! What a relief. If you don’t have it tomorrow, read the chapter again until you do. This is just a fact. I can only help you if you understand this simple fact.

Cecelia: The understanding/realization about what is enlightenment has not been lost during the night. On the contrary, I am far more happy today than yesterday! Life is wonderful! Please, tell me are enlightenment and self-realization completely synonyms?

Thank you, Ram, for the patience you have had with me! Enlightenment is the greatest gift one can give to a fellow human being.

Ram: Good for you. I won’t answer any more spiritual questions until you have studied my book carefully. I want you to go through it systematically and sign on to the logic at every step. Take your time. It will answer 95% of your questions and straighten out your thinking. That is why I

wrote it. I teach too many people to explain each topic over and over again in emails.

The idea in Vedanta is that we have to have a dialogue. I get my information from what you say and I ask you questions or make suggestions based on what you have said. You have to reply directly to my questions. And if you do not respond to my suggestions, there is no sense in me teaching you. If you don't like the way I say something think about it before you write back attacking me. If I speak directly and bluntly it is because you are not responding to my inquiries or to my suggestions. It is to get your attention. I am a very kind and patient person. I was very polite for a long time but when you would not communicate properly I got irritated. There is never an argument in Vedanta. It is something you either see or do not see. So you have to assume that if there is a problem, you are the problem. I am not the problem. I am the solution. I do not know where this relationship will go because it is one of the most peculiar that I have ever had. But I consider that we have just sorted out the very first issue in the teaching. I cannot teach you if you think that *moksa* is experiential. You can do *yoga* for experience. So take a lot of time with the book, just a few pages at a time. Let the ideas sink in. Don't worry about the questions that come up. They will be answered during the course of your study. When you have assimilated it, then you can write me and I will try to help you.

Cecelia: I am going to answer your question as "How is that knowledge gained," not as "How is knowledge gained in general by the enlightened person."

Enlightenment is not an object to be perceived. It is before the subject-object split. It is something that you are, being. It is like an unknown quality in oneself that one has not taken notice of earlier though it has always been there.

You see your identity in a different light. One good symbol/allegory is: as if you would find a new room in your house that you have not known about earlier, although there it has been for years.

It is hard and fast because it changes your identity, like dying a cloth changes its colour permanently.

I will wait for feedback.

Ram: This is not the correct answer. You do not actually answer my question. I think there must be a language problem because you do not seem to understand the argument that I put forth in my book. The answer is that it is gained through a means of knowledge. That is why Chapter 3, The Means of Knowledge, comes after Chapter 2. Chapter 2 shows that enlightenment is knowledge, not experience. What do you think the means of self-knowledge is?

Cecelia: I did not understand that you wanted me to tell you the content of the third chapter in your book. I believed you wanted to know what and how enlightenment is realized by my limited intellect and intuition.

That is why I wrote something pretty intuitive and allegorical about this topic. I knew that enlightenment is not an object for my subject position, so it must be some quality or new kind of identity.

Sorry for my misunderstanding!

Ram: I wanted you to understand that enlightenment is self-knowledge and that you need a means of knowledge. I cannot figure out why you cannot just read the book and watch the videos to have most of your doubts cleared. You are the only person among many who does not seem to understand what I am saying. It is very frustrating. I am starting to think that you do not need a teacher, that you are not ready for a teacher or that you have an idea of what a teacher is that is not the same as my idea – or something. It seems like we are on different planets.

Cecelia: My dear Ram, today I have printed out from the Web an analysis of my own horoscope. The astrologer is a very famous and very gifted psychologist-astrologer. When I read it, I understood some new aspects about my personality. I remember that you said somewhere in our comprehensive correspondence that my reaction to your mail about “You are hiding from life” (“that is really cruel of you, etc.”) was because you touched a real sore point in me. My father was a disappointment to me, but I did not realize it as a child. Later, as an adult, despite all those proposals, I felt often let down, or deserted by the men in my life.

Why am I telling this to you? Because I want you to know what a good psychologist you are! You really are a good judge of human nature. My second motive is a need to be honest; you will know me better if I honestly admit that your hypotheses are right.

Ram: Where is this coming from? I thought we were talking about knowledge and experience, and the means of knowledge. I know that I am a good psychologist. I thought I was a good Vedanta teacher but I am not getting very far with you.

Cecelia: I have gone through your exposition on *moksa*. You demonstrate skillfully how it cannot be an experience, as experiences have a nasty tendency to end after some time has passed. So enlightenment cannot be a prolonged *samadhi* state.

Later, in this chapter (Chapter II, “What is Enlightenment?”) you put forth several demonstrations that human beings are only “waves” of awareness. But sadly, there are no means to ascertain that human beings are only awareness, as awareness is a more subtle “thing” than the mind which tries to observe it. One must be content with watching the subtle reflection of awareness in the mind. Then you tell your readers that watching this reflection a long I-thought arises and then one should own this thought. How does the “I” return to the discussion? You have proven page after page that there is no separate I, just awareness. Can awareness own? I would say not.

Your logical argument ends in a new model of Ramana Maharshi’s *atma vichara*. As you certainly know, *atma vichara* is considered a really difficult path to enlightenment. I should like to know how many persons became enlightened along this method. The *Bhagavad Gita* states that one in a million is ever enlightened. This may be an generous overstatement, says David Godman in the DVD accompanying the book *Arunachala Shiva* (I quote him, as he is a really fine and trustworthy source in spiritual matters).

In the same book you state that Ramana Maharshi was always in *savikalpa samadhi*. Well, all *samadhis* end after some time has passed. In Ramana’s case, *savikalpa samadhi* lasted 30 years! How did that happen??

Greetings from a disqualified spiritual aspirant (who was qualified some three months ago but fell from the “*guru’s*” grace...).

Ram: Very good. Now we are talking. Perhaps you can requalify. Anyway, I have replied to your statements below. Please think about them and get back to me:

Cecelia: I have gone through your exposition on *moksa*. You demonstrate skillfully how it cannot be an experience, as experiences have a nasty tendency to end after some time has passed. So enlightenment cannot be a prolonged *samadhi* state.

Later, in this chapter (Chapter II, “What is Enlightenment?”) you put forth several demonstrations that human beings are only “waves” of awareness. But sadly, there are no means to ascertain that human beings are only awareness, as awareness is a more subtle “thing” than the mind which tries to observe it. One must be content with watching the subtle reflection of awareness in the mind.

Ram: This is true but it is not completely true. The purpose of this teaching is to point out that you cannot directly experience awareness, yourself, as you experience an object. But this does not mean that you cannot experience awareness. You are actually experiencing it all the time because you are awareness and experience is awareness. When you think you are Cecelia, the experiencing entity, then you do not appreciate your nature as awareness – which is the same as *moksa*. In other words, when you see that you are awareness, you see that Cecelia is an object, like all the other objects in your mind. You see that you are free of her. It is freedom from the idea that you are a doer/enjoyer/experiencer that is *moksa*. If you are happy being Cecelia, then there is no sense seeking *moksa*.

Cecelia: Then you tell your readers that watching this reflection a long I-thought arises and then one should own this thought. How does the “I” return to the discussion? You have proven page after page that there is no separate I, just awareness. Can awareness own? I would say not.

Ram: When you look at a tree, a tree-thought appears in the mind. When you look at the reflection of awareness in the mind, the “I am awareness” thought arises in the mind. The “I” thought is not a thought about Cecelia, the separate “I,” the experiencer. It is a thought that represents the knowledge that the “I” is awareness. So awareness that is ignorant of its nature as awareness and thinks that it is Cecelia recognizes that it is actually awareness. It sees that there is only one “I” and that Cecelia is only an idea. Then it takes awareness as its identity and lets go of the idea that it is Cecelia, a separate, unique individual.

Cecelia: Your logical argument ends in a new model of Ramana Maharshi’s *atma vichara*. As you certainly know, *atma vichara* is considered a really difficult path to enlightenment. I should like to know how many persons became enlightened along this method. The *Bhagavad Gita* states that one in a million is ever enlightened. This may be an generous overstatement, says David Godman in the DVD accompanying the book *Arunachala Shiva* (I quote him, as he is a really fine and trustworthy source in spiritual matters).

Ram: I disagree about David's trustworthiness in spiritual matters, and in worldly matters too. He once blatantly cheated me out of some money. And he himself says that he is not an authority on spiritual matters. In fact, he is just a hagiographer. He is good at what he does but he is definitely not an authority on *moksa*. And he has the experiential notion of enlightenment.

As for your question about the number of people who get enlightened, you are correct. Very few get enlightened by any means, but more people get enlightened through Vedanta than any other means. But so what? Many more would get enlightened if they had a proper teaching and proper teacher. And it is also true that whatever means you follow, you will only get enlightened through the knowledge that you are awareness. Ramana, and many of the enlightened people that I know who did not gain enlightenment through the formal traditional method of Vedanta *sadhana*, also said that it was only through knowledge that *moksa* is gained. Why? Because you are already the self. You just do not know what it means to be the self. If you read my

autobiography, it is only when I gave up on seeking experiential enlightenment that *Bhagavan* sent my *guru*, and it was only through knowledge that I gained what I thought I did not have.

Cecelia: In the same book you state that Ramana Maharshi was always in *savikalpa samadhi*. Well, all *samadhis* end after some time has passed. In Ramana's case, *savikalpa samadhi* lasted 30 years! How did that happen??

Ram: That is not what I said. I said he was in *savikalpa samadhi* when he gained the knowledge of who he was. He never said he was in *samadhi*. All he ever said was that he was the self. You are the self irrespective of your state of mind. It has nothing to do with *samadhi*. The self is *samadhi*, in that it sees everything the same. That is the meaning of *samadhi*. You see no difference between yourself and anything else, if there is anything "else." *Samadhi* is very useful for self-inquiry and for burning *vasanas*. It is a great blessing if you can stay in *samadhi*. But if you think *samadhi* is *moksa* you are mistaken. Finally, to say that Ramana was "in" *samadhi* is not correct. Ramana did not think he was the person Ramana after his vision of the self in *samadhi*. He knew that he was the self. So from that point on the name Ramana referred to the self, not a small Tamil man. It is correct to say that *samadhi* is "in" the self. This means that it is an object of your awareness. You know when you are in *samadhi* and you know when you are not in *samadhi*. Isn't that true? If it is true, then you are not *samadhi*, are you? You are the knower of *samadhi*. Please contemplate the last four sentences deeply. Don't read them as part of our argument about *moksa*. Evidently you did not read – or you did not remember – what I said in the interview I sent you about Ramana's teaching.

Cecelia: Greetings from an unqualified aspirant...

Ram: As I suggest above, you seem to be on the road to re-qualifying. The whole point of that unpleasant discussion that we had was that, if you want me to help you, then you have to respond to my questions and statements directly whether you like them or not. I had to be blunt with you because you seemed to think of this relationship as something personal. Your feelings became involved and you could not hear what I was saying. Usually, my personal relationships evolve out of successful communications with people. If I am not being heard, it is pointless for

me to communicate. I do not care if you have a different opinion but, if you want me to understand your view and accept it, then you need to give me the reasons. It needs to be supported by common sense and reason. There is nothing magical or mystical about the relationship with a Vedanta teacher. You will transform through self-knowledge and it can be very dramatic and exciting, but you transform because you have understood the truth and you have accepted it. And the truth working in you brings about the transformation. This email is excellent. Keep it up!

~ Love, Ram

Cecelia: It is nice to hear that I am on the path back to becoming a qualified disciple. But I am now going to tell you such doubts about your own qualifiedness as a *guru/Vedanta* teacher that you will hurl me back to the group of disqualified ones. But that may not be a great loss. When I started to read your autobiography, I was both shocked and disgusted. You are a very unqualified *guru* with your beer and your one-night stands. You are on the way to becoming another Adi Da! You cannot be self-realized because there are severe requirements.

Ram: Objects have no power to keep your mind away from who you are unless you believe that they have the power to make you happy. I haven't drunk alcohol for over forty years.

Cecelia: But I still think you are confusing new spiritual aspirants by your "the beer way to enlightenment," not to speak of the one-night stands.

Ram: You make statements based on no knowledge whatsoever. I have been teaching Vedanta since 1971 and I have never heard such a stupid statement from any of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people whom I have come in contact with. I hate alcohol.

Since the '60s I have always been serially monogamous and have only had relationships with virtuous women that I loved and who loved me. You are so very wrong. I had one unsuccessful relationship in my life when I was in my early twenties. Each one since then has been a success.

Cecelia: If you are unable to form committed sexual relationship, you are unable to stick to a *sadhana* for many, many years. Tell me how/why this is not true, as you seem to disagree.

Ram: This statement is patently untrue, Cecelia. It is only true in the sense that if you are committed to anything other than *moksa*, you will not be successful. You do not have a committed sexual relationship but you have not been successful spiritually because you have been committed to other things like security, helping others, etc. I think it is time to read Chapter 3 of my book and get it clear what the qualifications actually are. If you were only committed to *moksa*, you would not waste your time getting sidetracked in these silly issues of sex and alcohol, etc. For example, why are you worrying about whether or not I am confusing spiritual aspirants? I am working full-time to help you resolve your confusions. I could send you a whole book of email testimonials showing that the way I teach Vedanta has been very successful. I am continually praised for the clarity I bring to the spiritual world. You should just stick to inquiry and really take advantage of the opportunity to resolve your issues which, I suppose, we are doing now.

I think your mind is very scattered, Cecelia. If you actually took your time as I recommended and read my whole book carefully from cover to cover, maybe the big picture would start to form in your mind. But you seem incapable of getting the general implied meaning of my words – the state of mind from which they are written. You seem to get easily stuck on the small things that rub against your beliefs and opinions and cause agitation. I am most amazed about your reaction to my autobiography. I was told by a very well-respected person in the spiritual world that mine was the first autobiography he had read which was not about the small “me.” It seems you only see the small me, the doer, the person who lived that life. As usual, you did not finish it to see how the quest, and my *sadhana* and my *guru*, transformed that small person and how that person disappeared once and for all into who he really was. It is understandable that you think I am just a person because you think you are just a person, a spiritual person on the long, difficult road to enlightenment. There is no blame for this, obviously, Cecelia. But this Cecelia, who incidentally is just a bundle of beliefs and opinions, is not you. But it is what you are stuck with and therefore she is the obstacle to your freedom. I do not have the time to help you work through these issues, Cecelia. I have five or six very qualified, mature, dispassionate people whose minds are completely committed to *moksa* and who have no doubts about me and my competence that I am working closely with right now, and this conversation is becoming a distraction. A few emails back I thought that maybe we had turned the corner and were going to have a proper *satsang* on the topic of *moksa*, and then you went off the rails again and got all negative about the person you think I am. Anyway, I will only reply to emails on the topic of *moksa* from now on. I am not the issue. Our relationship is not the issue. If you have a problem with me, find someone else to help you.

Cecelia: Hi, Ram, yes, I have been sidetracked. I know the reason but I don't want to speak about it, as I know you don't want to hear about my private life. Maybe later, if you want to hear. I will continue on the path and I do hope you will not stop being my teacher.

I AM SORRY for what I have written. I am really asking you to forgive me, as I know that you are a fine person and a good Vedanta teacher, and the only one with whom I can discuss metaphysical matters.

Ram: Of course you are forgiven. I was never upset about it. I have behaved properly and done my best by you, so my heart is clear. In Vedanta we make you into your own *guru*. We do not want dependent, emotional relationships with the people we teach. If you learn self-inquiry properly, you can recognize your *vasanas* and deal with them as they come up.

Cecelia: This afternoon I started to regret what I had written to you, as I realized by introspection what my real motives were. Those motives have a very strong force and they blinded me for one day. I have rebelled against you for some private reasons. I will return to the theory and practice of Vedanta, and remove all other issues to my private life outside these studies.

Ram: That is all that is required. Although I am a good psychologist, I am not interested in it. Everyone who does not know who they are has some kind of psychological dysfunction. It is normal. But a person is not qualified for Vedanta if they are unable to keep their problems in perspective. In your case, you got identified with it and you projected it onto me. It shows a lack of

discrimination – in this way: we have never met or even spoken on the phone. All I know about you comes from what you do and say. All you know about me is what you have heard in emails, videos and my books. You can make certain inferences about what kind of a person I am from these sources but you cannot know how I see my role as a teacher. I have tried to explain it to you but you always interpret what you hear through the filter of your idea about what a *guru* is and what a disciple is. I am not a *guru*, Cecelia. It is not my identity. It is simply a role I play temporarily when I am asked to. Nearly everyone I teach is a friend, someone who likes me as a person, who understands how I see the world and how I see myself. And then in that context certain knowledge is communicated. This style of teaching is called *sakya bhava*, the relationship of friendship and it is modeled in the *Bhagavad Gita* in the relationship between Krishna and Arjuna. I am not anybody's father, mother or lover.

Cecelia: What I have not rebelled against is Vedanta or non-duality. I have just (mentally only) removed the teacher's role from you to David Carce and his lovely *Perfect Brilliant Stillness*.

Ram: As you mention here, this relationship is in your mind. It is a relationship of one part of yourself to another part of yourself. It has nothing to do with me, David or anyone else who is a real person. You can get emotional with me if we have a real relationship, if we make certain commitments to each other, if certain rules are established to govern the relationship. Then if I do not do my part and fulfill my commitment, you can get upset. That is certainly reasonable. But you cannot cook up a relationship in your mind and then pretend that it is a real relationship in the world. This falls under the definition of fantasy. It is typical of people who have suffered real or imaginary abuse.

Cecelia: I am sorry that I could not appreciate your autobiography. I think it is written by an American to other Americans. It is violent, according to my taste. But I hope I did not hurt you. I will try to reread it later.

Ram: It is a human story, Cecelia. I just happen to have the *karma* of being born in America. People around the world appreciate it. How can you say it is violent if you did not finish it? It is quite the opposite of violent. It is the story of a sinner who was redeemed. It is a universal tale. It is not personal. If you had stayed with it you would have developed great *bhakti* for the Lord. Your likes and dislikes are very strong and you are easily seduced by them.

Cecelia: Meanwhile, I have committed myself very deeply, maybe it would be better described as a deep understanding that all there is, is really only awareness or consciousness. We, the whole mankind, are in a "divine hallucination," quoting Ramesh Balsekar. There is no free will.

Ram: If "there is no free will" is a deep understanding, I would hate to see a shallow understanding. That is only half the story, Cecelia. It is a truth. It is not *the* truth.

Cecelia: Here comes a question I have jotted down: what kind of binding *vasanas* do I have? Any answer is appreciated.

Ram: You know very well what they are, Cecelia. You are a psychologist. You can start with this one: “I realized by introspection what my real motives were. Those motives have a very strong force, and they blinded me for one day.” I could tell you the whole story, Cecelia, because you have expressed yourself honestly throughout this communication, but it would do no good. You are highly defended and I am not going to get into a psychological relationship with you. Vedanta starts where psychology ends. This is something you have to figure out on your own. It only works when you discover it.

Cecelia: I remember that you have jotted down somewhere (where I cannot remember now) about my first epiphany, 18.2., “...the person is still there.” I told you that losing the “I” felt a bit painful. I still feel that I am attached to my I-ness and I would like to overcome it. Theoretically, I understand I am just a wave in the ocean; on some other level, I am still attached.

Ram: That is correct. You definitely are attached to your idea of who you are. But by admitting it, you are making progress. I will give you another hint: in psychology there is the concept called the Shadow. It is the stuff that contradicts your good opinion of yourself, so you have to keep it hidden in the dark. You cannot accept that you have certain unholy and unhealthy tendencies, so you deny them. But when something in the world triggers them, they burst out on their own and they are most embarrassing. The way you keep from facing them is to get angry with the person – in this case, me – who seemed to cause them. But I did not cause them. They are there already. As I said in a recent email, they are just waiting to come out. *Yoga* is all about purifying them. Patanjali calls them the “*chitta vrittis*.” Once they are purified, then you are ready for *samadhi*. This is why you come back from your high states. They are not purified and they suck you back down into your ego. Your binding *vasanas* were on display for me to see.

Cecelia: Much love and a hug, my dearest James. You are very precious to me. Don't let me slip back to *samsara*!

Ram: That is your job. I am supposed to show you the way out when you slip into it. Anyway, no harm done, Cecelia. But I warn you, if you go at me again like that I will mark your emails as spam and have my email client delete them permanently. I am good for one emotional outburst and that is all. It is not fair to me. I have behaved properly. I have not exploited you in any way. I have been very honest and straightforward. And it is not fair to the others who want my attention and who keep their egos under control. I spend a lot of time on these emails to you and I am not doing it for my health. I am sorry to have to speak plainly but it is my job to keep this relationship on-topic. I invite you to help me.

Cecelia: When my mind calms down a bit, I want to return to the Path as a topic.

Ram: Take your time. It is all we are going to talk about from now on. I am fed up with this emotional crap.

Cecelia: Will you forgive me!?? It was a self-protecting reaction from my unconscious that wrote those emails. It is human, but as far as I am able I will control my unconscious or subconscious in the future. Well, you know anyhow what the subconscious is like, how it behaves, etc. so I don't have to write about it. You mean so much to me, I hoped I could call you to plead that you to continue as my teacher. Please, tell me how to send SMSs to you??

There is a longer email waiting for you. I am so tired I probably will write just some garbage, so I stop. I hope you will not react to all this as "she is so impulsive, I cannot continue teaching her"! I rebelled, because you are so important to me.

~ Much love, Cecelia

Ram: It's okay, Cecelia. Don't worry about it. I don't *satsang* by SMS.

That ugly letter caused me to feel a great wave of compassion for you. It must be very difficult to be troubled with such a moralistic, unforgiving mind. I also found it rather amusing. The irony is certainly unmistakable. It certainly can't be about me because you are obviously unclear about who I am. Am I the most wonderful psychologically and spiritually astute person you praised so profusely for so long or am I the horrid, demonic, self-deluded, dangerous, psychopathic *guru* that you now despise?

Let's go over your statements and see if there is any objective truth to them and why you feel as you do. Since you told me that I am such a great psychologist, you will naturally be happy to get the benefit of my wisdom on your psychology. I offer it because my input on the topic of *moksa* seems not to interest you, although it recently seemed that maybe we had turned the corner on our conflict and would be able to discuss it rationally.

I can understand your reaction to that brief period of my life, considering your nature, but it certainly conflicts with the amazingly positive feedback that I have been getting from many others. And if you had overcome your reactions to the first part you would have come to a very different conclusion. Yes, I was a big sinner but by the grace of God my life was redeemed. If you had read the story dispassionately and through to the end, you would have thought differently. I should also remind you that these things took place over thirty years ago and you have no direct evidence that I am the same person.

Here is what I think about your reaction: there are some deep subconscious issues (*samskaras*) centering around unworthiness that you have not yet resolved. I think your interest in psychology was motivated by an attempt to resolve them. I think that when I was blunt with you, it awakened that issue and you became angry. When there is this kind of unresolved issue, the anger is always looking for an opportunity to work out and my blunt statements brought it to the surface. When this happens it is very difficult for the person to accept. It goes against their good idea of themselves. You think, "How could I be spiritual and feel such anger?" If the issue is a self-esteem issue – as I believe it is for you – then you immediately felt attacked by me. You believe you have become a victim of another – I am guessing now – evil man. It is probably too much of a cliché to say that I became a stand-in for your father, a husband, a lover or someone who did you "wrong." This keeps your belief in victimhood, with which you are probably quite comfortable after all these years, alive. You may even feel slightly comfortable and a bit saintly being so terribly victimized. You will probably think that I am deluded, but I can't take this seriously because it is simply not true. In fact, it gave me a big laugh. And I definitely do not dislike you for saying what

you think.

Cecelia: Good answer. I started laughing at the whole issue, my too-strict letter to you and your answer. Yet tell me why and how you made beer *sattvic* and the one-night chaps qualified persons? I would disqualify them, telling them to wait a bit and do meanwhile some simple *sadhana*.

Ram: Well, this tone is a bit more rational and reasonable. Beer doesn't make you anything. It makes you dull if you are a dull person. One-night stands are not good or bad spiritually. It is what you make of them. Committed relationships can be a total hindrance on the spiritual path. It is all what you make of them.

And you need to know that I don't qualify or disqualify anyone. The qualifications are well-known. I just cannot teach an unqualified person, no matter how much they think they want enlightenment. As you can see, after many months we are just at the very beginning of working out the very first teaching – the nature of enlightenment. And you are not even clear on it yet.

Cecelia: No, I don't think I have been victimized. I don't think in those terms. Yes, I have been treated badly, but maybe I am too proud to feel sorry about myself. Feeling sorry for oneself is such a waste of time and energy. My dad did that. He was sorry for himself. I consider all my misfortunes just ordinary stuff in *samsara*. Your neologism "*samsari*" is, by the way, good and funny. But I don't understand what you mean by calling *samsara* entropic. Please, inform me.

Ram: Why do you feel sorry for yourself, Cecelia? Give me the spiritual answer, not the psychological answer.

Cecelia: Yes, Cecelia is proud, opinionated and self-righteous.

Ram: That *samsara* is entropic means that everything is always dissolving into nothing. There is no substance to it. It is continually disintegrating. See your emotions, how silly and pointless they are. All they do is wear you out. They accomplish nothing. Actually, they accomplish the opposite of what you want – peace. It is amazing to me – and it is by no means uncommon – that a person who supposedly helps others psychologically does not have his or her own emotions under control.

Cecelia: Oh, yes, I love you. Maybe it is good for me. I still think we met somewhere in our previous lives, where you were a famous *pundit* and I a temptress to make your life complicated.

Ram: You and dozens of other women. Everyone's past lives are full of men and women. I agree with the part about making my life complicated. You have done your best.

This is not about loving me. It is about you loving you. It is not good for you to love me the way you do. It is good to love me for the right reasons. Love is a two-way street, Cecelia. Unrequited

love is a sign of vanity. I have a girlfriend, Cecelia. We love each other.

Cecelia: Yes, I need lots of compassion, so thank you.

Ram: Show compassion towards yourself. Keep your emotions in check.

Cecelia: If your autobiography has got such good feedback, it may mean that my life has been really calm and sheltered. It is so far from my reality.

Ram: I think that is true. You seem to be very naïve, very much in your own world. In some ways it is good and in some ways it is not good.

Cecelia: I am sad that I have lost a good teacher. You simply contradict yourself too often! You told me that you qualify everybody as a disciple, even the sexually unstable and impulsive ones. But me you have disqualified. So which one is the truth? You hate alcohol. Yet you describe in detail how to test oneself if one happens to be among those who stay *sattvic* though drinking beer. Well, I cannot believe that this test was made without a real bottle of beer.

Ram: I think we must have a language problem, Cecelia. English is your second language. Evidently, your comprehension of my sophisticated use of English and your moralistic, judgmental mind is causing you to miss both the ostensible and the implied meanings. For example, I am complete mystified where you got the idea about beer. That example in my book was just a literary device. It has nothing to do with me. It was just a humorous example of how the *gunas* work. You are the only person among scores who write to me who has problems with the meanings. I think you are looking for something when you read. I don't think your mind is clear, so you cannot get the correct meaning.

Even now, after all these useless words, you sound like a pouty little child: "You aren't fair to me. You give candy to the other kids and you don't give me any."

I have asked you many times to stick to the topic that I want to discuss. I told you several times that if you want to have a successful communication with someone you need to pay attention to what they want. I don't want to know how you feel about me. I want to know how you feel about *moksa*. You are either dull-witted or are purposely perverse. All you have to do to have a nice conversation with me is to answer my questions and talk about *moksa*. You seem to have no interest in it whatsoever.

Okay, let me try again. Let's see if you can respond to my question. I sometimes wonder if I am an idiot or a saint for continuing with this absurd conversation. Maybe I am just bored. Anyway, here is my question for the tenth time: why do you think you are qualified for *moksa*?

Cecelia: Attention, Ram Rishi Vedanta University. I will answer your question "Is enlightenment an experience or self-knowledge? What are your arguments for or against both theories."

If you read this mail and answer me shortly, a yes is enough. I will know that your spam filter is not on, and I can send to you my answer.

Ram: Okay, send your answer.

Cecelia: Hi, Ramji, I woke up this morning feeling very happy. The happiness or bliss grew and grew, becoming almost unbearable during breakfast. I tried to meditate, but was not able to do so. All I could do was to witness my bliss. At the same time my brain almost stopped. No thoughts. When I tried to read, I could not remember what I had read. Although I felt so blissful, I also felt that I was somehow outside my body and just witnessing the world. No subjective longings, wishes or plans.

Shall I just ignore this all? Or should I stay calmly at home and let the process take its course? Is this a step towards enlightenment?

You can, if you consider this mail just rubbish, drop this mail into the trash can. I really did not write this in order to rebel against your decision that you will destroy all other mail from me except that which speaks about spiritual matters.

~ Love, Cecelia

Ram: I am happy that you are feeling happy. Evidently you quit quarrelling with the Ramji in your mind and you are now back to normal. Good for you. It seems that you did not read my book or any of the various articles on my website about knowledge and experience, Cecelia. It is very strange that you seem to be unable to understand the most important teaching of Vedanta, the distinction between knowledge and experience. I can't help you if you do not understand that these *samadhi* experiences, these epiphanies, are only useful for *moksa* if they reveal your non-dual nature. In fact, in your case they are an obstacle because you identify with the experiencing entity – Cecelia. They have not revealed the knowledge that you are the self.

As far as enlightenment goes, for you, they are on the same level as negative experiences. In one of your first emails you said correctly that they never last. So some part of you knows how pointless they are. At the same time you became irritated at me for pointing out that they are impermanent. I have hammered at this point over and over – I cannot begin to tell you how important this issue is as far as *moksa* is concerned. In fact, *moksa*, enlightenment, is freedom from experience. I have been going over all our emails from the beginning and it is very clear to me I am unable to teach you anything. I honestly think that it is best for you to forget the idea of enlightenment for now. I recommend that you live a *sattvic* life, do everything with the *karma yoga* spirit and just enjoy yourself as best you can. Maybe at some time you will become dispassionate with reference to what happens to Cecelia. Perhaps one day it will not matter to you if you feel good or bad. If that day comes, you will be a prime candidate for Vedanta.

You say you read my autobiography but you seemed to have missed the most important moment. You got caught up in making judgments about my lifestyle and personality. You were so unhappy that you could not see that the person you were criticizing was not the same person that you are communicating with today. The most important moment in my life was when I realized that all my incredible spiritual experiences had not set me free. They had become a huge burden. And I remember that day forty years ago as if it was yesterday, when I let them go, when I renounced

the whole spiritual pursuit once and for all. I realized that the way I was thinking about enlightenment was completely wrong and that I did not know how to think correctly about it. It was the same realization that the Buddha made when he was sitting under the Bodhi Tree. It is an indispensable step on the path to enlightenment. In my case, I decided to go back to university and get my degree. And that very day my *guru* appeared and I was completely ready for Vedanta – because Vedanta is not interested in these experiences. It is only interested in the one who experiences things and the one who knows the experienter. My *guru* was a very difficult man, unlike me. I am very easygoing and tolerant. You would not have lasted two minutes with him. I had opportunities all the time to make him into a problem, but I didn't. Why? Because I was ready to hear what he was saying. And I knew that God had sent me to him for a reason. So I just sat there, kept my mouth shut and tried to understand what was being said. I was in *samadhi* 98% of the time but it did not mean anything. I do not care what I experience. Whatever comes is fine with me, including this ridiculous argument with you. But honestly, Cecelia, it is useless for me to write any more about this topic. I have been saying the same thing since the beginning. My website is an amazing resource. There is not another book out there that explains enlightenment more clearly. If you saw the emails that I get, you would be amazed. A *guru* does not tell you what to do, Cecelia. I think you have the wrong idea. A *guru* is somebody who helps you understand who you are, if you are ready. See the way you wrote this letter. You are asking me what you should do. It does not matter to me what you do. It matters to me who you are and what you know. When you realize that your understanding is faulty, then you go to a *guru*. He will help you see that how you are looking at life is the problem. You do not surrender to the *guru*. You surrender to Vedanta, the teachings. You see that they way the *rishis* see it, as the road to freedom and you surrender to the teaching. The teacher just helps you get it clear what they are and how to apply them.

I think the reason that you cannot understand what I am saying is that this contact with me – I am basing this on your own words from the first emails – was an opportunity for you to fall in love, which you did and which I pointed out had nothing to do with me, and was a kind of low-level *guru bhakti*. And this feeling – it is just a feeling – became your focus, not the dispassionate inquiry that is required for *moksa*. This showed me that you are only interested in what you experience, not in how you interpret your experiences. You always interpret the experience you are having in terms of how Cecelia feels. When you are having a wonderful experience like today, you feel wonderful and when you are in a big fight with someone like me, you feel bad. You only want to feel good and you do not want to feel bad. This is how everyone is. It is completely normal. But the problem is that you have no control of your experiences. When I got direct and blunt with you because you were not relating to my questions, you got angry with me. At one point you even said I was “cruel,” to use your own words. So the problem with experience-oriented people is that they are tied to the objects – the people and the situations and ideas – that make them feel good. This is bondage. It is freedom from dependence on objects – the first definition of enlightenment in my book – that is *moksa*.

In this email you ask “Is this a step to enlightenment?” This is not a criticism or a judgment, Cecelia, but the question itself shows that the way you think about enlightenment is faulty. There are no steps, Cecelia. Enlightenment is not some goal that you are going to reach at the end of some long road. Enlightenment is your nature. It is you. This is not something to be experienced, because you are experiencing your nature all the time. It is something that you do not understand. Vedanta shows you how to understand it.

~ Love, Ram

Cecelia: Hi. This afternoon I realized that I am just consciousness like all the people that walked past me. They were of the same “stuff,” consciousness/awareness/whatever, as me. I was them and they were me. There is no Cecelia anymore, though the mail still drops into my mailbox. (Quite correctly) I am letting the world float around me and past me, without comments, opinions, longings or wishes.

Ram: Great! That is all that is required.

Cecelia: You were so wrong when you sent the last email telling me to forget searching for enlightenment. That very day enlightenment took a strong grip of me, and I cannot but marvel at what an indescribably wonderful gift I have received!

Yes, enlightenment is known, but it is not knowledge. It has nothing to do with words as the term “knowledge” refers to. So knowledge as a word is misleading for a seeker.

The world looks so incredibly beautiful. All is quite perfect. I am staying in silence.

~ Best wishes, Cecelia

Ram: You are such a conceited, contrary-minded idiot. You don't have a clue what I mean by knowledge. It is right in front of your face and you miss it. This dialogue is like the Beatles song: “I say yes, you say no. I say goodbye, you say hello.” Grow up, Cecelia. Goodbye.

~ Ram

Cecelia: Hi, Ram. Yes, would you give me a new topic to ponder on and write to you? Is enlightenment knowledge or an experience?; it's too difficult for me to write about. All my glimpses, even two-day-long ones, confirm to me that it is beyond words. I think the term you use, understanding, is closest to what I surmise.

I have to gain it, I have to get it; why else continue to live? Life without spirituality is a desert. I will read your book through in order to get an overall view.

~ Love, Cecelia

Ram: What is this game you are playing with me, Cecelia? You have a very strange notion of who I am and what this relationship is. No, I will not give you another topic. This is what I meant by unqualified. You have the wrong attitude and your mind is so scattered you cannot keep it on the topic. I will say this for the tenth time: I can only teach you if you are clear about the nature of *moksa*. At every point in this conversation you have gone on about your epiphanies, your experiences. This means that you are not qualified for Vedanta. If you are qualified, Vedanta can enlighten you. If not, not.

Even in this email you tell me that it is beyond words. Yes it is but are YOU beyond words? This is about YOU, not Cecelia. Your mind is just too dull for me to teach you. You whine and

complain and insult me, and you want me to teach you? It is absurd. If I keep up this relationship with you, all the true *gurus* back to *Bhagavan* himself will turn over in their graves.

So you need to adjust your attitude, Cecelia. There is no humility. Go through our emails. Look at Cecelia from the perspective of a psychotherapist. Make a diagnosis. You will be shocked. Honestly.

(Later): I am so irritated about the way you behave that I missed the most important issue in your email. Please listen to this. You say “I have to gain it, I have to get it, why else continue to live? Life without spirituality is a desert.”

Vedanta says that you cannot gain it. You cannot experience it. Why? Because it is you. Can you gain you? If you already have it, then the only way you can gain what you already have is to understand what and where it is. This is why knowledge is enlightenment. This is why I cannot help you. Nobody can help you. Even God cannot help you because you want something that you already have. Yet you think it is something that you gain and lose.

Think about this. I have very little faith that you will understand. I feel sorry for you. Do not blame yourself. You cannot help the fact that your intellect is so fixated on what you do not have that you cannot see what you do have. This is how 99.999% of human beings are. It is not your fault. It is just ignorance. I am sorry for being so harsh with you, but your mind is so dull and you are so willful and contrary that it is virtually impossible to teach you anything.

Cecelia: Hi, Ram. “I have to gain it”: if you want to understand what I am truly wanting to say, you must take in consideration the limitations of words. What I wanted to express is: I want to live consciously and completely in the state where I am all the time conscious of the self. No more falling back to the illusory entity, Cecelia! Yes, I know that I, as well as every human being and the whole universe, is awareness/self. I do not have a doubt about it.

So don't pity me! I have no problem about who I am. The desert I felt when I wrote my email was the desert of needing a teacher and needing the company of fellow students/seekers. Nice that you sent me the email.

Ram: Now, listen, Cecelia. You are still thinking wrongly. You say “I want to live consciously in that state,” etc. There is no state you can live in consciously all the time. States change, as you well know. The self is not a state you can live in. The self is you, the one who wants to live in some state. You have the wrong idea about who you are. You think you are the one who is living, who is experiencing things. You are not. This is why you are so frustrated. If you had just read my second chapter like I asked, this would have been very clear. See how much trouble you make for me. It is not a language problem.

You are just stuck with the idea that you need to experience something more than what you are experiencing now. You are identified with bad feelings and you want to be over them. It is natural, but it does not work that way. If you are going to progress spiritually you have to find out WHY you want to experience life differently from the way you are experiencing it now. This will lead you to self-realization. Craving for some kind of *samadhi* or *satori* is no different from an alcoholic craving for a drink or a junkie craving for heroin. You are a *samadhi* junkie. That is all. It feels good and you crave it.

