

# Ask for Help

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Student:** Dear James, it has been a real blessing finding you, James. I don't imagine you could "guru me too much." In fact, if you would allow me to consider you as my teacher, it would be a great relief, as that part of my seeking could be considered to be over too, and would put to rest the doubts I've carried for these several years about lacking exactly that, a *guru* or teacher.

**James:** Yes, you can consider me to be your teacher.

**Student:** My reading list at the moment comprises the first two chapters of your new book, also your book *How to Attain Enlightenment*, the *Experience and Knowledge* booklet and *The Crown Jewel of Discrimination*. After that, I will order the entire video series as you and Sundari suggested. It will be money well-spent, I'm sure.

**James:** Yes. The idea is to be very systematic so the big picture becomes completely clear.

**Student:** It's interesting to me that since I "jumped in" and wrote to you, even before receiving any replies, I already began to feel that obstacles were beginning to be removed. It's almost as if the self were waiting for me to just give up and ask for help.

**James:** Asking for help is a crucial and absolutely necessary moment in one's spiritual life. It means that you are open to teaching. Teaching is not learning in the sense of interpreting what you learn from by experience. It doesn't work unless you realize that your experience and your interpretation of it are inadequate. For me, one of the most emotional moments in the *Bhagavad Gita* is the moment when Arjuna asks Krishna to teach him.

**Student:** At the same time, I listened to your talks on *karma yoga*, and this idea of "giving up the doer" finally made sense to me, as well as how *bhakti* as love of the self fits into this. So I can give the mind a goal, but at the same time consider all the actions as done by *Isvara*. Now I just need to find/choose that goal.

**James:** The goal is always freedom, but freedom is not something you attain. It is the nature of yourself. But freedom requires a clear mind so the goal is a clear doubt-free mind. It is a reasonable goal that can be attained by knowledge and action.

**Student:** As you said in your reply, "The experience you had was the big experience," so should I not now consider the search to be over, and all this other activity is simply an effort to remove ignorance and thereby come to a more complete and "stabilised" knowledge of reality?

**James:** Yes, indeed. This does not mean that other non-dual epiphanies won't happen – they may – but that you are free of the expectation that some kind of experience is necessary for you to be who you are.

**Student:** I did have many “spiritual” experiences throughout my life, before and after the knowledge of reality arose. However, as you put it, such go the way of all experiences, and they do in fact leave in their wake a doubt-shaped hole that appears as though it can only be filled by another, even larger, experience (or a sedative perhaps!).

**James:** Very well put. There is no solution in the *maya*-generated world of experience. It is a zero-sum game.

**Student:** So your assurance helps me to relax. The knowledge is here. There is plenty of time, as all time is in me. This also helps me to witness that suffering “experience-seeker,” tumbled along by the *gunas* and *vasanas* in the *samara*.

**James:** This is the attitude: there is nothing to gain, nowhere to go, I will just leisurely investigate myself with the help of the teachings.

**Student:** God bless you both and your mission to serve the truth.

**James:** Appreciation is always appreciated.