

Can't Get Back to Zero

Ram (James Swartz)

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Seeker: Dear James, I have been a long-term seeker and have studied Neo-Advaita for over 10 years. I have a good intellectual understanding of the concepts and I suppose the quality of my life has improved as I have become more accepting of “what is.”

Recently I have started to practice Ho'Oponopono after a brief flirtation with *A Course in Miracles*. As you are probably aware, Ho'Oponopono is to do with taking 100% responsibility for anything that comes into your awareness, such as other people's behaviour and personal emotions. By repeating the phrases “I'm sorry, please forgive me, thank you and I love you,” I am effectively petitioning the universe/God to remove shared memories that have built up over many lifetimes. The aim is to erase all programming to get back to Zero (divine inspiration).

Advaita is obviously effective at revealing our true identity as awareness, and as a consequence it might be seen that the content of life is a sort of irrelevance. Ho'oponopono, on the other hand, is a system of continual cleaning with the aim to get back to Zero (God).

I would like your advice as to what system to commit to, self-enquiry or Ho'oponopono. Are they mutually exclusive or complementary, in your opinion?

James: I had never heard of Ho'Oponopono but if you find that it makes your life more pleasant, it can't be bad. It has a few elements of what Vedanta calls *karma yoga*, Vedanta's core practice, but you can't compare it to Vedanta.

It is good that from your contact with Advaita you are more accepting of “what is.” Taking responsibility for what comes into your awareness is both helpful and not helpful. Taking responsibility for others emotions is not helpful. Taking responsibility for your emotions is sometimes helpful and sometimes not. It is a big topic. You will see what I mean once you are familiar with self-inquiry.

Erasing all programming to get back to Zero is a pipe dream. However, erasing enough of the negative emotions to get a contemplative mind is necessary if you want to be free. Getting back to Zero is not possible because you are already Zero. Vedanta reveals the fact that you are already Zero.

Before I can help you, you need to carefully read my book *How to Attain Enlightenment*, signing on to the logic at every step. You should also read the website, *ShiningWorld.com*. And you should read the *satsangs*, working back through the archives. This will familiarize you with Vedanta. You could order the *Self Inquiry* video series as well. *Self Inquiry 2011* is a good one to start with. It is about 12 hours of introductory teaching for \$50.

I can tell by your email what you are not familiar with Vedanta. It is not a “system.” It is not a “path” in the sense that this word is normally understood. It is a scientific means of self-knowledge. You will understand what I mean when you get to Chapter III of the book. Once you are more or less up to speed you will be able to answer your question yourself.

Certain qualifications are required for Vedanta. I cannot tell from what you have said so far if you are qualified and I don't want to encourage or discourage you. I suspect, since Neo-Advaita has not been effective, that you may be ready for some spiritual red meat. In which case Vedanta may be for you. You could certainly benefit from *karma yoga*. So I suggest that you practice what you are doing now and investigate Vedanta along the lines I have suggested. Once you are sufficiently informed write and let me know what you think.

~ Love, James