

Enlightenment and Bad Manners

Ram (James Swartz)

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/333>

James: Hi, Theodore. It seems you have an issue with ShiningWorld. You call it an organization, have made unflattering comments to my wife and made certain statements about the “authenticity” of some of the people we have recommended to write *satsangs*.

ShiningWorld is not an organization. It is a group of like-minded friends whose *sadhana* is serving Vedanta. The rules are established and enforced by *Isvara*. I encouraged others to write *satsangs* to refine their understanding and their ability to communicate because *Isvara* has other duties for me. The *dharma* of friendship is the *dharma* of ShiningWorld because it is the *dharma* of Vedanta teaching. Krishna and Arjuna were friends. Friends treat each other as equals. They do not set themselves apart by doubting each other’s authenticity. Friendship is based on the non-dual nature of reality.

It is strange that since your “self-realization” you have become some sort of expert on who is enlightened and who isn’t. If your self-knowledge was firm this would not be an issue. It seems you have not studied the teachings carefully enough, because self-realization is not a special status. Everyone is just simple, ordinary awareness, so there is no cause for one person to evaluate another. Enlightenment is the vision of non-duality. Those of us that count each other as friends are only interested in refining our knowledge of Vedanta, not in playing the game of oneupmanship.

It seems you have written several of our endorsees and not received the kind of replies that satisfied you. We are normal, hard-working people with busy lives. I, for example, am unable to reply to everyone who wants to communicate with me. My seminars are packed, I have invitations to teach that could keep me going for several lifetimes. So I cannot reply to everyone although I try. At the same time I have certain desires that need to be fulfilled by others and I often get ignored. Nobody is required to respond to me when I want something. There is a lovely verse in the *Gita*: “All beings follow their nature. What use is expectation?” If self-knowledge does not give someone proper self-esteem understanding this fact should suffice. If you had sufficient dispassion this disturbance would not have occurred. Dispassion is “indifference to the results of your actions.” If you want validation from others you may have to wait until the world sees fit to give it. It may never come.

It is not my place to lecture you but I choose to take this situation created by you as a request for a communication, so I am going to tell you a few things that will hopefully be received in the *karma yoga* spirit.

The self, not Theodore, is the center of the universe. His “enlightenment” is not a special status. It is just the removal of self-ignorance, going back to normal. On the basis of what are you going to evaluate the authenticity of anyone, particularly insofar as you only demean yourself when you demean anything?

I see your behavior as a sign of immaturity, insecurity and smallness. When people feel small they often have a have a need to feel superior. You are not superior to anyone or anything. When

a person has this kind of complex he or she is often not sensitive to the rules of social discourse. There is a great saying by Dogen: "Next to good manners, enlightenment is the most important thing in the world." It is one of my favorites.

Theodore did not show good manners in this situation. In the first place it is an insult to the spirit of non-duality. It is an insult to the *sampradaya*. It is an insult to the teacher that you showed so much reverence for, a teacher that seems to only be what you want him to be. If you respected me you would respect my wife and my friends. It is not good manners. We included you in our lives out of love. We introduced you to our friends out of love. And when you did not get the recognition you wanted you became unpleasant. The need for recognition means that you do not recognize who you really are, or if you do you lack confidence in it.

When there is a violation of a particular *dharma* there is a way to make matters right. I leave it up to you to figure it out. In the meantime I suggest that you read up on enlightenment sickness. I hope you have a speedy convalescence.

Note: Theodore's reply was extremely condescending and insulting, and I choose not to publish it here; it is simply too ugly. It is so strange because I was not involved in his issue at all. I heard about it after the fact from a third party, and I have a raft of lovely letters from Theodore praising me to the heavens. Perhaps I should publish them side by side with his nasty reply – but other duties call. This Jekyll-Hyde episode saddens me, but anything is possible in *maya*, so I take it as *prasad*. Evidently, *Bhagavan* wants to show how projection and denial can be hard at work even in people who know who they are. It teaches that self-inquiry should never be abandoned and humility is not necessarily an immediate consequence of self-realization.