

Pauranic Devotion

Ram (James Swartz)

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Kent: Hey, I also meant to ask, are there any Ramana texts worth looking at or good translations of things that he may have “sanctioned,” sort of?

Ramji: Try *Upadesha Saram, Essence of the Teaching*.

Kent: I’ve been getting into finding out more about things connected to him, was in Los Angeles and went to one of the Vedanta bookshops connected to the Ramakrishna Society, found a lot of stuff I hadn’t seen before and ordered a couple more out of curiosity, feeling like there were little gems here and there I liked. Interestingly, it seems the older he got or whenever he commented on things, he actually seems to spell out that Vedanta is the pinnacle, but only to those with the background; at least that’s my understanding.

Ramji: That’s true. He understood the significance of Vedanta. When he said he wasn’t a teacher he meant that he was the self and that he was not trained in the tradition, that he never had a *guru*. But he was a Vedantin by nature and he was steeped in Vedic culture, which was still very strong during his time.

Kent: Some of his devotees seem to gloss over that, but also running into intimate bio stuff written early on, one gets the more human glimpse of devotees reciting things in his presence and him with his apparent super memory getting it and having a very organic spontaneous *sadhana* inquiry defining his experience and growing in understanding, he also pretty much says so in some quotes, like “I had a *Pauranic* sense of God, and felt possessed, then heard this other stuff and said, oh, that’s what it is – how nice.” But earlier still, having familiarized himself with other literature, chose those points of view for others associated with that to walk them to his inquiry.

Ramji: This is correct. *Pauranic* means a dualistic approach. He said he “had” a *Pauranic* approach, meaning it wasn’t one anymore, that owing to his experience and the knowledge he got from it he was a “Vedantin,” a non-dualist. Most of his devotees don’t understand Ramana at all. They want to understand but they don’t know what non-duality means. Most are *Pauranic bhaktas*. It’s okay. Most people are not qualified for non-duality. The Ramanashram is a *Pauranic* institution. Ramana is the deity. They think he was a lucky guy who got an epiphany, and they hope that something like that will happen to them if they hang around and worship him, imitate his life, etc. It’s not bad. They are working on their qualifications. He didn’t present non-duality in a systematic way, only from his personal standpoint, so you get contradictions, although *Sat-Darshanam* is a simple, straightforward Vedanta text. He was not conflicted – he was a *mahatma*. Over the years he studied Yoga and Vedanta *sastra*, and appreciated well the value of Vedanta.

Kent: It seems, though, hard to find good translations of his words, so that seems to muddle it up more. David Godman seems like a great devotee, but something about his point of view seems a bit off – though a very nice guy. Any translators you think are getting it more accurately?

Ramji: Yes, David Godman is a great Ramana devotee, but he's only a pundit, a hagiographer.

Kent: Got your *The Yoga of Love*. By the way, it very nicely seems to be putting a lot in perspective, but I need to focus a bit more and work for some structure, I guess, if I want more out of it. I appreciate all the help.

Ramji: Yes. Your mind is extremely undisciplined. Sometimes I can't make any sense out of what you are saying. It is often like hieroglyphics. This letter is an exception, much more logical and sensible. Your *jiva* is what we call a "celestial," feet not firmly on the ground. You're a floater. Fortunately, you have the *mumukshutva* which seems to be increasing as you get older. It will pull you though. But you're still just poking around in the spiritual world. It's a shame that you don't really understand or don't want to follow the program as it is. Both *The Yoga of Love* and *The Essence of Enlightenment* present the big picture properly.

Kent: On a more relevant note though, is meditation on the thought "Wow, existence is (why is there, instead of not, well, there just is 'I am here'?)" enough for the idea of that is me, or awareness is that springing forth as that idea? For knowledge? Is that knowledge?

Ramji: Only for qualified people, Kent. Knowledge is "I am whole and complete, non-dual unborn, ever-present, limitless awareness." But you can't meditate on it until you have been taught how to meditate. You need to go through the program – listening, reasoning and actualizing (*sravanna*, *manana* and *nididhyasana*). Your mind is *rajasic*. It hops around from one thing to the next. It needs discipline, the ability to stick with one topic. One day it will all be clear to you, probably when you have a few gray hairs. Then you will realize the value of Vedanta and commit yourself to it. It's all there. And I have made the whole thing very accessible for Western people. Read the *satsangs* on the website – the testimonials.

~ Ramji