

Small Shift, Big Consequences

Ram (James Swartz)

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/752>

Ravi: Hi, Ram. Thank You. Thanks for everything. The site, the clear teachings, the *satsangs*. It has helped tremendously, especially for a person like me.

Let me tell something about myself. I'm Indian, but grew up in Africa and then moved back to India. As a result I didn't quite imbibe our culture. In fact I was totally Westernized. I see that in modern Indians over here as well. There is a lack of appreciation of our own culture. Religion is especially viewed with suspicion.

So when the urge to seek the truth came I turned to Buddhism. It's got a much better press in the West compared to Vedanta. I started with Vipassana and then Zen. I didn't make much headway there. Then four years back I discovered *I Am That*. That was a turning point. I read that religiously till I discovered Ramana. As you can see, I was going with the export *gurus* as they had good press in the West. After reading Ramana continuously and practicing inquiry, I came to a point where I experienced the self, or the "I Am," in my mind very distinctly. I figured that if I just continued meditation the ultimate truth would eventually dawn.

In your article on the qualifications of a seeker you make a point about the suspicious seeker. I couldn't help smiling. That described me very well. I in fact did visit your *satsang* in Tiruvannamalai in January 2011. I sat in the back row trying to figure out your agenda. ☺ I then left, but continued to read your site. As a suspicious seeker I just couldn't trust anyone, so I turned to Ramana as my *guru*, one of the old dead greats, as you said. Though his teaching is consistent and based on Vedanta, it is not a clear path.

When I started reading the *satsangs* at your site, something happened. I was really surprised. I didn't think just reading the *satsangs* or anything would make a difference. I was looking for an experiential solution to enlightenment. But reading a particular *satsangs* changed that. Suddenly the mind moved from subject to object. I knew I was not the body. Though I had read that line a thousand times, I knew it for the first time. I knew I was the eternal, changeless, actionless awareness. I knew that the knowledge, knower and the known are one. I had read all this so many times. But now I knew it.

Some of the changes in me after that are:

1. A strong conviction that no object in the world can bring true happiness. I now know that relying on any object for happiness is misery. I had a strong sex *vasana*. But now though I still find women attractive there is no desire to possess, just the understanding of the emptiness of all that.
2. Frequent bliss that is uncaused, and along with the bliss, unconditional love for all existence.
3. A complete lack of ambition. I used to have a desire to travel, watch movies, etc. Nothing interests me now other than Vedanta and the self.

Ram: This is about as good a checklist of the effects of self-knowledge as any. When a person is ready even a single *satsang* can effect the shift from the *jiva's* perspective to the self's perspective. I get quite a few letters like yours every year. If you want a good read get my book *How to Attain Enlightenment*.

Ravi: I'm reading Swami Dayananda Saraswati's *Bhagavad Gita Home Study Course*. It appears to contain enough Vedanta for now to keep me happy. I can't read any Indian language, though I speak a few. So I am restricted to the English versions of the scriptures and the commentaries on them.

Ram: Dayananda's book is excellent. His *Vivekachoodamani* is also excellent.

Ravi: The question I had was, how I should proceed now? Should I seek a real teacher, maybe one of Swami Dayanada's disciples?

Ram: It doesn't seem like you need one. If you do, *Bhagavan* will send one. I don't recommend looking for one.

Ravi: How and when do I know if the knowledge is firm?

Ram: Check yourself up against the many verses in the *Gita* that describe a *jnani*. You can get my rendition of the *Gita* at my website and read the sections detailing the signs of *moksa*. Keep studying the Vedanta. Make it a habit. The knowledge is firm when it destroys your binding *vasanas*, which it seems to have done. The sex one is a good bellweather.

Ravi: Thanks again for everything. Your love of Vedanta and India was a blessing for me.

Ram: You are most welcome.