

The Value of Vedanta

Ram (James Swartz)

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Marin: Hi, ShiningWorld. I am from Latvia. After being introduced to a lot of teachers and reading a lot of books I can say that I have finally found something that really makes sense to me... Vedanta! To tell the truth, while reading and watching videos of other authors, such as Eckhart Tolle, Adyashanti, etc., first I was amazed by the essence of their teachings, but after familiarizing with them I developed some questions. I thought that what all these people were teaching was great, but they were only talking from their point of view. I mean they were talking to the people as awareness (if can put it like this), but nearly no one talked about what to do from the student's point of view, what a person needs to develop in order to realise his self. After having these ideas I thought that if all the teachers could gather they could give the people a more useful walk-through in order to really help them. I came upon James' *How to Attain Enlightenment* book accidentally, and to tell the truth I was very sceptical after reading the title. Based on what I read before, the title didn't make any sense. How can someone teach you how to get enlightened? Based on what I have read before you could do nothing to gain it, because there is nothing to gain. I left the book and somehow after some days searching through videos at YouTube I saw an interview with James, and I decided to watch. After watching I decided immediately to buy *How to Attain Enlightenment* and discovered some videos too of a German retreat. Currently, I am reading the book and watching the *satsangs*. I can say that finally I came to something that really makes sense to me. Unlike Neo-Advaita, Vedanta really helps all the people that are searching. As I said before, I am constantly studying and soon I thought of buying some new materials from your site. I want to purchase a full set of the teaching that you are offering, but don't want to buy duplicated stuff, that's why I am writing to you.

As I can see in the advanced course, the first step is *Tattva Bodh*. I saw the samples of this video at YouTube, and as far as I can see is the same material covered in the German Vedanta retreat that already existed at YouTube (the one I am currently listening to). I wanted to ask, is this really the same material or do I have to purchase the *Tattva Bodh* video first? What about *Tattva Bodh* and *Atma Bodh*?

Thank you so much for reading my email, and I wish you all the best.

I send all the blessings to James and to all your staff. A big hug from Latvia.

James: Dear Marin, this is a very excellent letter. It is absolutely true. The modern "teachers" do not teach; they talk about the self from the point of view of their own experience, which is not all bad, but it is not good either. A teaching is a time-tested set of ideas and practices that produce predictable results. Neo-Advaita has no methodology to put the process of enlightenment into the hands of the inquirer once he or she has been properly taught. Enlightenment is more or less left to fate/chance/grace, etc., as if it was an event that "just happened." Enlightenment – consciousness/awareness – is the nature of the self; it is not a happening, although it may seem like an event when the last vestige of the inquirer's ignorance is dispelled by the teaching.

If you understand the material in the German self-inquiry seminar at YouTube, you don't need to

study *Tattva Bodh*. You can read the text alone to familiarize yourself with the terminology. But I think you should get the full set. Yes, the self-inquiry series on the full set is more or less the same, but it is much more comprehensive, as it was a ten-day seminar that is designed to be watched while reading the book *How to Attain Enlightenment*. If you want more or less the same material – Vedanta is a complete teaching, so all the texts cover the same basic material, emphasizing certain aspects of the teaching at the expense of others – you can get *The Essence of Enlightenment*, as it is easier to read for people for whom English is a second language and it develops certain topics more fully that are presented in *How to Attain Enlightenment*. Once you have the big picture from the *Self Inquiry Series*, you should watch the *Bhagavad Gita* series. If you are confident with reading *How to Attain Enlightenment* and the German series at YouTube, then you can just get the *Bhagavad Gita* teaching, later, *Vivekachoodamani* and finally, *Panchadasi*.

Basically, since you have been led to Vedanta, you should know that you probably will not look for another teaching. It is “the knowledge that ends the search for knowledge.” It has worked for six thousand years, more or less. Almost nobody who really understands what Vedanta is about moves on to another teaching. If they do, it means that they are just not qualified for Vedanta in the first place. So you should commit yourself to it completely. The other teachings prepared you, so they are good, but Vedanta is a scientific and professional approach and it works like no other path. In fact it is a pathless path, the complete knowledge behind every path. From your letter I can tell that you appreciate its value. If you have questions you can write to one of the ShiningWorld teachers.

~ Love, James