

Starting to Study Vedanta

Tan

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Tan: Hello, Bob. Sundari, James' wife, has asked me to answer your email.

I will support you in your Vedanta study.

James always recommends to first read the book chapter by chapter, slowly.

Only move on to the next chapter when you can sign on to the logic of the previous chapter.

If you have questions or doubts, summarize the doubts/questions you have on the chapter and write them to me.

Take your time in formulating the questions.

We will progress step by step, slowly, diligently.

It is important for you to understand that Vedanta does not solve financial, health or psychological problems.

Psychological issues especially should be dealt with first. Although Vedanta might help with minor issues, it is not geared towards that.

Vedanta will be successful when life's lessons have given the seeker a certain maturity. I think you had some tough lessons.

Are you able to take them dispassionately? You are not the one dealing the cards. You receive the cards. Can you dispassionately make the best of the hand that has been dealt?

It is best is to start by reading the book. Take your time.

~ Love, Tan

Bob: Hi, Tan. Do you prefer that I send you emails using Yahoo?

Personally, I dislike the Yahoo email setup, but if it's a problem for you I will use Yahoo.

Tan: No problem, use whatever mail system is better for you, it does not matter. You can respond to <tan@shiningworld.de>.

Bob: You know, I do have a question. What would you call what I see as the watcher (observer) inside of me?

Ever since I was a kid I felt like I had a projector behind my mind and behind the projector was the real me. Even when I get sick and my body hurts I know that what is watching the body feel is not hurt in the least.

Tan: Bob, in a way you already had a very advanced understanding. The answer also depends on what characteristics you believe this observer has.

The observer is a reflection of you, awareness. You, awareness, are a non-experiencing witness.

The observer is a reflection of yourself – awareness – in the mind (or better, subtle body) and is capable of experiencing and observing objects (feelings, thoughts, actions, etc.).

The subtle body is one of the three bodies of reality. Someone like yourself can be quite advanced in one area (like seeing that there is an observer) but can have doubts or ignorance in some other areas.

That is why I think you should really start with the beginning of the book. All these concepts, such as the subtle body, will be dealt with one by one and build on each other.

The proper use of language (even if we avoid Sanskrit, which we can do if you wish) is very important. One of the main perpetrators of confusion in the mind is inconsistent usage of language, and vague ideas.

Vedanta is a means of self-knowledge through words (it is called in Sanskrit a *abda pramana*).

Vedanta's (dualistic) concepts and words will dissolve (dualistic) concepts that are not in line with your true identity and which create suffering.

It is the mind where the ideas that create suffering will be dissolved. You are already awareness and freedom. So what will change is ignorance or doubts about your true nature and confusion in the mind will be dissolved.

Bob: I am aware that I am aware, that much I know. However, this knowledge does not bring me the freedom I seek.

Tan: What freedom are you seeking?

Is it freedom from pain, insecurity, loneliness?

The goals of seeking will also be dealt with in the first chapters of the book.

The majority of us seeks for years without ever clarifying exactly what it is we are seeking and what is behind the word such as enlightenment, freedom, etc.

Just by discriminating exactly between what we seek (understanding of my true nature) and what not (blissful experiences, which will not last), many confusing notions in the mind can disappear and the energy of seeking can focus towards the right goal.

Bob: Oh, well, just waiting for James' book to arrive. By the way, how is James doing after his surgery?

Tan: Yes, it is good to start reading the book.

About James I do not know. He seemed better.

Bob: Thanks again for taking me on.

Tan: You are welcome.

Bob: You wrote: "What freedom are you seeking? Is it freedom from pain, insecurity, loneliness?"

In a way, yes. I know that these things will always remain as long as there is a body-mind, but for freedom it would be not to let them matter to me.

Tan: The search in Vedanta for freedom (*moksa*) is freedom from identification with limiting objects like the body and the mind which cause painful ideas like "I will die" or "I am lonely," etc.

Bob: I have no dislike of Sanskrit at all. I was only saying I have no desire to be a Sanskrit scholar. I agree, so much can be misleading and get lost altogether with just words.

Tan: Good. Then I can use, once in a while, the Sanskrit words, not only to use the more proper words, but also to remind us both that it is not my teaching but an impersonal teaching that is more than 3,000 years old.

Bob: You and James use the word "understanding" a lot. This word confuses me at times, as it seems that it belongs solely to the mind.

For example, when I speak about the observer, it's not, in my opinion, understanding, it's much more a faster-than-instant knowing. I just know it, not with the mind where I need to think about it, but a knowing that has always been there not planted by any seed thoughts.

Tan: That is correct. Understanding about yourself does not belong to the mind. It is prior or subtler than the mind, because you are prior to the mind. The mind cannot directly know you.

You as awareness are aware of the observer (which is a reflection of yourself in the mind) without the usage of the mind. There are no thoughts involved.

Your mind of course afterwards can store a concept of that (as is now happening with these words) in your mind. But it does not matter, since that concept is true.

Concepts are neither bad nor good. They are either in line with the truth and do not cause suffering or are not in line with the truth and cause suffering.

Bob: Thanks again, with love.

Tan: Much love, Tan.