

An Angry Attack

Ram (James Swartz)

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/174>

Seeker: I notice at your website you have posted a letter from Swami Suddhananda, *The Swami Repents*. Suddhananda is one of your own *guru* brothers. Why would you be interested in posting his letter at your website? Have you ever been associated with him? Are you posting this as a denouncement, as a dismissal of the tradition? Is this done in the hope that you are elevated by it? If not, then what is your purpose?

James: Yes, I know Swami. I recommended him to many people. I was as surprised as anyone else. The truth is beyond the tradition. How could I be elevated by it? It is important that people exercise discrimination with regard to *gurus*.

Seeker: I attended your classes at Tiruvannamalai. On reflection I found it curious that an American chooses Tiru, a town thousands of miles from his home in the U.S. to conduct teachings primarily to Westerners. Why not sit in Santa Fe, Santa Monica, Mount Rushmore or New York City? Why choose India?

James: I have spent thirty years in India. I love it. *Bhagavan* set it up this way. If you have a nice place for me to teach, please invite me and I will think about it.

Seeker: Is it to because your audience won't accept you as readily as a teacher in the U.S. but are ready to accept you in India because seekers find comfort and commonality in the fact that Sri Ramana lived under the mountain? Are you not capitalising on India and her traditions and Ramana's popularity, using this to sell yourself as a teacher?

James: I teach all over the world. You can look at my schedule. I only teach in India for six weeks. I am popular because I am a good teacher and I wrote a book that has made me popular. I get invited to teach in many places.

Seeker: I attended your class. In your class you missed, slipped and tripped up on a fundamental yet crucial point in the teachings. Referring to Dayananda's book as your authority you exposed yourself - your expression of the truth was flawed. Indeed if your understanding of these teachings is complete - as your presence under the mountain and your insistence on teaching in the shadow of the tradition and Ramana presumes - then your teaching would need no reference - you being your own ultimate reference and ultimate authority.

James: I teach Vedanta. The scripture is the authority. It so happens that my experience backs up what scripture says and scripture validates my experience.

Seeker: If indeed you know yourself as the truth, why would you refer to the good Swami disparagingly or need to dismiss him – why the need to refer to anyone? Why Ramana? Why Tiru? Why Dayananda Swamiji? Why anything? Consciousness needs a reference? No – you do. You need all these references.

James: Good *swamis* don't violate *dharma*. Swami Suddhananda violated *dharma* and *sanyassi dharma*. The tradition will not survive if teaching *swamis* violate their *dharma*. Anyone that does needs to be exposed. In any case I did not expose him. His devotees did.

I love Ramana. Dayananda is one of my *gurus*. I have total respect for him. If you knew me, I could accept your statements if they were truth, but you have no idea who I am and why I am doing what I am doing. My posting made you angry because of beliefs you have about the *sampradaya*. You direct it toward me. But it has nothing to do with me.

I have never met you. If you feel this way about me, why do you read my website? Why not find some other teaching? I have been teaching for forty years. I am a public figure. When you are a public figure people project their ideas on you. I know the difference between what people think of me and who I am. I am a successful teacher because the teaching works. People's lives are transformed by it. So they tell others and it grows. If there was something wrong with me this would not be working. If you can find something *adharmic* about me, please expose me and people will stop coming. But you will not find anything, because I follow *dharma*. *Dharma* is higher than the *sampradaya*. Vedanta works because I am fine and I am doing *Isvara's* work. If you knew how the *sampradaya* works you would be thanking me, not criticizing me. It is good that you have *bhakti* for the Swami and for the *sampradaya*, but your discrimination needs a bit of work.

Seeker: I find it curious that you need to dismiss the tradition which spawned you. Do you know anything about the good Swami or what kind of teacher he is? If you did, you would not tread so heavily – and would find it difficult to refer to him – one of your brothers – in any disparaging manner.

James: I mentioned above that I recommended him for years. The self through the tradition spawned me. There is no one in my lineage that is more respectful of the tradition. I support it completely. Anyway, I am sorry you are disturbed. I suggest that you think about why. It is generally true that we are not upset by the things that seem to upset us.

~ Love, James

Seeker: James, I have been taking the time to read and see your life with Swami Chinmayananda, and am both intrigued and encouraged by your devotion to your calling and dedication to the tradition. Thank you for your clear, concise reply to my note. I came across your posting of the letter at your site as part of an internet search, and later followed that up with a closer look.

I agree with you that the tradition cannot abide the *adharmic* actions of teachers. I guess this is what is underlying my approach in my note to you. Reading through your time with Chinmayananda, I understand exactly your calling and dedication and

wish to take this opportunity to applaud you in your approach to the teachings. I will keep on reading your stuff – *Mystic by Default* is a good piece.

We come from the same generation – I studied with Swami Suddhananda for the many years, and what happened is a long and bitter pill to swallow. I also spent a while studying with Dayananda Swamiji whom I too have the utmost unquestionable respect for. Swami Suddhananda taught us all brilliantly – but I knew when I left the *ashram* in January that it was all over before the shit hit the fan.

If one day we meet – perhaps we can discuss this further.

I find the tsunami washing away India's traditions tragic – which is also why I decided to question you and your approach. It is a sad state of affairs when Westerners are teaching India *yoga* and now Vedanta, one that begs an enquiry. At the same time the oranges robes seem to have become the hiding place for those with an almost gangster or spiritual mafia mentality to wield their power. There are some highly questionable and dubious characters in powerful positions that make Swami Suddhananda's indiscretions chicken feed. These people sit on boards and act as trustees of institutions.

I find the merging of Western and Asian cultures curiously fascinating.

Thank you for your time.

James: You are welcome. I get hundreds of emails every year and 99% are very positive and full of gratitude for my teaching, not that it is my teaching. This is the first of the one or two critical letters I get each year where the writer was open-minded enough to hear what I had to say. It more or less blew my more or less unblowable mind. It is a tribute to your spirituality. Yes, I would like to meet you sometime, by *Isvara's* will.

~ *Om* and *prem*, James