

Don't Study Vedanta

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Kevin: Hi, Ram. I'd like your opinion about a Dharma Sevak course, a six-week introduction to Vedanta, I've been planning to join in Coimbatore in July. I've had my heart set on studying with the Chinmaya Mission for a few months to explore the texts in depth; however, I've started to feel it's too soon for me to go to India. It came up in conversation with Karl the other day and felt very freeing. Maybe I can let this option go and another will arise at the right time if it's meant to. The two weeks sitting with you felt really comprehensive and Karl expressed that we received the essence of Vedanta in that time.

I've just received details of the texts we'll be studying and I'd love your feedback on what you feel might be the most valuable decision to make. I'm on sabbatical for a few months, so I have time to do it, but there is a doubt about it. I guess how to take the next step with Vedanta is my question, if it's the sense of "knowing" it but not "realising" it.

Ram: Hi, Kevin. Very nice to hear from you. Karl said that you had made a visit. I'm glad you enjoyed yourself. I'm sorry it's taken a so long to reply, but I have been extremely busy lately – since the publication of the book – and it takes time to work through the emails and attend to all the other things that God puts in my path.

When you say it is too soon for you to go to India, do you mean that there are other things you want to do? Why do you want to explore the texts in depth? The subject matter of Vedanta is just you. Every text says the same thing. You are whole and complete, actionless, ordinary awareness. You are not the body-mind. And they give the means for the realization of this fact – inquiry, *karma yoga*, etc. All this you already know. And you are always present, so why would you have to go to India and subject yourself to a very rigorous discipline in difficult conditions to get something that you already have, although six weeks is not that big a deal?

Karl is right. You have the essence of Vedanta already. And it seems from your emails that you are quite happy. You seem to have a very nice life. What do you expect to get by studying Vedanta? Mind you, I can't see that it would hurt, but I think you would probably become bored rather quickly. I don't know, because we haven't had the chance to really speak heart-to-heart in person, but is your mind perhaps a little restless? It is understandable. You are still young and perhaps feel (we need to really look into our "feelings" to see if they are anything more than some sort of dissatisfaction) that there is still something to accomplish, something to gain in this world. I wish I knew you better so I could be more clear on the cause for this doubt, but I think you probably should go with the "freeing feeling" and opt not to do the course. This and other opportunities to study Vedanta will always be there. You can come to Tiruvannamalai and hear it again from me until it is completely clear who you are. Studying Vedanta is a little like reading about the train ride from one place to another when you could just get on the train. If you had assimilated the teaching, you would have been able to see this doubt for what it is.

You would know that nothing you do is going to fundamentally alter you. It seems to me that the doubt is not really about what to do in this life, it is about who you are.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. So if your goal is freedom – which it seems to be – then what is actually required is that you apply what you already know. You already know that nothing you do is going to change you, is going to make you happier than you are. If you are clear about this point – and no amount of Vedanta study is going to make it clear for you, because you already know it – then sure, go to India and study Vedanta. It is a very cool thing to do. I have been a student of Vedanta for forty years, but not to make me happy. I find that it is a perfect vehicle for expressing my happiness. But there are many people who are studying Vedanta for twenty or thirty years who are still studying Vedanta because they lack confidence in what Vedanta is actually saying: you are fine as you are. They believe that it is a very profound body of knowledge that contains some deep secret that they will just stumble across one fine day that will set them free. And the joke is that they are already free. It is something that you have to realize. It is more than a “freeing feeling.” But you will not just stumble across it one fine day. It stays hidden as long as you can’t see that it is just you. I think this doubt is about who you are, not about whether or not to study Vedanta. If you want to talk about it, feel free to Skype me or we can do Gmail video chat. This is the best I can do with the little information I have. Don’t think of it as holy writ just because the great Sri Ramji says it. Take it as an opportunity to really think about your motivations. I don’t think it is wise to say more until I know you better, because I may be completely off base. Anyway, very nice to hear from you and I hope our paths will cross again in the foreseeable future.

~ Much love, Ram