

The Logic Grid

Ram (James Swartz)

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Joe: Dear James, I hope you and Sundari are fine and in good health!

I'm so grateful that Vedanta showed up in my life. Whatever happens in daily life, it seems a few minutes with your books or watching a video just clears it all up again. I feel blessed to have this in my life and it is with me constantly. It seems there is a constant process going on in my mind about how to be able to explain Vedanta to a "normal person," but I have no idea why and I'm not bothered by it. Perhaps some day I will know.

James: Because there is a part of you that is a "normal person" and this conversation is just a way of objectifying that person and keeping it informed of who you really are. It is a good practice.

Joe: I have a question that I hope you can shed some light on: I'm 40 years old now, have three-year-old son, a partner, a spacious apartment and a few small businesses. It's a pretty stressful life at times, but also a life of greater fun and freedom than most people have, I guess. I have no boss, and it's a decent living financially, although I'm certainly not rich in that sense, but better than I ever had before, at least. I've tried for many years to create a life that has some financial freedom and without being tied up in a normal employment situation. I used to be a musician for many years, and I could never adapt fully to that "normal" lifestyle. I'd rather work twelve hours a day for myself than eight hours for someone else. 😊

Anyway, I'm growing older and maturing a lot with this Vedanta stuff. I've become interested in many new things in life. It seems Vedanta has put a kind of "logic grid" on my whole mind, and I'm thinking more and more like an engineer almost, impersonal and practical, without considering all of the do-gooding "should-stuff" that was always dominant before.

Many of the things you have said has really shaped the way I think nowadays, but I'm not sure all of it is Vedanta though. I just found your way of looking at things really simple and practical, and it has naturally become a model for my thinking, I guess. I studied your stuff very closely and intensely for some years a while back, although now the focus has naturally moved towards family and business life. It feels like I'm done with the spiritual stuff for a long time, perhaps forever. 😊)

James: I am very happy to hear this, Joe. Life is really cool, ever-new, when you see with the non-dual eye. There is nothing spiritual about Vedanta. It is a purely a practical way to think and act. I was always a practical person, so Vedanta fit me like a glove. It made me even more practical.

Joe: Perhaps all the do-gooding years in Alcoholics Anonymous is wearing off slowly. It seems even my political views are moving towards the conservative/right-wing side, which is absolutely astonishing and totally new to me. That side seems so

much more logical and unsentimental, and unemotional suddenly. Perhaps it's just age - or is it Vedanta's fault?? 😊

James: It is both age and Vedanta. There is an upside and a downside to both the conservative and the liberal points of view. Conservatives want to keep what is good alive, but one problem with them is that they often want to keep stupid things alive just for the sake of continuity. Vedanta values traditions that are based on the good of the total, an idea that is usually not supported in the modern political environment. As one ages, one sees the value in things that one didn't see in one's youth. But conservatism does not mean that change is bad. A good conservative needs to appreciate the need to change inequitable conditions.

Joe: My question to you is about hunting. Half of my family on my father's side have their roots in the most northern part of Canada where hunting moose is a big thing. I've lately come across many people who are hunting for some reason. I never had an interest in it before, but now I do. I've started to educate myself in hunting, reading books and will shortly take a hunting certificate. I find shooting very relaxing and meditative as well. I find the whole thing very interesting, and the learning process is a real adventure.

But I've found that there are some pretty heavy *rajasic/tamasic* energies in the people that hunt. I can't really explain it, but I can totally feel it. It's almost sickening at times. I'm really not fascinated by killing animals at all and that whole macho thing seems totally foreign to me. I'm not even sure I could even actually shoot an animal and cut it up afterwards, but the tradition and knowledge about it seems very fascinating right now. The idea of finding my family "roots" and learning something traditional feels like a noble thing as well, worthy of a 40-year-old. 😊

James: I grew up in an outdoor culture. My father and one of my uncles were serious sportsmen. They were good men who were not violent, greedy or aggressive. However, you are basically right about hunters. They tend to be very *rajasic* and *tamasic* and often suffer from low self-esteem. Sadly, it makes them feel big and powerful to kill something. Generally, they are not self-aware people.

Joe: What about the principal of non-injury when it comes to hunting? It seems right and sound to learn about the nature and animals in my own country, as well as learning our old traditions and even the technical side of guns and shooting. But what about the actual killing of animals that is not "necessary" anymore? (I'm not a vegetarian, so I eat meat anyway.) I'd be very glad to hear your point of view on this.

James: I think you know the answer to this. There is an article at the website written by my wife, which I heartily endorse, called *Vedanta and the Politics and Morality of Food*. Read it and see what you think. Or you can read Michael Pollan's book *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. In the end it is a values issue. If you wrote to a moose, you would get a very clear opinion. The reason animals run away when you try to kill them is because they love themselves. Do you want to get between an animal and its love of itself? From a non-dual point of view, what is the difference between a human being and an animal except a few thoughts? If you can't work it out in your

head, then shoot a moose, clean it, butcher it and eat it, and see how it makes you feel. Then decide if the feelings are worth repeating in the next hunting season. If you still feel the bloodlust, how about making it a fair fight? Throw away the fancy gun and go *mano a mano* with the moose. See how well you fare. Okay, I'll give you a spear.

~ Much love, James