

# Enlightenment Is Inevitable

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2016-04-19

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2624>

**Ned:** Dearest Ramji, I met you briefly in Atlanta last year, but not sure if you remember me. I attended your teachings with two close friends. We were students of Andrew Cohen for many years. Prior to attending the teachings, my only exposure to Vedanta was watching one of your YouTube videos from a series in Cologne, Germany. To be honest, I was not sure what I was getting myself into going to see you.

**Ramji:** Yes, I do remember you and your friends. I can understand your reservations. Teachers like Andrew give enlightenment a bad name. Too bad you had to go through all that, but it is good because it finally brought you to Vedanta. If he had been just a little more kind and humble you might have been tempted to stay. Most of the Neo teachers are decent people but they don't understand that enlightenment is only an ignorance problem. They put you to work before you even know what enlightenment is because they do not understand the relationship of experience and knowledge.

**Ned:** And prior to that time, after leaving Andrew's community, I had no interest in being with any spiritual teacher. In fact I had decided to find enlightenment "through my own experience." Well, *Bhagavan* must have thought that was not good enough, thus on a whim, not truly knowing why, I got a last-minute airplane ticket and came to the Atlanta seminar. *Bhagavan* was right!! (Surprised?)

**Ramji:** Definitely not. *Bhagavan* knows best. The problem is that we can't do it on our own. We need help. However, we also need to be self-confident enough know when a teacher and/or a teaching doesn't feel right. It is very difficult to see through teachers like Andrew, because they have an inspirational kind of energy that makes you feel good, so walking away is also difficult.

**Ned:** Since meeting you and studying Vedanta, (without sounding too confident, I hope) for the first time in my life "enlightenment" feels inevitable. It is as if the teachings are working on me... thus my job is to simply expose myself in them and inquire. Please feel free to tell me if this sounds deluded.

**Ramji:** You are not deluded. If you expose your mind to the the teachings faithfully, freedom is inevitable. Vedanta gives supreme confidence. Assuming your life is reasonably orderly, there is little to be done for Vedantic inquirers because self-knowledge - not the ego - does the work. Teachers like Andrew respect experience, not that there is anything wrong with it. They don't actually respect knowledge, because their minds have never been properly exposed to a vetted, effective means of self-knowledge. They cobble together what they like to call a teaching from reading, listening to teachers who have never exposed their minds to an impersonal means of knowledge and from their own spiritual experiences. No blame. They simply don't have the good fortune to associate with proper *mahatmas*. It inspires

them and is good enough to inspire others for some time, but it leaves your enlightenment in the hands of the teacher. It should be in the hands of the inquirer, once he or she has been properly taught. If you have a teacher that thinks he or she is a teacher, you have a recipe for disaster. *Bhagavan* is the teacher and the scripture is its voice. We are simply instruments. Proper *mahatmas* never manipulate, discipline or hang onto their students; they help to clear doubts. They are very happy when the student does not need teaching anymore. Many of the Andrew-type teachers depend on the attention of their students – dare I call it love? – for their self-esteem. But depending on a person, enlightened or not, is not helpful, because people have their unresolved issues. Depending on knowledge, however, is wise. It will never let you down. And it is something that breeds total self-confidence because it can never be taken away.

**Ned:** Since meeting you, I have felt deep appreciation and gratitude for what *Bhagavan* has revealed through you. Thank you, thank you!! As I was reading the verses by Shankaracharya quoted in your 1996 *Mandukya Upanishad* article last night, this feeling of gratitude became intense and still remains today. Please accept this short poem written last night as a small expression of my heartfelt gratitude.

*Bhagavan* loves me through you, and I am humbled and blessed. Your voice, above all, has inspired me to finally “Know Thy Self.”

### **Poem for Ramji**

Your voice rises in me,

heard above the many voices,

though it is not the loudest.

Your words emerge, delicate and ephemeral,

point my mind inward, toward the blessed, eternal, one home, my home, God’s home.

All is quiet.

One hears your words, and somehow silence is known,

all is revealed, tears fall and the heart floats, light, free.

There is no celebration in Union,

just a simple, soft, cosmic kiss.

The three bodies are content.

~ With love and gratitude, your student and friend

**Ramji:** What a lovely poem! Thank you. Appreciation is always appreciated.

**Ned:** Thank you very much for this generous email! Before meeting you and studying Vedanta I had no idea of the inherent pitfalls and limitations that come with spiritual teachers teaching from their own enlightenment experience, i.e. without a proven means of knowledge. I had no idea that such a means of knowledge even existed. This is a treasure that truly only God could have bestowed!!! Just knowing that this gift exists causes my heart to feel as if it's going to burst!!

**Ramji:** Yes, indeed, Vedanta is not man-made, i.e. subject to bias and error. It is a pure science, revealed by *Isvara*.

**Ned:** You are correct, when I was with Andrew I was looking for approval and was very insecure. I could barely even look him in the eyes. I was the perfect student for him. It took me seven years to realize that I needed to grow up and become my own man. Once I realized this, I left. I consider my time with Andrew a valuable learning experience. I have no regrets and no ill feelings towards him (not that what he did was in any way acceptable).

**Ramji:** It's a sign of your maturity that you see the upside of your time with him. There are still people who are angry.

Nobody sets out to be a narcissist. One should feel a certain sense of pity toward him because his intellect is so confused. A free person will never violate *dharma* like he did, particularly in the name of enlightenment. Freedom is love, and love is kind and dispassionate. He never grew up, so the whole phenomenon was basically an angry, arrogant kid bullying (in the name of teaching enlightenment) other kids. In fact I met him a year ago and I got the impression that he was a young boy, not malevolent, but just naive. I had expected one of those larger-than-life manly personalities and I was completely surprised at how ordinary and uninteresting he was. Several of his ex-devotees say he did not "see the light," that his "penance" is insincere, that the loss of status is killing him and that he wants his job back, but who knows? It is really a cautionary tale. If a materialistic country has no tradition of enlightenment - if the idea of enlightenment is transplanted from India, as it was starting to in the sixties - there is no way that seekers are going to be able to evaluate it. It will be experiential by default and the teachings will be humancentric and, as you know, there will be abuses.

**Ned:** Discovering that enlightenment is simply an ignorance problem is like finding the key to the gates of heaven. (I am sitting here laughing to myself as I see what I'm writing... I hope you don't find me overly dramatic or emotional. "First a poem and now this," I can hear you saying (LOL!). I just can't believe how beautiful this is!). Knowing that I am and have always been whole and complete, perfect as I am, has had an enormous impact. I see confidence being expressed like it has never been expressed before. And the world is responding in kind. Large amount of praise and approval have been coming my way from both personal and professional corners of life. Life is flowing more easily. The challenge as of late is to simply let all experience flow through and obey the *dharma* of the moment. This means not drawing the conclusion that I own any experience, good or bad, and simply respond accordingly. And also knowing that experience could never be Who I am.

**Ramji:** The truth is very counter-intuitive in the sense that *samsaris'* identities are inexorably tied to what happens to them, when what happens has nothing to do with the self at all.

**Ned:** Speaking of praise, through the Vedanta teachings I have discovered my “spiritual *karma*,” as you spoke about in many *satsangs*. Most of what I have seen is a big fat spiritual ego, as my mind can be very *sattvic*. As far as I can tell, I’ve put a leash on that dog, but please feel free to call it out (or anything else for that matter) if you see fit. I try not to take *maya* too seriously anymore.

**Ramji:** I don’t think I will have to say anything, because you discovered it yourself. And it usually happens when I do mention it without permission, that the person writes me off. 😊 It is amazing to me how attached *sattvic* spiritual types are to spiritual identities. Well, in some circles enlightenment is the ultimate identity. As you know, we are only the self and the self was never ignorant, so there is no enlightenment for us.

**Ned:** Ramji, my apologies if this email seems long. Please do not feel obligated in any way to respond. I know how busy you must be and how many emails you must get. I’m very grateful for your attention and all that you have said. Many thanks!

**Ramji:** It is true that I am very busy and I can see that you have very well assimilated the essence of Vedanta, but I wanted to write. Maybe it was the poem. 😊

**Ned:** Okay, first thing... I am going to write more poems if that’s all I have to do for the blessing of your attention!! 😊

Second, I never thought of it in those terms, but yes... indeed Andrew is/was acting as a child! Very interesting. He is clearly ignorant of the whole, non-dual self and is looking for love, power and security from objects. May Andrew and many more of his students know the love that comes from true freedom. Vedanta is the perfect remedy.

Regarding leaving Andrew, my friend David and I had the good fortune of a shared deep love of self-inquiry. Together we were able to work through much of what was disturbing about being with Andrew. Sadly, many of his ex-students did not have this opportunity and, at least to some degree, are likely still unresolved as a result.

I really liked what you said about the transplanted teachings being “humancentric” here in the West. Yet another something-else to attain, or rather “obtain,” an experience to be had. It is no wonder that enlightenment is so rare here in the West.

**James:** Just out of curiosity, did any of Andrew’s “disciples” (I use the word advisedly) claim to have gained enlightenment through him? I guess not. And if some did, I bet he denied their claims, as Papaji did his.

**Ned:** There have been numerous times since being exposed to Vedanta that I felt “something happening”... i.e. deep bliss and a feeling-sense and/or reflection of pure

awareness in the mind. The very instant this occurs, a thought arises... "Is this it?" In other words, is it time for my small self to become enlightened? I believe this may be a good example of what you spoke about regarding a *samsari's* identity being "tied to what happens to them." After all, I thought I wanted experiential enlightenment for so many years. The *vasana* is strong. In response, I have resolved myself to simply watch it happen, and not be concerned about anything "happening"... ever.

Thank you again, Ramji! Your words inspire and over and over liberate my mind. *Bhagavan* loves you through me. I bow before you as my teacher and embrace you as my close friend... as myself.

**James:** "It" is the one that observes the blissful current reflecting in the subtle body. But the presence of the blissful current is a sign that the mind is emptying, becoming more *sattvic*. At some point, when the *vasanas* are reduced to preferences, not binding desires, the experience of non-duality will be present all the time, even when there are occasional eruptions of *tamas* and *rajas* due to *prarabdha*. That blissful current is always present. It is produced by the reflection of original awareness on the subtle body. So, enlightenment for the *jiva* is experiential but it is not the product of an intense epiphany, although intense epiphanies sometimes produce long-lasting bliss, which is gradually attenuated often as the *jiva* takes on the role of a teacher and - if successful- gets more and more involved with people. Once the people are hooked by the bliss - the *shaktipat* - it is too late for them to accept the fact that the teacher has lost the experience of bliss or that it has become intermittent.

This had to have been the case with Andrew because a few years back I saw part of an interview with him - it was too painful to watch for more than a few minutes - in which he was nothing but a very negative angry person who had the perfect justification: "I'm angry because the world is a mess and I won't stop until I have fixed it." In other words, he was resigned to being angry for a very long time because he had no way to deal with it. He never did proper *sadhana*. He had the idea that you hang out with a *guru* until you get some kind of definitive discrete experience "of the self" and then you hang out an enlightenment shingle and transfer it to all and sundry. He had didn't have a clue about the meaning of non-duality.

He had to have been in torment all along. He must be really angry with himself now for going too far, i.e. creating the *karma* that lead to his downfall. It is a tribute to his extreme narcissicism that he blew a good thing. I have met many Andrew-people over the years, particularly recently, and I have been very impressed with their basic goodness and sincerity, although most of them have or had self-esteem issues, which, incidentally, predate Andrew. He could not see how dependent he was on objects, i.e. the people that made him feel like he was loveable. He couldn't feel the love in himself by himself. People who know what love is never abuse others. So *Isvara* woke him up. One never knows with narcissists, but he seemed a bit contrite when I met him.

Some are still fixated on him but he is just a symbol of a dysfunctional relationship *vasana* that was established in childhood, not to mention past lives. So Andrew is not the issue. To think he is responsible for the suffering is to avoid responsibility. It's not the devotee's fault that he or she gets involved with a bad *guru*. My first *guru* was a fraud but I walked away without so much as a by-your-leave because I

respected myself and I knew that there must be true teachers out there somewhere.

This is a bit off-topic, but the only cure for low self-esteem is to recognize it as a *tamasic* energy and (1) do something *rajasic* to counteract it (2) and/or cultivate *sattva* by applying the knowledge “I am the whole and complete blissful self” over and over and over until it destroys the unworthiness-thought. After all, “I have low self-esteem” is just a thought. If the devotee is getting on in years, it may be too late to fix it in either of these ways. The third way is what I call the Special Olympics *sadhana*, which involves accepting it. You say to your self and the world, “Yes, I’m definitely a cripple. So what?” Then you get in your wheelchair and happily race other cripples to this finish line. *Bhagavan* will love you, which means that you will love you. And the world will love you. It always brings a tear to my eye and a lump in my throat when I see Down’s syndrome people or wounded vets smiling and living normal lives.

Anyway, appreciation is always appreciated.

~ Much love, James

**Peter:** Dearest Ramji, I give up. For the past two days I have made many attempts to respond intelligently to your latest email. I cannot... so I give up. It has been a source of tension and agitation in my mind for two days. I really wanted to respond in the same timely and inspired way, like the first two emails that simply flowed out. And just now, as I was lying in bed, my mind was saying, “You must not be *sattvic*, because you have nothing to say... where is your clarity now?... you must not be spiritual... you are a fraud, pretending to be something you are not with Ramji.” Ultimately, the thought came, “If I were truly spiritual, I would be able to respond fully to your email, point by point.” There was a slight feeling of dread... then, from nowhere, a smile came across my face. Then I laughed out loud, TWICE! I realized “I” was the one watching all the bullshit in my head!! What a bunch of \$%@^%\$!! Is it okay to use profanities when speaking to your *guru*? ☺ Oh, Ramji, thank you for the blessing that you are, for helping me burn *vasanas* up, down and sideways, and shining the light of the self so brightly!! I am simply in awe... every time I read the email, especially the first paragraph, my mind stops. It is a four- or five-sentence teaching Ramji, truly. So much in so few words. So precise and so true. Thank you.

Andrew lost MANY good people. Yes, he lost very sincere and honest people. Not only did he lose them, but when many of them left they left in disgrace. When someone left or was asked to leave, it was always (in some form) because they were supposedly not interested in the Truth. It did not matter how long someone had been in the community or how much he/she had given to Andrew if we did not meet Andrew’s expectations, if we did not give him what he wanted, which was essentially his idea of what our “evolution” looked like, we were frauds and failures. I know people that left thinking they had to face this “fact” that they were simply not interested anymore and basically gave up trying. That is part of the very real tragedy of Andrew’s legacy. When I left, I too was told that I was not interested as well. Years later, I went back to see Andrew teach and was struck by how totally arrogant and solipsistic he seemed. I met with him after the teaching briefly, and the first thing he said to me was, “You are different. You are looking me in the eyes, like a man.” That was *Bhagavan* saying to me, “Yes, you made the right choice by leaving, you succeeded.” I never saw Andrew again and never wanted to.

Yes, I would say most if not all of Andrew’s students had very low self-esteem. I

know past students that are presenting themselves as teachers now, and I can see how insecure they still are, yet they are making oodles of money. Go figure. It is fascinating to look at now. I wanted from Andrew what I thought I was lacking. He needed me (and others) to get what he felt was lacking. Yes, a perfectly dysfunctional relationship!

Just before your last email to me, David and I had a fascinating and quite meaningful conversation about self-esteem, so your email could not have been better timed. In fact, judging by the content of your last paragraph, which seemed very on-topic to me, you could have very well been a part of that conversation. We literally spoke about how low self-esteem is “just a thought.” So powerful. I shared the email with David.

(Hey, look, I wrote back and didn't struggle.) 😊

~ With love and a warm heart, your student and friend

**Ramji:** I'm just a regular guy, Ned. No need to get your knickers in a twist concerning how to relate to me. You are actually talking to yourself. I can't imagine anything worse than being involved with people on an ego level, pretending that I'm somebody. Everyone is just the self with apparent self-knowledge or apparent self-ignorance. Since I love me, I love you. There is nothing more to it. I just relate to your understanding of who you are according to the teachings of Vedanta. I am like a computer: you input ignorance and I output knowledge. There is nothing personal about it. My self-worth is not connected to my relationships with people at all, so you don't have to please me or impress me with how spiritual you are. All people have to do is be polite. Next to good manners, enlightenment is the most important thing in the world. You don't have to reply point by point. You don't have to reply at all. I'm happy to see that the knowledge is working, that you know you are the one watching the mind vomit up its stuff. There is no need to pick through the vomit looking for meaning. It is just vomit. You are on the right path. Keep it up. In any case, thanks for the additional information but we have probably covered the Andrew topic and the self-esteem topic sufficiently. See you soon!

~ Much love, Ramji