

Study Vedanta Professionally?

Ram (James Swartz)

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Marlo: I've heard you say that Vedanta should be studied professionally. What does that mean? Certainly it doesn't mean I can get a nine-to-five job studying scripture? Is there a formal education that one can receive?

James: It just means that you should take a professional, systematic approach. Yes, there is a formal Vedanta education. There is a two- and a three-year course in India at the *ashram* of my two *gurus*. My first *guru* studied for seven years every day with his *guru*.

Marlo: Or is that just the long way around? I have heard you talk about Shankaracharya and that there beginning middle and advanced texts on Vedanta. Am I just poking around at the teaching?

James: Yes. You are picking and choosing what you study and when. You wouldn't have asked those questions about the elements and the subtle body if you had studied it systematically. Ordinarily, I don't answer such questions, but I like you and decided to indulge you a bit until you are completely hooked on Vedanta.

Marlo: Do you suggest a more systematic approach?

James: Yes, indeed.

Marlo: The self seems to be revealed in every teaching.

James: It is revealed in every teaching, but there is more to *moksa* than just knowledge of the self. Vedanta is a science. It deals with the self, the world and the *jiva* and how they relate one another. Anyone can realize the self. It is pretty simple and straightforward. But how the self relates to the world and the *jiva* is where the freedom come in. Until your knowledge of reality is complete, you will have doubts and feel incomplete. See how these *vasanas* still torment you.

Marlo: I listen and read.

James: That's good, but until your knowledge is complete, ignorance will cause problems.

Marlo: But it is apparent that you have a classic education in the subject matter. Does one have to travel to India for that kind of thing?

James: No, but it is possible. On the other hand, you can get caught up in the study of Vedanta and get even more lost. Several people who got introduced to it by me ended with nothing but Vedanta-knowledge, not self-knowledge. Remember, the subject matter is you, the self, and you, the *jiva*, and how you live in this world.

I suggest you read *Tattva Bodh* carefully. It is the basic text. It introduces the basic concepts and the terminology. Just follow the course at the website. Figure that you will be at it your whole life and spend an hour a day every day without fail to start. When you start to really appreciate the profundity and scope of it and the benefits really start accruing, you will fall in love with it. It will endlessly inspire you. You're new to it and are still working out some life issues. It's the granddaddy of all spiritual and religious traditions.

~ Love, James