

Deep in the Mines

Ram (James Swartz)

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Ed: Once again, James, I bow to you as the master. I am working my way through the *Atma Nivritti* talks you sent me, at my request, and all I can say is thank you, thank you, thank you. I was on the point of being seduced by Atmananda's Direct Path but I was a bit confused by it and had asked you for the *Atma Nivritti* talks in the hope you would dispel that confusion. Indeed, you have. You have also delivered me from my fascination with the Direct Path. The temptation to avoid the hard work of Vedanta is always there, and the Direct Path promises a shortcut that is very alluring. But there is no shortcut, no getting around the lineage (*sampradaya*). You have thoroughly demonstrated that in your analysis of the text. And my own experience confirms it. The articles I wrote and that are posted at ShiningWorld are the result of having gone deep into the mines of Vedanta, reading and re-reading Shankara's commentary on Gaudapada's *karika* on the *Mandukya*. If you take your pick deep into the mines you will strike gold but it's hard work. You have to be willing to sweat a little. Atmananda's approach, though brilliant at times, suggests there is a no-sweat method. Perhaps this was not his intention, and I have great respect for John Levy and Ananda Wood as well as gratitude to Atmananda, but in future I'll stick to the *sampradaya* and its texts as expounded by you and Swami Dayananda. Again, thanks.

~ *Shanti*, Ed

James: Yes, people who get enlightened on their own and feel the need to teach are always compromised because personal experience (*smriti*) is not a complete means of knowledge like Vedanta (*sruti*). The *guru's* job is to unfold the *sruti* and resolve its apparent contradictions. Atmananda's teaching really only works for contemplatives, not for doers (*karmis*). He should make that clear. If it is not clear then doers who want the fast track - not realizing that 95% of enlightenment is the preparation - take it up and fail. The few individuals, dead and alive, who trace their *moksa* back to Atmananda are all intelligent, good people but their "teachings" are always incomplete. They leave out *karma yoga*, values, *Isvara*, the *gunas*, etc. Even contemplatives need a complete teaching. You can realize who you are without it, assuming a burning desire and intense dispassion toward objects, but *moksa* comes quickly and spiritual life is reasonably easy with Vedanta. It's a pity more don't realize it - but there you are.