

What Is the Reason for Teaching?

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Seeker: I'm sorry, James, but I can't really see the point of explaining why the self can't be explained or of a teacher teaching what cannot be taught.

James: It is a common myth in the non-dual world that the self cannot be taught because the self is beyond words. It is true that it is not an object of perception, nor can the mind modify to it, because it is not an idea. However, it can be known because it is always available and directly experienced always. The obstacles to direct self-knowledge are beliefs and opinions that individuals pick up about it, self-ignorance in short. How does Vedanta solve the problem? It reveals the unexamined logic of an individual's experience, which becomes a tool by which erroneous self-notions can be dismissed.

However, an individual cannot teach himself, because the very ignorance that is obscuring his or her freedom will cause him to misunderstand the teachings. Vedanta is the science of consciousness/existence, and like any science, physics or psychology, it must be taught. You can read about relativity, for instance, and know that energy is mass times the speed of light squared, but it means nothing unless you have been educated as to the many steps between your present ignorance and a practical working understanding. People in the Western spiritual world have not had access to the science of consciousness, so they have had to rely on their interpretation of epiphanies and the words of others who have interpreted their own epiphanies or from reading books by various uninformed individuals, which causes seekers to hop from teacher to teacher, teaching to teaching. In addition, so much of what one reads and hears is so obviously goofy that one doesn't know where to turn. In addition, most Western spiritual people fancy themselves as rebels and/or rugged individualists who resist instruction at all costs. Consequently, they are denied the amazing benefits of teaching, not the least of which is learning how to inquire. Inquiry is not seeking; it is the application of impersonal scientific teachings to the mind on a moment-to-moment basis until one's appreciation of one's wholeness and completeness sets one free.