

Eckhart Tolle Channeling Krishnamurti

Ram (James Swartz)

2012-02-29

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/318>

Tony: James, well, like I said before, over two years ago a desire for spiritual knowledge reawakened in me and I set out to see what I could find. After doing research and study in Kaballah, Islam and Buddhism I came to the *Bhagavad Gita*. I could barely understand it and yet it still completely captivated me. Very quickly my life changed. I gave up longstanding bad habits, took to a meditation routine and devoted almost all my spare time to studying any book I could find about the Indian teachings (while still reading the *Gita*) and doing internet research. I wasn't entirely sure what I was looking for, so I got anything that seemed good or was recommended reading. I'm not saying I didn't get anything from it, but as much as I daily poured over these teachings and commentaries, I just struggled. And struggled some more. I just couldn't seem to connect the dots, but I was just completely obsessed with trying to understand. I just couldn't stand not knowing. I still can't. But I've always wanted to know, to know how things work, what they mean and what to do with that knowing. While I still entertain some egoistic notions of "doing stuff," that stuff has really just paled in comparison to having the knowledge of what is. It seems pointless if you don't know what life is about. I suppose I have always been geared towards *jnana yoga*, but because of certain things I had read I was just led to believe that devotion, or *bhakti*, was the way to go (like Ramakrishna saying *bhakti* is the way for the Kali Yuga, etc.) or that thinking of God as a person was the way to go cultivate devotion.

Even though that appealed to me emotionally (probably because of my Christian devotional roots), it just didn't make sense and I couldn't understand how that was leading the way to understanding. I just didn't see how *bhakti* and *jnana* were the same. Related maybe, but not the same. The idea of Shankara and *jnana yoga* haunted the back of my mind, but I tried to make myself a *bhakta*. This endeavor did end up leading me to a Hindu temple. While the worship was an excellent experience (except the sitting on the floor thing), I was really hungry for teaching. Luckily, some of the people at the temple were members of the local Chinmaya Mission chapter. They directed me to a study group, and there I was introduced to Vedanta for real. I was given some of Swami Chinmayananda's books. I could tell there was immense wisdom in them, but the way it was presented just wasn't coming together as a clear picture for me. I heard discourses from visiting *acharyas* and *swamis*, but it still wasn't coalescing into a clear picture as to what was the goal or what you were supposed to do. Maybe it was just the problem of language, but it still seemed like it was some kind of *yogic* experience. One day writing in my journal I asked myself, "What is enlightenment really?" I hadn't realized how unclear this was to me. Surely I should have known what I was dedicating most of my time to.

Over the course of this whole process it had been said again and again that the importance of a teacher was paramount. This seemed obvious because I didn't know what I was doing. I fretted over this a lot because I really wanted to understand the teachings. But I heard many times to not look for a teacher. But I still looked. Finally, out of exasperation I just gave up. I figured if it would happen it would happen. At this point my practice had hit a big dip. It was disillusionment time. I just didn't see how you could study something like Vedanta if there was no one to teach it. I just tried to find Chinmaya Mission teachers' discourses at YouTube and watch those.

One time while watching one of those videos I noticed a video from *Stillness Speaks* in the sidebar about Western masters of non-duality.

Out of my incessant curiosity I watched a video of a “master” who shall remain nameless. What he said really bothered me. The gist of it was that everything just “was” and you should just “be.” While this was true, he was also saying that spiritual practice, study, inquiry were just stuff the mind wants to do and really had no purpose but to exhaust you. At some point he experienced the “just being” and then it was clear to him. At the point where he said he realized that meditation was the same as eating a cheese sandwich I wondered to myself why people, instead of buying his book full of “not teachings” and paying to go to his classes of “no teacher,” didn’t just go eat a cheese sandwich instead. I think I had just gotten a dose of Neo-Advaita and I didn’t even know it. It seemed like Eckhart Tolle channeling Krishnamurti or something. Either way, it really rubbed me the wrong way on a deep level because he was saying you should help yourself but presenting no means to do it.

Then I noticed a video of a bearded fellow named James Swartz. It then clicked in my mind that a long time before I had come across you in my incessant internet searching. At the time, in my zeal for “authentic” teachings, I disregarded you, because you weren’t Indian and your name wasn’t something like Jameswartzananda. I didn’t think that a Western white guy like myself could know this stuff. So after stewing for a few days over the whole Neo-Advaita incident I looked you up. The first thing that came up was an article you had written about Neo-Advaita. It was what the doctor ordered. This led me to your website and other writing, and since then the dots have been coming together. Enlightenment has finally been defined. It wasn’t experience. After a lot of struggling many of my misconceptions stemming from *yoga* have disappeared and it has made everything much clearer. A lot of Vedantic concepts that I have grasped at have started to come into focus. This has been a big relief. Vedanta is delivering so many of the answers I have searched for for the majority of my life.

So that being said, is it okay for me to ask you to be my teacher? I honestly don’t know if that is considered to be some kind of faux pas or if I’m supposed to go through some kind of screening process, but I really feel like I have a strong desire to learn and the way you handle the teachings is excellent.

Plus, if I believed in coincidence I would say it is coincidental that my wife and I decided to move out to Oregon last year after visiting. We hope we will be able to move out there by the end of this year if all goes well.

In the meantime I will be buying your book as soon as I can and I have downloaded all of your *Gita* talks and your talks from Berlin. It is super-awesome that you have that stuff available for free. Keep up the good work. People need this stuff.

~ Thank you for your time, Tony

James: Hi, Tony. Cool story. Thanks. Yes, Vedanta puts it all together into one beautiful *mandala* of meaning. I will try to teach you. It should be easy, as you understand the value of Vedanta. Get the book *How to Attain Enlightenment* and start with it. And keep reading the website. If you can afford it I have a hard drive with the videos of the teaching. It has the basic *Self-Inquiry* series of nine DVDs plus Q&As that parallel the book. It has the *Bhagavad Gita*, 27 videos, about 50 hours,

Vivekachoodamani, done this January in India, and *Atma Bodh* plus MP3s of the videos and MP3s of other teachings and all my writings. All in all there are about 100 hours, maybe more, of serious teaching. It is almost as good as hearing it in person, some say better, because you can back up and listen again until you understand. The cost is \$200 plus postage, \$150 if you return the hard drive. Take your time with the book. Don't move on until you can sign on to the logic at every stage. And write to me after you have read it if you have questions.

~ *Om* and *prem*, Jamesananda