

It's Not Up to You to Be a Vedanta Teacher

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Student: Hello, Arlindo, and thank you for answering my last letter, but I am still not convinced that it is better I do not make any effort to become a Vedanta teacher. I know that in my case it is a strong desire but it is a very noble one: a desire to help people. Moreover, I have already begun teaching people here in my country – and I know that it helps them. Honestly, I don't agree that I should just leave it to *Isvara*, because I have a certain power to tell *Isvara* what I wish to have in my life.

Arlindo: Yes, my good friend. The life of every human being is driven by desire, and there are three categories of desires: *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. *Sattvic* desire is a desire in harmony with *Isvara's* field, a desire that is not self-centred but that brings into account the needs of the total (the Lord), the interest of not only me, but mostly, the interest of others and the environment. *Sattvic* desire is a desire primarily motivated to give, to contribute, to give back to *Isvara* as the field, and minimally motivated by getting something for oneself. And it is a desire not opposed to *dharma* as Krishna says in the *Gita*, a desire that produces spiritual progress.

A *rajasic* desire is motivated by my “need” to get what I want as a means to feel good about myself, to feel validated, lovable, appreciated, happy and satisfied. It is a highly competitive kind of desire. It is not the kiss of death, as Ramji says, but it does not produce spiritual growth and inevitably it binds the “desirer” to the object of desire. It makes the desirer dependent on the object, without which he/she feels mentally disturbed. *Rajasic* desire is responsible for spiritual stagnation.

Tamasic desire, on the other hand, is the most dangerous, damaging desire because it produces spiritual regression. It is extremely binding and it manifests itself with a sense of “urgency” which compels the “desirer” to break the rules. It is so binding and it feels so urgent that it can drive its victim to do horrible things, including killing other beings.

As I told you a few months ago, the question is: What is the motive behind my desires, what kind of strong desire is this to become a teacher? Does it make me feel as if I am in competition with others? Does it make me feel jealous? Does it disturb my mind? Does the idea of becoming a teacher makes me feel wonderfully accomplished? Or does the opposite idea make me feel frustrated, aggressive and angry? Does it compel me to think about it very, very often? Has it become a sort of an obsession? These are only a few symptoms of a *rajasic* desire, a binding desire for an object, which I mistakenly believe is going to resolve my sense of insecurity, smallness, inadequacy and incompleteness.

There is nothing wrong with the desire to teach Vedanta, provided it is a “*sattvic*” desire, a desire which, first of all, is not binding, i.e. I do not “need” it. I neither need it for the sake of disguising my unresolved issues, nor do I need it to gain happiness and satisfaction, because I am self-satisfied.

Secondly, a *sattvic* desire to teach is a genuine desire to offer, to serve, to help, to honestly share what you know with no posing and pretention, and no expectation of getting anything in return, which includes respect, love, name and fame.

Besides, teaching is a “transfer of knowledge.” Many so-called spiritual teachers teach what many believe to be pure knowledge, but in truth, in most the cases, it is a mixture of some knowledge with much ignorance, misleading, erroneous notions originated by individuals over the ages.

Vedanta knowledge is the only pure knowledge because it was created and revealed by *Isvara*, not by any individual, and passed on to us through the *rishis*. That implies that most people do not teach “knowledge” but a mixture of knowledge and Ignorance. Therefore what they call “teaching” is not a transfer of knowledge but a rather a transfer of something of a different nature.

The fact that you transfer some of your limited knowledge to other people does not validate you as a teacher of *Isvara’s* pure knowledge. In fact the more you learn and teach *Isvara’s* knowledge in its purity, the less will be your audience. The point I am trying to make is that it is better to forget about being a Vedanta teacher.

If for any reason people ask you questions about Vedanta, it is much better to think of yourself as someone who was assigned by the Lord the task of sharing his understandings of the Vedanta scriptures.

You do not need a “title” to do that. And if over a certain period of time the Lord keeps asking you to share your understanding to the extent that, by repetition you end up developing enough knowledge and skills to teach pure Vedanta, *Isvara* will find its way to get others to call you a Vedanta teacher. You do not call yourself a Vedanta teacher. It is up to others, up to *Isvara* to do so.