

Who Is a Competent, Self-Realized Teacher?

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Student: And what if a teacher is genuinely self-realized but uses a different language and methodology from the one I am used to? I may end up missing out on a good teacher. How to be able to know who is a qualified teacher?

Arlindo: In order to know who is a competent teacher you need to be a highly qualified student, or a *jnani* (one who knows the difference between “knowledge” and “ignorance”). It is basically impossible for the unqualified student to identify and choose to associate with a competent teacher, because his/her mind is conditioned by much ignorance masquerading as wisdom.

Inevitably, students’ erroneous and confused spiritual notions will judge the teacher and the teaching. If your mind is confused, you will always be attracted to a confused teacher. The student always gets the teacher he/she deserves. That is the true meaning of “the law of attraction.” ☺

Vedanta is pure knowledge, and knowledge and ignorance are like water and oil: they do not really mix. That is why so few people in the spiritual world are attracted to Vedanta.

To teach Vedanta requires Self-knowledge, scriptural knowledge, some skills and most important, enormous patience because 95+% of the people will resist, fight and reject the teachings. They are so deeply conditioned by wrong, vague, superficial and misleading confusing notions about “spirituality” that it is difficult for them to open up to the possibility that they have been holding on to fool’s gold.

Furthermore, Self-realized individuals are not necessarily qualified to teach. To realize that you are pure, limitless, ever-present, ordinary, pure consciousness does not qualify you to effectively help others to realize the Self. In fact only very few self-realized individuals are qualified. Those are the ones in possession of the complete teaching methodology revealed to us by the Lord.

A good Vedanta teacher needs to be taught first, and by a qualified teacher in the *sampradaya*. His/her *satsang* classes will produce slight variations of expression of the same teachings, of the same tradition, and that is due to the fact that each individual is uniquely brought up in his/her journey to self-realization.

There is more to teaching than mere improvisation and description of one’s experiences. A qualified teacher does not have a personal teaching – he/she simply follows the program presented by the scriptures on Self-knowledge. He/she does not try to reinvent the wheel to call it “my teaching.” A competent self-realized Vedanta teacher assimilates the teaching methodology to make the teachings his/her own. It is the same teaching, but with a slightly different flavour to it.

How can the student know who is more or less competent as a teacher? It’s not really possible in this way, but each student will be attracted exactly to the teacher he/she deserves. This is all part of *Isvara*’s merit system we call *karma*.