

# Is Vedanta an Intellectual Teaching?

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**Rob:** I was just reading *Is Enlightenment Possible for Serious Yogis?* from ShiningWorld.

James states that, "It is not an intellectual teaching, although it requires a discriminating mind."

I've heard James say this over the years, and I don't quite understand it. What makes something an "intellectual" teaching? Maybe I don't understand what "intellectual" really means.

**Sundari:** You need to understand the way James is using the term "intellectual." Obviously, any teaching is intellectual because it requires intellectual understanding. But the difference with Vedanta is that it is not a theory, an academic or philosophical thought system. You cannot "study" Vedanta, because it is who you are. There is no distance between the subject matter of Vedanta and you.

It is also not a path and its only brief is to remove ignorance of your true nature. However, Vedanta requires a certain kind of intellect – one that is refined and purified so that it is capable of assimilating the meaning of the teachings, which are extremely subtle and therefore very counter-intuitive. If the teaching remains in the intellect, what I call a "chin-upper," and does not translate into the way you live your life, what is the point? We have some inquirers who are in love with their ability to think and have a lot of ego around their own ideas and intelligence, so it is harder for them to put their thinking aside so that Self-knowledge can "do the work" of removing ignorance. While we need an intellect, it is not the intellect that removes ignorance. It is just an object known to you. You cannot "think your way to enlightenment." You need to surrender to a qualified teacher and the teachings.

Self-inquiry requires training the intellect to think differently because it is conditioned by *viparaya* and *adhyaropa* – the erroneous cognition of reality as a duality and the superimposition of this erroneous superimposition onto non-duality, onto the Self.

**Rob:** Is the intellect not the main tool of a discriminating mind?

**Sundari:** Yes, the intellect is the part of the subtle body, the instrument which allows us to discriminate, determine and make judgments. For Vedanta, you need a qualified and functioning intellect or the teachings will not stick. See above.

**Rob:** Another thing that has confused me is when James sometimes states (in videos) I've seen that a Vedanta *satsang* isn't a "lecture." Is it not an educational talk on the knowledge of *yoga*?

**Sundari:** Vedanta is not a lecture, because as I said, the subject matter is you. It is not “the knowledge of *yoga*,” it is the knowledge of you, THE SELF. It is not education, because it does not give you something you don’t already have. You are not going to walk away with an “enlightenment degree.” You are already the Self. As I said, all Vedanta does is remove the ignorance that is standing in the way of you appreciating this fact, which is what causes all your suffering.

**Rob:** Thank you so much, just trying to wrap my mind around the overall idea of Vedanta *satsangs* and how to communicate that to others.

**Sundari:** You are welcome, always a pleasure.