

# Hard and Fast Self-Knowledge

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Frank:** Hi, James. I recently went through about two grim months or so of heavy *tamas*, depression, where I was essentially in “survival mode” for that period. I did practically no self-enquiry, and was not capable of doing it anyway. I eventually got my head above water but was not in a state of mind for Vedanta and was not looking forward to forcing myself slowly back into practising enquiry.

Then one morning when I woke up it felt like the “horror” had returned, and I was thinking, “Oh, God, here we go again,” and made a feeble attempt to tell myself it’s just a feeling triggered by a (subconscious) thought and that I’m okay, and weakly tried to affirm myself as the self. Immediately, the self-knowledge seemed to “rise up” spontaneously, and has remained since then. It took my mind a few days to realise what had happened. The final piece of the jigsaw clicked into place when I saw clearly that both “enlightenment” and “unenlightenment” are just mental constructs and are without substance.

The self-knowledge is hard and fast and direct, and it requires no maintenance. I am satisfied and at peace. Thoughts and feelings and actions (including the less than noble ones) are just objects in me as awareness, they do not touch me and cannot do so. I am full and fullness and have always been so. *Maya* can and will do its thing but that’s its job and I am not “stained” by it. Daily life goes on as before but there is a subtle yet exquisite satisfaction and contentment and knowing. Frank is an object in me; I can see that he too does not have and never has had substance.

On a relative level, there is a reasonable possibility I will be able in about a year from now to retire with an adequate pension (assuming our national finances do not implode, which might well happen). I am going to continue studying Vedanta; I don’t need to, but as you once said, it’s a noble pursuit. Anyway, I have quite a big study *vasana*, so I may as well let it do its thing.

Thank you for everything. I really don’t know what else to say, no words are adequate. For the first time in my life I can say with complete honesty that I like being alive. Awareness is the pearl beyond price but it is also beautifully ordinary.

If there is anyway I can help, e.g. if you need anything to be proofread, I could give it a go (I’m a legal bureaucrat, so the relevant *vasanas* are well-honed).

Is the fame still growing exponentially? “No good deed will go unpunished.” ☺

~ Best wishes, Frank

**James:** Hi, Frank. I wondered what was going on with you because I haven’t heard from you for quite a while. What can I say but God is great! I am so happy for you. Now for the pension and the time to delve into the scriptures. It is indeed a noble and completely rewarding occupation. I am still at it after forty-four years. You will probably like *Panchadasi*. There is a copy at the website that I put a lot of care into, and I taught it in India this winter so there is a video of the teaching in the website shop for something like fifty quid. I recommend it. There are also great audios of

Swami Paramarthananda teaching it and other great texts – 350 hours of *Brahma Sutras*, for example. Thanks for the offer to proofread. I will take you up on it. I bet you would be a good editor too.

Yes, the fame increases and I must say I like it. I meet the most interesting people on the planet and it has resulted in the donation of two houses on a mountaintop in Spain – papers with the lawyers as we speak, knock on wood – where my lovely wife and I will settle down, Lord willing. We will give seminars there and occasionally travel to teach elsewhere. Perhaps you can attend one sometime, I would love to meet you. Anyway, it is great to hear from you and great news. Grace is earned.

~ Love, James