

# Is a Teacher a Must?

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Sandra:** Dear James, I have been making my way through your e-*satsangs* and am currently on the “Qualifications” chapter in your book. My only desire is to realize the true nature of self. The suffering has to come to an end. Take my house and car. I’m ready.

But you say I MUST have a teacher? I see I can write to you and maybe we can even have a Skype talk, but if I am to have a regular face-to-face instructor, does this mean I will not be able to “restore my brass ring to its original brilliance” without one?

~ Sandra

**James:** Dear Sandra, I am so happy to hear that you are systematically working your way through the book and that your suffering has come to an end.

When I say that you must have a teacher, I mean that to get a clear idea of what the self is and what the self isn’t, what the individual can do and what it can’t, etc. requires a teacher and a teaching. But once you are clear, then you more or less do not need a teacher. The knowledge becomes your teacher. If you have good discrimination, you do not always need to have physical contact with the teacher. The teachings themselves, properly assimilated, is enough. If you have a doubt you can’t resolve as a result of your contemplation on the teachings, then a qualified teacher is required. But this can often be accomplished by email or telephone or Skype. You have no way of knowing if this is true, but since the publication of my book five people I never met have written to tell me that the seeking has stopped and thanked me profusely, although it was the teaching, not me, that did the work. The seeking stops when you know who you are.

You do not need a teacher, however, to “restore your brass ring to its original brilliance.” You just need knowledge. When you are clear that you are awareness, there are no restoration efforts necessary. The knowledge does the work. But if there is still someone who wants to polish the mirror, then that someone needs to do the work, aided by the knowledge. Vedanta says that you are the brass ring that has never been tarnished, although it may seem so.

Having said that, however, even though you are clear who you are, you should continue with your inquiry. There are often hidden binding *vasanas* that come up that can shake your self-confidence. So you should continue to refine your understanding and resolve to live by the understanding until such time as the brass ring shines in all its glory.

~ Love, James