

Mooji's Pointers Not Enough

Ram (James Swartz)

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Galen: Dear Ram, my name is Galen and I am one of your inspired readers on the subject of enlightenment. First, I want to thank you for dedicating your time sharing the knowledge of Advaita. For a long time I have inside my mind a question that needs clarification and I feel that you can help me with this.

Last year I had joined for a retreat in Tiruvannamalai with Swami Suddhananda. It was very intense, the knowledge was so bright and clearly expressed that I had no doubt about the authenticity of it. Unfortunately, now I can see, after the revelation of the scandal in which Suddhananda was involved, that I could not discriminate about the nature of the teacher. For me at that time it looked that he was enlightened, and I had identified the truth of his teaching with him.

He is the second teacher I have encountered in the last ten years that showed up in the end to not be a genuine teacher. My question is, how can one discriminate between a genuine teacher and one who is not?

The need for a more simple life, to dedicate the time to self-enquiry with the close guidance of a teacher, brought me from Ireland to Portugal, in the countryside, close to an *ashram* that is now in the process of taking birth. The *ashram* was initiated by the Jamaican *guru* called Mooji. I appreciate very much the way in which he points to the truth. It feels very inspiring when he speaks.

He does not call himself a teacher in the traditional way but more a pointer to the truth. Probably you know a little about him.

Despite my appreciation, doubts arise in the mind about the efficiency of his approach. At the same time I can see that life brought me here at a moment when I was praying for the help of a *guru*. How can I discriminate? I feel that the mind is playing with me, not letting me give full trust to what life brought in front of me, at the same time I can see that there is a very naive part of me that in the past was not able to see clearly and discriminate.

I appreciate it if you can send me a few words about this, and I thank you again for your work.

~ Kindly, Galen

James: Hi, Galen. This is a good question. In the first place, you should not worry so much about the teacher as the teaching. Swami Suddhananda was a Vedanta teacher. Vedanta is a proven means of self-knowledge. It works if the teacher is skillful. It can even work if the teacher is not realized. Quite a few people whom I have never met tell me that they have been set free by my books, website and videos. This is not to say that I am great, only that Vedanta works even without the physical presence of a *guru*. It works because the problem is ignorance and the solution is self-knowledge. If you have a simple means for removing ignorance you can succeed without a *guru*, although it is best to have a *guru* because things go more quickly and easily. So there is another factor that is essential: the maturity of

the student. It seems you have realized that your discrimination is faulty. It is very good that you can see this. It shows maturity.

I know Mooji. He is a good guy and inspirational and, as you say, points to the truth, but he has no teaching. Without a teaching, what use is the pointing? It ends up being a frustration for the seeker, particularly someone who has had contact with Vedanta like you. Mooji and the Neos are very much a kind of secular religion where you are asked to believe in God, because the preacher and the religion cannot show you what God is. They can only talk about it and work up your desire to experience it but they cannot reveal it. Most of the people who go to Mooji are entry-level people. It is good for them. Most are more interested in the *sanga* than the *sat*. A cult of personality is developing around him. Only immature people with low self-confidence put other people on pedestals and worship them. They like the energy and the idea of being part of a group – it is like an extended family – but they are not yet qualified for *moksa*. They think it is some kind of happening. As people mature they leave entry-level situations and gravitate to a better teaching. This is not a criticism of Mooji. It is just a situation where *Isvara* is making a nice kindergarten for those who need it.

I think your mistake was not understanding the value of Vedanta as opposed to the Neo-Advaita. If you really understand what Vedanta is then you cannot accept a lesser teaching. If you have a choice between a tricycle and a bicycle you will always go for the bicycle. A proper teaching makes the goal clear and gives you a method for realizing it.

A mature person can separate the teacher from the teaching. It seems you have figured this out because you can see that Mooji is not enough. It would be good if Swami Suddhananda kept teaching. But he would have to take off his orange clothes and tell people out front that he was not celibate, and to get his girlfriends outside the *sanga*. He will probably never do that because he has been a lifestyle *sanyassi* – although not a real *sanyassi* – for most of his adult life and he probably cannot make his way in the world without the support of the Vedanta *sampradaya*. *Isvara* does not care if you are enlightened. If you violate *dharma*, you will suffer. In any case, that is not an option.

Anyway, I don't know what to tell you, Galen. What is or was your profession? Tell me a little bit about yourself.

~ Love, Ram

Galen: Dear Ram, thank you for answering my letter so fast. It was not very easy to fall asleep last night after reading it. Much stuff comes up to the surface regarding Mooji.

Last year I had heard for the first time of you from a good friend of mine with whom I had shared part of time in The Fourth Way School (based on Georges Gurdjieff's and P.D. Ouspensky's teachings).

Nine years ago I was about twenty-five years old, had just finished my studies in architecture, and felt a very strong pull towards spirituality. A strong feeling that the life I lived till then had no meaning and that much more could be discovered about myself. So started to read spiritual books, starting with Ouspensky's *The Fourth Way*. My life totally changed from then on. I was not looking anymore to be a great architect, to get rich and famous, to have a wife and children. My parents were not

happy at all with this turn of events.

I was in The Fourth Way School for about four years, after which I was asked to leave because I had started to follow the teachings of a non-dual teacher called David Hawkins. I was not supposed to follow other teachers or to meditate, which I did. It was grace that took me out of that strange field in which the teacher was controlling what the students' private lives should be about and who was having sexual relations with his male students. So my first encounter with a teacher left me with a bitter feeling.

I started to meditate and go to the conferences of David Hawkins in Arizona for few years and to go to *vipassana* retreats. For a year-and-a-half *vipassana* meditation became my daily practice. I was staying in the house meditating for four or five hours a day for a while, not really functioning in the world. This time the feeling that this would be a very long journey to enlightenment grew in me and I have started to see the need of the guidance from a master like Ramana Maharshi. At that time I had first time heard about self-enquiry and start to read books related to it.

The retreat in Tiruvannamalai with Suddhananda was the most powerful experience I have had and the most clear knowledge I had met till then. Coming back home from India and finding out about his love story disappointed me again. I had been strongly thinking before to go for a long-term Vedanta course with him. Once back, I asked Michael how I can get audio recordings from you and started to listen to your teaching every day. I heard also that you travel and this is how you spread the teaching, but because I was looking for a way of living close to a master, I had not seen this as possible with you. At some point I heard about Mooji, that he is starting an *ashram* in Portugal. So here I am since June this year, in Portugal working as a volunteer for the *ashram*. I was sincerely inspired by him on *YouTube* and felt again that maybe it is not a coincidence that I heard about him and that he needs architects, so thought again, "Maybe it's he who will show me the way out."

What is interesting, I have to say, is that in his pointing, which sounds non-dual, he touches essential truths I have encountered in Vedanta teachings. It seems that he always tries to bring the seeker to the point of questioning himself, and this for me was very inspirational. I had thought that the essence of his pointing is the same as the essence of the knowledge revealed by Vedanta, so it would be very helpful.

James: Yes, but you need more than pointers. You need a method to discriminate. You are using your discrimination to try to solve problems in *maya*, not to separate you, awareness, from the objects in you, i.e. the not-self. You are right in your analysis of your problem. It is lack of discrimination. But don't be hard on yourself. You are still young. Hearing about your *sadhana* is helpful.

Galen: Yet after a while I had a strong feeling to go back to the knowledge revealed through your teaching and start to listen again. Doubts arise again about what happened around him, why all the people who come to serve in the "seva program" and work from morning till evening planting trees on the land have also to pay a lot extra to be here close to him. An answer immediately came: it is *karma yoga*... okay.

I again closed my eyes to it and repeated to myself the answer Mooji gave to somebody who was having doubts: "Find who is the doubter." It sounds so true, his advice. It is essential to find the doubter, but this should not be an excuse. It seems

that it is so difficult to discriminate when you have the truth mixed up with the falsehood in a teaching.

James: *Karma yoga* as taught by Mooji and many others is just a clever trick to get free labor to build organizations and *ashrams*. It is not *karma yoga* at all.

Secondly, you can see how this “find the doubter” is a very clever way not to answer questions, to keep you ignorant. Mooji has no idea how to clear your doubts because he has no teaching. The idea is that the mind is an enemy and has to be transcended or destroyed or somehow dismissed. The doubter is the self under the spell of *maya*, ignorance. It needs to have its doubts cleared, not dismissed. If you find it, so what? The doubts remain. You need a teaching, a method for clearing your doubts.

The reason he does not want to answer this question is because he is ambitious and wants to be more famous and there are many useless people who are willing to pay to hang around and think they are special because they are close to Mooji. It is amazing that they actually have to work. Usually the rich ones don't work. They are the bosses who tell the poor ones to work. There is probably a special inner-inner circle that handles the money and hangs around hugging Mooji in his spare time. I don't think Mooji is in it for the money but you never know. I think he is chasing fame. This is why the situation is structured that way - it is, as I said, Mooji-centric, not God-centric.

Galen: Now, after you have written me the email, I can see more clearly that my focus should not be so much on finding the physical presence of a *guru*, and that I have been seduced also by the idea of belonging to a spiritual community with a *guru*. I also can see what you mean when you say that it is a kindergarten...

James: Yes, 98% of spiritual seekers are just looking for love, for someone to love or to be loved by someone or to feel like they are part of something important, something spiritual. It is not bad or wrong but it shows a lack of qualification, a lack of maturity. It is an objective solution to an inner longing for completion that doesn't work. Nothing can complete you because you are already complete.

Galen: Anyway, maybe I wrote a little too much about the past, but maybe useful for making more clear to you what is manifesting in me... What can I do? We never know in the moment why life brings certain experiences to us. We may think one thing, but it could be totally something else. Maybe I should not make conclusions so fast, but it seems that for the mind conclusions are necessary to create a story that make sense to it.

James: No, it is good what you wrote. It gives me an idea of what to tell you.

Galen: Now where to go? What to do? I do not feel like moving anywhere. Unfortunately, I cannot afford to come to India yet. I have rented a small house for 90 euros a month here in the countryside close to the Mooji *ashram*, and live with my girlfriend. When you will be in Europe again, I will come to see you.

James: Stay where you are. It is okay. Keep thinking. Don't accept all the things that Mooji and those people around him believe. It will be hard because his followers are not people, they are "sheeple," they do not think for themselves. A group hypnosis is happening there, a cult of personality. Every so often this kind of thing happens in the spiritual world. It doesn't last, because it is *guru*-centered, not *Isvara*-centered. There is a real danger that, if he isn't already, he will be corrupted by the fame and the power. Even Suddhananda, who actually has a brain and a teaching, i.e. Vedanta, fell prey to his *vasanas*.

People never learn. You had the same kind of situation with Osho and Siddha Yoga and so many other spiritual dramas in recent years. *Sadhana* is an inner journey, a discrimination that takes place within. It has nothing to do with *ashrams* and *gurus* and all that spiritual *maya*. These people are hypnotized by an idea. It is particularly dangerous because it looks so spiritual. By "dangerous" I don't mean life-threatening. I mean misleading, a waste of time. But it is good because it delivers the gift of disappointment to which, it seems, you are no stranger. For those who are indiscriminating, *Isvara* is forced to teach them through their life experiences, particularly their mistakes.

Stick with Vedanta. I don't say "stick with me." I have no devotees, no followers. I can teach you how to think and maybe show you who you are, but that is all. I do not tell anybody to do anything or try to control their lives in any way. If you stick with Vedanta you will learn how to think for yourself, to recognize that needy, seductive voice within that always misleads. You will learn how to listen to the voice within that I now see coming out, that voice of reason and clear thinking. Mooji is wrong about the problem. It is not the mind or the doubter. It is lack of discrimination between knowledge and ignorance. His idea of *karma yoga* is particularly dangerous because it is ignorance masquerading as knowledge.

You need *karma yoga*, but not the fake *karma yoga* that Mooji offers. *Karma yoga* is an attitude you take with respect to action and its results. Stop worrying about what you should do. *Isvara* will make it clear sooner or later. I have attached a chapter from my new book on it. In the meantime read my book *How to Attain Enlightenment* carefully. Sign on to the logic at every stage. Don't move ahead until you understand what has already been said. You need the big picture.

Galen: I have started to read your book *How to Attain Enlightenment* and to listen again your *satsangs*. Are you going to move to Spain at some point soon? I really appreciate your help, Ram, and I am happy that you could find time to answer my letter. I would like to keep in touch with you.

Ram: Yes, we are moving to Spain this year. You can come and see me.