

# No Non-Existence

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Annette:** Hi, Ram. If you're going to encourage me, you're asking for it! I've got more.

First, I wanted to tell you what I've been doing since I saw you. Vedanta has totally embraced me with its beauty and I'm having a love affair with it. It's all I care about. I've been watching one or two of your new India videos every day, and I'm very excited to start the *Bhagavad Gita* today because I've never seen your videos on it and, frankly, I can't understand the *Gita* by myself. I've gotten out all my books and scriptural material, including much from your website, that I was reading when we first emailed at the end of last year, and am rereading it. Plus all that great stuff on the hard drive! Your e-satsangs and all, I'm enjoying reading all of it.

And finally, you have sparked my interest in learning Sanskrit, and I'm going to go to a weekend workshop in October to jump-start that endeavor. I've also finally seen that this - the freedom, the reality - is all I've cared about my entire life, and I finally have the knowledge to put "what people think" aside. This is the devotion I've been looking for. I always wondered why I never had devotion, and it's because the model presented to me was such a mess. I almost chucked the whole thing for Catholicism a few months back, just so I would have something to worship! I'm serious! Now Vedanta has become so clear and beautiful, and I can fully love it with all my heart.

Here is something from the draft I'm working on: "I got myself stuck in a totally impossible place to move from. I'm surprised I made it out at all. It was a place where no information or knowledge at all could be taken as useful, because the person was said to be only arising in thought right now, and so all information applied to a non-existent entity. I was able to defend this position to anyone who questioned it, very easily and with impeccable logic. Obviously, I would say, any question, doubt, suffering you have only refers to a person that is arising in thought right now. This was all supposed to be remedied spontaneously, by pausing the thought that contained the person, and seeing that only self remains. Unfortunately, there was no tool or knowledge to prevent that suffering from returning again in the very next second. The spontaneous pausing had to be repeated over and over again, with no end in sight, because any application of means implied the existence of a person, time and change, which were all denied totally and/or logically argued against. So perverted was this web of ignorance that any attempt to escape it would be seen as referring to the unreal person, and must be ignored. No way out."

James, I even found in my journal from Portland a doubt that I was going to return to your *satsang* after the first night I saw you because I felt I was just "chasing being cooked," and "cooked" only referred to a non-existent person. I almost didn't come back! That's how sneaky and undermining my former beliefs and the Neo non-dual stuff is. I look at the ignorance in it now and I'm surprised I fell for it. "Only appearing in thought" was never fully explained. So it really does take probing and persistence to not allow anything to linger that is not completely explored. But that gets so exhausting and uncertain, and the self-doubt is always there. This is why it really is absolutely essential to have an established system of knowledge that is trusted and relied on and puts all the pieces in place. Thank God for Vedanta!

It's also necessary to have a teacher, someone to trust who is established in the self, as you say. I guess you are my teacher. Though there hasn't been much face-to-face contact between us, I hope it's okay with you that I put you in that role. You are certainly the one I trusted to take me through the teaching, via DVD and writings. I don't have questions now, but as I grow in this devotion it's nice to know there is a living human being to reach out to if needed.

~ Love, Annette

**James:** This is so cool, Annette, discovering the devotion. The description of the non-existent teaching is fantastic! This is one of the most laughable teachings around. The problem is the word "non-existent." Thought is not non-existent. It exists, no matter what it refers to. In fact there is no such thing as non-existence, because everything is consciousness. If a thought exists it exists as consciousness. A person exists - as consciousness. You cannot experience something that does not exist. Jesus, what moron came up with such an idea? And to think that a person would use this argument as some kind of helpful teaching when the idea of non-existence also applies to the teaching that the thought is non-existent and that the entity to which the thought occurred is also non-existent.

The basis of this silly - I hesitate to call it a teaching, since it obviously isn't - stupid teaching is the belief that the ego and the self enjoy the same order of reality and that you have to get rid of the ego to be enlightened. The ego is the self appearing in the apparent reality. It has no bearing on the self at all apart from the fact that it depends on the self for its existence, not the other way around. So it is fine as it is - if you are the self. But if you are below the line, it is possible to fall for this kind of nonsense.

I am happy to teach you if you need it, Annette. You are a great soul. You know who you are. I can't see that you will have many doubts, but sometimes there might be Vedanta questions that I might be able to help you with.

~ Much love, Ram