

# Not Much Ignorance to Expose

Ram (James Swartz)

2013-01-20

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/621>

**Mark:** Hi, James. Thank you for the email. I've read it over a number of times to try and absorb it all. ☺ Firstly, I've realized that making comparisons of Vedanta with other things (Buddhism, etc.) might not be overly useful. Better to take it for what it is on its own terms.

It's funny, from reading your book I was getting the idea of "you are already enlightened" and that it isn't experiential and yet I clearly forgot that when I asked my question!

**James:** Yes, it is easy to forget. If you are awareness you are always experiencing it because awareness is all there is. So it is futile to wait for some kind of experience to confirm your enlightenment.

**Mark:** I have days where I catch myself, perhaps say, getting irritated by someone, and I will take a moment and think, "This experience of annoyance is simply an object in my awareness." I find that tends to reduce or eliminate that feeling, and I can move on. Or I will try to remind myself as often as possible of a phrase you use in the book about the "hard and fast knowing of being limitless, actionless, non-dual awareness." I was having a little trouble with the "actionless" part, though that's clearing up now. I've been listening to lectures by Swamini Prakashananada from AVG (UK) and that's helped a lot.

**James:** "Actionlessness" is hard to assimilate because the self naturally identifies with the body when ignorance is operating. It can't imagine surviving without doing so there is often extreme attachment to the idea of doership. A bit of inquiry, however, reveals that action is taking place all the time on the level of the body and mind and that the self simply observes. There is a beautiful verse in the *Upanishad* that says, "Two birds sitting in a tree. One eats the sweet fruit, the other looks on."

The practice of knowledge definitely works to eliminate or minimize subjective disturbances. Keep it up.

**Mark:** I do most definitely need to expose my ignorance to a teacher. Currently, I'm not in the position, logistically speaking, where I can spend a lot of time around qualified teachers. I'm about three or four hours from Saylorsburg, PA, which isn't too far, but I'm married, self-employed and we have pretty limited means, so regular trips aren't in the cards right now. Until they are possible I made the decision that it was better to do something rather than nothing and that I could expose myself to authentic teaching online or through books. I'm trying to get grounded in all the essential basics, and hopefully I can work with people who can help build on that in the future. While Tibetan *lamas* are ten to a penny here in Connecticut, Hinduism is not well represented at all and there don't seem to be many (any?) people around interested in Vedanta.

**James:** I think you might benefit from my videos. There is a USB stick offered on the website that has 110 hours of teaching for \$200. Some say it is better than listening to the teaching live owing to the fact that you can rewind and replay.

There is the basic *Self Inquiry* teaching, *The Bhagavad Gita*, *Vivekachoodamani*, *Aparokshanubhuti* and *Atma Bodh* on it. There are also individual offers for between \$50 and \$100. A person is working on bringing me to Princeton for a weekend in the spring, I believe.

**Mark:** Anyway, thank you for letting me expose my ignorance via email! I appreciate that you take out so much time to help your readers.

**James:** You didn't make me work very hard, Mark. Not much ignorance here.

~ Love, James