

It Takes Enlightenment to Know Enlightenment

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Mani: Dear James, I have read your book a couple of times. I still don't understand your self-inquiry method. Could you please give me a brief summary of your method and how yours is different from Sri Ramana's method? This way probably could allow me to catch the essence of your book more easily when I read it again.

James: Hi, Mani. I don't see that there is essentially any difference, except that Vedanta - it is not "my" method; I have no method - is much more clear, logical, consistent and comprehensive. Ramana was enlightened but he was not a teacher. He just spoke from his own experience. If you read *Upadesa Saram* by Ramana it is pure Vedanta. He did not invent it. He realized it and what he realized was what everyone who realizes realizes. But Ramana was not a traditional teacher of Vedanta and he said apparently contradictory things because he was speaking to different people at different times. And only rarely did go to the trouble to explain the apparent contradictions.

Vedanta, "my" book, resolves all the apparent contradiction that there is in the spiritual world. It is beautifully organized and unfolds the vision of non-duality clearly. It presents the method of self-inquiry in such a way that if you can accept the logic - which is just the logic of human experience enshrined in the teaching of Vedanta - you cannot fail to understand who you are. Ramana did not collect all his statements and organize them in a logical sequence and explain the apparent contradictions. So there is room for doubt.

There is room for doubt with any teaching, including Vedanta, if you do not have a living teacher who can help you resolve the doubts. You cannot get enlightened by just reading scripture, whether it is the words of Ramana or the words of Vedanta, because your ignorance of the self will cause you to misunderstand the words.

It is impossible for you to know if anyone is enlightened unless you are enlightened. But you can know what enlightenment is if you open your mind to Vedanta and allow yourself to be taught because it is not the personal experience of anyone. It is the universal experience of everyone who ever discovered who he or she is. It is a perfect means of enlightenment because all the personal stuff has been taken cleaned out. It is just impersonal wisdom.

But probably the reason you do not understand Vedanta is because you think it is telling you to do something. But it is not telling you to do anything. It is telling you to understand something. The methodology makes it impossible for you not to understand if you are qualified.

~ Love, James