

The Self Is the Teacher

Ram (James Swartz)

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/840>

Dreamer: Hi, James. I spent over two hours on the phone yesterday evening explaining self-knowledge to a long-lost – and now retrieved – beloved friend. I gave a succinct and yet elaborate perspective of the nature of Vedanta and of your great talent in presenting it. I was glad to see, from his responses, that he is qualified for Vedanta. I later went to sleep and had a dream. The dream was nothing exceptional but its meaning wasn't in need of a Freud or Jung for an interpretation. Nonetheless, I thought it was a palpable example of Vedanta in (actionless 😊) action. In other words, though it was an experience of the dream state, it is an inspiring example of how teaching Vedanta can portray itself.

The Tree of Self-Knowledge

I was walking through a dense forest with some friends. There was no sense of me being my usual persona nor was there a sense of recognizing any particular person. We were just a bunch of unidentified people walking through the woods. We walked and walked. All of a sudden I stumbled upon a large tree trunk that was the core of a tree. I told my friends that I knew of this tree and that they wouldn't regret climbing it.

James: Unidentified people walking in the woods means there is only one generic person walking in the woods of self-ignorance.

Dreamer: So we all got into the act of climbing and climbing. We apparently climbed from branch to branch. But as anyone knows, one cannot climb from branch to branch.

James: This universal person begins to climb the tree of self-knowledge.

Dreamer: One has to go from the core to the various branches and then back to the core, unless one is an ape. The strange thing was that, as we were not apes (i.e. unqualified), we seemed to always be following an elongated form of the core. There were no branches (i.e. ambiguity or sidetracking teachings). There were no branches, just an interminable core that led on forever.

James: All the teachings (branches) spring from one source. Hopping from one teaching to another comes from an apelike understanding. People who are not qualified for the essential or core teaching hop from one teaching to another, never getting to the essence. Vedanta is not another branch. It is the core teaching, the source from which all teachings spring.

Dreamer: Yet, apparently, this core nonetheless seemed to branch off from time to

time. As we ascended we finally came upon a large branch (that was nothing but the core) where a bright light appeared. We were basking in light.

James: Vedanta calls the branching off a “leading error.” It is not the direct path, i.e. self-knowledge, but will eventually lead to self-knowledge. Basking in the light means experiencing, knowing the self as an object. Vedanta calls it indirect knowledge.

Dreamer: I told my friends that we still had a ways to go. They were about as motivated as one could be. Read: the teaching had only begun and we still needed more self-knowledge from the tree of life (*Isvara/brahman*).

James: The realization/experience of the self as an object is just the beginning, not the end of inquiry. The one who has realized, the one who is basking, needs to become the light through knowledge.

Dreamer: This is my first attempt at depicting a dream. Edit it, James, if you feel this might be of service to anyone. Though it is obviously a short statement of the self, maybe it could serve to nudge people on the way.

James: It is an excellent teaching, direct from the self. Your statement that there is “a ways to go” means that you understand that *moksa* is direct knowledge – “I am the tree.” I think it will be helpful. I will put it on the Web. I love the elegant simplicity of these self-dreams.