

Shiningworld Newsletter January 2013

The first Newsletter for from Tiruvannamalai, completed Panchadasi of the seminar. The Bhagavad Gita is well first seminar started biting anxiety as the literally hours before start! Typical India, own time and way of wonderful venue, away of town, very quiet



is in fine fettle, teaching with his usual panache and brilliance. We have put a few pics of the Tiru teaching from this year on the website in the gallery, as well as on Facebook. The one in this Newsletter is taken on Pongol, which is a celebration of the harvest, marking the beginning of the New Year. Many people brought beautiful flowers to grace the altar and it was an especially powerful teaching on that day.

2013 comes to you where we have and the first stage second stage, the under way. The on time, with nail venue was ready we were due to everything has its working out. It is a from the madness and sattvic. Ramji



Theme for Newsletter

We are introducing a theme with each Newsletter in future. The theme for this Newsletter is what it means to teach Vedanta. We are going to endorse a few people who have fairly recently realized the self and would like us to put up their email addresses as a service to enquirers who would like to write to them.





Teaching Vedanta

A person who has not carefully examined life will conclude that experience is for the sake of experience itself. But experience does not stand alone. It serves a higher master... the knower. Every experience we have is for the sake of the self, the knower, alone. When ignorance operates, the knower, awareness, thinks it is an experiencer, chases experience and comes to grief.

It does not have to be this way. A very long time ago, a teaching that revealed the fact that the knower is free of experience, appeared. Because this teaching worked, it became a tradition. We do not know when it began. Suffice it to say, thousands of years ago. Over time the teaching...you are the non-witnessing knower and not the experiencing entity that appears in you... was never compromised because it is the truth. Only the truth endures and Vedanta has endured as the most effective teaching the world has ever known. It will endure forever.

Those who do not understand Vedanta think that it is just one of many spiritual paths. All roads lead to Rome, they say. But Vedanta is a path like none other. It is a pathless path. It is the knowledge behind all the paths. Knowledge is. It is always present because the knower is always present. It should be obvious that I am the knower, the observer of the experience, but ignorance covers this simple fact. Ignorance of the knower...the self...is the same for everyone. Ignorance is very clever, unlike experience, which is very dumb. It is dumb because it doesn't remove itself but has to be removed by something else. The knower can figure out worldly things on its own using the means of knowledge supplied by God, perception and inference. But concerning the topic of the knower...who am I...the only tool is knowledge. Self knowledge, to be specific.

The interesting thing about the self is this: it is virtually impossible that the experiencer understand that it is actually the knower in a meaningful way on the basis of knowledge it gains from its experiences. It can gain indirect self knowledge by experience but it cannot gain direct knowledge...without help. Direct knowledge is: I am the non-experiencing witness, not the experiencer. Vedanta reveals this fact. Even those who know this fact intellectually do not actually have confidence to live as the knower. And they need more than an epiphany or two to convince them. They need to be convinced by understanding the logic of their own experience, a logic that escapes everyone owing to the amazing power of ignorance to conceal the truth.

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The most important fact we need to know about Vedanta is that it is not philosophy with various schools of thought. It is a very simple teaching methodology. Many people claim to teach Vedanta but treat it as a philosophy or some kind of spiritual path. It loses its effectiveness when it is presented in this way. There is also nothing 'spiritual' or mystical about it. Just as you need eyes to see forms, you need an eye to see awareness. The eye for awareness is Vedanta. Those of us who really understand the teaching tradition call it a pramana, a simple means of knowledge.

You cannot study Vedanta and expect to be set free of experience. Many people study Vedanta because they think it is a philosophy. They usually end up lost in the means, like people who get stuck in the world of cars can easily forget that cars are meant to move people from one place to another. Vedanta needs to be taught. A teacher of Vedanta has a very limited job description, to wield the means of knowledge effectively and reveal the fact that the student is limitless awareness, not the limited experienter. Vedanta reveals this fact by showing to the experienter the unexamined logic of its experience.

Vedanta is the Teacher

To teach Vedanta you have to understand that the teaching has nothing to do with what you think and feel, with what you experience. It is purely a method for removing ignorance. Understanding this and actually practicing the method on self-ignorant people are two different things. The best way to learn to teach is to be taught by someone who knows how to teach. This is how I learned. Although I was with my teacher every day for about two years, there was no personal instruction on teaching. It was not necessary because the teaching was going on all the time. Slowly, by observing how he taught and practicing on inquirers in the sanga, I learned how to teach. I made mistakes.

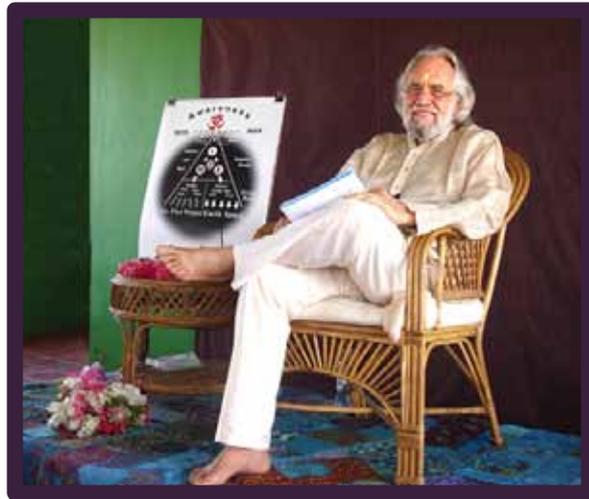
To teach Vedanta you have to have the utmost respect for the sampradaya, the teaching tradition. You will know that you have been selected to join the ranks of the great teachers of Vedanta when the teaching flows effortlessly from your mind, when it does not feel as if 'you' are teaching. Generally, this does not happen all at once but comes with constant practice.

Teaching is not lecturing, telling someone what to think or do or getting them to believe in themselves. It is communicating from heart to heart. Teaching is dangerous spiritually because there is power in it. People want to know and they will surrender to you. There is always a temptation to take credit for the teaching and use your position to fulfill your personal needs. If you are a mature person and respect the tradition, you will not become corrupted. Your sense of satisfaction will depend on the fullness that you are and your appreciation of the beauty of Vedanta as an effective means of self knowledge, not on the adulation that comes from helping people. The joy that lights the eyes the student when you see the knowledge working in them should be satisfaction enough.

A teacher of Vedanta is a karma yogi, leaving the results of the teaching to the self. It is an offering, an act of worship and service to the self in the form of inquiring minds. If the teacher has this attitude, the teaching will flow. If there is a fear of failure, the teaching will

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not work. Of course, you care if the student understands but you cannot be disappointed if he or she doesn't. Of course you want to do your best, but you are not discouraged when you don't. Teaching is a skill like any other and it takes time to get the hang of it. If you are doing it for the right reasons you cannot fail because you have the blessing of the whole lineage.



The Self is the Teacher

A Vedanta teacher understands that he or she is the self teaching the self, not an ego teaching an ego. It is the self that hears the teaching and responds. To teach an ego is to become an ego and assume the burden of doership. It never works. You will find yourself caught up in the lives of your students and suffer sleepless nights. A Vedanta teacher does not tell you what to do, but is free to make suggestions based on the logic of the teaching. Finally, a student of Vedanta has every right to expect the teacher to live a righteous life. The proof of self knowledge is a dharmic life.

There is more to say on the topic of teaching but I will leave the rest to my darling wife, Sundari, who has done a fine job explaining the qualifications of a teacher elsewhere in this newsletter.

It seems that many people are waking up and realizing who they are outside the tradition of Vedanta. It is very good. Enlightenment makes happy people but it does not in any way make a teacher of enlightenment or a teaching. Vedanta is such a powerful impersonal teaching that a person who knows the method and knows how to teach can reveal the knowledge that sets you free even though he or she has not been set free by the knowledge!

It so happens that in the last few years quite a few people have realized who they are through Vedanta as taught by me. Some understand the beauty of the tradition and want to share what they know. I cannot prevent anyone from teaching but I can support individuals who I feel would make good teachers. I can also withdraw my support if I feel that someone is not teaching properly. In general I always encourage people to share what they know with others in a spirit of sacrifice and service. I discourage those who have unexamined psychological issues. If someone teaches in my name and misuses the teaching it will come to my attention and I will no longer endorse them.

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As mentioned, teaching is dangerous because it builds ego. It is dangerous in Vedanta because people who are attracted to Vedanta are usually very intelligent. Intelligent people, particularly those with low self esteem, almost invariably entertain a sense of arrogance and entitlement. It is easy to forget that all wonderful qualities belong to the self, not to individuals. You will perhaps find this hard to believe, but sometimes people who realize who they are, suddenly feel superior to the person who taught them. This has happen three times to me in the last few years with people who I considered friends. I am not better or worse than anyone, but when I find this attitude developing I can no longer support that person. Respect for the lineage is the lineage.

Although Vedanta is Vedanta, there are basically two ways to teach. One is the style of Swami Dayananda, my teaching guru. It is the traditional style. I endorse it completely. You learn Sanskrit and you hear the texts one by one over time. Gradually the big picture, the vision of non-duality, is established in your mind and you are set free. This style worked very well in the old days and it works beautifully now for sanyassi types who have time on their hands and can spend two or three years in a gurukulam and/or who have the resources to follow the teacher. For this approach to work, you cannot be Sanskrit averse or Hinduism averse. This approach does not work very well with non-Indians, except ex-patriots. It is a conservative style and has certain advantages.

Although I cut no corners with the teaching and strictly follow the methodology of Vedanta I teach in a way that has proven effective with Westerners who do not have Hindu samskaras. Knowledge is not culture specific. I unfold the big picture all at once in a matter of days. The advantage of this style is that very quickly the inquirer finds out what enlightenment is and isn't. This is important because it eliminates the possibility that one will get sidetracked in one of the many experiential paths. And it immediately gives the inquirer proven tools with which to inquire. The other style takes more time, assuming the same level of eligibility.

My style works very well for highly qualified inquirers...even householders...who are discriminating, dispassionate and highly motivated. A highly motivated individual is self disciplined and can discriminate the self from the objects in all circumstances. The old style of teaching works well for individuals who are not as highly qualified because it involves a lifestyle that supports the teaching, qualifying the individual as he or she goes. I doubt that I would have had students who suddenly felt superior to me when they realized the self had I had the karma to teach in an ashram supported by a trust in the traditional manner because they would have gained the requisite maturity. If you have unfulfilled desires and you realize the self without the constant presence of the teacher and an ashram environment, you can easily insult Vedanta by letting your ego co-opt the teaching.

My style works less well for entry level people whose commitment to moksa is weak or middling and whose qualifications are not up to the mark because such people usually need the benefit of an institution and the ever-present watchful eye of the teacher to progress.

In any case the basic condition for an endorsement is that the teacher teach discrimination according to the logic unfolded in my book, How to Attain Enlightenment...because it works. I wish well those who have been set free by Vedanta but will not endorse those who teach according to their pre-Vedanta sadhanas. Nearly everyone who is set free by Vedanta has a

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long history of seeking and, while the practices and ideas that served at one time were useful for them I do not endorse the teachings of any of the Buddhist schools, Yoga schools, or the so-called 'teachings' of realized souls who teach their own experience, like Krishnamurthi, Osho, Papaji and the shallow offerings of the Neos. In the event that a particular statement of an enlightened person corresponds with Vedanta we accept it, but only then. This is not to disparage any individual teacher nor is it an attempt to shake your faith in a teacher or teaching that has brought you to Vedanta.

Finally, teaching is a labor of love. It is not an occupation. To teach under the aegis of Shiningworld the teacher must have an independent income. He or she should not charge for the teachings but is free to accept donations. If I hear that a teacher is soliciting or 'suggesting' donations I will withdraw my support.

I have decided to endorse several of my students as 'teachers.' Their names will be posted on the Contact page of Shiningworld.com. Obviously, to teach like I do takes time so you should not expect the same level of expertise from them. If you write them you can be assured that Sundari and I will monitor their replies to ensure that no mistakes are made on the doctrinal level. Feel free to Skype them or phone them to discuss your questions. So that you do not develop unrealistic expectations you should probably think of it as sharing, not 'teaching' which can be a word that often has emotional connotations. Think of them as friends you have met in a coffee shop and develop a relationship with them. Because someone does not answer your question to your satisfaction does not mean that they do not know who they are. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of teaching is learning how to identify the actual doubt. Often the question is not the real doubt. There is a lot of psychology involved in teaching; learning to spot the psychological block to the assimilation of the knowledge is a big part of effective teaching.

In any case, I am getting on in years and Shiningworld is growing leaps and bounds and it is time to think of handing on the torch. It is the desire of Isvara that the teaching tradition be preserved in all its purity and glory and, waiting to speak the truth, Isvara sits in the hearts of those sincere students of Vedanta who understand the value of the tradition. May all beings benefit from the wisdom of Vedanta.

Teaching Endorsements

We have five people we are endorsing on Shiningworld who would like to teach in keeping with the great tradition of the Vedanta sampradaya.

We can vouch for any of these people as their knowledge is solid and their characters are impeccable. They are new to teaching so please give them an opportunity to learn to teach. Feel free to write to any one of them; we believe all of them will make great teachers. We will post their email addresses in the "What's New" section on Shiningworld website as well. This is an experiment and if it proves to be successful, we will endorse others to teach under the aegis of Shiningworld. In the event that a teacher does not live up to the high standards of the tradition that Ram's upholds, they will no longer be endorsed by Shiningworld.

The people Shiningworld endorses in this way will not be permitted to solicit donations through Shiningworld; although they are permitted to accept them should anyone want to make them.

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E-satsang with Sundari

Paul: You say I have the qualifications of a good teacher. I don't necessarily doubt that. What are the exact qualifications you speak of ... for reference, of course?

Sundari: You have assimilated and correlated the knowledge comprehensively; you have understood the 'big picture'. You have great love and respect for the scripture and you are able to relay the knowledge and unfold it logically and correctly in your communications with Ram and I. This will have to translate into your teaching method, along with developing your own teaching style. Both will take practice. I have outlined the qualifications below:

Teaching Qualifications

1. Confidence in the knowledge and respect for the Tradition as an Independent Means of Knowledge

The main qualification for a teacher is that they have assimilated Vedanta and have great love and respect for it and the tradition it originates from. He/she must have total commitment to and faith in Vedanta as an irrefutable and valid means of knowledge. They must know beyond a shadow of a doubt that it is not 'their' teaching and that its power lies in the fact that it is a complete teaching, independent of their experience or opinions, or anyone else's.

2. Humility and Compassion

The teacher has to have humility and compassion and see those that receive the teaching as non different, as the self. Vedanta is a tradition of sakhya bhava, which is friendship or identification with everyone, not superiority over anyone. The guru sees no 'others' and his job is simply to remove ignorance, wielding the means of knowledge which does the 'work.' He or she knows that they are simply a vehicle transmitting the knowledge. This is why Ramji is not identified with being a teacher of Vedanta; he knows he is not the doer and leaves it all up to Isvara.

3. Meeting the Student at Their Level of Understanding and Communicating Effectively

The teacher has to have the very important ability not only to hold and unfold the logic; he/she also has to have the ability to connect with and meet the student at their level of understanding, without putting themselves above the student. I love the word eunoia; it means the ability of a teacher to create a rapport with their students through the action of transmitting knowledge with love. It is difficult to teach effectively without the ability to gauge where the student is at, or to engage them with how you communicate with them. You will either bore or confuse, or both. A true teacher simply shares the knowledge which involves listening as much as speaking. These skills do not magically appear overnight; it takes time and practice for everyone who starts out teaching.

4. Instilling Faith in the Student and Being Willing to Admit to Being Wrong

Obviously in order to instill confidence in the student as stated above, the teacher must have full confidence in the scripture and be able to effectively wield the means of knowledge.

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Just as importantly, the teacher must be willing to admit it when he/she does not know something, or that they are not familiar with something in the scripture. Or that they are wrong and have to check with the scripture. If they cannot do this, it means the ego has identified with the scripture and co-opted it. The ego needs to feel important, or "right". Some so called teachers will try to convince the student that they must become the devotee or disciple of the guru, instead of a disciple and devotee to self knowledge. Many seekers who lack discrimination give over their devotion, their money and years of their lives to these flawed and bogus gurus. One does not have to look far to find examples of this; it is so rampant in the spiritual arena that it is almost the norm. This is why Vedanta is so clear that it is an independent means of knowledge; it is not about egos. Ramji does not have disciples or devotees; he does not want or need devotion or "followers". This is what distinguishes a real from a false teacher: they teach the self, not the ego. It is not the teacher's place to evaluate your ego either. The main premise of Vedanta is that you are fine the way you are.

5. The Correct Use of Language and Vedantic Terminology

It is of utmost importance that the correct terminology and language is used when teaching Vedanta. Vedanta is a sabda pramana, meaning it is an oral tradition and as such it is very specific in the terminology it uses to express the teaching. This does not mean that in order to teach one has to study all the scriptures, or to quote verbatim from them. Nor does one have to be conversant with all the Sanskrit words. It means that the teacher must have a firm understanding of and is able to retain the meaning of the correct terminology in the scripture.

Other than for some terms and words that have no English equivalent and cannot be translated or replaced, the use of Sanskrit is not necessary to unfold the scripture correctly. Even Dayananda has changed his position about the necessity of using Sanskrit unless it is unavoidable. Ram's knowledge of Sanskrit is very good; he is scrupulous in adhering to the correct terminology and meaning of the scripture, which he expresses in his own way. To be confident as a teacher, it is important to develop your own style which is consistent with who you are, while staying true to the scripture. The teacher needs to find their own voice.

6. A Purified Mind

All the qualifications laid out by Vedanta apply to both teacher and student. Whether the teacher is self realised or not, although it certainly does make a considerable difference if they are, it is important that they follow dharma and have an impeccable character. They need to lead by precept and by example.

7. A Particular Kind of Mind

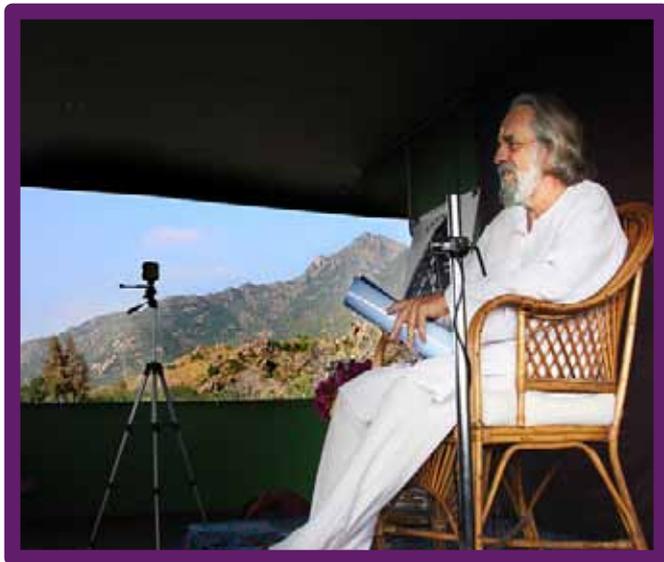
Not everyone is cut out to teach; it takes a particular kind of mind and temperament to teach effectively. As we well know, in the apparent reality, there is only one 'mind'; it is omniscient and all powerful and its nature is sattva. This is the macrocosmic mind, Isvara or Maya. There is also really only one jiva (or visva) with limited knowledge and limited power; although it appears that there are many individual minds or jivas. Certain minds, the small minority, seem to be designed by Isvara to be qualified for Vedanta and therefore ready for moksha. Vedanta does not appeal to those who are not qualified; this does not make a qualified mind superior to one that is not. Even though the mind may be qualified, this does not

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automatically translate into the skill to teach. Ramana and Nisargadatta are good examples of this. Neither of them were qualified teachers, and neither claimed to be teachers; yet this is what seekers have tried to make of them.

8. Maturity and Self-Esteem

There is another very important aspect to having a purified mind. Although the person may have most of the qualifications to be a teacher, if the person is not mature, does not have good self-esteem and has not worked out their psychological stuff, (in other words Isvara and the gunas) the ego can still co-opt the knowledge. Vedanta usually appeals to people who are very intelligent. This often leads to spiritual vanity and a feeling of superiority on the part of the teacher, or the student. The way Isvara projects intelligence through seemingly individual minds is pretty varied. So what if someone is very intelligent? They did not make themselves that way; intelligence does not belong to the jiva. It is purely the nature of the macrocosmic mind and of course, the ego just loves to own it!



Ramji had this situation with a former student he endorsed, who gained moksha through him and set out to teach under his guidance two years ago. This person has a brilliant mind and most of the qualifications, but started feeling superior to him and felt that their mind is 'special', more brilliant than 'other' minds. This person believes that a teacher has to behave in a particular way, which is "spiritual", believing that a teacher of Vedanta has to know the scripture and Sanskrit terms perfectly. They clearly got side-tracked by a severe dose of enlightenment sickness. This is why maturity and self-actualisation is so very important.

Not the Kiss of Death

We have a few other brilliant minds that have realised the self with Ramji's guidance who have suffered the same fate and fallen prey to enlightenment sickness as well, which is a pity. They project their stuff onto Ramji and find fault with him and how he teaches because they confuse him as a 'person' with the teaching. To use Ramji's words: "it is not the kiss of death". These are all good people and it is a learning curve. Enlightenment sickness is only a problem if you don't know you have it. It is not unusual for the ego to attempt to grab the spotlight, especially for people who are just starting out to teach. It is very tempting after all. Knowledge is power and being able to wield the King of All Teachings can be heady stuff for an immature and insecure ego. Ramji can no longer endorse these people on Shiningworld until such time as they understand the gunas and deal with their projections as he is fiercely protective of the integrity of the tradition and will not allow it to be contaminated. He loves them all just the same though.

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My Tribute to Ram

Ram does not like me to go on about him, but I am going to say this anyway. What makes a great teacher great, a Mahatma, is this: Ram has been self realized and living free as the self for almost 45 years. He has lived and breathed Vedanta for all of that time, never losing focus on the self. He is a Vedanta computer, by his own description. He gives 100% of himself every single time he teaches or replies to a doubt or query from an enquirer. He simply never tires of Vedanta or passing on the knowledge to "others". Ram has become an institution.

He has no other desire than to be of service by offering the knowledge, which he has given freely as a teacher and writer for all these years, and continues to do so. He unfailingly and quite naturally treats everyone as the equal they are, offering them his full attention, love and respect; not to mention the invaluable benefit of his wisdom as a teacher. He may not wear traditional Indian clothing, or have the Trust and ensuing entourage that goes with it to back him up. Yet he has given as much, if not more, than any of the teachers who do, with far fewer resources. He may be a little edgy for some tastes; with his own inimitable, larger than life, humorous, irreverent and brilliant style. His teaching is dynamic, to the point and uncompromising. Ram has the unique ability to condense the main body of Vedanta into a power packed nutshell that delivers the whole enchilada (his term!) quickly, without compromising the integrity of the scripture, but enhancing it. He unfolds the big picture in a language we can all understand and assimilate. Ram can detect ignorance no matter how well or where it tries to hide, and he will shoot it down with the expertise and precision of a sharpshooter. There is no escape from the acute monocular vision of the self; he simply sees everything like it is, whether one accepts what he has to say or not. He has no interest in being right because he never confuses the ego with the self and has no investment in outcome, or what anyone thinks of him. Like him or not, as a teacher or as a "person", he teaches traditional Vedanta powerfully and impeccably, making it totally accessible to Eastern and Western minds alike. He has put together a body of work that sets out the whole teaching, systematically and from ground zero. It connects all the dots, taking one from the very first step towards liberation, unfolding the logic elegantly and brilliantly, making all the transitions and revealing the entire flow comprehensively and simply. His fame is growing in leaps and bounds and the legacy he gives humankind will be around for many years to come, setting those who are ready and qualified, free.

Ram is a shining example of what it means to be a true teacher of Vedanta. For those who feel confident in the knowledge to teach, follow in his footsteps and the system he has laid out in his book. He has made it so much easier for others who want to teach by offering all his material on the website and in his books freely, and without reservation. Keep a checklist of the qualifications set out in Ram's document on teaching and in this document. Stick to Ram's methodology and the integrity he puts into his teaching and you will not go wrong. Those who have been exposed to Vedanta by Ram are very fortunate indeed to have been taught by such a great being and must have very good karma!

With much love,
Sundari

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Complaints Department

Our first complaint comes from someone who wrote in complaining about how many people are claiming to have realized the self through the Shiningworld website, as well as through Ram's talks, books and video material. It is notable that after decades of searching, it was only after meeting Ram and being exposed to Vedanta that this person found moksha. Out of the thousands of emails that Ram has responded to over the years, this is the first of its kind. Anyone who would like to read this email exchange between Ram and this person, please go to the website as it is posted in the latest batch of emails, titled: Teaching Vedanta – A Complaint.

The Road to Moksha Should be Long and Arduous

This person feels that because their journey to self realization was long and arduous, in order to be authentic, so should it be for other seekers. He feels that many are writing in with the correct Vedantic terminology to impress Ram, (with his encouragement), to show off their expertise and not because they really understand what they are saying. In addition, he feels that as so many are having their doubts cleared so quickly and claiming to have achieved moksha through Ram's skillful wielding of Vedanta, this is evidence that Ram has "cheapened" the tradition by making it wholesale and too available. He is basically saying that this cannot be real moksha because it is "too easy". This person says that as Ram is becoming so popular and drawing the spiritual crowd, he is no better than the Neo's that he criticizes and is aggrandizing himself. He also says that Ramji and I encouraging people to teach is further evidence that we are becoming like many other spiritual teachings that are hi-jacked by a self-inflated ego, spawning many lesser versions of the original idea. "Fast Food" spiritual outlets, with their special offers Discount on Enlightenment! (My spin, not theirs! 😊)

A little BIT of FUN.....

Maybe I should tell him that this month Shiningworld is having some great specials on our **Enlightenment Certificates**....

For the veterans who have ruined their knees after decades of sitting in meditation. The yogis and the experience junkies, who have given up seeking the Ultimate, **Ultimate experience of the Self** which *proves IT exists* **THE ALL TIME** seismic epiphany that will **blast** them into ? The tantrics, the kundalini addicts, the feel-good emotional types and professional spiritual seekers, disillusioned by their "**Union**" fix. The Buddhists stymied by **emptiness**; or whose **no-mind, no-ego enema** *just did not do the trick*.... **No** matter how many vipassanas they endured. The Neo's trying so hard to gain **spiritual sustenance** from their super low calorie diet of **non-existence rhetoric** Hoping against hope To just **GET IT!** The **Be IN Silence** crowd who **never** get it. The **Be In The Now, Stop Thinking!** die-hards. For all those disillusioned seekers whose **guru** turned out to be a **bit short** on **morals** or a **teaching** or **both**

If you have finally given up: **Well Done!** We have **just** the thing for you: as a consolation for all your trials and tribulations, we are offering you a **gilded Enlightenment Certificate** free

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And we are also offering **Group Enlightenment Certificates** and **Early Bird Special Enlightenment Certificates** too, come to think of it. The latter is for the smart ones. Those who do **NOT** have a spiritual pedigree; who did not have a **single epiphany** and who thus got it **real** quick because they did not suffer any brain damage trying to **be spiritual**, are not looking for another place to re-attach their umbilical cords and don't need to feel **special**. Thus they did not have to seriously impair their integrity, common sense or ability to reason, not to mention their sanity, diminish their bank balance, or waste years wandering around with the spiritual circus, lost in the spiritual supermarket, looking for **Themselves!** 😊

Regrettably, for all those who have come down with **Enlightenment Sickness**, please hand in your certificates until further notice. No arguments, please. The disease can be terminal, but usually Maya has just the cure for you, so not to worry ... and you will have **lots** of company.

And lastly, to the complainers who object to ordinary red-neck Enlightenment and will settle for nothing less than the **EXTRA Special Exclusive kind**: Those who have read all the books (or written them) attended all the seminars (or held them) and have graduated **Spiritual Summa Cum Laude** ... the **Spiritual Elite** and **Spiritual Intelligentsia**.... We suggest you apply elsewhere for your Certificates. Or, better still ... why not apply for your own **Guru Enlightenment Bestowing Status**? I believe a post has recently become available in the **Holy of Holy** echelons of Enlightenment with the demise of a big name Holy of Holy Guru, who got caught, like **SO** many before him **without** his dhoti, and Well, you know the story

Our special next month is **Endarkenment** Certificates. We will keep some aside for our complainers, with extra gilding **LOL!**



Apology I know, I know. I got carried away and gilded the lily somewhat with this satire. These complaints bring out the bad girl in me I can't help it! Please forgive me. Its Isvara's fault, remember? I am not the doer. It is so good to have a laugh about it all because Samsara is a very funny place indeed! If one cannot laugh at the person and the whole silly

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business the ego makes of enlightenment, then you need to ask yourself who is it that is taking themselves so seriously? I do not make fun of Vedanta, just the nonsense that prevails around the idea of what enlightenment is. If anyone thinks I am making fun of anyone in particular, please note that as I see no 'others' I am satirizing myself as much as anyone 'else'! I take Vedanta very seriously and have deep love and respect for the scripture because it is me, awareness.

Back to Business: More Complaints Psychological Advice

This person also claimed that instead of Ram and I sticking to pure Vedanta, we are now giving psychological advice, which is further proof of a downgrade in Ram's teaching of Vedanta. This man is not alone in this complaint; we have had another person complain about this. This person also found *moksha* with Ramji's help and then whined and criticized Ram for.... well, being too much like ... 'James' (this did not square with his idea of what a guru should be). He too criticized him for focusing on the *gunas*. Actually I think the latter criticism was aimed at me mostly, from both these people. This man backed this criticism with the claim that Dayananda does not focus on the *guna* teaching, so why make a big deal of it? This is true, he does not. Dayananda has his reasons, no doubt. I think this is because he is Indian and he comes from a culture that unlike the West does not have psychological "issues" as a God-given right. And it is true that Indian gurus behave differently, in keeping with their culture.

It is also true that until recently Ramji has made *moksha* his main teaching focus, and not the *gunas*. *Although Ram has taught and written about the gunas/Isvara extensively, he has not spent too much time addressing the lifestyle or psychological issues that are unavoidable and that everyone has to face.* It is also true that I have encouraged Ram to focus on this issue, within the framework of Vedanta. Vedanta definitely does not set out to "fix" the *jiva*; its main premise being that you are fine the way you are. To be qualified, Vedanta assumes that you are a mature person who has dealt with their "stuff" and is free of the *jiva*. However, it does not take much to see that realising the self is the easy part. Actualizing it in the apparent reality, is quite another, especially if you live in the West. One can say "so what?" Once one has negated all the objects, there is only you, awareness, and who cares about the *jiva*? Why make such a big deal of the *gunas*? They have nothing to do with you, awareness after all. While this is of course true from the self's point of view, one still needs to understand what it means to be self realised in the apparent reality. *Moksha* is for the *jiva* after all, and the *jiva* never leaves the apparent reality. It just does not work to impose the apparent on the real (*sattya* on *mithya*). *Isvara* does not care if you know who know who you are or not. In order to discriminate between *sattya* and *mithya*, one has to understand *Isvara*, in other words the *gunas*. Coupled with *karma yoga*, the *guna* teaching and the unfolding of the total/individual identity (*Isvara/jiva aikyam*) are powerful and important teachings that are ignored at the seekers peril. Although Ram's main focus will always be *moksha*, we both now place greater emphasis on the *guna* teaching because it is what underpins the psychology of the apparent reality. There is no getting away from it for the *jiva*, even an enlightened one who knows it is not the *jiva*. This is the problem with the Neos and why their 'teaching' is lacking in substance, meaning a means of knowledge. They ignore *mithya* and that just does not work. There is nothing like these teachings in any school of thought, religious,

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scientific or secular. It is so simple and powerful; and it works. It solves everything for the jiva, permanently and definitively, where nothing else does.

A good example of someone who denied this obvious fact is the disgraced Suddhananda. He was a good teacher, but he managed to avoid facing his huge sexual *vasana* and the consequences of the *rajas/tamas* that created it, for decades. Until *Isvara* took him down; no one escapes *Isvara* for too long. Whatever the individual is projecting or denying it will have to be acknowledged sooner or later. It is all very well to dismiss the *gunas* and *vasanas* as not self once all the objects have been negated; why bother with them? That is fine if one is OK with how the *gunas* colour the binding *vasanas* and the suffering that ensues as a result. In my understanding, without actualisation, freedom is not that free ... or that much fun, either.

Complaint No 2: Posting of E-satsangs on Shiningworld

We had another complaint from a man who came across Ram and Vedanta two years ago and realised the self, also after decades of searching. He received much guidance from Ram in that period of time, and more recently some from me as well. This is a wonderful person with a brilliant mind, who started teaching Vedanta under his own aegis last year, with Ram's encouragement. This person now too says that Ram and I are aggrandizing ourselves through the e-satsangs and that by posting our replies to people on the website for others to read, we are disrespecting the enquirer and Vedanta. He claims to know others who feel the same way. He also uses Dayananda to prove his point, saying that as the great man does not have this practice this shows that it is not the correct protocol that should be followed by a Vedanta teacher. By implication he is saying that this makes Dayananda a far greater teacher than Ram. Firstly, Ramji is not in competition with Dayananda (or anyone else) and recommends him to everyone, (including to this man) which is why we were surprised that this complaint originates from this particular person. We don't know what 'others' he is talking about because to our knowledge, this complaint is also a first. Secondly, the overwhelmingly positive responses we have from thousands of people with regards to how much they benefit from the e-satsangs, makes nonsense of this complaint. The hundreds of testimonials Ramji receives is also testament to this.



Shiningworld Reserves the Right to Anonymise and Post E-satsangs

If anyone else does have this complaint, we would like to remind everyone who writes in or wants to write in, that while we will preserve everyone's anonymity, unless instructed otherwise, we will post any email that we feel has the potential to benefit others. *This fact is clearly stated on the Shiningworld website.* It is true that the traditional Indian Vedanta teachers do not offer this service; it is impossible to have direct contact with them. However this is a great service of love and devotion on Ram's part and he gives of himself tirelessly in this way. There is nothing in it for either of us personally. This practice is in keeping with the Vedanta tradition of friendship and identification with the devotee; the guru is the servant of the student, who is seen as the self. Dayananda is a very great sage and we have tremendous respect for him. He has done humanity a valuable service with his teaching and books and is truly a great *Mahatma*. He also has a powerful Indian Trust behind him

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and he has a totally different style of teaching. would have done so a long time ago, having successfully and deliberately avoided fame for most of his life.

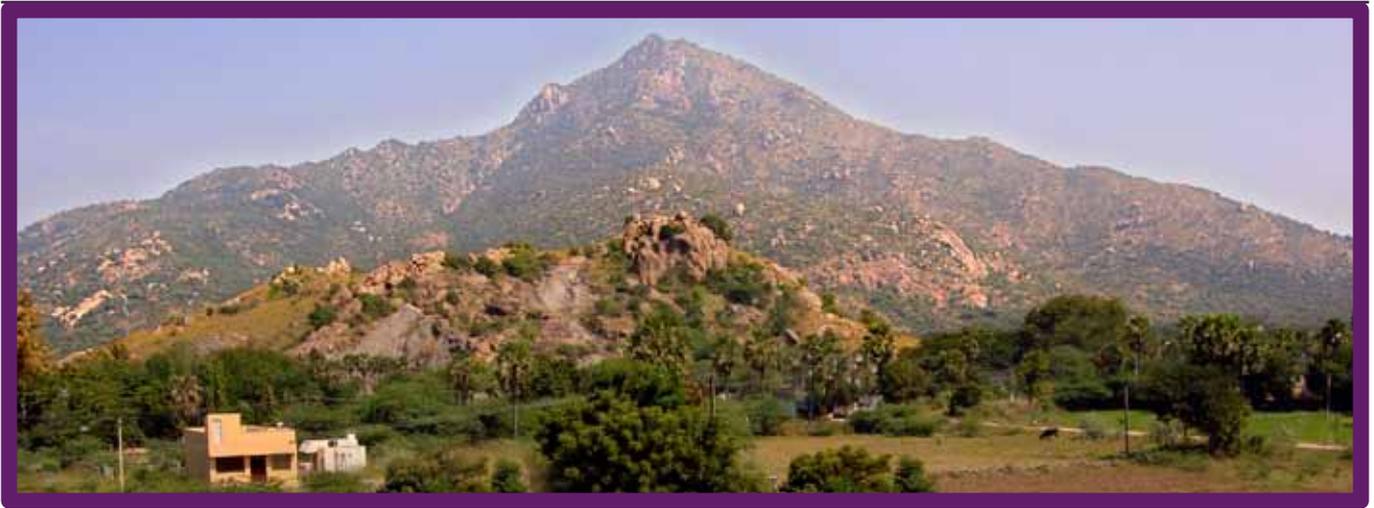
What Goes on Behind The Scenes

Needless to say, Ramji is not in the least bit perturbed by, or interested in these complaints! As the self, I am as detached as Ramji is; as the apparent self I am not quite as detached yet. These complaints are unimportant and we never focus on negativity of any kind; it does not stick to the self. They do however illuminate topics which are definitely not unimportant. Although everyone is entitled to their opinions and will be true to their nature, the attitude of these people is not correct. It is not dharmic to criticize or feel superior to the teacher who helped you find moksha, whatever your feelings may be about their apparent personality. The proper respect is lacking because Ramji gave his love, respect and service to these people. As I am the only person who lives with Ram; I know what goes on "behind the scenes". And what goes on is this: Ramji is never off duty; he never lets up; *Isvara* has him hard at it, slogging away fighting ignorance even when he is asleep. He simply cares about everyone because he knows there is no "everyone"; there is only one, the self. And he loves himself totally. I am not prone to wearing rose tinted spectacles; in fact I am quite allergic to them. This apparent person has a warrior side to her which makes her want to do some sword fighting with these apparent egos. I kind of like this part of her apparent character, hence the satire. As a teacher, control of mind and speech (*sama* and *dama*) are obviously very important as non-injury (*ahimsa*) is crucial in communicating with people. However, enlightened or not, being a good teacher does not mean you have to lose all your teethyou can still have some fangs! 😊

What India has to Teach

Our Western culture with its sense of self indulgence and entitlement is hung up about being offensive or offended. Being in India at the moment, it is hard not to use it as a metaphor. What I love about this culture is how unaffected it is for the most part, its tolerance and its insanely colourful multi-god devotional lifestyles. They are so generous with their gods and are happy to share them with anyone, or even to worship yours for that matter! Pick any one of the million or so gods you fancy; they all point to the One. Indians don't try to be someone; they don't have self esteem or identity issues. ***What I believe India has to teach the West is devotion, dispassion and accommodation.*** The Indian culture does not have the luxury of the neurosis that entitlement engenders. If you need to get real and check out how deep your likes and dislikes really are, as well as brush up on any of the qualifications for Vedanta, we recommend a nice long stay in India. Not the breeze-in-and-out spiritual tourist kind. In fact forget about coming here to 'be spiritual', which is what many of the spiritual poseurs and hopefuls do. These people come here suck on spiritual lollipops of all flavours for the "experience", missing the boat entirely. India, like *Isvara*, will make you or break you. It may be the land of an over-abundance of the profound and the profane, but it is very unlikely that one will find sanctity and sanctimoniousness sitting side by side. And you will not find low self-esteem masked by spirituality. You will find this in the Westerners, whether in India or anywhere else. You will also not find typical Indians criticizing or being disrespectful of their teachers. They know how to follow dharma and what *bhatki* means, something many Western seekers do not.

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In Training

I am “in training”, so to speak; I still have much to learn. Hopefully I will never stop learning. Ramji is a giant in terms of Vedanta and not many people measure up to him. I am a private person who much prefers anonymity to the spotlight and I did not set out to teach. *Isvara* seems to want it and to have a plan, so teaching is happening by default (*Isvara* is a sadist and a snake charmer, but pretty irresistible 😊). I am sure that there are many of you who have much better scriptural knowledge than I do and would also make very good teachers. This mind is in the process of becoming increasingly more purified by the knowledge under the tutelage of a truly great teacher; I definitely know who I am and what ignorance is. I have great love and respect for the tradition, my guru and Vedanta; I am totally devoted to the scripture. It works through me to remove ignorance as it does through anyone who knows who they are and can wield the knowledge. And as Ram is the first to insist, the self is the guru.

Any Comments?

As a jiva I am protective of Ramji even though he does not need it; I get irritated by those who complain because I know how much he gives and how valuable what he gives, is. I know it is ‘my thing’ and I know what the basis of the complaints is. It is par for the course to encounter aggressive and tenacious egos when one tackles ignorance with knowledge, as that is its nature. Projection and denial work that way; no-one is really doing anything, just acting out their conditioning with the gunas at play. Those who complain are *Isvara* too; it is intelligence in the service of ignorance. However, because we find most things have a funny side and we love the humour guna most of all, the complaints are also quite entertaining. I am curious to hear what you have to say about them. If you want to comment, email me, not Ram. Any useful opinions and points made will be posted on the website.

Endorsees

Anurag Jain. Email: anuragjain75@gmail.com. Anurag lives in India with his wife Shikha and has been teaching Vedanta for a while.

Ted Schmidt. Email: ted@terileigh.com. Ted lives in Minnesota and is a professional school teacher. He has written a few articles which have been posted on Shiningworld, along with numerous e-satsangs.

Paul Hardman. Email: pwhardman@gmail.com. This is our Rishi from Nebraska; read our e-satsang exchange posted last month on Shiningworld and the e-satsang attached to this Newsletter.

Isaiah Sanders. Email: address: isaiah_sanders1@yahoo.com. Isaiah lives in Arkansas and is totally dedicated to Vedanta. Many of his excellent e-satsangs with Ram and a few with me are posted on Shiningworld.

Tan Kalaycioglu. Email: address: tankalay@yahoo.de. Tan lives in Germany and as he is fluent in English and German, he is offering his services in German or English.