

Compassion for the Unqualified “Hoppers”

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Murry: Greetings, Sundari. I hope this email finds you rested.

Only two questions today.

Is there any other word in Sanskrit for *Isvara*, and here I am referring to *Isvara* 2? I have found, at least in part, the answer to my first question yesterday (page 188, *Inquiry*). For those of a devotional bent or a *bhakti* yoga practice, *Isvara* is usually called *Bhagavan*, a name I've heard used by the well-known Ram Dass. From my observation, he definitely followed a *bhakti* tradition. Would I be correct to say that most of the deities “worshiped” by the devotional in Hinduism are *Isvara*?

Sundari: Yes, correct. *Bhagavan* and *Isvara* are interchangeable terms. We like to use the terms the Creator, or the Field of Existence, assuming one understands that the Field is intelligent, conscious. Ram Dass did follow a *bhakti* tradition. And yes, most Indians worship their many deities as many manifestations of the one “God,” *Isvara/Bhagavan*, as the Creator, not as the self/consciousness. Most traditional Hindus don't know anything about the self.

Murry: And secondly, a question for James. Listening to tape #19 *Panchadasi*, he speaks around the 1:11-12 mark about people going four or five times to some particular teacher in order to “get” Vedanta, and he gives the example of tinkering with the bus to examine all the parts, but earlier in the talk he spoke about his own experience of spending 21 months, day and night, sitting with his teacher.

From my perspective, I'm not understanding how these two stories are not similar, people wanting to be free by pursuing a teaching but some are not qualified to understand it “quickly,” so they keep riding the bus. Obviously, James is seeing something different. I would appreciate his perspective.

Is it fair to criticize people who never get down to doing the work, i.e. discrimination (to use the Buddhist analogy of crossing a river with a raft, and then once across continuing to carry on with the raft on one's back) or is it a place for compassion for these people as they have not yet developed the qualifications? I've heard myself saying many times, “There sure is a lot of spiritual materialism out there.” This question is not meant as a criticism, but is being asked sincerely.

Sundari: Both are true, it depends on the qualifications of the inquirer. If you are qualified and self-knowledge has obtained, you can throw away the “raft” that got you across the river, meaning the means of knowledge. You no longer need it, because you know you are the knowledge and then live free of the *jiva*, as the self. If self-knowledge has not obtained and some ignorance remains, *nididhysana* continues until all sense of doership and binding *vasanas* have been dissolved. This can take years. Some self-realized people never self-actualize. It's not the kiss of

death, but neither is it *moksa*.

The point James was making is that it is better to stay with one teacher who is qualified and has the knowledge than to hop around from teacher to teacher. At the same time, one must have compassion for the “hoppers” because they don’t have good *karma* and are more than likely not qualified for self-inquiry. Hence the hopping, always looking for something better, for the ultimate experience.

Indeed there is as much spiritual materialism (maybe more) in the so-called spiritual world as there is in the world. It is all desire- and needs-based until it is not anymore and the qualifications for Vedanta develop.

~ Much love, Sundari