

# Vedanta Is Not Against Religion

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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**Reg:** Thank you, Sundari, for this beautiful sum-up! And the time you took to do it. Very appreciated!

I am reading *The Essence of Enlightenment* by your husband and loving it. I want to understand and be free, truly. I know I am coming on your turf, so I appreciate your patience with me. I am not orthodox Christian anyway, but I still believe the true teachings of it. It has been so hashed up, much of the original is not even recognizable now. What I see anyway. I do love the completeness of Vedanta and its assurance of liberation. I will continue to study and practice the best I can what I am learning. I have no one around me to talk to about it. I may get on the website sharing at some point and ask my questions.

Where do I find out about *upasana* meditation?

Also, I have the *Bhagavad Gita*, but does it matter the translation used? Or do you all there have a preference?

Thanks again!

**Sundari:** I am glad you are enjoying James' book and it is helping you with your self-inquiry. We strongly recommend that all inquirers make use of the *e-satsangs* at the website, as they are a wealth of high-level Vedanta answering every question you could come up with. Use the search function to facilitate finding the answers to your particular question. Also, watch the videos of James teaching. There are many hours available for free at YouTube, and we also have very reasonably priced options in our shop. You have a gold mine at your finger tips.

Vedanta is not against religion at all; it sees it as necessary stage for many people to go through. The whole point of *bhakti*, or worship, though is to transform dualistic devotion to *jnanum* – knowledge, or non-dual devotion. Religions exhort one to believe and worship a deity “out there” separate from and better than you. They do not teach self-knowledge and never have. That is not to say that what they actually stand for is not misinterpreted and distorted beyond recognition, as you rightly point out. I come from a very staunch Catholic conditioning which never took, thankfully! But a quote from my father I have always related to is “don't confuse Christ with the Christians.” The same could be said of the Buddha. It is only when what these great souls tried to teach was turned into a religion was all semblance of self-knowledge lost. There are many people who believe that Christ taught non-duality and many of his claimed statements bear this out. Worshipping Christ as a symbol of the self is beautiful and in keeping with self-knowledge and non-duality. To worship Christ or any deity as outside of and better than you is ignorance and duality. Vedanta does not make religion wrong; it has its place for many minds that are not ready or qualified for self-knowledge.

*Upasana* is not really a specific meditation; the word means “meditation, worship, devotion, spiritual discipline, sitting near or attending the teachings of a qualified teacher.” It does have three basic forms, the first two are dualistic: when some

object or person is worshipped as a ritual; when an idol or a picture of a deity or great soul is worshipped as “God” and thirdly, the last form is non-dual – when the worshipper sees no difference between themselves and whatever symbol of the self they are worshipping or meditating on.

Feel free to write to us any time, Reg, we are here for you and you are not alone. Most dedicated inquirers march to a different drum than the rest of the world and in particular their world; it is par for the course if freedom is what one is after. Vedanta does not make sense to the mind unless it is qualified to hear it, so there is no point trying to talk about it to such minds. This can make the inquirer feel isolated and alone, but how can you be when everything and everyone is you?!

All the best with your self-inquiry; you have found the Holy Grail and are on the Vedanta bus, so, as James says, don't worry and take it easy! The knowledge will take care of the mind if you stick with it.

~ Much love, Sundari