

The Enneagram

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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Samantha: Can you tell me more about how the enneagram relates to Vedanta? James once allowed a friend of his to give a talk on this in Tiruvannamalai.

Sundari: The enneagram is based on a limited formula, principally understood and taught as a typology of nine interconnected “personality types.” It is useful up to a point to understand the *jiva*, but it is a means of knowledge for *mithya* (the apparent reality) only. It does not and cannot explain *satya*, consciousness. Even as a *mithya* teaching, it does not and cannot explain what the *jiva* is (consciousness), what *Isvara* is (consciousness), what their common identity (consciousness) means for the *jiva*. Nor can it explain the forces that run the Field of Existence, the *gunas*.

Like astrology and numerology, the enneagram can help us understand something about *Isvara's* psychological order, but as it does not have any teaching on the three *gunas* (*jnana yoga*), its usefulness is very limited. It is a subjective means of knowledge for objects only. These practices are intended for people identified with the body-mind who believe the world is real, that they are doers and must do something to gain the edge or gain/avoid what they desire or fear. Thus the enneagram, astrology or numerology are not a valid means of knowledge for consciousness. Only Vedanta is.

As Vedantins we are not interested in the world or making it work for us. We know it is a zero-sum game and only apparently real, meaning not always present and always changing. Only consciousness fits the definition of real, “always present and unchanging.”

While it is very useful to understand our psychology and conditioning, and in fact essential to do so to be qualified for Self-inquiry, Self-inquiry is not about improving the *jiva* or catering to our likes and dislikes. It is about NEGATING the *jiva* and its conditioning in light of the scripture, nothing else. Self-inquiry is the investigation of what it means to BE consciousness for you as a *jiva*, with the help a valid means of knowledge. If you are qualified for self-inquiry, you do not need the enneagram or anything else. You only need the Vedanta scripture.

James allowed his friend Arthur, who was a serious inquirer at the time, to give a talk on the *gunas* years ago in Tiru because he recognized that if the enneagram is combined with the teachings on the three *gunas*, it can be applied far more usefully than it typically is. But it is very seldom taught that way, and to our knowledge, Arthur abandoned the project and the book never reached publication. We cannot put you in touch with him, because we have lost touch.

~ Om, Sundari