

April 10, 2015

## Talk at All Faiths Seminary International

### Hinduism and Its History

#### Origins of Hinduism

- Sadhus, Rishis – renouncing the sense world (Path of Desire/Renunciation)
- Vedas - Rituals, Mantras – Rig Veda
  - Truth is One, sages call it by many names.
  - Introduction of gods and goddesses
- Upanishads - philosophy, spiritual teachings, man and nature
- Mahabharata & Ramayana (oldest epics)
- Bhagavad Gita – Lord Krishna and Arjuna
- Yoga Sutras of Patanjali – Raja Yoga

#### Reincarnation & Samsara (cycle of reincarnation)

#### Maya and Lila

#### Dualism and Non-Dualism

#### Gods and Goddesses:

- Brahma & Saraswati, Siva & Parvathi, Vishnu & Lakshmi  
Krishna (V), Ganesh, Rama(V), Hanuman, Kali
- Ishta Devata

#### Caste system

- Brahmins – priests
- Kshatriyas - warriors, rulers
- Vaishyas – merchants
- Shudras – servants
- Dalits (Harijans) – Untouchables

#### Four Stages of Life (Ashramas)

- Brahmacharaya - bachelor, student
- Grihastha - householder
- Vanaprastha - retired
- Sannyasa - renunciate

#### History of Hinduism and yoga in America:

- Transcendentalists & Thoreau “Walden”
- Sw. Vivekananda – 1893
- Sw. Vishnu and Sw. Satchidananda

#### The Four Major Yogas

- Jnana Yoga
- Bhakti Yoga
- Karma Yoga
- Raja Yoga

## **Jnana Yoga from the Bhagavad Gita**

Jnana Yoga – Knowing beyond name and form (nama-rupa) through pure understanding of the nature of the doer who when seen in clarity results in liberation. Knowledge of the absolute.

### **Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 13 – The Field and Its Knower**

The body is called a field, Arjuna (Prakriti); the one who knows it is called the Knower (Purusha) of the field. This is the knowledge of those who know. I am the knower of the field in everyone, Arjuna. Knowledge of the field and its knower is true knowledge. (1,2)

The field, Arjuna, is made up of the following: the five areas of senses perception; the five sense organs and the five organs of action; the three components of the mind: manas, buddhi and ahankara; and the undifferentiated energy from which all these evolved. In this field arise desire and aversion, pleasure and pain, the body, intelligence and will. (5,6)

Free from selfish attachment, those who know truly do not get compulsively entangled even in home and family. They are even-minded through good fortune and bad. Their devotion to me is undivided. Enjoying solitude and not following the crowd, they seek only me. This is true knowledge, to seek the Self as the true end of wisdom always. To seek anything else is ignorance. (9-11)

Know that prakriti and Purusha are both without beginning and that from prakriti come the gunas and all that changes. Prakriti is the agent, cause, and effect of every action, but it is Purusha that seems to experience pleasure and pain. (19,20)

Purusha, resting in prakriti, witnesses the play of the gunas born of prakriti. But attachment to the gunas leads a person to be born for good and evil. (21)

Some realize the Self within them through the practice of meditation, some by the path of wisdom, and others by selfless service. (24)

They alone see truly who see the Lord the same in every creature, who see the deathless in the hearts of all that die. Seeing the same Lord everywhere, they do not harm themselves or other. Thus they attain the supreme goal. (27,28)

This supreme Self is without beginning, undifferentiated, deathless. Though it dwells in the body, Arjuna, it neither acts nor is touched by action. As akasha pervades the cosmos but remains unsustained, the Self can never be tainted though it dwells in every creature. (31,32)

As the sun lights up the world, the Self dwelling in the field is the source of all light in the field. Those who, with the eye of wisdom, distinguish the field from its Knower and the way to freedom from the bondage of prakriti, attain the supreme goal. (33,34)

## Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950)

- "Of all the thoughts that rise in the mind, the thought 'I' is the first thought."
- "What is called mind is a wondrous power existing in Self. It projects all thoughts. If we set aside all thoughts and see, there will be no such thing as mind remaining separate; therefore, thought itself is the form of the mind. Other than thoughts, there is no such thing as the mind."
- "That which rises in this body as 'I' is the mind. If one enquires 'In which place in the body does the thought 'I' rise first?', it will be known to be in the heart [spiritual heart is 'two digits to the right from the center of the chest']. Even if one incessantly thinks 'I', 'I', it will lead to that place (Self)'."
- "The mind will subside only by means of the enquiry 'Who am I?'. The thought 'Who am I?', destroying all other thoughts, will itself finally be destroyed like the stick used for stirring the funeral pyre."
- "If other thoughts rise, one should, without attempting to complete them, enquire, 'To whom did they arise?', it will be known 'To me'. If one then enquires 'Who am I?', the mind (power of attention) will turn back to its source. By repeatedly practising thus, the power of the mind to abide in its source increases."
- "Knowledge itself is 'I'. The nature of (this) knowledge is existence-consciousness-bliss."
- "The place where even the slightest trace of the 'I' does not exist, alone is Self."
- "The Self itself is God."

## **Bhakti Yoga from The Bhagavad Gita**

Bhakti Yoga – The spiritual path focused on the cultivation of love and devotion towards God. It has been defined as "devotional service to *Bhagavan* (God) with no other motivations than simply to please the Supreme Lord.

### **Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 6 - The Practice of Meditation**

Even among those who meditate, that man or woman who worships me with perfect faith, completely absorbed in me, is the most firmly established in yoga. (47)

### **Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 9 - The Royal Path**

Fill your mind with me; love me; serve me; worship me always. Seeking me in your heart, you will at last be united with me. (34)

### **Cosmic Vision**

Those who make me the supreme goal of all their work and act without selfish attachment, who devote themselves to me completely and are free from all ill will for any creature, enter into me. (55)

### **Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 12 – The Way of Love**

Those who set their hearts on me and worship me with unfailing devotion and faith are more established in yoga. (2)

They for whom I am the supreme goal, who do all work renouncing self for me and meditate on me with single-hearted devotion, these I will swiftly rescue from the cycle of birth and death, for their consciousness has entered me. (6,7)

That one I love who incapable of ill will, who is friendly and compassionate. Living beyond the reach of “I” and “mine” and of pleasure and pain, patient, contented, self-controlled, firm in faith, with all their heart and all their mind given to me – with such as these I am in love. (13,14)

Those who meditate upon this immortal dharma as I have declared it, full of faith and seeking me as life’s supreme goal, are truly my devotees, and my love for them is very great. (20)

### **Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 18 – Freedom and Renunciation**

By loving me they come to know me truly; then they know my glory and enter into my boundless being. All their acts are performed in my service, and through my grace they win eternal life. (55,56)

## **Karma Yoga from the Bhagavd Gita**

Karma Yoga - Performing actions as selfless service without attachment to the results; performance of one's duties without selfish expectation; actions performed for the joy of serving.

Quotes from Swami Satchidananda:

"Perfection in action is Yoga."

"A perfect act is one which harms no one and does good for someone."

### **Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 3 - Selfless Service**

At the beginning of time I declared two paths for the pure heart: jnana yoga, the contemplative path of spiritual wisdom, and karma yoga, the active path of selfless service. (3)

One who shirks action does not attain freedom; no one can gain perfection by abstaining from work. Indeed, there is no one who rests for even an instant; all creatures are driven to action by their own nature. (4,5)

Those who abstain from action while allowing the mind to dwell on sensual pleasure cannot be called sincere spiritual aspirants. But they excel who control their senses through the mind and using them for selfless service. (6,7)

Fulfill all your duties; action is better than inaction. Even to maintain your body, Arjuna, you are obliged to act. Selfish actions imprison the world. Act selflessly, without any thought of personal profit. (8,9)

But those who realize the Self are always satisfied. Having found the source of joy and fulfillment, they no longer seek happiness from the external world. (17,18)

The ignorant work for their own profit, Arjuna and the wise work for the welfare of the world without thought for themselves. Perform all work carefully, guided by compassion. (25,26)

The senses have been conditioned by attraction to the pleasant and aversion to the unpleasant. Do not be ruled by them. They are obstacles in your path. (34)

It is better to strive in one's own dharma than to succeed in the dharma of another. Nothing is ever lost in following one's own dharma, but competition in another's dharma breeds fear and insecurity. (35)

The senses are higher than the body. The mind is higher than the senses. Above the mind is the intellect, and above the intellects is the Atman. Thus, knowing that which is supreme, let the Atman rule the ego. Use your mighty arms to slay the fierce enemy that is selfish desire. (42,43)

### **Chapter 4 - Wisdom in Action**

The awakened sages call a person wise when all the undertakings are free from anxiety about the result; all selfish desires have been consumed in the fire of knowledge. The wise, ever satisfied, have abandoned all external supports. Their security is unaffected by the results of their actions; even while acting, they really do nothing at all. Free from expectations and from all sense possession, with mind and body firmly controlled by the Self, they do not incur karma by the performance of physical action. (19-21)

They live in freedom who have gone beyond the dualities of life. Competing with no one, they are alike in success and failure and content with whatever comes to them. They are free without selfish attachments. Their minds are fixed in knowledge. They perform all work in the spirit of service and their karma is dissolved. (22,23)

Those established in the Self have renounced selfish attachments to their actions and cut through the doubts with spiritual wisdom. They act in freedom. Arjuna, cut through this doubt in your own heart with the sword of spiritual wisdom. Arise: take up the path of Yoga! (41,42)

## **Raja Yoga - Major Sutras from Patanjali's Yoga Sutras**

- 1:2 The restraint of the modifications of the mind is Yoga.
- 1:3 Then the seer/self abides in his/her own nature.
- 1:4 At other times the self appears to assume the forms of the mental modifications.
- 1:5 There are five kinds of mental modifications which are either painful or painless.
- 1:6 The mental modifications are right knowledge, misconception, verbal delusion, sleep and memory.
- 1:12 These mental modifications are restrained by practice and non-attachment.
- 1:13 Of these two, effort towards steadiness of mind is practice.
- 1:14 Practice becomes firmly grounded when well attended to for a long time, without break and in all earnestness.
- 1:15 The consciousness of self-mastery in one who is free from craving for objects seen or heard about is non-attachment.
- 1:22 The time necessary for success further depends on whether the practice is mild, medium or intense.
- 1:23 Or Samadhi is attained by devotion with total dedication to Ishwara.
- 1:27 The word expressive of Ishwara is the mystic sound OM.
- 1:28 To repeat it with reflection upon its meaning is an aid.
- 1:29 From this practice all the obstacles disappear and simultaneously dawns the knowledge of the inner Self.
- 1:30 Disease, doubt, dullness, carelessness, laziness, sensuality, false perception, failure to reach firm ground and slipping from ground gained - these distractions of the mind-stuff are the obstacles.
- 1:31 Accompaniments to the mental distraction include distress, despair, trembling of the body and disturbed breathing.
- 1:32 The practice of concentration on a single subject is the best way to prevent the obstacles and their accompaniments.
- 1:33 By cultivating attitudes of friendliness toward the happy, compassion for the unhappy, delight in the virtuous and disregard toward the wicked, the mind stuff retains its undisturbed calmness.

2:28 By the practice of the limbs of Yoga, the impurities dwindle away and there dawns the light of wisdom, leading to discriminative discernment.

2:31 These Great Vows (Yamas) are universal, not limited by class, place, time or circumstance.

2:33 When disturbed by negative thoughts, opposite ones should be thought of.  
This is pratipaksha bhavana.

2:34 When negative thoughts are done, they are based on ignorance. Reflecting thus is also pratipaksha bhavana.

Refer to handout sheet for Yamas and Niyamas

2:46 Asana is a steady, comfortable posture.

2:47 By lessening the natural tendency for restlessness and by meditating on the infinite,  
Posture is mastered.

2:48 Thereafter, one is undisturbed by dualities.

Bk 2:49 - That firm posture being acquired, the movement of inhalation and exhalation should be controlled. This is pranayama.

Bk 2: 50 - The modifications of the life breath are either external, internal or stationary. They are to be regulated by space, time, and number and are either long or short.

Bk 2: 51 - There is a fourth kind of pranayama that occurs during concentration on an internal or external object.

Bk 2:52 - As its result, the veil over inner light is destroyed.

Bk 2:53 - And the mind becomes fit for concentration.

Bk 2:54 - When the senses withdraw themselves from objects and imitate, as it were, the nature of the mind-stuff, this is pratyahara.

Bk 2:55 - Then follows supreme mastery over the senses.

Bk 3:1 - Dharana is the binding of the mind to one place, object or idea.

Bk 3:2 - Dhyana is the continuous flow of cognition toward that object.

Bk 3:3 - Samadhi is the same meditation when there is the shining of the object alone, as if devoid of form.

# *the* *Eight Limbs of Yoga*

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## I YAMA – Attitudes to cultivate towards others

1. *Ahimsa – Non violence; not causing pain to any living being including ourselves.*
2. *Satya – Truthfulness; mindful communication through speech, writings, gesture and actions.*
3. *Asteya – Non stealing; the ability to resist a desire for that which does not belong to us.*
4. *Brahmacharya – Conservation of energy, including moderation in sexual relationships, for the pursuit of spiritual goals.*
5. *Aparigraha – Non greed; the ability to accept only what is appropriate.*

## II NIYAMA – Attitudes to cultivate towards ourselves

1. *Saucha – Purity; cultivating cleanliness of body and mind; keeping even our surroundings clean.*
2. *Santosha – Contentment; the ability to be comfortable with what we do and do not have.*
3. *Tapas – Consciously accepting mental and physical pain as purification and an opportunity to learn.*
4. *Svadyaya – Self study; study of spiritual teachings and their applications to our lives.*
5. *Ishvara Pranidhanan – Self surrender; allowing ourselves to be guided by the Truth.*

## III ASANA – The practice of physical postures with awareness, balancing effort and comfort, revitalizing the body.

## IV PRANAYAMA – The practice of breathing techniques leading to the enhancement of subtle energy flow, energizing body and mind.

## V PRATYAHARA – Education of the senses and the ability to withdraw them to achieve spiritual goals.

## VI DHARANA – Concentration; the beginning stages of learning to focus the mind.

## VII DHYANA – Meditation; the steady continuous flow of attention towards an object, such as the breath, a mantra or a sacred image.

## VIII SAMADHI – Absorption; the complete union of the meditator with the object of meditation. The experience of Oneness with all creation.

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