

The ethical value system and the Goals of the Hindu

The Vedantic Paradigm

Brahmavidya and Yogasastra

It is the goal of every Hindu to attain Self Realization and Salvation (Moksha). Vedanta (literally the end of the Veda), the essence of the Sanatana Dharma is concerned essentially with 2 aspects of higher human knowledge

Metaphysics	Brahmavidya
Ethics	Yoga Sastra or the means to attain Brahmavidya

The foundations and origins of this Meta knowledge are lost in antiquity and are considered eternal and do not depend on any one prophet or Sage. A distinction is made by the Indic between Sruti; a revelation from the Lord, the Lord is the author and transmitted to us through the Rishis (from rsh to know) and Smrti that which is heard (from man). Thus the Indic tradition is not a likhita Parampara (written tradition) but an oral one. Veda, Mantra and Sruti are thus termed Apaurusheya Pramaanam

They are the first record we humans have of the questions that were asked in antiquity, questions we continue to ask today. Questions like – Who am I, why am I here, what makes me unique as a species and as an individual, how was the Universe created and what my place in it is.

But as far as we are aware it was Vyaasa (Badarayana) who expounded on this knowledge in a tangible form to humans in the form of Brahma Sutras. Sutras are aphorisms characterized primarily their terseness and the depth of meaning associated with each aphorism. Brevity was essential, as the main means of transmittal of knowledge was oral and vast amounts of knowledge had to be memorized and had to be recited in a particular meter (Chandas) to assist in harmonizing the mind while engaged in the process of learning.

Thus all Indic tradition can be classified into the following

Vedas	

Sutra	
Smrti	
Puranas	
Itihasa	
Bhashyam	

Every individual exhibits three Gunas in varying proportions. Chapter 14 of the Bhagavad Gita deals with their function, and indicates the means for the individual to transcend them. The path that an individual needs to take is dependent on the relative proportion of these Gunas that reside in him

Sattva	Individuals who are predominantly sattvik are attached to happiness and to knowledge
Rajas	Raajasik individuals are filled with a desire and passion to undertake new projects and goad others into action. Many leaders exhibit a Raajasik temperament
Tamas	Tamas is inertia born of ignorance. It enshrouds the discrimination of man and inclines him to indolence, sleep and renders him inert. By nature it is destructive

The cardinal Virtues according to Hinduism

Purity	Sattva, Suddhi	
Self Control	Sama/Dama	
Detachment	Vairagya	
Truth	Satyam	
Non Violence	Ahimsa	

One of the first steps is to master the eight characteristics or atma gunas

Compassion	daya
Forgiveness or patience	kshanti

Absence of jealousy	anasuya
Cleanliness	sauchyam
Not feeling mental strain or doing work with effortless ease	anayasa
Auspiciousness	mangala
Non-miserliness	akarpanya
Non-grasping or non-desiring nature	asprha

There are many paths to Self realization, but many of these paths can be categorized into four main Yogas or means to attain the goal. They are

Karma Yoga	Work and Action, subject of Chapter 3 of the Bhagavad Gita
Bhakti Yoga	Yoga of Devotion, Chapter 12 of Bhagavad Gita
Jnana Yoga	Yoga of Knowledge, yoga of pure discrimination, Chapter 4 of Bhagavad Gita, summarized in Chapter 2
Raja Yoga	Yoga of meditation, summarized in Chapter 6 of Bhagavad Gita

For most individuals a balanced combination of all four Yogas is most appropriate, the proper balance depending on the individual's vasanas or svabhava and the stage of his journey through life. There is no intent to convey that any particular Yoga is superior to the other.

For an introduction to Patanjali's Yoga Sutras see for instance "Practical Yoga , ancient and modern" by Earnest E Wood or Raja Yoga by Swami Vivekananda

Yoga is the control of ideas in the Mind. Yoga means the establishment of perfect harmony between the everyday self and its spiritual source.

Five Kinds of ideas or modifications (Patanjali's Yoga Sutras)

Right Knowledge
Wrong Knowledge or indiscrimination
Fancy or verbal delusion
Sleep
Memory

Special qualifications demanded of a student of Vedanta (Sadhana Chatusthaya) or the fourfold pre-requisites of philosophical discipline (Mandukya Upanishad). See also Viveka Chudamani by Adi Sankara

English	Sanskritam	
Discrimination (between the Real and the Unreal)	Viveka	
Non-attachment	Vairagya – dispassion for all enjoyments here and in hereafter , uncolored ness	
Self Control	Sama(tranquility of mind), Dama(restraint of senses), Uparathi(renunciation of desires), thithiksha(endurance), sraddha,(faith) samadhan (self control)	Uparathi – renunciation of superstition and dependence on the idea that his/her advance can be helped or impeded by others (Vivekachudamani) Thithiksha – endurance – acceptance of the idea that he/she must endure what comes and make the most of it without complaining (whining in modern parlance) - forbearance
Irrepressible hankering for the truth	Mumukshutwa a burning desire to realize the Self within, which is the Self within us all	

Efficacy of Chanting Shanti 3 times – The purpose is removal of 3 possible obstacles to the study of scriptures

Adhi-daivika – God sent like lightning , thunder etc.

Adhi-Bauthhika – phenomenon such as fire, floods, landslides etc.

Adhi-atmika or Adhyatmika – purely subjective, such as inertia, lack of faith, insincerity, and our own negative attitudes

The Eight Angas (limbs) of Yoga

Yama	Discipline, ahimsa (abstinence from doing injury), Satyam (truthfulness), Asteya (honesty), Brahmacharya (celibacy during the first 25 years, chastity), Apar Graha (non acquisitiveness, poverty)
Niyama	Self restraint, shaucha (cleanliness, purity), santosh (contentment), Tapas (ascetism), Swadhyaya (study), ishwarpranidhana (devotion to God)
Asanam	Sitting in the right place and with the correct bodily attitude
Pranayama	Regulation of breath
Pratyahara	suppression
Dharana	concentration
Dhyanam	meditation
Samadhi	absorption

Man's karma can be divided into 3 parts

Prarabda karma	That part of a Man's accumulated karma which has begun to bear fruit in the present life. It is entirely predetermined and cannot be avoided, e.g, sex, parentage, color of skin. Man is a creature of circumstance
Sanchita karma	Accumulated karma of previous lives of individual. As a result of past actions he acquires a certain character and certain tendencies. Unlike prarabda karma it can be totally destroyed and it is possible to uproot evil habits by persistence and plant good habits in their place
Agami karma	Is the Karma which is being created now. It's fruits

will come to us possibly in a future life. It is entirely in our own hands

Discussion of Cognate Ideas

Exercise of Free Will – see for instance the dialog between a disciple and His Holiness Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swaminah, reproduced elsewhere in this [section](#).

The four proximate Goals of life

Dharma	
Artha	
Kama	
Moksha or Purushartha	

Sreyas and Preyas

Sreyas & Preyas

Swami Atmananda

“Kathopanishad says that every person will always get the option of treading the path of that which is right & good – the Sreyas, or succumb to the path of immediate pleasure – the Preyas. Those who choose the path of Sreyas will make the best of their lives, while those to succumb to the latter will have to pay the price destined for the deluded ones. ...

The moment we fix an extraneous goal for our self, then that very moment we accept various fundamental facts of life. When we think that our fulfillment lies in some object or achievement yonder then we in effect say that ‘I am basically a lacking being’ and ‘I have to do something to be fulfilled’. All these presumptions are completely baseless and do not stand any enquiry. The fact is that – ‘that’ which constantly manifests as ‘I’ in our bosoms is an infinite, transcendental, self-effulgent & blissful existence, and the ‘means of knowledge’ of this is deep enquiry & contemplation of the basis of Vedanta. Sravana, Manana & Niddidhyasana of Vedantic scriptures is the Pramana of the knowledge of Truth of life. Vedanta not only reveals truth about us but also about the whole perceptible world. Everything thing which is perceptible is in the realm of time, and is therefore changing & ephemeral. This is an extremely evident fact and really speaking requires no logical validation. Thus when we keep an extraneous goal then we simultaneously affirm our presumptions that I am a limited & lacking person and the world outside is permanent and capable of giving me that which I lack. When our life will be based on these untruths then how can we ever expect to awake to a state of cherished fulfillment & contentment.

The ideal way to live has to be one which is based on the facts of life. The fact is that I am fulfilled and the world has nothing to offer to me. Action is only meant to help us serve & give. This alone should be our fundamental motivation – lovingly serve everyone, selflessly, no expectations even of gratitude. Our service should be as natural & effortless

as is the fragrance of a flower. There should be no doership involved. This is what the path of Sreyas is all about. Let any situation come, never let a sense of lack, craving or dependence enter your mind. Even if you do not know these facts directly then also it is worth believing. Holding your head high, with a loving heart, and an enthusiastic disposition work on selflessly, for the good of all around. Love is a strange thing : it increases only on giving. The path of Preyas, on the other hand is one of delusion & untruths. We can certainly get an object of our enjoyment and seem to get fulfilled, but soon enough the life itself will start revealing that there has been a fundamental error somewhere. Lord Krishna says in Bhagwad Gita that 'Know that to be Rajasic joy where there is pleasure in the beginning and lots of pains thereafter'. .. So let us exercise our freedom and tread a path which may appear slightly painful in the beginning but ultimately which alone is the way to real fulfillment.

What is right knowledge ?

Sources of Vedic Knowledge

There are three different sources of vedic knowledge, called **prasthanatraya**. The **Upanisads are known as sruti-prasthanas**, the scriptures following the principles of six limbs vedic knowledge (Vedangas) as well as Mahabharata, Bhagavad-gita, and Puranas are known as **smrti-prasthanas** and Vedanta-sutras which present the vedic knowledge on the basis of logic and arguments is known as **nyaya-prasthanas**. All scientific knowledge of transcendence must be supported by sruti, Smrti and a sound logical basis (nyaya). Smrti and nyaya always confirm that which is said in the sruti.

Vedic injunctions are known as sruti. From the original Veda Samhitas up to the Upanisads are classified as sruti. The additional supplementary presentations of these principles as given by the great sages are known as smrti. They are considered as evidence for vedic principles. Understanding the ultimate goal of life is ascertained in the Vedanta-sutras by legitimate logic and argument concerning cause and effect.

There are six aspects of knowledge in the Vedas known as Vedangas:

Siksa	phonetic science
Vyakarana	grammar
Nirukti	context (conclusive meaning)
Chandas	meter
Jyotis	time science (astronomy & astrology)
Kalpa	rituals

The seers who have realized these aspects of knowledge from the Vedas, have composed sutras (short but potent phrases which convey a lot of meanings) on each Vedanga. Kalpa-sutras are of four categories, namely, srauta (collective sacrifices), grhya (family rituals), dharmas (occupational duties) and sulba (building of sacrificial fireplaces, altars etc.).

According to the different levels of conditioned consciousness there are instructions in the Vedas for worship of different controllers, with the aim of reaching different destinations and enjoying different standards of sense enjoyment. Agamas (emanated scriptures) are books which are classified into five for this purpose:

energy - Sakti - Sakta Agamas
visible source (Sun) - Surya - Soura Agamas
controller - Ganapati - Ganapatya Agamas
destroyer - Siva - Saiva Agamas
ultimate source - Visnu - Vaikhanasa Agamas

For those who are below standard for vedic purificatory process, Lord Siva gave the Tantra sastras. These have two general classifications, right and left. While the right aspect contains regulations for purification for those who are grossly engaged in meat eating, intoxication and illicit sex, the left aspect contains low class activities like black magic etc.

>From the point of view of common human activities sense gratification is the basis of material life. To cater to this aim, there are three paths mentioned in the Vedas:

The karma-kanda path involves fruitive activities to gain promotion to better planets. Using the methodology from the first five Vedangas, the Kalpa-sutras explain this path. Upasana-kanda involves worshipping different controllers for promotion to their planets. The Agamas explain this path.

Jnana-kanda involves realizing the Absolute truth in impersonal feature for the purpose of becoming one. The Upanisads explain this path.

Though these paths are all from the Vedas, and the Vedas do explain them, one should not think that that is all the Vedas have. The real purpose of the Vedas is to gradually push one in the path of self realization to the point of surrender in devotional service to the Supreme Grace.

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