

Grady Laksmono

221318327

RELS 200 Midterm

July 19, 2009

Answer Question 1:

According to Hinduism, Brahman is the concept of the Godhead. Brahman is the unchanging, infinite, immanent, and transcendent reality which is the divine ground of all things in the universe. Atman is the universal spirit that seeks the truth, which eventually becoming permanently absorbed with and one with Brahman. The human self or atman is the microcosm of Atman, is the soul of every human life. “Underlying the human self and animating it is a reservoir of being that never dies, is never exhausted, and is unrestricted in consciousness and bliss. This infinite center of every life, this hidden self or Atman, is no less than Brahman, the Godhead. Body, personality, and Atman-Brahman – a human self is not completely accounted for until all three are noted” (Smith, 21)

Hinduism believes that there are Four Paths to God: The way to God through knowledge, love, work, and psychophysical exercises. The way to God through knowledge or Jnana yoga is “intended for spiritual aspirant who have strong reflective bent, is the path to oneness with the Godhead through knowledge.” (Smith, 29) The knowledge has nothing to do with the factual information, but rather an intuitive understanding that transforms and will eventually turn the knower into which the knower knows and becoming one with it. Cultivating this power proceeds through two stages, the first is learning through listening sages and scriptures. The second step is thinking, by prolonged and intensive reflection. The Atman must change the concepts that were learned to realization. There are a number of projects those are proposed for this realization, one example is that one may be advised to example our everyday language and ponder to its implications. (Smith, 30) Jnana yoga is said to be the shortest path to divine real, however, it is also the steepest because it requires a rare combination of rationality and spirituality.

The second path to God is through love or Bhakti yoga is “to direct toward God the love that lies at the base of every heart.” (Smith, 32) The principles of bhakti yoga are richly exemplified in Christianity. In the point of view of Hinduism, Christianity is a great path to God through love or bhakti yoga. To those who follow the path of Bhakti yoga, feelings are more real than thoughts. Love in the bhakti yoga must be out-going, and will reject all suggestions that God one loves is oneself, and insist on God’s otherness. Secondly, the goal of the bhakta is striving not to identify with God, but to adore God with every element of his or her being. (Smith, 33) All that the bhakta have to do in this yoga is to love God dearly, not just claim such love, but love God in fact. Love God and other things those are being loved in relation to God without having the desire to be loved in return. The approach to the bhakti yoga is through Japam, which is the practice of repeating God’s name. (Smith, 34, 35)

The third path to God is through work or Karma yoga is “intended for persons of active bent.” (Smith, 37) In this path, Hinduism believes that God can be found in the everyday world affairs as readily as everywhere by putting them into work with everything they have and doing them wisely, in such a way that will bring the highest rewards, not trivia. Insist on learning the secret of work, by which every movement can carry them to God is the approach of the Karma yoga.

The fourth path to God is through psychological exercises or Raja yoga is “designed to people who are of scientific bent, it is the way to God through psychophysical experiments”. (Smith, 41) “This approach is calling for a strong suspicion that our true selves are more than we realize and a passion to plumb to their full extent... Unlike of the most experiments in the natural sciences, those of raja yoga are on one’s self, not external nature.” (Smith, 42) There are eight steps of raja yoga experiments: The first step of raja yoga is practicing the five abstentions:

injury, lying, stealing, sensuality, and greed. The second step is practicing the five observances: cleanliness, contentment, self-control, studiousness, and contemplation of the divine. The third step is to work with the mind, keeping the body from distracting the mind while it concentrates. The fourth step is to practice the yogic postures, protecting the mediator from disruption from the static aspects of the body. The fifth step is composed of the body at ease and regular breathing. The yogi is sitting absorbed in the contemplation. The sixth step is aiming for concentration. The purpose of the sixth step is to teach “the restless mind to hold unswervingly to the object it is directed to.” (Smith, 48) The seventh and the eight steps are the process of progressively deepening concentration. The seventh step is deepening concentration into mediation; the union between the two is tightened to the point where separateness vanishes. “The subject and the object are completely merged so that the self-consciousness of the individual subject has disappeared altogether.” (Smith, 49) In the last step, the mediator is in the state in which the human mind is completely absorbed in God. The state in which is Sanskrit word called Samadhi should be retained. Samadhi is the name for state in which human mind is completely absorbed in God. (Smith, 44 - 49)

There are four paths because according to Hinduism, there are four basic spiritual personality types. Some people may be reflective, while others are emotional, essentially active, or inclined. For each of these personality types, Hinduism prescribes a distinct yoga that is designed to capitalize on the types of distinctive strength.

This says that Hinduism is a religion that seeks God by self-control and understanding of themselves, which can be achieved through one of the Four Paths. Hinduism is a polytheistic religion because it believes in many avatars of God, even if they are all supposed to be the same as one, Brahman, but distinctive power of each god made me come to this conclusion.

Answer Question 3:

The aim of the Eightfold Path is essentially to offer solution to the fact that life is suffering. The Four Noble Truths constitute to the Buddha's answer to the question of the four most considered convictions about life. (Smith, 99) In the First Noble Truth states the fact that life is suffering, or dukkha. The Second Noble Truth answered these questions for the cause of the suffering. The cause of life's dislocation is desire or tanha, which is the selfish desire for private fulfillment. (Smith, 102) The Third Noble Truth follows logically from The Second, "if the cause of life's dislocation is selfish craving, its cure lies in the overcoming of such craving." (Smith, 103) The Fourth Noble Truth provides the answer on the way to overcome the self-seeking, which is through the Eightfold Path. (Smith, 104)

Eightfold Path is a course of treatment. But it is not an external treatment that is accepted passively by the patient. It is not treatment by pills, or rituals or grace. The Eightfold Path is a treatment by training. (Smith, 104) The training breaks down into eight steps. However, they are preceded with preliminary step, which is the right association. "When a wild elephant is to be tamed and trained, the best way to begin is by yoking it to one that has already been through the process. By contact, the wild one comes to see that the condition it is being led toward is not wholly incompatible with being an elephant. That what is expected of it does not contradict its nature categorically and heralds a condition that, though startlingly different, is viable... The transformation facing the untrained is neither smaller than elephant's nor less demanding..." (Smith, 105) In the preliminary step, Buddha pointed out the important of the peers in the process of transforming ourselves through the Eightfold Path because "Human beings cannot make progress on the way unless they are supported by a field of confidence and concern that Truth winners generate." (Smith, 105) We should associate with Truth winners, converse with

them, serve them, observe their ways, and imbibe by osmosis their spirit of love and compassion. With this preliminary step in place, then one may proceed to the Eight Path steps proper. (Smith, 105)

In the first step, one must the right views. “A way of life that always involves more than beliefs.” (Smith, 105) A rational human being must have the right way of looking at life, nature, and the world as they really are. By understanding the reality of the world, one must accept that life is suffering, and then from this understanding, one will have directions and efficacy to go to the next step.

In the second step, one must have the right intention. After being able to understand the reality of the world, one must understand the difference between right and wrong intention, and being able to differentiate them. In this step, the practitioner must constantly aspire to get rid of all immoral qualities from themselves. “Whereas the first step summoned us to make up our minds as to what life’s problem basically is, the second advises us to make up our hearts as to what we really want.” (Smith, 106)

The next three steps involved with one’s actions in life. In the third step, one must have the right speech, the right conduct on the fourth, and the right livelihood on the fifth. The first task on the third step is to become aware of our speech and what it reveals about our character. “False witness, idle chatter, gossip, slander, and abuse are to be avoided, not only in their obvious forms but also in their covert ones.” (Smith, 107) The fourth step is the ethical half of the Ten Commandments in Christianity. In the fifth step, the practitioner must not engage in any occupations in which either, directly or indirectly, results in the harm of other living beings. Buddha listed names of the professions of his day in which he considered incompatible with spiritual seriousness, “poison peddler, slave trader, prostitute.” (Smith, 108)

In the sixth step, “Buddha laid tremendous stress on the will. Reaching the goal requires immense exertion; there are virtues to be developed, passion to be curbed, and destructive mind states to be expunged so compassion and detachment can have a chance.” (Smith, 108) In this step, the practitioner must work very hard to make persistent effort to abandon all of the wrong and harmful thoughts, words, and deeds. In the seventh step, one must have right mindfulness. “All we are is the result of what we have thought.” (Smith, 109) In this step, the practitioner must understand themselves by constantly being alert to their body and minds. Gradually overcome ignorance by continuous self-examination and liberation from unconscious robot like existence through self-awareness. The last step, the eight is to have the right concentration, which involves the techniques of Raja yoga in Hinduism, leading to the same goal. (Smith, 111)

In terms of the caste system, Dharma is the standards which determine one move socially in terms of caste in the next life. Since Karma is the moral law of cause and effect, then one’s Karma determines whether one follows the path of Dharma. Karma decrees that every decision must have its determinate consequences, but the decision themselves are freely arrived at. (Smith, 65) In relation to the Hindu’s concept of the caste system, Karma justified the action to the people who are born in the untouchable caste because they must have not been doing very bad actions on their previous life.

Buddha’s critique to the concept of the caste system could be seen from his teaching in religion that is devoid of tradition and rely on the intense self effort. Buddha consider that the ideas that only Brahmin can attain enlightenment as ridiculous. In other words, whatever your caste, you can make it in this very lifetime for enlightenment. (Smith, 96, 97)

Answer Question 4:

Buddha does not doubt that it is possible to have a good and enjoyable time. However, there are two questions obtruded. How much life is enjoyable? What level of our being does such enjoyment proceed? (Smith, 100) According to the Buddhism, life is suffering, and desire is the cause of suffering. This is explicitly stated in the Buddha's First and Second Noble Truth. The First Noble Truth states that life is suffering or dukkha. The Second Noble Truth identifies the cause of the suffering in life, "the cause of life's dislocation is tanha. Tanha is usually translated as desire." (Smith, 102) Tanha however, is a specific kind of desire. Tanha is a desire for private fulfillment. (Smith, 102) If desire causes suffering, then the removal of the desire will result in the discontinuation of suffering, which is stated in the Third Noble Truth, "If the cause of life's dislocation is selfish craving, its cure lies in the overcoming of such craving." (Smith, 103) Finally, the Fourth Noble Truth identifies the prescription on how to cure the suffering. "The overcoming of tanha, the way out of our captivity is through the Eightfold Path." (Smith, 103)

Similar to Buddhism, Hinduism suggested that actions those are prompted by desire would lead to suffering. However, "as long as people are content with the prospect of pleasure, success, or services, the Hindu sage will not be likely to disturb them beyond offering some suggestions as how to proceed more effectively. The critical point in life comes when these things lose their original charm and one finds oneself wishing that life had something more to offers." (Smith, 20) Pleasure, success, and duty are assumed to take the humanity in the direction of what we really want. What we really want is actually lied at the deeper level: being, knowledge, and joy. Hinduism suggested that people want these infinitely because of the distinctive nature of human for being capable to think of something that has no limit or infinite. "The world's offerings are not bad. By and large they are good. Some of them are good enough

to command our enthusiasm for many lifetimes. Eventually, however, every human being comes to realize with Simone Weil that there is no true good here below, that everything that appears to be good in this world is finite, limited, wears out, and once worn out, leaves necessity exposed in all its nakedness.” (Smith, 20) The answer of Hinduism to the suffering is the Four Path to God, in which would lead to find Atman, the infinite center of every life, which is no less than Brahman, the Godhead. Brahman is “ the underlying the human self and animating it is a reservoir of being that never dies, is never exhausted, and is unrestricted in consciousness and bliss.” (Smith, 21) Hinduism advises that as long as pleasure and success is that we think we want, we should seek them in the provision of prudence and fair play. “The guiding principle is not to turn from desire until the desire turn from you.” (Smith, 17)

The answer to Path of Renunciation in Hinduism is through one of the Four Paths to God: Path to God through knowledge, love, work, or psychophysical exercises. “Hinduism’s specific direction for actualizing the human potential comes under the heading of yoga.” (Smith, 26) Yoga is a method of training that is designed to lead to integration of the human spirit with God, who lies concealed in its deepest recesses. (Smith, 27) There are multiple trails to the common direction, for each calling for its distinctive mode of travel. Some people may primarily reflective, while others are emotional, active, or experimentally inclined. Hinduism prescribes a distinct yoga for each of the personality types, that is designed to capitalize the distinctive strength of a person. (Smith, 28)

In Buddhism, the answer to the Path of Renunciation is through the Eightfold Path. After the preliminary step, one may proceed to the eight paths: one must have right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and the right concentration. On the eighth step, one must have the right concentration, by being involved

substantially with the techniques that is described in Hinduism of the Path to God through psychophysical exercises, the raja yoga. (Smith, 111)

Compared to the Disenhancement in the Hopi ritual of the Kachinas, both Buddhism's and Hinduism's points for the cause of Renunciation are the similar. Buddhism and Hinduism both suggested that the cause of our life suffering is "when one finds oneself wishing that life had something more to offer." (Smith, 20) In Buddhism, the needs of Renunciation through the Eightfold Paths are the result of the Four Noble Truths. Hinduism takes the approach of one of the Four Path to God. However, unlike in Hinduism or Buddhism, where the Path of Renunciation comes after the Path of Desire, where "if people could be satisfied by following their impulses, the thought of renunciation would never arise." (Smith, 17) The Disenhancement in the Hopi ritual takes the Renunciation as necessity stage in the religious development of the child. (Gill, 92)