

HINDUISM

Philosophy 312: Oriental Philosophy

Summary of Some Periods in the History of Hinduism

Abstract: A selective list of persons, works, and events are drawn from Hinduism's four thousand year history.

I. **The Vedic Period** dates from the Aryan invasion of India and the Vedas date from that period. (The complete decipherment of the Indus Valley script on steatite seals will help determine previous influence on the beginnings of Hinduism.)

A. The **Vedas** are a collection of early hymns and sacred literature (approx. 3000-800 BC).

B. Four main Vedas where the essential meaning of ritual is identified with self and some personifications of natural forces occur. No known authors.

1. **Rig Veda** (royal knowledge)--music, humns (mantras) to the gods.

"Awareness of the delightful
Wonder of the Creator Will direct our thinking"

2. **Atharva Veda**--magical chants, spells and incantations.

3. **Yajur Veda**--prose and verse sacrificial formulae.

4. **Sama Veda**--priests' chants.

C. **Henotheism**: The god being worshiped is considered as the most real although there are over thirty other gods mentioned. (E.g., we see the major difficulties of life in terms of our own problems; yet we acknowledge there are other problems. Dieties are symabols of the forces of life, and ther e is some speculation that there is only one divine reality. Process, an Unidvided whole, is the fundamental reality beyond logic and language.

II. **Pre-Epic Period**--the **Upanishads** (800-500 BC, concluding part of the Vedas, more than one hundred treatises.

A. The Upanishads clarified the inner meaning of the rituals of the Vedas. The earliest works predated Greek philosophy.

B. These speculative and mystical scriptures are concerned with the question, "What is Brahman?" and the nature of the soul, or self.

1. The true nature of ultimate eternal reality is known *via negativa*.

2. Brahman is conceived as the power sustaining the cosmos; Brahman is thought of both personally and impersonally.

3. The most influential teaching is Brahman = Atman (Self). The central meaning: "That which makes great."

4. What am I? non-empirical self--the ultimate Self is known by direct apprehension.

5. *tat tvvam asi* -- "Thou are That" refers to the characterization of Brahman.

6. Other metaphysical and ethical problems: reincarnation, anti-caste, universal suffrage, some yogic practices.

7. Brahman is the ultimate and universal reality of pure being and consciousness.

III. **The Epic Period** (500-200 BC) Approximately three centuries after the Upanishads, the Vedas were often unavailable and when available they were difficult to understand. Hence, folklore began to develop.

A. **The Mahabharata**: first epic, longest single poem in world literature, 18 books, emphasizes social duty and asceticism.

1. Cosmology present: a pulsating or cyclic universe with time measured in kalpa (4,500 million years).

2. **Bhagavad Gita** (Song of the Lord): the best loved and most read section.

a. Development of theistic ideas with concepts of yoga (karma, jnana, bhakti).

b. Themes: duty v. grace; Trinity: Brahman, Vishnu (stability), and Siva (destruction); the ten avatars (incarnations of the savior).

B. **Ramayana**: second major epic is similar in parts to *Aesop's Fables*.

1. The story of Rama and Sita--the relation and story of model persons.

2. Ethical and philosophical speculations include order for society and order for life.

IV. **The Medieval Renaissance** (700-1200)--The belief in the underlying unity of the world, the Vedanta.

A. **Sankara**: monistic interpretation of the Vedanta.

1. The world of experience caused by maya is social delusion and ignorance and cannot be thought of as being or nonbeing. (Maya cannot be a separate reality.) We are not body-identified consciousness.

2. Maya is the source of all misery and suffering.

3. We are Brahman who is united, infinite changeless being, consciousness, and bliss.

B. **Ramanuja**: bhakti yoga with the analogy of the relation of God with the world.

1. The soul and God should be distinguished.

2. "monkey school"--the young have to be taught to walk.

3. "the cat school"--the young have to be taken by the scruff of the neck.

C. **Madhva**: pluralist (the three metaphysical realities of matter, soul, and God).

V. **The Modern Period**--the Hindu response to Christianity.

A. **Raja Ram Mohan Roy** (1772-1833) Unitarian sect against idolatry, child marriages, sati, and caste system. He sought interreligious cooperation.

B. **Tagore** (1861-1941) Roy's student sought to reconcile inner life with active work and sought practical goals.

1. Tagore noted the spiritual emptiness of the West in his discussions.
2. His fiction, essays, and philosophy were mentioned in his Nobel Prize for poetry, 1913.

C. **Ramakrishna** (186-1866): practiced all faiths internally and saw them leading to the same goal.

1. Although not particularly interested in the West, he taught the authenticity of all religions.
2. Religious visions and mystical trances of Christ and Muhammad

D. **Vivekananda** (1863-1902) Ramakrishna's student who brought the message to the West in the Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1893.

E. **Mahatma** ("great soul") **Gandhi** (1869-1948)--political and spiritual leader of India's freedom.

1. Influenced by the Gita, John Ruskin, and Tolstoy.
2. Key ideas included nonviolent disobedience (including the threat of fasting unto death as political pressure) and *ahimsa* (non-injury to living beings).

Philosophy 312: Oriental Philosophy ***Hinduism: The Ends of Life***

Abstract: We can seek what we want; all paths can be legitimately pursued.

I. The Purpose of Life: the four legitimate ends of life.

In this life you can seek what you want. In order to achieve meaning and significance, there are four basic ways.

It is important to realize that all persons need go through all stages, and they will be left alone if they pursue and enjoy any one of the following paths.

A. **The Path of Desire**--the twin goals are pleasure and success; nothing is gained by repressing these desires--in fact we might be worse if at some point we do not seek desire.

1. Pleasure: if you want it, go after it; the beauty and delight is there.

- a. Of course, you have to balance short-term and long-term pleasures.
- b. You will soon find that lasting pleasures are preferable.
- c. There might be some sacrifices. *E.g.*, the basic precepts of morality (*cf. Siddhartha*, "[Samsara](#).")
- d. The hedonism in Hinduism is sometimes viewed as shocking in terms of Western ethics.

Problem with the stage or goal of the path of pleasure: pleasure is enervating and too narrow and trivial to satisfy your total nature. The literature is full of advice from individuals who lament the transience of pleasure, glamour, and wasted youth.

2. Worldly Success: the path entails the triple aspects of wealth, power, and fame (all equally worthy goals).

a. The drives for these goods are almost second-nature to us.

b. They make many other things possible: raising a family, civic duties, dignity, and self-respect.

Problems with the state of worldly success:

a. Wealth, fame, and power are precarious--they are not distributive properties. They tend to be exclusive; not everyone can have them. (How can everyone be famous?)

b. Success can never be satisfied--for we compare ourselves to others.

(1) We can never get enough when worldly success becomes our style of life. The rich never retire.

(2) Poverty is measured by the increase of one's greed. The wise person has nothing he cannot carry in his hands. If you have something of worth, you must look out for it.

c. There remains a lack with worldly success. Surely there is more to life than this--subjective qualities seem to be lost.

d. We have molded the world to our will; dogmatism results. Life is short; "you can't take it with you."

e. Even the child will move on; unless we move on we are locked into the daily round (*samsara*). Even so, worldly success is a necessary stage in our development.

B. The Path of Renunciation,--has a negative ring to our ears (*e.g.*, ascetic), but is not meant to do so. An athlete in training employs discipline toward a greater good. Hence, "renunciation" can be thought of as "hope" instead of "disillusionment" since the name "renunciation" is used in reference to what has gone before, *i.e.*, the path of desire.

Not everyone will pursue this path in this life (*cf.* [reincarnation](#)). What makes the path of renunciation persuasive is that those who pursue it after the successes of the path of desire and people who want more from life.

1. Duty: the third great aim in the Hindu outlook ([dharma](#)).

a. There are specific duties appropriate to our age, disposition, social status, community, and peer group.

b. Faithful performance brings praise and self-respect and joy for a time.

c. We have the sense of worth of being a valuable, reliable, productive person. Our existence seems to be justified by our doing the right thing.

Problems with the stage of duty:

a. We become a cog in a machine; we have the feeling of being used, taken advantage of.

b. We lose ourselves in the daily round. (Cf., Hesse's *Siddhartha*, 106D.) Consider factory children working 12 to 14 hour shifts six days a week. What is the feeling of having done a good job?

c. Is this all there is? *I.e.*, what is the replacement value of a human being? What other possibilities are there?

2. Liberation: seeking freedom from life's limitations. What are the things we really want, we deeply want?

a. The real desires of people are for liberation.

(1) Being--we don't want to die; we want life.

(2) Awareness--existence is not enough; curiosity and knowledge is more important.

(3) Joy--the feeling of well-being

b. More precisely, we want infinite being, infinite knowledge, and infinite joy. What is this concept in Western terms?

c. The Hindu word for this state of being is *moksa* (pronounced something like "mok shah," sometimes spelled *moksha*) or liberation. *Moksa* is the complete release from the countless limitations and restrictions which impinge upon our existence.

III. **The heart of Hinduism:** what you want most, you can have. Not only can you have them, in a sense, they are already yours. (Remember Siddhartha's advice to Govinda, "Perhaps you seek too much.")

A. Is a person just a body? a personality? Hinduism says something more--an indestructible infinite center of being that never dies and is without limits.

B. The infinite center of every life is the hidden self. The Atman who is no less than Brahman, the Godhead. You are all three: body, personality, Atman-Brahman.

C. But suppose you say you don't feel particularly infinite today--where is this? It is buried and it is the task of the following lectures to show how it can be uncovered.

Philosophy 312: Oriental Philosophy
Hinduism: The Four Stages of Life

Abstract: Life is a developmental path upward through four stages (*ashramas*) for some Hindus.

I. **The Four Stages of Life**--as has been noted before, if there is one abiding perspective on Hinduism, it is that people are different. How should you live? If you are a male in an upper three [varna](#), then it depends upon what stage of life you are living. (Not all persons go through all stages).

A. **The Student Stage**--(twelve year rite of initiation 8,12 to 18,24 years old for male, high caste Hindus).

1. Student lives in the home of his teacher and study the Vedas.
2. Student serves the teacher, shows respect, and learns the texts. The rite is a kind of apprenticeship where habits, skill, and practical knowledge are emphasized.

B. **The Householder Stage**--(begins with marriage as the completion of the formal studies).

1. The rules for marriage are set forth in the *Laws of Manu*. Attention is turned toward the world: family, career, and community.
2. Note the relation to the game of life, [the path of desire](#), where success is a means to self-esteem.
3. If physical activity is the only importance in life, all experience after youth is wasted, and what would lie ahead would be unfortunate. However, obviously, there is more to life than *dharma*.

C. **The Forest Retirement Stage**--(begins after the arrival of the first grandchild; the grandfather can withdraw from social obligations).

1. Compare the different import to the question, "What do you want to be?" when the question is addressed to a 16 year-old and to a 50 year-old person.
2. This stage involves coming to terms with who we are. There is time to read, think, and consider the significance of life without the interruption of duty.

D. **The Forest Dweller or Ascetic Stage**--(begins by leaving home and carrying out a spiritual existence in the country).

1. The man and his wife together (if she wants to go) move to the forest to begin in earnest the path of self-discovery.
2. Most men defer the Forest Dweller Stage to another future life.
3. The forest dweller works out a philosophy of *sannyasin*--one who neither hates nor loves anything. A *sannyasin* is completely independent and is beyond dharma (the structure of moral and social obligations) and so in a sense is "beyond good and evil."
 - a. There are no social pretensions--things simply are what they are (*cf.*, [Vasudeva](#) in Hesse's *Siddhartha*).
 - b. Once detachment, mental and economic independence, is achieved, the *sannyasin* can return to the town or city.

- c. This stage of life is a necessary condition for the attainment of salvation; once achieved that soul will never individually return to this world.

Philosophy 312: Oriental Philosophy
The View from Above: Moksa (Moksha, Mukti)

Abstract: By overcoming the limitations of personality, *moksa* can be realized.

I. As human beings we are limited in many ways: we lack physical, mental, and spiritual abilities. We error, we grow ill, we die.

II. We are limited in three essential ways: suffering, ignorance, and limited life.

A. Limitations due to suffering--the limitation of existence.

1. When your life has a purpose, you can tolerate almost any pain. *E.g.*, in the strenuous life, the scrapes and bruises are hardly noticed.

2. Psychological suffering and pain is more difficult to deal with--especially, personal losses.

- a. If the ego had no expectations there would be no disappointment. If the ego did not exist, there would be nothing to disappoint.

- b. If one can see things with empathy "under the aspect of eternity," one can truly experience joy at the victory of his opponent (*cf.*, the final chapter of *Siddhartha*). One can see the inevitable narrowing of life's possibilities due to prior choices (*e.g.*, compare the process of life to a chess game).

3. The only real disability in life is a bad attitude.

B. Limitations due to ignorance or lack of awareness. We seek "knowing that knowledge of which brings knowledge of everything." We seek awareness of ultimate reality.

1. The "blinding insight" of the mystical experience has occurred too many times to too many reputable thinkers in all cultures for us to doubt its worth.

2. The shattering vision of unity--mystics claim transcendent knowledge is possible.

3. Evidence from academic psychology suggests that we are hardly aware of the possibilities of the human mind: hypnotism, meditation, collective unconscious, the idiot savant.

C. Limitations of the self--how far can our being extend? How can we define the boundary of the self? Is our total being part of infinite consciousness?

1. *Immediacy level* of consciousness: we identify ourselves with the individual moment (*e.g.*, the crying of a child over a trivial misfortune).

2. *Intermediate level* of consciousness: we identify ourselves with what we do, "show we are," and the roles we play. We shift identification away from the individual moment to see our life as a process.

3. *Infinite level* of consciousness: we do not identify ourselves with any particular set of

experiences. There is a self which underlies my everyday self and yet endures through individual experiences. Compare this notion to the transcendental unity of apperception.

a. If I am more than what I have experienced, then I can let go of past injustices, forgive, and still be the same self. If I change my mind, I do not change myself. Commitment and self-consistency are not necessary for self.

b. The Hindu epics relate many fables which illustrate the infinite level of consciousness.

III. **Moksa**: "From Brahman to a grass blade, creation is for the benefit of the soul until supreme knowledge is obtained." *Moksa* is absolute freedom from ignorance, anguish, and death. Suffering is not part of the soul (Self) and is only part of human personality (the self).

Philosophy 312: Oriental Philosophy ***Hinduism: The Caste System and Reincarnation***

I. The **Caste System**--(groups assigned by birth not personality). The Hindu conception of the social order is that people are different, and different people will fit well into different aspects of society. Social order or social class according to varna forms the framework of moral duties according to personal characteristics of individuals (not necessarily birth).

A. Historically the caste system dates back to the Aryan invasion of India around 2,000 BC.

B. Society is divided into four main groups (with a fifth, "the untouchables," outside of the caste system).

Passage from the *Rig Veda*:

(The world was formed from Purusa whose body is described as follows.)

"The brahmin was his mouth, his two arms became the rajanya (kshatriyas), his thighs are what the vaisya are, and from his feet the shudra was made."

1. **Brahmin**: the seers, the reflective ones, the priests.

a. The intellectual and spiritual leaders.

b. In our society, they would correspond to the philosophers, religious leaders, and teachers.

2. **Kshatriyas**--(pronounced something like "kshot ree yahs") the born administrators (formerly nobles, rajahs, and warriors).

a. The protectors of society.

b. In our society, the politicians, police, and the military.

3. **Vaisyas**: (pronounced something like "vy sy us") the producers, the craftsmen, artisans, farmers.

a. The skillful producers of material things.

b. In our society, the merchants.

4. **Shudras**--(pronounced something like "shoo drrahs") the unskilled laborers or laboring class.

a. The followers or the maintenance people.

b. The so-called menial workers or hard laborers.

C. Advantages to the Caste system. The heritability of intelligence and factors of personality raise some interesting philosophical questions.

1. What we would like people to be is not usually what they are. Many persons would be more comfortable in their own social class.

2. Unless unequals are separated into different classes, many persons would be "born losers."

3. **Egalitarianism** is the belief that privileges are proportional to the responsibilities and a denial of the tyranny of the majority.

II. **Reincarnation**: the philosophical basis of this belief is the consideration that if individual souls (*jivas*) are eternal, where did they come from?

A. The spirit is independent of the body and the situation the spirit is in.

Passage from the *Gita*:

"Worn out garments are shed by the body; worn out bodies are shed by the dweller."

1. At the subhuman level the passage is almost automatic up the chain of being.

2. At the human level comes consciousness which implies freedom, responsibility, and effort.

3. The consequences of your past decisions have determined your present state.

B. **Law of Karma**--the moral law of action and reaction.

1. The present condition of your soul (confusion or serenity) is a product of your past decisions. You have made yourself what you are.

2. Your present thoughts and decision are determining your future states. ("Unsettled state" = "bad karma.")

3. Every person gets what that person deserves--even though decisions are freely arrived at, there is no chance in the universe. Karma is the middle way between determinism and indeterminism.

4. We will not change the world in any significant way--the world is the training ground for Atman-Brahman.

5. There is no chance or accident in the universe. "There are no lost traces."

The four margas Hinduism

The ultimate aim of the Hindu faith is to achieve Moksha. Moksha means liberation or release from the endless cycle of incarnations. This is the goal of all Hindus. The biggest event in the life of the Hindu is, in fact, his death. Moksha can be achieved by following the different margas or ways. The four margas are karma yoga (the way of action), Jnana yoga (the way of knowledge), bhakti yoga (the way of devotion) and Raja Yoga (a method of special postures, methods of breathing, and rhythmical methods of breathing and repetition of the proper thought formulas).

B. Society is divided into four main groups (with a fifth, "the untouchables," outside of the caste system).

Passage from the *Rig Veda*:

(The world was formed from Purusa whose body is described as follows.)

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1. **Brahmin**: the seers, the reflective ones, the priests.
 - a. The intellectual and spiritual leaders.
 - b. In our society, they would correspond to the philosophers, religious leaders, and teachers.
2. **Kshatriyas**--(pronounced something like "kshot ree yahs") the born administrators (formerly nobles, rajahs, and warriors).
 - a. The protectors of society.
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 - a. The followers or the maintenance people.
 - b. The so-called menial workers or hard laborers.

The Four Noble Truths Buddhism

1. Life means suffering.

To live means to suffer, because the human nature is not perfect and neither is the world we live in. During our lifetime, we inevitably have to endure physical suffering such as pain, sickness, injury, tiredness, old age, and eventually death; and we have to endure psychological suffering like sadness, fear, frustration, disappointment, and depression. Although there are different degrees of suffering and there are also positive experiences in life that we perceive as the opposite of suffering, such as ease, comfort and happiness, life in its totality is imperfect and incomplete, because our world is subject to impermanence. This means we are never able to keep permanently what we strive for, and just as happy moments pass by, we ourselves and our loved ones will pass away one day, too.

2. The origin of suffering is attachment.

The origin of suffering is attachment to transient things and the ignorance thereof. Transient things do not only include the physical objects that surround us, but also ideas, and -in a greater sense- all objects of our perception. Ignorance is the lack of understanding of how our mind is attached to impermanent things. The reasons for suffering are desire, passion, ardour, pursuit of wealth and prestige, striving for fame and popularity, or in short: *craving* and *clinging*. Because the objects of our attachment are transient, their loss is inevitable, thus suffering will necessarily follow. Objects of attachment also include the idea of a "self" which is a delusion, because there is no abiding self. What we call "self" is just an imagined entity, and we are merely a part of the ceaseless becoming of the universe.

3. The cessation of suffering is attainable.

The cessation of suffering can be attained through *nirodha*. Nirodha means the unmaking of sensual craving and conceptual attachment. The third noble truth expresses the idea that suffering can be ended by attaining dispassion. Nirodha extinguishes all forms of clinging and attachment. This means that suffering can be overcome through human activity, simply by removing the cause of suffering. Attaining and perfecting dispassion is a process of many levels that ultimately results in the state of *Nirvana*. Nirvana means freedom from all worries, troubles, complexes, fabrications and ideas. Nirvana is not comprehensible for those who have not attained it.

4. The path to the cessation of suffering.

There is a path to the end of suffering - a gradual path of self-improvement, which is described more detailed in the *Eightfold Path*. It is the middle way between the two extremes of excessive self-indulgence (hedonism) and excessive self-mortification (asceticism); and it leads to the end of the cycle of rebirth. The latter quality discerns it from other paths which are merely "wandering on the wheel of becoming", because these do not have a final object. The path to the end of suffering can extend over many lifetimes, throughout which every individual rebirth is subject to karmic conditioning. Craving, ignorance, delusions, and its effects will disappear gradually, as progress is made on the path.

The Noble Eightfold Path describes the way to the end of suffering, as it was laid out by Siddhartha Gautama. It is a practical guideline to ethical and mental development with the goal of freeing the individual from attachments and delusions; and it finally leads to understanding the truth about all things. Together with the *Four Noble Truths* it constitutes the gist of Buddhism. Great emphasis is put on the practical aspect, because it is only through practice that one can attain a higher level of existence and finally reach Nirvana. The eight aspects of the path are not to be understood as a sequence of single steps, instead they are highly interdependent principles that have to be seen in relationship with each other.

1. Right View

Right view is the beginning and the end of the path, it simply means to see and to understand things as they really are and to realise the Four Noble Truth. As such, right view is the cognitive aspect of wisdom. It means to see things through, to grasp the impermanent and imperfect nature of worldly objects and ideas, and to understand the law of karma and karmic conditioning. Right view is not necessarily an intellectual capacity, just as wisdom is not just a matter of intelligence. Instead, right view is attained, sustained, and enhanced through all capacities of mind. It begins with the intuitive insight that all beings are subject to suffering and it ends with complete understanding of the true nature of all things. Since our view of the world forms our thoughts and our actions, right view yields right thoughts and right actions.

2. Right Intention

While right view refers to the cognitive aspect of wisdom, right intention refers to the volitional aspect, i.e. the kind of mental energy that controls our actions. Right intention can be described best as *commitment* to ethical and mental self-improvement. Buddha distinguishes three types of right intentions: 1. the intention of renunciation, which means resistance to the pull of desire, 2. the intention of good will, meaning resistance to feelings of anger and aversion, and 3. the intention of harmlessness, meaning not to think or act cruelly, violently, or aggressively, and to develop compassion.

3. Right Speech

Right speech is the first principle of ethical conduct in the eightfold path. Ethical conduct is viewed as a guideline to *moral discipline*, which supports the other principles of the path. This aspect is not self-sufficient, however, essential, because mental purification can only be achieved through the cultivation of ethical conduct. The importance of speech in the context of Buddhist ethics is obvious: words can break or save lives, make enemies or friends, start war or create peace. Buddha explained right speech as follows: 1. to abstain from false speech, especially not to tell deliberate lies and not to speak deceitfully, 2. to abstain from slanderous speech and not to use words maliciously against others, 3. to abstain from harsh words that offend or hurt others, and 4. to abstain from idle chatter that lacks purpose or depth. Positively phrased, this means to tell the truth, to speak friendly, warm, and gently and to talk only when necessary.

4. Right Action

The second ethical principle, right action, involves the body as natural means of expression, as it refers to deeds that involve bodily actions. Unwholesome actions lead to unsound states of mind, while wholesome actions lead to sound states of mind. Again, the principle is explained in terms of abstinence: right action means 1. to abstain from harming sentient beings, especially to abstain from taking life (including suicide) and doing harm intentionally or delinquently, 2. to abstain from taking what is not given, which includes stealing, robbery, fraud, deceitfulness, and dishonesty, and 3. to abstain from sexual misconduct. Positively formulated, right action means to act kindly and compassionately, to be honest, to respect the belongings of others, and to keep sexual relationships harmless to others. Further details regarding the concrete meaning of right action can be found in the *Precepts*.

5. Right Livelihood

Right livelihood means that one should earn one's living in a righteous way and that wealth should be gained legally and peacefully. The Buddha mentions four specific activities that harm other beings and that one should avoid for this reason: 1. dealing in weapons, 2. dealing in living beings (including raising animals for slaughter as well as slave trade and prostitution), 3. working in meat production and butchery, and 4. selling intoxicants and poisons, such as alcohol and drugs. Furthermore any other occupation that would violate the principles of right speech and right action should be avoided.

6. Right Effort

Right effort can be seen as a prerequisite for the other principles of the path. Without effort, which is in itself an act of will, nothing can be achieved, whereas misguided effort distracts the mind from its task, and

confusion will be the consequence. Mental energy is the force behind right effort; it can occur in either wholesome or unwholesome states. The same type of energy that fuels desire, envy, aggression, and violence can on the other side fuel self-discipline, honesty, benevolence, and kindness. Right effort is detailed in four types of endeavours that rank in ascending order of perfection: 1. to prevent the arising of unarisen unwholesome states, 2. to abandon unwholesome states that have already arisen, 3. to arouse wholesome states that have not yet arisen, and 4. to maintain and perfect wholesome states already arisen.

7. Right Mindfulness

Right mindfulness is the controlled and perfected faculty of cognition. It is the mental ability to see things as they are, with clear consciousness. Usually, the cognitive process begins with an impression induced by perception, or by a thought, but then it does not stay with the mere impression. Instead, we almost always conceptualise sense impressions and thoughts immediately. We interpret them and set them in relation to other thoughts and experiences, which naturally go beyond the facticity of the original impression. The mind then posits concepts, joins concepts into constructs, and weaves those constructs into complex interpretative schemes. All this happens only half consciously, and as a result we often see things obscured. Right mindfulness is anchored in clear perception and it penetrates impressions without getting carried away. Right mindfulness enables us to be aware of the process of conceptualisation in a way that we actively observe and control the way our thoughts go. Buddha accounted for this as the *four foundations of mindfulness*: 1. contemplation of the body, 2. contemplation of feeling (repulsive, attractive, or neutral), 3. contemplation of the state of mind, and 4. contemplation of the phenomena.

8. Right Concentration

The eighth principle of the path, right concentration, refers to the development of a mental force that occurs in natural consciousness, although at a relatively low level of intensity, namely concentration. Concentration in this context is described as one-pointedness of mind, meaning a state where all mental faculties are unified and directed onto one particular object. Right concentration for the purpose of the eightfold path means *wholesome concentration*, i.e. concentration on wholesome thoughts and actions. The Buddhist method of choice to develop right concentration is through the practice of meditation. The meditating mind focuses on a selected object. It first directs itself onto it, then sustains concentration, and finally intensifies concentration step by step. Through this practice it becomes natural to apply elevated levels concentration also in everyday

About Buddhism

The greatest achievement is selflessness.
The greatest worth is self-mastery.
The greatest quality is seeking to serve others.
The greatest precept is continual awareness.
The greatest medicine is the emptiness of everything.
The greatest action is not conforming with the worlds ways.
The greatest magic is transmuting the passions.
The greatest generosity is non-attachment.
The greatest goodness is a peaceful mind.
The greatest patience is humility.
The greatest effort is not concerned with results.
The greatest meditation is a mind that lets go.
The greatest wisdom is seeing through appearances.

Atisha (11th century Tibetan Buddhist master)

Buddhist Symbols

Since the making of human images of the Buddha was considered sacrilegious for a long time, Buddhist visual art has produced an elaborate vocabulary of symbolic and iconic forms of expressions. A great variety of

Buddhist symbols is found in temples and in Buddhist visual art and literature. The following eight figures are among the more common ones. The lotus, the wheel, and the stupa can be seen in almost every Buddhist temple. One may understand these symbols as visual mantras. Contemplating these figures is an exercise in meditation to establish inner contact with the aspect that is represented.



Lotus Flower

Padma - Symbol of Purity.
Can be of any colour
except blue.



Dharmachakra

The wheel of the law. The
eight spokes represent the
eightfold path.



Stupa

The stupa is a symbolic grave
monument where relics or the
ashes of a holy monk are kept. It
also symbolises the universe.



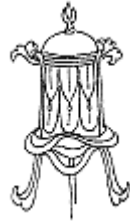
Triratana

The three jewels - the Buddha,
the Dhamma, and the Sangha.



Chhatra

A parasol - protection
against all evil; high rank.



Dhvaja

Banner - the victory of the
Buddha's teachings.



Deer

The deer -usually in pairs-
symbolises the first sermon of the
Buddha which was held in the deer
park of Benares.



Naga

The snake king. Vestige of pre-
Buddhist fertility rituals and
protector of the Buddha and the
Dhamma.

Mudras

Images of the Buddha were produced from the fifth century onwards. The sacred nature of the representation is reflected in the artistic goal of creating an aura of equanimity, perfection, and holiness. The large number of rules governing the execution of a portrayal or a statue require an erudite understanding of Buddhist symbolism. Any Buddha figure made by a skilled artist exhibits a multitude of characteristics that communicate subtle meanings and intentions to the viewer. The most important of these characteristics are perhaps the mudras, or hand gestures, of the Buddha. These well-defined gestures have a fixed meaning throughout all styles and periods of Buddha images.



Bhumisparsha Mudra

Touching the earth as Gautama did, to invoke the earth as witness to the truth of his words.



Varada Mudra

Fulfillment of all wishes; the gesture of charity.



Dhyana Mudra

The gesture of absolute balance, of meditation. The hands are relaxed in the lap, and the tips of the thumbs and fingers touch each other. When depicted with a begging bowl this is a sign of the head of an order.



Abhaya Mudra

Gesture of reassurance, blessing, and protection. "Do not fear."



Dharmachakra Mudra

The gesture of teaching usually interpreted as turning the Wheel of Law. The hands are held level with the heart, the thumbs and index fingers form circles.



Vitarka Mudra

Intellectual argument, discussion. The circle formed by the thumb and index finger is the sign of the Wheel of Law.



Tarjani Mudra

Threat, warning. The extended index finger is pointed at the opponent.



Namaskara Mudra

Gesture of greeting, prayer, and adoration. Buddhas no longer make this gesture because they do not have to show devotion to anything.



Jnana Mudra

Teaching. The hand is held at chest level and the thumb and index finger again form the Wheel of Law.



Karana Mudra

Gesture with which demons are expelled.



Ksepama Mudra

Two hands together in the gesture of 'sprinkling' the nectar of immortality.



Uttarabodhi Mudra

Two hands placed together above the head with the index fingers together and the other fingers intertwined. The gesture of supreme enlightenment.

Confucian ethical teachings include the following values:

- **Li:** includes ritual, propriety, etiquette, etc.
- **Hsiao:** love within the family: love of parents for their children and of children for their parents
- **Yi:** righteousness
- **Xin:** honesty and trustworthiness
- **Jen:** benevolence, humaneness towards others; the highest Confucian virtue
- **Chung:** loyalty to the state, etc.

Confucius considered life as a process of transformation that moves through different developmental stages, with each stage having its own task and process. Confucius reviewed his own life journey and suggested the following stages of life (Confucian Analects, Confucius 1971 [500 B.C.E.]; Cheng, Y. 1988). Confucians created various rituals of *Li* (a proper behavior in a certain situation) that demands certain behaviors to fulfill the expected performance. *Li* ranges from a bow to an elder, taking off shoes before entering the house, being silent and respectful to elders, bringing a gift to the host, and writing thank-you notes to a helper. Society considers a serious violation of *Li* as a violation of the law (Confucian Analects, Confucius 1971 [500 B.C.E.]). The original purpose of *Li* is to help the individual to express proper ways of building and maintaining caring relationships.

Birth as a creative life form. Confucianism considers the individual as a link in the chain of existence from the past to the future. Everyone should have descendants to continue the family tree. To have no children is considered the most unforgivable thing in life. Having a child, particularly a boy, is very important to carry on the family name.

Therefore, when a new life is born to the family, by the end of one month, the family will give a party for the extended family and friends to announce and celebrate the arrival of the new family member. It is the family's responsibility to take care of the mother's needs to reward her production and contribution to the family. Her family status will be increased accordingly. In the future, the person is given a birthday party anywhere from every year to every ten years, according to the extended family's desire. Egg is served as a symbol of life, and the noodle serves as a symbol of longevity, thus, the longer the better. Many parents also offer different gifts to the child during the party to test his or her talents or areas of interest with reference to future education.

At home, children are taught to honor the ethical code (*Li*), such as honoring parents, loving brothers and sisters, respecting elders, trusting friends, and retaining loyalty to the family and the nation. It means that life is a creative force because it is connected with the Ultimate. Based on virtue, children are taught to make friends by studying with others who are interested in learning similar subjects.

Parents are encouraged to appreciate the strengths of a less favored child and look at the weaknesses of the favored one to avoid any prejudice.

Young adulthood. At fifteen years of age, a child reaches young adulthood and starts to dress differently (Adulthood Li). The social symbols of adulthood are given with expectation that the individuals will perform their roles adequately with the help of family members and others. They participate in social activities and assume related responsibilities, which extend the ethical code of obedience to society. Self-searching, self-awareness, self-acceptance, identity development, acceptance of others, and systematic synchronicity with the environment are expected to take place.

Age of independence. At age thirty, with life established, a person should become an independent professional and have his or her own family and career established. A journey of self-searching is done between the ages of sixteen and thirty. During this stage, it is important to outwardly express one's inner qualities to understand and develop the self.

A wedding ceremony (Wedding Li) is given by both families to announce the establishment of the new couple. During the wedding ceremony, both bride and groom have to pay their honor to Heaven, Earth, their ancestors (at the symbolic shrine in the family hall), and their parents, with family and friends as witnesses. The third day after the wedding, another wedding party is held with the bride's family.

Age of mental maturity. At age forty, a person should have matured and acquired a defined self, no longer struggling in a trial-and-error fashion. As Confucius says, "When a person at forty is the object of dislike, he will always continue what he is" (Confucian Analects, Confucius 1971 [500 B.C.E.]).

Age of spiritual maturity. At age fifty, a person should be spiritually reconnected with the Ultimate and be synchronized with it. A matured person should know the answers to the questions: "Where did I come from?" "What is the purpose of my life?" and "Who am I?" During this stage, a person should be synchronizing life energies with the systems' needs according to mission and vision. Real life is only beginning, not ending.

Age of acceptance. At age sixty, a person is ready to take a spiritual journey that is the only way that he or she may actualize the self spiritually. Spiritual maturity will facilitate the acceptance of diversity and differences within the family or community and guide the community in leadership.

Age of unification. After the age of seventy, one can purify his or her mind and free the self from negative thoughts. The real self becomes outwardly apparent after it reconnects with the Ultimate and accepts the self and others. During this stage, retirement and detachment from worldly situations may be beneficial.

Funeral service. Confucians respect the end of the life by giving a sincere funeral service (Funeral Li/rite) to honor the dead and promote the social morality (Confucian Analects, Confucius 1971 [500 B.C.E.]). The name of the dead will be added to the shrine of the family hall as a part of the dead (*Yin*) family.

Honor the ancestors. Confucians promote ancestor worship by burning paper money and offering food to respect the lives of the dead on April fifth. This ritual respects ancestors and educates younger generations. It becomes a community asset of honoring the self as well as the family.

Teacher's day. This is an elaborate ceremony to honor Confucius at Taipei's Confucian Temple on Confucius's birthday, September 28. His birthday has been dedicated to honor all teachers as a teachers' day, which is a national holiday in Taiwan. Confucian music and dance are performed to honor Confucius and all teachers. The best gift to the teacher or helper may be a successful outcome of one's project, or letters of appreciation.

Family life and structural relations. The Confucian role approach (Chung 1993b, 1994) is based on the assumption that lawlessness and social problems are due to uncultivated individuals, a lack of morals in the social structure, and lack of adequate relationships. Confucius defined five social relationships on which Chinese and other Asian social structures and relationships are based. Various Asians still feel, profoundly, his influence in these areas in their daily life.

In societies that have been influenced by Confucius, the traditional social structure is based on five fundamental interpersonal relationships: superior-subordinate, parent-child, husband-wife, brothers,

and friends (Chung 1992b). These relationships are arranged in a hierarchy based on the members' respective position and status. For example, the first superior-subordinate relationship requires loyalty to the government or one's superior on the job. In return, the employer takes care of the employees' needs. Second, the parent-child relationship requires filial piety; children should obey, honor, and respect their parents, and parents should love their children. The husband-wife relationship prescribes that the wife submit to the husband and the husband love the wife. Young brothers should respect the older brother, while the elders should love the young ones. Among friends, righteousness and trust are the rule.

Confucianism prescribes family relationships and indicates the degree of intimacy and obligations. Anyone who is within this network is considered part of the family. Otherwise, he or she is an outsider. As a member of the family, one enjoys membership privileges such as trust, intimacy, and sharing. Confucians promote universal brotherhood and sisterhood by respecting others and observing propriety (Confucian Analects, Confucius 1971 [500 B.C.E.]).

PHIL 1316 History of Religion I (Survey of Old Testament.)

This course is a study of the development of the people and Judaism during the Old Testament period with emphasis upon the development of their social, political, and religious institutions.

Goals: We will attempt to understand the Old Testament writings as they relate to each other and to the world contemporaneous to the Hebrew people. This is not a faith driven study but a cultural, historical and literary view of this important ancient text.

Instructor: Father Jerry Pardue
903-675-1639
jerry.pardue@tvcc.edu

Text: Paul R House, *Old Testament Survey*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992

Students must have a copy of the Old Testament in whatever translation available to them.

Class Schedule: Tuesday Evening: 7:00 – 9:40 pm
14 classes, final examination period
No class on February 2 and March 11

Attendance: Students are encouraged to attend class each session and participate in discussion and presentations. Those missing a class need to work with others in the class to get notes for missed lectures and discussions. Presentations must be given when scheduled to earn credit. Completing the assigned reading in advance of class will enhance the learning experience.

Evaluation: 3 Exams will count towards 30% of the final grade. Our exams are open book and open note.

45% of the grade will be for a 3 brief presentation assigned by the instructor.

25% of the grade will be for a research paper on a subject chosen by the student and approved by the instructor.

PHIL 1317 History of Religion II (Survey of New Testament.)

This course is a study of the development of the people and the Christian movement during the New Testament period with emphasis upon the origins, development, and expansion of its institutions and ideas.

Goals: We will attempt to understand the New Testament writings as they relate to each other and to the world contemporaneous to the beginning of the Christian era. This is not a faith driven study but a cultural, historical and literary view of this important text.

Instructor: Father Jerry Pardue
903-675-1639
mail@jcpardue.com

Text: Thomas D Lea and David Alan Black, *The New Testament Its Background and Message*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003.

George W Knight, *A Simplified Harmony of the Gospels*. Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 2001.

Students must have a copy of the New Testament in whatever translation available to them.

Class Schedule: Monday Evening: 7:00 – 9:40 pm
13 classes, final examination period
No class on September 7 and October 12

Attendance: Students are encouraged to attend class each session and participate in discussion and presentations. Those missing a class need to work with others in the class to get notes for missed lectures and discussions. Presentations must be given when scheduled to earn credit. Completing the assigned reading in advance of class will enhance the learning experience.

Evaluation: 2 Exams and will count towards 50% of the final grade. Our exams are open book and open note.

An Epistle project and a Pericope project will require an in class presentation and will count for 15% each. A final project will require an in class presentation and will count for 20%.

PHIL 1304. World Religions.

Course: A comparative study of the living religions of the world including Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam and Christianity with emphasis on origin and development.

Goals: We will attempt to understand religions of the world as they relate to each other and to our experiences. This is not a faith driven study but a cultural, historical and literary view.

Instructor: Father .Jerry .Pardue -
2101 E College St
Athens, TX 75751
903-675-1639
jerry.pardue@tvcc.edu

Text: Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*. San Francisco, Harpers Collins, 1991.

Class Schedule: Monday Evening: 7:00 -- 9:40 pm
No class on March 15

Attendance: Students are encouraged to attend class each session and participate in discussion and presentations. Completing the assigned reading in advance of class will enhance the learning experience. Your reading and notes will be very important for examinations as our tests are open book tests.

First Presentation: Short class presentation on a religion not familiar to modern times

Field Experience: You are required to visit a church, mosque, or synagogue of a denomination that you have never visited in a religion or denomination that you are totally unfamiliar with and make a presentation to the class about that denomination or religion. If you are unable to complete such a project for a specific reason please meet with instructor as soon as possible to plan a substitute.

Evaluation: 2 exams 30% 3 short papers 30% 2 presentations 40%

Spring 2010 Schedule: World Religions	Date	Class	Text			
	25-Jan	1	12-81	Hinduism		
	1-Feb	2	82-153	Buddism		
	8-Feb	3	154-195	Confucionism		
	15-Feb	4	196-220	Taoism		
	22-Feb	5	365-383	Primal Religions		
	1-Mar	6	384-392	Other Religions		1st paper due
	8-Mar	7		MID TERM EXAM & PRESENTATIONS		
	15-Mar			SPRING BREAK		
	22-Mar	8		Judaism		2nd paper due
	29-Mar	9	271-316	Islam		
	5-Apr	10	221-270	Islam		
	12-Apr	11	317-364	Christianity		
	19-Apr	12		Christianity continued		
	26-Apr	13		Christianity continued		3rd paper due
3-May	14		FINAL EXAMINATION & PRESENTATIONS			

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3-May	14		FINAL EXAMINATION & PRESENTATIONS			