

# Session 1

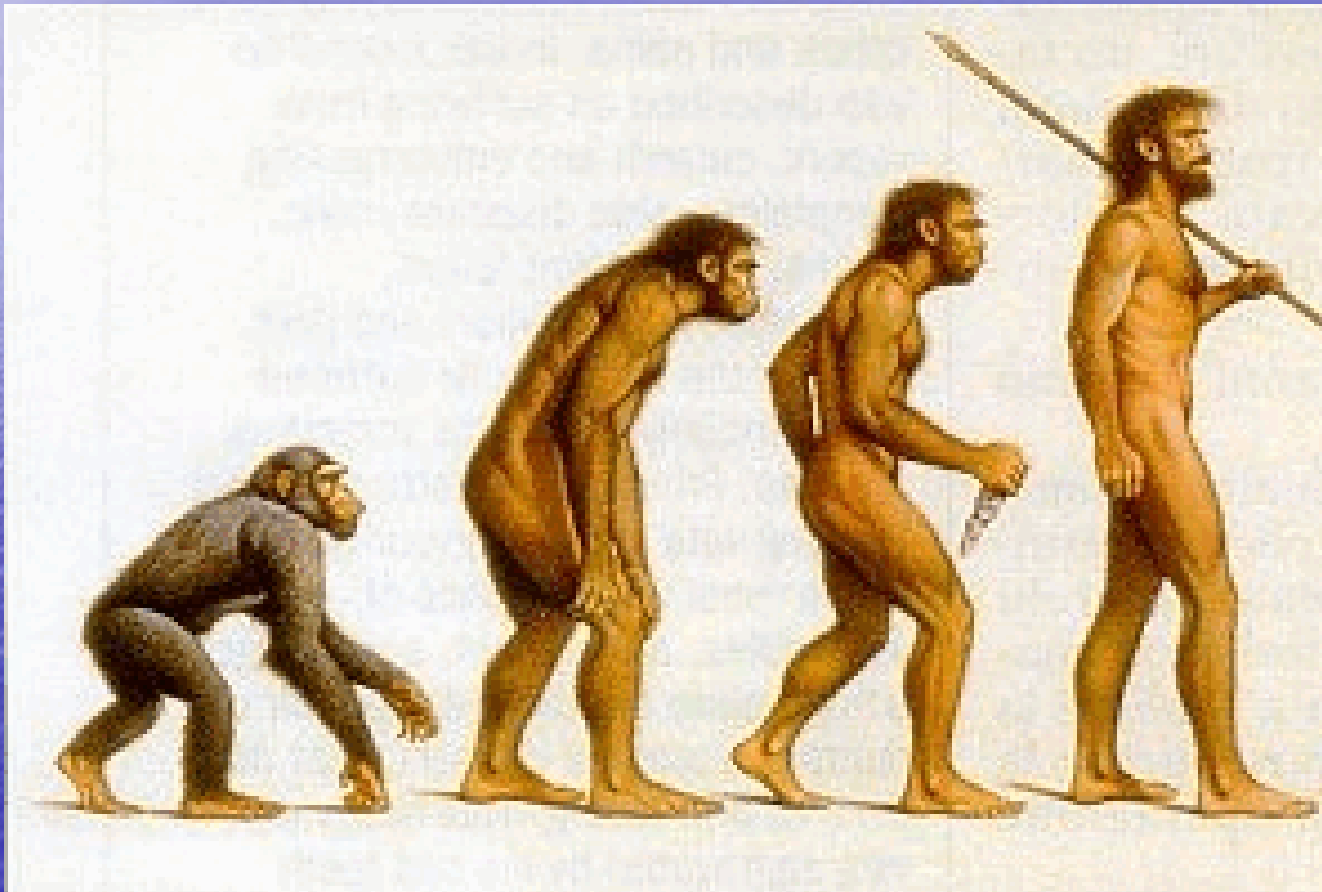
## Hinduism: A Rational Theory rather than Dogma

For IAP Course, Hinduism: A Universal Religion, MIT, 2006 (Varun Aggarwal)

# Disclaimer

- A Hindu is 'not instructed' to *preach* till he is God realized.
- Till you haven't verified a theory to be correct, how can you teach it to other people and ask them to drive their actions according to it?
- I am NOT PREACHING.
  - Just exposing you to a theory.
  - Don't know whether it is correct.
  - Sounds logical to me.
  - If it does to you, inquire further, follow or test it!
  - Not instructing you to do or follow anything.

# NOW THAT WE KNOW IT IS EVOLUTION!!!



The trendy argument of the atheists 😊

# The overwhelming Literature: Need for a Generalized Theory

- A literature spanning more than x years.
- Different hypothesis, results, reproducible/not reproducible/contradictory
- Subjective (as any other science)
- Change in definitions/meaning over time
- A few survey papers.
- Cannot study/say everything.
- Specialization → Generalization
- Here is my **Biased Survey Paper**, allowed to me by "Independence of thought"

# Questions: Code of Conduct/Seeking the truth

Do you need a philosophical substratum for a code of conduct/an objective in life?

Who am I?

Why is there suffering/happiness/suffering ...?

Why is the whole universe in place?

Why is there injustice/asymmetry?

What is the objective Of life?

Vivekananda's statement: About pulling an end of the string

# Why is there injustice/asymmetry?

- Why are two people born unequal?
  - Rich and Poor
  - Mental Faculties
  - Handicaps, etc.
- Why we suffer for no fault of ours?
- Why the wrong-doers are not punished?

# Why is there injustice/asymmetry? Why there should be an ANSWER?

- It is just simple evolution.
- We are random causations.
- These are random phenomena.
- Thus there is no Question!



- Nothing is random::
  - **Random** till you don't understand/quantify influencing factors.
  - It might be intractable
- For theorizing, need to have **faith** that it is not random/there is a reason.
- Ex: The apple falling on the ground and the cause of day and night are due to the same reason!!! So very hard to believe...

# Why is there asymmetry/injustice? The theory of Karma

- Karma means 'action'.
- A person is born less fortunate than the other. Why?
- Let us use simple 'Cause and Effect'
- Why? → Since he did something wrong.
- When did he do something wrong?
- A previous life, a previous birth.

Karmic theory is dealt in the most systematic way in the

**Bhagvad Gita** (The celestial Song): The most *celebrated Survey Paper* in Hindu Philosophy

# The theory of Karma

- A 'person' goes through the cycles of birth and death.
- Each life he experiences results of his karma in the previous life.
- Does fresh karma → Gets accumulated (*Karmic debt*)
- Results experienced in the next life.
- And so it goes on...

# The theory of Karma: Questions

- Is it pre-decided what will happen in this life? –  
No
  - It is your action, that determines your experience.
  - But it is not just action in this life, but also the action in previous life.
  - Just a 'System with Memory' 😊

**Thus, YOU are the Master Of Your Destiny**

# The theory of Karma: Questions

- If I wrong A, it had to be so, it is due to A's Karma, then why am I blamed?
  - 'A' had to reap the fruit of his karma- Agreed
  - Your instinct made you do the bad karma.
  - **You** offered yourself as the instrument.
  - Otherwise, the 'universal karmic equilibrium' would itself find another **fit!**
  - Thus YOU accumulate bad karma!

# The theory of Karma: Questions

- What is classified as bad karma?
  - Extremely controversial!!
  - Wrong-doing in ignorance is not bad karma
  - Generalized: Hurting an innocent person is bad karma
  - Individual Perspective: Hurting some [if necessary] for the good of many is fine. (Utilitarian)
  - It is in the reference-frame of the individual.

**Whenever you do an action and something inside tells you it is wrong, it is. Otherwise it is not!**

**Your 'Self' is the judge**

# Theory of Karma: Inferences

- No one can hit you except yourself!
  - Whatever bad happens to you is due to your Karma
  - Thus no-one can hurt you, till it is your 'karmic debt'.
  - Only your Karma influences you
- You cannot help anyone!
  - Everyone reaps his own Karma
  - You can just be an instrument!

# Let us rest here for a moment...

- In the current framework, we have been able to explain that there is no injustice.
- But how did it all begin? When the first generation came in, there shouldn't have been any debt. How did it diverge?
  - The STEADY STATE of the system is clear, but not the initial conditions and the transients. ☺
- This is a rough framework, but the intricacies are not important. One can surely tug them in.
- We didn't talk about THE PERSON till now: who is the 'person', why does one do bad and good karma, etc.
  - Shall propose another theories to take care of this.
- Let us delve in further....

# Theory of Karma: Delving In

- You cannot do good, you cannot do bad... You cannot do anything for the world. You can only influence yourself.
- You are not doing any Karma, you are not the owner of the result.
- You are an instrument in the hand of the 'Universal Karmic Equilibrium'.
  - The Karma is done by the three Gunas of the Prakriti: Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. (Bhagvad Gita)
- You attach to the karma
  - You tie yourself to the result.
  - You believe your Karma creates it.
  - You take ownership.
  - **And thus you come back to reap the fruits**

# The Idea of the Changeless: ATMAN (THE PERSON)

- One can only influence oneself, WHO is this ONE?
- CHANGE is the truth of life.
- There is duality everywhere: Pleasure/pain, success/failure, etc. Everything is temporary. The world is **imperfect**
- Hindus postulate an 'CHANGELESS' behind this changing.
  - The unchanging is a WITNESS, and
  - Neither a doer nor the one that experiences,
  - Free from the duality of pleasure and pain.
- That unchanging has to be realized.
- That unchanging is called the ATMAN (the soul).
- The ATMAN is Sat-Chit-Ananda:: True, Conscious, Blissful

**This realization is called MUKTI, i.e. FREEDOM**

*This (self), weapons cut not; This fire burns not; This, water wets not; and This, wind dries not. (Bhagvad Gita, 2-23)*

# Theory of Karma: Desire is bondage

- Desires make us do karma: good, bad and neutral.
- We do good or bad karma, take ownership and thus accumulate it.
- In case, it is neutral Karma
  - It is either instinctive and reaps good/bad result.
  - It attaches one to the body, which the 'one' is not. One returns for its fulfillment and chains himself.
  - That puts sensory pleasures in a negative tone!
- A second way of motivating the idea (The Buddhist Way) :
  - We have desires → World is imperfect → Desires remain unfulfilled → Sorrow
  - Have no desires → Then you have nothing to lose → There is no sorrow
  - You live like a KING.
  - But this is just a psychological state...
  - The Hindus claim it is the 'REAL' state. The state of the ATMAN ☺
- A third way of motivating this:
  - First we desire our enjoyment, we find it temporary and unfulfilling: Self desires end..
  - Once our focus is off us, we see the pain in the world, work for it and feel pride in it
  - Finally we find, we are not the influencer...

*He who does actions forsaking attachment, resigning them to Brahman, is not soiled by evil (bondage), like unto a lotus leaf by water (Bhagvad Gita, 5-10)*

# Theory of Karma: How to get out of the mess

## Nish-Kaam Karma Yoga: Action without Desire

### Theory or practice??

- Does karma without desire
- Does everything as a duty: Duty of a son, a father, a husband, a professional, citizen, etc.
- Offers oneself as an instrument in the hand of 'Karmic Equilibrium', How?
  - Does good (as a duty), but never takes pride in it; for he is not the cause.
  - No desires thus he doesn't do bad.
- Not doing karma is also a karma, that's not the solution!

In this state, one accumulate no Karma, nor attachment with the body  
→ No cause → No effect → 'One' becomes free from the cycle of  
birth and death → Sat-chit-Ananda

*Thy right is to work only, but never to the fruit thereof. Be thou not the producer of the fruits of thy actions; neither let thy attachment be towards inaction. (Bhagavd Gita, 2-47)*

# Theory of Karma: The state of a *Yogi*

## Nish-Kaam Karma Yoga: Action without Desire

- Such a person is always equal-minded.
- He neither becomes sad nor happy since he has no desires.
- He is not attached to anything, he let goes.
- He just enjoys what he is doing.
- Such a man is FREE.

# The Theory of Karma: Take Home

*Vaishnav Jan to tene kahiye...*

<http://www.raaga.com/channels/hindi/movie/HD000033.html>

# The Big Question

- Woops! I thought we were discussing religion, where is GOD?
- How does this God relate to the soul?
- Are there answers to why do we have desires/what is wrong in having desires?

# What we do next...

- Theory of the dualists: Dvaita
- The question dualists couldn't answer.
- The theory of the non-dualists: Keval Advaita

This is 'Arundhati Nyaya' !!!

# Theory of the Dvaita: The Atman and the Paramatman

- There is two: The Atman and the Paramatman. (Dualists) [[No Satan in Hinduism]]
- The soul (*atman*) resides in the body.
- The body is just like a cloth around it.
- It is the soul which moves from one body to the other.
- The soul has a sheath which carries the karmic debt.
- The soul takes a body+mind as dictated by the karmic debt.
- The body performs the action.
- Is it material or not? Controversial (Bhaagvatam proposes its size)

*Even as a man casts off worn-out clothes, and puts on others which are new, so the embodied casts off worn-out bodies, and enters into others which are new. (Gita, 2-22)*

# Paramatman: Creator, Preserver and the Destroyer

- Paramatman (The super-soul) is God: The totality of everything, The primal force.
- The Paramatman creates the universe (matter) and dissolves it at the end.
- All the souls are his part and emerge from him at creation.
- The souls are actually free, but their identity is obscured to believe that they are bound.
- Thus the karmic cycle goes into action
- At the end, everyone merges back to the Godhead, there is dissolution and then creation goes on again.

There are innumerable Dvaita schools of thought and this is one view.  
Our real aim is to reach Non-Dualism.

# The Nature of Paramatman

- There is one God.
- He is actually Nirguna (formless) and projects himself as Saguna (with attributes and qualities) and multiple forms.
- Different people can relate to different forms of God.
- God projects himself into multiple forms, so that the “bounded souls” can relate to one of his forms and be devoted to it.
  - Radhakrishnan’s view from perspective of history of religion.
- Why devoted to him?
  - The basic nature of the soul is to love the super-soul (**Acintya-Bhedabheda**)
  - We need to be indebted to our creator!
  - If you don’t pray to him, xyz will happen! (Religion of fear)
  - **We will find a better answer at the end.**

# Incarnation Of God: Resonance of Dualism and Karmic Theory

*Whenever, O descendant of Bharata, there is decline of Dharma and rise of Adharma, I body myself forth (Bhagvad Gita 4-7)*

- The Paramatman incarnates on earth.
- The karmic equilibrium is in imbalance.
- No one offers himself to be an instrument for balancing it, e.g., Case of Ravana
- The Paramatman (actually a non-doer, always-free) takes human form to balance the Karmic Equilibrium.
- He demonstrates ideal way of life so that people can follow his example.

The lives of incarnation form the model way of living for most Hindus.  
Rama, Krishna, and many-many more.

# Serving the Godhead: A Very Popular View of Salvation

- The theory of Love and Devotion. (Bhakti)
- Vishnu/Krishna, a deity is the Paramatman, the Supreme being.
- The basic nature of all souls is to serve him/love him and be happy in this state.
- The souls can become free by devotion and love to Lord.
- In freedom, they eternally serve Vishnu and be happy in serving him.

# The Question Dualists couldn't answer

- Why is Paramatman the Paramatman and the atman an atman.
- Why the atman has to be devoted to the Paramatman?
- If Vishnu/Krishna is 'the God', what special love he has for Indians, that he revealed his form only to them and showed all wrong forms to others?
- Why this asymmetry?

Each idea of Dualism is beautiful, sweet, tender and full of LOVE. But it loses its universality. Non-dualism gives it the backbone... We will see how...

# The Buddhist Challenge

- If there is a Vishnu, who will have to serve till eternity and be happy in it, we will rather fight him.
- Why do you postulate two: The changing body and the Unchanging Soul?
- Everything can be explained on the body and mind, both of which are changing.

# Non-Dualism: A great Unifier

- There is no duality, there is 'NOT-TWO'.
- Answer to the Buddhists:
  - There is not the body and the soul
  - It is the soul which looks like the body
  - The famous "snake in the rope" analogy.
  - Only the soul is real, the body is unreal.
  - The body is seen due to ignorance
  - The Soul is Unchanging: For perception of change, a UNCHANGING datum needs to exist.

Advaita: 'a' NOT 'dvaita': Two

# Non-Dualism: Though is thee

- There is ONE Paramatman
- He **looks** multiple due to ignorance
  - He doesn't split into multiple.
- **'I AM BRAHMA'** –  
**The Mantra of Non-Dualism**
- Each one of us is that ONE in every regard eternally beyond time and space.
- Each one of us is SAME.
- Belief in Multiplicity/Differentiation is the root cause of world.

There is one: Hatred is Negation of Love, Darkness is Negation of Light, Failure is negation of success; One is felt due to the expression of the other

# THE ONE AND MANY

- The ONE (Brahman) alone exists.
- Since there is not a second, nothing effects it.
- It's state is indescribable (SAT-CHIT-ANANDA)
- There is no creation ... matter/feelings/life is illusory.
- We are the ONE eternally beyond the conception of time and space.
- It is IGNORANCE, that makes us see time/space/duality.
- It is IGNORANCE, which shows the one as many.
- The ONE supports all what is experienced, but is never touched by ignorance
- The ONE is the one experienced and the one that experiences...
- *We don't become FREE on salvation, we realize we are free!*

# ADVAITA: REFERENCE FRAMES

- We are all traveling in cars moving with different speeds. (speed → Level of Ignorance)
- We all see different things, whatever we see is real for us.
- We all have our own frame of reference to see the universe and that it becomes for us.
- None of us lie, when we say, we see it differently.
- We all see the same truth, but differently.
- The truth manifest when the car is at speed 0.

When we all have different quotient of ignorance, why all of us see the same world?  
Advaita explains this on the principle of cumulative ignorance/karmic debt

# ADVAITA RECONCILES ALL RELIGIONS

Why did God reveal himself as **Allah** to one and **Ram** to the other?

- The ONE is PARAMATMAN.
- The ONE never projects himself into forms.
- Different people see it differently due to their level of ignorance/understanding.
- Our perception shows us different forms.
- A seer of Ram, a seer of Jesus, a seer of Allah all see the same ONE through different glasses with flakes of ignorance.

# REFERENCE FRAMES

## The way Gita puts it...

Even those devotees, who endued with *Sraddha*, worship other gods, they too worship Me alone, O son of Kunti, (but) by the wrong method.

For I alone am the enjoyer, and Lord of all Yajnas, but because they do not know me in reality, they return.

Votaries of the Devas go to the Devas; to the Pitrs, go their votaries; to the Bhutas, go the Bhuta worshippers, My votaries come unto me.

(9-23,24,25)

# ADVAITA RECONCILES LOVE AND MORALITY

- Love is:
  - Losing identity in the other
  - Feeling the pain/pleasure of the other.
- Love is unification. Love is expansion
- All hatred is due to differentiation. (Me and You)
- Hatred is limited expression of LOVE.
  - We LOVE ourselves, we wrong the world for oneself.
  - We LOVE our family, we wrong ....
  - We LOVE our city, country, World and then the whole universe.
  - Loving the whole universe, losing identity in it is our basic nature, for the whole universe is ONE

# ADVAITA RECONCILES DUALISM

- Paramatman is the expression of that ONE
- Loving Paramatman is loving that ONE, which we are identical with.
- We first love ourselves, then our family, then the world and then Paramatman.
- Serving Krishna/Vishnu in an eternal heaven and being happy in it is the limited version of that 'ONE-NESS' seen through glasses of ignorance.
- **How dare someone ridicules dualism**
  - It is such a beautiful expression of the ONE.
  - Till you are in/see the world, you remain in DUALITY.
  - The college teacher and the school teacher example ☺

# ADVAITA AND THEORY OF KARMA

- If the universe/matter is illusory, how can there be a theory in an illusion.

Real Numbers → Complex Numbers  
Don't exist, Are a tool  
Follow rules → Real Numbers

The ONE → The World  
Doesn't Exist, Tool to  
realize, Follow rules → The ONE

- Reference frames: Theory of Karma works at the material level due to the perception of duality. It doesn't effect the ONE.

# ADVAITA RECONCILES DEVOTION

- How does devotion help, if it is the law of Karma that is working?
- For the power of ONE is within YOU.
- The matter is an illusion, so is the sorrow.
- The 'prayer' manifests your power seeming to come from that ONE
- Prayer is not the only WAY...
- The voice which appears to come from outside actually comes from inside -- Vivekananda

# EVOLUTION VS. INTELLIGENT DESIGN



The scientists SEE evolution.

The Christians SEE God creating the universe.

The Hindus SEE Brahma creating the universe.

The advaitist KNOW there is no creation.

# The Way: Learn and Unlearn

... first, it is absolutely necessary to clear the intellectual portions, although we know the intellectuality is almost nothing; for it is the heart that is of most importance. It is through the heart that the Lord is seen and not through the intellect. The intellect is only the street-cleaner, cleansing the path for us...

-Swami Vivekananda

Analogous to what engineers do all the time. 😊

ADVAITA gives a context to

**reconcile**

all schools of thought in religion

AND

all different religious practices

It forms the basis of a

**UNIVERSAL RELIGION**

# Problems/Challenges to Advaita

## IGNORANCE

- Where did IGNORANCE come from? How did the symmetric become unsymmetrical? How/Why the Karmic cycle began? Did Adam eat the apple!
  - Sankaracharya calls it the unexplainable.

# Problems/Challenges to Advaita INTELLECT

- Advaita claimed body, mind, intellect all as illusory and unreal.
- This created the basic problem that all logic is inconsequential.
- Advaitists relied on experience.
- Brain Research, Did they make a basic error in interpreting the experiment.

# Problems/Challenges to Theory of Karma CLONING

Genetics and Heredity??  
Can we engineer qualities for a person?



REFERENCE SECTION OF MY  
LITERATURE SURVEY!!!

# BOOKS OF THE HINDUS

- VEDAS : Believed to be the divine word of the God
  - SAMA, RIG, YAJURVA, ATHARVA (4)
  - UPAVEDAS
    - AYURVEDA: medicine
    - DHANURVEDA: Archery and war-fare
    - GANDHARVA-VEDA: Music
    - STHAPATYA-VEDA: Engineering and architecture

Rituals and prayers for material and spiritual goals, Myths, Philosophy, Science, etc.

# BOOKS OF THE HINDUS

- UPANISHADS

- Upa: Near, Ni: Down, s(h)ad: Sit  
Come down and sit near (Disciple and guru)

- 108 in number

- 12 Major

Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Aitreya, Taittraiya, Chandogya, Brihadaranyaka, Kaushitaki, Shvetashtana

- The best source of **Advaita Philosophy**

- **Completely fearless writings**

- Contains teaching, mythology, etc.

- Vedanta Sutras and the Brahma-Sutras

# BOOKS OF THE HINDUS

- PURANAS

- 18 in number
- Basically mythology and stories of God/God incarnations
- Dualist in approach
- Initiates a religion of fear.
- SRIMAD BHAAGVATAM: Extremely popular
  - Stories of 24 avatars of Vishnu
  - The story of Krishna, *Bhagvaan-Svayam*
  - A beautiful blend of Mythology and Vedanta Philosophy

# BOOKS OF THE HINDU

- RAMAYANA: Equivalent to the VEDAS
  - The story of Prince Ram, incarnation of Vishnu (The preserver)
  - Shows the ideal way of life.
  - Sri Ram: Idealized and worshipped by millions of Hindus
  - Translated to Awadhi by Tulsidas, 'Ram Charitmanas'
  - Several version
  - A TV show based on Ramayana was the first biggest success of Indian TV

# BOOKS OF THE HINDUS

- MAHABHARATA: Story of a Kingdom in India
  - The longest poem of the world.
  - A book teaching 'dharma' (right conduct) through a story
  - Krishna is an important character of the story.
  - Bhagvad Gita (The Song of God)
    - Teachings by Krishna to Arjun (super-soul to soul)
    - The best commentary on the Upanishads
    - The most celebrated text of Hinduism
    - A unifier of different ways to reach God
    - The best survey paper

# PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS

## Roughly according to timeline

- Systems coming out of the Vedas
  - Sankhya Of Kapila
  - Nyaya of Gautama
  - Vaisheshika of Kanada
  - Mimamsa of Geimini
  - **Vedanta of Vyasa**
  - **Yoga of Patanjali**

Different ways of linking matter, soul and God;  
ways of salvation

# PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS

## Roughly according to timeline

- Advaita Vedanta: Upanishads
- Dvaita: Upanishads, Puranas
  - From rituals to devotion (The Bhakti Movement)
- Buddhism: Bhagvan Buddha (Siddhartha)
- Jainism: Mahavira
- Keval Advaita: Sankaracharya
- Vishisht Advaita: Ramanujacharya
- Back to Dvaita: Madhavacharya!
- Achintya Bhedabheda: Sri Krishna Chaitanya

# Major Hindu Beliefs

- God is one
- He is the creator, preserver and destroyer
- Good and evil are two sides of the same coin. They are both a part of Paramatman  
(There is no Satan in Hinduism)
- We all existed, exist and shall exist till eternity
- We have multiple lives taking plant/animal/human form according to our karma. (All Eastern religions agree on this)
- There is a way to get out of this cycle of births.