An Introduction –

Multi-faceted Vedic Hinduism
(Sanaatana Dharma)

Presented by:
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What does Sanaatana Dharma mean?

- *Sanaatana* is Perennial and *Dharma* is universal principles and laws that govern life
- Refers to the whole process and values of life starting from inception of an idea, activity, results and beyond
- Provides a vision and a way for practice in life, both at an individual and collective level.
What are the Objectives of Life (Purushaarththa)?

1. **Dharma**: Laws of Life, Nature and Universe
2. **Artha**: Wealth, Possession and Power
3. **Kama**: Desire and Ambition
4. **Moksha**: State of contentment and tranquility

The above order is very important and should not be interchanged.
What are the major Stages in Life (Ashrama)

1. **Bramhacharya**: deals with the younger years of a student’s life (education).

2. **Grihasta**: deals with married life (social responsibility).

3. **Vanaprastha**: deals with later years of life (contemplation).

4. **Sanyasa**: deals with the senior years of life (renunciation).

The above order is general guideline but it is possible to become a Sanyasin directly from any stage.
How do India’s *Rishis* define what goal of life is?

- “It is the view of the *Rishis* (enlightened beings) of *Bharata* that spiritual enlightenment is the ultimate goal of life. That is attainment of ultimate joy (*Ananda*). That is liberation (*Mukti*). Spiritual knowledge (*Jnana*) is that by which one merges into the light of *Atman* (One Source) as a river merges into the ocean.

- The *Rishis* or *jnanis* having attained this ultimate goal have brought forth the knowledge in science and arts (*Vijnana*) keeping in line with their roots in spiritual knowledge (*Jnana*) because *Vijnana* is the manifestation of *Jnana*.

- It is for this reason an in-depth sincere study of knowledge in science and arts at any stage of manifestation will lead to attainment of the ultimate goal of spiritual knowledge (*Jnana*)”

*Sriranga Sadguru*

1913 - 1969
Vedic Knowledge as an Inverted Tree

Brahman - God
Non-Dual Reality

4 Vedas

Vedic literature

Integrated knowledge of Spirituality and Science
And, Yoga* is the practice of Vedic knowledge in all aspects of life

“The customs and habits, the dress and ornaments, the manners and etiquette, the conceptions of right and wrong and of good and evil, the learning, literature and the various arts like music, the political thoughts, views regarding all actions and the consecratory ceremonies, etc., of the Indians (Bharatiyas), are all permeated like the warp and woof by Ashtanga Yoga.”

Sriranga Sadguru
1913 - 1969

*Yoga means the union of the individual soul with the Supreme
Ashtanga Yoga is the practical approach of Vedanta

1. Yama
   i. *Ahimsa* (nonviolence),
   ii. *Satya* (Truth),
   iii. *Asteya* (non-covetedness),
   iv. *Bramhacharya* (continence),
   v. *Aparigriha* (non-receiving)

2. Niyama
   i. *Shoucha* (cleanliness),
   ii. *Santosha* (contentment),
   iii. *Tapah* (austerity),
   iv. *Swadhyaya* (Scriptural study),
   v. *Ishvarapranidhana* (Surrender to Supreme God)

3. Asana
   Firm postures

4. Pranayama
   Vital force regulation

5. Pratyahara
   Withdrawal of senses from object

6. Dharana
   Fixing the mind on a sacred object

7. Dhyana
   Unbroken flow of mind on a sacred object

8. Samadhi
   Original state of bliss
Vedic Hindu Temple designed on Yogic principles of the Human Body

- Human body with chakras - (Abode of God) Devaalaya
- God indwelling in human being - (Deity) Murti
- Feet - Rajagopura
- Hands - Prakaara
- Abdomen - Mandapa
- Heart as Antaraala (entrance to Garbha Griha)
- Crown of the head - sanctum sanctorum - Garbha Griha
- Rituals - a guide to inner worship
Monotheistic Vedic Hindu Trinity describes Manifestations of the One Source

Non-dual Reality - GOD - with inseparable masculine principle and feminine energy. Bramhan, the formless, manifests in different forms to ease the seeker’s understanding of life and universe.
Goddess Saraswati symbolizes Divine Knowledge.

Saraswati means the one who gives the knowledge of one’s own Self and Universe.
Lord Nataraja, Divine Dancer, in Spiritual Bliss of Perfect Yogic Balance

- Dwarf - demon of forgetfulness
- Snake - *Kundalini* yogic energy
- Drum - *prana* energy
- Fire - *apana* energy
- Two hands in the middle - blessing of fearlessmess
- Head Ornaments - Sun, moon and fire
  (Ref: Sriranga Sadguru)
And, *Lord Nataraja* illustrates scientific principles of Speech sounds

- *Chakras* represent the energy centers. The importance of various *chakras* in spiritual path is well known.
- The production of various seed-sounds in relation to various *chakras* starting from *Muladhara* at the base are shown.
- In the *Vedic* tradition, the human spinal cord is represented as the musical instrument (*Veena*).
  
  The 24 frets of the instrument are analogous to the 24 cartilages in the spinal cord. The number 24 also relates to the 24 syllables in the *Vedic Gayatri Mantra*.

  (Ref:Sriranga Sadguru, Amaravani)

The divine dance of *Lord Nataraja*, Lord of Dance, signifies the *yogic* process of self realization.
Vocal and instrumental music expresses the experiential aspects of Vedic Hinduism

- Vocal music has its origin in *Vedic* chants.
- Melody characterizes instrumental music; rhythm the Percussion instruments.
- The design of *Mridangam* and *Tabla* have both melody and rhythm. This is from the tonal combination like string instruments.
Sound carries spiritual vibrations

- **Shankha** (Conch Shell) produces an unusually pure tone
  - Reflects the sound of OM
  - Used in Hindu rituals

- Sound interacts with the flame to bring about various shapes
  - A particular tone breaks the flame into seven tongues (Tyndall effect)
Veda Mantras interacting with flame…

Appearance of Goddess Lakshmi during a Yajna

An example: The interaction of Veda mantras and spiritual vibrations has a role in the appearance of the forms of the devatas and devis
Vedic Triadic Approach to Seek Spiritual Knowledge

Three essential components for making an effort to acquire any knowledge, particularly spiritual knowledge are:

- **The Sadguru** refers to the guiding energy in the form of mother, father, acharya, spiritual mentor
- **Shastras** refers to the body of knowledge (Vedic literature)
- **Anubhava** means the experience of the seeker

Eventually, the seeker should advance towards spiritual enlightenment.
Vedic Hinduism (Sanaatana Dharma) has universal and contemporary relevance

The multifaceted *Vedic* Hinduism or *Sanaatana Dharma*, through its universal principles of life and science, shows the ability to sustain the timeline through past, present, future and beyond.

“*Ekam Sat Vipra, Bahudha Vadanti*” - The Truth is One. The Realized Ones describe the One Truth in several ways.
Multidisciplinary Team

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