

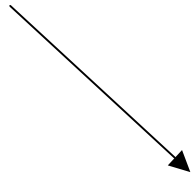
Hinduism

Think about this: Imagine that you are happy. Will you desire more happiness than you currently possess? Or less? Or will you want it to remain constant, without increase? Imagine you are happy. Will you want this happiness to end, that is, to fade? Or will you want this happiness to continue forever, indefinitely?

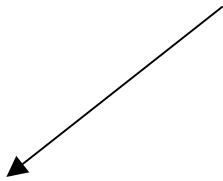
Happiness has certain qualities, just as a triangle has certain properties.

It belongs to happiness to be **permanent, enduring, unending, and thus self-sufficient (not dependent upon fortuitous circumstances)**. And it belongs to happiness to be **unsurpassable**.

Let's turn to the world of nature. What is the one obvious fact we notice about the world of nature?



Ans: That things are never the same, that the world is constantly changing.



Cycles of birth, death, re-birth



Seasons (Match them)

___ Birth	a. Winter
___ Life	b. Fall
___ Dying	c. Spring
___ Death	d. Summer

Even in our life, we experience loss, ie., of a friend, a spouse, a child.



He experiences sorrow at the loss, joy at a birth, fear at an impending loss, etc.

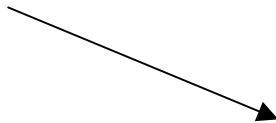


Food:

When he eats, he experiences satisfaction. But what does he soon experience?



Ans: hunger



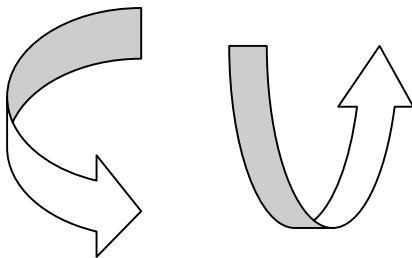
Rest:

He is awake, alive, full of energy, but he soon experiences fatigues – needs rest. Then he experiences renewal or rejuvenation.

What do we notice about the seasons? Ans: change. What pattern?

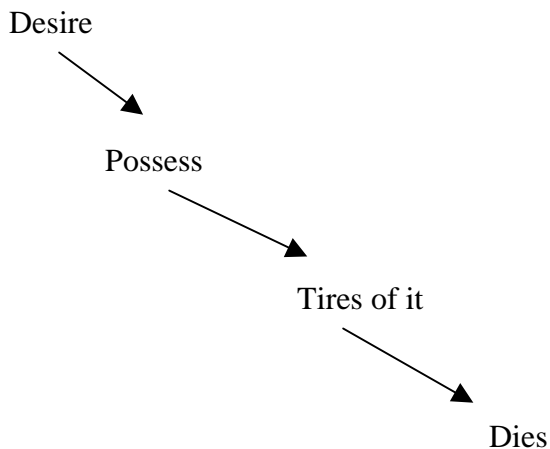
Hinduism is very alert to this fact.

The doctrine of Samsara – cycle of re-birth. Time is not linear, for Hinduism, but cyclic.



Samsara and human desire:

Man's desires get caught in this cycle. What he possesses and enjoys, he soon loses.



But happiness has the property of permanency.

According to Hinduism, there are **four kinds of happiness**.

The Hindu Notion of Happiness

First level: **Pleasure**: The enjoyment of the pleasures of sense, foods of all kinds, wine, the pleasure of games, amusements, sexual pleasure, the pleasure of pleasant scents, i.e., flowers, pleasant sounds, i.e., music, pleasant scenes. Hinduism encourages people to pursue pleasure if that's what they so desire. Eventually you will tire of it (samsara) and move on.

Second level: **Worldly success**: wealth, fame, power. Political power, financial success, driven to work and achieve one's goals. The happiness of being known and celebrated, the approval of others, a job well done, financial security, faithful performance of one's duty. Hinduism also encourages people at this stage to pursue this happiness of success and competition. Eventually you will tire of it and move on, looking for something more permanent.

Third level: **Life devoted to others**: serving the community, living for the well-being of others. The will to give, to serve. Living for the common good of the whole (as opposed to my own good). Hinduism encourages people here, at this state, to pursue this, knowing that history relegates all our deeds and all the good they do to the past. That too is passing away and subject to Samsara.

Fourth level: **Moksha**: Liberation from everything that distances us from infinite being. Union with infinite being. Unlimited bliss. No ignorance, unlimited knowledge. No more finitude, no more passing away. Undying joy, undying light. This is true happiness, for it is permanent and enduring and unsurpassable.

First level: Since it does not satisfy, it does not satisfy man's true self. What is man's true self?

Second level: Still focused on the self, the ego. Competitive: when I win, another loses. Involves me at the expense of the other.

Level three: History – all things pass, this too will pass. All the good one does, passes away, recedes into the past.

Level four is true happiness, the kind of happiness that man ultimately desires, which is why he is never at rest with these others.

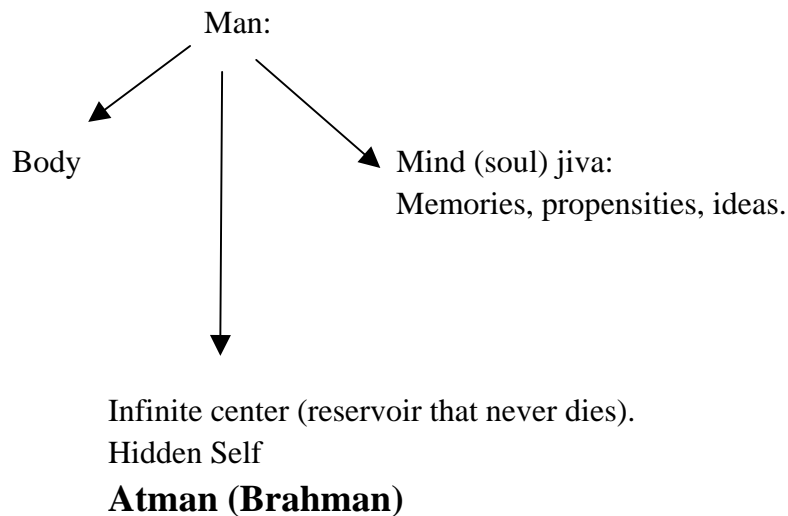
Level 1 & 2 = **The path of desire**

Level 3 & 4 = **The path of renunciation (self expansion)**

Level 3 & 4 **marks the birth of religion.** When a person awakens to this and surpasses level 1 & 2, religion is born in his life.

Can happiness (level 4) in this life be possessed? According to Hinduism, the answer is yes. You and I can have it, because we already have it.

What is Man?



The eternal is buried under an almost impenetrable mass of distractions, delusions, self serving instincts that comprise our surface selves.

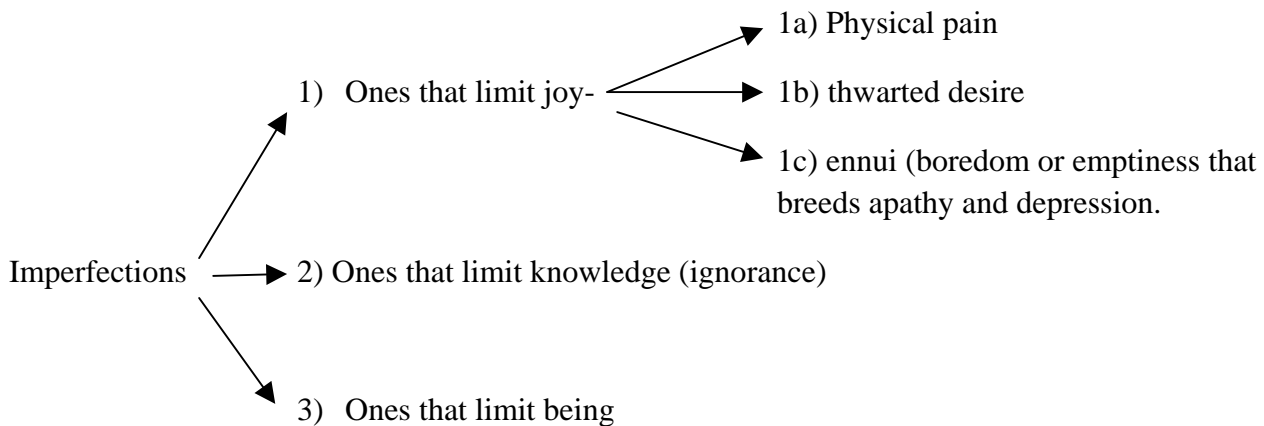
Our basic duty is to clean ourselves so that light can penetrate.

Monism: Monism is the doctrine that all is one, that multiplicity is an illusion. Hinduism is monistic. Brahman is the One. Everything else is subject to the cycles of Samsara. There are millions of gods in Hinduism, but all these gods are merely aspects of the one reality, Brahman. They are not distinct gods with a distinct being.

There are three gods who govern, as it were, the cycles of Samsara (birth, life, and death). The god that creates is **Brahma**, the god that preserves is **Vishnu**, and the god that destroys is **Shiva**. But they are all Brahman.

The Aim or Purpose of Life

The aim of life is to **get as far as possible from imperfections**. Hinduism holds that it is possible to transcend them.



1a) Physical pain derives from our bodies, which we will eventually outgrow. The true Hindu self is spiritual.

1b) thwarted desire or psychological disappointments occur when our egos don't get what they want. Once the ego stops insisting, this imperfection will stop.

1c) ennui – it will abate as interests turn outward. Boredom is the self filled with itself.

2a) Ignorance is transcended, but how? Upanishads: “knowing of That the knowledge of which brings knowledge of everything”. Everything does not mean all actual knowledge. Rather, insight that reveals the meaning of things at large.

3a) Restricted being: How do we define the self? Not the body, nor the physical space we occupy. Time: every moment is a dying. The “I” of the moment dies. My life is a series of funerals. But I do not think of myself as dying each moment. I do not equate myself with these moments. I thread them as if they were beads on my string. I experience them without considering myself identical with them. The I is a-temporal. So too, the self threads successive lives in the way a single life threads successive moments (reincarnation). I must become aware of this eternal “I” and learn not to identify the “I” with these passing moments, passing experiences, passing emotions like sadness and disappointments, etc.

For Hinduism: Mind is infinite. It is infinite in being, infinite in awareness. There is nothing beyond our minds to be known. Mind is infinite in joy. Nothing can thwart its beatitude. But,

We are like kings who fell victim to amnesia. We wander our kingdom in tatters not knowing who we really are.

Jivas – individual souls enter the world mysteriously. Why? For what reason? No answer. Like bubbles that rise to the surface, to burst and disappear, to become what it is, namely, Atman.

The nucleus of jiva is Atman – the God within that seeks release.

The soul (jiva) – on an escalator, beginning on the subhuman level, automatically ascends through increasingly complex animal forms, until a human body is attained. When this happens, the jiva knows itself.

Karma – The mechanism that ties these new acquisitions together. It is the moral law of cause and effect: “As a man sows, so shall he reap”. This is where the belief in reincarnation comes in.

- One’s present condition is an exact product of what it has wanted and done in one’s previous life.
- Present thoughts and decisions determine one’s future experiences.

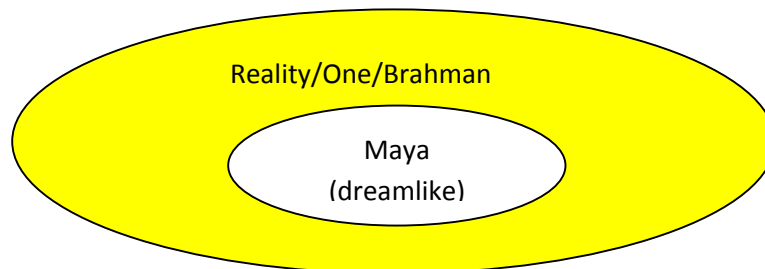
Action —————> reacts onto oneself

Choice —————> identity (sculptor)

No appeal to bad luck. Total individual responsibility for your lot.

Moksha – total release – eventually everyone gets there because one tires of the fickle modes of happiness.

Maya – The world appears the way we see it, but that is not the way it really is.



The word **maya** – same root as magic – tricky – the trick lies in the way the material world and its multiplicity pass themselves off as being independently real. Maya is seductive – traps us in it, postponing our wish to journey on.

Reality – undifferentiated Brahman throughout.