

Today's Lecture

- Administrative stuff
- *The Bhagavad Gita: Subsequent chapters*

Administrative stuff

- You have your topics for the second assignment.
- Remember that, this time around, I will not look at drafts in the week of the assignment deadline.
- I will return your graded assignments sometime *next* week.
- I will not return them to you *unless* you have submitted your assignment text to Turnitin.com (**Course ID: 1083846; Course password: dukkha**).
- Also, can Oriel Thomson come and see me after class (or in office hours)?

The Bhagavad Gita: Subsequent chapters

- There are three topics raised in Chapters Three through Twelve that I want to cover before moving on from the *Gita*: (i) The *trimarga*, (ii) *guna*-nature, and (iii) the ideal moral agent.
- Krishna proffers at least three Paths or Ways to achieve *moksha* (or liberation from *samsara*).
- Do remember that these are three Paths or Ways to go beyond samsaric existence, rather than merely three Paths or Ways to a better rebirth (Koller, *Asian Philosophies*, p.46).
- This being said, a better rebirth is assured as one ‘matures’ in one, or more, of the Paths.

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- *Jnanayoga* or *Jnanamarga* is the *Yoga* or Path of Knowledge. The knowledge spoken of in the name of this Path is Supreme Knowledge, or (direct, unobstructed) knowledge of *Atman/Brahman*.
- The primary emphasis in this Path is on a direct perception of, or (better yet) a realization of one's identity with, *Atman*.
- One prepares oneself for this realization through moral discipline, meditation and scriptural studies.
- For passages in the *Gita* pertaining to this Path see 3:17; 6:4-7, 9; 6:20-22, 28-29 on your class handout.

- *Bhaktiyoga* or *Bhaktimarga* is the *Yoga* or Path of (Loving) Devotion. The (loving) devotion spoken of in the name of this Path is directed towards Brahman as represented in one of the many Hindu Deities.
- In saying this, the primary emphasis in the *Gita* is on Vaishnavism, or the worship of Lord Vishnu as manifest in His *avatar* Lord Krishna. As such, this text has a sectarian ‘flavor’ to it.
- A practitioner of *Bhaktimarga* seeks union with the Divine. She or he pursues this through moral discipline and various devotional practices (e.g. prayer, meditation on the Divine, *puja* (or worship), pilgrimages and so on).
- For passages in the *Gita* pertaining to this Path see 4:9-11; 4:23-24; 5:23-26, 29; 6:27, 30-31; 7:24-25, 28-30; 8:19-22 on your class handout.

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- *Karmayoga* or *Karmamarga* is the *Yoga* or Path of Action. The action spoken of in the name of this Path is desireless. Alternatively, the action in question is that which arises from one committed to letting go of the possessive mine, or ‘I’, and, in so doing, acts for action’s sake.
- The primary emphasis in this Path is on the successful abandonment of egocentricism through moral discipline and selfless adherence to dharma (including *varnashramadharmā*). (*Varnashramadharmā* is the *dharma* pertaining to *varna* [or class] and *ashrama* [or stage of life]. More on this to come.)
- For passages in the *Gita* pertaining to this Path see 3:7-9; 3:25; 3:35; 4:18-22; 5:5-9 on your class handout.

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- Several things are worth noting about these Paths to *moksha*.
- (1) They are not mutually exclusive. Many contemporary Hindus engage in practices connected to all three. This is not merely a willingness to overlook incompatibilities in the Paths. (i) As we have seen from Chapter Two, *Karmayoga* quite quickly leads to *Jnanayoga*. (ii) What's more, there is not much in the difference between *Jnanayoga* and *Bhaktiyoga* (each, ultimately, promotes concentrated focus and meditation on, and (eventually) identification with, *Brahman*). Admittedly the focus of practice in *Jnanayoga* is much more abstract than in *Bhaktiyoga*.

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- (2) *Bhaktiyoga* is open to all Hindus, while *Jnanayoga* has been *traditionally* restricted to those of the twice born classes (either *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya* or *Vaishya*), and generally the twice born men, who enter the life stages of Forest Dweller or Recluse. In practicing *Bhakti* there are no restrictions *per se* due to class, caste or gender ... though there are common restrictions on who can enter Temple, and there are general caste or *stridharma* restrictions that *in fact* impact on the devotional practices of the lower castes and women, respectively.

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- (3) Those who lack caste, due to loss of caste or being born to parents who were themselves not born to parents of caste, can practice *Bhaktiyoga*, though, given the prominence of *varnashramadharm*a in the practice of *Karmayoga*, it is very difficult for these individuals to commit to *Karmayoga* properly construed.
- (Remember that *varnashramadharm*a is the *dharma* pertaining to *varna* [or class] and *ashrama* [or stage of life]. More on this to come.)

- As Koller's mentions, these Paths are designed to lead us away from attachment to our empirical (or *guna*) self, and in so doing, lead us to *moksha* (see Koller, *Asian Philosophies*, p.46).
- Koller's point, which mentions the *guna*-self, nicely leads us into a discussion of *guna*-nature. What, after all, are the *gunas*?
- The *gunas* mentioned in the *Gita*, and by Koller, are the basic constituents of matter (see Koller, *Asian Philosophies*, p.46). We will run into a more detailed treatment of *guna*-nature in our discussion of *Samkhya*. For now remember that *all* matter is fundamentally constituted by *gunas*.
- So the *guna*-self is the empirical or material self, that is you as you look at yourself in the mirror, or touch yourself, or even introspect about your desires, beliefs and preferences.