

Traditionalist vs Anti-traditionalist: a conversation (May 2022)

Traditionalist (forwards):

Quote

Ten Things a Hindu can do While using English Language: - written by Francois Gautier (check his Facebook page. He knows more Hinduism than many of us) # 01.

Please stop using the term "God fearing" - Hindus never ever fear God. For us, God is everywhere and we are also part of God. God is not a separate entity to fear. It is integral.

...

Unquote

Anti-traditionalist:

Regarding #01, traditional Hinduism has a much worse culture of fear than Christianity or Islam. Several kinds of narakas, too many do-s and don't-s, very high risk of compromising some technical and complicated rule, stories full of Gods acting weirdly suggesting that they won't listen to reason etc. It is true though that in modern RSS-type Hinduism or modern Guru Hinduism, there aren't so much of those, and are likely less fear-inducing than Islam or Christianity.

Traditionalist:

Its not modern RSS-type or Guru Hinduism. You can call it Vedanta-oriented or philosophical because what he is saying is founded in the philosophy of the religion. You take out the philosophy, then yes you got that Garuda-purana waiting (even now) and it is going to scare "the hell out of you" (if that phrase is allowed). Its not like "do adharm, kill and loot, and nothing is going to happen and therefore no need to fear God".

Anti-traditionalist:

The "Vedanta-oriented or philosophical" does not deny the Garuda purana stuff. Not about killing or looting, but there is any number of harmless stuff traditional Hinduism forbids, like going out for a journey on particular days and so on.

Traditionalist:

Yes, that can be part of their religious views. It falls in the same category - cause and effect. It may be ridiculous to others. Perhaps you can argue better that traditional Hinduism invoked fear of adharma and put too many trivial things in the category of adharma. But it looks at God as detached karmaphaladaata, not someone to fear: you are held responsible for what you receive as phala, God cannot act wantonly or "jealously" etc. But you can approach Him personally through devotion and seek His grace as well - but that can be also regarded as karmaphala for your devotion.

Anti-traditionalist:

It is not about appearing ridiculous to others, it is about having to live amidst a fear of too many trivial things, which is just suffocating. In contrast, Abrahamics don't live in fear of the wanton-ness or jealousy of their God, because it is pretty easy to not worship other Gods. Judaism is hard indeed, but Christianity and Islam make things easy for believers. Hinduism is more like Judaism in this respect.

You yourself might have had a different opinion if you were subject to traditionalist dictatorialism. Remember that story of Sri Ramakrishna where one person who partook of a Shraddha was someone leading a cow to slaughter, and therefore the person who gave the Shraddha feast went straight to hell. Or remember the story of Kanchi Periyava where none less than a Raja-guru ends up stealing stuff from the king, for which someone else begins to be punished, simply because the food he ate from the royal court had, without the knowledge of the guru or the members of the court, being stolen.

Then one has people telling one that wasting one grain of rice leads to seven lifetimes of hunger (though these people still waste one grain of rice here and there, e.g., sticking to the bottom of a pan). Women having to stay within some confines throughout certain days. Randomly, some foods having to be kept away from some others. As I said, not going out on certain days. Having to look at Rahu kalam etc. The level of complication is incredible.

Again, it is not merely about the nuisance or triviality; it is about how the conformance is imposed by threatening horrible consequences, so that you constantly live in fear of horrible consequences. It defies any sense of reason or calculus, and begs the question: if someone as great as that Rajaguru, despite presumably doing everything perfectly, can even steal stuff, can normal people aspire to any virtue in these matters at all? Clearly, Islam and Christianity don't

even begin to compare. I am not sure, but probably even Judaism, while it imposes several restrictions, don't keep prescribing lists horrible consequences for the transgressions involved.

So I repeat, the reason why your own life is quite normal and tolerable is probably that traditionalists have very badly lost out on many aspects.

Traditionalist:

[Suppose] a purohit partook some food at a house in which he did puja (or some religious activity), then had a bout of diarrhea and dysentery and died three days later. Perhaps he died for no other reason than that the host did not cook properly or knowingly or unknowingly added rotting food in the mix to save. Whatever - but he was caught in the mix. Would you say "Fie upon the old lady who warned of such a calamity would happen if the food is not cooked this way or that?"

(suppose) [a person] last year goes to a random place, takes off his mask for a bit, comes back home, gets Covid, dies a month later. The Rules and dictates are to stay 6 ft away from everyone, avoid crowded places and wear mask all the time. Even then there is fear always messaged of dire possibilities. How authoritarian! He disobeyed and died. How unfair! Those rules would have looked ridiculous before Covid and for many they look unnecessary now. And yet there are dictator doctors still warning, still insisting on vaccines and boosters, striking fear of 'horrible consequences' in the hearts of the people wanting tolerable lives. In fact many resented and revolted even in the height of the pandemic, and many among them supposedly died then. And there are many who even today religiously follow the Covid rules of 2020-2021, and suffer the intolerable life. Boo and Hoo.

The level of do-and-don't complication increases as the complications of life increase and people don't know how to contain them easily. There could have been valid reason for many of them, cultural and practical at the time, that got interwoven in the religious ethos and mixed with the authentic readings of religion. They may acquire status of dharma. The traditionalists may [even now] assert that [many] such 'traditional dharma' should be followed, or else there can be this or that consequence. That's like the people who even today insist masks must be worn everywhere public, "or else..." And you know what, that "or else" can occasionally justify itself but rarely enough to not be taken that seriously. Not following their food-rules may cause some health problem, but then an over-the-counter drug fixes the upset stomach. So, why bother and fuss; "throw away that threat-based rule - it is authoritarian!" says the modernist.

Now this criticism is of course based on the non-traditional view that the traditionalist is wrong in what he claims is dharma or the consequences of not following it. It is the analysis of someone who is not part of that traditional religion mentally but finds himself entangled in the traditional society or family and having to deal with their religious ideas that he does not (or wants not to) believe are true. He maybe doesn't know with conviction what is true or not; but he wants freedom from guilt and fear to follow a more-wanton less-traditional life without being taken to task by the society around him that believes in these 'crazy' injunctions. And therefore he looks at the so-called traditionalist living the "normal and tolerable" life and says it is the lack of traditionalism that has given this happiness.

But then, the traditionalist IF he is really a traditionalist believes (or aligns to the belief) that what he claims is dharma is indeed so. That is his religion and faith, or his acceptance of traditional dharma; and living upto that dharma also becomes his sadhana. Yes, he may not do sandhayavandam; but he thinks it should be done "or else..." That he is failing is not a badge of tolerability for life. It is a failure and he must make effort to get out of it. In his mind, that is "parameshvara-preethyartham". Conforming with svadharma is the way to resolving his past karma and creating the better path. So, he regards all the rules and restrictions as part of his pravritti marga - even if such rules seem "evil" to those who are mentally outside that religion.

And he may even think that women should stay in doors on certain days - actually the traditional woman herself would think so; that shudras should not learn vedas; brahmanas should not make money through vaishya karya (ok, I mean the really traditionalists), and so on. That is religion to him, not merely a social welfare argument. The way to righteous order is through abidance in dharma. The non-traditionalist sees all this in a modern social sense for he does not consider them dharma. So we will have an irresolvable difference in opinion here.

The so-called traditionalist finds his non-traditional life normal either because he has not shraddha in the traditional injunctions he preaches, or because the non-traditionalist are doing everything possible to suffocate him out of his religion and make it difficult to follow it freely.

Anti-traditionalist:

If you think there is any comparison between looking at Rahu kalam or the auspiciousness of the day for going out and wearing masks in public, there is nothing I can say. Only, you should probably work on your honesty.

Also think of this: did all these rules result in higher survival rates in India as compared to other countries which did not torture its people nearly as much?

Traditionalist:

Again an argument of one outside the tradition commenting on someone in the tradition. It amazes me how you insist on the traditionalist de-legitimizing his own religion. [...] followed Rahu kalam more diligently than you ever will wear the mask. It is a matter of faith. And while you think mask is a bigger thing, there were plenty of people who you think foolish who were giving every argument to not wear it. If a traditionalist endeavours to follow their religion diligently, the Ishvara will give the right phala; it has nothing to do with your assessment on survival rates. The goal is something else - again for the traditionalist.

Anti-traditionalist:

There is no delegitimization. Just an observation that to the nontraditionalist who sees traditionalism for what it is, traditionalism is a fear-based regime, much more so than Islam or Christianity. Religions which realize that they need to compete in a market place will replace the traditionalists and inherit the earth. The traditionalists can keep thinking, though, that Ishvara will take an avatAra and keep bailing them out.

I am not someone to force masks on others, but the comparison with Rahu kalam is [BS]. There is enough medical understanding to suggest that masks \*can\* \*possibly\* prevent transmission of airborne viral diseases.

Traditionalist:

Let me try again: Its [BS] to *you*. You forget that you are not in his religion. He is quite comfortable in his set of "evidence" if he needed them.

Your observation is false. Traditionalism is God based, dharma based and moksha based. That is the basis of fearlessness. The non-traditionalist mentality cannot understand it since his be-all and end-all is body.

Anti-traditionalist:

Well whatever you say works for those traditionalists who are strong enough that God, dharma and moksha suffice to get rid of or at least substantially alleviate their fears such as in that Rajaguru story. You think there are enough of such people. Fine. Let it be.

Traditionalist:

Stop interfering and obstructing, they will come out of the woods. The social/ political gang-up on traditionalists and brahmins even while claiming Islam and Christianity are so much better is an artificial choke on traditionalism. Perhaps it will last long enough to cripple all possibility of redemption, and non-traditionalists can claim success in their ignorance. But the traditionalists so long as it does not happen will bide for time and for the opening from Ishvara. They will hopefully survive in needed pockets in a rigorous and purer form. And what were accretions that are not necessarily dharma (like dowry custom as per paramacharya) may not revive and yet many other aspects that are legit will. This is not a hope for traditional orthodox Hinduism to become all of Hinduism or Indian religion, but that the legitimacy and freedom to practice religion openly and without interference, once it is equally available for the traditionalist as for anyone else, will lead to "enough of such people" to come back to the fore and reignite the dharmic flame. (ideally)

Anti-traditionalist:

Do you observe Rahukalam? Do you observe all those rules about separating one kind of food items from others? ...

Traditionalist:

No, not rahukalam.... I am not follower of many things - if you are making a point out of it. I get in and fall back from some basic things unless it is already embedded in my psyche - like not sipping, etc. and of course some deliberated things like dress, vibuthi etc. ... with regard to something like rahu kalam, I don't think it is associated with svadharma or Nitya karma. It is said to have a negative effect so far as laukika goals are concerned, but is not regarded as a failure in dharma if broken. So within traditionalism, what is linked to dharma should take precedence, and this may include such things as madi-Achara which a modernist

may interpret as practical, if the traditionalist interprets as a dharmakarya. If I [am to] think of ekadasi as something to do, the tradition has to present its knowledge as a traditional *dharm*a that I am supposed to follow as duty, independent of body-mind rewards here. Then it gets in my to-do list. Otherwise even if traditional, it loses the factor of spiritual-necessity in my quest for moksha should I be willing to bear the risk of physical or laukika consequences.

Anti-traditionalist:

But if rahukalam has laukika consequences, you have a duty to not get into it, to not disadvantage those who depend on you. Similarly, you will have to prevent your loved ones from disregarding it... you probably do skip a lot of AchArams, e.g., keeping rice near other stuff? You yourself said you skip a lot of AchArams. If these are inconvenient even for you, imagine the case of someone who is much less capable.

Traditionalist:

That notion of duty the tradition via Acharya Shastra etc. has to insist on, not simply anyone's logic. Yes if others are involved, I may very well follow it for them if they believe it matters sufficiently. Not so much for myself. It's like taking that sweet. You may even believe it can have a bad effect but not necessarily that you will get a heart attack at once. So you weigh the consequences and take a decision; but if you don't want to tempt someone else who has a serious heart condition, you refrain on their behalf. But with the chicken nugget it may be more dharma than merely laukika and social considerations.

For other acharams, yes inconvenient but in part due to many things having changed, including sense of dharma. Most of us view everything through a nastika lens and hence little things become a battle. Its mental. Sandhyavandanam should not appear this difficult for most (?) Brahmins; it should be like brushing the teeth or taking a bath. The traditional religion requires seeing its dharma as part of pravritti Marga for the greater goal and that is the primary work to do. The level of fear and "suffering", bondage and servility people go through for getting money and social status etc. would dwarf the inconveniences and fear that they think they suffer from traditional religion. Only they have accepted the ultimate laukika purpose as goal and hence will follow its demands to the T. Sandhyavandanam will be suffocating them while getting off to work at 6 AM and slogging for 10 hours there is all worth it. Not blaming them but the irony is apparent.