Swami Atmarupananda
Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society of Greater Houston

Can Religion be Open, Universal, and Scientific?

12-1pm, October 22, 2019
Meadow Lark, Memorial Union

Abstract: Historically religions have most often closed themselves to the unconverted, claimed exclusive possession of the truth, and made claims of revelation that cannot be tested. That is, salvation is for members in good standing only; truth is limited to what is contained within a particular holy book plus what can be inferred from the book; and truth is revealed and hence not to be fundamentally questioned. These three characteristics of religion have weakened its credibility in the face of science, which doesn’t require conversion, just education; whose interest is in the universal principles governing the universe, not a revealed book; and whose discoveries are testable by anyone anywhere with the requisite training. That’s a powerful claim.

At the same time, many feel that religion contains something of immense value to humanity. Does it really? If so, what? And is it possible for religion to be open to all, universal in its embrace, and scientific in its teachings? If it can, will it still mean anything profound, or will it be reduced to meaningless platitudes and good wishes? The answer is critical for the survival of religion and science both, and for the survival of humanity.

Bio: Born in America, Swami Atmarupananda discovered the Vedanta tradition of Hinduism while studying as an exchange student in Sweden, and developed what has become a lifelong fascination and dedication. He joined the Chicago branch of the Ramakrishna Order of India as a monk in 1969 at the age of nineteen, was initiated by the tenth President of the Ramakrishna Order, Swami Vireswarananda, and subsequently spent many years in India engaged in monastic, scholarly, and spiritual training. Altogether he has spent almost fourteen years in India, and thirty-six years working for the Order in America.

He has been engaged in various pioneering works, including the founding of centers in San Diego, the Vivekananda Retreat in upstate New York, and the Vedanta work in Puerto Rico. For many years he has traveled to various countries of the world to speak, to give retreats both in English and in Spanish, to engage in inter-spiritual dialog, and to participate in conferences dedicated to finding a new, spiritual foundation for economic and social development. From 2012 till the end of 2017 he was posted to the Headquarters of the Order near Kolkata, India, to edit a new edition of the 10-volume Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda. In December 2017 he was sent to be the resident minister of the Vedanta Society of Greater Houston, where he now resides.

If you are interested in giving a seminar, then please contact Syed Ahmed at syed.ahmad@ndsu.edu or Dennis Cooley at dennis.cooley@ndsu.edu.