**Q&A Library Catagorization Topics**

1. Adhytama Vidya (Embodied Knowing)
2. Inner Sciences
3. Empirical Sciences
4. First Person Scientific Empiricism
5. A-historical methods of dharmic traditions
6. Breaking India Forces
7. Afro-Dalit Project
8. Atrocity Literature
9. Contributions of Indian Civilization
10. Criticism of Western Academia
11. RISA Lila
12. Wendy’s Children
13. Dharmic Freedom / Dharmic Pluralism
14. Freedom from History
15. Freedom from Institutional Authority
16. Freedom to Choose Personal Path (Svadharma)
17. Freedom of Choice of Deity (Ishta-Devata)
18. Difference Anxiety
19. Sepoy
20. Digestion
21. Tiger – Deer Metaphor
22. History-centrism
23. Exclusivity
24. Unique Revelation
25. India in the Encounter of Civilizations: China, Islam, and the West
26. Integral Unity of Dharmic Traditions
27. Sapekha Dharma
28. Sapekshata
29. Nirapekshata
30. Bandhuta / Bandhu
31. Indra’s Net
32. Mutual Respect
33. Mutual Respect is not Tolerance
34. Need for Hindu Identity
35. Neo Hinduism
36. Open Architecture (of Hinduism)
37. Order vs. Chaos
38. Dharmic Forest and Judeo-Christian Desert
39. Western Joker and Indian Clown
40. Poisen Pill / Porcupine Defense
41. Purva-Paksha
42. Reversing the Gaze
43. Sameness Myth
44. Sanskrit
45. Mantra Power
46. Nontranslatable Catagories
47. Science & Indian Traditions
48. Swami Vivekananda’s Influence on Western Thought
49. Synthetic Unity of the West
50. Templeton Project to Re-invent the West
51. Science vs. Religion Tension
52. U-Turn Theory

**Definition of Select Topics**

**Cultural Digestion**

Malhotra warns of aggressive aspects of Abrahamic religions whose expansionist drive (lack of mutual respect) pushes to consume other competing systems. Malhotra uses (["The Importance of Debating Religious Differences"](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rajiv-malhotra/the-importance-of-debatin_b_861789.html). <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rajiv-malhotra/the-importance-of-debatin_b_861789.html>.) the term "digestion" to describe the widespread dismantling, rearrangement and assimilation of a less powerful civilization into a dominant one. Like the food consumed by a host: what is useful gets assimilated into the host while what does not fit the host's structure gets eliminated as waste. The West superimposes its concepts, aesthetics, language, paradigms, historical template and philosophy, positioning these as universal. The corresponding elements of the digested civilization get domesticated into the West, ceasing to exist in their own right. The result is that the consumed tradition, similar to the food, ceases to exist whereas the host gets strengthened. In harvesting the fruits of other civilizations, the West has often destroyed their roots, thereby killing their ability to produce more bountiful harvests. Native Americans and European pagans are among numerous examples of such previous digestions into the modern West.

**History Centrism**

For followers of history-centric (Abrahamic) religions, truth-claims based on history are more significant than the scriptural message itself. History-centric dogma such as original sin and resurrection become critical beliefs and no compromise can be made on their acceptance. This explains the centrality of Nicene creed to all major Christian denominations. Followers of history-centric religions believe that the God revealed His message through a special prophet and that the message is secured in scriptures. This special access to God is available only to these intermediaries or prophets and not to any other human beings (["Problematizing God's Interventions In History"](http://creative.sulekha.com/problematizing-god-s-interventions-in-history_103442_blog). <http://creative.sulekha.com/problematizing-god-s-interventions-in-history_103442_blog>.).

Dharma traditions do not hold history central to their faith. Gautama Buddha emphasized that his enlightenment was merely a discovery of a reality that is always there. He was not bringing any new covenants from any God. The history of the Buddha is not necessary for Buddhist principles to work. In fact, Buddha stated that he was neither the first nor the last person to have achieved the state of enlightenment. He also asserted that he was not God nor sent by any God as a prophet, and whatever he discovered was available to every human to discover for himself. This makes Buddhism not History-Centric.

Malhotra explains how history-centrism or lack of it has implications for religious absolutist exclusivity vs. flexible pluralism (["Dharma and the new Pope"](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rajiv-malhotra/dharma-and-the-new-pope_b_2755683.html). <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rajiv-malhotra/dharma-and-the-new-pope_b_2755683.html>.): "Abrahamic religions to claim that we can resolve the human condition only by following the lineage of prophets arising from the Middle East. All other teachings and practices are required to get reconciled with this special and peculiar history. By contrast, the dharmic traditions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism -- do not rely on history in the same absolutist and exclusive way. This dharmic flexibility has made a fundamental pluralism possible which cannot occur within the constraints of history centrism, at least as understood so far."

**Integral vs. Synthetic Unity**

Both Western and Dharmic civilizations have cherished unity as an ideal, but with a different emphasis. Here, Malhotra posits a crucial distinction between what he considers a "synthetic unity" that gave rise to a static intellectualistic Worldview in the West positioning itself as the Universal and an "integrative unity" that gave rise to a dynamically oriented Worldview based on Dharma.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajiv_Malhotra#cite_note-Tilak-10) While the former is characterized by a "top-down" essentialism embracing everything a priori, the latter is a "bottom-up" approach acknowledging the dependent co-origination of alternative views of the human and the divine, the body and the mind, and the self and society

**Order vs. Chaos**

Dharma philosophical systems are highly systematized in their approach to understanding ultimate reality and in carefully addressing what one can know through various means of knowledge. However, this rigor does not restrict their freedom in being comfortable with social organization. Indians exhibit remarkable openness to self-organization and decentralization. Malhotra explains the basis for this openness (["Order, chaos and creation"](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/Order-chaos-and-creation/articleshow/10552328.cms). <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/Order-chaos-and-creation/articleshow/10552328.cms>.): "Hinduism weaves multiple narratives around the central motif of cooperative rivalry between order (personified as devas) and chaos (personified as asuras). A key myth shared by all the dharma traditions — the 'churning of the milky ocean,' or 'samudra-manthan' — shows the eternal struggle between two poles. The milky ocean is the ocean of consciousness and creativity, which is to be churned in order to obtain amrita, or the nectar of eternal life."

**Purva-Paksha**

Ancient Indian schools of thought conducted debate in the tradition of Purva-Puksha, a method whereby the debater is first required to master and demonstrate an understanding of the opponent’s position before articulating his own perspective and rebuttal. Malhotra champions the revival of this practice in interfaith discussions, explaining that such a technique would allow participants to engage on equal terms, move beyond superficial exchanges, and result in sharper, more fruitful exchange of ideas.

<http://beingdifferentbook.com/iit-mumbai-april-1-2013-qa-7/>

**Mutual Respect**

An approach to religious differences that is superior to, and moves beyond ‘tolerance’. Malhotra explains that in a personal relationship, one would never accept tolerance, but would demand respect. The expectation should be no less among religious communities. Tolerance implies inferiority, whereas mutual respect equalizes religious difference. Shifting the paradigm from tolerance to mutual respect creates an environment for followers of non-Abrahamic faiths to be equal partners at the table.

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rajiv-malhotra/religious-difference-with-mutual-respect_b_1165589.html>

**U-Turn Theory**

Western appropriation of Indic ideas and knowledge systems has a long history. Malhotra’s pioneering U-Turn Theory explains that the appropriation is done in several stages. In the first stage, the Westerner is extremely respectful of the guru or tradition and acquires the knowledge as a sincere disciple. Once the knowledge transfer is complete, the former disciple removes all traces of the original source, repackages the ideas as his own thought, and may even proceed to denigrate the source tradition. In the final stage, the ideas are exported back to India by the former disciple and/or his followers for consumption. Malhotra cites numerous examples to support this theory, dating from the erasure of Upanishadic and Vijnanada Buddhist influences on Plotinus to the modern day reimportation of yoga into India.

<http://beingdifferentbook.com/iit-mumbai-april-1-2013/>

<http://beingdifferentbook.com/u-turn-theory-lady-sri-ram/>

**Nontranslatable Sanskrit**

Malhotra identifies various non-translatables in Sanskrit that have been mapped into Abrahamic religious concepts. These mis-translations then are used to draw sameness arguments or to denounce Hinduism. Malhotra explains (["'Holy Spirit' is not the same as 'Shakti' or 'Kundalini'"](http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Hinduism/Articles/Holy-Spirit-is-not-the-same-as-Shakti-or-Kundalini.aspx?p=1). <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Hinduism/Articles/Holy-Spirit-is-not-the-same-as-Shakti-or-Kundalini.aspx?p=1>.): "In the fashionable search for sameness in all religions, Holy Spirit in Christianity is often equated with Shakti or kundalini in Hinduism. However, these terms represent different, even incompatible cosmologies. Christianity assumes an inherent dualism between God and creation. This necessitates historical revelations along with prophets, priests and institutions to bring us the truth. But Shakti, being all-pervading, obviates dependence on these; its experience can be discovered by going within through yoga."

**India in the Encounter of Civilizations: Islam, China & the West**

One of Malhotra’s key research interests is the competition of civilizations in a world of increasingly scarce resources, and what role India will play in this encounter. Malhotra posits that three civilizations, each with its own distinct history, sense of purpose, identity and grand narrative are competing for leadership on the global stage: China, Pan-Islam, and the West. He proposes three scenarios under which India is likely to participate. In the first, India’s subnation identities become aligned with these external civilizations on religious and ideological grounds, and India’s cohesion as a nation state is eroded. In the second scenario India’s culture spreads globally as pop culture but the Indian nation-state disappears. In the third, India emerges as a nation-state with its culture intact and helps the world. <http://indianrealist.wordpress.com/2009/03/16/rajiv-malhotra-on-where-is-india-in-the-encounter-of-civilisations/>

**A Business Model of Religion**

Malhotra uses free market economic principles to analyze religion, comparing religious conversion to battle for market share, unproven missionary claims to unfair marketing practices, and religious exclusivity to proprietary brands. The underlying argument is that much of the religion field already operates like a business and the use of a market model works on many levels, yielding fresh insights on ways to create fair competition and safeguard consumer/believer rights.

<http://creative.sulekha.com/a-business-model-of-religion-1_103227_blog>

<http://www.rajivmalhotra.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=27&catid=22:dialog-of-civilizations&Itemid=26>

**The Usage & Importance of Categories**

Malhotra argues that attempts to understand Indian thought from the perspective of Western catagories, which insist on mutually exclusive frameworks and polar opposites, are limiting and distorting. In constrast, dharmic catagories offer an alternative and more natural framework to examine Indic traditions and identities.

1. **Advocacy & Original Research**

**Swami Vivekananda’s Influence on Western Thought**

Over a century ago Swami Vivekananda, at the behest of his guru Ramakrishna, visited America to participate in Chicago’s Parliament of Religions and went on to deliver lectures throughout the country introducing to American audiences concepts such as Vedanta and Raja Yoga. Since that original visit, Swamiji’s ideas have continued to exist in the West in various manifestations, some acknowledged and some unknown. Malhotra’s research on Swami Vivekananda traces the trajectories of the Swami’s ideas across the generations, examines how they shaped 20th century Western thought, and why much of his influence remains unacknowledged and uncredited.

<http://beingdifferentbook.com/media/Vivekananda's%20Ideas%20-%20Two%20Revolutions%20in%20Western%20Thought.pdf>

**Contributions of Indian Civilization**

Indian knowledge systems, encompassing a variety of subjects ranging from science and medicine to architecture and textiles, represent an unbroken transmission of knowledge over millennia. They offer locally developed solutions to uniquely local problems, support a sustainable lifestyle and are ecofriendly. Unfortunately, modernization and western models of progress have categorized these knowledge systems into artificial categories of science, folklore, superstition,etc. and devalued much of this knowledge. In seeking to catalogue India’s scientific heritage and cultural legacy, Malhotra’s project enables the preservation and revival of these practices.

<http://www.rajivmalhotra.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22&catid=20:american-education-reform&Itemid=26>

**Science & Indian Traditions**

Western science relies exclusively on models that generate empirical data and calculate predictive outcomes to test hypotheses. In contrast Indian sciences are heuristic based, and while they also generate empirical evidence and reproducible results, they are resistant to theoretical frameworks and model based forecasting. The result is a discrepancy between empiricity and modeling. Rajiv Malhotra, through his nonprofit Infinity Foundation, supports and oversees projects that collect empirical and physical data generated by Indian Sciences with a goal to subject that evidence to testing by statistical methods.

The research is conducted in two spaces: the first where texts exist describing the science, and the second where empirical and physical evidence exists in the absence of supporting textual evidence. Results will be published in a twenty volume collection, History of Indian Science and Technology (HIST). Currently, eight of the twenty volumes are complete, with four more in the pipeline.

<http://beingdifferentbook.com/jnu-keynote-address/>

<http://www.indianscience.org/>

**The Need for Hindu Identity**

Malhotra explores the issue of Hindu Identiy by posing three questions. 1. Is there a need for Hindu Identity? 2. What is the Hindu Identity? 3. What does it mean to be a Hindu? He explains that Hindus have an identity rooted in mutual respect which establishes a moral high ground and provides a positive example for others to follow. He also clarifies that “Hindu-American” is not a contradiction as hyphenated identities are accepted in a pluralistic America.

<http://beingdifferentbook.com/arsha-vidya/>

<http://beingdifferentbook.com/debating-identity-with-indian-american-youth/>

**Criticism of American Academia**

Malhotra has vigorously challenged the study of Hinduism in the Academy, calling it an extension of the colonialist mindset and questioning its use of Western universalist paradigms, intellectually weak frameworks, and biased conclusions. He argues “theories used in research are entirely Western, privileging an embedded worldview” and “whoever controls the theories controls the discourse.” These critiques led to debates with well-known scholars such as Wendy Doniger, Jeffery Kripal, and Vijay Prasad, who defended the position of the Academy and the validity of its analysis.