

## VEV738: Special Module on Civilization-II

Course Sub-title: Inner Journey to Self-Discovery

### Course Plan

#### Preamble:

The world has witnessed great advances in science and technology over the past two centuries and along with it, the unavoidable spread of materialism. Assisted by scientific achievements, and the insatiable needs of humans and human enterprises, the materialism engine was employed unscrupulously to exploit natural resources creating wasteland where there was forest, polluting the earth and the air, and has brought global warming to the tipping point. This indiscriminate exploitation has awakened many to the “cry from within” to make a change. In the beginning there were relatively few who responded but through the decades this number has been growing exponentially. The young and old from societies of different countries and ethnicities are questioning the meaninglessness of the 9-5 rat race, earning large salaries at the cost of personal health, family and relationships. More and more of the younger generation are eager to know and strive to find a higher purpose for their lives and how they can make a meaningful contribution to society.

The purpose of this course is to pick one of the threads of self-inquiry that is based on the experiences of spiritually enlightened people and methods of introspections and put the individual on the path of self-discovery. The course will touch upon spiritual experiences (altered states of consciousness) of saints and sages, their way of living, their teachings and practices. This will be followed by the presentation and discussion of elements from the *upanishadic* method of self-inquiry, the direct method and how this method can be practised in daily life. Three primary methods of yoga - Karma yoga, Jnana yoga and Bhakti yoga - in the context of how they may be practiced in contemporary living will be presented. In particular, the topics in this area will be covered with a practical aspect: Karma yoga and service, Jnana yoga and contemplation, and Bhakti yoga and holiness in daily life. This course will include a practical component in which the practice of key asanas and basic meditation techniques will be taught.

#### Course Objectives:

At the end of the course, it is expected that the student would have:

- Acquired an understanding of how altered states of consciousness are related to the foundation of religion from experiential sojourns
- Gained knowledge to appreciate that altered states of consciousness can be systematically developed by following well defined principles of Raja Yoga and related disciplines
- Understood some method (s) of self-inquiry such as the direct method
- Learnt from the experiential knowledge of a master about techniques of Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti yoga and their application in day-to-day living
- Developed an experience-based understanding and appreciation of the vast potential that underlies this science and develop inquisitiveness to explore further

**Course Plan:**

S.No.	Topic	Theory (hours)	Practical (hours)
Module 1: Journey to self-discovery			
1	Experiences of altered states of consciousness by sages	1	
2	The origin of religion and the spiritual path	1	
3	Raja yoga and service to fellow men	1	
4	Jnana yoga and the search for truth	1	
5	Bhakti yoga and holiness in daily life	1	
6	Contemplation and the inner journey to self-discovery	1	
7.	Practices for self-renewal and discovery	1	
Module 2: Hands-on practical training			
7	The basic asanas for daily practice		1
8	Techniques for deeper meditation		1
8	Asana sessions - methods and precautions		4
9	Pranayama sessions - training in different methods, practice and precautions		4
10.	Asana, pranayama and guided meditations		4
	Total	7	14

Evaluation Components: This is a Pass/Fail course. To pass the course, 90% attendance is mandatory in the lecture component along with 75% in the practical component of this course.

**Reference Texts:**

- Raja yoga, Swami Vivekananda, Prabhat Prakashan, 2020.
- Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Swami Vivekananda, Fingerprint! Publishing , 2019.
- Wisdom of the Rishis: The Three Upanishads, Ishavasya, Kena and Mandukya, Sri. M, Magenta Press, 2012.
- Jewel in the Lotus - Deeper Aspects of Hinduism: Sri. M, Magenta Press, 2011.

**Course Instructor: Sri M**

A Padma Bhushan Awardee in 2019, Sri M is a spiritual guide, social reformer and educationist. He was born into a Muslim family on November 6, 1949 in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. From the young age itself he had the fortune of meeting numerous well-known saints, like Yogi Gopala Saami, Kaladi Mastan, Swami Abhedananda, Chempazhanti Swami, Swami Tapasyananda and Mai Ma etc. At nineteen he embarked on his journey to the Himalayas. In Badrinath he met his master, Maheshwarnath Babaji, who initiated him into the Nath tradition. He lived and travelled extensively through the Himalayas with his Master. His Master then encouraged him to return to the plains. He met saints from all religions including NeemKaroli Baba, LaxmanJoo and J.Krishnamurti. In 1998, he started his teachings, eventually leading to formation of the Satsang Foundation.

Though Sri M's parampara is kriya yoga, he believes that this may not suit all aspirants. Conversant with teachings of most major religions, Sri M argues to 'go to the core, theories are of no use'. In 2011, Sri M published his memoir "Apprenticed to a Himalayan Master – A Yogi's Autobiography", which became an instant bestseller. In 2019, Sri M was conferred with the Padma Bhushan, one of India's highest civilian Awards for the distinguished service of high order in the field of Spirituality. Over the years, his initiatives include: The Satsang Vidyalaya – providing free, high-quality, multilingual education to rural children from the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh. Chanda Satsang Vidyalaya – Located in Lathira, Uttar PradeshNagar, the Chanda Satsang Vidyalaya has a unique and innovative approach to education. The Peepal Grove School – a co-educational, residential school committed to providing an environment conducive to the in-depth exploration of knowledge. Satsang Swasthya Kendra – to provide affordable yet qualitative preventive and curative health care to the people through holistic and comprehensive treatments. Manav Ekta Mission – for promoting inter-faith harmony and transcending religious, racial, geographical, cultural and ideological differences. Sarva Dharma Kendra – as a spiritual retreat to facilitate dialogue between religions and to serve as an experiment for mankind realising the essential unity of all religions. Walk of Hope – A 15 month long padayatra from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, led by Sri M, spanning 7500 kms across 11 states of India in 2015-16 for peace, harmony and tolerance.