

The True Call

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Part 1 of the Talk by Dr. Zakir Naik

Alhamdulillah, wa salaathu wa salaam ala rasoolillah wa ala ali wa sahabihi wa ajmain, amma baad. A uzu bil-lahi minas shayta nir-rajeem, Bismillah hirrahmanirraheem, Qul ya ahla alkitabii taAAalawila kalimatin sawa-in baynana wabaynakum allanaAAabuda illa Allaha wala nushrika bihishayan wala yattakhitha baAADunabaAADan arbaban min dooni Allahi fa-intawallaw faqooloo ishhadoo bi-anna muslimoona. Qala rabbi ishrah lee sadree, Wayassir lee amree, Waohlul AAuqdatan min lisanee, Yafqahoo qawlee. My respected Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, my respected elders and my dear brothers and sisters, I welcome all of you with the Islamic greetings Asalaam ualaikum wa rahmathullahi wa barakathu (May peace, mercy and blessings of Allah, Almighty God be on all of you).

The topic of this evening's inter-religious dialogue is the concept of God in Hinduism and Islam in the light of the sacred scriptures. I started my talk by quoting a Verse from the glorious Qur'an from Surah Al-Imraan Chapter #3 Verse #64 which says : Qul ya ahla alkitabii (say oh people of the Book) taAAalawila kalimatin sawa-in baynana wabaynakum (come to common terms as in us and you) which is the first term? allanaAAabuda illa Allaha (that you worship none but Allah, Almighty God) wala nushrika bihishayan (that we associate no partners with him) wala yattakhitha baAADunabaAADan arbaban min dooni Allahi (that we erect not among ourselves Lords and Patrons other than Allah) fa-intawallaw (if they turn back) faqooloo ishhadoo (say you bear witness) bi-anna muslimoona (that we are Muslims bowing our will to Allah Almighty God). This Verse of the glorious Qur'an though it particularly speaks to the ahle kithaab, the Jews and Christians, it is meant for all different types of people, it says "taAAalawila kalimatin sawa-in baynana wabaynakum." (come to common terms as with us and you) which is the first term? allanaAAabuda illa Allaha (that you worship none but God Almighty) wala nushrika bihishayan (that we associate no partners with him). It is not appropriate to try and understand a religion or to try and understand the concept of God in a religion, by observing the followers of that religion;

because many a times the followers of that religion, they themselves may not be aware about the religion or the concept of God in the religion; neither it is appropriate to observe or look at the traditions or the cultures of the followers of the religion because many of the cultures and traditions may not be part of the religion. The best and the most authentic way to understand any religion or the concept of God in a religion is to try and understand what the sacred scriptures have to speak about that religion or the concept of God in that religion. Before we discuss the concept of God in Hinduism and Islam in the light of the sacred scriptures, let us understand what is the meaning of the words Hinduism and Islam. The word Hindu has geographical significance and was used to describe the people living beyond the river Sindhu or people living in the land watered by river Indus. Most of the historians, they say, that this word Hindu was first used by the Arabs. Some historians say it was used by the Persians when they came to India through the north western passes of Himalaya. According to encyclopedia of religion and ethics, Volume #6, Reference #699, it says that the word Hindu was not found in any of the Indian literature before the advent of the Muslims to India. According to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, he writes in his Book "the discovery of India" on page #74 and #75 that the word Hindu can be earliest traced to a source a tantrik in 8th century and it was used initially to describe the people, it was never used to describe religion. Its connection with religion is of late occurrence according to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The word Hinduism is derived from the word Hindu. The word Hinduism was first used by the English writers in the 19th century to describe the multiplicity of faiths of the people of India. According to new Encyclopedia Britannica, Volume #20, Reference #581, it says the word Hinduism was first used by the British writers in the year 1830 to describe the multiplicity of the faiths of the people of India excluding the converted Christians. That is the reason today, majority of the Hindu scholars they say that the word Hinduism is a misnomer. The correct word should be Sanatan Dharm, the eternal religion or the Vedic Dharm, the religion of the Vedas. According to Swami Vivekananda, he says the word Hindu is a misnomer; the correct word should be a Vendantist, a person who follows the Vedas.

Let us understand what is the meaning of the word Islam. Islam comes from the root Arabic word salam, which means peace. It is also derived from the Arabic word silm,

which means to submit your will to Almighty God. In short, Islam means peace acquired by submitting your will to Almighty God and this word Islam occurs in several places in the Qur'an and the Sahih Hadith including in the Qur'an in Surah Al-Imraan, Chapter #3 Verse #19 and Surah Al-Imraan Chapter #3 Verse #85. Any person who acquires peace by submitting his will to Almighty God, to Allah, he is called as a Muslim and this word Muslim also occurs in several places in the Qur'an and the Sahih Hadith including in the Qur'an in Surah Al-Imraan Chapter #3 Verse #64 and Surah Fussilat Chapter #41 and Verse #33. Many people have misconception that Islam is a new religion, which came into existence 1400 years ago and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the founder of this religion. In fact, Islam is there since time immemorial. Since man set foot on the earth, and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not the founder of this religion but he is the last and final messenger sent by Almighty God, the last and final Prophet.

Let us first understand what are the sacred scriptures in these two great religions. In Hinduism, the sacred scriptures have been divided into 2 parts. The Shrutis and the Smritis. Shruti, in Sanskrit means that which is perceived, that which is understood, that which is revealed and the Shrutis are considered to be the word of God and they are more sacred than the Smritis. The Shrutis are further divided into 2 types, the Vedas and the Upanishads. Veda is derived from the Sanskrit word vid, which means knowledge par excellence, it also means sacred wisdom. Basically, there are 4 Vedas. This is the Rig-Veda, we have the Yajur-Veda, we have the Sama-Veda, and we have the Atharva-Veda. There are 4 Vedas but there are difference of opinion regarding how old are the Vedas. According to Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj, he says the Vedas are 1310 million years old, but the majority of the Hindu scholars they say the Vedas are approximately 4000 years old. There is difference of opinions regarding where did the Vedas come into existence the first time. There is also difference of opinion regarding who was the Rishi to whom the Veda was given the first time. In spite of these differences regarding the age of the Veda, the part in which it came first, to whom it was given; in spite of these differences, yet the Vedas are considered to be the most authentic of all the sacred scriptures of Hinduism, the most sacred amongst all the scriptures of Hinduism. If any other Hindu scripture contradicts the Vedas, the Vedas are supposed to be followed. The next in

the authority we have, are the Upanishads. These are the Upanishads. Upanishad is derived from the Sanskrit word, upa which means near, nee means down, shad means sit, "sitting down near." When the pupil sat down near the guru to acquire knowledge, it was called as Upanishad. It is also called as knowledge which removes ignorance. There are more than 200 Upanishads, but the Indian culture puts the figure of 108 and people have picked up and compiled Upanishad known as principal Upanishad. Radhakrishnan has picked up 18 Upanishads and written a Book "The principal Upanishads." Next type of the Hindu scriptures, we have are the Smritis. The word Smriti means to hear. It means to remember. It means memory. Smritis are less sacred than the Shrutis. They are not the word of Almighty God and they have been written by Rishis and by human beings. They contain the creation of the universe, how a lifestyle should be lead by a human being on an individual level, on a community level, on a society level. They are also referred as the Dharm Shastra. There are various types of Smritis. We have the Puranas. Puranas means ancient. Maharishi Vyas, he has compiled the Puranas into 80 voluminous parts. This is one of the Puranas known as The Bhavishya Purana. Then, we have the Itihas, the epics, there are two epics, the Ramayan and the Mahabharat. The Ramayan deals with, as most of the Indians know with the story of Sri Ram and the Mahabharat deals with the story it is a feud, a fight between the cousins, the Pandavas and the Kawrawas. It also deals with the story of Sri Krishna. These are the 2 great epics. Then, we have the Bhagwat Gita. Bhagwat Gita is part of Mahabharath, it has 18 Chapters of Mahabharath from the Bheeshma Parv Chapter #25 to Chapter #42. It is an advice given by Sri Krishna to Arjun in the battle field. It is the most popular and most widely read sacred scriptures amongst all the Hindu scriptures. Then, we have the Manusmriti and various others. This was in brief regarding the sacred scriptures of Hinduism; but the most sacred, most authentic amongst all the scriptures is the Veda. If anything contradicts the Vedas, we have to follow the Veda.

Let us discuss the sacred scriptures of Islam. The most sacred amongst all the Islamic scriptures it is the glorious Qur'an. The glorious Qur'an is the last and final revelation of Allah, Almighty God which was revealed to the last and final messenger, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Qur'an says in Surah Ra'ad Chapter #13, Verse #38 "li-Kulli ajalin kitaab" in every age have we sent a

revelation. There are several revelations of Almighty God sent on the face of the earth, by name, 4 are mentioned in the Qur'an; the Torah, the Zabur, the Ingil, and the Qur'an; but there are various others like Suhufi Ibrahim; but all the scriptures that came, all the revelations that was sent by Almighty God before the last and final revelation of the glorious Qur'an, they were only meant for a particular group of people; and the message which they preached was supposed to be followed only till a particular time period. But because Qur'an is the last and final revelation of Almighty God, it was not sent only for the Muslims or only for the Arabs, it was sent for the whole of humanity. Allah says in the Qur'an in Surah Hijr and in Surah Ibrahim Chapter #14 Verse #1, "Alif-Laaam Raa." We have revealed this Book to thee, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) so that thou may leadest the human kind from darkness to light. Not only the Muslims or the Arabs, but the whole of humankind. The same message is repeated that the Qur'an is for the whole of human kind in several Verses including Surah Ibrahim Chapter #14 Verse #52, Surah Baqara Chapter #2, Verse #185 and Surah Zumar Chapter #39 Verse #41 that the Qur'an was revealed for the whole of humankind. The next scriptures in Islam are the Sahih Hadith. The authentic sayings and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). There are many; one of them is the Sahih Al-Bhukari. We also have the Sahih Muslim. The hadith of the Prophet, the authentic sayings and traditions are a commentary of the Qur'an. The complimentary to the Qur'an. They will never contradict the Qur'an. This was in brief regarding the scriptures in these two great religions.

Now, we will discuss the main talk "concept of God in Hinduism and Islam in the light of the sacred scriptures." What Dr. Zakir Naik says or what respected Sri Sri Ravi Shankar says or what any other human being says is not important; we have to see what do the sacred scriptures say about the concept of God in these 2 great religions. If I says something or Sri Sri Ravi Shankar says something or anybody else say something, if it matches with the scriptures we have to agree. If we give any example, if it matches with the scriptures, we have to take it. If I say something and if it does not match with the scripture; if I give an example which does not match with the scripture, we have to reject it. First, we will discuss the concept of God in Hinduism in the light of the Hindu scriptures. If we ask the common Hindu that how many Gods does he believe

in? some may say 3, some may say 100, some may say 1000, while others may say 33 crores, 330 millions. But if you ask a learned Hindu who is well Versed with his Hindu scriptures, he will tell you that in Hinduism you should believe and worship only one God. But the common Hindu, he believes in a philosophy known as pantheism, everything is God. The common Hindu believes that the tree is God, the sun is God, the moon is God, the human being is God, the snake is God. What we Muslims believe is everything is God's, everything belongs to God's, 'G' 'O' 'D' with an apostrophe 's'; the tree belongs to God, the sun belongs to God, the moon belongs to God, the human being belongs to God, the snake belongs to God. So the major difference between the common Hindu and the common Muslim is that the common Hindu says everything are Gods, we Muslim say everything is God's. The major difference is the apostrophe 's'. If we can solve this difference of apostrophe 's', the Hindus and the Muslims will be united. How would you do it? As the Qur'an says taAAalawila kalimatin sawa-in baynana wabaynakum (come to common terms as in us and you) which is the first term? allanaAAbuda illa Allaha (that you worship none but Almighty God). Let us try and understand what would the sacred scriptures of Hinduism have to speak about Almighty God. It is mentioned in the Chandogya Upanishad Chapter #6, Section #2, Verse #1; ekam evaditiam God is only one without a second. It is a Sanskrit quotation. "I know that I am speaking in front of a great scholar of Vedas Sri Sri Ravi Shankar I am just a student. So if my Sanskrit pronunciation is a bit poor, I would like to apologize. He is a great scholar of the Veda, I am just a student of Islamic comparative religion as well a student of the Hindu scriptures and the Vedas. It is mentioned in Swethaswethara Upanishad, Chapter #6, Verse #9, Na casya kasuj janita na cadhipah, which means of him of Almighty God, there are no parents they have got no lord. Almighty God has no true father, he has no true mother, he has no true superior. It is mentioned in the Swethaswethara Upanishad; Chapter #4, Verse #19 Na Tasya Pratima Asti of that God there is no Prathima, there is no likeness, there is no image, there is no picture, there is no photograph, there is no sculpture, there is no statue. It is mentioned in Swethaswethara Upanishad; Chapter #4, Verse #20; no one can see the Almighty God and it is further mentioned in Bhagwat Gita Chapter #7, Verse #20; all those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires, they worship many Gods. Some of the translation says that all those whose

intelligence has been stolen by material desires, they worship idols and this quotation is also mentioned by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar in his Book "Hinduism and Islam the common thread" in the section of not worshipping other Gods on page #3. He gives the quotation but does not give the reference. The reference is Bhagwat Gita Chapter #7 Verse #20. It is further mentioned in Bhagwat Gita Chapter #10 Verse #3, that they know me as the unborn not begotten, the supreme lord of the world. Amongst all the Hindu scriptures, the most sacred are the Vedas. It is mentioned in Yajur-Ved Chapter #32, Verse #3 Na Tasya Pratima Asti of that God there is no Prathima. Prathima as I said, means likeness, image, picture, photo, sculpture, statue. It is further mentioned in Yajur-Ved Chapter #40 Verse #8 Almighty God is imageless and pure. It is further mentioned in Yajur-Ved Chapter #40 Verse #9 Andhatma pravishanti ye asambhuti mupaste. Andhatma means darkness, pravishanti means entering, and Asambhuti means the natural things like fire, water, air. They are entering darkness those who worship the natural things like fire, water, air, etc and the Verse continues, they are entering more in darkness those who worship the Sambhuti. The Sambhuti are the created things like tables, chairs, etc; who says that? Yajur-Ved Chapter #40 Verse #9. It is further mentioned in Atharva-Ved Book #20 Hymn #58 Manthra #3 Dev maha osi verily great is Almighty God; and amongst the Vedas, the most sacred is the Rig-Ved. It is mentioned in the Rig-Ved Book #1, Hymn #164, Manthra #46, ekkam sat vipra bhuda vidyante Truth is one, God is one, sages call him by various names. God is one but the saintly people call him by many names and there are no less than 33 names given to Almighty God in Rig-Ved Book #2 Hymn #1 alone. One of them is Brahma. The Brahma is called as the creator. If you translate creator into Arabic, it means khaaliq. We Muslims have got no objection if someone says that Almighty God is khaaliq or Creator, but if someone says this Almighty God has got 4 heads and on each head is a crown, you are giving an image to Almighty God. We Muslims take strong exception to it. More over, you are going against Swethaswethara Upanishad Chapter #4 Verse #19 which says Na Tasya Pratima Asti, of that God there are no images. The other name given to Almighty God in Rig-Ved, Book #2, Hymn #1, Verse #3 is Vishnu. Vishnu is called as the God who is the sustainer. If you translate Sustainer into Arabic, it is somewhat similar to Rabb. We Muslims have got no objection if someone calls Almighty God as Rabb or Sustainer, but if someone says he is Almighty God who has got 4 hands and

giving an image to Almighty God, in one hand is the lotus, the second hand is the conch, traveling on the sea on the bed of snakes, we Muslims take strong objection to it. Moreover you are going against the Yajur-Ved, Chapter #32, Verse #3 which says Na Tasya Pratima Asti of that God there is no prathima. There is no likeness, there is no image, there is no picture, there is no statue, no sculpture.

It is further mentioned in Rig-Ved Book #8, Hymn #1, Manthra #1 Ma chitanidi sansad worship him alone, one God, praise him alone. It is mentioned in Rig-Ved, Book #6, Hymn #45 Manthra #16, praise him alone, worship that one God and the Brahma Sutra of Hinduism is dvitiya naste neh na naste kinchan Bhagwan ek hi hai doosra nahi hai, nahi hai, nahi hai, zara bhi nahi hai. There is only one God not a second one, not at all, not at all, not in the least bit. So, if you read the Hindu scriptures, you shall understand the concept of God in Hinduism in the light of the sacred scriptures.

Let us understand the concept of God in Islam. The best reply anyone can give you from the scriptures is quote to you Surah Ikhlāas, Chapter #112 Verse # 1 to 4 which says Qul Hu-wallaahu Ahad (say he is Allah one and only) Allaahus-Samad (Allah the absolute and eternal) Lam yalid, wa lam yuulad (he begets not nor is he begotten) walum yakul-la-Huu kufu-wan ahad (there is nothing like him). This is a 4-line definition of Allah subhaanawa thaala, of Almighty God given in the Qur'an. If any person says so and so candidate is God, if that candidate fits in this 4-line definition, we Muslims have got no objection in accepting that candidate as God. The first is Qul Hu-wallaahu Ahad (say he is Allah one and only) God is only one without a second. ekam evaditiyam Chandogya Upanishad Chapter #6, section #2, Verse #1. The second is Allaahus-Samad (Allah the absolute and eternal) same as Bhagwat Gita Chapter #10 Verse #3, they know me as unborn not begotten without a beginning, supreme Lord of the world. The third test is Lam yalid, wa lam yuulad (he begets not nor is he begotten) same as Swethaswethara Upanishad Chapter #6 Verse #9 Na casya kasuj janita na cadhipah of him there are no parents, no lords. Almighty God has got no mother, has got no father, he has got no superior. The fourth test is walum yakul-la-Huu kufu-wan ahad (there is nothing like him). Swethaswethara Upanishad Chapter #4, Verse #19, Yajur-Ved Chapter #32 Verse #3 Na Tasya Pratima Asti of that God there is no prathima, there is no likeness, there

is no image, there is no picture, there is no statue. If any person says so and so candidate is God, if that candidate fits in these 4-line definition which we discussed of the Qur'an and the Hindu sacred scriptures, I have got no objection accepting that candidate as God. For example, there are many human beings who consider Bhagwan Rajneesh to be God. Once, during question and answer time, there was a Hindu brother who told me, brother Zakir, we Hindus do not believe Bhagwan Rajneesh as God. I told him I have never said the Hindus believe Bhagwan Rajneesh to be God, I have read the Hindu scriptures, no where in the Hindu scripture does it say that Bhagwan Rajneesh is God. I said some human beings, some people believe Bhagwan Rajneesh to be God. Many people believe him to be God. Let us put this Bhagwan Rajneesh to the test of Surah Ikhlas and the test of the Hindu sacred scriptures.

1. Qul Hu-wallaahu Ahad (say he is Allah one and only) ekam evaditiyam God is only one without a second, was Rajneesh only one, was he the only human being who has claimed to be God. There are many who have claimed, especially in this country of ours, thousands of men have claimed to be God, he is not the only one, but a Rajneesh bhakth may say, no he is unique. Let us do the second test.

2. Allaahus-Samad (Allah the absolute and eternal) when we read the autobiography of Rajneesh, we find mentioned there that Rajneesh was suffering from asthma, from chronic back ache, from diabetes mellitus. Imagine Almighty God suffering from chronic back ache, asthma, diabetes mellitus.

3. Lam yalid, wa lam yuulad (he begets not nor is he begotten) we know Bhagwan Rajneesh was born in Madhya Pradesh, he had a mother and father, he goes to America(USA) in 1981 and takes thousands of Americans for a ride; and in the state of Oregon, he starts his new village called as Rajneeshpuram. Later on, the American government arrest him and they put him behind bars and Rajneesh alleges that American government gave him slow poisoning. Imagine Almighty God being slow poisoned. And In the year 1985, the American government removes him from the country, kicks him out, he comes back to India, and goes back to the city of Pune to his center which is today called as Osho Commune. If you go there, it is mentioned there on his tomb stone Bhagwan Rajneesh "Osho" never born, never died,

but visited the earth from the 11th of December 1931 to the 19th of January 1990. Never born, never died but visited the earth from the 11th of December 1931 to the 19th of January 1990. They did not mention on his tomb stone that he was not given visas to 21 different countries of the world. Imagine Almighty God coming on this earth to visit the world and requires visas. The arch bishop of Greece said if you do not remove Rajneesh out of this country, we will burn his house and the house of his disciples.

4. The last test walum yakul-la-Huu kufu-wan ahad, it is so stringent that no one beside the true God will pass. The moment you can compare God to anything in this world, he is not God. Walum yakul-la-Huu kufu-wan ahad. We know that Bhagwan Rajneesh like normal human beings, had 2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 hands, 2 legs, white beard. The moment you can compare God to anything in this world, in this universe, he is not God, walum yakul-la-Huu kufu-wan ahad. If some says that Almighty God is a 1000 times stronger than Arnold Schwarzenegger. You might have heard the name of Arnold Schwarzenegger, the person who got the title Mr. Universe, the strongest man in the Universe. The moment you can compare God to anything in this world, whether it be Arnold Schwarzenegger or Dara Singh, or King Kong, whether it be a 1000 times or million times, the moment you can compare God to anything in this world, he is not God, walum yakul-la-Huu kufu-wan ahad, there is nothing like him. This was, in short, the 4-line definition of Almighty God. I call it the litmus test for theology for the study of God. Otherwise, the Qur'an says in Surah Isra Chapter #17 Verse #110, Qulid-ullaaha awid-ur-Rahmaan; ayyammaa tad-uufala-hul - Asmaaa ul-Husnaa. (Say: call upon him by Allah or by Rahmaan, by whichever name you call upon him to him belongs the most beautiful name. You can call Allah by any name but it should be a beautiful name and a name which he has called himself and this is mentioned in no less than 4 different places in the Qur'an besides Surah Isra Chapter 17 Verse #110, it is also mentioned in Surah A'raaf Chapter 7 Verse #180, Surah Ta Ha Chapter #20 Verse #8 and Surah Al Hashr Chapter #59 Verse #24 that to Allah subhaana wa thaala belongs the most beautiful names and there are no less than 99 different attributes, names, given to Allah subhaana wa thaala in the Qur'an and the Hadith. For example Ar Rehmaan, Ar Rahiim, Al Kariim, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, Most Wise and the crowing one is Allah. Why do we Muslims prefer calling Allah by the Arabic word Allah instead of the English word God. Because a person can play

mischief with the English word God which he cannot do with the Arabic word. If you add 's' to God, it becomes 'Gods', the plural of 'God.' There is nothing like plural Allah, Qul Hu-wallaahu Ahad (say he is Allah one only). If you add 'dess' to 'God', it becomes 'Goddess', meaning a female God, there is nothing like male Allah or female Allah in Islam. Allah has got no gender. If you add a father to 'God', it becomes 'Godfather'. He is my 'Godfather', he is my guardian, there is nothing like Allah father or Allah Abba in Islam. If you add a mother to God, it becomes God mother. There is nothing like Allah mother or Allah Ammi in Islam. Allah is a unique word. That is the reason we Muslims, we prefer calling Allah with the Arabic word Allah instead of the English word God because a person can play mischief with the English word God. But when any Muslim is speaking to the non Muslim, who may not understand the meaning of Allah and uses the English word God like what I am doing today, I have got no objection but I would like to mention that God is not the appropriate translation of the Arabic word Allah and this word Allah is mentioned in the scriptures of all the major world religions including Hinduism. It is mentioned in Rig-Ved Book #2, Hymn #1, Verse #11, one of the names of God is given as Allah. Allah is also mentioned in Rig-Ved, Book #3, Hymn #30 Manthra #10 and also in Rig-Ved Book #9, Hymn #67, Manthra #30, there is a separate Upanishad by the name of AllOpanishad which is also mentioned in one of the books of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar a separate Upanishad, that is AllOpanishad. This was in brief regarding the concept of God in Islam according to the sacred scriptures of Islam.

This was in brief regarding the synopsis of the concept of God in Hinduism and Islam in the light of sacred scriptures and there was my talk on this topic just for few hours. I had initially prepared a synopsis of 50 minutes, but on the request of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. I was supposed to speak second and he was supposed to speak first. He requested me to speak first, I said no problem. Give me 10 minutes after that and the format was changed. He requested me to speak first because he wants to know my views, he said I would like to know your views. So it is obligatory on me since it is a dialogue that I give my views regarding whatever little bit I have read of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Many things what he says, I agree with him totally. Many things I disagree. While I give my views on the comments of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar on this topic, especially talking about concept of God in Islam and Hinduism, I may differ. My

intention is to let all the Hindu and Muslim brothers and sisters understand the correct concept in these 2 great religions. My intention is not to hurt anyone's feeling and I am sure Sri Sri Ravi Shankar will not mind if I differ with some of his views. It is my duty as a student of Islam and comparative religion, if I find something what they have spoken about Islam or something what I have knowledge about Vedas, if I differ I have to present it, and this is what is the dialogue for; but the main purpose is to understand and let the followers of these 2 great religions come together like what we have done today. Imagine it is a historic event, tens of thousands of people here. The first time I heard Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, was 1 week ago, when I saw his VCD on the topic of conversation with the spiritual master. He gave a talk on May 7, 2002 in Santa Monica in California and the first sentence I heard from Sri Sri Ravi Shankar was Spiritual path demands 2 things; first, authenticity, how authentic are you?; second, intensity, and believe me when I heard this statement spiritual path, first thing demands authenticity, I was impressed. I totally agree that spirituality demands authenticity, whether first, second, or third, it does demand authenticity. It demands truthfulness, without authenticity how can a person be spiritual? I totally agree with respected Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Later, I was given a few of his books by the organizers and read one of the books Hinduism and Islam, the common thread; and when I read the Book, I am sure that the intention of respected Sri Sri Ravi Shankar was mainly (this is a Book Hinduism and Islam, the common thread) the main intention was to get the Muslims and Hindus together. Even I have written a book "similarities between Hinduism and Islam," so as far as that topic is concerned we share a common platform; but there were some things or rather many things which I found in the book which were not authentic, mainly, especially concerning Islam and it is my duty to present the views. It is just for us to understand and come closer. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar writes in the first section, faith in one God on page #2, Hinduism is perceived to be a religion of many Gods but contrary to this perception, it believes in one God. I agree with him 100% that is what I present in my talk. He further continues and says it believes in advaita non-dual monotheism. Though seven colors make up a rainbow, it comes from one ray of white light, one white light. Similarly, 33 crores of devis and devathas, God and Goddesses are rays of one paramathma super human being, intelligent. To compare, this 7 colors make up rainbow of one light with 33 crores of devi and devathas come from rays of one paramathma, I find it a little bit illogical because I being a medical doctor and student of science also. We know the science says that light is made up of

7 colors, "VIBGYOR" violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red, but each color by itself is not white light. All the 7 colors in the right proportion make up one white light. Each individual color is not white light; and if any one of the color is missing, it will not constitute pure white light. To say this and give the example to 33 crores of devi and devathas, rays of one paramathma, it is like saying that one Almighty God has got 33 crores components like how a human body has got approximately 11 parts; 2 legs, 2 hands, one head, one neck, 2 shoulders, one chest, one abdomen, one pelvis; but each part does not make up the complete human body. All the parts put together in the right position makes up the complete human body. If anything is missing, it is not a complete human body. To give this example to 33 crores of equivalent to one God, is saying that God has 33 crore parts, which I disagree and if any one part is missing then that will not be complete one God. But he further goes and says that God has got 108 names, one God has got 108 names or 1008 names which I agree with him; this is what the Veda says, as I mentioned in my talk in Rig-Ved, Book #1, Hymn #164, Manthra #46, God is one, truth is one, saints call him by variety of names and then he goes on to say this is similar in Islam that in Islam God has got 99 names which I agree with him. As far as names are concerned like in Hinduism you can give any name, in Islam also you can give any name which Almighty God has called himself with and there are no less than 99 names given to Almighty God in the Qur'an and the Hadith. Giving a name, I totally agree, Islam as well as Hinduism. For example, my name is Zakir Abdul Karim Naik. You can even call me Abu Fariq Zakir Naik, the father of Fariq Zakir Naik. You can even call me Abu Zikra Zakir Naik, father of Zikra Zakir Naik or father of Rushda Zakir Naik, four different names but all pointed to the same person, all are unique, only pointed to me and no one else. So giving names is totally correct as the Veda says as the Qur'an says, as long as the name is beautiful name and the name which Almighty God prefers calling himself with. Further in the section #3 of modes of worship on page #3, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar gives an example in his Book a picture of a person is not the person, a visiting card of a person is not the person; similarly, the idol is the symbol of chaitanya, consciousness, and divinity. I totally agree with the first part that the picture of a person is not the person, the visiting card of the person is not the person. But further saying that the idol is the symbol of divinity, I think with my limited knowledge it is against the Vedas in Yajur-Ved Chapter 32 Verse #3, Na Tasya Pratima Asti "of that God there is no prathima, no likeness, no image, no picture, no photo, no statue, no sculpture" neither is idol the visiting card of God

because visiting card gives the address of the person, his place of work, or his place of his residence; to say this is a visiting card is limiting the place of Almighty God. Even if I agree for the sake of argument that the idol is the symbol of God, is a picture of God or the visiting card for sake of argument. Suppose a person promises me some financial assistance and after few days his secretary gives me the money he had promised along with the visiting card, it will be illogical for me to thank the visiting card of the person or to thank his photograph if I see it somewhere else; the least I can do is at least I can call him up personally and thank him on the telephone. So, even if I agree for the sake of argument the idol is the photo of Almighty God, or the visiting card, which I do not agree but for the sake of argument, yet it is illogical to thank that photo, the visiting card, or the idol; and this is agreed upon by majority of the Hindu scholars that idol worship is wrong in Hinduism. What they say, that at a lower level, at a lower consciousness, person at a lower level who do not know, may require an idol to worship God but when you reach a higher consciousness idol is not required and this is what even Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has mentioned in some of his VCDs which I saw. At a higher level of consciousness, you do not require an idol; at a lower level you require. If this is the understanding, I would say that we Muslims have already reached that high level of consciousness. We do not require to worship Almighty God in a image. Further more, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar writes in his book on page #4 that Islam strictly believes in the formless God but yet it acknowledges the symbol of this God in Mecca and Kaaba. Though they believe that Almighty God is all pervading, but they worship in the direction of Kaaba and he goes on to say that means they are worshipping the formless through the form. To say that the Muslims worship Allah subhaana wa thaala, through the form of Kaaba, is totally wrong. It is not mentioned in any of the scriptures of Islam either in Qur'an or in Sahih Hadith. No Muslim ever worships the Kaaba neither does he worship Almighty God through the Kaaba, it is prohibited. Allah says in the Qur'an in Surah Baqara Chapter #2, Verse #144 that where ever you are, you face in the direction of the sacred mosque, direction of Kaaba, Kaaba is our Qibla, it is our direction, and we believe in unity, if we want to offer salah which direction do we pray in the north, south, west, or east?. So for unity, we pray in one direction that is direction of the Kaaba, it is our Qibla; and when Muslims drew the world map, the first person was al-Idrisi in 1154. He drew with the south pole on the top and north pole down and the Kaaba was in the center. Later on, the western cartographers came and they turned the map upside down, north pole top and south pole down, yet the Kaaba was in

the center. So if you are in the north you face towards the south, if you are in the south you face towards the north, if you are in the east you face towards the west, if you are in the west you face towards the east. When we go to Mecca, and circumambulate round the Kaaba in Umrah and Hajj, it is because of the commandment of Almighty God, but logically I can think we circumambulate because every circle has got one god indicating that God is only one. So to say that we worship the formless through the form is a great error as far as Islam is concerned. Further, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar writes on page #26 that Prophet Muhammad when he came back to Mecca, he destroyed all the idols in the Kaaba except the central object of worship the black stone. To say that black stone was the central object of worship is totally an error, it is unauthentic. You will not find any authentic record not any Islamic scriptures, any historic authentic records that black stone Al-hajar Al-aswad was ever worshipped by any of the idolaters in any age of Arabia. And Sri Sri Ravi Shankar writes on page #6 and he says that the Hindus and the Muslims before they offer their prayers, they wash the hands and feet and this was prevalent as a vedic practice in Arabia which was picked up by the Muslims. It has no roots, it is nowhere anywhere mentioned in the Judeo-Christian traditions. I do agree Hindus and the Muslims wash the hands and feet before offering prayers. Some of the Hindus do that, I have no disagreement, but to say that it was picked up as a vedic culture from Arabia and has no roots in Judeo-Christian tradition, I feel is wrong because I am a student even of the Bible. It is not only mentioned in the Old Testament, it is even mentioned in the New Testament. It is mentioned in the Bible in the Old Testament in the Book of Exodus Chapter #40, Verse #31 and 32 that Moses and Aaron, they washed their hands and feet before they appeared in front of the lord as they were commanded. It is mentioned in the New Testament in the Book of Acts Chapter #21 Verse #26 Paul along with the men, He washed before he appeared in front of the lord as was commanded. So, this is a part of the Judeo-Christian, it is part of the Bible, in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, which we call it as wudu that is ablution. As far as I being a student of Islamic comparative religion, I feel that the best book dealing with the Art of Living, it is the glorious Qur'an; and I would like to present an English translation of the glorious Qur'an to Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Most of the religions except Islam, the followers of most of the religions except Islam, they believe in the concept of anthropomorphism that Almighty God taking forms including human form. Some religious followers believe God Almighty took human form once, some many times and they have a logic that Almighty God is so pure, it is so holy, he does not

know the short comings of the human beings, he does not know how do the human beings feel when he is angry, when he is sad, when he is hurt; so Almighty God became a human being and came in this world to know what is good or what is bad for the human being. On the face of it, it is a very good logic; but I say that if I manufacture a tape recorder do I have to become a tape recorder to know what is good or what is bad for the tape recorder? I do not have to become a tape recorder. I write an instruction manual that if you want to play the audio cassette, put in the cassette and press the play button; if you want to stop, press the stop button; do not drop it from a height it will get spoilt; do not immerse in the water it will get damaged. I write an instruction manual. So similarly, since Almighty God is the creator of the human beings, he does not have to become a human being to know what is good or what is bad for the human being. What does he do? He has to reveal an instruction manual; and the last and final instruction manual for the human beings is the glorious Qur'an. No one can write a better book on Art of Living than the Creator himself. Therefore, I say that this book is the best book on Art of Living, it is the instruction manual for the human beings, the do's and dont's, how our life should be led. I would like to end my talk with the quotation of the glorious Qur'an from Surah An'aam Chapter #6 Verse #108 which says that revile not those Gods who they worship besides Allah, lest in the ignorance they will revile Allah subhaana wa thaala. Allah says abuse not, revile not those Gods who people worship besides Allah, lest in the ignorance they will revile, they will abuse Allah subhaana wa taallah. waakhiru daAAawahum ani alhamdu lillahi rabbi alAAalameena.