Florida Talk Show Focuses on Hinduism
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On Sunday, September 13th, citizens of Florida listened to a discussion about Hinduism and had a chance to ask many questions. The program, called "It's Your Faith," is hosted by Rabbi Jan Bresky. Each week Rabbi Breski takes one of mankind's spiritual traditions and discusses it for Saint Petersburg citizens. On September 13th the hour was spent with the editor of Hinduism Today, Rev. Swami Sivasiva Palani. The program opened with Rabbi Breksy's introductory questions about the Hindu scriptures, the nature of God and simple definitions of atma. Brahma, karma, yoga, moksha and more.

Then the station invited questions, and in they poured. One man wanted to know "If Hindus really believe that there is no good and there is no evil." Yes, explained Rev. Palani, describing how the ideas of original sin and eternal hell are not in Hindu scripture. "I love that so much!" the caller said. "Just think, there is no evil. What a wonderful philosophy. Not at all like our Western beliefs."

Another caller asked whether Hindus have a "Bible like the Christians do?" Yes and no, explained the swami. Yes, in the sense that almost all Hindus hold the Vedas as their scriptures. No, in the sense that there is not a one holy book for all Hindus, but rather there are many holy books. Each spiritual tradition in the Hindu family has the Vedas and they also have their own saints' or Gurus' writings and hymns which they call scripture.

That thought provoked the next caller to ask how he could get hold of the Vedas to learn about Hinduism. Rabbi Bresky intervened to say that the Vedas are really too vast and difficult for a beginner. He suggested that the caller read the Upanishads first, for they are the best philosophical introduction to Hindu thought.

The next caller asked why there are so many gods in Hinduism. Swami explained

that Hindus believe in a one Supreme Being who created the world. Yes, he said, there are many other gods, but only one Supreme God. The gods are something like the angels and archangels in the West. There is one God, but there are many angels at God's side in the Christian view. Similarly, Hindus have one God and many devas which means "radiant beings." The swami clarified, "What is confusing in Hinduism is that different people call God by different names. To one Hindu He is Siva, to another He is Vishnu, to another She is Shakti. But Hindus know that it is the same Great God for all. Not different Gods, just different names."