Quotes & Quips
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India Was Once the Richest Country in the World?

Neem Karoli Baba (ca 1900-1973), North Indian sadhu mystic

With the coming of the tsunami, we have realized the limitations of human effort. In the face of something like this, even science is rendered helpless. Only God's grace can help us. This is a time to invoke love and compassion in our hearts and to work with our hands. Mata Amritanandamayi Ma, Kerala-based hugging saint who pledged US$22 million for relief

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The atman in you is that which indwells all things." "Tell me, Yajnavalkya, about this atman that indwells all things." "It is that which transcends hunger and thirst, sorrow and delusion, old age and death." Brihadaranyaka Upanishad III, 5A

Make sure you work in return for the disaster relief you are getting, for I do not want my countrymen to become beggars. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), following a 1934 earthquake in Bihar in which more than 10,000 people died

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To the growing soul, to the spirit within us, may not difficulties, obstacles, attacks be a means of growth, added strength, enlarged experience, training for spiritual victory? The arrangement of things may be that, and not a mere question of the pounds, shillings and pence of a distribution of rewards and retributory misfortunes! Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), Indian philosopher speaking on karma and disasters

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A three-year-old boy named Chidambaram, living in the United States, attends a parent co-op nursery school several days a week with his mother. Each day a different parent brings the mid-morning snack for the children. Chidambaram soon observes that some of the kids eat things that he and his family do not, such as meat and eggs. Sensing the importance of vegetarianism in his life, he takes it upon himself to find out exactly what's in the snack each day. One day, Chidambaram's mother and grandmother take him to lunch at a Mexican restaurant as a special treat. Chidambaram's grandmother reads the menu to him and suggests, "Perhaps you'd like the Kiddy Enchilada?" Little Chidambaram looks at his mother in horror and exclaims with authority, "We don't eat kitties!" By Valli Sendan, his grandmother

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Just as a big banyan tree sprouts from a tiny seed, so the wide universe with names and forms sprouts forth from the heart. Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), South Indian mystic

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Upon dying, a man is greeted on the other side by Lord Yama, who immediately begins helping him determine his next step in the inner worlds. Lord Yama says, "Your karmic record is not clear to me. Is there something exceptional you have done that I should know about?" The man responded, "I was walking down the street with my wife. Several thugs drove up on mopeds and insulted her. I walked over to the leader, reached up, ripped the earring out of his ear, grabbed him by the throat and told him, 'That's no way to speak to a lady!' " "Impressive, " Yama said. "When did this happen?" The man replied, "Oh, a couple of minutes ago."

Those from a religious background who believe that "There is only one life and when it's over, it's over " generally cry and have a very unhappy time over the departure of a loved one. This is very disturbing to the loved one from where they are in the inner world wondering, "Why the grief?" Because they are fine. They are happy, and they are free of a lot of karmas, a lot of worries, a lot of conflict, ready to start a new life. Those with a pure Asian religious background, who understand reincarnation, dharma, karma and the existence of God everywhere, will smile contentedly and say to themselves, "What a wonderful life the departed had!" and be joyous in the new world that the departed loved one is now experiencing.
Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927-2001), founder of Hinduism Today

Did You Know?

According to economist Angus Maddison in The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective, the region that today comprises the Indian subcontinent held the largest share of the world's gross domestic product until the beginning of the sixteenth century, when it was rivaled by China, and then again throughout most of the eighteenth century.

At the end of the sixteenth century, India's great wealth sustained a population of more than one hundred million people. In "India, the Silicon Jewel of the East " (Digital Journal, May 13, 2004), Paul William Roberts states, "There was an abundance of arable land, and the state of Indian agriculture compared favorably with any of the Western European countries. Right down to the subsistence-oriented peasant, everyone saw a good return on land and labor. There was a large and vigorous skilled workforce turning out not just cotton but luxury items for the barons, courts and ruling classes. Consequently, the economy produced a fabulous financial surplus."

From the early eighteenth until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when India enjoyed a 24.4 percent share of the world's gross domestic product (see table, right), economic historian Paul Bairoch confirms, the region enjoyed a 25 percent share of the global trade in textiles. It was the world's leading manufacturer of handicrafts and handloom textiles. Bairoch writes, "More important, there was a

large commercialized sector with a highly sophisticated market and credit structure, manned by a skilful and in many instances very wealthy commercial class." Paul William Roberts adds, "Methods of production and of industrial and commercial organization could stand comparison with those in vogue in any other part of the world. India had developed an indigenous banking system. Merchant capital had emerged with an elaborate network of agents, brokers and middlemen. Its bills of exchange were honored in all the major cities of Asia."

Maddison studied numerous sources and derived historical world gross domestic product (GDP) totals by assembling evidence on changes in population, retaining the 1990 international dollar as the temporal and spatial anchor in the estimation of movements in GDP and per capita GDP, and filling holes in the evidence with proxy estimates.

Truthfulness

Tirukural 291: What is truthfulness? It is speaking words which are totally free from harmful effects.

Tirukural 293: Let one not speak as true what he knows to be false, for his conscience will burn him when he has lied.

Tirukural 294: One who lives by truth in his own heart truly lives in the hearts of all people.

Tirukural 297: Not lying, and merely not lying, is beneficial for those who cannot or will not practice other virtues.

Tirukural 298: Water is sufficient to cleanse the body, but truthfulness alone can purify the mind.

Tirukural 299: Not all lamps give light. The lamp of not-lying is the learned man's light.

Tirukural 300: Among all great truths we have ever beheld, not a single one rivals the goodness of telling the truth.