Our Immortal Soul
Category : January 1995
Published by Anonymous on Jan. 02, 1995

Our Immortal Soul

It's the core of our being, our deepest essence and Self, yet we know so little about our own soul.

Every faith defines the incorporeal principle of human life, that which survives death of the physical body and, in Hinduism, returns in another. To Buddhists the individual soul is illusory. Early Jews spoke of it as inseparable from the body. To Christians it is created at birth, but survives our single life. Plato, Socrates and Pythagoras taught that the soul exists before and after birth. Here and on the next two pages we examine the Hindu view of soul and the four-fold path, chatushpada, along which it travels.

What Is Our Individual Soul Nature?

Our individual soul is the immortal and spiritual body of light that animates life and reincarnates again and again until all necessary karmas are created and resolved and its essential unity with God is fully realized.

Our soul is God Siva's emanational creation, the source of all our higher functions, including knowledge, will and love. Our soul is neither male nor female. It is that which never dies, even when its four outer sheaths- physical, pranic, instinctive and mental-change form and perish as they naturally do. The physical body is the annamaya kosha. The pranic sheath of vitality is the pranamaya kosha. The instinctive-intellectual sheath is the manomaya kosha. The mental, or cognitive, sheath is the vijnanamaya kosha. The inmost soul body is the blissful, ever-giving-wisdom anandamaya kosha. Parashakti is the soul's superconscious mind-God Siva's mind. Parashiva is the soul's inmost core. We are not the physical body, mind or emotions. We are the immortal soul, atman. The sum of our true existence is anandamaya kosha and its essence, Parashakti and Parashiva. The Vedas expostulate, "The soul is born and unfolds in a body, with dreams and desires

and the food of life. And then it is reborn in new bodies, in accordance with its former works. The quality of the soul determines its future body; earthly or airy, heavy or light."

How Is Our Soul Different from Siva?

Our soul body was created in the image and likeness of the Primal Soul, God Siva, but it differs from the Primal Soul in that it is immature. While Siva is unevolutionary perfection, we are in the process of evolving.

To understand the mysteries of the soul, we distinguish between the soul body and its essence. As a soul body, we are individual and unique, different from all others, a self-effulgent being of light which evolves and matures through an evolutionary process. This soul body is of the nature of God Siva, but is different from Siva in that it is less resplendent than the Primal Soul and still evolving, while God is unevolutionary perfection. We may liken the soul body to an acorn, which contains the mighty oak tree but is a small seed yet to develop. The soul body matures through experience, evolving through many lives into the splendor of God Siva, ultimately realizing Siva totally in nirvikalpa samadhi. Even after Self Realization is attained, the soul body continues to evolve in this and other worlds until it merges with the Primal Soul, as a drop of water merges with its source, the ocean. Yea, this is the destiny of all souls without exception. The Vedas say, "As oil in sesame seeds, as butter in cream, as water in river beds, as fire in friction sticks, so is the atman grasped in one's own self when one searches for Him with truthfulness and austerity."

How Is Our Soul Identical with Siva?

The essence of our soul, which was never created, is immanent love and transcendent reality and is identical and eternally one with God Siva. At the core of our being, we already are That-perfect at this very moment.

At the core of the subtle soul body is Parashakti, or Satchidananda, immanent love; and at the core of that is Parashiva, transcendent reality. At this depth of our

being there exists no separate identity or difference-all are One. Thus, deep within our soul we are identical with God now and forever. These two divine perfections are not aspects of the evolving soul, but the nucleus of the soul which does not change or evolve. From an absolute perspective, our soul is already in nondual union with God, but to be realized to be known. We are That. We do not become That. Deep within this physical body, with its turbulent emotions and getting-educated mind, is pure perfection identical to Siva's own perfections of Parashakti and Parashiva. In this sacred mystery we find the paradoxes of oneness and twoness, of being and becoming, of created and uncreated existence subtly delineated. Yea, in the depth of our being, we are as He is. The Vedas explain, "The one controller, the inner Self of all things, who makes His one form manifold, to the wise who perceive Him as abiding in the soul, to them is eternal bliss-to no others."

Why Are We Not Omniscient Like Siva?

The three bonds of anava, karma and maya veil our sight. This is Siva's purposeful limiting of awareness which allows us to evolve. In the superconscious

depths of our soul, we share God Siva's all-knowingness.

Just as children are kept from knowing all about adult life until they have matured into understanding, so too is the soul's knowledge limited. We learn what we need to know, and we understand what we have experienced. Only this narrowing of our awareness, coupled with a sense of individualized ego, allows us to look upon the world and our part in it from a practical, human point of view. Pasha is the soul's triple bondage: maya, karma and anava. Without the world of maya, the soul could not evolve through experience. Karma is the law of cause and effect, action and reaction governing maya. Anava is the individuating veil of duality, source of ignorance and finitude. Maya is the classroom, karma the teacher, and anava the student's ignorance. The three bonds, or malas, are given by Lord Siva to help and protect us as we unfold. Yet, God Siva's all-knowingness may be experienced for brief periods by the meditator who turns within to his own essence. The Tirumantiram explains, "When the soul attains Self-knowledge, then it becomes one with Siva. The malas perish, birth's cycle ends and the lustrous light of wisdom dawns."

How Do Hindus Understand Moksha?

The destiny of all souls is moksha, liberation from rebirth on the physical plane. Our soul then continues evolving in the Antarloka and Sivaloka, and finally merges with Siva like water returning to the sea.

Moksha comes when earthly karma has been resolved, dharma well performed and God fully realized. Each soul must have performed well through many lives the varna dharmas, or four castes, and lived through life's varied experiences, in order to not be pulled back to physical birth by a deed left undone. All souls are destined to achieve moksha, but not necessarily in this life. Hindus know this and do not delude themselves that this life is the last. While seeking and attaining profound realizations, they know there is much to be done in fulfilling life's other goals, purusharthas-dharma, righteousness; artha, wealth; and kama, pleasure. Old souls renounce worldly ambitions and take up sannyasa in quest of Parashiva, even at a young age. Toward life's end, all Hindus strive for Self Realization, the gateway to liberation. After moksha, subtle karmas are made in inner realms and swiftly resolved, like writing on water. At the end of each soul's evolution comes vishvagrasa, total absorption in Siva. The Vedas say, "If here one is able to realize Him before the death of the body, he will be liberated from the bondage of the world."