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Quotes and Quips

The great soul of India will topple our material world. Romain Rolland (1866-1944), French thinker and Nobel laureate

He who is called Brahman by the jnanis is known as atman by the yogis and as Bhagavan by the bhaktas. But even That disappears when the aspirant reaches nirvikalpa samadhi. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886)

All other pleasures and possessions pale into nothingness before service which is rendered in a spirit of joy. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

The human being is a marvelous thing. Imagine, a creature that can talk to God Himself! Dada Vaswani, leader of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission

You cannot believe in God until you believe in yourself. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

Since we cannot change reality, let us change the eyes which see reality. Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957), Greek writer

A quiet mind is all you need. All else will happen rightly, once your mind is quiet. As the Sun makes the world active with its rays, so does self-awareness change the mind. In its light, energies wake up and work miracles without effort on your part. Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897-1981), Hindu sage

All things are good when we learn to master them, but no thing is good when it

masters us.

Reincarnation is an ancient, mainstream belief in Judaism. Even the great Torah scholar, commentator and kabbalist, Ramban, attributed Job's suffering to reincarnation. In the Jewish concept, the soul is placed in a body in order for a person to attain spiritual perfection. If one didn't take full advantage of the opportunity to perfect the soul, he may be reincarnated to complete the soul's perfection. Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman, teacher at the Ohr Somayach scripture school in Jerusalem

For Earth, in a sense, it matters little if we extract energy from petroleum or from eating our vegetables: all of it comes from the planet. Now, a human being at rest runs on 90 watts; that's how much power you need just to lie down. And when you're physically active, you'll need about 250 watts. So how much energy does our Western lifestyle require? When you add up our food calories plus the energy needed to run the computer and the air-conditioner and more, you get over 11,000 watts. A single New Yorker needs more energy than a blue whale, the biggest animal that has ever existed. That is why our lifestyle is unsustainable: Earth just can't do it. Geoffrey West, British physicist

An imperfect world goads us to improve. Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, publisher of Hinduism Today

Just sit quietly and you will hear swami speaking to you. All are swami. Satguru Siva Yogaswami, (1872-1964) Sri Lankan mystic

Who there be who, like our Lord, knows the great and the small, the difficult and the facile? Only they who, like a tortoise, withdraw the five senses under their shell. They hear and see the here and the beyond, and have all impurities dispelled. Tirumantiram, verse 133

Hinduism is an orthodox religion, conservative in its ways and yet pliant and understanding. It is simultaneously the most demanding spiritual path and the most forgiving. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswami (1927-2001), founder of Hinduism

Today

Did You Know?

Maybe We Are All From Jwalapuram, India

The human bodies that we now inhabit to live on this planet were, most scientists agree, developed in Africa. Anatomically modern humans originated there about 200,000 years ago, after a long evolutionary process.

Intriguingly, analyses of human DNA have detected a population bottleneck sometime around 60,000 years ago, when only a minuscule number of humans, fewer than 10,000 individuals, survived an unknown event. All of us Homo sapiens are their descendants.

What could have caused such a dramatic decrease in human population? The leading theory is that a major volcanic eruption which happened at that time is the culprit. When the Toba supervolcano on the island of Sumatra exploded, it spewed a catastrophic amount of particles into the atmosphere. A blanket of ash covered several continents. Climate changed abruptly, poisonous gases tainted the Earth and few human settlements--or perhaps even just one--managed to survive.

Scientists are investigating where human populations were living at the time of that eruption. It was in India, not in Africa, that the most convincing evidence was found so far. Recent archeological discoveries show that a human population certainly survived in the Jwalapuram Valley, South India. Its remnants can be dated to both before and after the Toba Cataclysm.

Given the cohesive genetic identity of those who endured the population bottleneck, scientists believe that a few groups with individually homogenous populations survived--or maybe one single, highly diverse community.

A possible, yet speculative, portrait that this evidence paints of the past is that the humankind we know began in South India, a tribe of heroic survivors, who were perhaps more ingenious and skilled than others who perished. From there, they

spread all over the Earth, quickly developing technology and mutating into the different races we know today.

Basics of Hinduism

Sampradayas and Paramparas

The Vedas have long decreed, "truth is one, but sages call it by many names." The decentralized structure of Hinduism--the world's most tolerant and comprehensive religion--is an affirmation of this creed.

Having no single religious authority does not mean Hinduism lacks order. Tradition is the basis for its system, giving credence to spiritual preceptors of recognized groups. Wisdom, along with the belief that advanced souls are continuously being born to teach, adds flexibility when there is no precedent.

A sampradaya is a theological and philosophical school with specific practices, views and attitudes transmitted by each successive generation of followers. A sampradaya assures continuity with the past. Each one may hold several distinct lineages of gurus that teach its main tenets; such lineages are called paramparas.

A parampara, meaning "uninterrupted series," is a line of spiritual gurus. In a parampara, a chain of mystical power and continuity of authority is passed from guru to guru, each teaching within the philosophical realms of his or her sampradaya.

A good example lies in Hinduism's Vaishnava denomination, which has four major sampradayas: Sri (espoused by Ramanuja), Brahma (Madhvacharya and Chaitanya), Rudra (Vishnuswami and Vallabhacharya) and Kumara (Nimbarka). Within the Kumara sampradaya of Sri Nimbarkacharya, a major parampara is headed today by Swami Sri Gopal Sharan Devacharya and his guru, Swami Sri Lalita Sharan Devacharya.