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Published by dharmalingam on Jun. 05, 2012

Quotes and Quips

For those who have strong dedication, samadhi is near.
Patanjali (2nd century bce), Indian author of the Yoga Sutras

During the Kali Yuga, man, being completely dependent on food to live life, cannot altogether shake off the idea that he is the body. But truly he is Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886), Indian mystic

Hasten slowly, and you shall soon arrive. Renounce all worldly goals, and you shall reach the highest goal. Milarepa (c.1052-1135), Tibet's most revered yogi

Everyone wishes to be loved. Only a blessed few wish to love. Dada Vaswani, leader of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission

Awareness is ever there. It need not be realized. Open the shutter of the mind, and it will be flooded with light. Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897-1981), Hindu sage

All know that the drop merges into the ocean, but few know that the ocean merges into the drop. Kabir (1440-1518), Indian Saint

Bhakti is nothing but the devotion we show to the divinity that resides within us. Once we regard the divinity within us with devotional fervor, we are bound to develop the same affection towards everything outside, for the same divine truth runs through all things. M.S. Subbulakshmi (1916-2004), renowned Carnatic singer

There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children. Nelson Mandela, president of South Africa and Nobel laureate

There is no physical world for me. All I see, I see it as the glorious manifestation of the Almighty. Swami Sivananda (1887-1963), founder of the Divine Life Society

There is nothing either good or bad, thinking makes it so. William Shakespeare (1564-1616), English playwright

Laughter is a spark from the soul.

My friend has kleptomania, but when it gets bad, he takes something for it.

All the elements in your body, apart from hydrogen, helium and lithium, came from stars that once exploded. Forget Jesus: a whole star had to die for you to live. Lawrence Krauss, American physicist and cosmologist

Love is wise. Hatred is foolish. Bertrand Russel (1872-1970), British philosopher, logician and historian.

Photons have mass? I didn't even know they were Catholic!

God's omnipresent consciousness exists within each individual. Imagine a japa mala: every person is a bead, but the string that goes through the center of each bead--God's consciousness--permeates us all. By looking deeply inside ourselves, we can experience our oneness with God. Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, publisher of Hinduism Today

If an earthquake does you harm, do you try to harm it in return? Just keep quiet. Let everyone mind their own business. Satguru Siva Yogaswami (1872-1964), Sri Lankan mystic

Hindus profoundly know that God is the same Supreme Being in whom peoples of all faiths find solace, peace and liberation. Nonetheless, we realize that all religions are not the same, and the doctrines of one often conflict with those of another. Even this should never be cause for religious tension or intolerance. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927-2001)

Did You Know?

Soma, the Rishis' Potion

Soma was a drink of ritual importance, a sublime mixture capable of transforming mortals into Gods. Indra and Agni are portrayed as consuming soma in copious quantities. It is frequently mentioned in the Rig Veda, whose Soma Mandala contains 114 hymns, many praising its energizing qualities.

It is described as prepared by extracting juice from the stalks of a certain plant--unfortunately, which one is today unknown, a secret lost to the ages.

Drinking soma was a restricted, yet documented ritual at the time the Vedas were being written. Its properties seem to have been stimulating of the sage's inner faculties, who, with their yogic powers, were able to soar in consciousness into the realms of the Gods.

Today, without the formula, modern Hindu rituals offer expiatory prayers apologizing for the use of a substitute plant because soma has become unavailable.

There has been much speculation concerning what is most likely to have been the identity of the original plant. There is no solid consensus. It is described as "green-tinted" and "bright-shining" in the Rig Veda. One recipe states that soma juice was filtered through lamb's wool, and mixed with other ingredients (including

cow milk) before it was drunk. It was said to "roar."

Pandit Vamadeva Shastri, a modern scholar who has performed extensive research, holds a view that the soma was not simply one plant (though there may have been one primary soma plant in certain times and places), but instead several families of plants, including orchids and sunflower. The great early Ayurvedic doctor, Sushrut, spoke of 24 soma plants, growing mainly on Himalayan lakes. Soma, therefore, was likely part of an entire science of sacred plant preparations and not just one plant in particular. The Atharva Veda mentions five great plants of which soma is the best, including ganja, barley and darbha, showing that many plants had soma-like qualities.

Vamadeva believes that real soma is a secretion in the brain from spiritual practices of yoga, pranayama, mantra and meditation, releasing a flood of bliss throughout the body. This inner soma is the main subject of the Vedic hymns, though outer somas were once also important.

Basics of Hinduism

Our Subtle Anatomy

Though we emphasize that which we can see, smell, hear, taste and touch, there is much more to existence, refined levels which rishis and yogis have described in detail. Humans themselves are far more interesting than the physical body which is discarded after each life.

The innermost core of each person is the imperishable atman, one's Self, which is to God as a spark is to the fire. In order for the atman or soul to function in the various planes of existence, it creates vessels, containers, constructs of energy ranging from the most refined to the most gross form--physical matter itself--which are then inhabited by the divine atman. These are called koshas.

Hindu sages have spoken about five koshas. They are the annamaya kosha, "sheath composed of food," the physical body. In it we function in daily life and, if our consciousness is still unevolved, it will be with this vessel that we will identify, thinking that we are nothing but matter. In ascending order of subtlety comes the pranamaya kosha, "sheath of prana," also known as the pranic or etheric body; and

after that the manomaya kosha, "wish-formed sheath," the lower astral body, the instinctive-intellectual sheath of ordinary thought, desire and emotion. Higher still lies the vijnanamaya kosha, "sheath of cognition;" the mental or cognitive-intuitive vessel.

Above them all resides the subtlest of vehicles, the anandamaya kosha, "body of bliss." This is the intuitive superconscious sheath, or actinic-causal body. Anandamaya kosha is not a sheath in the same sense as the four outer koshas. It is the soul itself, a body of light, also called karana sharira, "causal body," and karmashaya, "holder of karmas" of this and all past lives. It is the anandamaya kosha which evolves through all incarnations and beyond until the soul's ultimate, fulfilled merger, vishvagrasa, in the Primal Soul, Parameshvara. Then anandamaya kosha becomes Sivamayakosha, the body of God Siva.

This knowledge is liberating for Hindus, who know that what others call death is nothing but the temporary shedding of the outermost of one's layers, the "sheath composed of food."