

Path to Dharma

தர்ம நெறி

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பெருமை மாயை



News Letter

6

செய்தி மடல்



கேசுத்திர(வயல்)விநாயகர் ஆலயம்,
ஸ்ரீ முக்தகேஸ்வரம், சீலாபம், இலங்கை.

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This news letter solely contains the questions and answers of a series of discussions held on the full moon day of May 2008, at this temple with the devotees which will be useful to all.

1. What is Brahman?

Brahman is the Ultimate Reality of the entire appearances. Theologians and philosophers say that, Brahman cannot be worshipped directly, nor described except in abstract terms such as 'Bliss', 'Awareness' or 'Consciousness, and "being".

Vedanta philosophy explains that the whole universe is alive, structured as an ever changing field of vibrating kinetic energy which is the expression of the absolute Consciousness termed as Brahman ('the Unbounded').

The infinite aspects of creation, the 'world of name (nama) and form (rupa)', are the temporary and unbinding modifications of this awareness. Some philosophers say that everything other than Brahman has only a limited reality for the reason that it possesses no permanence. Maya is the veiling power which conceals Brahman (Ultimate Reality) from us and leads us to believe that the world we see is permanent. All the Gods and Goddesses are manifestations of Brahman.

2. Mention some qualities to describe Almighty God ?

Compassionate	Divine wisdom	Eternal	mercy and love	Pantokrator
Immense	Omnipotent		Omniscient	God of forgiveness
Transcendent	Immanent		Beyond human understanding	

(Refer, in News letter- 3 the details of this is given as God is one and indivisible, indescribable, inexhaustible, incorporeal, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, original, first, eternal, both transcendent and immanent, of absolute infinite existence, and the ultimate principle who is without a beginning, or an end. He is the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss who is hidden in all and which is the cause, source, material and effect of all creation known, unknown and yet to happen in the entire universe. The Vedas depict Brahman as the Ultimate Reality)

3. Define the following terms Athman ,Brahman,Karma and Moksha in relation to Hinduism?

Athman - Athman is the fundamental nature or principle of life which is the Supreme (Absolute) Reality present within a human being but not a 'soul' or 'sprit'. 'Inner self' is the most appropriate English term

Brahman- Brahman is the absolute Reality or Cosmic Self which is an abstract concept of 'the divine'

Karma – Karma is the total sum of all human action. The law of karma refers to understanding that all human actions have corresponding consequences that affect not only one's present life but future lives, until the state of moksha is achieved.

Moksha- moksha is the Liberation or release from 'Samsara' (cycle of births and rebirths of the human being). Different philosophical and religious strands in Hinduism describe Moksha differently. Generally accepted concept is that, the attainment of union with God or knowledge of one's identity with Brahman

4. What is Maya in terms of Hindu philosophy ?

According to Hindu philosophy the physical world where we live is not real, since it is temporary and ever getting changed. The world where we live in is a world of ignorance and falsehood (untruth), called *Asath*, in contrast to *Sath* or the world of Truth that exists beyond it, where neither the mind, nor any of the senses can ever reach.

5. **What is the process of reincarnation?**

'Carnate' gives the meaning of flesh. The phrase reincarnate elucidate to "re-enter the flesh." Hindu Philosophy consider the soul is immortal and keeps re-entering a fleshy body time after time, over and over in order to resolve experiences. Thus learn all the lessons of life in the material world has to offer. The process of reincarnation explains the natural way the soul evolves from immaturity to spiritual illumination. According to Hinduism, life is a continuing process of spiritual alchemy. The individual through countless incarnations, is gradually purified in the conflagration of experience to the point where the individual is finally coconsciously reunite with brahman the matrix of all life.

6. **What is the method of conquering the cycle of births and rebirths (bond of Samsara)?**

The linkages of the circle of Samsara or round of births and deaths(Bhava-Chakra), are the desires, of that individual. So long as the individual desire material objects of this world, the person ought to come back to this world in order to acquire them and enjoy. Anyhow when all the desires of that person intended for the ordinary objects die away, then the links are broken down and that individual is free without taking any more births attaining Moksha which is the final liberation (emancipation).

7. **What is the process of Breaking the bonds of Karma?**

We stroll in this world of Samsara as if we are different from the Lord Almighty (Brahman). If we amalgamate our self with Lord Almighty through meditation and Yoga, we will obtain immortality and everlasting bliss. Break the bonds of Karma through awareness of the Eternal and have the benefit of the Supreme peace of the Atman (thy innermost Self and Inner Ruler). We will be freed from the cycle of births, deaths and rebirths. After that we will be freed from sin, freed from enthusiasm, attaining the state of a Jivanmukta or liberated sage. We will see the Self in the self and see the Self as all.

8. **What happens to a person (Athman) after reaching moksha (release or liberation from the endless chain of deaths and rebirths)?**

According to Upanishads, the individual Athman is assumed to merge into the cosmic Brahma. A traditional comparison is that of a drop of water that, when dropped into the ocean loses its uniqueness and becomes one. Although widespread, this metaphor does not quite confine the significance of this merger. The Upanishads show that that the Athman is never separate from Brahma; hence, individuality is illusory, and moksha (release or liberation from the endless chain of deaths and rebirths) is simply waking up from the dream of separateness.

9. **What are the fundamental scriptures of Hinduism?**

The **fundamental scriptures** of Hinduism, are collectively referred to as "Shastras", which are basically a collection of spiritual laws revealed by saints and sages at varied periods in the long history of the world. There are two types of sacred scriptures Hinduism: "Shruti" (heard) and "Smriti" (memorized). They were passed on from generation to generation orally for centuries before they were written down in Sanskrit language. The significant Hindu scripts are the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata.

10. **What is unique in Makara Jyoti in Sabari malai hills in India?**

Annually on *Makara Sankranti* day, at Sabarimala, a religious pilgrim centre at the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border, a beam of light of amazing intensity appears on the horizon in the north-eastern direction of an adjacent mountain top called Kantamala hills. The guiding light, is called *Makara Jyoti*, which lasts 12 to 20 minutes.

11. **What are the laws of the cosmos in relation to Hinduism?**

The laws of the cosmos are Eternal Dharma or universal natural law (Sanathana Dharma). It is also the moral and religious duties, laws and customs of Hindus that are in harmony with the natural laws.

Taittiriya aranyaka says that, "Dharma is the foundation of the whole universe. In this world people go unto a person who is best versed in dharma for guidance. By means of dharma one drives away evil. Upon dharma everything is founded. Therefore, dharma is called the highest good." (Taittiriya aranyaka 10:79)

Laws of Manu (Manu Dharma) says that, "Dharma, when violated, certainly destroys; dharma, when reserved, preserves; therefore, dharma should not be violated, lest the violated dharma destroys us" (Manu Dharma -The Laws of Manu 8:15)

12. What are the famous Maha vakyas (famous sayings) of Veda and where do you find them ?

- i) "Prajnanam Brahma" ("Intelligence is Brahman"), The Aithareya Upanishad of the Rg-Veda .
- ii) "Aham Brahmasmi" ("I am Brahman"), The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad of the Yajur-Veda
- iii) "Tattvamasi" ("Thou art That"), The Chandoghya Upanishad of the Sama-Veda
- iv) "Ayam Atma Brahma" ("This self is Brahman"), The Atharva-Veda s

13. What is Gayatri mantra? Where do you find Gayatri mantra in Rig Veda?

The Gayatri mantra is as follows:-

Om Bhur bhuvah svahah Tat savitur varenyam

Bhargo Devasya dheemahi Dheeyo yonah prachodayaat

The Gayatri mantra is found Rig Veda 3.62:10. The meaning of it is that, "We meditate on the supreme splendour of the god, Savitr: May it stimulate our thoughts"

As the Sun annihilates darkness, the Gayathri Mantra destroy ignorance. This Mantra invokes the power and radiance of the Sun to energize all earthly life, to destroy our sins and to reveal the Supreme Self to us. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagvad Geetha that "Amongst the Mantras, I am the Gayathri" .(Note: In news letter 3 details of Gayatri mantra is given)

14. What are the dimensions of a religion?

Myrtle Langley in his 'A book of Beliefs Religions' gives Six Dimensions of Religion as follows:-
six dimensions of a religion

- i. **Dopctrine**-A belief systems which gives a total explanation of reality.
- ii. **Myth**-Stories about God and the gods, creation and salvation, and events of historical significance(Myth is not fiction.).
- iii. **Ethics**-Values and codes of behavior.
- iv. **Ritual**- Worship, festivals, rites of passage and initiations and customs regulating food and dress.
- v. **Experience**-The individual's experience of the awe-inspiring and the transcendent, or a sense of belonging and commitment to something greater than the self.
- vi. **Social**-The institutional organization of people to practice their religion

15. Give some quotations of a Religion by some famous writers?

Some quotations about Religion by some famous writers are,

- i. Religion is -'the flight of the alone to the Alone' - **Plotinus**.
- ii. Religion is -'what a man does with his solitariness' - **A.N.Whitehead**
- iii. Religion is -'Men create the gods in their own image'- **Xenophanes**
- iv. Religion is -'One religion is as true as another' - **Robert Burton**
- v. Religion is -"We must have religion for religion's sake. ' - **Victor Cousin**
- vi. Religion is -'Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world and the soul of souless circumstances. it is the opium of the pople.The abolition of Religion as the illusory happiness of the pople is the demand for their real happiness.The demand to give up the illusions about their condition is a demand to give up a condition that requires illusion' - **Karl Marx** (1818-1883)

- vii. • Religion is -"Religion would then be the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity; like the obsessional neurosis of children. If this view is right, it is to be supposed that a turning-away from religion is bound to occur with the total inevitability of a process of growth."- **Sigmund Freud** (1856-1939. Founder of psycho-analysis)
- viii. Religion is -"If religion has given birth to all that is essential to society, it is because society is the soul of religion" -**Emile Durkheim**(1858-1917 founder of modern sociology)
- ix. Religion is -"Religion has its own independent roots in the hidden depths of the spirit itself" - **Rudolf Otto** (1869-1937)

16. What is Soma plant that is used to prepare 'soma pana' by the priests while chanting Sama Veda?

Soma is the personification of a hallucinogenic plant the preparation of lay at the heart of Vedic sacrifice. The hallucinogenic mushroom *Amanita muscaria* generally known as fly agaric. *Amanita muscaria* has been used for thousands of years by siberian shamans to induce ecstatic states. This plant grows in Siberia and Afganistan. The prosperity of Soma, the "elixir of the gods" which is, frequently discussed is the sense of euphoria and ecstasy experienced by those who drink it. Soma, like the fly agarics is thought to be red. It is supposed to have been pressed and bottled before it is drunk.

In the Rig Veda , Soma is often called madhu (honey) and pavamanu (a tawny yellowish liquid) possibly referring to the dark yellow colour of the mushroom a fruit has been pressed.

17. Are Hindu cosmological time cycles accurate?

Hindu cosmological time cycles is based on Indian Hindu astronomy the astronomical quantities used in the calculations of the construction of Hindu stellar time cycles are more accurate when compared to others. This is because that the Hindu astrophysical time cycles characterize numerically the life of our solar system and are an absolute system of time measurement, based upon the sexadecimal numeral system with units as minute as $1/216000$ of a day and as huge as 3.1104×10^{14} years. This system of the cosmological time cycles is based on the prime basic unit of the cycles, namely, the kalpa period, and its three major sub units: the manu, caturyuga, and kaliyuga intervals.

18. In Hindu cosmological time cycles what is the unit of a day?

In Hindu cosmogeny, all proceeds en route for precision in cycles of repetitive incarnations, throughout the immense interval of one kalpa, (the primary unit of the cycles). Almighty of our cosmological system manifests all conscious creatures out of Himself. This time factor is termed a "day of Brahma". After this, the god of our solar system returns all conscious creatures to himself for the interval of one kalpa. This time factor is termed a "night of Brahma". In Hindu astronomy cosmological time cycles is the basis of the divisions of time.

19. In Hindu cosmological time cycles what is Manu, Caturyuga, intervals, in terms of era factor?

There are 14 Manus in a day of Brahman [a kalpa], and 72 yugas constitute the period of a Manu. (Clark's translation of the Aryabhatiya verse 3)

The following complete description of the cycles comes from the Burgess translation of the *SuryaSiddhanta*:

- 1) *That which begins with respirations (prana) is called real.... Six respirations make a vinadi, sixty of these a nadi;*
- 2) *And sixty nadis make a sidereal day and night. Of thirty of these sidereal days is composed a month; a civil (savana) month consists of as many sunrises;*
- 3) *A lunar month, of as many lunar days (thithi); a solar (saura) month is determined by the entrance of the sun into a sign of the zodiac; twelve months make a year. This is called a day of the gods.*
- 4) *The day and night of the gods and of the demons are mutually opposed to one another. Six times sixty of them are a year of the gods, and likewise of the demons.*
- 5) *Twelve thousand of these divine years are denominated a chaturyuga; of ten thousand times four hundred and thirty-two solar years*

- 6) Is composed that chathuryuga, with its dawn and twilight. The difference of the krethayuga and the other yugas, as measured by the difference in the number of the feet of Virtue in each, is as follows:
- 7) The tenth part of a chathuryuga, multiplied successively by four, three, two, and one, gives the length of the kerthayuga and the other yugas: the sixth part of each belongs to its dawn and twilight.
- 8) One and seventy chathuryugas make a manu; at its end is a twilight which has the number of years of a krethayuga, and which is a deluge.
- 9) In a kalpa are reckoned fourteen manus with their respective twilights; at the commencement of the kalpa is a fifteenth dawn, having the length of a krethayuga.
- 10) The kalpa, thus composed of a thousand chathuryugas, and which brings about the destruction of all that exists, is a day of Brahma; his night is of the same length.
- 11) His extreme age is a hundred, according to this valuation of a day and a night. The half of his life is past; of the remainder, this is the first kalpa.
- 12) And of this kalpa, six manus are past, with their respective twilights; and of the Manu son of Vivasvant, twenty-seven chahturyugas are past;
- 13) Of the present, the twenty-eighth, chahturyuga, this krethayuga is past....

20. Are there any evidences from the Vedas for Hindu cosmological time?

The *Rig Veda*, composed in 1000 B.C. gives the following:-

Twelve spokes, one wheel, navels three.

Who can comprehend this?

On it are placed together

three hundred and sixty like pegs.

They shake not in the least. (Dirghatama, Rig Veda 1.164.48)

A seven-named horse does draw

this three-navels wheel...

Seven steeds draw the seven-wheeled chariot...

Wise poets have spun a seven-strand tale

around this heavenly calf, the Sun. (Dirghatama, Rg Veda 1.164.1-5)

A brief expression of the essence of the cycles is given above. A study has shown that "navels three" stand for the three mean motions of the Sun and "seven-wheeled chariot" for the precession of the equinoxes. Thus, there can be no question that Hindu cosmological time cycles were already an established conclusion.

21. What is the Hindu units of time on a logarithmic scale?

The Hindu units of time on a logarithmic scale is given below,

Sidereal metrics

- a **paramanu** is the normal interval of blinking in humans, or approximately 4 seconds
- a **vighati** is 6 paramaanus, or approximately 24 seconds
- a **ghadiya** is 60 vighatis, or approximately 24 minutes
- a **muhurta** is equal to 2 ghadiyas, or approximately 48 minutes
- a sidereal day (**nakshatra ahoratram**) is *exactly* equal to 30 muhurtas (A day begins and ends at sunrise.)

22. What is the units of time measurement described in the Vishnu Purana on a logarithmic scale?

The time measurement described in the section of the Vishnu Purana is given as follows:

- 15 twinklings of the eye = 1 Káshthá
- 30 Káshthás = 1 Kalá
- 30 Kalás = 1 Muhúrtta
- 30 Muhúrttas = 1 day (24 hours)
- 30 days = 1 month
- 6 months = 1 Ayana
- 2 Ayanas = 1 year or one day (day + night) of the gods

Micro- units of time used in the Vedas is given below,

- a **trasarenu** is the combination of 6 celestial *atoms*.
- a **truti** is the time needed to integrate 3 *trasarenu*s, or 1/1687.5th of a second.
- a **vedha** is 100 *trutis*.
- a **lava** is 3 *vedhas*.
- a **nimesha** is 3 *lavas*, or a blink.
- a **kshanas** is 3 *nimeshas*.
- a **kashthas** is 5 *kshanas*, or about 8 seconds.
- a **laghu** is 15 *kashthas*, or about 2 minutes.
- a **danda** (one *nadika*) is 15 **laghus**

23. What do you mean by **thithi** (lunar day) in lunar metrics?

A **thithi** (lunar day) is defined as the time it takes for the longitudinal angle between the moon and the sun to increase by 12°. Thithis begin at varying times of day and differ in duration from approximately 19 hours to approximately 26 hours.

1. a **paksha** (lunar fortnight) consists of 15 thithis
2. a **masa** (lunar month) consists of approximately 29.5 days. A **masa** (lunar month) is divided into 2 pakshas: the one between new moon and full moon is called *gaura* (bright) or *shukla paksha*; the one between full moon and new moon *krishna* (dark) *paksha*
3. a **rithu** consists of 2 **masa**
4. an **ayanam** consists of 3 **rituhs**
5. an **year** consists of 2 **Ayanas** [6]

24. What is the time measurement described in the Vishnu Purana?

The time measurement described in the Vishnu Purana Book I Chapter III is as follows:

- 1) 2 Ayanas (six month periods, see above) = 1 human year or 1 day of the devas
 - 2) 4,000 + 400 + 400 = 4,800 divine years = 1 **Kretha Yuga**
 - 3) 3,000 + 300 + 300 = 3,600 divine years = 1 **Thretha Yuga**
 - 4) 2,000 + 200 + 200 = 2,400 divine years = 1 **Dhwapara Yuga**
 - 5) 1,000 + 100 + 100 = 1,200 divine years = 1 **Kali Yuga**
 - 6) 12,000 divine year = 4 Yugas = 1 **Mahayuga**(also called divine yuga)
- Reckoning of time for Brahma.
- 1) 1000 Mahayugas = 1 **kalpa** = 1 day (day only) of Brahma (4320,000,000 human years).
Two *kalpas* constitute a day and night of Brahma)
 - 2) 30 days of Brahma = 1 month of Brahma (259,200,000,000 human years)
 - 3) 12 months of Brahma = 1 year of Brahma (3,110,400,000,000 human years)
 - 4) 50 years of Brahma = 1 **Pararddha**
 - 5) 2 **parardhas** = 100 years of Brahma = 1 **Para** = 1 **Mahakalpa**
(The lifespan of Brahma is 311,040,000,000,000 human years)

One day of Brahma is divided into 10000 parts called **charanas**. The **charanas** are divided as follows:

The Four Yugas

- i) **Kretha Yuga** (**Sathya Yuga**) 4 **charanas** (1,728,000 solar years)
- ii) **Thretha Yuga** 3 **charanas**(1,296,000 solar years)
- iii) **Dhwapara Yuga** 2 **charanas**(864,000 solar years)
- iv) **Kali Yuga** 1 **charanas**(432,000 solar years)

The cycle repeats itself so altogether there are 1000 cycles of **mahayugas** in one day of Brahma.

- One cycle of the above four **yugas** is one **mahayuga** (4.32 million solar years)
- as is confirmed by the Gita statement "**sahasra-yuga paryantam ahar-yad brahmano viduH**", meaning, a day of brahma is of 1000 mahayugas. Thus a day of Brahma, **kalpa**, is of duration: 4.32 billion solar years. Two *kalpas* constitute a day and night of Brahma
- A **manvantara** consists of 71 mahayugas (306,720,000 solar years). Each **Manvantara** is ruled by a **Manu**.

- After each manvantara follows one **Sandhi Kala** of the same duration as a *Krita Yuga* (1,728,000 = 4Charana). (It is said that during a Sandhi Kala, the entire earth is submerged in water.)
- A **kalpa** consists of a period of 1,728,000 solar years called *Adi Sandhi*, followed by 14 manvantaras and Sandhi Kalas.
- A day of Brahma equals
- (14 times 71 mahayugas) + (15 x 4 Charanas)
- = 994 mahayugas + (60 Charanas)
- = 994 mahayugas + (6 x 10) Charanas
- = 994 mahayugas + 6 mahayugas
- = 1000 mahayugas

25. What is the symbolic significance of Lord Ganesha?

The form of Lord Ganesha symbolically represents the potential energy of Lord Siva and kinetic energy of Goddess Parvathi (Uma). Due to a mythological incident, the normal human head of Lord Ganesha had to be replaced with that of an elephant. The elephant-headed Ganesha looks like AUM, the pranava mantra, representing the quintessence of the Vedas (Hindu scriptures), indicating power and wisdom. The appearance of Lord Ganesha is given below by a Sloka.

Eka dhantham Maha kayam, Lambo dara Gajananam
Vigna nasa karam devam, Herambam Pranamam yaham

I salute the Lord Heramba (the self-effulgent Ganesha), the only one who destroys all obstacles, who has a huge body, a face that of an elephant and only one tusk.

Lord Ganesha has four hands. In one hand he holds the noose to capture and retain obstacles or difficulties; in another, he has a goad to guide the worshipper in the right direction, by removing his obstacles; in the third keeps the modaka, (a sweet), representing the fruit of devotion and with the fourth hand he blesses his devotees. His right tusk is broken and it represents personal sacrifice to achieve bigger possessions. He is the Lord of the Ganas, the spirits guarding the cosmos. Lord Ganesha rides a mouse. It is the mouse that carries Lord's grace to every nook and corner, moving silently, seldom visible in the darkness, which influences our lives.

He is the creator of obstacles, if one is going in the wrong direction. He is also the remover of those obstacles. Accordingly all Hindu functions and rituals will always commence with invocation and puja to Lord Ganesha.

26. What is the meaning of the following Durga sloka ?

Sarva-mangala-mangalye Shive Sarvaartha-sadhake
Sharanye Trayambake Gauri Narayani Namostute

Explanation:

Goddess Durga (Parvati) is the consort of Lord Siva and is worshipped as Sakti. The evidences from Puranic literature describe Goddess Durga as having many forms, including Gauri, Narayani Chandi, Hemawathy, Kali Uma etc. Lord Siva symbolizes the efficient cause of all the creations, and Sakti symbolizes the material cause.

Translation of the sloka is as follows:

The one who is the auspiciousness of all that is auspicious (sarva mangala mangalye), the consort of Lord Siva (Sive), who is the means of accomplishing all desires sarvartha sadhake), who is the refuge of all (saranye), the three eyed one(trayambake), the fair complexioned one(Gouri), Salutations to you, Narayani(narayani namostute). Salutations to the consort of Sri Narayana (Sri Lakshmi Devi), who is all auspicious, who is the Mistress of all, who blesses devotees succeed in their efforts and who is the refuge of all.



