

Path to Dharma

தர்ம நெறி



News Letter

25

செய்தி மடல்

Contents

January

2010

ஜனவரி

1. Why do Hindus worship so many Gods?
2. Are Hindus idol worshippers?
3. What are the periods of origin of Vedas, epics and Puranas ?
4. According to viewpoint of Hinduism, explain the whether 'The concept of God' is monotheistic or polytheistic?
5. What is the process of reincarnation?
6. What is karma in very brief?
7. What are the sixteen sanskars (rituals)?
8. What are the significant features of the plant 'tulasi' (Ocimum sanctum)?
9. What are the eight rasas referred in Natyasastra?
10. What is meant by Bhaumika, Kudyaka, and Urdhvka decorative (chithra) painting referred in Silpasasstra?
11. "Knowledge of the Self is really the Vedânta, which is, the end, the highest goal of the Veda. The highest wisdom of Greece was 'to know ourselves;' the highest wisdom of Hinduism is 'to know our Self.'" is a famous quotation. Can you explain this concept simplified by ordinary age old proverbs like language used in villages?

கேஷத்திர (வயல்) விநாயக ஆலயம்,
ஸ்ரீ முன்னேஸ்வரம், சிலாபம், ஸ்ரீ லங்கா.

Author B.S.Sarma ,

Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka.

hot mail; kshethravinayaka@yahoo.com: munneswaram@yahoo.com

Sri Sankar Publications

January

2010

ஜனவரி

Editorial.

A large number of readers of 'Path to Dharma', the periodical published, by Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka, are responding positively in maintaining a high academic level of this magazine.

Though wide-ranging views are expressed by the readers now and then on the standard of the publication, a high scholarly norm of this magazine will be sustained.

The foremost endeavor of this magazine is to convey understanding related to Hindu religion essentially by replies to the qualms raised by the anxious readers. Many have responded to the explanation and meaning of astothra like Lord Siva, Lord Subramanya as good but these may not attract the attention of vast majority of the readers. So, the continuation of the explanation and providing meanings of the astothra of other deities will not be included in future.

I am extremely grateful to the readers of 'Path to Dharma', magazine, who are providing me colossal advise and moral support in bringing out this periodical.

B.S.Sarma,

Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka.

January.2010

Suggestions from the readers

Dear Sarma,

Thank you for the regular news.

In this publication, the bringing of VEDAS by the Aryans is mentioned.

Are you able to shed a light as the what form of Hinduism existed prior to the arrival of the Aryans. It seems that it was only after the arrival of the Aryans, "true" Hinduism started.

Please note that you have got me interested in the history and scope of Hinduism and my question above and that are likely to follow are in no way intended to offend or ridicule.

Rather, I am interested in comparing notes with various "Hindu" preachings including, but not limited to versions I hear from Fiji "Hindus" (conveniently divided into Northern India descendants and South India descendant), Indians from various states of India, Sri Lankan Tamils (not sure but I think again conveniently divided into two groups - Indian and Sri Lankan), South Africa/Guyana/Surinam/etc - probably more on Fiji lines.

I look forward to your ongoing literature and your response to the above question.

Kind Regards'\.

Indar Rohit Maharaj LLB MBA (La Trobe) GDICTE (Melb) BA Dip Ed (USP)

Lawyer/Practice Manager

RAVI JAMES MAHARAJ (BARRISTERS & SOLICITORS)

Level 8,51 Queen Street

Melbourne, VICTORIA 3000, Australia

Tel: (03) 9614 3588

Fax: (03) 9620 9277

email: Rohit.Maharaj@ravijames.com.au

Dear Mr.Sarma, Editor, 'Path to Dharma',

Thank you very much for sending me regularly every month ' Path to Dharma' which I get the print outs and their photostat to share the knowledge with my friends who are interested in this field of study.

You are actually helping in a huge way to the Hindus who are concerned in knowing our cultural-religious-ritual-philosophical system.

May Almighty God bless with a long healthy life to serve the Hindu devotees.
With kind regards,

K.Arun Shankar,Bhoopasunrda, Bangalore-94.S.India.

3rd Jan.2010

Dear Editor,
'Path to Dharma',

I and my friends go through the valuable magazine 'Path to Dharma'every month which you send me via E-mail.

We all appreciate your immense services rendered without any expectation in return to the public, who are really in thirst of knowledge about the philosophy of our religion.

The section 'Tales from Panchatantra' appeared was a good series which was appreciated by many of my friends. We expect more of this type.

Thanking you,
S.Nanda Kumar, Navalar Road, Jaffna. 5th Jan.2010

Inspirational quotations

You may discriminate a thousand times, yet the I who is the thinker does not leave. For devotees to regard me with devotion is a very good thing. To the devotees I am the Supreme Divinity embodied in a human form, meaning that the Supreme Divinity Beyond Form has taken on qualities. When individuals take a form, they express through that form, and God listens to the prayers of a pure individual.

— from Ramakrishna: The Nectar of Eternal Bliss

Worship does not mean the memorization of mantras, or even the proper placement of the flowers and other objects. Worship is an attitude of respect, of dedication, of devotion to the exclusion of selfishness.

— from Siva Puja and Advanced Yajna

The fruit of the attempt to satisfy desire is either knowledge or ignorance. Whenever we attempt to satisfy a desire we produce action. All action yields either the fruit of ignorance, strengthening the ego, the identification of individuality, or strengthening of unity, surrender of the ego. Either we have knowledge, which is communion, or ignorance, which is division.

— from The Guru and the Goddess

1. Why do Hindus worship so many Gods?

Hindu religion is prehistoric and very remote in origin, and accordingly the Gods of Hinduism are also primitive. Since the deities are eternal and even if they appear to be diverse and independent, really they are facets of the same Brahman, the Supreme God.

Saint Sri Ramakrishna says "there can be as many spiritual paths as there are spiritual aspirants and similarly there can really be as many Gods as there are devotees to suit the moods, feelings, emotions and social background of the devotees". Blurton, R, in his *Hindu Art*. (1992) published in London says that "It is not known for certain when the intellectual struggle was determined to relate the nature of God, which is formless and infinite to a finite, tangible form, which can be comprehended by the layman. The search for an appropriate means of reflecting the unfathomable, unknowable nature of the divine presumably continued in Hinduism. In some instances in later Hinduism, the deity can be described by what the deity is not".

2. Are Hindus idol worshippers?

Hindus do not worship idols in the sense it is implied. They do not venerate or worship stones or statues. Hindus invoke the presence of great souls living in superior consciousness into stone images and experience the presence of divinity thereby God. Although Hindus worship stone images of a God, they invoke the physical presence of the God in the stone image. For Hindus one of the ultimate attainments is that they go beyond the need of all form and symbol. Hindus invoke God in the temples of the sanctum into the worshipping idol, where they pray through rituals by highly qualified priests and they invoke God within themselves through highly skilled Sat Gurus who teach yoga. Yoga refers to yoke oneself to God within. The *Jabala Upanishad* intimates that the image is only the support for the beginner; Yogins see siva in the soul and not in images. Images are meant for the imagination of the ignorant.

We can hardly understand how, at so early a date, the Hindus had developed ideas which to us sound decidedly modern. As the *Vishnu samhita*, a ritual agama text puts it: "Without a form, how can God be meditated upon? If (He is) without any form, where will the mind fix itself? When there is nothing for the mind to attach itself to, it will slip away from meditation or will glide into a state of slumber. Therefore the wise will meditate on some form, remembering, however, that the form is a superimposition and not a reality".

3. What are the periods of origin of Vedas, epics and Puranas ?

According to O'Flaherty W (p.171975-Hindu Myths, Harmondsworth, (p.51988 ed. Tetual Sources for the Study of Hinduism. trans. Wendy O'Flaherty) the approximate dates for the texts are as follows:

Rig Veda: 1200 BC; Atharva Veda: 900 BC; Brahmanas; 900-700 BC; Upanishads: 700 BC; Mahabharata: 300 BC – AD 300; Ramayana: 200 BC-AD 200;.

The Puranas are just as difficult to date, but she gives them this rough chronology:

Agni: AD 850; Bhagavata: AD 950; Bhavishya: AD 500 -1200; Brahma: AD 900 -1350; Brahmanda: AD 350 -950; Brahmavaivarta: 750 -1550; Brhaddharma: 1250; Brhannaradiya: 750-900; Devi: 550-650; Devibhagavata: 850-1350; Garuda: 900; Harivamsa: 450; Kalika 1350; Kalki 1500-1700; Kurma: 550-850; Linga: 600-1000; Mahabhagavata: 1100; Markandeya: 250; Matsya: 250-500; Narasimha: 400-500; Padma: 750; Sambha: 500-800; Saura: 950-1150; Siva: 750-1350; Skanda: 700-1150; Vamana: 450-900; Varaha: 750; Vayu: 350; Vishnu: 450

4. According to viewpoint of Hinduism, explain the whether the concept of God is monotheistic or polytheistic?

The philosophical impressions of Hindus at Divinity vary. The affluence of the ancient perceptions of God, inquiring minds of Hindus believe only in the formless Absolute Reality as God, the belief in God as personal Lord and Creator.

Hinduism offers the liberty to experience and approach God in one's personal way, exclusive of challenging conformity to any dogma. This free will makes the concept of God in Hinduism the richest in all the world's religions.

According to viewpoint of Hinduism, the concept of God is both a monotheistic and a henotheistic (the belief in or worship of one God without denying the existence of others.) religion. Hindus accept in one supreme God who created the universe and who is worshipped as Consciousness. Hindus were never polytheistic. Hindus recognize the fact that there is one all-pervasive God which energizes the entire universe.

Hinduism shows that God is not very far away, living in an inaccessible heaven, but is inside of each and every soul. Experiencing the Supreme God in the personal and practical way is the goal of Hindu theology. Hence God is the Life of our lives,

5. What is the process of reincarnation?

The term reincarnate signifies to "reenter the flesh." Hindus accept as true the soul is immortal and keeps on reentering a fleshy body time to time in sequence to resolve experiences and thus find out all the lessons life in the material world has to offer. Concept of reincarnation also explains the natural way the soul evolves from immaturity to spiritual illumination. Researches performed in the process of reincarnation by scientists, psychiatrists and parapsychologists and finally recognized the truth in the viewpoint and perception of reincarnation.

The course of action of reincarnation shows that, as soon as the soul leaves the physical body it never returns. The soul just after leaving the physical body, does not die but lives on in another subtle body known as the **astral** body. The astral body lives on another plane of consciousness called the astral plane. Here the soul continues to have experiences until it (that soul) is reborn again in another physical body as an infant. The soul chooses a family which can best fulfill its subsequent step of maturation.

6. What is karma in very brief?

The expression **karma** gives the meaning of "cause and effect." Karma is fundamentally energy. If this energy is produced through thoughts (verbally or by deeds), to others and it comes back to the source (in time) by other people. The process of action and reaction is experienced on all levels-physical, mental and spiritual (which is karma.). Karma is one of the natural laws of the universe. Time could be considered as curved as space. This ultimately makes a circle. Since karma is one of the natural laws, it is also equal in re-payment.

We ourselves create our own karma by deeds. Bad karma in this life means that, since we have done something awful in the past to somebody, now someone else is doing something bad to us. Good karma in this life means that we have done something good in the past and now others are doing something good to us now.

7. What are the sixteen sanskars (rituals)?

These are various rituals prescribed in Hindu rituals which are necessary for a Hindu way of life. These *samskaram* are applied during different phases of life. These are:

1. *Garbhadhan Sanskar* (Conception)
2. *Punsavan Sanskar* (Protection)
3. *Simantanayan Sanskar* (Bringing Happiness to mother)
4. *Jatakarm Sanskar* (Child Birth)
5. *Namakaran Sanskar* (Naming of Child)
6. *Nishkraman Sanskar* (First outdoor visit)
7. *Annaprashan Sanskar* (First food feeding)
8. *Chudkaram Sanskar* (Haircutting)
9. *Karnavedh Sanskar* (Ear piercing)
10. *Upnayan* (Sacred thread wearing)
11. *Vedarambh Sanskar* (Study starting)
12. *Samavartna Sanskar* (Education completion)
13. *Vivah Sanskar* (Marriage)
14. *Vanprasth Sanskar* (Preparation for renouncing)
15. *Sanyas Sanskar* (Renouncing)
16. *Antyesti Sanskar* (Funeral)

8. What are the significant features of the plant 'tulasi' (*Ocimum sanctum*)?

A very detailed account of the plant 'tulasi' (*Ocimum sanctum*) was already given in one of the earlier magazine which is given below as an attachment.

The Thulasi plant has many medicinal properties. The holy basil is also a herbal medicine for a large number of common sicknesses. Drinking the water, in which some sacred Tulasi leaf was soaked in, will reduce the stress.

Tulasi is a divine sacred plant according to Hindu religion. There are plenty of legends to narrate how the herb Tulasi came into existence and considered as a sacred aromatic plant worthy of worshipping. The traditional Hindu legend, Samudramathana, the "Churning of the Cosmic Ocean," elucidates, that Lord Vishnu spawned Tulasi from the turbulent ocean as a vital medicinal basil for all mankind.

More legends describe how the Goddess Herself came to reside on Earth as Tulasi. Another important allegory shows that the plant as the fourth incarnation of the Goddess who appeared as Tulasi at the beginning of the present age, the Kali yuga.

Generally, worshipers of Lord Vishnu will envisage Tulasi as Goddess Lakshmi or Goddess Vrinda; devotees of Lord Rama may view Tulasi as Sita; while Lord Krishna bhakthas revere Her as Goddess Vrinda, Goddess Radha or Goddess Rukmani.

In Sanskrit the term Tulasi that which is incomparable and the most sacred is called Tulasi. Impressed by her devotion and adherence to righteousness, Tulasi the wife of a celestial being was blessed by Lord Krishna that she would be worshipped by all, offerings would be incomplete without the offering of Tulasi. She also symbolises Goddess Lakshmi. Those who wish a righteous life also worship Tulasi.

The qualities of Tulasi are:

- 1) Kalyani - Normally poisonous snakes and mosquitos do not come close to it due to some smell that it emits. That explains why it is a must in every house. The leaves as well roots are a cure for several diseases like malaria, cold, fever, acidity. The wood of this plant is used for japa Mala, a rosary for worship of Lord Vishnu and when worn in the neck it prevents diseases of the throat.
- 2) Visnu Priya - Tulasi is normally expressed as the beloved of Lord Vishnu as he is the creator and Tulasi helps the health of human beings and animals, prevents soil erosion.

3) Moksha prada – While maintaining the body in healthy condition, it keeps the mind healthy and free of worries enabling us to concentrate on worship of the Ultimate Reality with peace of mind.

Tulsi, along with all other species of basil, possesses remarkable physical and spiritually healing properties. Tulasi has been praised in Indian scriptures and lore since the time of the early Vedas as an herb that cures blood and skin diseases. Ancient treatises extol it as an antidote for poisons, a curative for kidney disease and arthritis, a preventative for mosquito and insect bites, and a purifier of polluted air.

Tulasi is used to maintain ritual purity, to purify if polluted and to ward off evil. A leaf is kept in the mouth of the dying to insure passage to heavenly realms. During an eclipse, leaves are ingested and also placed in cooked food and stored water to ward off psychic pollution. Funeral pyres often contain Tulasi wood to protect the spirit of the dead as Bhutagni, destroyer of demons. Tulasi leaves and sprigs are hung in the entryways of homes to keep away troublesome spirits, and the mere presence of the Tulasi shrine is said to keep the entire home pure, peaceful and harmonious.

Scientific studies have established and the results show the importance and the medicinal significance of this herb which are summarised as follows;

- The juice of Tulasi with a small quantity when taken reduces the Blood Cholesterol
- The juice of Tulasi with honey, push out the kidney stone
- The juice of Tulasi leave could be used to lower the temperature of the fever.
- Chewing Tulasi leaves provides a incredible relief from cold and flu.
- Goggling by the Tulasi boiled water relieves the sore throat.
- A few drops of the juice of Krishna Tulasi leaves in eyes will soothe the sour eyes.
- The paste of Tulasi roots is commonly used as a remedy for insect bites
- Chewing Tulasi leave will rescue from the mouth infections.
- Appling Tulasi paste reduces the pains like headache.

Tulsi Sthothram

*Yenmoole Sarvatheerthaani Yenmadhye Sarvadevatha
Yadagre Sarva Vedaascha Thulaseem-tham Namamyaham*

Meaning:

I bow down to the Tulasi at whose base are all the holy places, at whose top reside all deities and on whose middle are all the Vedas.

Attachment.:

Tulasi (*Ocimum sanctum*) is one of the most sacred plants in the Hindu worship rituals and in aurvedic treatment. Tulasi gives Sattwa, (positivity) and healing power. It smoothns the heart beat, refreshes the mind, increases the sense of spiritual love, and enhances devotion, faith, compassion and clarity. In addition it helps to develop pure awareness.

The juice of the leaf of Tulasi helps to enhance the quality of Rasa Dhatu (nutrient plasma), Rakta Dhatu (blood), Majja Dhatu (bone marrow and nerves) as well as Shukra Dhatu (reproductive fluids). All the offerings in a ritual would be incomplete without using the leaf. The *tulasi* leaf has great medicinal value and is used to cure various ailments, including the common cold.

The decoction of the green Thulsi leaf obtained by boiling basil leaves in water is taken as a medicine for sore throat in aurvedic treatment. The juice of Thulsi leaves is very valuable for the treatment of skin diseases. It has also been tried successfully by some naturopaths in the treatment of leucoderma.

The decoction of the green Thulsi leaf helps in activating the function of the kidneys. The leaf of Thulsi is an important constituent of many Ayurvedic cough syrups and expectorants. It helps to mobilize mucus in bronchitis and asthma. Chewing Thulsi leaves relieves cold and flu.

The leaves are considered as a stimulant for nervous disorders. It increases memory power. The leaves encourage the elimination of the catarrhal wastes and phlegm from the bronchial system. The leaves strengthen the stomach and induce bountiful perspiration. Ordinary pediatric problems such as coughs, colds, fever, diarrheas vomiting etc. respond satisfactorily to the decoction of the Thulsi leaves.

The leaves are very effective against all the infections of the mouth. In the rainy season, when malaria and dengue fever are widely prevalent, tender leaves, boiled with tea, act as a preventive against these diseases, and is used in villages as follows; A handful of Thulsi leaves are boiled with cardamom powder in 500 ml of water and this decoction is used to bring down the body temperature. The Thulsi leaf is useful for the treatment of teeth problems. The Thulsi leaves are dried powdered and used for brushing teeth. It can also be mixed with mustard oil to make a paste and used as toothpaste. It is also useful in pyorrhea and other teeth disorders according to aurvedic treatement

The herb is useful in the treatment of respiratory disorders. A decoction of the leaves, with honey and ginger is an effective remedy for bronchitis, asthma, influenza, cough and cold. A decoction of the leaves, cloves and common salt also gives immediate relief in case of influenza. They should be boiled in half a liter of water till only half the water is left and add then taken. Basil juice is an effective remedy for sore eyes which is generally caused by deficiency of vitamin A. A few drops of the juice taken from the black type of Thulsi leaves are put into the eyes for a few days to over come this problem.

Thulsi leaf has a favorable effect in cardiac ailments. This leaf reduces the cholesterol level of the blood. A decoction of the of the Thulsi leaves can be taken for painful headache. Minced Thulsi leaves mixed with sandalwood paste could be applied on the forehead to cure a headache. The herb is a prophylactic or protective and curative against insect stings (bites). A small quantity of the juice of the Thulsi leaves is applied repeatedly on the wound for a few hours. A paste of fresh roots of the Thulsi plant is also considered as effective for the bites of leeches. Thulsi leaves are regarded as an anti-stress agent. Anyone may chew up a few leaves of Thulsi leaves, daily, which will definitely prevent stress.

9. What are the eight rasas refered in Natyasastra?

The Natyasastra referes to eight rasa, and to 108 kinds of hand poses used in dancing. The rasa is itself divided in the Natyasastra into sentiments or tastes; eight

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| i. reotic (srngara). | v. heroic(vira), |
| ii. comic(hasya) | vi. terrible(bhayankara), |
| iii. pathetic(karuna), | vii. odious(bibhatsa), |
| iv. furious(raudra) | viii. marvelous(adbhuta) |

10. What is meant by Bhaumika, Kudyaka, and Urddhvka decorative (chithra) painting refered in Silpasasstra?

According to Bhattacharya(1947),the chira is divided into the Bhaumika, Kudyaka,andUrddhvka with reference to their position in the house. Bhaumika chitra ment decorations on the floors which might be painted using powdered or tinctured colours, inlaid with coloured stones and gems. The decorations on the walls were called kudyaka, and those on the top of pillars, beams and celings as Urddhvaka chitra. Thses classifications could be applied to paintings as well as sculpture

11. "knowledge of the Self is really the Vedânta, which is, the end, the highest goal of the Veda. The highest wisdom of Greece was 'to know ourselves;' the highest wisdom of Hinduism is 'to know our Self.'" is a famous quotation. Can you explain this concept simplified by ordinary age old proverbs like language used in villages?

A few statements are listed below:

"As two logs of wood meet upon the ocean and then separate again, thus do living creatures meet.

"Family, wife, children, our very body and our wealth, they all pass away. They do not belong to us. What then is ours? Our good and our evil deeds.

"When thou goes away from here, no one will follow thee. Only thy good and thy evil deeds, they will follow thee wherever thou goest.

"Whatever act, good or bad, a man performs, of that by necessity he receives the recompense.

"According to the Veda the soul (life) is eternal, but the body of all creatures is perishable. When the body is destroyed, the soul departs elsewhere, fettered by the bonds of our works.

"If I know that my own body is not mine, and yet that the whole earth is mine, and again that it is both mine and thine, no harm can happen then.

"As a man puts on new garments in this world, throwing aside those which he formerly wore, even so the Self of man puts on new bodies which are in accordance with his acts.

"No weapons will hurt the Self of man, no fire will burn it, no water moisten it, no wind will dry it up.

"It is not to be hurt, not to be burnt, not to be moistened, not to be dried up. It is imperishable, unchanging, and immovable, without beginning.

"It is said to be immaterial, passing all understanding, and unchangeable. If you know the Self of man to be all this, grieve not.

"There is nothing higher than the attainment of the knowledge of the Self.

"All living creatures are the dwelling of the Self who lies enveloped in matter, who is immortal, and spotless. Those who worship the Self, the immovable, living in a movable dwelling, become immortal.

"Despising everything else, a wise man should strive after the knowledge of the Self."

"knowledge of the Self is really the Vedânta, that is, the end, the highest goal of the Veda. The highest wisdom of Greece was "to know ourselves;" the highest wisdom of Hinduism is "to know our Self."

Siva is the Guru of all Gurus, and the five lettered mantra (Om Namah Sivaya) is the most basic building block of all Sanskrit sadhana. From the five-lettered mantra, we go to the nine-lettered mantra, to the mantra with eleven syllables, and so on. It grows and grows in complexity, sophistication and in the various qualities that a seeker will want to increase as he or she proceeds along the path. Start with the five-lettered mantra if you don't have a Guru. If you worship Siva, He will send the Guru who is appropriate for your personal development.

— from Before Becoming This

Worship does not mean the memorization of mantras, or even the proper placement of the flowers and other objects. Worship is an attitude of respect, of dedication, of devotion to the exclusion of selfishness.

— from Siva Puja and Advanced Yajna

Show respect through your every action. If you serve truth, even disregarding all temptation to forsake the truth then you will attain divine strength.

— from Gems of Wisdom