

Hinduism - Quotes from Their Scriptures

Hymn to Purusha

Thousand-headed Purusha, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed—he having pervaded the earth on all sides, still extends ten fingers beyond it. Purusha alone is all this – whatever has been and whatever is going to be. Further, he is the lord of immortality and also of what grows for food...All creatures constitute but one quarter of him, his three quarters are the immortal in heaven...When the gods performed the sacrifice with Purusha as the oblation...from that wholly offered sacrificial oblation were born the verses and the sacred chants¹; from it were born the meters; the sacrificial formula was born from it. From it horses were born and also those animals who have double rows of teeth; cows were born from it, from it were born goats and sheep. When they divided Purusha, in how many different portions did they arrange him?...

His mouth became the Brahmin; his two arms were made into the rajanya (Kshatriya); his two thighs the Vaishyas; from his two feet the Sudra was born.² The moon was born from the mind, from the eye the sun was born; from the mouth Indra and Agni, from the breath the wind was born. For the navel was the atmosphere created, from the head the heaven issued forth; from the two feet was born the earth and the quarters (the cardinal directions) from the ear. Thus did they fashion the worlds.

Creation Hymn

Then there was neither being (Sat) nor non-being (Asat); there was no air, nor firmament beyond it. Was there a stirring? Where? Beneath what cover? Was there a great abyss of unplumbed water?

There was not death nor anything immortal; Nor any sign dividing day from night. That One Thing, given no breath, was yet self-breathing; No second thing existed whatsoever.

Darkness was hidden in a deeper darkness; This all was as a sea without dimensions; The Void still held unformed what was potential, Until the power of Warmth produced the sole One.

Then, in that One, Desire stirred into being, Desire that was the earliest seed of Spirit...Bestowers of the seed were there; and powers; Free energy below; above, swift action.

Who truly knows, and who can here declare it? Whence It was born, and how this world was fashioned? The gods came later³ than the earth's creation: Who knows then out of what the world has issued?

Whether the world was made or was self-made, He knows with full assurance, he alone, Who in the highest heaven guards and watches; He knows indeed, but then, perhaps, he know not!

¹ Verses, chants, meters = Vedas

² These are various Hindu casts

³ The gods are a process of creation

Hymn to Cow⁴

Worship to thee, springing to life, and worship to thee when born! Worship, O Cow, to thy tail-hair, and to thy hooves, and to thy form! Hitherward we invite with prayer the Cow who pours a thousand streams, By whom the heaven, by whom the earth, by whom these waters are preserved...Forth from thy mouth the songs came, from thy neck's nape sprang strength, O Cow.

Selected Quotations from the Upanishads

In the beginning all was Brahman, One and infinite. He is beyond north and south, and east and west, and beyond what is above or below. His infinity is everywhere. In him there is neither above, nor across, now below; and in him there is neither east nor west.

The Spirit supreme is immeasurable, inapprehensible, beyond conception, never-born, beyond reasoning, beyond thought. His vastness is the vastness of space.

At the end of the worlds, all things sleep: he alone is awake in Eternity. Then from his infinite space new worlds arise and awake, a universe which is a vastness of thought. In the consciousness of Brahman the universe is, and into him it returns. Maitri Upanishads

Concealed in the heart of all beings is the Atman, the Spirit, the Self; smaller than the smallest atom, greater than the vast spaces...Know the Atman as the Lord of a chariot; and the body as the chariot itself. Know that reason is the charioteer and the mind indeed is the reins. The horses, they say, are the senses; and their paths are the objects of sense. When the soul becomes one with the mind and the senses he is called 'one who has joys and sorrows'. He who has not right understanding and whose mind is never steady is not the ruler of his life, like a bad driver with wild horses. But he who has right understanding and whose mind is ever steady is the ruler of his life, like a good driver with well-trained horses. Katha Upanishad

[Concerning the relationship between the Brahman (eternal being) and the atman (self being): "In the macrocosm of the universe, the sages saw Brahman; in the microcosm of their own being they saw the atman. The realization that there is no distinction between the two, that the ground of one's own being is identical with the ground of the universe, is the great discovery of the Upanishadic thinkers." Page 59 of *The Hindu Tradition* by A.T. Ambree.]

Then the father said to him: "That salt which you put in the water last evening – please, bring it hither." Even having looked for it, he did not find it, for it was completely dissolved. "Please take a sip of water from this end," said the father. "How is it?" "Salt." "Take a sip from the middle," said the father. "How is it?" "Salt." "Take a sip from that end," said he. "How is it?" "Salt." "Throw it away and come to me." Shvetaketu did so thinking to himself: "That salt, though unperceived, still persists in the water." Then Aruni said to him: "Verily, my dear, you do not perceive Being in this world; but it is, indeed, here only: That which is the subtle essence – this whole world had that essence for its Self. That is the Real. That is the Self. That art thou, Shvetaketu." Chandogya Upanishad

Brahman is all and Atman is Brahman. Atman, the Self, has four conditions. The first condition is the waking life...The second condition is the dreaming life of inner-moving consciousness...The third condition is the sleeping life of silent consciousness when a person has no desires and beholds no

⁴ By 1500 BC the cow is already considered a sacred animal

dreams... The fourth condition is Atman in his own pure state: the awakened life of supreme consciousness. It is neither outer nor inner consciousness, neither semi-consciousness, nor sleeping-consciousness, neither consciousness nor unconsciousness. He is Atman, the Spirit himself... This Atman is the eternal Word OM. Its three sounds, A, U, and M, are the first three states of consciousness... The word OM as one sound is the fourth state of supreme consciousness. Mandukya Upanishad

Saving Knowledge

The man who surrenders his human will leaves sorrows behind, and beholds the glory of the Atman... When the wise realize the omnipresent Spirit, who rests invisible in the visible and permanent, then they go beyond sorrow... Not even through deep knowledge can the Atman be reached, unless evil ways are abandoned, and there is rest in the senses, concentration in the mind and peace in one's heart... a sage who sought immortality looked within himself and found his own Soul. Katha Upanishad

Destiny After Death

Atman, the Spirit of vision, is never born and never dies. Before him there was nothing, and he is ONE for evermore. Never-born and eternal, beyond times gone or to come, he does not die when the body dies. If the slayer thinks that he kills, and if the slain thinks that he dies, neither knows the ways of truth. The Eternal in man cannot kill: the Eternal in man cannot die. Katha Upanishad

Karma

According as a man acts and walks in the Path of life, so he becomes. He that does good becomes good; he that does evil becomes evil. By pure actions he becomes pure; by evil actions he becomes evil. Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad

Samsara⁵

Accordingly, those who are of pleasant conduct here – the prospect is, indeed, that they will enter a pleasant womb, either the womb of a Brahman, or the womb of a Kshatriya, or the womb of a Vaishya. But those who are of stinking conduct here – the prospect is, indeed, that they will enter a stinking womb, either the womb of a dog, or the womb of a swine, or the womb of an outcast... Chandogya Upanishad

The Goal of Hinduism

The wise one (the Self) is not born, nor dies. This one has not come from anywhere, has not become anyone. Unborn, constant, eternal, primeval, this one is not slain when the body is slain... He, however, who has not understanding, who is unmindful and ever impure, reaches not the goal, but goes on to reincarnation. He, however, who has understanding, who is mindful and ever pure, reaches the goal from which he is born no more... When are liberated all the desires that lodge in one's heart, then a mortal becomes immortal! Therein he reaches Brahman! When are cut all the knots of the heart here on earth, then a mortal becomes immortal! Katha Upanishad

⁵ The wheel of rebirth

A quote from the Bhagavad Gita illustrating the different yogas

The Bhagavad Gita (or, Song of the Blessed Lord) is one section of the epic Mahabharata. The Mahabharata is the longest poem in the world – over one hundred thousand couplets, thirty times as long as Paradise Lost.

Much of the Bhagavad Gita is a dialogue between Krishna (a hero god) and Arjuna (a warrior). As Arjuna faces battle, he is paralyzed by doubts; Krishna responds with a discussion that covers the way of action and the way of meditation, but underscores love as the most suitable way of salvation:

Let right deeds be
Thy motive, not the fruit which comes from them.
And live in action! Labor! Make thine acts
Thy piety, casting all self aside.
Contemning gain and merit...
in performance of plain duty man
Mounts to his highest bliss...

This section describes
Karma Yoga, the way of
action and duty.

Sequestered should he sit,
Steadfastly meditating, solitary,
His thoughts controlled, his passions laid away,
Quit of belongings,. In a fair, still spot
Having his fixed abode, - not too much raised,
Nor yet too low, - let him abide, his goods
A cloth, a deerskin, and the Kusa-grass.
There, setting hard his mind upon The One,
Restraining heart and senses, silent, clam,
Let him accomplish Yoga, and achieve pureness of soul...

This section describes
Jnana Yoga, the way of
meditation.

For he that laboreth right for love of Me
Shall finally attain! But, if in this
Thy faint heart fails, bring Me thy failure! Find
Refuge in Me! Let fruits of labor go,
Renouncing all for Me, with lowliest heart,
So shalt thou come; for, though to know is more
Than diligence, yet worship better is
Than knowing, and renouncing better still.
Near to renunciation – very near –
Dwelleth Eternal Peace!

This section describes
Bhakti Yoga, the way of
love and devotion (to a
particular deity).

Be certain none can perish, trusting Me! O Pritha's Son! Whose will turn to Me. Though they be born from the very womb of Sin, Woman or man; spring of the Vaisya caste or lowly disregarded Sudra, - all Plant foot upon the highest path.⁶

⁶ The way of love is open to all, even women and low castes.