

The Nature of Our Soul



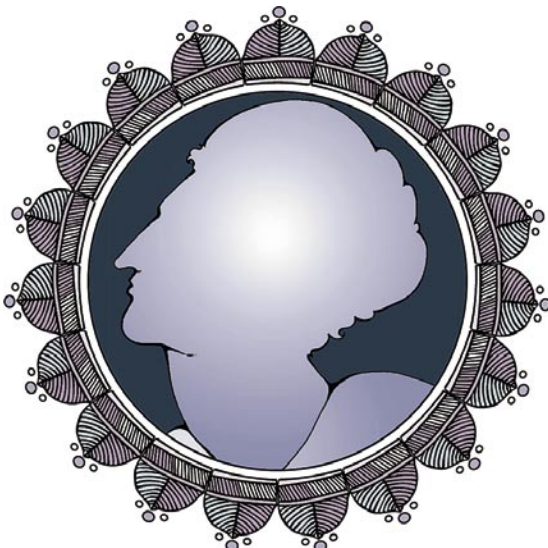
What Is the Nature of Our Soul?

Sloka 26: Our soul is a body of light which never dies. It reincarnates, taking a new physical body again and again to create and resolve *karma*. After many lives of experience, it knows God fully. Then it does not need to reincarnate again.



How Is Our Soul Different from Siva?

Sloka 27: God Siva, the First Soul, created our soul to be just like Him, but it is still becoming fully perfect. Siva's body is perfect. Our soul body is still maturing. Eventually, we will grow to be exactly like Siva.



How Is Our Soul The Same as Siva?

Sloka 28: The essence of our soul is identical with Siva right now. It was never created. This essence is the love that flows through everything and the Truth that lies beyond everything. This deepest part of us is perfect right now.



Why Don't We Know Everything Like Lord Siva?

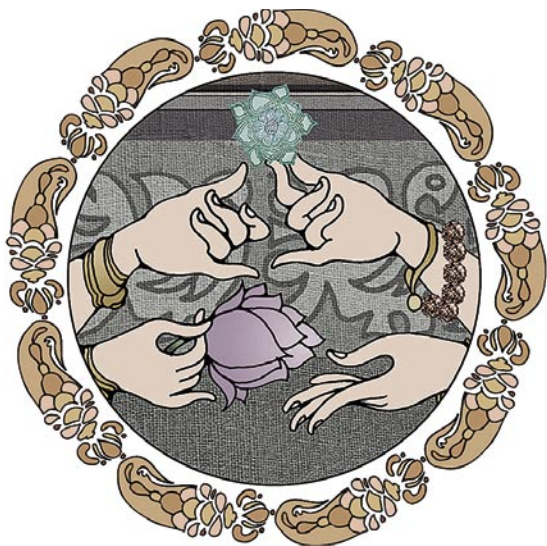
Sloka 29: The three bonds of ego, *karma* and the experiences of the world blind our sight. God Siva created these to help us grow and learn. Deep within, we share God Siva's all-knowingness.



What Is the Freedom Known as Moksha?

Sloka 30: *Moksha* is freedom from the need to be born again on Earth. All souls one day attain *moksha*, after which the soul continues to mature in the higher astral world and divine world. Finally, it merges with Siva completely, like a river with the sea.

Karma and Rebirth



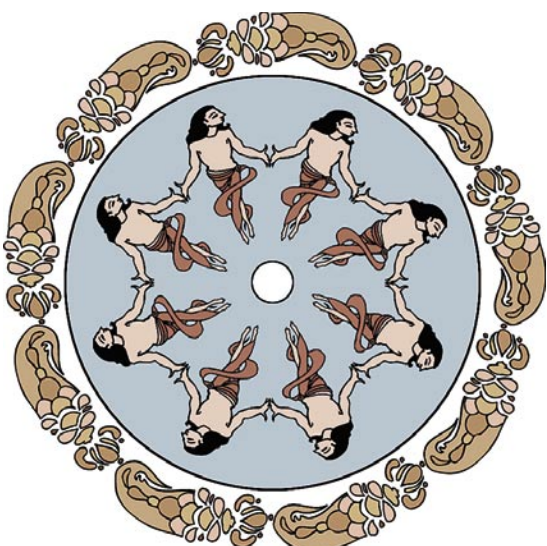
How Do Hindus Understand Karma?

Sloka 31: *Karma* means “deed” or “act.” It names the great law of cause and effect, or action and reaction, which we experience every day. *Karma* is a universal law of the mind, just as gravity is a law of matter.



Is There Good Karma And Bad Karma?

Sloka 32: In the highest sense, there is no good or bad *karma*. All *karmas* help us to learn and grow, whether they seem good or bad. Selfless acts are uplifting, and selfish acts cause confusion and unhappiness.



What Is Reincarnation?

Sloka 33: Reincarnation is the natural process of birth, death and rebirth. At death our soul drops off the physical body and continues evolving in the inner worlds in subtle bodies. In time we enter into birth again.

What Should We Think about Death?

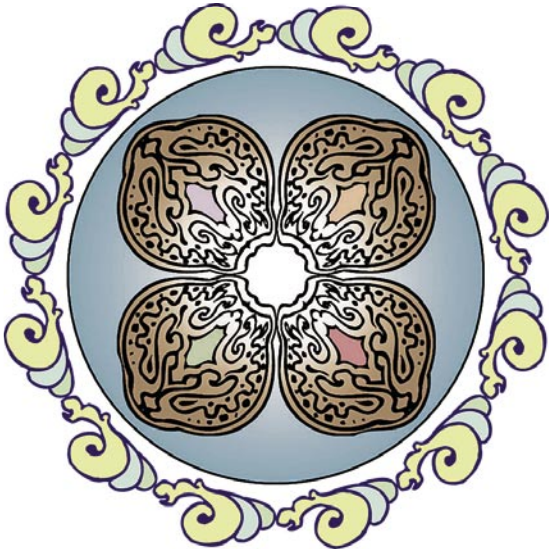
Sloka 34: Our soul never dies; only the physical body dies. We do not fear death. We also do not look forward to it. But it is a very important experience. Life, death and our time after death are all part of our path to perfect oneness with God.

How Should We Prepare for Death?

Sloka 35: When we know we are going to die soon, we heal all relationships and settle the duties of our life. Preparing to depart, we chant our *mantra*, meditate, worship God and read scripture. We seek the inner light as we happily let go of the world.



The Way to Liberation



What Are the Four Stages on the Path?

Sloka 36: The path of enlightenment has four stages: *charya*, virtue and selfless service; *kriya*, devotional acts; *yoga*, meditation under a *guru's* guidance; and *jnana*, the wisdom state of the realized soul.



What Is the Charya Stage?

Sloka 37: *Charya* is performing religious service and living according to good conduct and traditional culture. Living right purifies our outer nature and helps us overcome basic instinctive patterns.



What Is the Kriya Stage?

Sloka 38: *Kriya* is worshiping regularly in the temple and home shrine. *Kriya* includes rituals, reciting our *mantra*, studying scripture and performing penance, such as fasting. All of this deepens our love and understanding of God and Gods.



What Is the Yoga Stage?

Sloka 39: *Yoga* is inner worship which leads to union with God. It includes meditating regularly, disciplining desire and performing austerities under the guidance of a *satguru*, the enlightened one who helps us to realize our divine Self.



What Is the Jnana Stage?

Sloka 40: *Jnana* is the highest state of human life, achieved after many births and countless deep spiritual experiences. It is divine wisdom flowing from an enlightened being, an old soul, who knows God and is filled with love. *Jnana* is the result of *yoga* well performed.

The Three Worlds



Where Did This Universe Come from?

Sloka 41: God Siva created the world and all things in it. He creates from moment to moment every atom of the physical universe that we can see and the spiritual universe we cannot see. Everything is within Him. He is within everything.



What Is the Nature of The Physical World?

Sloka 42: The physical world is called the Bhuloka. It is the realm of material substance. Everything in the physical world is experienced through the five senses. It is the smallest of the three worlds, and the one most subject to change.



What Is the Nature of The Subtle World?

Sloka 43: The subtle world is called the Antar-loka. It is the mental-emotional plane that we experience through thought and feeling. It is where we live fully when we sleep and when we die. This astral world exists inside the physical world.

What Is the Nature of The Divine World?

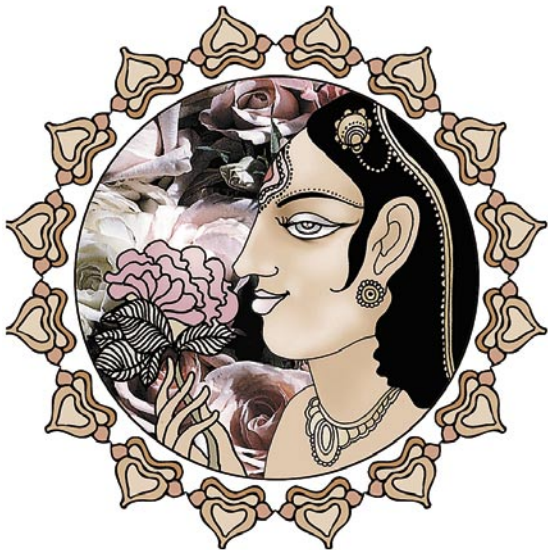
Sloka 44: The divine world, called the Siv-loka, is the highest of heavens and home of our true Self. This realm of light, where the Gods and great souls live, exists deep within the subtle world. We can experience it through meditation and temple worship.

Does the Universe Ever End? Is it Real?

Sloka 45: The universe ends when time, form and space merge in God. This is called the Great Dissolution, but it is not permanent. Everything is created again by God Siva in the next cosmic cycle. The universe is real, not an illusion, though it is constantly changing.



The Goodness of All



Are Souls and World Essentially Good?

Sloka 46: Deep down, the real nature of all people is their soul, which is goodness. The world, too, is God's perfect creation. Everything is in balance. Everything has a purpose. There are things that appear to be evil, but they are not, and, deep down, nobody is truly evil.



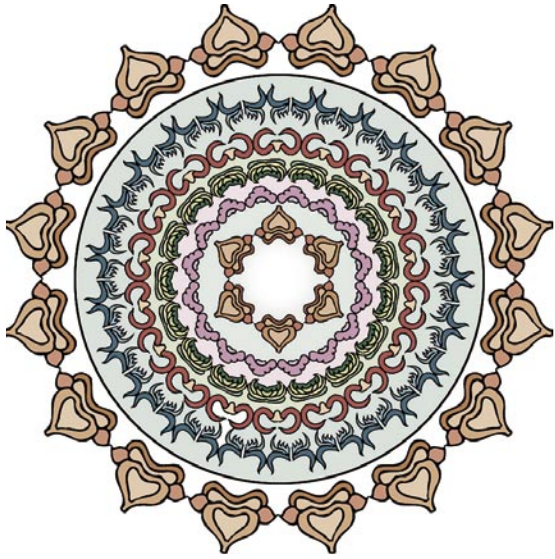
Why Do Some Souls Act in Evil Ways?

Sloka 47: People who forget that they are souls act in evil ways. They are living completely in their outer, animal nature. The ignorant see this as evil, but the wise see it as the low-minded actions of spiritually immature individuals.



What Is the Source of Good and Evil?

Sloka 48: Rather than seeing good and evil in the world, we understand that the nature of people is threefold: the lower animal nature of emotions and instincts, the middle nature of the intellect and the higher nature of divine consciousness.



How Can a Kindly God Permit Evil?

Sloka 49: In the deepest sense, there is no good or bad. God did not create evil as a force separate from good. He gave the ideals of *dharma*. He lets us make our own choices in life, so we can learn and grow from our successes and mistakes.



Should We Avoid the World?

Sloka 50: The world is a wonderful creation of a loving God, never to be avoided. Siva wants us to live positively in the world. He wants us to face karma and live according to *dharma*. We must not hate or fear the world. Life is meant to be lived joyously.

Sin and Suffering



Why Is There Suffering in the World?

Sloka 51: The nature of the world is duality, which means it contains each thing and its opposite: joy and sorrow, goodness and evil, love and hate. By experiencing these, we learn and grow. Finally, we seek Truth beyond all opposites.



What Is Sin? How Can We Atone for It?

Sloka 52: Sin is breaking God's divine law on purpose. There is no inherent or "original" sin. Also, no sin burdens the soul forever. Through religious disciplines, worship and penance, we can overcome the negative effects of any sin.



Does Hell Really Exist? Is There a Satan?

Sloka 53: There is no eternal hell, and there is no Satan. However, there are hellish states of mind and miserable births for those who think and act badly. But such fiery, hellish experiences and lives do not last forever.



What Is the Consequence of Sinful Acts?

Sloka 54: When we do not think, speak and act nicely, we create negative *karmas* and bring suffering upon ourselves and others. When we ignore divine guidance and act wrongly by following our lower nature, we always suffer.

Does God Ever Punish Wrongdoers?

Sloka 55: God is perfect goodness, love and truth. He is not angry or mean. He does not condemn or punish those who act wrongly. Jealousy, meanness and pride are qualities of man's instinctive nature, not of God.

