

पृथिवी दक्षिणा चात्र  
विधिः प्रथमकल्पितः ।  
विद्विद्धिः परिदृष्टोऽयं  
शिष्टो विधिविपर्ययः ॥

Pr̥thivī dakṣiṇā chātra  
vidhiḥ prathamakalpitaḥ,  
Vidvadbhiḥ pariḍr̥ṣto'yam  
Śiṣto vidhiviparyayaḥ.

---Mahābhārata14.11.30

“In Aśvamedha-Yajña the whole land is to be offered for donation to society. This is the main theme of all learned scholars.”

Anything else is contrary to the spirit of Aśvamedha-Yajña. Śrī Rāma ruled in a democratic fashion. He discussed issues democratically with his cabinet ministers and sought input from the ministers. After vanquishing Rāvaṇa and completing the term of exile, he and his constituents undertook Aśvamedha-Yajña. Because of Śrī Rāma's democratic approach of including all his citizens in the development of the nation or, in other words, the under taking of

Aśvamedha-Yajña, he is revered by the people of India, the Buddhists of Thailand and Cambodia, and, also, by the Muslims of Indonesia even today.

Q (33): How many religious ceremonies do Hindūs have? Name the rites of passages or religious ceremonies of **Sanskārs or sacraments**?

A (33): There are sixteen religious ceremonies known as Sanskārs, sacraments in life of a person (Manu2/2, 2/4, 2/5-8, 2/9, 2/35, 2/11-43, 2/44-224, 2/40, 3/1-3, 3/4-62, 3/67-286, 5/167, 6/1-32, 6/33-97, 12/82-125).

**The Sanskārs are performed for the physical, social, and spiritual development of a person.**

In these ceremonies Agnihoṭra plays a very important part. These ceremonies are indicative of an individual's development and the acceptance of that stage of development by the family and society. The acknowledgment of this unique individualization process at every step of growth helps enrich the life of the person. **Sanskārs prepare one for the next stage of growth.** It promotes potential and progress in all aspects of life, including the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual. Sequentially, these ceremonies are outlined to fulfill one's role from the beginning to the end of life.

1. **Garbhādhāna** - Conception acceptance ceremony. (After solemnizing marriage ceremony.)

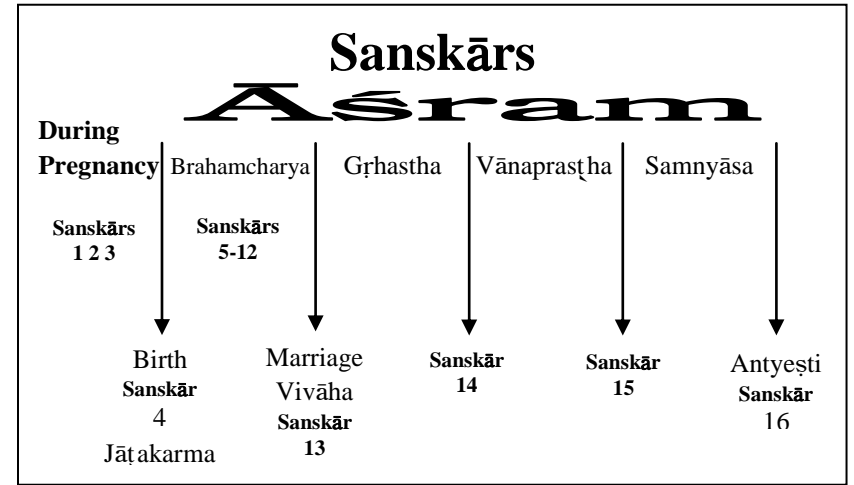
2. **Punsavana** - Ceremony of graceful care of the embryo to the development of the fetus. Usually it is undertaken during the second or third month of pregnancy, the first trimester.
3. **Sīmāṅṭonnayana** - Inviting God's blessings for the development of the fetus to full birth. Usually it is conducted from the fourth month of pregnancy, and, onwards, into the second, and the third trimester of pregnancy, similar to the ladies shower in the west.
4. **Jātakarma** - Accepting and identifying the newborn as an individual.
5. **Nāmakaraṇa** - Naming ceremony which is usually on the eleventh day, usually from birth to the twelve days.
6. **Niśkramaṇa** - Ceremony of invoking God's blessings to expose the new comer to the outside world and to pray for the well being of the baby. Usually this ceremony is conducted when the child is two to four months old.
7. **Annaprāśana** - Offering of solid food to the toddler, usually undertaken from four to six months of age.
8. **Chūdākarma** – Self-awareness ceremony. (One year and onwards.)
9. **Karṇavedha** - Self-esteem development ceremony, to help improve one's image and self-respect. It

- further enhances one's responsibility. (Usually three to five years).
10. **Upanayana** - School entrance initiation. To help control the fear of separation from parents, and to help overcome the anxiety of entering a strange place such as school. It is also called **Yajñopaveet Sanskār**. It is usually conducted at the age of five years and onwards.
  11. **Veḍārambha** - The education enrichment ceremony which is undertaken when the child is five years of age.
  12. **Samāvartana** – It is a welcoming ceremony to accept the grown-up as a qualified individual. It is undertaken after completion of studies, to return home, and to prepare for the next stage of life
  13. **Vivāha** - Marriage ceremony. To select an appropriate spouse and to start the second phase, as house-hold life or nuclear familial life. It is usually undertaken at twenty-five years of age which is the beginning of **Grihastha Āśram**.
  14. **Vānaprastha Āśram** - After enjoying and fulfilling all desires, Kāma; by earning money, Artha, through righteous means and undertaking benevolent deeds such as Dharma, one is now ready to march ahead in life to conquer all the remaining gratification.

Vānaprastha Āśram is the name of that stage of life. It is usually undertaken from fifty to seventy five years of age; and this stage is similar to a retirement planning state. Thus the stage is set for introspection and reassessment of the goals of life. The next stage is for complete renunciation.

15. **Samnyāsa Āśram** - Samnyāsa is the selfless service to mankind that is attained by spiritual awakening. When someone dedicates his or her life for societal upliftment without any personal gain, the person has entered the Samnyāsa Āśram, and the ceremony confers the title of Samnyāsa. A Samnyāsī is one who devotes oneself to the service of mankind. A Samnyāsī, usually, wears an orange robe to symbolize the self-less service to humanity. The orange color is a symbolic representative of blood. In other words a Samnyāsī is ready to sacrifice his or her life for the societal upliftment. **Thus a Samnyāsī is dedicated to serve society selflessly.** One may directly choose this phase of life from Brahmacharya Āśram if one is so inclined. It is usually undertaken at the age of seventy-five years, onward.

Note: The flag of the Vaidic-Hindū society is of an orange color. **The orange color is representative of the dedication, or Yajña, in order to undertake altruistic efforts to serve society selflessly.**



16. **Antyeṣṭi** - This is the last ceremony. When the soul has left the mortal body, the remains are cremated. This ceremony is called Antyeṣṭi. **Narameḍha or Puruṣmeḍha are other terms used for Antyeṣṭi.** The body elements are consumed by fire, and the remains are disposed to nature, Prakṛti. The body disintegrates to the five primary elements: earth, water, air, dynamic energy, and space, and the cycle starts all over again. **Practical significance:** If any-one does not wish to learn any skill, nor to complete education, nor to follow the Sanskār of Brahmcharya Āśram, then, one has failed himself or herself to be self-sufficient, and one has not prepared for righteous living. Now, can one imagine what kind of societal structure humanity is going to bare? Lack of Sanskār has been linked to innumerable consequences such as: child abuse, domestic violence, spread of venereal diseases, teenage

pregnancy, increased infants mortality, broken families, fraud, and other criminal ills. **Anthropologists have verified the destruction of those cultures who do not initiate their youths.**

Sanskārs are the community events that mark the process of ending childhood with dependencies on parents. One attains a new social status. There is a new level of social responsibility which is conferred through rituals and initiation. Thus, it is a rite of passage, indeed, welcoming the young person into the larger community of adults.

**Sanskārs are essential parts of life to deal with the crisis in transition from adolescence to adulthood and, then, into mid-life. Sanskārs allay the anxiety, develop the social support system, instill coping skills that adopt to new frontiers of life, and provide the social cohesion that is so important to survive. After all, human beings are social beings, and the Sanskārs make better human beings.**

Q (34): Describe Āśram and how one should lead a life?

A (34): Āśram is a Sanskr̥t word that can be used to describe either a place or a phase of life. There are four phases, or Āśrams, in the life of a person. The Vedas have determined that the human life span consists of one hundred years. Manu, the law provider, compiled all the natural laws in a book called *Manusmṛti*.

Human life is divided into four stages that are necessary for an individual, as well as, for societal growth and prosperity. *Manusmṛti* describes the manner in which to live. Four further points are listed as follows:

1. **Brahmacharya Āśram** - The first phase of life, from birth to age 25, is designated to educate, to acquire skills, and to prepare one to earn a living.
2. **Gṛhastha Āśram** –The second phase of life, 25 to 50 years of age, is designated for further progress, prosperity, and propagation; such as marriage, children, and work.
3. **Vānaprastha Āśram** – The third phase of life, from 50 years to 75 years of age, is designated to the achievements of life. This stage is for exploring life's goals including retirement.
4. **Samnyāsa Āśram** – The fourth phase of life consists of the twilight years from seventy-five years of age onwards. This stage is meant to serve humanity and to impart gained knowledge and experiences, selflessly, for the betterment of whole universe. **Selfless service to humanity is the main motto of Samnyāsa Āśram.**

Brahmacharya Āśram is the first step in the journey of life. If one cannot support one's self by the end of Brahmacharya Āśram, age twenty-five, and the person has children, then, how can an inadequate and immature person support his or her own children? This leads to societal instability which is the cause of dysfunctional and chaotic family life which seriously

affects and impedes the community, society, country, and the nation as a whole.

The great scholar, Kalidāsa, described how to lead a life by beautifully condensing the lifestyle in one Śloka as follows:

शैशवेऽभ्यस्तविद्यानां यौवने विषयैषिणाम् ।  
वार्धक्ये मुनिवृत्तीनां योगेनान्ते  
तनुत्यजाम्॥

Śaiśave'abhyastavidyānām  
yauvane viṣayaiṣiṇām,  
Vārdhakyē munivṛttīnām  
yogenānte tanutyajām.

Raghuvamśa I/8

**“Study in childhood, enjoy the pleasures of adulthood, tame and detach from materialistic life, like a Muni sage in old age, and, in the end, one should leave the body like a Yogī.”**

Q (35): What is Varṇa?

A (35): Great Manu classified society into four sections to promote peace and prosperity (Manu 1.31). **These sections are based on aptitude, innate qualities,**

**inclinations, and voluntary vocational selections, or Karma that are never given by birth, Janamaṇa, but by vocations only. These sections are called Varṇas.** Varṇa is singular and is pronounced as varṇ.

The Varṇas are described as follows:

1. **Brāhmin: The intellectual class of society** is primarily engaged in devotional services to God. This includes the study of scriptures and imparting the gained knowledge to society through education. The method helps to propagate the study of scriptures (Manu 1.31), the “Think Tank” of the society.
2. **Kṣatriya: The governing class of society.** Kṣatriya includes rulers, warriors, and soldiers. The governing class is the ruling, martial, and administrative sector of society.
3. **Vaiśya: The commerce sector of society.** It consists mainly of traders, farmers, salespersons, and others who are engaged in production, or manufacturing, or distribution, and other related business or commerce.
4. **Śūdra: Śūdra** includes people who are physically inclined to work, those who are skilled and unskilled laborers, as well as, occupations in transportation and allied activities. **This is the service sector of the society.**

Q (36): Are these Varṇas to be treated differently?

A (36): No. All Varṇas are an essential part of society, and one is neither higher nor lower than the other. The caste system is wrong, and the system was propagated by the British to cause internal turmoil, so the people would be easier for them to rule. Vedas have described society as follows:

ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीद्बाहू राजन्यः  
 कृत्तः।  
 ऊरू तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पद्भ्याँ शूद्रो अजायत ॥

Brāhmaṇoasya mukhmāsiḍ bāhū  
 rājanyaḥ kṛṭah,  
 Urū ṭaḍasya yaḍvaiśyaḥ  
 paḍbhyām śuḍro ajāyaṭa.

---- Yajurveda 31/11

“By the grace of God that section of society which bestows knowledge through oratory powers are Brāhmins. Those who have powers to protect through arms are Kṣatriyas, and the ones who take care of the main body or trunk of the society, “prosperity,” are Vaiśyas, and the Śuḍras move society forward”.

Nirukṭa defines “Varṇa” as Varṇo Varṇote (2.1.40); Varṇa is whatever is adopted, implemented, or executed. As described earlier, **Varṇa is never “Janmanā”. It means Varṇa is never by birth, but by ones’ own propensities which is fallaciously portrayed by the caste system.**

Manu classified the society with good faith, but during the last millennium the classification has gone totally haywire. The most important factor remains to be the constant subjugation of Hindū society by foreign forces and ideologies.

**All Varṇas are equal. All Varṇas are equally important to sustain society. By virtue of this societal division, Hindū society was able to survive during the treacherous times of foreign subjugation, and not a single scripture sanctions differential treatment.**

Q (37): What is the difference between Brahman, Brahmā, and Brāhmin?

A (37): **Brahman:** The word Brahman is pronounced as “Brh-mn”. Brahman describes the Eternal, Supreme Being, the Absolute Ruler, and the Ultimate Reality that pervades and transcends all things, God.

**Brahmā:** It is pronounced as “b-r-h-maa”. Brahmā is a concrete representation of creating the

attribute of God as a Creator. Brahmā is expressed in the form of a trinity, or a mythological triad of Creator; Propagator; Re-Creator, or Destroyer, respectively, Brahmā + Viṣṇu + Śiva. Allegorically, Brahmā is represented by four faces to express the imparting of knowledge in all four directions: east, west, south, and north. Brahmā is also a title given to a designated person during Agnihoṭra who makes sure that all the activities of Agnihoṭra are conducted appropriately. Brahmā is a silent conductor and administrator of Agnihoṭra. Anyone who knows all the four Vedas is also called Brahmā.

**Brāhmin:** -It is pronounced as “Braa-h-min”. It is one of the four sections of society, or Varṇa, that is based on a vocational division. **It is an intellectual class of society that deals primarily with the devotional or priestly services to God** as described by the law provider, Manu. (See answer to number 35).

Q (38): What is the meaning of Hindūism?

A (38): The word Hindūism is an incorrect nomenclature which was coined by the British. Later on, the term was carried further by the ignorance of people having ulterior motives whose subtle intentions were to discredit and disgrace Hindū Dharma. There is not any “ism” in Hindū Dharma.

**The suffix, “ism,” refers to an ideology that is to be propagated and by any method imposed on others, for example, Marxism, socialism, communism, imperialism, and capitalism, but Hindūs have no “ism”.**

Hindūs have four Vedas and six books of philosophy with multiple scriptures of various earthly and spiritual sciences. Hindūs follow the continuum process of evolution, for the Hindūs do not have unidirectional ideology; therefore, in Hindū Dharma there is no place for “ism.” Hindūs are democratic in approach, for each individual is free to adopt any philosophy or way to salvation.

**Hindū Dharma is not an organized religion geared to promote one ideology over another. Hindū Dharma does not proselytize or impose on others as many other religions have done.**

**Hindū never had an “ism”. Hindū does not endorse an “ism”, and Hindū will never have an “ism”. Hindū Dharma is the correct and only connotation to be used to address the Hindū religion.**

Q (39): What is the difference between congregation and audience?

A (39): Hindūs, Jains, Buḍḍhists, and Sikhs, traditionally, have a body to conduct all religious activity which is called Sabhā, such as Sanātan Dharma Sabhā, Shiromaṇi Sabhā, and Jain Sabhā. Sabhā means the public is in attendance. All Dharmās are democratic, and Dharmas do not indoctrinate those in attendance. On the contrary, all organized religions have congregations. Those who are in attendance are indoctrinated, and, hence, those who attend are called congregations. For example, one philosophy is to be implemented over the group in attendance.

The correct word to use is “audience”; because, people come to attend “socio-religio-philosophical meetings” and ceremonies with an open mind. The audience may, or may not, agree with what is being discussed or addressed. **Hindū Dharma followers are free to think, and to practice any philosophy one may choose. In Hindū Dharma, everyone is at liberty to think freely, and to undertake personal growth, and to have prosperity.** To address any Hindū Dharma followers and attendees by the word “congregation” is inappropriate.

**The proper word to use to address Hindū religious attendees at any religious function is audience (Sabhā).**

Q (40): Is the Hindū religion an organized religion such as the religions of the Semite people, mainly, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism?

A (40): No. The Hindū religion does not have a central governing body, national, or international body to guide or to direct. It does not have a founder, a prophet, or a savior. Since time immemorial it has had a plethora of sages, saints, devotees, enlightened teachers, and reformers who have dedicated their lives for the betterment of humanity. The Hindū religion is a conglomeration of eternal teachings enshrined in the Vedas which have guided a democratic design. It has never fostered militancy, nor has it undertaken holy wars such as Jihad, or crusades, in order to convert people. Because of the Hindū religion, numerous tribes, sects, races, religions, and cultures are still thriving harmoniously in different geographical regions of India, and these tribal people have maintained their own identities, cultural heritage, and traditions for thousands of years. The strategy of organized religion has shifted in modern times to more subtleties, such as a means “to project an innocuous image through the media”, but the democratic openness of the Hindū approach has remained steadfast.

Q (41): If the Hindū religion is not an organized religion then, how, do Hindū priests make living and how non Hindūs are viewed by Hindūs?



A (41): Unlike Christian ministers or priests, who are paid to work, Hindū priests are usually unpaid. Hindū priests depend on donations. Hindūs see everyone equal and consider others as loving sons and daughters of God.

Yajurveda (11.5) states Śṛṅvanṭu viŚve amṛtasya puṭrāḥ: “ॐ ऋन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्राः। All are loving children of God.”

Note: Jews would call non Jews “Gentiles.” The Hebrew word “Goyin” is used for other non-Jewish nations and Jews that are converted to Christianity. Christians call Jews “Heathens,” and “Pagans” to non-Jews. Similarly Muslims would call non-Muslims in a derogatory way “Kāfirs”, and in the past have imposed “Jajia”-a form of tax for being non-Muslim. Hindūs have neither called other religious followers by any name, nor labeled others.

Q (42): In the world of cultures, which one is superior and which one is inferior?

A (42): According to the first principle of sociology, one culture cannot be compared to another (I. Robertson: Sociology, 1987); therefore, a culture may not be referred to as superior or inferior.

**\*Note: “Sarva Dharma Sambhava” means all Dharmas are equal. One must remember that only Dharmas are equitable, as they are natural principles. On the other hand, religions such as Christianity and Islam are not equivalent, for religions are created by human being (see the answer number two).**

Q (43): What are the various major religions of the world which are not found in India?

A (43): **None.** India is the mother of all world civilizations and religions, and India treats all religions with her motherly love. Even the spirituality of Semitic religions originated in India, Madame Louis Jacolliot researched and wrote many books on this topic. In Jacolliot’s most famous book “*La Bible Dans L’Inde*” (1876), Jacolliot stated: “**India is the world’s cradle; thence it is, that the common mother in sending forth her children even to the utmost West, in unfading testimony of our origin, bequeathed us the legacy of her language, her laws, her morale, her literature, and her religion**”.

Q (44): There are so many religions in the world, name a religion that scientifically analyzes how life should be lived?

A (44): **Hindū Dharma’s teachings have stood the test of time including the scientific justification regarding life and life goals. All other religions are beliefs, holding blind faiths, and dogmatic teachings in this approach. Only through Vaidic-Sanātan-Hindū Dharma can one acknowledge, practice, and realize the existence of God while living and enjoying life. God-realization is not a theory, but God realization is a reality. Through Paṭañjali’s Aṣṭāṅg Yoga, one may experience the bliss of the presence of God.**

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि  
जिजीविषेच्छत १०० समाः।  
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति  
न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥

Kurvanneveha Karmaṇi  
jijīviṣechchhaṭṭagm samāḥ,  
Evam tvayi nanyatheto'stī  
na karma lipyaṭe nare.

---Yajur veḍa 40.2

**The Vedas state “that human beings, desirous to live in this world for one hundred years, must engage industriously. There is no other way in this life, for the industriousness does not automatically cling, and one must earn it if one wants to live that life”.**

Q (45): What is the goal of life?

A (45): Vaidic scriptures have summarized the goal of life in one statement; धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणां सर्वा सद्यः सिद्धिर्भवेन्नः “Dharmārtha -kāma -mokṣāṇām sarvā

saḍyaḥ siḍḍhir bhavennaḥ”. In English, it means “by leading a virtuous life one may acquire wealth righteously, and one may enjoy and fulfill righteously all these desires. Ultimately, one masters all these desires and liberates oneself from the clutches of all desires; therefore, one may be the master of the self.”

**This liberation is called Mokṣa which is the purpose of life.**

When the soul gets to the highest stage of spiritual development, or evolution, then, one may attain ultimate peace. **This is the final position of the soul where there is no more desire or suffering that is called Mokṣa, the liberated state of the soul. This state of existence is commonly known as Mukṭi, Nirvāṇa, liberation, and Salvation.**

Q (46): How can God help us lead a righteous and virtuous life?

A (46): In the allegorical, Ālaṅkārika, the symbolic presentations of Bhāgvaṭ Purāṇa\*, God is described as an invisible friend who guides one towards the righteous direction. This invisible friend goes wherever one goes, and this invisible friend directs consciousness which leads to a righteous and virtuous lifestyle.

\*Note: All Purāṇas are documents of history. Their literature uses symbols to express the hidden nuances of life; for example, the symbols show how to live and lead a virtuous life by observing righteousness. The

narration of the Purāṇas is in the form of an allegory, a **picturesque presentation that is easy to comprehend. These writings should not be taken literally. The real purpose of the Purāṇas is lost by the various distorted interpretations.**

People usually get confused when the illustrative description is taken as reality. Then people make a concrete picture out of the symbolism used in the text that produces confusion.

Q (47): What is the most important Hindū etiquette?

A (47): Any person, whether young or old, male or female, friend or stranger, rich or poor, urban or rural, related or unrelated, greets another person with folded hands, then one bows the head forwards slowly, and one says softly “Namaste”. One has demonstrated the most common Hindū etiquette “Namaste”. The meaning of Namaste is to acknowledge, devoutly, the expression of divinity in an individual.



**The most important Hindū etiquette is “Namaste”**

Q (48): How are children viewed by Hindūs?

A (48): Yajurveda (8.36) states that God is the greatest of all, Ever Pervading and Giver of everything to all beings. Therefore, Hindūs consider children as God’s gift; thereby, children are treated with utmost love and care. Manu (9.130) also reinforces the fact “that children, son and daughter, are exactly like one’s soul”. Therefore, child abuse has no place in Hindū society.

Chāṇakya (Nīti 2.10, 2.11) stated **the rights of children by saying** “Parents need to provide education to sons and daughters. Chāṇakya further states that those parents who do not provide education are real enemies of the child.” Paṭañjali Mahābhāṣya (8.1.8) also reinforces the rights of children. Parents and teachers must provide a nurturing environment, education, a structure of kindness, and firmness. Chāṇakya Nīti (3.18) states: Love and nurture your children up to five years of age, then, also, provide structure, limits, and responsibilities until ten years of age and at the age of sixteen one should start treating children as an adult.

*Scientific American*, August, 1999, reported that Richard A. Shweder et al. University of Chicago, U.S.A., studied Hindū children in India, and Shweder found that Indian children learned to maintain tradition, to respect defined rules of interpersonal relationships, and to help people in need. Regarding the value systems, the investigators found that **“Indians begin life as relativists and end as a Universalist; thereby, Indians maintain universal core values;”** whereas,

the Americans went precisely the other way. American adults modified values in the face of changing circumstances. The study indicates the effects of the universal core values of benevolence, fairness, and honesty that are necessary in healthy societies which sustain human relationships.

**Hindūs consider children as God’s gift; thereby, children are treated with the utmost love and care.**

Q (49): How are women viewed by Hindūs?

A (49): Chāṇakya (Nīti 12.13) states that “an individual should treat other women of society like a mother”. Therefore, Hindūs view women of the society as mothers and sisters. Women in Hindū society are represented as Mātṛ-Śakti, God’s creative powers. In Hindū society many of the deities are of female form. (For a definition of deity and God, please refer to questions and answers number 86 and 87). For example, the attributes of wisdom is “Sarasvatī”, that of prosperity is “Lakṣmī,” and the divine power to destroy evil is “Pārvaṭī.” Pārvaṭī’s various forms are as follows: Ambikā, Bhavānī, Chandī, Durgā, Girijā, Kālī, Laliṭā, and Mīnākṣī. The forms are, also, known as the universal mother or Mātṛ-Śakti, a motherly creative force.

यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः ।  
यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः ॥

Yatra nāryastu pūjyaṅte  
ramaṅte tatra devatāḥ,  
yatra itāstu na pūjyaṅte  
sarvāstatra falāḥ kriyāḥ.

-- Manu Smṛti 3/56.

“The household where women are respected, divine offerings and divinity flourish, but in a house hold where the women are neglected then degradation prevails”.

**Manu (3/55) stated the rights of women in the family provide for “parents to honor and care from their daughters, husbands to respect their wives, and all other house hold members of the family. Devara, brother-in-laws, are to hold women in high esteem.”**

Therefore, women in Hindū society are addressed ethically and publicly with great respect and dignity.

**Rakṣā Bandhana is the celebration of the universal Sisters’s Day,** and at this festival all sisters tie a band of affection and love on the wrist of the brother.

**On Akṣya Tṛtīya, which usually falls in August, Universal Mother’s Day, or Universal Women’s Day**

**is celebrated with great fun and flair in different parts of India.**

In the Jaipur, Rajasthan, a huge procession is held on this day. First from the king's palace, various citizen groups and marchers parade their colorful banners and flags.

This is followed by the extravagant show of highly decorated parading of twenty-five elephants. This in turn is followed by infantry, cavalry, camel artillery, and prominent citizens. In the end, a decorated much awaited armored spectacular chariot of the female deity representing, "Universal Motherhood" arrives. This marks the highest point of the procession. In order to watch this traditional, but extraordinary procession, millions of people throng from all parts of the world, but the beautiful procession can not be described in words, and the ocean of human beings eager to watch this unique parade may be seen from miles.

**In Hindū society women are not visualized as sex symbols.**

**Hindūs address and view women of the society as mothers and sisters.**

Q (50): How are elders viewed?

A (50): Vidur (Nīti 4.39) states that those "who do not follow the company of experienced elders remain immature and naïve". Elders have lived their lives and during this process have gained considerable experience, so elders, generally, are viewed as a wise

resource to the family. Elders are respected and consulted for resolutions of problems. Normally, elders are cared for by their kith and kin. Grandparents give feelings of security and continuity to grandchildren by sharing space and food, undertaking household chores, and enjoying the fun of nightly bedtime stories. This unique system of learning, through vertical hierarchy, nurtures, teaches, and instills the deep sense of the value system of a healthy society which helps make the new generation better human beings. Indirectly, this process leads to learning a code of behavior, history, ethics, and recognizing the aging process through diffusion of knowledge. **Scientific studies have revealed that those children who have relationships with grandparents are quieter, calmer, and more trusting. Elders are not considered depreciated or useless just because of their age.**

**Hindū society appreciates the art of aging, death and dying, by accepting elders in a more graceful manner.**

Q (51): How are neighbors, friends, and uninvited guests treated in a Hindū home?

A (51): A duty of Hindū Dharma's followers is to treat guests with respect, dignity, and hospitality. Hindūs observe five duties, Pancha Karma, according to the code of conduct as laid by Great Manu (IV-21):

- 1) **Barhma Yajña:** It means “to pray to divinity by invoking God through devotional recitations of Vaidic hymns, meditation, learning of the Vedas, and Yoga”.
- 2) **Deva Yajña:** It is, also, commonly called Agnihoṭra (see question #30). It stands for promoting purity, health, virtues, and wisdom. Natural resources are utilized with the blessings of divine forces to achieve this goal.
- 3) **Pitṛ Yajña:** It means to serve parents, parental figures, scholars, and other learned sages well. It is designed to gain knowledge and wisdom from these scholars and elders.
- 4) **Balivaiśwa Deva Yajña:** It means to take care of the needy and dependents; for example, the indigents, orphans, and the dependent animals need care.
- 5) **Aṭithi Yajña:** Aṭithi is a guest without an appointment. Another definition is “Nasṭi dviṭīya ṭithi yasya,” meaning, one who does not come back for a second time. Usually, Aṭithi is a sage, Rṣi, Yogī, or that learned scholar whose mission is to travel from place to place in order to serve humanity. Those who are pure, virtuous, and work towards societal upliftment come under this category. To offer hospitality to these guests is known as Aṭithi Yajña.

**Hindūs treat guests with respect, dignity, and hospitality.**

Q (52): What are the core books on ethics?

A (52): There are three core books on ethics (Nīti):

1. **Viḍur Nīti:** During the time of the Mahābhārata War, the wise “Viḍur” describes ethics or Nīti (Please see “The words of wisdom” on page 22).
2. **Bhartṛhari Nīti:** During the reign of the great King Vikramāditya, 400 B.C., his elder brother King Bhartṛhari, a great scholar, had many books to his credit, including Bhartṛhari Śatakam, which comprises one hundred Sanskrṭ Ślokas relating to ethics. (Please see “the naive versus the ignorant” in the introduction).
3. **Chāṇakya Nīti:** Chāṇakya, the Chief minister of King Chandra Guṭṭa Maurya, also, called by some historians as Vikramāditya (see the above item number two) wrote many books on political science, ethics, and economics. The book Chāṇakya Nīti describes ethics.

Q (53): Give an example of Viḍur’s Ethics.

A (53): Viḍur logically tried to persuade Dhr̥tarāṣṭra to give the Pāṇdavas their rightful share of land. This discussion is called Viḍur Nīti.

न्यायागतस्य द्रव्यस्य बोद्धव्यौ द्वावतिक्रमौ  
अपात्रे प्रतिपत्तिश्च पात्रे चाप्रतिपादनम् ॥

Nyāyāgaṭasya dravyasya  
bodḍhavyau dvāvatīkramau,  
apātre praṭipattiścha  
pātre chāpraṭipāḍanam.

---Viḍur nīti---1-57

“There are only two misuses of wealth that is righteously earned, and the misuses are, giving gifts to the unworthy and not giving to the worthy”.

Q (54): Give an example of Bharṭṛhari’s ethics.

A (54): Bharṭṛhari wrote many books on ethics, devotion, detachment, and passion. The following is an example from his book on ethics;

विपदि धैर्यमथाभ्युदये क्षमा,  
सदसि वाक्पटुता, युधि विक्रमः।

यशसि चाऽभिरुचिर्व्यसनं श्रुतौ,  
प्रकृ तिसिद्धमिदं हि महात्मनाम् ॥

Vipaḍi dhairyamathābhyuḍaye kṣamā  
saḍasi vākpatuṭā, yudhi vikramḥ,  
yaśasi chābhiruchirvyasanam Śruṭau,  
Prakṛṭisiḍḍhmiḍam hi mahāṭmanām

--- Bharṭṛhari i- Nīti-Ṣaṭakam 63

“Those even in extreme adversities do not give up peace of mind, for they become compassionate on achieving progress, and use their oratory skills wisely to advance their point in debates. Being ready to defend themselves and to show prowess, they bravely fight in the battle field. These are energetic people who undertake serious studies of various scriptures, to earn their rightful place through knowledge. Indeed, those who possess these characteristics are great souls or sages”.

Q (55): Give an example of Chāṇakya’s ethics.

A (55): Chāṇakya was the main architect of Vikramāḍitya’s vast empire. Chāṇakya was a great scholar who wrote many books, and, Chāṇakya carried the title of Ācharya, a great professor. His books on

economics are still being used in graduate and post-graduate courses at Indian universities. Family qualities are described by him as follows:

सत्यं माता पिता ज्ञानं  
धर्मो भ्राता दया सखा ।  
शान्तिः पत्नी क्षमा पुत्रः  
षडेते मम बान्धवाः ॥

Saṭyam māṭā piṭā jñānam  
d̄harmo bhrātā d̄ayā sakhā,  
śāntiḥ paṭnī kṣamā puṭraḥ  
ṣadeṭe mama bāṇdhavāḥ.

---- Chāṅkya nīti -d̄arpanaḥ 12:10

“Truthfulness is my mother, knowledge is my father, duty and sustenance is my brother, and kindness is my friend, harmony and peace is my spouse, and compassion is my child. These six qualities make my family and life”.

What a beautiful representation of a typical Hindū family interaction!

Q (56): Give some examples of general Hindū ethics.

A (56): A few excellent examples of general Hindū ethics are represented as follows:

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः  
सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।  
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु  
मा कश्चिद् दुःखभाग् भवेत् ॥

Sarve bhavaṅtu sukhinaḥ  
sarve sanṭu nirāmayāḥ ,  
Sarve bhad̄rāṇi paśyaṅtu  
mā kaśchid̄ duḥkhhāgbhaveṭ.

“By God’s grace may we all enjoy our lives. Let everyone be at peace to have a prosperous life; let everyone be free from suffering or diseases, and let no one suffer.”

(b) अयं निजः परो वेति  
गणना लघुचेतसाम् ।  
उदारचरितानां तु  
वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥



Ayam nijah paro veṭī  
 gaṇanā laghucheṭasām,  
 uḍāra chariṭānām tu  
 vasuḍhaiva kutumbakam.

---- Hiṭopaḍeś, Apari, 38

“This is mine and that is yours, this kind of thinking is very narrow minded. By divine grace, if one looks from a broader mind, one realizes that the whole universe is one big family”.

Q (57): What is the one book that is concise, comprehensive, and compares all world religions and scriptures?

A (57): In 1872-73, Swāmi Dayānand gave a magnanimous lecture about religions and scriptures. The lectures were hosted in Calcutta, India by Śri Devendṛa Nath Tagore, father of the Nobel Laureate Ravindṛa Nath Tagore. Devendṛa Nath Tagore asked Swāmi Dayānand to write the lectures in a book form, for those who could not attend the lecture, many such lectures were written in Bengali but are not currently traceable. Later on Raja Jaikishandas, Deputy Collector of Aligadh requested Swāmi Dayānand to write “*Satyārth Prakāśa*,” which means light of truth, or the

manifestation of truth. This book logically, and, justly, compares all world religions, and scriptures. The revised first volume was published in 1875, and second edition in 1884. Mr. Louis Jacolliot, Judge of a French colony named Chandranagar, in 1868 wrote a book in French, “*La Bible Dans L’ Inde*”, -*The Hindū Origins of Christian and Hebrew Revelations*. It is worth reading, and its English translation was published in 1869. He also wrote many books on different religions.

Q (58): What kinds of diets are recommended?

A (58): The science of life and the Vaidic art of healing is called **Āyurveda** which recommends for health and longevity the following:

1) **Diet:** For “Sātṭvika,” or peace, purity, virtuous and righteousness promoting, a nutritious diet is recommended. A diet that provides good health and longevity is a lacto-vegetarian diet. Those who cannot tolerate milk can use lactate milk, yogurt or curd, cheese, and similar products such as buttermilk that are devoid of lactose which may be used alternatively. The diet that is conducive to the promotion of health and nutrition is a lacto-vegetarian diet. A vegetarian diet is also a very good source to obtain all proteins; particularly, beans, legumes, pulses, and nuts. When these items are consumed in mixed forms, the items provide a very rich source of first class proteins at a very affordable and consumer friendly price. Vegetables are a good source of antioxidants. Antioxidants

protect body cells from harmful free radicals. These free radicals cause many chronic diseases. Lycopene is an anti-oxidant that is present abundantly in tomatoes, pink grapefruits, and watermelons. Recent studies have proven that lycopene-rich diets prevent prostate cancer, and the antioxidants, in general, are known to prevent high blood pressure, heart attacks, brain attacks or strokes, and cancers.

**Hindū ethics dictate that diet should be acquired by a fair means and should not cause pain or suffering to any life or animal.** A non-vegetarian diet, according to modern science, has proven to cause heart attacks, cancer, high blood pressure, and strokes. Red meat, eggs, chicken, and sea-creatures consumed as so called “seafood”, cause heart attacks; because, these foods are high in cholesterol and triglycerides as shown by research in modern medicine.

In the United States of America alone, six billion animals are killed annually for human consumption. Animals are routinely fed antibiotics to grow them faster, fatter, and larger. Consequently, the emergence of resistant microorganisms increase the morbidity and mortality while costing a staggering thirty five billion dollars annually in the United States of America, alone.

**Drinks: Drinks that contain addictive substances such as alcohol and marijuana are to be avoided.** Alcohol produces anxiety and depression which

fragments sleep, destroys judgment, and damages multiple body systems. There is no beneficial medical effect on the body from drinking alcohol even in small dosages. Similarly, stimulants, hallucinogens, and other substances like tobacco are harmful to the body and should be avoided. One needs to know that a substantial amount of money is poured into advertising by the empires of tobacco and alcohol industries to promote alcohol through movies and sporting events.

Modern medicine recommends proper diet, lacto-vegetarian, regular exercise, Hath Yoga, abstaining from intoxicants, either legal like alcohol and smoking, or illegal addicting substances such as stimulants or sedating drugs.

**Manu (2/177) directed all humans, very clearly, “to abstain from the diet of flesh and intoxicants.”**

Q (59): Name some of the great sages, saints, heroes, and heroines who were idealized by the Hindū society.

A (59): These sages are innumerable. Even-though it is an incomplete list, an attempt will be made to list some of the sages, saints, heroes, and heroines as follows:

Dhruva and Prahalāḍa of antiquity, Rajā Hariśchandra of Saṭ-Yuga; Maryādā Puruṣoṭṭam Śri Rāma of Tṛeṭa-Yuga; Yogirāj Śri Kṛṣṇa of Dṇwapar-Yuga. Kali-Yuga: King Bharṭṛhari; King Vikramāditya, Chāṇakya; Gauṭama Budḍha; Mahāvīr Swāmi; King Ashoka; Poet Tīruvalluvar; Ādi Śankarāchārya; Mahā

kavi Kālidās; Kamban; Bābā Rāmaḍeva; Vaiṣṇav Āchāryas--Rāmanuja, Mādhava, Nimbhā, Vallabhā, and Chaiṭanya Mahāprabhu; Guru Nānak; Mahārāṇā Praṭāpa; Bhāmā Shāh; Mirābāi; Ṭulsīdās; Kabir; Sūrdās; Guru Teg Bahādur; Guru Govind Singh; Chhaṭrapaṭi Sivāji; Mahṛṣi Dayānanda Saraswaṭi; Rāma Kṛṣṇa Paramahansa; Rāṇi Laxmi Bāi; Swāmi Vivekānanda; Swāmi Yogeshawarānanda; Swāmi Rāmṭīrth; Subhāsh Chandra Bose; Swāmi Shradḍhānanda; Mahātmā Gandhī; Mahṛṣi Raman; Dr. K.B.Hedgewar; Śri Aurobindo; Swāmi Prabhu Pād; and Śri Sushil Muni.

Today, Buḍḍhists of oriental countries, such as Thailand and Laos, still revere Sinthā-Māthā as do the Muslims of Indonesia. Sinthā-Māthā is the universal living ideal of humanity, and every Muslim of Indonesia, Hindūs of India, and the Buḍḍhists of oriental countries want her blessings. Sinthā-Māthā is a derivative version of Sītā Mātā, Mother Sītā, and the consort of Śri Rāma.

Q (60): What are the most important festivals that Hindūs celebrate?

A (60): The four most important festivals are:

- 1) **Dīvālī** or **Dīpāvalī**: This is the beginning of the new year. The farmers celebrate the harvest. The business communities close old accounts and open new accounts to accommodate the new financial year. The whole society ushers at the beginning of winter to celebrate the home-returning of victorious Śri Rāma. On Dīvālī, people light up earthen lamps called Dīpaks; therefore, the holiday is called the “Festival of Lights”. The illumination, of all the dwellings with Dīpaks, reflects a joyous and festive mood of the people that signifies the victory of divine forces over evil. Narakāsura was a very oppressive king of Prāgjyotiśpura, which is currently called Assam, and on this Dīvālī day, Śri Kṛṣṇa also freed the oppressed people of Prāgjyotiśpura from the clutches of the tyrant King



Narakāsura.

**Dīvālī is the one grand and pious festival that is celebrated by Hindūs, Jains, and Sikhs alike. Dīvālī reinvigorates the family bonds of affection and love.**

- 2) **Vijayādaśamī:** Two weeks before Dīvali, Vijayādaśamī is celebrated. This is the tenth day of the Rām-Rāvaṇa War when Śri Rāma liberated his wife, Sītā, from the totalitarian regime of Rāvaṇa, the ancient king of Laṅkā. Vijayādaśamī means victory on the tenth day. Vijay means victory, and Daśamī means the tenth day of the month; therefore, Vijayādaśamī denotes the victory on the tenth day of the Rām- Rāvaṇa War.
- 3) **Śravaṇī, Upākarma, Ṛṣi-Tarpaṇa, Or Rakṣā Bandhana:** This welcomes the month of Śravaṇa that is the beginning of the tropical rain season and Chomāsā. During Chomāsā, all sages and saints come to the cities and stay for four months to rejuvenate, preach, and to undertake Svādhyāya, the study of scriptures. Since this is shared with all the sections of society, it is called **Upākarma**, to bring near. By this virtue one is able to listen to the beneficial teachings of various learned scholars, sages, and saints. Hence, it is also called **Ṛṣi-Tarpaṇa**. On this day special ceremonies are performed to those students who want to be introduced to schooling. The **Yajñopavīta ceremony** is the name given to this initiation ceremony. Another age-old festival of **Rakṣā Bandhana** that renews the inseparable bond of affection between sister and brother is celebrated. During this festival, the sister ties either a **Rākhī** or

a symbolic colorful cotton string called a “Molly” on their brother’s left wrist, as a bracelet.

**It is a reminder of sisterly love for the brother, and the brother has a duty to look after the sister. Rakṣā means to care and protect, and Bandhana means inseparable bond.**

- 4) **Holī:** It is a spring festival that represents the fulfilled colorful harvest celebration. Holī is celebrated by burning a bonfire in the evening hours and baking freshly harvested grains like Wheat and Gram. **Dhulendi** is celebrated on the next day of Holī burning, by dancing, singing folk songs, arranging picnics, and gleefully spraying non-poisonous colored powder, Gulāl, and fine mist of colored water, on familiar people such as relatives, friends, and acquaintances to make life more enjoyable. The color signifies the welcoming celebration of spring and is also called **Phalgun**, or **Phagwā**. It is a way to say good-bye to winter, and a way to greet the newyear of the Hindū calendar which begins with the month of Chaitra. This is a most important and successfully proven living social experiment in which the whole society comes close to one another, and the distinctions or boundaries of “socio-economic-religio-political class” is dissolved. This unique societal experiment is unparalleled in human history.

The festival of Holī is deeply associated with the victory of righteous forces over evil. The legend

states that “**Holikā**, the sister of the great tyrant King Hiraṇyakaśyapa, had a boon stating that she could walk through fire unharmed. Therefore, she, in order to punish Prahlāḍa, as King Hiraṇyakaśyapa desired, asked Prahlāḍa to sit on her lap, and, then, she sat on the fire. Unfortunately, on this day she was consumed by fire. Probably, she wanted innocent Prahlāḍa to escape the fire, so she may have sacrificed herself. Hiraṇyakaśyapa, was ultimately, overrun by the righteous forces, peace and prosperity returned to the kingdom, and Prahlāḍa ruled benevolently. The people achieved liberty from the tyrant King Hiraṇyakaśyapa, and this is, also, how the festival of **Holī** came into existence.

**“The Fire of Holī is a symbol of Yajña in which all our bodily desires and propensities are offered in the pure and blazing flame of spiritual enlightenment lit within our hearts”** as stated by H.V.Seshadri.

Other important festivals are:

I. **Makar Saṅkrānti (Pongal)**: This marks the northward migration of the sun. For example, winter solstice, from the Tropic of Capricorn towards the Tropic of Cancer, falls on the fourteenth day of January every year. The festival of winter solstice, Makar Saṅkrānti, is celebrated all over India, as ‘Mahāvraṭa,’ or New-Year. In Punjab the festival is called ‘Lohadi’, in Assam ‘Bhogāli-

Bihu’, in Bengal ‘Navvānoh’, in Andhra Pradesh ‘Bhoghi,’ in Tamil Nadu ‘Pongal,’ and in Kerala ‘Pooram’. It is the celebration of freshly harvested crops. In the northern parts of India candies and toffees of sesame-seeds are distributed, and, in other places, Khichaddi, a delicacy made from cooked rice and Moong beans, is served.

II. **Śiva Rātri**: This is when Swāmi Dayānanda Saraswatī realized Śiva is within himself, thus gaining the enlightenment. This process forced him to galvanize India towards self-governance. Śiva Rātri is also the birthday celebration of the legendary Śiva. People usually fast until midnight and Śiva is worshipped all night. Śiva Rātri usually falls on a month after Makar Saṅkrānti which is fifteen days before the Holī celebration.

III. **Rāma Navamī**: This is the birthday celebration of Śri Rāma who epitomizes the ideal human. *Rāmāyaṇa* is the name of the book that describes the life history of Śri Rāma. Multiple text books and commentaries have been rewritten on *Rāmāyaṇa*, by different authors, at different times, in different languages, but, only, **Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa is the original and authentic Rāmāyaṇa**. Sage Vālmīki was contemporary to Śri Rāma, and the whole *Rāmāyaṇa* was recited by Sage Vālmīki at the coronation ceremony of Śri Rāma.

**IV. Baisākhī:** This is the first day of the Hindū solar calendar. To Sikhs Baisākhī has become a major festival, as on Baisākhī Day, Guru Govind Singh founded 'Khalsa Panth', the Pure Path, to protect Dharma from the atrocities inflicted by Muslims on Hindus (Please see answer one). Baisākhī is also, celebrated in the far east, such as Thailand and Indonesia.

**V. Janmāṣṭamī:** This is the birthday celebration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Yogirāj Śrī Kṛṣṇa was the epitome of the Mahābhārata. Śrī Kṛṣṇa successfully infused vigor and valor in Arjuna to safeguard his own rights against the Kaurava's. The teachings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are reflected in a book called the *Gītā*.

Q (61): Does heaven or hell really exist?

A (61): Heaven and hell are not geographical entities, but heaven and hell are metaphors. Yāskāchārya in *Nirukta* (1.10) clearly defines hell as a "miserable state of suffering and downfall which is devoid of prosperity and peace." While discussing this with his mother Devahūti, Āchārya Kapila, *Bhāgavaṭa Purāṇa* 3.20.29., stated: "Mother, heaven and hell are here on this earth. You can visualize your own suffering as being in hell." When the soul does not understand the purpose in the present life cycle, and the soul continues to make mistakes, then, this is called "hell". When the soul transcends to a higher plane of human existence it

is called "heaven." Heaven or hell have symbolic connotations.

Chāṅkya nīṭi 17.15, describes that "if the house wife is of noble character, affable, and supportive, the household is prosperous, the children are educated, disciplined, and productive, and then, pleasures of heaven cannot exceed this joy of the household. There is no joy which can excel this household enjoyment".

An ignorance free realm of the spiritual experience, or the state of transcendence of bliss, is described as heaven that is opposite of hell.

**Speaking, in simple language, if one has a peaceful, prosperous, solace life, then, one can label this state as heaven. The opposite of heaven is hell.**

**The sorrow and pain, joy and enjoyment of the world are immortalized by the legends of hell and heaven, respectively.**

Q (62): What is Punarjanma or rebirth?

A (62): It is the re-entry or reincarnation of the soul into another body. The soul is eternal and immortal. The soul departs when a person ceases to exist, dies; therefore, the soul is present when a person is alive. The process of re-entry of the soul into another body is called Punarjanma, or rebirth. It is a continuous process of growth of the soul, and the process continues until the soul achieves the full knowledge and bliss of God. The soul then liberates from the cycle of rebirth or reincarnation. This process of liberation is called

Mokṣa which depends on the righteous Karma of the soul (See Question number 64).

**Re-entry or reincarnation of the soul into another body is called Punarjanma.**

Q (63): What is Puruṣārtha?

A (63): When a person undertakes industrious, concrete, and beneficial action, or efforts, to promote growth for self and others; it is called Puruṣārtha. Puruṣārtha takes one closer to achieve ultimate goals. Whosoever undertakes Puruṣārtha is called a Puruṣārthī which is an industrious person. **Puruṣārtha means “undertaking the efforts to achieve the goals of ones’ life.”** Hindū Dharma has four ultimate Puruṣārthas: Dharma, Artha, Kāma, and Mokṣa.

चरन्वै मधु विन्दति  
 चरन्स्वादु मुदुम्बरम् ।  
 सूर्यस्य पश्य श्रेमाणं  
 यो न तन्द्रयते चरन् ॥  
 चरैवेति चरैवेति ॥

Charanbai madhu vindati

charanṭsvāḍu muḍumbaram.

Sūryasya paśya śremāṇam,  
 yo na tndrayate charan.

Charaiveṭi charaiveṭi.

----Aitareya Brāhmaṇ 7.15

“The honey bee, by effort, collects honey, and birds enjoy tasty fruits by effort. The sun is revered, by virtue of a constant shining effort; therefore, one should be constantly industrious. Be an industrious Puruṣārthī; be an industrious Puruṣārthī.”

**A Puruṣārthī helps realize his or her destiny by the deeds he or she has undertaken, and, then, the person does not have to depend on dubious fortune-tellers and ambiguous forecasters.**

Q (64): What is the meaning of Karma?

A (64): Karma is that natural principle which deals with selfless deeds, actions, or activities. Everyone receives the fruits of their actions: “As you sow; so shall you reap.” Everyone is responsible for his or her Karma, actions. No intermediary, prophet, or guru can change the consequences of one’s own actions. When someone undertakes any selfless activity, it is called **Niṣkāma-Karma**. Īśa Upaniṣaḍ (1.1-2) beautifully describes this activity. **Yogirāj Śri Kṛṣṇa describes**

the Niṣkāma-Karma (Gītā 2.47) as “to devotionally undertake the duty and dedicate yourself to the cause.” When Niṣkāma Karma is offered to the benefit of All Pervading Reality, or God, it becomes Yajña.

Whenever Karma is addressed in this text it is the selfless righteous Karma called Niṣkāma-Karma. Fortune does not play a role either with Niṣkāma-Karma or with Puruṣārtha.

Q (65): What is yoga?

A (65): Yoga is a Sanskr̥t word which means to join together. Yoga is the process of realizing God through meditation. Paṭaṅjali states that “yoga is the complete and ultimate control of all mental activities” (Yogaśchittavṛttinirodhah --

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः -- Yoga Darśan .1.2). Śrī Kṛṣṇa reiterated the definition of yoga in the *Gītā* (2.48 and 2.50) as maintenance of emotional equilibrium in adversities as well as in favorable circumstances (Samaṭvam Yogaḥ Uchyaṭe समत्वम् योगः उच्यते). Therefore, through this harmonious balance of all emotional faculties, yoga is the supreme among all deeds, Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्; Yoga helps maintain emotional stability.

**Note: Do not get confused with the popularly depicted exercise form of Yoga as real Yoga. Various physical postures of Yoga are good for general health and physical fitness, this physical form of Yoga is called “Hatha Yoga”. But it is not the real Yoga. “Hatha Yoga” is a fraction of real Yoga. Real Yoga is described in question number 66 under the heading of “Paṭaṅjali’s Aṣṭāṅg Yoga.”**

Q (66): What is Paṭaṅjali’s Aṣṭāṅg Yoga?

A (66): Sage Paṭaṅjali has outlined eight steps to achieve self-realization, a step closer to Mokṣa. **These steps are Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi.** This is a step by step approach to develop complete control of all physical and mental functions before one can reach God. These eight steps are in fact the code of conduct for one to have God realization, Paṭaṅjali stated:

Yama- Niyama- Āsana- Prāṇāyāma -Pratyāhāra-  
Dhāraṇā-Dhyāna-Samādhayoḥ Aṣṭāvāṅgāni  
यमनियमासनप्राणायामप्रत्याहारधारणा-  
ध्यानसमाधयोऽष्टावंगानि |-- Yoga Darśan .2.29

Q (67): What is Yama?



A (67): Yama allows one to develop control of self, or principles of restraint, through five steps known as Ahimsā: Peaceful coexistence; Satya: Truthfulness; Aṣṭeya: Abstinence from violating the rights of others; Brahmacharya: Abstinence from sensual gratification; and Aparigraha: Abstinence from possessiveness.

**AhimsāSatyaAṣṭeyaBramcharyaAparigrahā Yamāh**

-- अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः।

Yoga Darśan .2.30.

**The principle of self-control is called Yama.**

Q (68): What is Niyama?

A (68): **Niyama means discipline** which consists of five steps: Śauca: Purification; San̄toṣa: Contentment; T̄apa: Devotional dedication; Svādhyāya: Continuing the educational study of scriptures, and Īśvara-Prāṇidhāna: surrender in service to God. These steps are designed to achieve success in life.

**Śauca San̄toṣa T̄apaḥ Svādhyā**

**Īśvara-Prāṇidhānā ni Niyamāḥ.** –

शौचसन्तोषतपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानिनियमाः।

Yoga Darśan .2.32.

**Disciplining self is called Niyama**

Q (69): What is the meaning of Ahimsā?

A (69): Vaidic philosophy states that “all living creatures have souls; therefore, do not kill or cause pain to any creature.” Whereas, the individual cell, or a system, or a part of system, which cannot exist in nature, independently, may not possess a soul; soul is the energy of the living. Ahimsā means “not to harm or kill any creature,” it does not mean to be coward, or become negligent, or to avoid protection. **In fact Ahimsā is a principle of peaceful co-existence.** Ahimsā is to be practiced by thoughts, words, and deeds. This is the main contribution of Hindū Dharma.

**The principle of peaceful coexistence by all sections of society, among themselves and with others is called Ahimsā. Practically, Ahimsā means tolerance, harmony, and unity among all creatures with an aim of peaceful coexistence.**

Q (70): Describe briefly Satya, Aṣṭeya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha.

A (70): All these principles of Yama, and discipline, or Niyama are to be followed in practice by thoughts, speech, and actions.

**Satya:** means truthful, faithful dealings without any malice.

**Asteya:** means abstinence from violating the rights of others by taking away their property, tangible or intangible.

**Brahmacharya:** is defined as abstinence from any sensual gratification which means ‘to submerge oneself in scriptural studies for further growth to seek God’.

**Aparigraha:** is to live a dedicated, simple, and benevolent life by helping others by abstaining from greed, lust, pride, selfishness, and non-possessiveness.

Q (71): What is Śaucha?

A (71): **Śaucha deals with the disciplined regulation and purification of the body both externally and internally.** This includes the taming of sleep and cyclical bowel movements. One needs to harmonize the body functions according to the day and night cycles, circadian rhythms. Practical and scientific use of Śaucha is the regulation of internal bodily rhythmic secretions of corticosteroids which helps to deal with stress in day to day life. One will not have problems of insomnia, or poor sleep, if one learns to go to sleep and wake up everyday at a predetermined and fixed time.

**In general, Śaucha denotes regulation of the bodily internal rhythms to prevent a dysfunctional life.**

Q (72): What is Santōṣa?

A (72): Santōṣa is keeping the emotions of gratification under constant control. One will remain content with accomplishments, achievements, and efforts, without feeling remorse or excitement when one has Santōṣa. In this way, one will achieve better results, without the emotions interfering with decision-making capabilities. **Contentment may be substituted roughly for Santoṣa.** However, Santoṣa has divine connotations, and one should not give up Puruṣārtha, or other efforts, to become well disciplined.

Q (73): What do Tapa and Svādhyāya mean?

A (73): Tapa is the state of mind in which devotion and dedication prevail, even, in adverse circumstances. **Anyone who maintains a righteous humanitarian duty in the face of all adversities is said to practice Tapa.**

Svādhyāya means to continuously study the scriptures daily which leads to a constant educational search to explore the self. The main theme of Svādhyāya, with the assistance of scriptures towards self-realization, is spiritual analysis and creative thinking. In reality **Svādhyāya is introspection with an undertaking of self-analysis from the help of the scriptures.**

Q (74): What is Īśvara-Praṇidhāna?

A (74): **By surrendering oneself to the service of God, one will follow the devotional path of Īśvara-Praṇidhāna** by being able to control all anxieties and fears. Īśvara-Praṇidhāna is the foundation of Bhakṭi-Yoga; moreover, Bhakṭi-Yoga leads to an intense devotional path to seek the union with the ultimate reality. **Whatever one does for the service of God is Īśvara-Praṇidhāna.**

Q (75): What is Āsana?

A (75): Āsana is the correct anatomical posture for sitting or meditating for a long period of time. The posture will develop physical strength, stamina, and fitness which is necessary for longevity. Sage Paṭaṅjali described Āsana as a steady state in which one feels comfort. In simple words, Āsana means “the position to sit”. **The practice of Āsana is called Hatha Yoga.** For more details please consult Paṭaṅjali’s original *Yogaḍarśan* (see the resource guide at the end of the section).

Q (76): What are Prāṇāyāma and Praṭyāhāra?

A (76): Prāṇāyāma is the method of bringing involuntary actions such as respiration and heart beat

under voluntary control. **Prāṇāyāma is disciplining “Prāṇā,” the subtle energy, which pervades and controls all the functions of body.** The taming of involuntary functions of the body by systematic breathing while reciting “Om,” constantly, is called Prāṇāyāma. It takes tremendous practice to achieve the mentioned results.

Praṭyāhāra withdraws the attention from sensory stimulation by redirecting the attention inwards. In the beginning, one develops discipline over the appetite by controlling hunger, and one disciplines feelings of lust through divine support. Also, Praṭyāhāra includes the appropriate nutritious intake of vegetarian food to achieve longevity, and a healthy life by disciplining the mind over sensual desires. It is a stage of introspection, redirection, and arousal of inward energy. **Praṭyāhāra paves the way for improved focus and voluntary restraint of the emotions, the higher wakeful state of inner self, and consciousness.**

Q (77): What are Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi?

A (77): Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi are the different stages of meditation and **the practice of all these three entities is called Rāj Yoga**

**Dhāraṇā is the initial stage of unwavering concentration,** one learns to fix and freeze the attention, but the goal is to control the Chitṭa, the

conscious self. During the D̥hāraṇā stage of meditation one needs to focus on the breathing as described in Prāṇāyāma. Alternatively one may practice focusing on the universal sound of Om, by gradually pronouncing the sound of ‘AAA-U-M,’ and at the end of the sound production of ‘M,’ continue to focus on the silence and follow the series. Afterwards, one needs to continue to meditate on the sound and the silence. **This is the secret of all types of meditation, whether they are of Buddhist, Jain, or Sikh origin.**

**Dhyāna is the focal state of intense meditation.** During Dhyāna meditation the activity of mind is focused on the intense silence. By gradually increasing the duration of meditation, with years and years of practice of D̥hāraṇā and Dhyāna one may obtain a state of ecstasy or bliss called Samādhi.

**Samādhi is the ultimate stage of concentration and meditation.**

Samādhi is the state of transcendental absorption of consciousness which merges with the Absolute, Infinite, Divine Superconsciousness. **Samādhi is the total absorption of the self. One transcends into a super-conscious state; whereby, the dichotomy of subject to object is dissolved, and the distinction between subject and the object is experienced and realized.** One becomes cognizant of the fact that the subject is the object, and one experiences the object in

the subject by realizing the highest state of self-realization.

In the Samādhi stage, one discovers and experiences the truth enshrined in the Vedas the self feels and perceives self as non-self, and self realizes self as it exists, and not as the self appears. Therefore, one can feel, realize, and experience the ultimate reality, the nature of self, and non-self.

**Samādhi liberates the conscious of self from all Avidyā, ignorance, which helps one achieve the bliss of God realization in this life.**

**Paṭañjali’s Aṣṭāṅg Yoga:**

**1. Yama:** Five Principles:

**Ahimsā:** Abstain from injurious or violent behavior **and maintain peaceful coexistence.**

**Satya:** Abstain from distortion or lying and be truthful.

**Aṣṭeya:** Abstain from violating the rights of others, and do not steal.

**Brahmacharya:** One should maintain abstinence from sensual gratification and lust by keeping the mind free from sensuous desires by focusing on attaining the pure knowledge of God.

**Aparigraha:** Abstain from greed and possessiveness.

**2.Niyama:** Five Disciplines:

**Śauca:** 1) Maintain internal bodily purity in mind or in thought processes.

2) Maintain external bodily purity by proper grooming and hygienic care.

**San̄toṣa:** Contentment and compassion.

**Tapa:** Devotional dedication and austerity.

**Svādhyāya:** Meaningful daily reflections and the study of Ārṣa scriptures.

**Īśvara-Prāṇidhāna:** Surrender in service to God

[Kriya yoga: Tapa, Svādhyāya, Īśvara-Prāṇidhāna]

**3.Āsana:** Correct, comfortable, anatomically, steady postures for meditation.

**4.Prāṇāyāma:** Taming the vital life force or energy, through mediation while focusing and controlling breathing. [Hath Yoga = Āsana + Prāṇāyāma]

**5.Pratyāhāra:** Control of senses.

**6.Dhāraṇā: Meditative Concentration.** [Bhakti Yoga = Meditation + intense devotional recitation or harmonious singing of hymns.]

**7.Dhyāna: Intense Meditation,** complete submersion in meditation.

**8.Samādhi:** Transcendental absorption of consciousness with the Absolute, Infinite, Divine Superconsciousness, and to experience the bliss of this union.

**Note: Rāj Yoga consists of Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi.**

Q (78): What are the benefits of meditation and yoga?

A (78): Meditation improves concentration and promotes peace of mind that provides confidence and clarity in thinking. Furthermore, meditation reduces tension and stress by calming the agitated mind. Yoga leads to physical, spiritual, and mental development to a process of self-realization that brings us one step closer to God -realization. In all yoga reduces distress, and Yoga tames the energy of the mind that leads to discipline, determination, and utilization of this energy in goal oriented activities.

Herbert Benson, M.D., author of the best selling book *The Relaxation Response*, advocates meditation for stress reduction and blood pressure control. Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., has shown that anxiety and suffering can be reduced by meditation. Dean Ornish, M.D., professor of medicine; San Diego School of Medicine has demonstrated that yoga, meditation, and a vegetarian diet can halt and, even, reverse coronary artery disease. In simple words meditation helps

prevent heart disease which cures the underlying heart disease associated risk factors. Studies have demonstrated that effective practices of yoga and meditation lead to regulation of body temperature, and the immune system is improved to help prevent viral and bacterial infections along with auto-immune diseases.

**Scientific studies have proven that Yoga reduces the basal metabolic rate by sixty percent (Benson H 1982, 1996) by bringing back the normal cortisone levels.**

**Yoga reduces physical and mental tensions which help prevent hypertension, strokes, and heart attacks. Together, Yoga and meditation can lead to a long and healthy life.**

**Paṭañjali's Aṣṭāṅg Yoga is the only authentic Yoga that gives the mind control over matter.**

Q (79): What are the essential ingredients of the Hindū ceremony or worship services?

A (79): Devotees use all natural plant products during the Hindū ceremony and worship services. **The important items needed to complete any ceremony of the worship services are camphor, coconut, and flowers.** Camphor is a highly flammable natural plant product derived from camphor trees. The word camphor comes from the Sanskr̥t word "Karpuram". Camphor is used to ignite fire, or to lighten an earthen lamp with wicks that are saturated with purified butter,

Ghee, or pure vegetable oil. Coconut and flowers are used for offerings.

Q (80): Who created God and how does God exist?

A (80): Nobody created God. God is the ultimate Creator, no one created this Great Ceator. God is called 'Akāla' which means 'God' which is beyond the bounds of time; therefore, God is defined as Eternal, Unborn, Everlasting, Perpetual, and Indestructible.

**God is beyond time. God existed before creation, and God will continue to exist after creation. God is Eternal, Everlasting, and Endless. Since God was never born, Aja or Ajanmā, the question of the end of God does not arise!**

Q (81): Why do people say my God, your God, or their God?

A (81): There is no such thing as my God, your God, our God, or their God. Neither is there a Christian God, nor is there a Muslim God, nor is there a Hebrew God. The words as mine, yours, and theirs connote egoism perpetuating ignorance and hindrance in God-realization.

**One should abstain from the use of selfish words while describing God, for God is impersonal.**

**There is only One Immutable, Eternal, Lord of all lords, Almighty, Merciful, Creator of all, Omnipresent God.**

Sages call God by various names to denote different attributes (R̥gveda 1.164.46); for example: Ind̥ra-Supreme Resplendent Power; Miṭra-friend of all; Varuṇa- Most Desirable Supreme Being; Agni: Self Effulgent One, God is Supreme Adorable and All Knowledge. God is D̥ivya- Great Divine One; Garuṭmān-Mighty Universal Spirit; Yama-Great Ordainer of the World ; Maṭariśvāna- Cosmic Creative Energy. **Universally, authoritative Veda and Upaniṣads address God by the most revered supreme name ‘Om’.** As ‘OM’ represents **Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Ever-Pervading Brahman** (Yajurveda 40. 17); **Immortal; Worthy of Adoration** (Chhāndogya Upaniṣad 1.); **Worthy of Reverence and Devotion as all the righteous actions lead to ‘Om’** (Kaṭha-Upaniṣad 3.15).

**The primary and natural name of God is ‘Om’, and all these attributes that can be denoted by ‘Om’, for all other names are secondary (Māndūkya Upaniṣad 1).**

Similarly, the statements such as “I will pray for you,” are to be reckoned with, for, these statements only give

hope in desperate situations. One must remember that “No one can substitute for others as far as eating or sleeping is concerned. If one is hungry, it is the same individual who will have to eat to fulfill the appetite, thirst, or sleep.” Similarly, no one may substitute the prayer of one’s own quest for God realization; because, proxy does not produce the end results, for no intermediary exists between oneself and God, for every person is a child of God (Ārya Īśvarapuṭraḥ, Nirukṭa 6.26.1.).

Q (82): Why should we worship God?

A (82): We worship God, so we may become better people by developing the basic qualities of devotion and dedication. Worship makes the human being aware of the divine qualities of God, so people may learn from these qualities. The worship of God will make each individual, family, society, community, and nation more conducive to growth, harmony, peace, and prosperity. Devotion to God helps develop mercy and kindness towards all living beings.

**Prayer gives us an insight into developing self-control over passions and vices, and prayer enables us to acquire peace of mind helping us grow and enrich our lives.**

Q (83): If one worships God, will God fulfill our desires?

A (83): One needs to understand that God is the Ultimate Creator who has made natural laws, and everyone is destined according to these laws. Praying to God helps one realize inner potentials and spiritual strength to undertake Puruṣārtha (see question number 63). By the grace of God, one will develop peace of mind in order to think clearly, to acquire inner strength, and to carry on Puruṣārtha by achieving goals successfully.

**Furthermore, God protects those who protect themselves. In this respect, the great sage Manu is very clear in stating:**

धर्म एव हतो हन्ति  
धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः ।  
तस्माद्धर्मो न हन्तव्यो  
मा नो धर्मो हतोऽवधीत् ॥

Dharma eva haṭo hanṭi  
dharmo rakṣati rakṣitaḥ.

Tasmāddharmo na hanṭavyo  
ma no dharmo haṭo'vadhīṭ.

---- Manu 8.15

“Whosoever destroys their own righteous principles and natural responsibilities, Dharma indeed destroys

the individual. Whosoever protects their own integrity and righteousness, Dharma, protects them, therefore, one should not disdain Dharma.”

Q (84): If one worships God, is it true that God will forgive past, present, or future offenses?

A (84): No. God’s laws are natural laws, and everyone is responsible for each individual action. Therefore, emphasis is given on Karma, benevolent action, or deed, and Dharma, benevolent duties of self, for these actions are the regulating forces of rebirth. In this manner heaven and hell may be experienced in this life. Whenever one undertakes any action, the individual should be ready for the consequences, for the laws of God are unchangeable; “so shall you sow, so shall you reap.”

**Prayers and meditations improve insight that helps to prevent from committing any inappropriate or unjust actions. As such, a true devotee will abstain from causing any harm to any body and will be ready to accept the consequences for his or her actions, if so happens.**

Q (85): What is the meaning of Deva, Devatā, and Deity?

A (85): Devatā, Devi, or Deva originated from the Sanskr̥t word “Divya”, which means divine giver of



beneficial things to humanity. *Devaṭā* is a noun, and *Devi*, or *Deva*, are adjectives, female and male, respectively. In essence the word divinity is derived from the Sanskrit word “*Divya*”.

Similarly the word “deity” is derived from the Sanskrit word “*Deva*,” and the word “*Deva*” became “*deitus*” in Latin and “*deity*” in English. Deity represents a particular quality or deity which is a direly limited aspect of the attribute of the Supreme Creator in a very concrete form.

***Deva, Devaṭā, and Deities are not God, every one needs to know this fact.***

Q (86): If *Deva*, *Devaṭā*, and Deities are not gods, then what is God?

A (86): God is the Supreme Creator, Omnipresent, who is Almighty and Controller of all. God is Pure-Conscious, All-pervading, Beginningless, Eternal, Existent, Formless, Just, Imperishable, Infinite, Incomparable, Merciful, Unbegotten, One and Only One, Without a Second. God alone is worthy of worship as authoritative Atharvaveda says:

य एतं देवमेकवृ तं वेद ।  
न द्वितीयो न तृ तीयश्चतुर्थो नाप्युच्यते ।  
य एतं देवमेकवृ तं वेद ॥

न पञ्चमो न षष्ठः सप्तमो नाप्युच्यते ।

य एतं देवमेकवृ तं वेद ॥

नाष्टमो न नवमो दशमो नाप्युच्यते ।

य एतं देवमेकवृ तं वेद ॥

स सर्वस्मै वि पश्यति यच्च ।

प्राणति यच्च न ।

य एतं देवमेकवृ तं वेद ॥

Ya eṭam devamekavṛṭam veḍa .

na ḍavīṭiyo na ṭṛṭīyaśchvaṭurtho  
nāpyuchyaṭe.

Ya eṭam devamekavṛṭam veḍa.

na panchmo na ṣaṣṭhaḥ sapṭamo  
nāpyuchyaṭe.

Ya eṭam devamekavṛṭam veḍa.

nāṣṭamo na navamo ḍaśamo nāpyuchyaṭe.

Ya eṭam devamekavṛṭam veḍa.

sa sarvasmai vi paśyaṭi yachcha prāṅṭi  
yachcha na.

ya eṭam devamekavṛṭam veḍa.

**“God is One and Only One, Without a Second, neither third, nor fourth, nor fifth, nor sixth, nor seventh, nor eighth, nor tenth; in fact, Only One”.**

Q (87): What is the principal name of God (Paramātmā)?

A (87): **The principal name of God is “Om” or “AUM”.** The three letters A-U-M, denote symbolically three important functions: creation, preservation, and dissolution. These three letters represent three different aspects of phonation. If God has created all, then everyone should be able to pronounce the name of God, irrespective of race, religion, geographic location, or cultural orientation. Any human being worthy of phonation shall be able to enunciate the name of God clearly. The first sound made is “A”, the middle sound is “U”, and the last is “M”; therefore, the name of God is ‘AUM’, or ‘OM’. The name “Om” encompasses all the attributes of God; therefore, “Om” is the principal and supreme name of God. One should address God by Om, only, as Māṇdhūkya Upaniṣad states:

ओमित्येतदक्षरमिदं सर्वं तस्योपव्याख्यानम् ।

Omityetaḍakṣaramidaṁ sarvaṁ  
ṭasyopavyākhyānam

**All Veḍas and the Śaṣṭras define ‘OM’ as the primary and natural name of God. All other names are secondary.**

Yajurveda says: ओम खं ब्रह्म ।

Om kham Brahma. Yajurveda (40.17)

Om is the Omnipresent Great Universal Brahmā: God.

Chhāṇḍogya Upaniṣad says:

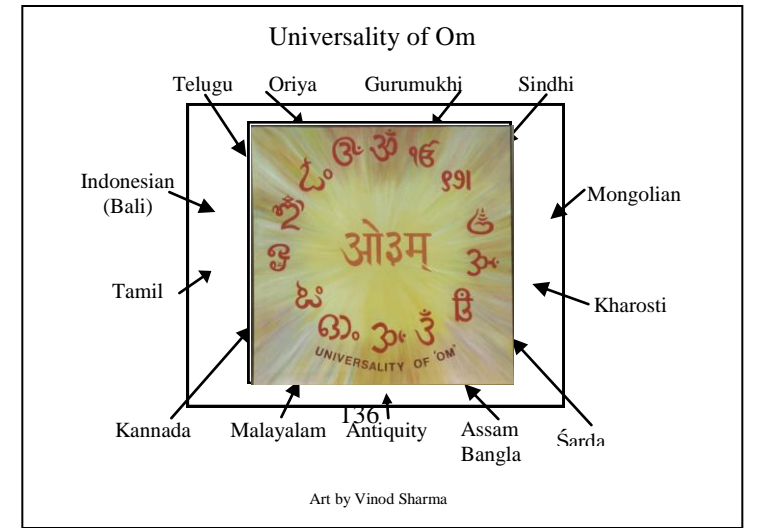
ओमित्येतदक्षरमुद्गीथमुपासीत ।

Omityetaḍakṣaramudgīthamupāsīta.

Chhāṇḍogya Upaniṣad.1

“God is immortal, and the name is OM, for God alone is worthy of worship, none other”.

**To pronounce the name of God, no training is needed, even a child can enunciate AAA-U-M (Om), as the very name of Om starts with the sound of “AAA-U-M.”**



Q (88): What are the three principal qualities of God?

A (88): God has no gender; therefore, the question of whether God is male, female, or neutral does not arise.

**God is pure conscious and has three principal**

**qualities: Existence (Sat), Consciousness (Chit), Bliss (Ānanda).**

**For this reason, God is addressed as Sachchidānanda. One may feel the presence of God in this life, for many pure Yogis have experienced the perpetual bliss of God's presence in a deep state of meditation.**

Q (89): What is the soul, Ātmā, and what are the two principal qualities?

A (89): **The soul in reality is the energy of being.** By this virtue, the body performs all living actions. The soul has two principal properties that are consciousness and existence, but the soul has no continuous bliss.

Q (90): Describe principal quality of Prakṛti.

A (90): Prakṛti is the material cause of the universe. The substance, matter, composes the universe which is made up of atoms, molecules, and compounds. Matter does not have life, only one property, existence. It has

neither consciousness nor bliss. Prakṛti manifests in the form of physical and casual bodies, and Prakṛti acts as a conduit for the expression of soul.

**Note: *Mimāṃsā, Vaiśeṣika Śāstra, Nyāya Śāstra, Paṭañjali's Aṣṭāṅg Yoga, Sāṅkhya Śāstra, and Vedānta*, these six books called ŚAD-DARŚAN. These six books of philosophy are interlinked. The first five of these books describe Prakṛti, or Nature, or unconscious principle, and Ātmā, or Puruṣa, or conscious principle as eternal entities. Paṭañjali's Aṣṭāṅg Yoga described God as the Super-Conscious, Eternal, Intelligent, Supreme-Self, Governor of Prakṛti and Puruṣa.**

Vedā, and all these Śāstras including Vedānta Śāstra, described God as the Impersonal and Formless. With the help of Paṭañjali's Aṣṭāṅg Yoga, one can understand Puruṣa, or self, as well as, the Supreme Being who is the final cause of creation. Through the dynamism of ŚAD-DARŚAN, particularly, Sāṅkhya Śāstra, or one can realize, or one can control the ego, or I, or AHAṆ-KĀRA, or ignorance of self. Afterwards, one becomes cognizant about the existence of PURUṢA. Having accomplished the goal of self-realization, one can enjoy eternal bliss by seeking and comprehending God through Paṭañjali's Aṣṭāṅg Yoga.

Q (91): What are the characteristics and the basic differences of Prakṛti and Pravṛtti?

A (91): Prakṛti, metaphysically and in abstract thinking, represents nature; whereas, Pravṛtti refers to an individual's lifestyle, inner nature, or propensities. The three basic characteristics, Guṇas of Prakṛti and Pravṛtti, are as follows:

**Sāttvika** - symbolizes purity, justification, sublimation, benevolence, and pure consciousness with purity promoting virtuous qualities.

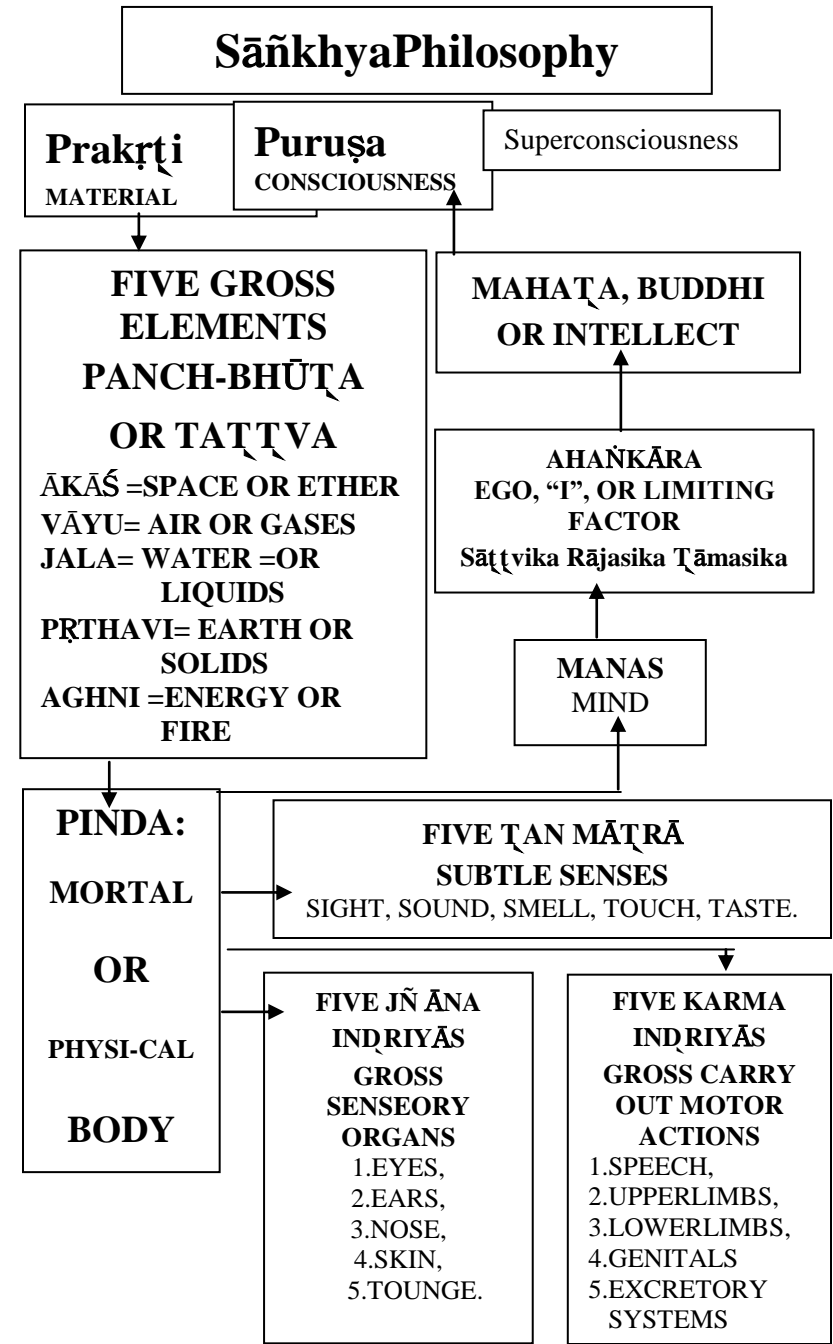
**Rājasika** - represents impurity, egoistic, resentment, selfishness, adulteration, and agitation promoting qualities.

**Tāmasika** - encompasses ignorance, dullness, malign and malice, destructive, demonic, and vicious qualities.

Q (92): What is Jñāna?

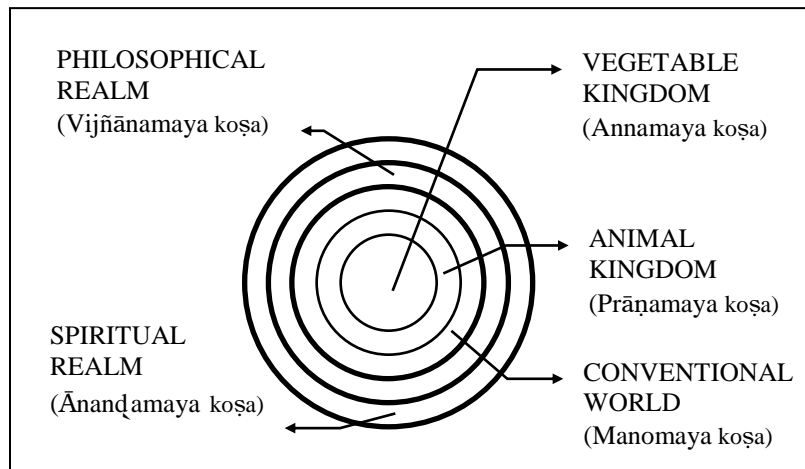
A (92): Jñāna, in a very simple way, may be translated as 'knowledge.' Yogiraj Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* (3.3) states that there are only two paths in the world for self-realization, one is Karma Yoga, and the other path is Jñāna Mārga (Path). These two realistic paths both encompass human life and complement each other.

Jñāna Mārga is called the Sāṅkhya path. The combination of Prakṛti and the soul creates the casual



world.

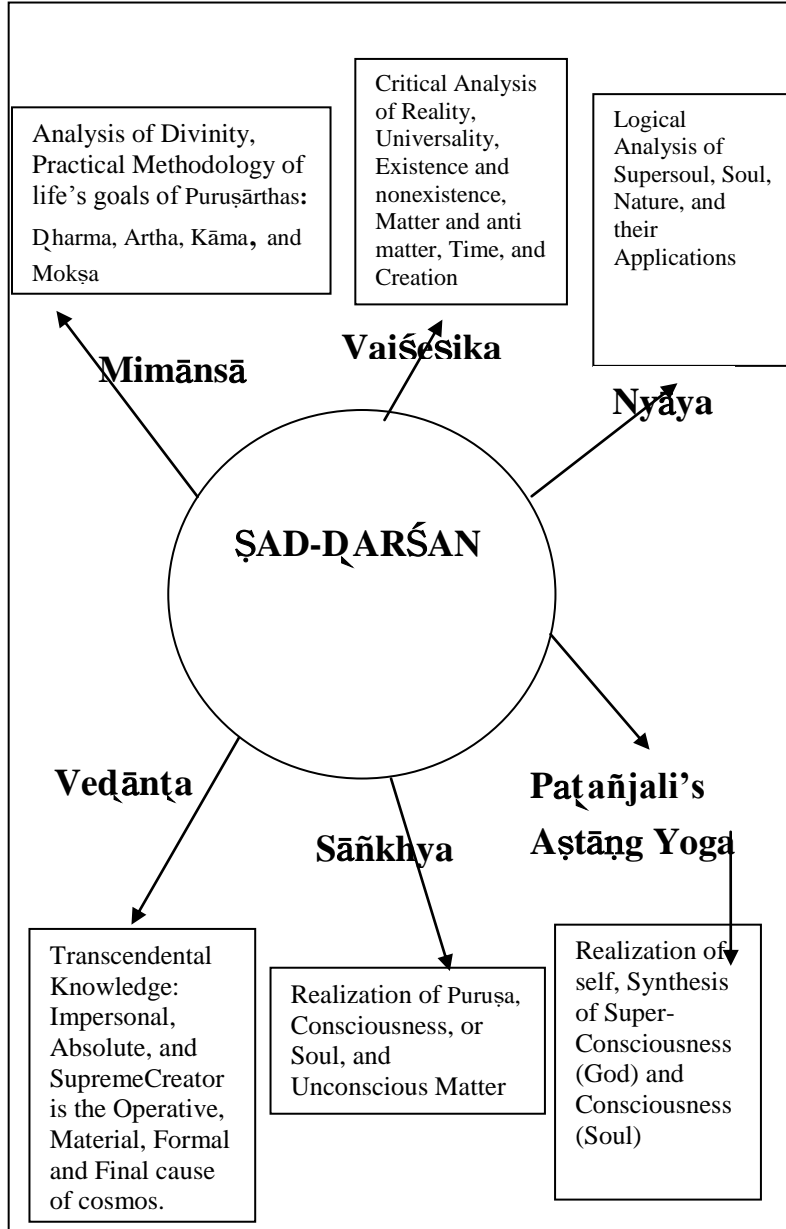
Ṭaiṭṭiriyopaniṣad describes the interaction of souls, and Prakṛti is the basic development called the Annamaya koṣa, including the vegetable kingdom. When the Prakṛti elements develop further, Prāṇa, or the energy, moves to the external body called the Prāṇamaya koṣa which includes the animal kingdom. Further growth, of the Prakṛti elements, leads to the development of the mind, Manomaya koṣa,-the casual world. Further maturation of the Prakṛti, or the matters of mind, which imparts the discriminatory knowledge of these three entities; soul, God, matter, and the relationship to each other, creates the advanced state of mind called the Vijñānamaya koṣa. This stage represents the world of consciousness.



The final stage of development of the Prakṛti is the blissful state called Ānandamaya koṣa or the spiritual world of the super-consciousness.

The development of spiritual, philosophical, and conventional realms of existence from the vegetable to the animal kingdom represents the body, or Pind, which is essential for the expression of soul. Sāṅkhya philosophy describes Prakṛti, or nature, metaphysically as Ahankāra or a limiting factor. The interaction, of these two entities, results in various forms of realms as described above.

Regarding creation, Maḥṛṣi Dayānanda theorized that God initially created adult male and female forms at the beginning of the creation, or Sṛṣṭi. This statement is supported by the fact that “natural phenomena obey definite scientific laws” as stated by Professor Hawking of Cambridge University, Cambridge, England (1999). Professor Hawking further elaborated that “the early appearance of life on earth suggests that there is a good chance of the spontaneous generation of life in suitable conditions.” Maḥṛṣi Dayānanda further commented that the suitable conditions existed at the beginning of creation, or Sṛṣṭi, at a place called Trivishitapa, or the present day Tibet is the place where the human civilization first started.



Q (93): How can one achieve God-realization?

A (93): By practicing Paṭāñjali's Aṣṭāṅg Yoga (see question number 66) and meditation, one may attain God-realization in this life. Yajurveda teaches that a person may attain union with the Divinity while alive as shown in the following:

यस्तु सर्वाणि  
भूतान्यात्मन्नेवानुपश्यति ।  
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न  
वि चिकित्सति ॥

Yastu sarvāṇi  
bhūtānyātmannevānupaśyaṭi,  
sarvabhūteṣu chātmanam  
taṭo na vichikiṭṣaṭi.

---- Yajurveda 40/6

“Great Creator by Your grace, a person, by practicing righteousness and yoga, realizes that Your presence, Samyak dṛaṣṭā is in all the creations of the Creator, and all are treated likewise, for a person has no doubt regarding God's presence, and, indeed, one has attained salvation Samyak Darśan.”

तद्वैराग्यादपि दोषबीजक्षये कैवल्यम् ॥

Ta dvairāgyādapi doṣa-bija-kshaye  
kaivalyam.

---- Yoga Darshan 3-51.

**“Finally, by renouncing these obstacles, the seed of ignorance or bondage is destroyed, and the yogi attains Kaivalyam, liberation.”**

A blissful union with God is possible through Paṭaṅjali’s Aṣṭāṅg Yoga called Jñāna Yoga or Rāj Yoga. Jñāna Yoga is another path that leads to self - realization, a step closer to God -realization. Bhakti Yoga, devotional submersion, also, leads to self - realization by arousing consciousness towards the Jñāna Yoga of Paṭaṅjali.

Q (94): Do Hindūs consider ‘Avaṭāra’, such as the incarnation of God, a reality?

A (94): Avaṭāra is wishful thinking, or God in the guise of someone will come to save. God is Almighty and Ever Pervading, so what percentage of God has to be born? This does not sound like an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient entity.

The Vedas and Shāstras including Sūtra, Brāhmaṇ Granths, Upaniṣads, and Āraṇyakas do not mention the theory of Avaṭāra. . **The incarnation of God is not a reality, but the incarnation of God is a figment of the imagination.** Avaṭāra is a self-fulfilling prophecy, and an invention of man to cover insecurities. The very idea that someone in the form of an Avaṭāra, or an incarnation of God, will come to rescue is merely a fantasy. Furthermore, it makes one inept as well as lazy. The theory of Avaṭāra has made the Hindūs indolent and fostered dependency. Whosoever undertakes Puruṣārtha will save themselves and achieve goals successfully (see answer 63). Only souls reincarnate into forms of living creatures.

Puruṣārtha, or industriousness, is the only appropriate solution to meet the needs an individual to achieve destiny.

Q (95): Do Hindūs worship idols?

A (95): No. *The American Heritage College Dictionary* defines an idol as a false God.

Yajurveda very clearly and authentically states:

न तस्य प्रतिमा अस्ति  
यस्य नाम महद्यशः ।

हिरण्यगर्भइत्येष मा मा  
हिंसीदित्येषा यस्मान्न जातइत्येषः ॥

Na ṭasya praṭimā aṣṭi  
yasya nāma mahadyaśaḥ,  
hiraṅgarbha ityeṣa mā mā hinsīdityeṣā  
yasmāna jāta ityeṣaḥ

--- Yajurveda 32/3

“That there is no image Murti, or Praṭimā, of the One whose glory is the greatest of all. God is the creator of all beings, and God sustains all luminous objects within the self. None is mightier than the unborn or the never born all pervading God. God alone is worthy of worship”.

To this date Balinese Hindūs do not worship images. One would not find any Praṭimā, or image, in the places of Āssāmī’s Dharam Sabhā. Āssām refers to a state in India.

However, Hindūs, who have difficulty in understanding God, use deities to worship. Since God is impersonal, and God has innumerable qualities that are incomprehensible by human mind, Hindūs have personified the particular characteristics of God in the form of a deity. For example, Barhmā is creator, and Viṣṇu is preserver, and Śiva is recreator, or destroyer.

Deities, however, represent very few of the divine attributes of God in a very concrete form. **One must remember that a deity is not God.** Nevertheless, during worship services, to meditate and to develop concentration, various icons partially symbolizing divinity are used by the general Hindū population.

**Modern reformers and saints like Guru Nānaka, Daḍu, Kabīra, Rājā Rām Mohan Roy, Mahrṣi Dayānanda Saraswaṭī, Swāmi Shradḍhānanda, Swāmi Barhmānanda, Yogī Śri Aurobindo are well known for their views against idol or image worship. Basavesvara, a Lingāyaṭa saint stated: “There is no deity except God”. Tamil Yogi Śivakkiar, Tamil poet Saint Thāyumānavar, and Tamil Ācharya Mānikkavāchakara all wholeheartedly denounced the worship of objects made from stones and metals as God or representatives of God.**

Ādi Śankarāchārya and Vaiṣṇava Saint Mādhavāchārya, in their commentaries on Chhāṅḍogya Upaniṣad, objected to the worship of inanimate objects, and the saints commented: “There is no solace in worshipping an inanimate object in place of God”.

Swāmi Barhmānanda was another Vaiṣṇava saint who also denounced the worship of idol or stone statues in



place of the worship of God. Swāmi Barhmānanda was born in Puṣkar, Rajasthan, about one hundred fifty years ago, and the devotional songs of Swāmi Barhmānanda were sung by the eighty year old Swāmi Madhawanand of Deep Madhwa Asram Rajasthan who visited Atlanta in June, 1999.

Q (96): What are the essential ingredients of Vaidic-Sanātān-Hindū Dharma?

A (96): The essential ingredients are as follows:

1. There is only one immutable ultimate reality, God the Creator and the Controller of the Universe, and God alone is worthy of worship.
2. The Vedas are the source of all true physical and spiritual knowledge. These impersonal treasures of knowledge are the gifts from God to humanity.
3. The purpose of human life is to realize the Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent Eternal Super Soul or God, by the soul or self with the help of Prakṛti, which is the material manifestation. This is made possible by the soul through self-realization (आत्मज्ञान), and spiritual awakening may be obtained by following the inter-related dynamics or sequential undertakings as shown below:
  - i. Yajña: Sanctified benevolent dedicated efforts, or activities offered to the Impersonal, All Pervading Reality, God, through performing Dharma.

- ii. Dharma: Devotion, dedication, and duty to under-take selfless Karma.
- iii. Karma: Selfless service is Niṣkām Karma. Yogirāj Śri Kṛṣṇa describes the Niṣkāma-Karma (Gītā 3.14) as Yajña Karmasamubhḍavaḥ which means Yajña arises from that Niṣkām Karma as being offered to the all Pervading Reality.
- iv. Yoga: Through Aṣṭāṅg yoga, one may discipline the self, mind, and body to achieve the highest state of development called Mokṣa.
- v. Mokṣa is the liberation from desires. To achieve this liberation one must first know the Kāma, innate desires. During the journey of life, one needs to undertake Puruṣārtha, especially, Dharma and Artha. By a righteous means of Puruṣārtha, one earns money to enjoy and fulfill the desires of Kāma. After an individual has fulfilled innate desires, then, the next step is to conquer them, the Kāma. In order to achieve this goal of life, an individual must pass through four phases on the journey of life: Brahmacharya, Gṛhastha, Vānaprastha, and Samnyāsa Āśrams. Collectively, the four Varṇas, or the sections of society, pass through these four Āśrams or stages of life. By virtue of these following four principles, Yajña (त्याग, सेवा), Dharma (तप), Karma (निष्काम कर्म), and

Yoga (अष्टांग योग), an individual in all sections of society may achieve salvation. Having been enlightened, an individual uses the potentials of the soul to fulfill the ultimate social responsibility of selfless service; thereby, the particular individual achieves the ultimate liberation, Mokṣa, by preventing rebirth or reincarnation of the soul.

- vi. Rebirth: The individual may achieve complete salvation, Nirvāṇa or Mokṣa, and the cycle of reincarnation, or transmigration of souls, may be eliminated.
4. Anyone utilizing the principles of Yajña, Dharma, Niṣkām Karma, and Aṣṭāṅg Yoga may achieve the ultimate peace, or Mokṣa, without an intermediary.
5. The ultimate liberation of the soul, Mokṣa, salvation or Nirvāṇa, in this life is possible through the unique synthesis of materialism (भौतिकवाद) and spiritualism (आध्यात्मिक ज्ञान).
6. Fearlessness and freedom of expression comes in a thought within the frame work of tolerance, adaptability, and peaceful coexistence.
7. The whole world is one great humanity, Śṛṅvaṅtu viśve amṛtasya putrāḥ: “श षन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्राः।” Yajurveda 11.5. It means everyone is a loving child of God, and everyone has

equal rights. For this reason, Sanātan-Hindū Dharma never had slavery.

Q (97): Who can be called a Hindū?

A (97): In general, anyone may be called a Hindū who follows these principles:

1. The principal Creator and Controller of the universe is the One, Absolute, Immutable, Inborn, Transcendent, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Ultimate Reality, who is an all pervasive Supreme Being, called “Om.”
2. The principal source of all true spiritual, material, or scientific knowledge is Jñāna in the four Vedas.
3. The principal practice of Yajña is the sanctified continuous benevolent efforts. Yajña is the first step towards realizing the supreme entity “Om”.
4. The principle of Dharma provides an individual with the basic duties and responsibilities towards self, family, friends, society, and the universe at large. The principles are the primary guiding force in undertaking Yajña to realize “Om”.
5. The principle of Karma colors the ultimate destiny. Yajña and Dharma measure the deeds of a given individual, but Karma decides the next birth.
6. The principle of Pancha Karma: Taittirīya Upaniṣad has outlined five duties (See answer # 51) to improve upon the outcome of Karma, Dharma, and Yajña.

7. The principle of reincarnation, or rebirth, is a reality governed by Karma, Dharma, and Yajña.
8. The principles of Yoga; Yama: Ahimsā, Satya, Aṣṭeya, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha, Niyama, Śauca, Sanṭoṣa, Tapah, Svādhyāya, and Īśvara-Praṇidhāna are to be practiced in life. All life is sacred, and the pure devotion to God, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence are the principles of Ahimsa. These principles are to be practiced in daily life in order to improve the interactions between the individual, family, society, and nations to achieve 'Universal Family-Hood,' for one to attain unity with the Transcendent Absolute One which is the final goal of life to be achieved.
9. The Principle of Mokṣa, and all the above principles, may be summarized in one statement: "Dharma, Artha, Kāma, and Mokṣa." Simply, it means to lead life righteously, to earn livelihood righteously, and to enjoy life righteously, to fulfill all desires righteously. One should master all desires in order to make one free to attain bliss, peace, and the final emancipation from the cycles of rebirth. All souls mature spiritually without any intermediary, and none, of the souls, may be deprived of this spiritual liberation, for the goal of life is called Mokṣa.
10. The principles of Saṅskāra are to be implemented, so an individual may achieve growth, to become a better person. to benefit humanity. Also, when the

body dies, cremation should be used, so the body returns to Panch-Bhuṭa, the five elements of Prakṛti, nature.

Q (98): Name the two most significant contributions made by the Vaidic-Hindū-Sanātan Dharma in shaping the modern world.

A (98): Innumerable contributions have been made for the good of humanity by Vaidic-Hindū-Sanātan Dharma. At this point a few of contributions will be summarized as follows:

### 1. The righteous pursuit of freedom:

- A. Individuals without an intermediary have liberty to pursue freedom by righteous means. When an individual is physically, socially, emotionally, and metaphysically free, then, liberty is attained.
- B. Freedom to worship is ingrained as a right for everyone. Every individual is at liberty to worship as one wishes, as long as the individual does not interfere or hurt another, or make one self to be a burden to others.
- C. When one attains freedom from the clutches of all desires, then spiritual freedom known as Mokṣa, Nirvāṇa, or salvation may be attained. "Access to the righteous pursuit of freedom by any individual is bestowed upon

the individual by Vaidic Sanātan Hindū Dharma” which means that every individual has the potential to achieve salvation if one so desires, and one implements this through Puruṣārtha or industriousness.

## 2. Oneness of Science and Religion:

The unison, of the physical and spiritual sciences, is a basic ingredient of Vaidic-Sanātan-Hindū Dharma. The Vedas are the repertoire of all these sciences, Parā or spiritual knowledge, and Aparā, the physical or material sciences, or knowledge. The implication of this uniqueness is clearly evident in Yoga and Ayurveda to name a few. In mathematical areas, the gift of ‘zero’ and the binary system formed the basis of the modern computer system which was given to the world by ancient Vaidic scholars and sages. The Arabic race, as some believe, only transmitted the number zero to the west from India’s ancient Vaidic sages. The gifts of ancient Vaidic sages, “zero and the binary system,” has projected the modern world into the cyber-age of the twenty-first century.

Q (99): What can Vaidic-Hindū- Sanātan Dharma offer the world?

A (99): From antiquity, Vaidic-Hindū-Sanātan Dharma has survived in India offering hidden insights to the world as shown in the following:

1. **Tolerance:** Peaceful coexistence is the product of the principles of Aṣṭāṅg yoga, as shown by Ahimsā, Saṭya, Aṣṭeya, Brahmacharya, and Aparigraha. In practice, these principles have provided the following gifts to the world:
  - a) A harmonious existence of all world religions. India offers a rare example of a country where all religions have thrived together since antiquity.
  - b) India has supported the development and freedom of worship of the divinity as one chooses without harmful controls.
  - c) The preservation of ecology and bio-diversity allows various flora and fauna to thrive in India; whereas, in other countries many species have vanished long ago.
  - d) India promotes a tolerance to alien ideologies, civilizations, tribes, and various ways of life.
  - e) A democratic approach to life and freedom of expression is apparent in India.

- f) The “live and let live” philosophy prevails making a person a better human being, and, now, the world is a better place to peacefully cohabit with all the creations of nature.
- g) The practice of universal “family-hood” is evident in every day interactions. Only the **Vaidic-Hindū-Sanātan Dharma or related Dharma’s followers accept the universal sisterhood and universal motherhood by addressing woman, as sister or mother, depending upon their age.**

2 **Jñāna: Vivek.** There is discriminatory thinking concerning the knowledge of God, soul, and nature. Jñāna is necessary for the following:

- a) The achievement of self-realization is followed by practicing the philosophy of Yajña, Dharma, Karma, and Yoga.
- b) To experience God-realization in this life through unique synthesis of materialism and spiritualism is important.

3. **Healthy, stress-free, living provides longevity** which are practiced through the teachings of Aṣṭāṅg Yoga, and a better understanding of death is given. Yogis depart from this world at their time by taming

death. In general, people embrace death and dying with serenity and dignity. A vegetarian life-style will present a preventive medicinal approach to the society; thereby, the society is free from sickness and disease.

4. **Purpose of life:** There is continuous physical, social, and emotional growth throughout the four phases of life. To earn and to enjoy the material world through righteous conduct is acceptable. An environment of life with spiritual knowledge serves to vanquish all desires, so an individual may live in the world and, also, leave the world peacefully.

Q (100): What should one recite to get the blessings of God?

A (100): At the beginning of any undertaking, one needs to recite “Om Ṭaṭ Saṭ” three times to acknowledge the attributes of God, or recite:

“O Almighty Merciful Omnipresent God,  
You are Reality,  
You are Existent; and  
we feel Your Presence.”

Note: One may recite at the end, “Om Svastī,” three times:

for bliss, peace, and prosperity. Even, today, the Balinese, Indonesian, Hindūs recite Om Svastī, Om Svastī, and Om Svastī.