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Cow Dung's Many Uses

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), in Young India

Four monks made an agreement to meditate in silence for a week and not to speak a single word. On the first day, they maintained silence. But as darkness fell, the flame of their singular candle began to flicker. "Oh, the flame is going out, said one monk. "Eh, we should not speak a single word, said the second. "Why do you two want to speak? said the third. "Ha! I am the only one who did not talk! said the fourth.

I submit to you that the tolerant society is open to and encouraging of all religions. And this does not weaken us; it strengthens us, it makes us strong. You know, if we look back through history to all those great civilizations, those great nations that rose up to even world dominance and then deteriorated, declined and fell, we find they all had one thing in common. One of the significant forerunners of their fall was their turning away from their God or Gods. Ronald Reagan (1911-2004), 40th President of the United States

Why does a vijnani (enlightened person) keep an attitude of love toward God? The answer is that 'I-consciousness' persists. It disappears in the state of samadhi, no doubt, but it comes back. In the case of ordinary people the 'I' never disappears.

You may cut down the ashwattha tree, but the next day sprouts shoot up. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886), guru of Swami Vivekananda

Anger is nothing but an attachment for an object, when expressed towards an obstacle between ourselves and the object of our attachment. Swami Chinmayananda (1916-1993), founder of Chinmaya Mission

Mark Twain visited over a century ago and commented that Varanasi was "older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together."

Temper is the one thing you can't get rid of by losing it. Jack Nicholson in the movie "Anger Management "

Your heart is the temple where God should be enshrined. Your good thoughts are the flowers, your good words the hymns, your good deeds the rituals. And love is the offering. Mata Amritanandamayi Ma, Kerala-based hugging saint and Hinduism Today's Hindu of the Year 1993

Even among high-context cultures, the Indian wedding stands out. It involves as much planning as the construction of a nuclear power plant--except it costs more. Anonymous

Sugar is sweet at all times, even in the dark. So remains devotion for the devout, in times of comfort or discomfort, praises or insults, darkness or enlightenment. His Divine Holiness Pramukhswami Maharaj, spiritual head of Bochasanwasi Shree Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha

Tell the truth; there's less to remember.

He is the Supreme Brahman, the Self of all, the chief foundation of this world, subtler than the subtle, eternal. That thou art; thou art That. Atharva Veda, Kaivalya Upanishad

Life is a boomerang. It brings you back what you send out. It is a child, not an old person, who makes progress in life. If you really want to become a child, then you have to feel that there is always something to learn and that God is there to teach you. Sri Chinmoy, renowned spiritual leader, author, poet, artist, musician and athlete

Q: What does a Hindu wish someone on their birthday? A: May you have many happy returns.

A millennium before Europeans were willing to divest themselves of the Biblical idea that the world was a few thousand years old, the Mayans were thinking of millions and the Hindus billions. Carl Sagan (1934-1996), astrophysicist and author of Cosmos

Austerity is the powerful bath of fire and bright rays of showering light that washes the soul clean of the dross of its many past lives, and of the current life, which have held it in the bondage of ignorance, misgiving, unforgiveness and the self-perpetuating ignorance of the truths of the Sanatana Dharma. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927-2001), founder of Hinduism Today

Did You Know?

A little-known shloka says that every Deity dwells in a different part of the cow, making her as holy as the Deities themselves. According to the Mahabharata, Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity, dwells in the cow's dung, giving it spiritual value in Hinduism. Through the centuries, many practical uses for cow dung, as well as urine, have been discovered.

The floor where havanas are performed is traditionally coated with cow dung and sprinkled with cow urine, the fire is ignited with dried cow dung, and no such ceremony is said to be complete without a five-part offering containing cow dung and urine. Cow dung is also used to prepare vibhuti (holy ash) and plays a role in a variety of religious rituals, such as Lakshmi Puja (a trail of cow-dung plaster invites Her from the main door of the house to the shrine room where She is invoked for Her blessings), Govardhan Puja (worship is performed on a mound of cow dung representing Govardhan Hill for prosperity and fertility of the land) and countless other festivals of nearly every tradition throughout India.

Aside from their sanctifying qualities, cow dung and urine are also praised for their purifying, healing and sanitizing actions. Jewelers employ cow urine to purify gold and silver ornaments, and ayurvedic doctors prescribe it in the treatment of skin disease, obesity, ulcers, stomach diseases and liver pain. Cow dung can leech poison from the body, including from snake and scorpion bites, and when made into a solution and sprayed on municipal waste, its antiseptic qualities kill foul odors.

Used as fuel for cooking fires, cow dung saves money otherwise spent on firewood or gas, and the smoke helps kill germs and repel mosquitoes and flies. The cow's dung and urine are both used as inexpensive, organic fertilizers, and the urine

makes an effective bio-pesticide.

Cow dung ash mixed with mud strengthens mud houses, and houses coated with cow dung are insulated from extremes of heat and cold and protected from diseases like cholera and plague, insects and reptiles, wild elephants and even, so they say, nuclear radiation.

with Bindu Chaudhary, Nepal