

## [Sin and Suffering](#)

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## Sin and Suffering

Unlike many faiths, Hinduism admits of no mortal sin, no eternal hell, no satan, no intrinsic evil.

Sin and suffering are a part of human life. We are not afflicted by anyone but ourselves. All is not lost. There is always a way out of the syndromes of life. Our God is all-powerful, almighty, all-knowing-sorrow and trespassing of dharma exist at His behest. It is by His law of karma that we go through guilt, transgressions, sorrow, hurting ourselves and others. When we are mature enough to face atonement, seven stages must be undergone: admission, remorse, repentance, confession, showing shame, penance and reconciliation. Then all is forgiven and forgotten.

### Why Is There Suffering in the World?

The nature of the world is duality. It contains each thing and its opposite: joy and sorrow, goodness and evil, love and hate. Through experience of these, we learn and evolve, finally seeking Truth beyond all opposites. Aum.

There is a divine purpose even in the existence of suffering in the world. Suffering cannot be totally avoided. It is a natural part of human life and the impetus for much spiritual growth for the soul. Knowing this, the wise accept suffering from any source, be it hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, famine, wars, disease or inexplicable tragedies. Just as the intense fire of the furnace purifies gold, so does suffering purify the soul to resplendence. So also does suffering offer us the important realization that true happiness and freedom cannot be found in the world, for earthly joy is inextricably bound to sorrow, and worldly freedom to bondage. Having learned this, devotees seek a satguru who teaches them to understand suffering, and brings them into the intentional hardships of sadhana and tapas leading to liberation from the cycles of experience in the realm of duality. The Agamas explain, "That which appears as cold or as hot, fresh or spoiled, good

fortune and bad, love and hate, effort and laziness, the exalted and the depraved, the rich and the poor, the well-founded and the ill-founded, all this is God Himself; none other than Him can we know." Aum.

### What Is Sin? How Can We Atone for It?

Sin is the intentional transgression of divine law. There is no inherent or "original" sin. Neither is there mortal sin by which the soul is forever lost. Through sadhana, worship and austerities, sins can be atoned for. Aum.

What men term sin, the wise call ignorance. Man's true nature is not sullied by sin. Sin is related only to the lower, instinctive-intellectual nature as a transgression of dharma. Still, sin is real and to be avoided, for our wrongful actions return to us as sorrow through the law of karma. Sin is terminable, and its effects may be compensated for by penance, or prayashchitta, and good deeds which settle the karmic debt. The young soul, less in tune with his soul nature, is inclined toward sin; the old soul seldom transgresses divine law. Sins are the crippling distortions of intellect bound in emotion. When we sin, we take the energy and distort it to our instinctive favor. When we are unjust and mean, hateful and holding resentments year after year and no one but ourselves knows of our intrigue and corruption, we suffer. As the soul evolves, it eventually feels the great burden of faults and misdeeds and wishes to atone. Penance is performed, and the soul seeks absolution from society and beseeches God's exonerating grace. The Vedas say, "Loose me from my sin as from a bond that binds me. May my life swell the stream of your river of Right." Aum.

### Does Hell Really Exist? Is There a Satan?

There is no eternal hell, nor is there a Satan. However, there are hellish states of mind and woeful births for those who think and act wrongfully-temporary tormenting conditions that lift the fiery forces within. Aum.

Hell, termed Naraka, is the lower astral realm of the seven chakras below the muladhara. It is a place of fire and heat, anguish and dismay, of confusion, despair

and depression. Here anger, jealousy, argument, mental conflict and tormenting moods plague the mind. Access to hell is brought about by our own thoughts, words, deeds and emotions-suppressed, antagonistic feelings that court demons and their aggressive forces. Hell is not eternal. Nor is there a Satan who tempts man and opposes God's power, though there are devilish beings called asuras, immature souls caught in the abyss of deception and hurtfulness. We do not have to die to suffer the Naraka regions, for hellish states of mind are also experienced in the physical world. If we do die in a hellish state of consciousness-burdened by unresolved hatred, remorse, resentment, fear and distorted patterns of thought-we arrive in Naraka fully equipped to join others in this temporary astral purgatory. The Vedas say, "Sunless and demonic, verily, are those worlds, and enveloped in blinding darkness, to which all those people who are enemies of their own souls go after death." Aum.

### What Is the Consequence of Sinful Acts?

When we do not think, speak and act virtuously, we create negative karmas and bring suffering upon ourselves and others. We suffer when we act instinctively and intellectually without superconscious guidance. Aum.

We are happy, serene and stable when we follow good conduct, when we listen to our conscience, the knowing voice of the soul. The superconscious mind, the mind of our soul, knows and inspires good conduct, out of which comes a refined, sustainable culture. Wrongdoing and vice lead us away from God, deep into the darkness of doubt, despair and self-condemnation. This brings the asuras around us. We are out of harmony with ourselves and our family and must seek companionship elsewhere, amongst those who are also crude, unmindful, greedy and lacking in self-control. In this bad company, burdensome new karma is created, as good conduct cannot be followed. This papa accumulates, blinding us to the religious life we once lived. Penance and throwing ourselves upon the mercy of God and the Gods are the only release for the unvirtuous, those who conduct themselves poorly. Fortunately, our Gods are compassionate and love their devotees. The ancient Vedas elucidate, "The mind is said to be twofold: the pure and also the impure; impure by union with desire-pure when from desire completely free!" Aum.

### Does God Ever Punish Wrongdoers?

God is perfect goodness, love and truth. He is not wrathful or vengeful. He does not condemn or punish wrongdoers. Jealousy, vengefulness and vanity are qualities of man's instinctive nature, not of God. Aum Namah Sivaya.

There is no reason to ever fear God, whose right-hand gesture, abhaya mudra, indicates "fear not," and whose left hand invites approach. God is with us always, even when we are unaware of that holy presence. He is His creation. It is an extension of Himself; and God is never apart from it nor limited by it. When we act wrongly, we create negative karma for ourselves and must then live through experiences of suffering to fulfill the law of karma. Such karmas may be painful, but they were generated from our own thoughts and deeds. God never punishes us, even if we do not believe in Him. It is by means of worship of and meditation on God that our self-created sufferings are softened and assuaged. God is the God of all-of the believers within all religions, and of the nonbelievers, too. God does not destroy the wicked and redeem the righteous; but grants the precious gift of liberation to all souls. The Agamas state, "When the soul gradually reduces and then stops altogether its participation in darkness and inauspicious powers, the Friend of the World, God, reveals to the soul the limitless character of its knowledge and activity." Aum.