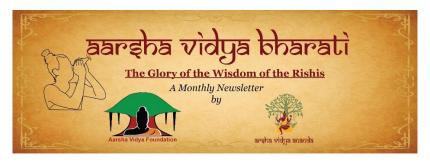
Aarsha Vidya Bharati - Sep 2021

A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



This is one of many articles from our monthly newsletter. Access the <u>Sep 2021 issue</u> or read any of the <u>articles</u>.

Spotlight -Svarga

By Swamini Brahmaprajnananda

We generally translate 'svarga' as heaven in English. But they are not the same. 'Svarga' in Hinduism is a **temporary realm of experience** beyond our physical world. The Karma $K\bar{a}nda$ section of the Veda reveals that if we perform karma aligned with Dharma



with mantras, rituals and meditations, we will attain svarga, presided over by Indra $Bhagav\bar{a}n$. Due to the fructification of excessive punya, the $j\bar{\imath}va$ is bestowed with a celestial youthful body and can enjoy the comforts and pleasures of this special place without ageing. But the $j\bar{\imath}va$ cannot earn fresh karma. Sounds attractive? Wait until you hear more.

Is 'svarga' eternal? For how long can the $j\bar{\imath}va$ remains in svarga? Bhagavad $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ teaches us,

ते तं भुक्त्वा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यलोकं विशन्ति। एव त्रयीधर्ममनुप्रपन्ना गतागतं कामकामा लभन्ते ।।9.21।।

te tam bhuktvā svargalokam viśālam kṣīṇe puṇye martyalokam viśanti evam taryīdharmam anuprapannāh gatāgatam kāmakāmā labhante //9.21//

These people having enjoyed that vast *svarga*, enter the world of mortals when their *puṇya* is exhausted. In this manner, following the rituals in the three Vedas, those who are desirous of various ends, gain **the condition of (repeated) going and coming**, *saṁsāra*.

Then, the $j\bar{\imath}va$ is reborn either on earth or on some other plane depending on which unique combination of $punya-p\bar{a}pa$, fructify. Even if one goes to svarga, it is not permanent. The happily-ever-after ending eludes us even in svarga. The sense of separation and hence loneliness that plagued the $j\bar{\imath}va$ on earth is likely to continue

in svarga although it might be numbed due to celestial entertainment. Since svarga is temporary and the $j\bar{\imath}va$ is still plagued with $avidy\bar{a}$, a human life is considered a **great blessing** because $Mok\bar{\imath}a$, freedom while living is possible only in this realm after which there is no more rebirth.

Levels of manifestation and evolution

Satya loka Tapo loka Jana loka Maha loka Svarga loka Bhuvaḥ loka

Bhū loka (We are here)

Atala Vitala Sutala Talātala Mahātala Rasātala Pātāla

rather get *Brahmavidyā* here and now?

The Śāstra mentions 14different lokas (realms with gradation in the level of evolution the medium of and the experiences that one has). Needless to say, all the *loka-s* above *bhūh*. (our world) are more evolved with different dimensions and experiences and blessings of powers for the denizens. The loka-s below bhu loka are at lower levels of evolution and indicate a baser temperament given to adharma. One attains a loka depending on the punyapāpa that fructifies for the iīva. One cannot travel on one's own like one does to Satya *loka* is different places. where **Brahma** lives ji and **teaches** Brahmavidyā. Are you willing to do all the *punya* karma and meditations required to get to Satya loka or would you

Like svarga, naraka is not hell. It is a temporary place where one pays the price for doing $adh\bar{a}rmika$ actions. Going through suffering makes one **aware of the consequences** of one's actions and hence more responsible. Here one exhausts one's $p\bar{a}pa$ by suffering. Both svarga and naraka are temporary.

In Christianity or even Islam there are descriptions of heaven and Jannat. In both religions, heaven is the Kingdom of God which is eternal and only believers are allowed in, which is vastly different from *svarga*.