

[Dharma's Puzzle Pioneer](#)

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ENTERTAINMENT

Dharma's Puzzle Pioneer

There are no cross words in

If you find it difficult to solve the special crossword puzzle on the right, (please see hard copy) consider yourself fortunate that you didn't have to create it. This first-of-its-kind puzzle contains 68 words out of 80 that pertain to Hinduism and India. That is 85%. And, as brain-teaser builder Kumar Balani affirmed, it was not all fun and games, even with the help of his intrepid computer. "It was an arduous task, involving a time-consuming multi-stage process. But the result is well worth it. I learned that if one perseveres, success is inevitable."

Admit it. We take the dilemmas of puzzle-making for granted. But after hearing Balani detail how he solved this puzzle's creation conundrum, you just might take your puzzles more seriously. Balani explained, "First, I manually keyed in over 1,200 words from the lexicon of Dancing with Siva, Hinduism's Contemporary Catechism. But 1,200 words resulted in only about eight words from the lexicon getting into the puzzle. So I manually inputted another 1,400 words from the index of the book, plus another 500 words from a list I had previously developed on Hinduism. Armed with 3,100 words, I was finally able to create a 15 x 15 square puzzle containing 32 words

relating to Hinduism--forty-percent of the total 80 words. That was only after going through some 20 trial puzzles!"

Instead of being deterred, the word-wielding Balani became determined--even obsessed. "I was still not satisfied, so I worked the puzzle over and over until I came up with a puzzle containing 68 words that were either from the book, related to Hinduism and India or words on which clues could be written to relate them to Hindu concepts. I am pleased with the result, and I must thank Hinduism Today for the request for a puzzle with nearly all Hindu words--it was a real challenge!"

Balani was born in Poona, spent most of his early years in India and migrated to the Philippines in 1960. He started dabbling with puzzle creation in 1965, during his first year of high school at San Sebastian College, Manila. He used class newsletters and the school newspaper, The Sebastinian (of which he was editor), as his outlets. Now, Balani's occupation is his export business, Asia Connection Ltd., in East Brunswick, New Jersey. His family and business keep him fully occupied, but he still publishes a plethora of puzzles. "My primary concern is that the readers enjoy my puzzles," Balani stresses. But he also strives not to make the puzzles too easy, being aware that the average Indian immigrant is well-educated.

Try it. But don't strain your brain

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