

HINDUISM TODAY®

Affirming Sanatana Dharma and Recording the Modern History of a Billion-Strong Global Religion in Renaissance

**Murugan's
Stunning New
California Home**



(Cover) Lord Murugan is bedecked in jewels, garlands and holy ash at the peak of the Maha Kumbabhishekam at the Shiva Murugan Temple in Concord, California; (above) volunteers serve hearty meals to grateful pilgrims at the Kumbha Mela 2025

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 2025 • The Hindu Year Viśvāvasu, 5127 • विश्वावसु

Bodhinatha Veylanawami www.gurudeva.org

INTERNATIONAL

- Murugan Out West:** America's Newest Murugan Temple Graces California's Concord Hills 18
- Yoga in Europe:** Germany's Yoga Vidya Ashram Carries Forward a Vibrant Hindu Tradition 28
- Conference:** Our Editors Attended and Report on the 2025 European and World Yoga Conferences 34
- Kumbh Mela:** Chronicling the Remarkable Effort Required to Care for 660 Million Pilgrims 52
- Her Mela Experience:** Choodie Shivaram Describes Her Daughter's Spiritual Immersion 59
- His Mela Experiences:** Devout Thai Scholar Hurditya Deva Recounts His Adventures 60

LIFESTYLE

- Youth:** The Teen Superpower— Service to Others 62

- Educational Insight:** Siddha Medicine, South India's Mystically Guided Medical Tradition 36
- Mahabharata in Motion:** Indian Dance and a Creative Flair Bring an Epic Story to Life 64
- Art:** Suresh Muthukulam Depicts Spiritual Success 86

OPINION

- In My Opinion:** How Grandfather's Experiences Shaped My Religious Life 9
- Publisher's Desk:** Heaven and Hell Are States of Mind within Us 10
- Letters to the Editor** 12
- From the Scriptures:** The Ultimate Attainment 17

DIGESTS

- Global Dharma** 6
- Quotes & Quips** 14

USA Contacts: Letters to the editor, subscription and editorial inquiries may be sent to HINDUISM TODAY®, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304 USA, letters@hindu.org. HINDUISM TODAY® (ISSN# 0896-0801; USPS# 023082), October/November/December, 2025, Volume 47, No. 4. Subscriptions from USA and Canada 1-808-822-3012; subscriptions, copies or bulk orders from other countries 1-808-822-3012; subscribe@hindu.org. Advertising: 1-888-464-1008, ads@hindu.org. HINDUISM TODAY® is published four times a year in January, April, July and October by Himalayan Academy Publications,® a nonprofit educational institution at 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304 USA. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, Founder; Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanawami, Publisher; Paramacharya Sadasivanatha Palaniswami, Editor-in-Chief. Global subscriptions: US\$35/1 year, \$65/2 years, \$95/3 years, \$155/5 years, \$299/lifetime. **International Contacts:** In Malaysia: Datta Impex, PT 6949 Jalan Casuarina 7, Desa Casuarina, Bandar Baru Nilai, 71800 Nilai, NSDK. Tel: 1-012-607-7310; E-mail: dattaimpex@yahoo.com. The Russian edition is available through contacting Dinanatha Bodhiswami in Moscow: bodhiswami@gmail.com. For permission to republish a HINDUISM TODAY® article, e-mail letters@hindu.org. Printed in USA. Periodicals postage paid at Kapaa, Hawaii, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HINDUISM TODAY®, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304.

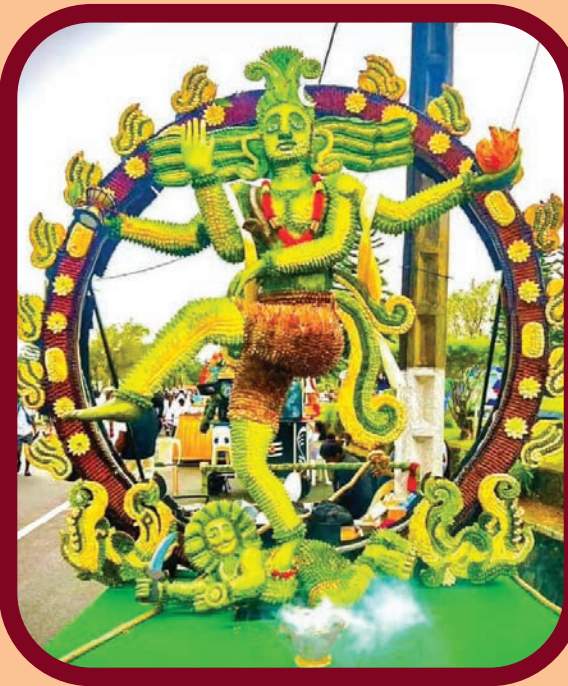
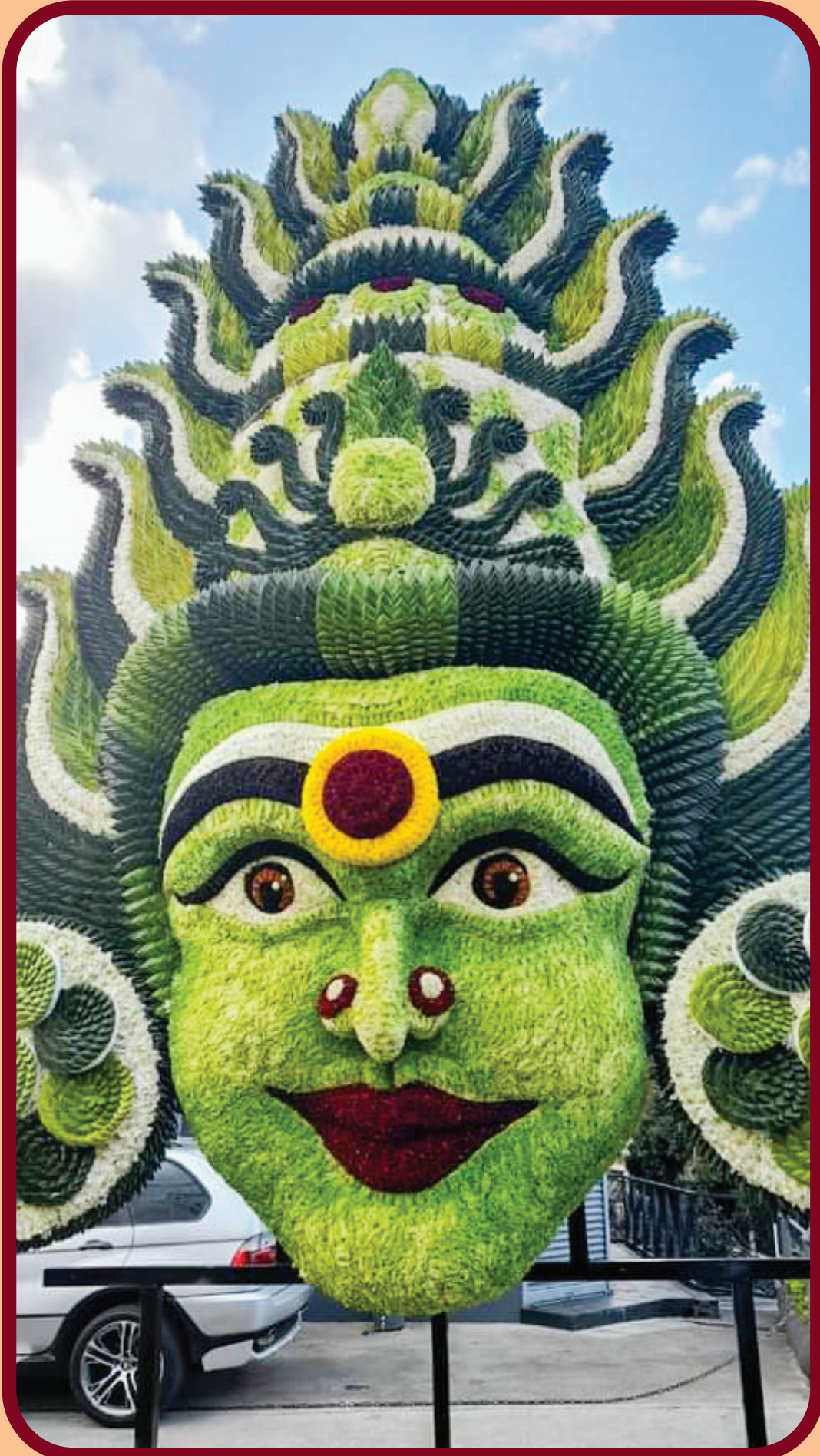
© 2025 HIMALAYAN ACADEMY PUBLICATIONS®, 107 KAHOLALELE ROAD, KAPAA, HAWAII 96746-9304 USA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



www.hinduismtoday.com



subscribe.hinduismtoday.com



The Floral Shrines of Mauritius

A dazzling tribute: These vibrant floats, crafted from coconut leaves, palm fronds and tropical flowers, are part of several Hindu festivals in Mauritius, including Kavadi and Thi-mithi. Designed and pulled by devoted hands, each floral chariot carries sacred images of the Gods such as Lord Murugan or Goddess Am-man through village streets, blessing homes along the way. The artistry, teamwork and natural materials reflect a living tradition brought from India in 1834. All Photos were provided by Sandiren Palaniady





GLOBAL DHARMA

INDONESIA

Jakarta Establishes Grand New Murugan Temple

THE SHRI SANATHANA Dharma Aalayam, also known as the Jakarta Murugan Temple, is a new Hindu temple in Jakarta, Indonesia. The temple was officially opened to the public on February 2, 2025, with a grand Maha Kumbabhishegam (consecration ceremony). The event was attended by notable dignitaries, including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who participated virtually. He emphasized the temple's role in strengthening India-Indonesia cultural and spiritual ties, highlighting their shared heritage and values. The presence of Dr. Pichai Gurukkal along with 70 of his students further elevated the significance of the event. A traditional elephant procession, approved by the Indonesian Ministry, was a highlight,

symbolizing the divine presence of Lord Ganesha. The temple is the first Dravidian-style Hindu temple in the city according to indoindians.com.

The establishment of the Shri Sanathana Dharma Aalayam was driven by the need for a Hindu place of worship for the Indian community in Jakarta. Collaboration with the city government led to the allocation of a 4,000-square-meter plot of land in Kalideres district for the construction.

The project was made possible through generous contributions from diverse communities including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Catholics and Sikhs. This act shows Jakarta's spirit of unity and religious harmony despite following different belief systems. "Jakarta



Massive tower: Worshipers walk below the 40-meter tall Rajagopuram on Feb. 2, 2025, at the Jakarta Murugan Temple. Built atop a 4,000-square-meter plot, the temple is open to everyone.

Murugan Temple represents Indonesia's unity in diversity, serving as a fundamental part of its cultural and spiritual heritage," said Selwendren, Temple Chairman.

Beyond its religious importance, the Aalayam serves as a cultural hub for the Hindu

community. The Kumara Dhar-san Mandabam facilitates educational and traditional programs, fostering a sense of belonging among devotees. This multipurpose hall hosts Tamil language classes, yoga and meditation sessions, marriage ceremonies, cultural and religious events.

INDIA

Flights Pause for Faith in Kerala

ON A WARM APRIL DAY EVERY year, jets pause and silence reclaims the skies above the international airport in Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of the southern Indian state of Kerala.

The airport's closure is not due to bad weather or a technical glitch, as one might assume, but to make way for a Hindu temple procession that marches right across its runway, as reported by the BBC.

Devotees pull ornate wooden chariots bearing temple Deities along a two km stretch of runway, a tradition so revered that it shuts down operations for a few hours at the airport, which usually handles 90 landings and take-offs daily. Elephants, a common part of Hindu religious events in India, also walk along the runway.

The event is part of the annual Painkuni festival held by the famed Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple, home to treasures worth billions of dollars.

The procession, held on the final day of the 10-day festival, begins at the temple and heads through the runway to Shanghumugham Beach, around six km away.

When the procession arrives at the beach, priests give the Deities a ritual bath in the sea. The return journey follows the same route, crossing the runway again and reaching the temple.

The procession is led by the head of the former royal family of Travancore, which built the airport in 1932. It's not clear when the festival and the procession started but the ritual has been followed since then, even when the management of the airport was passed on to the government and then a private company.

The airport is currently managed by Adani Airport Holdings Ltd, owned by billionaire



Gautam Adani's Group.

The airport also shuts down operations for a few hours for a similar procession during the temple's Alpashi Festival, usually in October or November each year.

The Thiruvananthapuram International Airport is one of the few airports in the world that closes down for a religious event. Others include Indonesia's Ngurah Rai Airport during the Balinese Hindu new year and

Chariot or plane: Devotees pull ornate wooden chariots along a 2km-stretch of airport runway

Israel's Ben Gurion Airport on Yom Kippur, which is the holiest day in Judaism.

But these are public holidays when the airport shuts down entirely and it's rare for a high-security runway to be used in the service of a religious or cultural event.



Breathe in, breathe out: A stretch of RK Beach in Visakhapatnam with a large gathering performing yoga

YOGA

Yoga Day Highlights Soaring Wellness Industry in India

INDIA CELEBRATED THE 11TH annual International Day of Yoga on Saturday, June 21, 2025. The theme was "Yoga for One Earth, One Health." A signature event, Yoga Sangam, featured mass yoga demonstrations across the nation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the celebrations in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh according to India Entrepreneur.

The yoga and meditation industry—a curious term for a practice that has existed since time immemorial—in India has witnessed significant and rapid growth. According to a study by Future Market Insights, the industry is expected to grow from US\$81.7 billion in 2025 to US\$155.2 billion by 2035. The

statistics indicate that the industry will expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.6 percent during this period.

"Honestly, I think India is just coming back home to itself," says Sarvesh Shashi, CEO of SARVA Yoga. He feels it's a beautiful shift where people are no longer looking at yoga as just something you do on a mat. "They're beginning to see it as a way to breathe better, live lighter and feel more grounded in a very noisy world." Though he also believes a lot of it is driven by stress, he adds it's fueled by curiosity because of people wanting more peace and meaning. "Thankfully, technology has made it easier to access even the most ancient of practices with just a tap," Shashi says.

POLAND

First Hindu Temple Opens Near Kraków

A NEW HINDU TEMPLE OPENED IN 2022 CLOSE TO THE CITY OF Kraków—the first in the region and one of few in Poland—at a ceremony attended by local dignitaries and the Indian ambassador. According to Notes From Poland website, the Radha Govind Bhakti Yog Mandir was under construction in Brzegi—between Kraków and the nearby town of Wieliczka—since 2017. As well as serving a growing local Hindu community, it aims to spread knowledge about India's cultural and spiritual heritage.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Artur Kozioł, mayor of Wieliczka, said that "Each of us in the world builds our home according to our own culture, religion, tradition, what we have in our heart." The mayor also presented Indian ambassador Nagma Mohamed Mallick with a symbolic miner's lamp, a reference to the historical salt mine in Wieliczka that makes the town a popular tourist destination.

The temple is the first to be built by the international Jagadguru Kripalu Parishat in Europe and is a copy of the Radha Madhav Dham temple and ashram complex in Austin, Texas, reports Dziennik Polska.

The Indian diaspora in Poland is estimated to be between 10-15,000 out of a total population of 38 million.



Sanatana Dharma in Poland: Front view of the Radha Govind Bhakti Yog Mandir

SAINTS

Leaders Unite in Bengaluru for Dharma and Culture

TO STRENGTHEN AND FACILITATE coordination between the various denominations of Sanatan Dharma, over 1,000 spiritual heads, saints, acharyas and mahatmas from India and across the globe attended the inauguration ceremony of Bharateeya Santa Mahaa Parishhad (BSMP) on June 16, 2025, in Bengaluru, South India. It was organized by Sri Kailash Ashrama, Suttur Mutt and Hariharapura Mutt, all located in Karnataka state.

As reported by the organizers' promotional material and the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, distinguished participants

included Shankaracharyas and heads of major mathas. Related dharmic religions were represented by Jain acharyas, and Buddhist monks from countries such as Japan and the United States, reflecting the event's international outreach.

Among the prominent figures were Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami of Kauai's Hindu Monastery (home of *Hinduism Today*), Jagadguru Shankaracharya Vijayendra Saraswati of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, Jagadguru Rambhadracharya, Acharya Govinddev Giri Maharaj and representatives from BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha.



Gathering: (above) The inaugural meeting (*Hinduism Today* publisher Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami is in front row, center); (below left) organizers from left to right: Sri Jayendra Puri Swamiji, Sri Deshikendra Swamiji and Sri Sachidananda Saraswathi Swamiji

According to the organizers' press release, Bharateeya Sanskruti (*Indian Culture*) proclaims unity in diversity. It is the only culture where religious diversity is most naturally and completely accepted. Thus, Bharatiya Sanskruti is the basic foundation of world peace and global harmony.

The core objectives of the BSMP are to strengthen unity among India's diverse spiritual traditions and promote the preservation of Sanatana Dharma. The inaugural gathering aimed to create a coordinated platform for saints to collaboratively

address challenges facing dharma, including the erosion of traditional values, diminishing awareness among youth and external threats to religious identity. Emphasis was placed on revitalizing temple-based learning, safeguarding scriptures, empowering religious institutions and fostering interfaith respect. The Parishhad also sought to inspire a global resurgence of spiritual values rooted in Indian culture, encouraging saints and communities to work together in the spirit of "Ekam Sat"—One Truth.

traditional and modern strategies to harmonize human-elephant coexistence.

A SURPRISING NEW STUDY BY John Nezek at Poland's SWPS University may turn our most basic assumptions about people who choose plant-based diets upside down. It turns out that vegetarians might actually be more power-hungry, achievement-oriented and individualistic than their meat-eating counterparts, as reported by *StudyFinds.org* in July 2025. Vegetarians appear to be independent thinkers who aren't afraid to buck social trends, even if it means prioritizing personal goals over group harmony.

MORE THAN 20,000 DEVOTEES gathered to witness the reconsecration of the Sri Sivan Temple in Singapore on June 8, 2025, as reported by *The Straits Times*.

Global Dharma news provided by

HINDU PRESS INTERNATIONAL

Subscribe to a free daily news summary about Hinduism worldwide at hinduismtoday.com/hpi

PHOTOS: BAPS SWAMINARAYAN SANSTHA; MEDIATECH



HINDUISM TODAY was founded on January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927–2001). It is a nonprofit educational activity of Himalayan Academy, with the following purposes: 1. To foster Hindu solidarity as a unity in diversity among all sects and lineages; 2. To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; 3. To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; 4. To protect, preserve and promote the sacred *Vedas* and the Hindu religion; 5. To nurture and monitor the ongoing spiritual Hindu renaissance; 6. To publish resources for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, photographs, reports on events and by encouraging others.



Founder:

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

Publisher:

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Editor-in-Chief:

Paramacharya Sadasivanatha Palaniswami

Publisher's Aide: Paramacharya Sivanatha Ceyonswami

Deputy Editor: Acharya Kumarnathaswami

Managing Editor: Acharya Arumuganathaswami

Production Manager: Sannyasin Saravananathaswami

Assistant Editors: Sannyasin Tillainathaswami, Sadhaka Sabanatha

Subscription and Distribution Manager:

Sannyasin Shanmuganathaswami

Advertising Manager: Sannyasin Kaivalyanathaswami

Russian Edition Editor: Dinanatha Bodhiswami

Correspondents: Choodamani Shivaram, Bengaluru;

Lavina Melwani, New York; Dev Raj Agarwal, Dehradun;

Nikki Thapa, Nepal; Anne Petry, France/India,

Claire Burkert, USA/Nepal. *Copy Editor:* Chamundi

Sabanathan. *HPI Staff:* Chandra Sankara. *Consultants:*

Dr. S. P. Sabharathnam Sivachariyar. *Photo Contributors:*

Thomas L. Kelly, Dinodia Picture Agency, Dev Raj

Agarwal, Dehradun. *Distribution:* USA: New Leaf, EB-

SCO Subscription Services, WT Cox. Europe: Publica-

tions Overseas, SWETS *Subscription Service:* Malaysia:

Datta Impexs. India: Central News Agency Limited,

Delhi. Mauritius: CODIP. *Printer:* Quad/Graphics,

Midland, Michigan.

IN MY OPINION

A Legacy of Faith and Courage

While we are generations apart, our steps echo with the same sacred syllables of devotion

BY LOSHINI RAJENTHARAN

MY LATE PATERNAL grandfather migrated from Tamil Nadu to Malaysia, with nothing to his name except a single metal suitcase. Inside it, he carried an image depicting Lord Rama, Sita Ma, Lakshmana and Hanuman. That portrait had once hung in his father's tailor shop in Karaikudi.

After his parents passed away, and with little left to hold on to in his village, he left—with only his elder sister's blessings and no valid ticket, traveling as a stowaway in the ship's kitchen. He arrived in a foreign land, not knowing the local language or English, the language of the colonial rulers. He had no money, no contacts, no job prospects. All he had was faith—faith firmly placed in Lord Rama.

He would tell me often, and with great pride, how he carried that suitcase on his head for most of the journey to the port of Nagapattinam, where he set sail. That very same image of the Gods, now nearly a hundred years old, still rests in my childhood home—now my brother's home—anchoring the prayer room as its central Deity. We were raised with prayer woven into the fabric of daily life. Mornings before school, evenings as a family and again before bed. Whenever my grandfather found me in the prayer room, he would say, "Chant *Sri Rama Jeyam*. Hanuman will always protect you as long as the chant is in your heart." I believed him.

As I grew, Sri Rama Jeyam became my inner anthem. I chanted it silently while driving, while working, while doing blood draws for my patients, while walking. It steadied me through some of life's darkest storms—through depression, my father's long illness and eventual passing, and through the ache of heartbreak.

Last year, I began practicing *likhita japam*—the daily act of writing Sri Rama Jeyam. The ritual brought a new kind of



stillness, a rhythm that grounded me and echoed across generations. Just a few months after I began this practice, by a series of serendipitous events, I received a job offer in the United Kingdom. In many ways, I mirrored my grandfather's journey—leaving Malaysia for a new land far across the ocean. Like him, I left behind a life, a family and even my beloved cats. I arrived with a medical degree, fluency in the

language, savings and a job—but all of these were made possible by the sacrifices of those who came before me. Their grit, their resilience and, most of all, their faith.

If my paternal grandfather revered Lord Rama, my maternal ancestors leaned toward Shaivism. I embraced both. I carried both in my heart. Still, the transition was not easy. The loneliness was immense. The fear and doubt, often crushing. But I leaned on faith.

I began chanting the *Hanuman Chalisa* daily as well. I discovered a Hanuman temple in Hendon Broadway, and it became my refuge. Each weekly visit felt like returning home. Kneeling before the Deities of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman in a quiet corner of the temple always brought me back to my roots. After the prayers, I would sit and chant the *Hanuman Chalisa*—ten times, sometimes twenty. In those moments, peace returned. Strength returned. Slowly, silently, I met each challenge as it came, believing Hanuman would help me through.

My grandfather taught me that faith is not ornamental. It is what you carry when you have nothing else. It is what gives you the courage to board a ship with no ticket, to walk into the unknown, to keep going when your heart breaks quietly in the dark. His faith lives in me now. And mine, in turn, carries me forward.

LOSHINI RAJENTHARAN, 33, is a Hindu, a psychiatrist, and Malaysian-born Tamil devotee of Rama and Hanuman, now living in London.



Heaven and Hell Are States of Mind Within Us

Hinduism offers methods to secure spiritual consciousness by purifying the mind and quieting the thraldom of thought

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

LET'S BEGIN WITH A BROAD QUESTION: "What exactly distinguishes someone who believes in a religion—a religionist—from someone who doesn't—a secularist?" A religionist typically believes that each person has a soul, an essence that continues to exist after death. A secularist generally believes that when the body dies, that's the end—there's nothing that survives the death of the physical form.

Going a bit deeper: a religionist also believes that what happens to the soul after death depends on how a person lived. If their actions were virtuous, the soul goes to a place some call heaven. If their actions were not virtuous, the soul experiences what is referred to as hell.



The Hindu Viewpoint

Hinduism shares several similar beliefs. Yes, the soul survives the body, and, yes, there are experiences after death, which can be likened to heaven and hell. But it adds something unique—something profound. It tells us that these aren't just places we go to after we die. They are also states of consciousness that we experience right here, right now.

Take heaven, for instance—called *svarga* in Sanskrit. It's not just a distant celestial realm. It's a state of elevated awareness, of joy and clarity, that we can access in this very moment. The same goes for hell—*naraka*. It's not simply a fiery underworld. It's a reflection of our own inner turmoil. If someone dies while trapped in fear, hatred or confusion, their soul is drawn to a realm that mirrors that inner state. If they die in peace and love, they rise to a realm that reflects that peace.

What it Means to Access Higher Consciousness

That brings us to a natural question: "If heaven is a state of consciousness, how do we access that higher state—how can we live in it now?" Hinduism answers with a beautiful concept: *atma darshana*—directly experiencing the soul. *Atma* means soul. *Darshana* means sight, which includes mystical sight or divine vision.

Let's imagine what happens when we truly go within—when we dive inside ourselves, into our spiritual essence, into the realm of the *atma*. Think of it as a journey in four steps. Step one brings us to a calm, intuitive awareness—a space of quiet confidence, creativity and inner peace. Step two takes us into a place of unconditional love for all beings. Step three unveils brilliant inner light, where visions of divine beings, sages and higher realities become possible. Step four takes us beyond form—into a vast, silent, luminous inner space, a realm of pure awareness, where even identity dissolves into the transcendent.



Why Don't We Commonly Experience This?

Imagine a clear pond. At the bottom, shining in the depths, are large gold nuggets—our soul nature. But if the surface of the pond is rippling with wind, or the water is clouded by mud and pollution, we can't see the gold. The ripples represent our busy, restless intellect. The murkiness is our subconscious clutter—old fears, memories, habits, distractions. To see clearly, we need stillness. We need clarity. We need purity of mind. And just as importantly, we need humility—a gentle willingness to observe ourselves, without judgment, with openness.

Mental Noise and its Remedies

I've found it helpful to think of thoughts as falling into five categories.

1) Recent Issues: The first source of mental noise is recent unresolved events—arguments, traumatic events, emotional upsets. When our subconscious keeps sending such memories to the surface, that's a sign they are still emotionally charged and unresolved. If we ignore them, their buried tension becomes part of a restless, anxious nature. It is easiest to resolve them while they are fresh—talking things out with the people involved, offering a sincere apology if we hurt someone, and extending forgiveness if we've been hurt. That emotional release allows the experience to settle peacefully.

2) Past Concerns: The second source is unresolved experiences from long ago. Such old memories come up now and then—perhaps not enough to take over our day, just enough to unsettle us. By now, talking to those involved may no longer be practical. A useful technique here is subconscious journaling: write out your feelings, then burn the paper with the intent of releasing the emotional charge. If done sincerely, the memory will remain, but without the sting.

3) Worries about the Future: The third source of turmoil is worry. We imagine things going wrong and sometimes become afraid. A remedy for this, taught by my guru, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, is the use of simple affirmations. For example, when thoughts begin to spiral out of the present into an unknown future, say to yourself, "I'm all right, right now." Repeat it gently, steadily, until your awareness settles into the present moment.

4) Big Decisions: The fourth category is decisions—especially big



It's a choice: A yogi meditates on the divine and demonic, knowing they are states of his own mind
.....

Purifying the Subconscious

Equal in importance to harnessing our thoughts is purifying the mind. Why does the mind need to be purified? Because adharmic thoughts, speech and actions done in this and even past lives have created negative *samskaras* (impressions) that becloud the subconscious mind. Purification of the mind—*chitta shuddhi*—is therefore essential. *The Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (India Heritage Research Foundation) puts it beautifully: "Purification of the mind may be called the essence of all spiritual endeavors." How do we accomplish this?

The first strategy is restraint: choosing not to add more impurities. That means living in dharma—not harming others, not stealing, not lying, etc. When we live ethically, we stop adding more mud to the pond's water.

The second approach is *seva*—selfless service. When we perform unselfish, uplifting actions, we start accumulating positive *samskaras*. These mingle with our other less meritorious *samskaras* and subtly begin to reshape our nature and future. Difficult karmic effects that we would have fully faced in the future become softened by the positive impressions of our present actions. If we act selflessly, offering the fruits of our actions to the Divine, the creation of troublesome new *samskaras* is lessened, and our overall karmic burden is gradually diminished.

A third practice is Deity worship—attending pujas and homas in the temple. My Gurudeva observed: "Visiting a Hindu temple, receiving darshan from the majestic Gods of our religion, can altogether change the life of a worshiper. It alters the flow of the *pranas*, or life currents, within his body. It draws his awareness into the deeper *chakras*.... He comes to know and love the Deity. The Deity comes to know and love him, helping and guiding his entire evolutionary pattern."

The fourth method is the eightfold path of *raja yoga*. Sage Patanjali explains in his *Yoga Sutras* how the practice of yoga's eight limbs gradually clears impurities and leads to radiant knowledge. *Tapas* (austerity), though difficult, is especially effective. Performing penance to atone for misdeeds is a common form of *tapas*—such as 108 prostrations before the Deity in the temple, or walking prostrations around a temple.

And then, a Quiet Mind

Finally, we return to the clear water of the pond. It is through purifying the mind, quieting the intellect and spiritualizing the ego that we grow, evolve and eventually experience our golden soul nature. With a purified mind, we can see those golden nuggets at the bottom—our soul nature—having freed ourselves from the lower states of mind and entered the heaven within.

life issues. Often we just mull them over again and again without making progress. This turns the decision into yet another worry. The solution is to schedule it. Set a clear time—say, 10am on Saturday—to sit down and resolve the matter. Then, anytime it pops up before then, remind yourself, "I've set aside a time to deal with this. No need to think about it now."

5) Daily Chatter: Source five is current-day mental chatter—thoughts about errands, duties, e-mails or the unsettling discourse of world events. These can be quieted through breath control, *pranayama*. A simple technique is this: inhale for nine counts, hold for one, exhale for nine, hold for one. Just a few minutes of this breathing calms the nervous system and stills the thinking process.



LETTERS

Lord Shiva and Advaita Vedanta

I enjoyed reading “Visiting a Hindu Temple” (Oct/Nov/Dec 2024), especially the section, “One God, Many Gods.” Having been influenced by Advaita Vedanta for decades, my Ishta Devata (personal Deity) has become Lord Shiva. He is the one I meditate on during my meditations.

According to various Shaiva texts, such as the *Shiva Purana*, Shiva embodies the non-dual (advaita) nature of existence, where all dualities—such as creation and destruction, masculine and feminine—merge into a singular ultimate reality. Shiva is considered not only a Deity but also a representation of the supreme, undivided consciousness that transcends all dualities. This aligns with the concept of Brahman, the formless, ultimate reality in Hindu thought.

In addition, the Vedic perspective sees Shiva as representing the absolute, eternal truth—the formless consciousness that underlies all existence, beyond the limitations of human perception. In this sense, Shiva is not just a personal God but the very embodiment of the universal Self or Atman, which is one with Brahman.

PRADEEP SRIVASTAVA
PRADEEPSCOOL@HOTMAIL.COM

Earth’s Largest Gathering

The Kumbha Mela is beautifully explained in 19 pages (Jul/Aug/Sep 2025). The pictures made reading more lively. Many amazing things can be easily noted by a reader. Some 660 million visited the Mela and took a bath in a window of just a few days. It is impossible to believe that there were no flies, no bugs, no stray dogs, and no one complained, despite the crowded atmosphere, sleeping on the ground and eating from plates on the floor. The absence of guns was an important feature—thus there were no gun related deaths or injuries like we see during many gatherings of gatherings in America and in other countries. It is impressive to note that a woman’s knee pain was gone after a Nag Sadhu’s blessings and a bath in Ganga Maataa (p. 34).

PRABHAKAR G JOSHI
JOSHIPPS@GMAIL.COM

Sacred Girnar

The Girnar mountain, older than the Himalayas, is considered to be the home of yogis, jatis and sadhakas. The writer of this well-worded and self-experienced article (“Girnar Mountain, a Spiritual Journey of Ten Thousand Steps, Jul/Aug/Sept 2025) has successfully drawn a word picture of his journey to the mountain. The state government of Gujarat has put in extra efforts to make available facilities for elderly and physically



COURTESY SREE SIDDHIVINAYAK TEMPLE

Powerful blessings: Inside Mumbai’s Sree Siddhivinayak Temple, the petite Ganesha murti is flanked by Riddhi and Siddhi, Goddesses of prosperity and spiritual perfection

challenged pilgrims. The annual circumambulation to the foothills of Girnar is most attractive, mirroring the deep faith of the people of the Saurashtra region of western India. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims circumambulate Girnar in the month of November every year. Another vibrant event, held in the foothills of Girnar, is the Maha Shivratri Mela, an annual affair featuring the foot march of Naga sadhus.

SHAILESH KUMAR VYAS
JANMSTHAL@GMAIL.COM

Mumbai Ganesha Temple

Wonderful writing, Choodie! (“Lord Ganesha’s Mumbai Home,” Jul/Aug/Sep 2025.) Such a well-structured article! It is believed that when Lord Ganesha scribed the *Mahabharata* as dictated by Sage Vyasa, he never lifted His hand once. This article, too, looks like such a lovely flow, with Ganesha dictating and Choodie being the scribe—another great article!

SRINIVAS
SRINIVAS2007@GMAIL.COM

A very nice and educative article, Choodie! In a fast-paced city like Mumbai, this temple enables us to pause and recharge our batteries!

KESARI PRASAD
AHKESARIPRASAD@GMAIL.COM

Heartiest congratulations on bringing out this beautiful article on the Siddhi Vinayak Temple Prabhadevi. I have been visiting this temple since the 1960s. You have done a deep dive into the history of the temple and chronologically brought out its emergence to the

present state with various twists and turns. It makes for very interesting reading. Keep writing on all possible topics, as you bring out many facts not known to readers.

CDR. NAGARAJ
BKNAG30@YAHOO.CO.IN

Entering Hinduism

I agree with Mr. Grier’s letter to the editor (July/Aug/Sep 2025) stating that it is not necessary to lay the condition that one must cleanse the old religion’s influences to convert to Hinduism. Performing regular pujas and chanting mantras alone is sufficient to cleanse the mind and thoughts of the seeker, as per my view. Similarly, signing a document confirming conversion is also not advisable. Simply worshiping the God with folded hands on the heart is more than sufficient to believe in the God. Such conditions can be avoided. Jai Sri Ram!

ATHINARAYANAN R
ATHINIRMAL@GMAIL.COM

The Glory of Pilgrimage

I absolutely love these articles on pilgrimage (“Awesome Kedarnath,” Apr/May/June 2025), which highlight the grit, the sacrifice, and finally the joy of touching the Divine by breaking away from our comforts and routines. It reawakens memories of my pilgrimages and immediately transports us to walk along with the author, endure the hardships, walk the dusty roads, smell the incense, seek and touch the immaculate.

DEVA SEYON
DEVASEYON@GMAIL.COM



John Adams’ View of Hinduism

Wow, excellent work by this young man (Jul/Aug/Sep 2021)! I’m sure he will be a defender of Sanatana Dharma for his whole life. What an inspiration!

vs
SREENARASIMHAIAH@YAHOO.COM

Advice for Students

The article “Balancing Religion & High School” (Apr/May/June 2025) was very well done—not just words, but small, actionable suggestions, which I am sure will resonate with young Hindus.

ATHINARAYANAN R
ATHINIRMAL@GMAIL.COM

Sri Ramana

Thank you for the article on the life of Sri Ramana Maharshi (Apr/May/June 2025). It is a moving narrative that covers all aspects of a sage’s life, mission and vision. I know the author well (Sudarshan Ramabhadran) and remember being with him during his program at the venue in 2018. Reading the entire article gives a clear idea of a yogi who transcends all material and spiritual boundaries and who continues to guide seekers by his writings and presence. I have done the *parikrama* at Tiruvannamalai thrice, and it is always an elevating experience despite

the huge crowds that throng the hills. Om Namah Shivaya.

SESHADRI VASAN
RSVASAN2010@GMAIL.COM

An excellent article on the Sage of Tiruvannamalai, who taught through silence and the most profound three-word enquiry: “Who am I?” I loved it, as it contains everything a lay person would need to know about Ramana Maharshi, with archival pictures and testimonies from prominent persons who had the privilege of meeting and interacting with him.

SUBRAMANIAM MULLURCARAMANI
MPS@REDIFFMAIL.COM

An Extraordinary Dancer

Indrani Rehman was a pioneer and a trailblazer (“She Dances with Devas,” July 1999). She was Odissi’s first major dancing star, whose perseverance, dedication, beauty and sense of aesthetics brought attention to the style in its crucial, initial years of revival. Indrani’s thorough grounding in Bharatanatyam gave her Odissi *angashuddhi* and *azhuttam*. She and I share an Odissi guru—the late Debaprasad Das. I later moved on to study and perform Odissi with Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, who taught me at home in Bhubaneswar for 12 years, and

with whom I stayed, studying, for 30 years (1974–2004).

You cannot overstate Indrani’s contribution to the revival of Odissi. I met her a few times (she was inevitably warm and charming), and I fondly recall spending a delectable evening with her at an excellent dinner hosted by Yamini Krishnamurti at her Satya Marg, New Delhi, residence in the 1980s.

PROFESSOR OOPALEE OPERAJITA
OFFICE@OOPALIOPERAJITA.COM

✓ A Correction from the Editors

Our Dharma Ambassador article in the Jan/Feb/Mar 2025 issue mistakenly states that Gautam Sharma is a Hindu chaplain. This is not correct, but he is working toward becoming one.

Letters with writer’s name, address and daytime phone number should be sent to:

Letters, Hinduism Today
107 Kaholalele Road
Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA
or visit: www.hinduismtoday.com/letters

Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of HINDUISM TODAY.

To Inform and Inspire: Our Magazine’s Second Goal

Supporting Hinduism Today sustains in-depth stories that preserve sacred traditions



musical instruments—let’s experience the living stories of these five arts with traditional exponents in Tamil Nadu.”

Author Padma Krishnan and photographer Anne Petry visited numerous craft shops to provide insightful detail into each of these traditions through text and photos. For stone carving, they chronicled the entire process—from selecting suitable stones at the quarry, and tracing designs on the stone, to the various stages of carving and final detailing. Similar details are covered for the metal, wood and terra-cotta crafts.

In the article’s section on music, we learn about the Kailaya (or Siva) Vathyam, an ancient ensemble of instruments still played at Siva temples, especially in South India. They provide the music for all manner of religious events: festivals, consecrations, processions and whenever Tevaram or Tiruvassagam are sung. The ensemble includes membranophones, brass percussion and brass wind instruments, along with strings and conches. In order to touch any of the instruments, one must be a devotee of Siva, signified by wearing a rudraksha bead, smearing holy ash on

sixteen places on the body, becoming a vegetarian and performing puja to the Sivalinga twice a day. As the article explains, many artists have become more serious about their spiritual life after their initiation into Saivism. Some were drawn to this form of music by reading Tevaram and Tiruvassagam, while others were struck by hearing gifted musicians playing at temple events.

Each issue of HINDUISM TODAY is crafted to uplift, educate and preserve the world’s oldest living faith. Through thoughtful journalism and vivid imagery, we share the beauty and depth of Hindu culture with a global audience. Your support ensures that these stories reach seekers, students and spiritual leaders—strengthening Hindu identity and fostering understanding in today’s interconnected world. You can support HINDUISM TODAY in its efforts to bring together Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism. Your generous donation helps keep the magazine financially strong and secure.

Donate at: bit.ly/help-HT, or contact us at: +1-888-464-1008 or support@hindu.org

QUOTES & QUIPS

When you see with your inner eye, then you realize that you are God and not different from Him.

Shirdi Sai Baba (1838–1918)

Having dispelled all the impressions lingering in the mind, being with contented heart, being free from the three impurities—*anava*, *karma* and *maya*—and firmly rooted in the unassailable notion of non-duality, the *sadhaka* should always meditate on his own Self, which is in total identity with the Supreme Self. *Sarvajnanottara Agama* 7.16

Life's challenges are opportunities in disguise. Embrace them, learn from them, and emerge stronger. **Swami Avdheshanand Giri**, *Acharya Mahamandaleshwar of Juna Akhara*

Grace is always present. You imagine it is something somewhere high in the sky, far away, and has to descend. It is really inside you, in your Heart, and

the moment you effect merger of the mind into its Source, grace rushes forth, sprouting as from a spring within you. **Ramana Maharishi** (1879–1950)

If you close your eyes to facts, you will learn through accidents. *Nigerian proverb*

The first step on this long path is to consecrate all our works as a sacrifice to the Divine in us and in the world. **Sri Aurobindo** (1872–1950)

The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read. **Mark Twain** (1835–1910), *American author*

Don't be satisfied with stories, how

things have gone with others. Unfold your own myth. **Rumi** (1207–1273), *Sufi mystic and poet*

You are extraordinary within your limits, but your limits are extraordinary! **Gertrude Stein** (1874–1946) *American poet*

Meditation is the dissolution of thoughts in eternal awareness or pure consciousness without objectification, knowing without thinking, merging finitude in infinity. **Voltaire** (1694–1778), *French writer*

Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darknesses of other people. **Carl Gustav Jung** (1875–1961), *Swiss psychiatrist*

Just as the flowing rivers disappear in the ocean, casting off name and form, even so the knower, freed from name and form, attains to the divine Self, higher than the high. *Mundaka Upanishad* 3.28

Your duty is to be, and not to be this or that. "I am that I am" sums up the whole truth. The method is summed up in the words "Be still." What does stillness mean? It means destroy yourself. Because any form or shape is the cause for trouble. Give up the notion that "I am so and so." All that is required to realize the Self is to be still. What can be easier than that? **Sri Ramana Maharshi** (1879–1950)

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. **Maya Angelou** (1928–2014), *American poet*

Man's law changes with his understanding of man. Only the laws of the spirit remain always the same. *Native American Crow Proverb*

However strong or beautiful this body may be, its culmination is in those three pounds

of ashes. And still people are so attached to it. Glory be to God. **Sarada Devi** (1853–1920)

Doing nothing is better than being busy doing nothing. **Lau Tzu Lao Tzu** (4th or 6th century bce), *author of Tao Te Ching*

Most people believe the mind to be a mirror, more or less accurately reflecting the world outside them, not realizing on the contrary that the mind is itself the principal element of creation. **Rabindranath Tagore** (1861–1941), *Bengali poet and Nobel laureate*

In successfully facing the difficulties that come to us in life, we are resolving karma and moving forward on the spiritual path. **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami**, *publisher of HINDUISM TODAY*

Spiritual striving is not to get something you don't have. But it is to stop something you have, so that you can be what you are. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927–2001), *founder of HINDUISM TODAY*



DID YOU KNOW?

The Making of Palani Murugan

THE FAMED NAVAPASHANAM MURTI OF Lord Murugan enshrined at Palani Hill Temple is one of the most extraordinary manifestations of Siddha alchemical wisdom. Crafted by the legendary Siddhar Bhogar, this sacred form is not carved from stone or metal but carefully fashioned from a mysterious amalgam of nine potent substances—collectively (*navapashanam*).

In the Siddha tradition, *pashanam* refers to powerful mineral or elemental compounds that, though often toxic in their raw state, are transformed into medicinal agents through meticulous alchemical purification. These materials are broadly classified in two groups: *kadisana* (hard or dense minerals) and *irasa* (subtle or reactive substances). The *kadisana* group includes substances such as *lingam* (cinnabar or mercuric sulfide), *sudham* (purified mercury), *gauri* (believed to be an arsenic-based compound), and *thutham* (copper sulfate). These dense minerals are traditionally considered dangerous

until processed through multi-stage detoxification methods involving heat, herbal infusions and mantric activation.

In contrast, the *irasa* category comprises more reactive or subtle compounds used in internal alchemy and spiritual healing. These include *sendhuram* (a red mercurial oxide), *sattilingam* (another form of cinnabar preparation), and *nilam* (sometimes interpreted as blue vitriol, or simply as a mystical compound). These substances are prepared to support both physical well-being and subtle body transformation.

The murti itself, known as Dandayuthapani Swami, is revered as an *oushadha thirumeni*—a "medicinal body." During ritual abhishekam (ceremonial bathing), offerings like sandalwood paste, milk or vibhuti are placed on the murti and are believed to absorb healing qualities. The resulting *prasadam* is then distributed to devotees and used to treat various ailments.

Though the formulation remains a closely



Ancient alchemy: An artist depiction of the Navapashanam murti of Lord Murugan enshrined at Palani Hill Temple

guarded secret—known only to *sthapatis*, temple architects—ongoing research and oral tradition continue to highlight Bhogar's unparalleled synthesis of spiritual insight, medical science and sacred artistry. The navapashanam murti stands not only as a devotional object but also as a living symbol of the deep medicinal and mystical knowledge embedded in the Tamil Siddha tradition.

PUZZLES

Word Search

Instructions: in the word cloud, find and circle the words given below. They might be horizontal, vertical, diagonal and even backwards.

A V T T A T B K Q A T A H A N A L V U S V P P V U O Q N V I
M C P T S I U A P S A R A Q P U J N B H J A R T E H S K Y J
W H M L N M N N I R G U N A R R M N I R O D H A M Y F S S D
D I S D B A Y W Y B S U A A H K N A H S B D L K W W Y M T
B D U H N K S D Q T S D A D N A N A D I H C T A S H T O Y G
X A A T Q G O A P J N Q Z W P G D K N R Y I V A N M K T Y I
C K R E H L D L Y A E U M L H G Y I X T R T Y P C S T S R X
A A F J B N T U K H M Y A S N F V M C M A G N R H K Y H N K
W S M A S Q W S G K B K Y I R P J L A V A R I A H B B F D R
D H Z T T G X U E L I A Y E A I N F E R T V Y A Y A D I R H
A A Y T B P N A Y R A N J A R P Y E I U M A R A V H S I R G
Y E Z I Z A M P U P M H E O E V L A N A J N L B M R F U U Q
W D J M T K A L S A R U G T T T V A N M U H S U S I B B X D
D Q X I V K R A H U O M U Z I A X O A T K U M N A V I J A H
I I T N A L A K I R T R U Z T V L E A O R L B B D K Z H A Y
F A P Y Q N K N A Y I A M Y J A R Z D A L A T I Z G G U T E
C E C N G S M A J Y B V D W Y N R I K O N K G I A M F E H Y
U R N S S I O S A R P M N A T A Z P W V Q I H K A N J W E A
W R M O B W Y A K S H A R E N R J J V Z L V L K S A J O K E
B R G N X I V Y V Y F P K W U P L I R W G X D V S D V A V O

NETI	ANAHATA
SATCHIDANANDA	ISHVARA
TURIYA	PRAJNA
JIVANMUKTA	SKANDA
NIRGUNA	YAKSHA
GUNATITA	TATTVA
CHIDAKASHA	APSARA
MANOLAYA	KALPA
KUMBHAKA	ANTARYAMI
BINDU	HRIDAYA
AJNA	VAIRAGYA
SUSHUMNA	ABHYASA
BHAIRAVA	TEJAS
SANKALPA	PRANAVA
DHYEYA	KSHETRA
NIRODHA	NIMITTA
SHANKHA	TRIKALA
SRIYANTRA	MOKSHA
OMKARA	
NADA	

I Want to Be a Monk

Life at Kauai’s Hindu Monastery in Hawaii is profound, spiritually demanding and richly rewarding. If you or someone you know feels called to a life of selfless service and meditation, we welcome the discussion. Candidates must be male, under age 25, single and ready to embrace a strict and traditional Hindu way of life. E-mail: monklife@hindu.org



More details about the Saiva Siddhanta Yoga Order can be found by scanning the QR code.



Join Us at 4 Dharmic Temples in L.A.



These four ten-minute videos capture class visits to a Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh temple. They were developed by Hinduism Today for use in California sixth and seventh grade social studies classes in which the history of these four Indian-origin faiths is taught. Each visit was hosted by a member or clergy of the temple and approved by the temple management. By these tours, students learn the basics of the related faiths and experience their sacred spaces.

HINDUISM



JAINISM



SIKHISM



BUDDHISM



See the videos at: bit.ly/TempleTourPlaylist



PAINGALA UPANISHAD

I Am Brahman

A Sacred Teaching on Identity, Reality and Liberation

The following is an excerpt from S. Radhakrishnan’s translation of the Paingala Upanishad, Chapter 4, sections 10–24, edited for length and clarity

.....

In a gathering of teacher and disciple, the sage Yajnavalkya imparts the wisdom of the Self to his devoted student, Paingala, revealing the essence of non-duality and ultimate liberation.

Just as water poured into water, milk into milk, or ghee into ghee becomes one without distinction, so too does the individual soul merge with the Supreme Self. **10**

When the body is kindled with the flame of knowledge and the understanding becomes unified, the true seeker should burn away all bonds using the fire of Brahman’s wisdom. Having realized the true Self and become firmly established in the limitless state, such a one enters the sacred realm known as the Supreme Lord—non-dual, pure like the ether, and as seamless as water merging into water. **11**

The Self, subtle like space and present within all beings, cannot be seen—just like the wind. Though motionless both inside and out, this immanent Self perceives everything through the torch of knowledge. **12**

Wherever a knower of the Self may die, and however that death may occur, he merges with Brahman at that very place—just as the all-pervading ether remains unchanged. **13**

The knower who understands the Self to be undivided, like the space within a pot, attains true freedom, with his awareness spreading in all directions. **14**

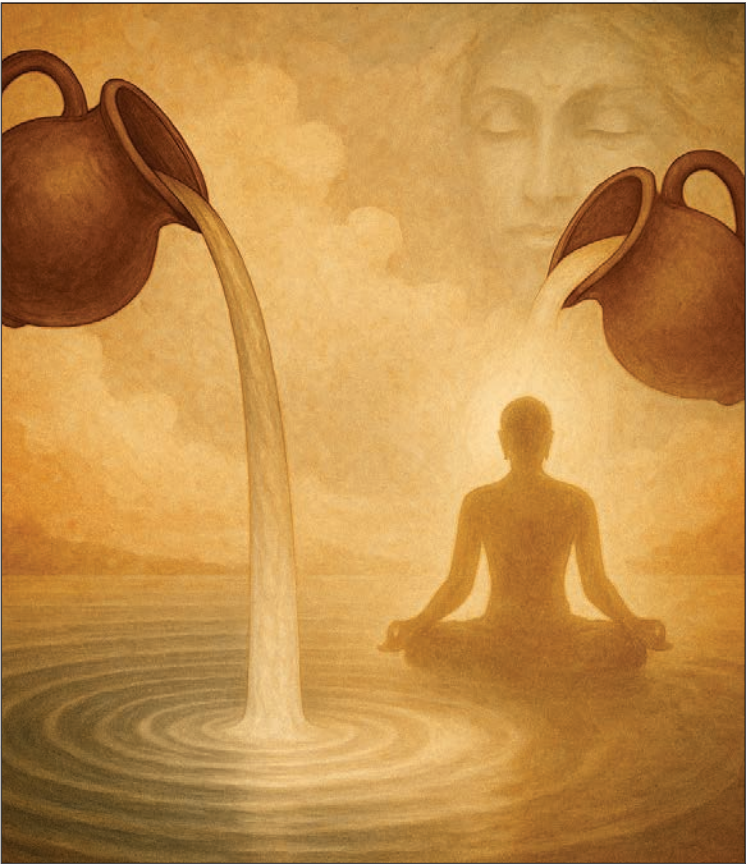
Austerities such as standing on one leg for a thousand years do not equal even a sixteenth of the merit gained through deep, concentrated meditation. **15**

A person may long to understand everything about knowledge and its object, but even living for a thousand years will not bring an end to scriptural study. **16**

What truly needs to be known is the subtle, imperishable existence. Since life is fleeting, one should abandon the endless tangle of scriptures and meditate directly upon the truth. **17**

Until true knowledge is attained, one follows rituals, purification practices, prayers, sacrifices and pilgrimages—all prescribed in the scriptures. **18**

For the noble soul, the surest path to liberation is the unwavering realization, “I am Brahman.” Bondage comes from the sense of possession; liberation arises from its absence. **19**



The soul is bound when it identifies with “mine;” it is freed when that identification ceases. When the mind attains true illumination, the sense of duality disappears. **20**

When the seeker reaches that illuminated state, he attains the highest reality. Wherever his mind turns, there too is the supreme state. **21**

The transcendent Brahman is established everywhere. Just as a starving man gains nothing by punching the air or chewing chaff, one cannot reach Brahman through fruitless effort alone. **22**

One who does not realize “I am Brahman” cannot attain liberation. But whoever studies this Upanishad daily becomes sanctified—by fire, by air, by the sun, by Brahma, by Vishnu and by Rudra. He gains the merit of bathing in all sacred rivers, becomes learned in all the Vedas and disciplined in all Vedic vows. He receives the fruits of a hundred thousand recitations of the epics and the Rudras, and the benefit of countless repetitions of the sacred syllable Aum. He sanctifies ten generations before and after him and purifies all who share his meals. He becomes a great soul and is freed from the gravest sins. **23**

The knowers of Brahman, having abandoned passion and made their inner senses sharp and alert, clearly reveal the highest state of Vishnu. This is the truth. This is the Upanishad. **24**

SARVAPELLI RADAKRISHNAN, (1888–1975) was an Indian philosopher and statesman, India’s first vice president (1952–1962) and second president (1962–1967). He held doctorates in science, philosophy and theology.



FEATURE

Lord Murugan Moves Out West

America's newest Murugan temple graces California's Concord hills

BY REENA RATHORE, CALIFORNIA

MURUGANUKKU AROGARA!" THESE sacred words rang out across Concord, California, on May 9, 2025, rising with the beat of drums and the hum of Vedic hymns, as thousands of devotees, young and old, stood shoulder to shoulder, eyes lifted, hearts full, to witness a moment years in the making: the maha kumbhabhishekam, consecration ceremony, of the newly constructed Shiva Murugan Temple. Priests poured holy water, sanctified through fire rituals, over the Rajagopuram (gateway tower) and the temple's other soaring rooftop towers. The water cascading down from the pots marked the fulfillment of a dream forged through decades of faith, devotion and community effort.

Though scaffolding partially obscured the view, it couldn't dim the excitement in the air. Overwhelmed with emotion, devotees, dressed in traditional attire, teary eyed, stood with hands folded in prayer and voices

united in devotion as the rites culminated and a water blessing was cast upon them from atop the temple, an experience that felt both deeply personal and profoundly communal.

Rooted in *Agama Shastra* and Vastu principles, the temple features hand-carved granite Deities, pillars and sanctums crafted by a team of traditional Indian sculptors under the leadership of Dr. K. Dakshinamoorthy Sthapati—an internationally renowned temple architect with over 40 years of experience—working in tandem with Indian American architect Sharad Lal.

The eight-day festivities, which included cultural performances and community feasts, drew over 15,000 visitors just in the first few days, with many traveling from all across the US. A huge outside video wall let all visitors view the rituals in real time.

A kumbhabhishekam finalizes the consecration of the Deity and sanctifies the temple, imbuing it with divine energy as a power-

ful spiritual center. Attending a kumbhabhishekam is said to be equivalent to 12 years of pilgrimage and temple worship.

The Concord Shiva Murugan Temple, a vibrant beacon of Saiva Siddhanta tradition in North America, owes its genesis to the visionary spiritual leader Sri Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (founder of HINDUISM TODAY magazine), affectionately known as Gurudeva (1927–2002). Recognized globally as a pioneer of Hinduism in the West, his far-reaching spiritual mission began in the 1950s in the Bay Area, where, in 1957, he founded the Palaniswami Sivan Temple in San Francisco. Three decades later it was transferred to Concord and ultimately became the Concord Shiva Murugan Temple.

Towering yet serene, ancient yet modern, the temple, which had been housed in a former Greek Orthodox church since 1987, might not seem out of place in Tamil Nadu. After a six-year construction period, it stands as North America's first Panchavarna (five-

Overview: (left) Crowds witness kumbha waters being poured over the towers; (right) Pitchai Gurukkal shows arati to devotees just before the priests climb up the towers with the energized kumbhas

color) Chola-style structure, showcasing a fusion of classical South Indian architecture and diasporic determination.

"I had tears in my eyes. I felt this is real, I can touch it, it's a dream come true—not just for me or my board but for the entire community. It was a long journey. It wasn't an easy task, you know, to get this done," Athappan Nallappan, temple president, told HINDUISM TODAY, acknowledging the uncertainty that loomed even days before the event. "Murugan has waited for 60-plus years to get into His permanent home."

The *murtis* (Deity images) are a blend of old and new. Lord Murugan, Ganesha and Durga had long resided in the previous temple and were lovingly reintegrated into the new space. Newly sculpted and brought from India were Lord Siva, Meenakshi Amman, Santana Lakshmi and Kamadhenu. The main Deity is Palani Andavar. The temple also enshrines four other Muruga forms: Swaminatha, Bala Muruga, Karthikeya and Subrahmanya. A stunning silver peacock, Murugan's *vahana*, or divine vehicle, formerly enclosed in a wooden case in the old temple, sits prominently in the central sanctum. Lord Murugan was seated on this peacock when He was ceremoniously welcomed into His new home.

Nallappan shared how the impact was deeply tied to the community's familiarity with the old space. "People feel the vibes, that energy, when they walk into the new temple because they knew the old temple. If the place was not there, maybe it wouldn't have been that impactful." In the former building, Lord Murugan's shrine had been above a basement, not grounded in the traditional way. "In Hinduism, the murti, the sanctum, is supposed to touch the earth." Now, with the completion of the new temple, he said, "Murugan is in the right place for Him, the best place for Him, for centuries to come."

For Meena Ravi Annamalai—who served as the temple's construction chair, design lead, city liaison and fundraising architect—this was more than just a religious ceremony: it was the culmination of a decades-long journey filled with design debates, emotional trials, divine signs and spiritual perseverance. "For the past 14 years, I've lived and breathed for this project," she told HINDUISM TODAY. "When I saw how Muruga sat like a prince on His pedestal in the *garbhagriha* (sanctum), I thought, 'Oh, He likes it.' Finally, I was relieved of all my anxiety and stress."



At the heart of the rites was Dr. Sivasri K. Pitchai Gurukkal, a leading Sivacharya and the revered head priest of Sri Karpaga Vinayagar Temple, Pillayarpatti, Tamil Nadu, who has performed Maha Kumbhabhishekam for over 3,400 temples worldwide. An accomplished scholar, author and recipient of numerous honors, Gurukkal is also a pioneer in religious education. In 1980, under the aegis of the Naharathar community, he established the Sri Karpaga Vinayagar Veda Agama Vidhyalaya to promulgate Saiva Siddhanta and Vedic traditions. He later established the Archaga Training Center and Siva Neri Kazhagam, which has trained over 2,800 professional priests who are serving in temples all over the world. All the priests at the Concord Shiva Murugan Temple were his students, as well as two-thirds of the priests who performed the ceremony.

"He was with us for ten days. Normally, at his age, he comes only the first and last day. But he was here every day. He's 78. And because he was here, everybody came with dedication, passion and gave their best," said Nallappan, who has been associated with the temple since 1991 and been on the board since 2001. Despite safety concerns and medical advice, "Gurukkal went all the way up to the towers and performed the rituals himself, and that was another emotional moment," he added.

The lineup of priests included experts from New York, Houston, Livermore, Arizona, Chicago, London and Singapore. The selection wasn't random. "We chose temples that supported us or whom we had partnered with in the past. Plus, there are priest networks. WhatsApp groups and referrals helped us find the right people with special abilities. And of course, Dr. Gurukkal gave us a list of his recommendations," said Nallappan. Joining Dr. Gurukkal was Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, the spiritual leader of Kauai Aadheenam in Hawaii and successor to Sri Subramuniyaswami, accompanied by San-nyasins Shanmuganathaswami and Sid-dhanathaswami. As Satguru Bodhinatha entered the premises, a wave of emotion swept through the crowd. Devotees eagerly approached with folded hands, many bending down to touch his feet while others stood in reverence, all eager for a blessing, and a photo to capture the moment.

Preparatory Rituals

Before the sacred water was poured upon the temple's gleaming towers, extensive preparatory rituals, beginning May 2, were conducted to purify the site and invoke divine energies. Temple head priest Anand Subramaniya Sivachariyar told HINDUISM TODAY that these inaugural days were devoted to Sparshahuti and Nadi Santhanam



Arogara! (left) Devotees gaze upward in devotion as sacred water is poured over the temple towers; Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami was the event's chief guest

rites—Agamic ceremonies where each mantra serves to invite the Deity's presence and clear the space of negativity.

Beginning May 6, a series of Yagasala Pujas were performed where fire offerings drew Lord Muruga's divine essence into 27 *kalasams* (special pots used in puja). Over 27,000 mantras were chanted by nine priests, with each *ahuti* (offering) infusing the air as well as the waiting vessels with spiritual energy. By the night of May 8, Sivachariyar explained, all the energy that had been amassed demanded a tangible conduit. "We tied a holy thread of *durva* grass, a red thread, gold and silver string—like an electrical wire—to carry the power into the new sanctum," he related. Spanning more than 1,000 feet from the temporary Yagasala pavilion into the heart of the temple, this "divine cable," which was tied for two hours on May 8 night, ensured an uninterrupted flow of blessings.

At the Kumbhabhishekam Ceremony At sunrise on May 9, the temple's towers came alive as the water in the kalasams was used for the abhishekam. "After the power transfer, we poured the holy water over the Deities and towers," Sivachariyar declared. This water—a sacred blend drawn from Ganga, Yamuna, Narmada, Kaveri, Rameshwar, Manasarovar, Thiruchendur and local American rivers—symbolized the union of ancient tradition with new soil. Inside the main sanctum, the energized murtis underwent a maha-abhishekam, an elaborate anointing with oil, milk, curd, *panchamrit* (five special foods), sandalwood paste and rose water. "Then we adorned the Deities in silk garments and diamond-studded jewelry," Sivachariyar explained. "Even Lord Muruga's spear is covered with diamonds."

Priest Vishwanathan Mahadevan of Maryland was among those who led the community in this "once-in-a-lifetime" ceremony. "It's a blessing and a divine experience to be a part of this grand occasion," he said. Srinivasan, a young priest from Shri Ganesha Gayatri Mandir in Chicago, Illinois, said, "I am very excited that my first big puja in North America is this ceremony." Long-time volunteer Prabhu Vedanayagam, associ-

ated since 1994, said, "The newly consecrated shrine not only stands as an architectural marvel but also as a living bridge between worshipers and the cosmic forces that shape their daily lives."

Hayward's Bala and Hashnee Subbusundaram, Chennai natives, reflected on how the expanded sanctuary has deepened their connection to both tradition and community. Hashnee noted, "We are big devotees of Lord Murugan and are followers of this temple and the community here. It's a divine blessing. Our parents in India have also contributed to Lord Muruga. We are so happy that everyone is now able to relish this bigger space." Bala added: "There is so much energy when you step into the temple, which is done beautifully, and it brings a lot of energy from people as well. We will continue to come here to seek blessings from not just Lord Muruga but Lord Siva, Meenakshi Amman and other Deities as well."

For Kalai Selvi, a San Ramon restaurateur, the ceremony was deeply stirring. "I love Lord Murugan. We have a group of friends who walk from San Ramon to the temple every month." But nothing had prepared her for the innauguration of this new place: "From seeing Lord Murugan in a small build-



ing to now seeing Him in this new temple, I had tears in my eyes." Selvi, whose restaurant serves meals during the annual Thaipusam Walk (see p. 27), brought her 14-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter with her "to keep them connected to their roots."

Attendee Mohan Kumar marveled at how faithfully the artisans have replicated South Indian temple art. "Lord Muruga is a very famous God in Tamil Nadu, so this is really huge for us. Until now, we never had such a big temple with our traditions and culture which I can now show to my son. I have been to temples in multiple states in the U.S. but have never seen anything like this," he said. Kumar, who lives an hour away in Tracy, used to visit the temple once a month, but now said he plans to "visit twice a week."

The Birth of a Temple Movement

Sivaya Subramuniyaswami's journey began with a spiritual calling that led him to India and then Sri Lanka at the age of 20. In 1949, he meditated in the caves of Jalani, where he had a profound spiritual awakening. It was in Jaffna that he met his guru, Sage Yogaswami, who initiated him into sannyasa and instructed him thusly: "Go around the world and roar like a lion. You will build

temples and feed thousands."

In December of 1949, Gurudeva returned to America. In 1953, he began his teaching mission, and in 1957 established the Palaniswami Sivan Temple on Sacramento Street in San Francisco, long before the Hindu diaspora had taken root in the U.S.. It was a small sanctuary, housing murtis of Lord Ganesha, Lord Murugan and Satguru Yogaswami, carrying the spiritual essence of the East to an unfamiliar West. While earlier institutions like the Vedanta Society existed in the U.S., the Palaniswami Sivan Temple was the first formal Hindu temple in North America with regular worship practices.

Transformation: Concord Era Begins

Three decades later, Gurudeva realized his little temple was too small for the growing crowds. While driving through Concord, California, searching for a larger space outside the big city, Gurudeva pointed to a Greek Orthodox church and said: "That would be a good temple." The very next day, a devotee successfully acquired the property, and extensive renovations were set in motion. On April 30, 1987, Gurudeva personally performed the eye-opening ceremony for Lord Ganesha. Just days later, on May 2, 1987, he consecrated Lord Ganesha and Lord Murugan at the temple's new location.

In the early years, devotees conducted the pujas. Eventually, trained priests were brought in from India. In 1995, Gurudeva—focusing on the growth of his Hawaii headquarters (established in 1970), entrusted the ownership of the Concord temple to the local Indian community. An ad-hoc committee, formed at a meeting in Berkeley solidified plans for managing temple operations. By 1996, the temple became a 501(c)(3) organization as the Concord Shiva Murugan Temple.

Renovation and Expansion

The budding temple underwent steady physical and spiritual growth. Additional Deities were added in the early 2000s: Vishnu, Durga and Navagrahas. The southeast entrance was realigned to face east in keeping with *Vastu Shastra* principles. Bronze statues of the 63 Nayanmar saint, gifted by Gurudeva, were installed. From 1988 to 2010, the temple expanded by acquiring adjacent properties, increasing its footprint from 0.33 acres to 1.25 acres.

Plans for a larger temple began in 2011, culminating in the Bhoomi Puja (ground breaking) on August 21, 2016, attended by 2,000 devotees. This ceremony laid the spiritual foundation for the new complex. On January 26, 2019, a Vastu Puja was held to harmonize temple energies with cosmic principles. After securing necessary permissions and approvals, the project officially began with a ceremonial Golden Shovel event. On Septem-

ber 5, 2024, a Balalayam ceremony blessed the temporary relocation of the sacred murtis presence during renovation.

First envisioned as a modest US\$5–7 million project, the dream grew into a \$15-million-plus endeavor as ideas expanded and devotees stepped up with support. "The \$15 million is our estimate and projection, and we still have more work to be done," Nallappan confirmed. "It does not include any of the land costs. It's just pure construction costs—material, labor etc."

From Dream to Reality

The temple continues to serve the spiritual, cultural and communal needs of Bay Area Hindus. It celebrates major Hindu festivals with much fanfare, including the annual Thaipusam Walk, and promotes classical music, dance and devotional art across generations. It welcomes all with a devotee-first honor system: there are no compulsory fees for puja participation. Priests perform homas, milestone pujas, weddings, housewarmings, etc. A team of volunteers prepare weekend meals in a full-fledged industrial kitchen. Management encourages youth participation in religious, cultural and volunteering roles.

When you step inside the temple, you're enveloped in cool air, glistening granite and a flood of natural light all day long due to three levels of windows and skylights, a sensory contrast that's both striking and symbolic. The Vimanam tower above the sanctum tells a story: "At the base, Murugan is shown in a kingly form. As you go higher, you see Him dressed only in a small loincloth, like in Palani, Tamil Nadu. It signifies detachment. You shed your attachments as you approach the sanctum. It's a journey from material to spiritual," added Nallappan. But light is just one part of the temple's many architectural marvels. High ceilings evoke awe and elevate the spirit. "God is always in a higher position, and that gives you wonder," he said.

The temple's exterior is framed in concrete and wood. This keeps the temple naturally cool, even in hot weather. The sanctums, Deities and pillars are carved from solid granite. An eye-catching *kodimaram* (flagpole), made with a wooden core and copper overlay, greets visitors near the entrance.

The granite sanctum is anchored in three ways to meet Concord's seismic regulations. "We struggled with every stone, especially as we went up higher and higher," Annamalai said, recalling the two-story sanctum sanc-torium and the sculptors who worked tirelessly to place each block. "My heart used to be in my throat watching them. I would keep admonishing them to be careful. We had to get so many approvals from our structural engineer, a special testing engineer and another from the city. But it all worked out. It looks beautiful."



CSMT MEDIA

Joyous scenes: (clockwise from above) Young dancers wear peacock feathers during consecration celebrations; priest Anand Sivachariyar (on the left) sanctifies the main sanctum tower as Sri Pitchai Gurukkal (at right) looks on; a five-metal murti of Lord Murugan is ceremoniously paraded into the new temple

While the temple radiates tranquility today, the journey to build it was anything but smooth. With an optimistic 18- to 24-month timeline, Covid lockdowns brought the world to a standstill in mid-2019, shortly before the ground breaking ceremony. “We had to stop everything for six to eight months,” Nallappan recalled. “There was no foot traffic, and no way to generate money. We wondered what kind of message we were getting. It was a setback.” Funding a project of this scale in the middle of a global crisis was daunting. The temple’s future seemed uncertain. “It was a major concern—how do you complete a project like this without big donors?” said Nallappan. “Small donations add up, but we needed large commitments to stay afloat.”

So, Nallappan took the leap. “I wasn’t comfortable asking others for big money unless I stepped up myself. I committed \$15 million over three years. Over time, it went up to \$2 million.” That leap of faith inspired confidence in others. “People want to give money; they just have to trust that the team can execute it.” That trust opened doors, and a breakthrough came with a \$3-million pledge from prominent Murugan devotee and philanthropist, Shiv Nadar, founder of HCL Group and the Shiv Nadar Foundation. “He was in India and had

never even seen this temple. But he has given to Murugan temples before, so I used that connection,” Nallappan noted.

Nadar’s daughter, Roshni Nadar Malhotra, chairperson of HCLTech, participated in the May, 2025, ceremony, which concluded with warm felicitations honoring the patrons for their generous support and dedication. Also present was Dr. K. Srikar Reddy, Consul General of India at San Francisco.

Built on Devotion, Not Debt

Once funds began to flow and construction resumed, things finally turned around. “When money is no longer an issue, everything becomes easier,” Nallappan quipped.

Despite the major hurdles, what makes this temple’s story even more remarkable is that it was completed without any loans. “It was not always the plan.” Initially, with no cash in the bank and limited revenue, the temple administration was forced to seek a loan to show financial solvency to general contractors and the city. The search for a willing lender delayed the project by three months. Although they secured a line of credit, the temple leadership, guided by a long-held principle of avoiding debt, was



CSMT MEDIA



CSMT MEDIA

determined not to pass liability onto the community. “I come from a community that doesn’t believe in borrowing money and spending. We wanted to spend the money we had in our hand and go from there,” Nallappan said. So, while the loan was taken, it was never used.

While the Covid lockdown disrupted timelines, it also gave time to raise more support. Eventually, the bank asked to redo the loan, since it hadn’t been used. Facing additional costs to renew it, Nallappan chose not to: “I said, ‘Let’s bite the bullet. Let’s go and figure this out,’” he recounted, adding that along the way, the temple purchased several adjacent properties, including a residence for the priests.

“I really am afraid of debt,” Meena Annamalai added. “I told myself back in 2012, if I’m not going to have debt for myself, I cannot very well leave debt hanging over the temple or Muruga.” So, she turned to the community, launching her first fundraising effort with a Lakshmi Puja during Akshaya Tritiya, which raised a modest \$30,000. Through annual galas, cultural performances, silent auctions and personal appeals, she helped raise much more. “Among nine galas, the first one raised a quarter million and the last gala raised around \$4 million.”

One anonymous donor matched up to \$100,000 every year, she shared. “Even people who couldn’t attend still sent money. They wanted to be part of this.” Annamalai ran the campaign herself, sending thou-

sands of messages via WhatsApp, updating supporters with construction photos and speaking at community events. “I’m not a great photographer,” she said. “But I shared everything I could. I WhatsApped about a thousand people.” Over the years, despite fears that people would grow tired of being asked for money, she received unwavering support and maintained a 10,000-strong donor database.

“I was only a representative of the 50–60 volunteers, donors, designers, architects, drivers and staff who made the temple possible.” Throughout the entire process, she added, the neighbors were supportive and welcoming, seemingly embracing the temple as an important part of their community. “I have heard that with some other temples, people have complained about bells ringing late in the evening, etc., but we never encountered any issues here,” she said.

Letting Go, Building Against the Odds

The decision to tear down the old temple—now converted into a parking lot—was a painful one. In Hindu tradition, temples are built but rarely torn down. “We needed to take the temple down to get the parking permit. Nobody was comfortable in making the call,” said Nallappan. A solution appeared unexpectedly: the paint store next door, long unavailable, suddenly came up for sale. “We took that as a sign. Murugan is giving a signal: He’s ready to move. He doesn’t even want to leave Second Street. He’s just going from

one end to the other,” quipped Nallappan.

Annamalai, who was intricately involved in nearly every detail of the temple’s design, initially volunteered to help with fundraising. But when the project needed leadership, Meena stepped in and eventually quit her tech career to give it her full attention. In 2015, as president, she brought Dakshinamoorthy Sthapati on board. Despite having no background in construction, she coordinated the import of dozens of containers of hand-carved granite from India, managed teams of contractors and sculptors and navigated complex zoning laws, building regulations and inspections. “I still don’t know where the Port of Oakland is,” she joked. “But I’ve received 36 containers from there. I have gotten so much support.”

Ravi Nadesan, a longtime disciple of Gurudeva and a board member for over 30 years, joined Annamalai in serving as the liaison with the city. Constructing a granite temple on seismic land was a logistical and bureaucratic maze. Unfamiliar with the religious requirements of Hindu temples, local city authorities, rejected early design plans. Annamalai recounted how she pushed back on requests that would have compromised tradition. “They wanted the sanctum to face Concord Boulevard, the main thoroughfare. They said, ‘The building is so beautiful and Second Street is only a little street. Turn it around to face the boulevard.’ But that would be south-facing. I said, ‘I can’t do that. It has to be east-facing.’” When officials suggested



moving the structure to the corner of the lot, she resisted again, explaining, "That's Agni Mula. It has to be in the Brahmastanam, in the center of the plot."

When city officials insisted on visual accessibility of the vimanam (the tower above the sanctum sanctorum) from the sidewalk on Concord Boulevard, she had to reimagine the ceiling. "We came up with a two-tier ceiling that now allows sunlight to stream in through the windows, and you can see the vimanam and even Palani Andavar right at the top."

City regulations posed daunting challenges. On an original site of only 0.92 acres, the City of Concord demanded massive parking and 21 percent landscaping. Initial approval was denied for a modest 2,300-sq-ft temple. "I'm glad that did not get approved," she said. "After further discussions and securing parking contracts with nearby organizations, we now have 14,100 square feet—7,100 for the temple and 7,000 for a cultural center."

To address the city's aesthetic expectations,

Coming alive: (clockwise from above left) The temple hall is filled with devotees gathered for the sacred moment of first darshan; priests perform kumbhabhishekam on a temple tower; Anand Sivachariyar conducts the final aarti

the temple team enhanced the side walls of the towers with traditional Kerala Panchavarna colors—yellow, red, green, black and white—creating symmetry and visual appeal. "We had been focusing totally on the Rajagopuram," Annamalai noted, referring to the temple's grand entrance tower. "But the walls of the temple became very beautiful because the city of Concord wanted to see the temple. We had two painters come from India. They mixed 48 different shades to get it right."

Each compromise led to an unexpected design triumph. Much of the beauty, she admitted, came because the City of Concord Design Review Board "made me jump through hoops for almost 8–9 years. But I'm very happy. It became even more beautiful. This project is the magnum opus of my life. Everything that happens, happens for the good," Annamalai said, invoking the *Bhagavad Gita*.

With the temple itself complete and operational, work continues on the adjoining cultural center, landscaping and a commercial-grade Hindu kitchen, scheduled to be finished later in 2025. "We delayed landscaping until after Kumbhabhishekam, knowing thousands would be walking through. Now we're finishing the flooring, kitchen equipment and a walk-in refrigerator to preserve flower garlands for the Deities," she said.

Designed to Last Generations

The Shiva Murugan Temple is a result of extraordinary collaboration between tradition and technology. Dakshinamoorthy Sthapati, who has designed and constructed over 300 temples worldwide, intentionally chose Chola temple architecture for its aesthetic maturity, intricacy and geometric precision. "The Chola period was a renaissance in temple design. We followed their aesthetic but added our own creative features," he shared with *HINDUISM TODAY*, adding that the design underwent multiple revisions before approval.

Dakshinamoorthy sets out to redefine convention with each project. "My goal was to create something unique. All the temples I've worked on are different from each other," he said, recounting a career dedicated to reimagining sacred spaces. "Temples in the U.S. and around the world should avoid stereotypical designs," he noted. "They should honor ancient traditions but also fit the needs of the modern world."

Central to his design was the visibility of the Vimanam, the 47-foot pyramidal tower above the inner sanctum, or *garbhagriha*. "In many temples, the Vimanam is hidden from view," he explained. "But it is a Deity in itself. According to *Agama Shastras*, even the temple's structure is sacred. So I raised the central hall and introduced a



CSMT MEDIA

double-tiered garbhagriha, ensuring that the Vimanam could be seen and worshiped from every angle.” Built in a seismic zone, the temple was designed with cutting-edge techniques that adhere to California’s rigorous building codes. On advice from Indian American structural engineer Arun Shah, lightweight but strong fiber-reinforced polymer was employed to handle structural load challenges.

“We used reinforced concrete inside and tied the granite structure to it,” said Dakshinamoorthy, who’s been serving as a state-level expert for the Tamil Nadu Hindu Endowment Board. “Even ornamental details like kalasams are anchored to the core. The result is a unified, durable structure.” Notably, the Vimanam and the five-tiered, 48-foot-tall Rajagopuram were constructed using Glass Fiber Reinforced Concrete (GFRC); but unlike typical GFRC applications, these were filled with concrete, not left hollow, making them solid, waterproof and crack-resistant. “It looks traditional from the outside, but it’s built with the strength of modern materials.”

All stone sculptures, sanctums and columns were handcrafted in India over a two-year period by expert stonemasons and traditional sculptors, and the entire structure was trial-assembled there before being shipped to California. “It is something like a prefabricated structure,” he said. “This helped ensure precision and avoided delay and errors during execution here.” The final design involved over 800 stones, with just the sanctum sanctorum using over 200 granite pieces.

Devotees can walk around the sanctum using three *pradakshina* (circumbulatory) paths: one circling the main sanctum, another within the temple hall and a third open-air path around the perimeter. Each is designed with accessibility in mind, including wheelchair access.

An author of several award-winning books

on the philosophy, principles and symbolism of temple architecture, Dr. K. Dakshinamoorthy is personally committed to this temple. “I don’t take on many temples at once,” he said. “Each one should be a signature temple. We are not just building with stone. We are making this temple a living element and we are putting a soul into it. This temple is attracting people because it was built using proper geometry, proportion and ancient wisdom.”

Masters of Stone: The Sculptors

Behind the awe-inspiring stone carvings and intricate architecture stands a group of Tamil Nadu-based *shilpis*, master artisans who were selected for their skill and deep dedication. The 15 artisans, who arrived in April 2021, had previously worked with Dakshinamurthy on various international projects. They remained on site in California for an extraordinary four-year period.

Mariappan, the team supervisor, explained that the temple’s design is a synthesis inspired by thousands of ancient temples. “The Sthapati visited many of India’s big, well-known temples and combined their best features. That was the architectural ambition he executed here,” he noted in comments translated by Senthil Chindambaram, public relations and construction board member. “In India, stones are laid one over the other. But here, due to regulations, they had to drill and secure each piece differently. There was a learning curve at first, but once they understood the system, it became second nature.”

It was their first time working in the U.S. That opportunity itself was momentous—but learning that they would be building a temple for Lord Murugan, a Deity revered by Tamil communities, gave the project a layer of spiritual fulfillment. The sculptors brought all of their tools from India,

Sculptors: *The shilpis, traditional temple artisans, are honored during the consecration events*

staying true to traditional methods. Working in the U.S. brought new challenges, especially with differences in construction materials and building codes, but the team adapted quickly. While local contractors handled the foundation, plumbing and electricity, the Indian sculptors were solely responsible for the stonework, murals, painting and intricate detailing of the structure.

These artisans have worked in countries as far-flung as Singapore, the U.K. and Australia. But what sets this project apart, they said, is that they saw it through from start to finish, with no turnover in their team, leaving a personal imprint on every stone. With the project now complete and receiving national media coverage, the sculptors expressed both joy and nostalgia, eager to reunite with their families, yet aware they were leaving behind a sacred legacy. “When we see this temple on YouTube or the news, we’ll feel proud that we have accomplished such a great project. We came here for a purpose, and that purpose has been fulfilled,” they said.

This temple is a powerful reminder that faith, when matched with perseverance, can carve stone—and shape history.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reena Rathore is a journalist with over a decade of experience at indiawest.com telling stories that amplify Indian American voices across arts, culture, politics and community. Previously, she led the launch of eight radio stations across India.

A Thaipusam Walk

BY REENA RATHORE, CALIFORNIA

IN FEBRUARY 2023, HINDUISM TODAY asked me to report on the Thaipusam festival walk to the Shiva Murugan Temple, one of its most revered annual traditions. That year, despite frigid temperatures and a bout of rain, the temple registered its largest turnout to date for this event. About 6,000 devotees, coming from as far as Canada, Austin, Chicago, Phoenix, Atlanta, New Jersey and Seattle, walked devotionally to the temple to pay obeisance to Lord Murugan. Two years later, in 2025, over 12,000 participants joined the walk. Individuals use this time to fulfill their vows and thank Lord Murugan, also known as Lord Kartikeya, for fulfilled desires, forgiveness and continued good health.

“One family planned their entire trip from Singapore around this event,” noted Senthil Chidambaram, the walk’s lead organizer. Participants began their walk at the crack of dawn along two popular San Francisco Bay Area trails: the Iron Horse Trail, a seven-hour, 21-mile path beginning at Bishop Ranch 3 in San Ramon; and the Contra Costa Canal Trail, a 2.5-hour, seven-mile route starting from Heather Farm Park in Walnut Creek. Dressed in down jackets, puffy parkas and sturdy shoes, they walked in pairs, families and large groups, some pushing bundled-up babies in strollers, others guiding toddlers and teens. Dotting the trails were multiple food stations, where dedicated volunteers handed out breakfast, lunch and hot beverages. Both routes are set against a backdrop of rolling hills, making the walk a scenic one that an entire family can enjoy. The event culminated with darshan of Lord Murugan. Afterwards, shuttles ferried participants back to their starting points.

Begun over a decade ago by a handful of community members, the Thaipusam walk has grown into a large-scale annual tradition under the temple’s stewardship. “Lord Murugan is worshiped in South Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Burma, Sri Lanka and in the southern part of India, mostly by Tamilians. But over time we have seen devotees from Gujarat, North India and the Telugu community. Many also visit because we have Lord Siva as one of the main Deities in the temple,” Chidambaram explained.

Much preparation goes into organizing this massive community event. Permits and approvals had to be secured from the cities of San Ramon, Walnut Creek and Concord, as well as from Heather Farms Park, and the East Bay Parks Department, which oversees the trails. Setting the event in motion required opening up registration slots to manage attendance, a critical step that informs logistics such as food planning, transporta-

tion and trail safety. Working with more than eight restaurants, the food and snacks team begin organizing months in advance, mapping out distribution logistics and planning stations, supplies, tents, tables and food safety protocols.

Prepping for food begins the day before the walk. Simultaneously, the signage team installs parking markers and mile signs, while the safety and security team coordinates with park rangers, Boy Scouts and bike patrol volunteers to ensure safe trail usage. Six to seven Concord police officers are recruited to oversee crowd management. In addition to volunteers, hired staff and a medical team are stationed along the trail to ensure participant safety.

Maneuvering a stroller on slippery pavement, Venkatesan Ramaswamy, a regular participant, said he feels although the celebration is more full-scale and grand in India, he is grateful for the experience in this foreign land. For many, the experience was as emotional as it was spiritual. “This was my first Thaipusam walk,” said Prasanna Gamin. Originally from Andhra Pradesh, she joined the seven-mile trek after hearing about it from friends. “This isn’t a tradition where I am from, but we wanted to participate in it and feel the spiritual vibe. It was such a great experience.” Learning more about the festival’s origins from fellow walkers also added to the experience, said Gamin, who was joined by her friends Sheela and Leishi.

For others, it was a day of gratitude. Indra K. Vijay, who walked with her husband and daughter, said she made dietary and spiritual preparations leading up to the walk. “Even in India, we undertake spiritual walks for different Gods and most of the time you are offering prayers through that and also making wishes. It’s been a while, so I decided to do

it. I’m a theist who prays every day. For this, I washed my hair and avoided nonvegetarian food. Some people also fast for this. I’m hoping to do the 21-mile walk next year,” she said. Her 10-year-old daughter Anya described the experience as “fun.”

For Kartik Hariharan, named after the God Himself, the walk served a dual purpose. “My mom prayed a lot to Lord Kartikeya to have a child, and so when I was born, she named me after Him. I told her about the walk and she asked me to do this after sharing the story behind it,” he said while catching his breath. “I think 18 miles was pretty good. The last three miles were tough, but overall, it was very well organized, right from the start to all the pitstops we had, and snacks and refreshments. It was a flat terrain, you are not doing any elevation gain, but it’s on concrete, which is hard on your knees if you are not used to it. Getting “fitter for the Grand Canyon” was another motivation behind this, he shared, “but we are all very spiritual and religious and I would do it again, as the experience was very fulfilling.”

Among those who experienced the Thaipusam celebration for the first time in the US was Anusha, a fitness enthusiast. She made it a bonding activity with her friends, Praneeta and Swapna. “We started at 6:45am and finished around 2pm. The walk was very beautiful,” she said. “Thaipusam is something I grew up with, but I did not know they do it here. In India, there’s a lot more spectacle, but here, it was therapeutic. Very relaxing walk, where you are in the zone with nature, and I think the rain made it pleasant.”

Whether spiritually calming or therapeutic for the soul, the walks foster a deep sense of community, shared accomplishment and camaraderie—one that lingers long after the celebration ends.



CSMT MEDIA



PHOTOS COURTESY OF YOGA VIDYA ASHRAM

RELIGION

Yoga Vidya: A Living Hindu Ashram in Germany

Seva, scripture and the soul's journey: how a dedicated group in Bad Meinberg offers Europe an authentic Hindu spiritual home

BY THE EDITOR

NESTLED IN THE COUNTRYSIDE NEAR Bad Meinberg, northern Germany, the Yoga Vidya Ashram hums with the rhythms of spiritual life. The scent of sandalwood lingers in the halls. Bells ring out at sunrise as worship begins in the small temple. Sanskrit chants float over the gardens. Here, among the rolling hills and timbered buildings, something unmistakably sacred unfolds each day: the age-old practices of Hinduism, brought to life with devotion, discipline, and joy. It is a place of pride for the nation's 150,000 Hindus.

Yoga Vidya is Europe's largest yoga ashram—a vibrant community of seekers who have chosen a life steeped in the teachings of Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism). Their daily schedule mirrors that of Indian ashrams: meditation before dawn, traditional fire ceremonies, satsang, scriptural study and voluntary service. Sometimes assumed by outsiders

to be a wellness center or secular retreat, this is a true spiritual sanctuary, rooted deeply in the Hindu tradition.

Yet in recent times, the question has arisen—sometimes in courts and official inquiries—as to whether this institution is truly religious. The answer, for anyone who has lived, studied, or even briefly visited Yoga Vidya, is self-evident. This article will explore the ashram's ritual life, theological roots, sacred architecture, devotional culture, and unbroken lineage—all of which bear witness to its profound religious character.

Lineage and Origins

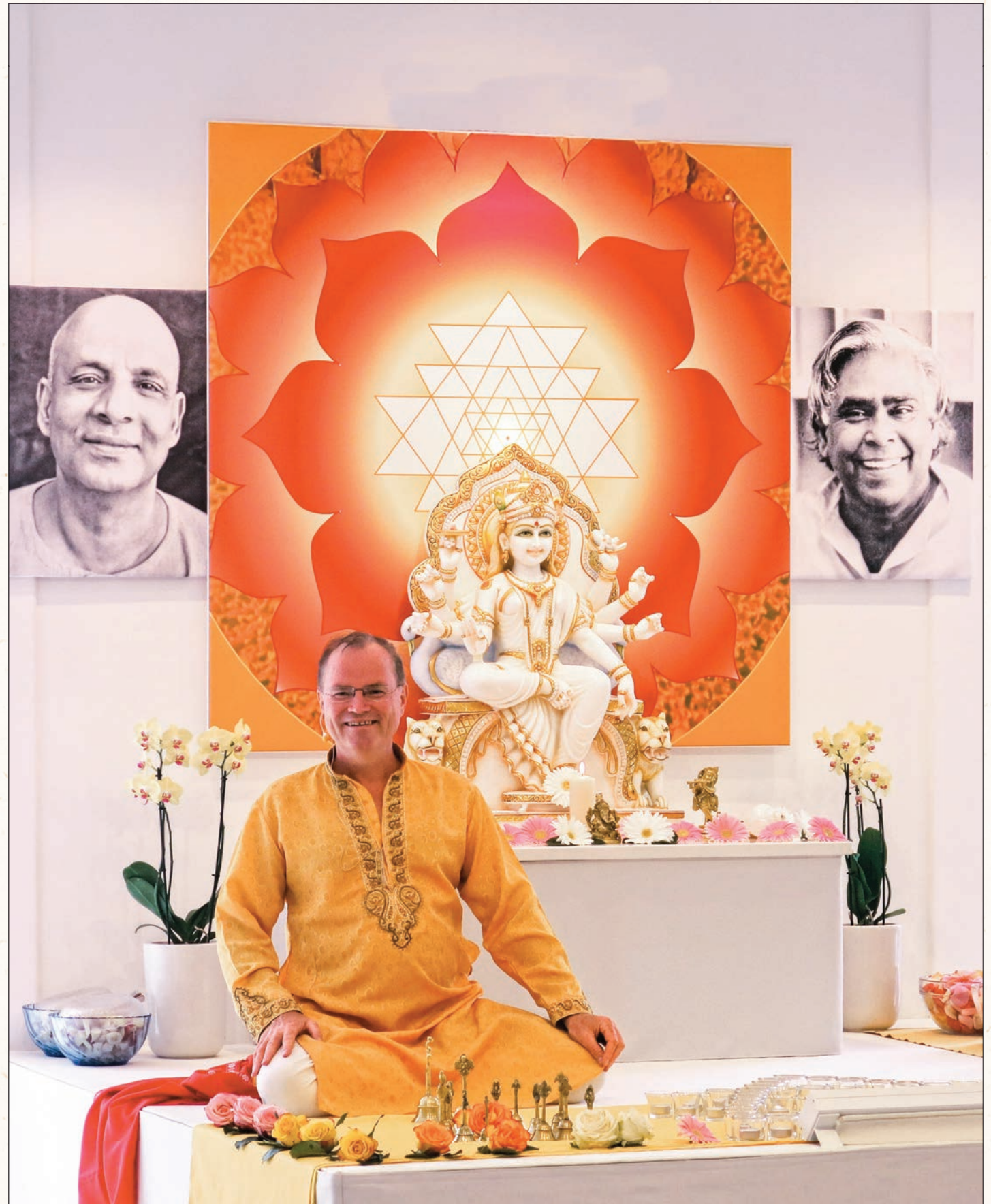
Every authentic Hindu institution begins with a lineage (parampara)—a sacred transmission of wisdom passed from teacher to student across generations. Yoga Vidya stands firmly within this tradition. It was founded in 1992 by Sukadev Volker Bretz, a German-born spiritual seeker who spent

years under the tutelage of Swami Vishnudevvananda, a disciple of Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh.

Sivananda's mission was to bring the core teachings of Vedanta and classical yoga to the world and the Yoga Vidya movement is an explicit continuation of this mission, adapted for European soil but never diluted in essence. Sukadevji, as he is affectionately called, received initiation, guidance, and a spiritual mandate from his guru, along with the teachings, rituals and scriptures that form the foundation of ashram life.

The very name Yoga Vidya—"the Knowledge of Yoga"—echoes the Upanishadic tra-

Amazing facilities: (left to right) drone shot of the extensive Bad Meinberg campus; founder Sukadev Bretz demonstrates puja for the Goddess, as Swami Vishnudevvananda and Swami Sivananda preside.





PHOTOS COURTESY OF YOGA VIDYA ASHRAM



dition where *vidya* means not mere information, but liberating insight into the nature of the Self. From the beginning, the ashram has been dedicated not just to postures or health but, through those and other traditional Hindu means, to *moksha*, spiritual liberation—the ultimate goal of all Hindu paths.

This connection to a living, revered lineage—rooted in India, guided by scriptural authority, and upheld by initiation—is the lifeblood of the ashram's religious identity.

Daily Life as Devotion

A religious community is distinguished from a commercial enterprise such as a wellness center or yoga school not just by what is taught, but how life is lived. At Yoga Vidya, daily life is not organized around productivity or personal enrichment—it is oriented toward the Divine. Every aspect of the day is shaped by spiritual intention.

Before sunrise, practitioners gather in silence for satsang—a communal session of meditation, Vedic chanting and spiritual reflection. This is the anchoring rhythm of every single day. The chants are not arbitrary, superficial or merely cultural—they are powerful Sanskrit invocations of Hindu Deities: Ganesha, Siva, Durga, Vishnu, Lakshmi. The words are drawn from traditional scripture and liturgy and are treated with intention and reverence.

Mid-morning brings the homa ritual, a sacred fire ceremony central to Vedic religion. Ghee is poured into the flames while mantras are recited in ancient meter—offerings to Agni (the fire God) and other Deities. The air is filled with smoke and devotion. This is no symbolic gesture; it is a real, priest-led yajna, performed to sanctify the space, purify karma, and honor the Gods. Homa is performed here with the same care as in temples and ashrams throughout India.

Throughout the day, *seva*—the spiritual discipline of selfless service—is performed

Days full of worship and service: (clockwise from above left) A hatha yoga class in one of the many halls; Sukadevji performs the traditional homa for the upliftment of humanity; the gopuram of the new Ganesha Temple in Berlin (not part of the ashram), shows the growing presence of Hindus in the country; a joyful sevaka helps feed hundreds as her selfless service to God.

by residents and visitors alike. Cleaning floors, preparing meals, tending the temple: these acts are understood not as labor, but as worship. Karma yoga, as taught by Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, is not a metaphor here. It is embodied.



In the evening, the community gathers again for *arati*, the waving of lamps before the Deity accompanied by hymns, incense, and sacred silence. Murti images of Deities are decorated with garlands and sandalwood paste. The sense of sanctity is palpable.

This rhythm of mantra, ritual, silence and

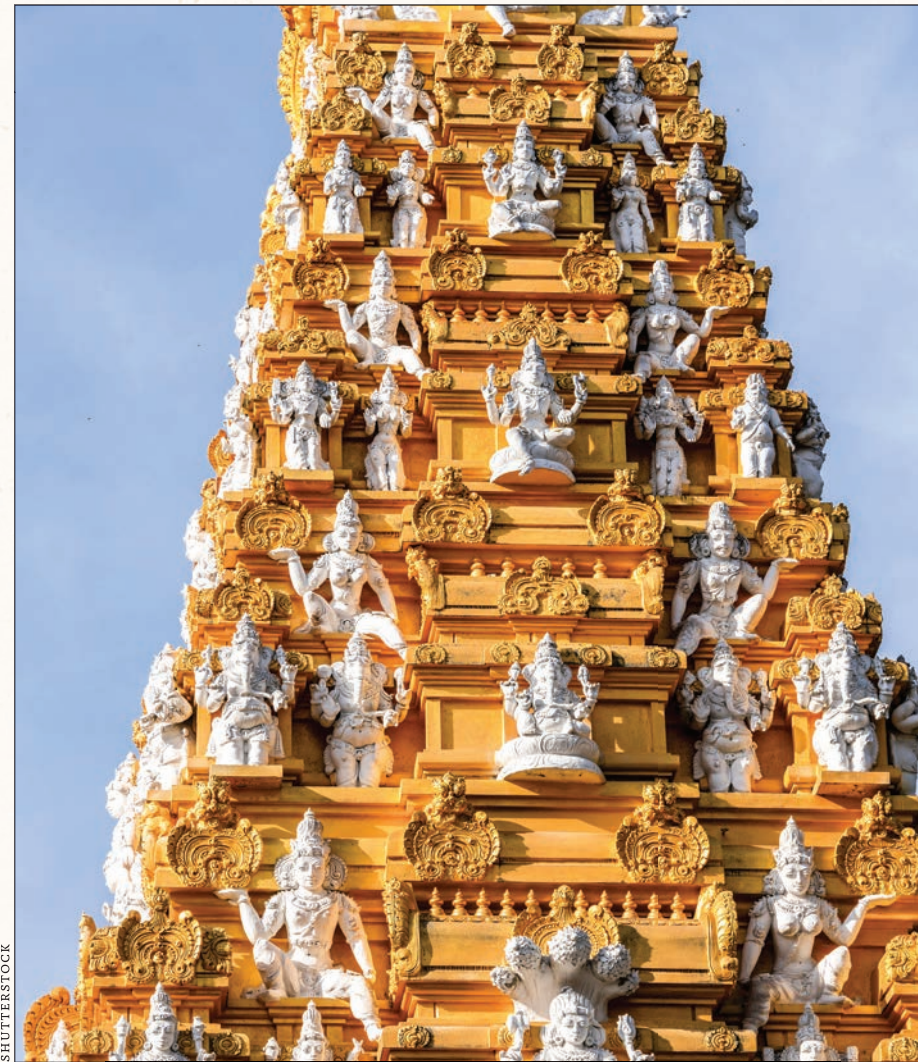
service is the daily life of Yoga Vidya—consistent with the devotional and contemplative life of contemporary Hindu ashrams in India. It is not a casual “lifestyle choice;” it is a life path of sadhana, spiritual practice, pursued sincerely and systematically.

Scriptures and Theological Teaching

A core hallmark of any Hindu religious institution is its relationship to shastra, scriptural authority. At Yoga Vidya, sacred texts are not relics of the past but living guides to the present. The ashram offers daily teachings drawn from foundational Hindu scriptures such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, *Upanishads*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Bhakti Sutras*. These are studied not as mere philosophy, but as revealed wisdom (*sruti* and *smriti*)—texts to be contemplated, memorized and practiced.

Classes are held in a traditional *guru-shishya* style, where the teacher sits at the front, and students listen, question and reflect. Sanskrit is explained word for word, reinforcing a reverence for the original language of Hindu revelation. Swami Sivanda's books—*Bliss Divine*, *Practice of Yoga*, *Essence of Vedanta*—are treated with the same regard as traditional scriptures, as expressions of realized insight rooted in Sanatana Dharma.

Those wishing to further intensify their study and practice can enroll in Yoga Teacher Training (TTC) or Advanced Yoga Training (ATTTC). In addition to practical instruction in postures, these students receive theological grounding in karma, dharma, bhakti, jnana and moksha. They are taught the meaning of the *mahavakyas*, the four great affirmations



SHUTTERSTOCK

“Hinduism is Sanatana Dharma—the eternal religion that teaches us to experience the Divine in every moment. It is worship expressed through seva, bhakti, japa, and meditation—a sacred path that uplifts the heart, mind, and soul. It is my faith, my path.”

Sukadev Bretz

of the *Upanishads*, and explore fundamental Hindu concepts such as reincarnation, Ishvara, guna theory and maya—not as abstract ideas, but as frameworks for understanding life and spiritual evolution.

Diksha, Hinduism's formal system of initiation, is offered for those who wish to deepen their commitment through mantra practice, guided by senior swamis or spiritual teachers in the Sivananda tradition. It is clear that Yoga Vidya functions not only as a place of yoga instruction, but as a true *gurukula*—a traditional Hindu center of scriptural learning and spiritual formation.

Sacred Space and Symbols

The sacred at Yoga Vidya is seen, touched and felt. Walking the grounds of the ashram, you enter a world shaped by Hindu religious symbolism. The central temple, or puja hall, is home to beautifully adorned murtis of Deities including Ganesha, Vishnu, Shiva, Lakshmi, Durga and Saraswati. These are consecrated embodiments of the Divine, treated with care and reverence according to traditional temple protocols.

Daily pujas (formal worship services) are performed, often multiple times a day, involving *abhishekam* (ritual bathing), *alan-karam* (decorating the Deity), *naivedyam* (food offerings) and *arati* (lamp waving).

Chanting of Sanskrit mantras and hymns from the *Vedas* and *Puranas* accompanies these rites, just as in temples in India. Participants bow, chant and offer flowers.

The temple is only the beginning. Around the ashram, you'll find dozens of beautifully painted yantras, Om symbols, sacred geometry, and framed verses from the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Upanishads*. Meditation halls are adorned with images of the great rishis, yogis and Deities of Hindu lore. Incense burns continuously. The vibration of mantra pervades the space, reinforced by the practice of silence in designated areas.

Hindu festivals are celebrated with devotion and detail—Navaratri, Shivaratri, Krishna Janmashtami, Ganesha Chaturthi and Diwali. Each is observed with elaborate decorations, fasting, chanting, storytelling and community rituals, re-creating the sacred atmosphere of India. The ordinary becomes sacred: a hallway becomes a temple path, a meal becomes an offering and a day becomes a yatra, a spiritual pilgrimage.

Hinduism's Temple Tapestry

Yoga Vidya is just one of many institutions fostering a vibrant Hindu presence in Germany. Hindu temples have emerged countrywide as centers of devotion, culture and community, creating a rich spiritual landscape. Today, Germany has over 100 Hindu temples, many established by diaspora communities from India, Sri Lanka and beyond. These temples stand as living testimony to the global journey of Sanatana Dharma and the religious pluralism of modern Europe.

Among the most prominent is the Sri Kamadchi Ampal Temple in Hamm, founded in 2002. Modeled after the famed Kamakshi Temple in Kanchipuram, it is one of Europe's largest Hindu temples, adorned with a towering *gopuram* (temple tower) and over 200 exquisitely carved statues.

In Berlin, the Hindu community celebrated a milestone with the inauguration of the Sri Ganesha Hindu Temple in Neukölln's Hasenheide Park in 2023. Featuring a magnificent 59-foot-high *gopuram*, it is now Germany's largest Hindu temple.

Other temples include the Sri Muthumariamman Temple in Hannover (2009), the Sri Kurinjikumaran Temple, a grand sanctuary for Lord Murugan in Gummersbach (2008), and the Sri Mahamariamman Temple in Sulzbach-Altenwald, Saarland (1994).

Each temple is a beacon of culture, preserving traditional festivals, classical dance, music, scriptural study, and social service activities. Through these sacred spaces, Hindus in Germany are weaving their traditions into the broader European mosaic, enriching both themselves and the societies they inhabit. Though relatively small in numbers, Germany's Hindu community has quietly



ALL PHOTOS: YOGA VIDYA ASHRAM



but significantly enriched the nation's cultural depth, strengthened its economy, upheld strong family and social values, promoted spiritual awareness and contributed to a more inclusive and resilient German society.

Community and Seva as Dharma

At the heart of Hindu religious life is the concept of dharma—a righteous way of living that aligns personal duty with cosmic order. At Yoga Vidya this is embodied in the practice of seva, or selfless service.

The community runs on devotion, not salaries or contracts. Hundreds of volun-

teers, known as *sevakas*, commit to months or even years of unpaid service. Their main spiritual work lies in the daily pujas, bhajans, classes and spiritual studies, but they also clean the floors, prepare meals, greet guests, lead yoga classes, maintain the temple, tend the gardens and manage the infrastructure. Some come for spiritual growth, others for retreat from the world, but most stay because they have found something deeper: a life of meaning rooted in giving without expectation.

Their spiritual discipline echoes that of brahmacharis or ashramites in India, dedi-

cating their energy to the collective spiritual field. They wake early, attend daily satsangs, live communally, observe celibacy or simplicity, observe a strict vegetarian diet and follow the Yamas and Niyamas of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. The model comes straight from the *Bhagavad Gita*, where Lord Krishna teaches that action done without attachment to results purifies the heart and leads to liberation. In this sense, every task at Yoga Vidya—whether washing dishes or organizing events—is an offering, an act of worship.

The ashram supports these volunteers with food, shelter, spiritual guidance and



The life divine: (clockwise from far left) Entrance hall and information kiosk; puja being offered to the holy sandals of the guru; Hindu leaders join in performing South Indian style puja to a marble Lord Ganesha; devotee bows before a beautifully adorned Lord Krishna and Goddess Radha; Sukadeva demands excellence, training students in the mastery of yoga postures and the full breadth of spiritual life.

community. The currency exchanged here is not monetary; it is *bhakti*, devotion; *shrad-dha*, faith; and *tapas*, spiritual effort.

This is a spiritual community. It is governed not by labor law but by a sacred ethic: do your duty as an offering to the Divine.

Religious Governance and Intent

A spiritual institution is defined not only by its daily life and ritual forms, but also by its intentional structure—its mission, governance and guiding documents. In the case of Yoga Vidya, its founding and operation are rooted explicitly in religious purpose.

The organization's bylaws and charter outline a clear dedication to spreading the teachings of classical yoga, Vedanta, and Sanatana Dharma. These are not merely philosophical terms but core elements of Hindu theology. The ashram's stated mission includes the realization of the Self, the teaching of the Hindu scriptures, and the performance of rituals and devotional worship according to tradition.

Leadership is provided by longtime practitioners and swamis, many of whom have been formally initiated into the Sivananda lineage. These individuals are not administrators in a corporate sense; they are spiritual guides, entrusted with the protection and transmission of dharma. Their authority is religious, not managerial: it is modeled after the guru-disciple relationship that lies at the heart of Hindu tradition.

Retreat programs, teacher trainings and extended residencies are not organized around wellness or tourism. They are structured as opportunities for *sadhana*—spiritual practice—and often culminate in rites of passage such as mantra diksha (initiation into sacred mantra), silent meditation retreats, or ceremonies of vow-taking that commit the practitioner to a life of discipline and service.

Even the way decisions are made reflects spiritual priorities. Changes in schedule or practice are often guided by scriptural precedent or counsel from elders who serve as dharma protectors. This is not a business. It is a spiritual order, part of a global Hindu renaissance and a living continuation of ancient India's ashram tradition.

Witness to a Living Tradition

No amount of legal definition can substitute



for lived experience. For those who have spent time at Yoga Vidya Ashram—as students, visitors, residents or spiritual aspirants—the religious character of this institution is unquestionable. It is felt in the silence of pre-dawn meditation, in the crackle of sacred fire during homa, in the tears that arise unbidden during evening arati. It is visible in the eyes of those who serve with devotion.

Having briefly walked these halls, sat in meditation before their shrines, interviewed the aspirants and chanted Sanskrit hymns alongside hundreds of voices, I can affirm: this is Hinduism in practice, alive and well on German soil. The mood is one of surrender, reverence and transformation. The spiritual energy (*shakti*) here is the same as what one feels in Rishikesh, Thiruvannamalai or Chidambaram, the holy centers of Hinduism.

I met Europeans here who had never set

foot in India but have become fluent in Sanskrit chants and deep in bhakti. I spoke with visiting Indians who shared with me their joy in seeing their familiar traditions honored so faithfully in Europe. I encountered young Germans who have taken their spiritual vows, stepped into celibacy, and dedicated their lives to the divine path—not from cultural curiosity, but because they found their purpose, their dharma.

Yoga Vidya is authentically Hindu. In their extensive bylaws the words *Hindu* and *Hinduism* appear forty-five times. Any visitor familiar with Hinduism can attest that the ashram is Hindu in its very essence—in its worship, its teaching, its community, its lifestyle, and its unwavering commitment to Self-realization as the ultimate spiritual goal of life.



YOGA

Germany's 2025 European and World Yoga Congress

Global yoga leaders assemble to nurture peace, share teachings and strengthen community through disciplined yogic practice

BY THE EDITORS

FROM APRIL 25 TO 27, 2025, THE EUROPEAN and World Yoga Congress took place at the Yoga Vidya Ashram in Bad Meinberg, Germany. The event was organized by the Portuguese Yoga Confederation under the guidance of Guruji Amrta Suryananda in collaboration with Yoga Vidya—Europe's largest training organization for yoga teachers. This international congress brought together practitioners, teachers and representatives from over twenty countries to share knowledge, explore spiritual practice, and promote unity through yoga.

The Yoga Vidya Ashram provided an ideal location for the event, with its extensive campus offering multiple seminar rooms, meditation halls, full restaurant facilities and comfortable accommodations in a serene

country setting. Founded by Sukadev Volker Bretz, Yoga Vidya is rooted in the Sivananda tradition and focuses on a holistic, spiritually grounded approach to yoga. The ashram regularly hosts large-scale events and trainings and has become a hub for traditional yoga in Europe.

The congress featured a wide range of classes, workshops and lectures covering topics such as asana, pranayama, mantra, meditation and Vedantic philosophy. Instructors and speakers from various lineages and countries offered presentations in several languages, with live translations allowing for broad accessibility. Sessions included practical instruction, philosophical discussion and opportunities for shared reflection on the role of yoga in modern life. The program also provided time for informal inter-

action among participants, encouraging connection across traditions and cultures.

A central theme of the event was how yoga can contribute to peace—both personal and global. Organizers emphasized yoga's potential to bring clarity, resilience and a deeper sense of purpose. While rooted in traditional teachings, many sessions addressed contemporary concerns such as stress, health and community building. Several presentations highlighted yoga's role in education, social service and mental well-being.

Portuguese Yoga Confederation founder Guruji Amrta Suryananda—who started the European Yoga Confederation and has been actively encouraging collaboration across the continent—stressed the importance of protecting yoga's essence: "Many places I visited were calling it 'yoga,' but they weren't prac-



Many cultures, one path: (clockwise from far left) Swamini Atmaprakashananda from the UK gives an inspiring lecture about personal evolution through yoga; the event included asana practices; and devotional music as well; several of the international speakers on stage (Guruji Amrta Suryananda is second from the right); Swamini Chandra Shakti Devi of Portugal gives the morning asana class

ticing real, inner yoga. That's why this kind of gathering is important—so that we can keep yoga as *yoga*."

He recalled the founding of the Confederation: "I gathered the rare teachers who had studied in India and practiced authentic yoga. We came together with one condition: we only speak about yoga and we only practice yoga—nothing else." He also emphasized that "places like this—as in this congress—must be preserved. They are rare, and they allow the real spirit of yoga to live and be shared."

Among the many international teachers was Shiva Priya, a yoga instructor originally from Lahore, Pakistan, raised in Germany, and now teaching in Karachi. Reflecting on the spirit of the event, she said: "When the yogis and masters get together, great energy comes—what we call Shakti, Mahashakti—full of compassion, love and peace. The meaning of this conference is to spread yoga, unity and companionship, and to remind us that we are all one. First, we are one with our own Self, and then we are united with the whole Earth and Universe."

Shambhavi, a European yoga practitioner with a background in linguistics commented on yoga's staggered evolution in Europe: "Everything grows, and sometimes matures, only to lose that maturity again—not by returning to childlike innocence, but by becoming like a confused young adult. But eventually, it finds its way back to the path." She added, "A multi-language approach can be a good tool. It can help yoga grow, not just in popularity, but in depth of consciousness."

The congress also served as a platform for



international cooperation among yoga organizations. Congress leaders had a chance to discuss quality standards for yoga-teacher training, with a view toward maintaining authenticity while meeting the needs of a growing and diverse student population. The group's core has long supported structured, spiritually oriented yoga education and continue to promote programs that uphold its traditional practices over modernized approaches.

Yoga Vidya, as host and co-organizer, provided logistical and spiritual support throughout the event. They coordinated accommodations, meals, translation services and event facilitation for the large and diverse group of attendees. Vegetarian meals were served, and the ashram's peaceful environment supported inward reflection and focused learning. The success of the congress reaffirmed the importance of international gatherings for the yoga community.

THE SACRED SCIENCE OF SIDDHA MEDICINE

EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

Mystical Healers and Timeless Guardians of India's Ancient Wisdom



By Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary

"Siddha medicine is not just a way to treat illness—it is a sacred science passed down by our Siddhars, showing us how to live in alignment with nature and the universe. When we follow these ancient teachings, we understand that true health is the balance of body, mind and soul, guided by the wisdom of those who came before us." —Dr. L. Janani, M.D. Senior Siddha Doctor at Sri Narayani Holistic Centre and previous Siddha Doctor consultant to the AYUSH Wellness Clinic for the President of India.

THERE ARE MOMENTS IN LIFE WHEN DESTINY WHISPERS SO SOFTLY that you might mistake it for the wind. And then there are times when it roars—demanding to be heard. My journey into the hidden world of the *Siddhas* was one of those calls, a thread woven so intricately into my being that no matter how many times I tried to move in another direction, it kept pulling me back. It began in the quiet corridors of ayurvedic study, where I first heard the term *Siddha medicine*—a secret lineage of healers who had, according to legend, mastered the alchemy of life itself. But what truly mesmerized me was *kaya kalpa*, a technique so profound that it claimed to reverse aging by decades. I scoured every available text, searching for the hints of history, piecing together stories of sages who had seemingly bent the laws of time. It was intoxicating. How had these beings—half mystic, half scientist—discovered the keys to human cellular transformation? They were poets, healers, visionaries, masters of consciousness who moved through time like hidden Jedi, their knowledge passed down in secret through the ages. And so the search began. I wasn't unfamiliar with the concept of *siddhis*, the mystical abilities said to arise from deep spiritual practice. At nineteen, I had already been immersed in advanced meditation courses, seeking firsthand experience of these hidden potentials. I had even encountered the sensation of levitation, a fleeting moment where the body seemed to lift—not in defiance of gravity, but in harmony with some deeper force. Though the experiences of levitation were brief, it was enough. It changed me. It showed me that reality was not as fixed as we were led to believe. I spent over a decade searching for a true Siddha master. I traveled, studied and met many remarkable healers—but none carried the full spectrum of knowledge I sought. I grew weary. The dream that had once burned so brightly in my chest slowly faded into the background, an ember rather than a fire. Perhaps some things were not meant to be found. I turned my focus back to Ayurveda, deepening my own meditation practice, and let the search rest—though I never truly let it go.

DALLE



Quieting the mind: *Shirodhara therapy—pouring warm medicated oil gently over the forehead—soothes the nervous system and invites the mind into profound stillness.*

stopped. The Holistic Centre shut down. Everything we had built was put on hold.

I was on my *Sound Medicine* book tour in America when the world locked down. Joshua and our son were still in India. We were separated by continents, held apart by uncertainty. Nine months passed before we could reunite. When we finally did, Amma gave us a new directive.

“Take Siddha Wisdom to the World”

Now Joshua and I exist between two realms—one in the ancient rhythms of South India, the other in the electric pulse of modern California. We have become bridges between these worlds, carrying the whispers of Siddha knowledge into the bright, analytical light of contemporary science. The world of the Siddhas, once hidden, is emerging just as humanity seeks new paths to healing, transformation and consciousness.

At times the gap between these ancient teachings and modern life feels vast. But I have seen firsthand that the impossible is simply the unknown waiting to be understood. And so, with full hearts and open hands, we step forward—bringing the secrets of the Siddhas into a world desperately in need of their magic. Because some calls must be answered.

Keepers of the Sacred Flame

The Siddhas, mystical sages and pioneers of ancient Indian wisdom, have captivated seekers for millennia. Revered as masters of the physical and spiritual realms, they embody extraordinary powers and boundless compassion. Rooted in Tamil culture, the Siddhas developed a profound system of medicine and spirituality that transcends physical healing, addressing the body, mind and soul. This article delves into their world, exploring their history, teachings and enduring relevance for modern spiritual audiences.

Who Are the Siddhas? The Siddhas were extraordinary spiritual teachers, healers and scientists from South India, known for their unparalleled understanding of the human body, mind and soul. They combined practical knowledge with spiritual wisdom to create a holistic healing system known as Siddha medicine, which focuses on treating the whole person. Deeply rooted in Tamil culture, this ancient tradition continues to inspire those seeking balance, health and self-discovery.

Siddhis: Extraordinary Abilities: The term Siddha translates to “one who has attained perfection,” reflecting the mastery of body, mind and spirit that defines these sages. Through rigorous spiritual discipline, the Siddhas are believed to have achieved siddhis (super-human powers), symbolizing their mastery over the laws of nature:



PHOTO BY MADISON CARTER

Legendary Healers

The Siddhas’ legacy is enriched by countless stories of healing and transformation, illustrating their profound wisdom and connection to divine energy.

One tale recounts Bogar Siddhar, who cured a king’s chronic ailment using a single alchemical preparation derived from mercury and herbs, showcasing his mastery of Siddha pharmacology. Another story highlights Agastya Siddhar, who created a rejuvenating formula to restore vitality to an aged sage, granting him prolonged life.

The chronicles of Therayar Siddhar include accounts of his extraordinary ability to identify imbalances in patients’ energies by merely observing their aura. In one instance, he healed a farmer’s persistent paralysis by prescribing a combination of herbal oil massage and a specially crafted mantra for energy realignment.

Konganavar Siddhar, famed for his knowledge of divine alchemy, is said to have saved an entire village from a plague by purifying their water source with metallic preparations and invoking divine blessings.

These accounts inspire faith in the Siddha medicine lineage’s transformative power and demonstrate the deep integration of spirituality and science in this ancient healing tradition.

Above: Statue of Siddha Agastya, the revered sage credited as the founding father of the Siddha healing tradition.

Some Calls Must Be Answered

Then, many years later, just as life had settled into something comfortable—destiny knocked once more. I had married, become a mother, and was working to bring Ayurveda to a wider American audience when my spiritual teacher, Amma, extended an invitation that sent shockwaves through my soul: “Would you help set up a healing center in South India to translate the ancient Siddha texts?”

For a moment, time stopped. It was the invitation I had dreamed of, but at the worst possible time. My family, my work, my life—it was all rooted in another world. Moving to rural India wasn’t just a leap of faith; it was a freefall into the unknown. For weeks, my husband Joshua and I wrestled with the decision, torn between the pull of the mystical and the weight of the practical. But some truths cannot be ignored. We both knew in the depths of our being that this was why we were here. And so we left.

India was both a dream and a trial. Together, we built the Sri Narayani Holistic Centre, gathering ancient texts, reviving lost formulas,

and witnessing the miracles of the Siddha tradition firsthand. Joshua immersed himself in *varma*, the ancient martial and healing art, and *nada yoga*, the practice of sound healing through mantras, while I navigated the intricate daily management of the center—an experience woven with surreal encounters with the sacred Siddha formulas, legendary preparations said to awaken the body’s hidden potential.

Some days felt like stepping into a science fiction novel, where reality itself bent under the weight of forgotten wisdom. Other days felt like moving mountains with bare hands, as the sheer difficulty of our work tested every ounce of patience and resilience we had. There were moments I wanted to quit, to turn away from the weight of this knowledge. And yet, something deeper—a knowing that pulsed through my very being—kept me there. The Siddhas had called, and I could not turn away.

Just as the center found its rhythm, as we began sharing these lost treasures with the world, the COVID pandemic struck. The work



MADISON CARTER

- ❖ **Anima:** Ability to reduce one's body to atomic size
- ❖ **Mahima:** Expanding one's body infinitely
- ❖ **Laghima:** Becoming lighter than air
- ❖ **Garima:** Attaining immense density or weight
- ❖ **Prapti:** Manifesting desires
- ❖ **Prakamya:** Accessing any place in the world
- ❖ **Ishitva:** Commanding natural elements
- ❖ **Vashitva:** Influencing others

These siddhis symbolize not only physical prowess but also the Siddhas' deep spiritual evolution and their integration of divine consciousness.

A Glimpse into History

According to tradition, Siddha medicine emerged from divine revelation. Lord Shiva, the Adiyogi, imparted this esoteric knowledge to Goddess Parvati, who passed it to Her son, Lord Murugan. Lord Murugan then shared it with the first mortal Siddha, Sage Agastya, who is venerated as the father of Siddha medicine. Sage Agastya, along with 17 other principal Siddhas, developed this profound

system and encoded it on palm leaf manuscripts, many of which survive to this day.

Siddha tradition is deeply intertwined with the divine. The Siddhas saw themselves as instruments of celestial will, often invoking the blessings of the devas and Lord Murugan. Murugan's blessing are believed to empower practitioners with intuitive healing abilities.

Among the esteemed Siddhas, the legendary sage Agastya stands out for his groundbreaking practices that integrate physical, mental and spiritual mastery. Other key figures include Thirumular, the mystical poet behind the *Tirumantiram*, and Bogar, a master alchemist known for his expertise in varma healing. Thirumular's *Tirumantiram* blends mysticism with medicine, while Bogar's alchemical work includes creating the idol of Lord Murugan at Palani Hill, using nine medicinal minerals (*navapashanam*). Karuvurar is also notable for his profound knowledge of architecture. This lineage features numerous sages, each contributing distinct teachings and innovations. These masters embody the Siddhas' vision of aligning human life with the cosmos.

Power of plants: A practitioner performs patra pinda pwedana, applying a heated leaf bundle to reduce pain, inflammation and stiffness.

Disease Classification

The Siddha system classifies diseases into three fundamental doshas (vata, pitta and kapha) based on the imbalance of the elements, or pancha bhutas. Unlike Ayurveda, which emphasizes seasonal cycles and body types (prakriti), Siddha medicine delves into the metaphysical causes of disease, often attributing ailments to karma or spiritual disharmony.

Comparison with Chinese and Buddhist medicine reveals parallels: all three systems emphasize balance, though Chinese medicine highlights the interplay of yin and yang while Buddhist approaches emphasize mental states and mindfulness. Siddha stands out for its deep integration of mysticism and material science, particularly in its use of alchemical preparations.

The philosophical kinship between Siddha medicine and homeopathy is intriguing. Both systems embrace the principle of "like cures like" and emphasize the potentization of substances to enhance their therapeutic effect. While Siddha medicine employs metals, herbs and minerals in both gross and subtle forms, homeopathy focuses exclusively on highly diluted preparations. Scholars debate whether direct influence exists, but the shared focus on energy medicine and holistic healing underscores their philosophical alignment.

This synergy of ancient Siddha alchemy and the principles echoed in other global medical traditions demonstrates how humanity's quest for healing transcends time, culture and geography.

Diagnosis in Siddha Medicine

Siddha diagnosis is a blend of art and science. Practitioners rely on the "Eight Diagnostic Tools," known as Envagai Thervugal. These tools are:

- 1. Pulse reading (Naadi Paritchai):** This is the most critical diagnostic tool in Siddha medicine. Practitioners examine the pulse's rhythm, speed and intensity to discern imbalances in the doshas and gain insight into the body's internal functioning.
- 2. Examination of the tongue (Na):** The tongue's color, texture and coating provide clues about digestive health and organ functionality.
- 3. Observation of voice (Mozhi):** The tone, clarity and strength of the voice indicate the condition of the respiratory system and overall vitality.
- 4. Palpation of the body (Sparisam):** Through touch, practitioners assess abnormalities in temperature, texture and sensitivity of the skin and underlying tissues.
- 5. Examination of the eyes (Kan):** The eyes reveal emotional states and internal health through their brightness, moisture and movement.



DALL·E

Sacred Texts

The teachings of the Siddhas are preserved in ancient Tamil texts, written on palm-leaf manuscripts in a veiled, metaphorical style known as the twilight language, or *sandhya bhasha*. This cryptic language safeguarded sacred knowledge, ensuring only those with the necessary spiritual insight could interpret its deeper meanings. The texts transcend intellectual understanding, inviting practitioners to experience direct mystical insights as the key to unlocking their profound wisdom.

Siddha medicine, while less globally known than Ayurveda, offers a unique and holistic approach to healing that integrates philosophy, medical knowledge, alchemical formulas and spiritual practices. Its esoteric nature, encrypted teachings, and focus on metallic preparations have contributed to its relative obscurity. Additionally, its regional prominence in Tamil Nadu, compared to Ayurveda's broader geographic reach and early promotion by Western scholars, limited its global recognition. Nevertheless, Siddha medicine is increasingly drawing attention from seekers of authentic, spiritually-focused healing practices.

Ultimately, the legacy of the Siddhas encompasses not only their medical systems but also their spiritual philosophies and practices. Their teachings continue to inspire holistic approaches to health and self-realization, bridging ancient wisdom with modern aspirations for balance and harmony

Above: ancient palm leaf manuscripts preserve the sacred teachings and medical wisdom of the Siddhas.



MADISON CARTER

- 6. Assessment of urine (Moothiram):** Changes in color, consistency and sedimentation patterns in urine offer valuable diagnostic information.
- 7. Analysis of stool (Malam):** The texture, color and frequency of stools help identify digestive and metabolic issues.
- 8. Observation of body color and appearance (Niram):** The complexion and overall appearance are indicators of internal balance and vitality.
- These eight tools enable Siddha healers to perceive not just physical ailments but also the spiritual and emotional undercurrents that contribute to illness. This holistic approach to diagnosis underscores the Siddha philosophy of treating the individual, not just the disease.

Food as Medicine

“Let food be thy medicine” resonates deeply within Siddha philosophy. Diets are tailored to individual constitutions and disease conditions, closely aligned with the three doshas—*vata* (space and air), *pitta* (fire and water) and *kapha* (water and earth). These doshas form the foundation of Siddha’s understanding of health and disease. The balance of these elements within the body determines one’s physical,

mental and spiritual well-being.

Foods are classified based on their effects on the doshas, with certain items prescribed to pacify or stimulate them. For instance, cooling foods like cucumber and coconut water are used to balance an aggravated pitta, while warming spices like ginger and pepper aid in soothing vata. Similarly, light and dry foods are recommended to balance kapha.

Medicinal herbs, fermented preparations and carefully balanced meals form the cornerstone of Siddha dietary practices. Fermented foods such as mor kanji (fermented rice gruel) are celebrated for their probiotic properties, aiding digestion and strengthening immunity. Herbs like turmeric and neem are integrated not only for their medicinal qualities but also for their ability to harmonize the doshas.

In Siddha medicine, foods are not merely sustenance but a pathway to healing and spiritual growth. Mindful eating—consuming food with gratitude and awareness—is emphasized to ensure proper digestion and assimilation. This holistic approach to food underscores the Siddhas’ belief in nurturing the body to nurture the soul.

Food as medicine: A collection of traditional herbs and spices used in Siddha body treatments—each chosen for its energetic and medicinal qualities.

Lifestyle Management

- Siddha wisdom emphasizes harmony with natural rhythms and the intricate connection between the body, mind and environment. Lifestyle management in Siddha is not merely about routine but about aligning oneself with universal energies to maintain equilibrium and health. The following practices form the cornerstone of Siddha lifestyle management:
- 1. Dinacharya (Daily Routine):** Siddha prescribes a structured daily routine to synchronize bodily functions with the natural cycles of the day. This includes waking up before sunrise, cleansing rituals using herbal formulations, yoga and meditation to prepare the mind and body for the day ahead. Evening practices involve winding down with calming activities, herbal teas and prayer to promote restful sleep.
- 2. Ritucharya (Seasonal Adaptation):** Each season brings changes that influence the doshas (vata, pitta and kapha). Siddha medicine encourages seasonal adjustments in diet, clothing and activity levels. For example, during hot seasons, cooling foods and practices are emphasized, while warming techniques are used in colder months.
- 3. Yoga and Pranayama:** Siddha medicine views yoga as essential for maintaining physical flexibility and mental clarity. Specific postures are recommended to balance the doshas, while breathing techniques (pranayama) enhance energy flow and detoxify the body.
- 4. Meditation and Mantras:** Regular meditation is prescribed to cultivate inner peace and spiritual growth. Chanting specific mantras is believed to harmonize the mind and cleanse negative energies.
- 5. Periodic Fasting:** Siddhas emphasizes fasting as a method to detoxify the body and rest the digestive system. Depending on the individual’s constitution and health, fasting may range from complete abstinence to consuming specific herbal liquids or light meals.
- 6. Herbal Baths and Cleansing Rituals:** Siddha practitioners recommend using herbal-infused water for bathing to rejuvenate the skin and promote circulation. This practice is often combined with massages using medicated oils to enhance overall well-being.
- 7. Mindful Living:** Siddhas encourages mindfulness in every activity, from eating to interacting with others. This holistic approach fosters gratitude, reduces stress and promotes overall harmony.

By adhering to these lifestyle practices, the Siddhas believed that individuals could achieve not only physical health but also spiritual transcendence, thus creating a life of balance, vitality and higher purpose.

External Therapies

Siddha medicine places equal emphasis on external therapies and internal remedies. This dual approach reflects its holistic philosophy, addressing both the symptoms and root causes of diseases while



DALLE

Training & Certification

The resurgence of Siddha medicine has necessitated stringent oversight to curb malpractice. Certified programs under India’s National Institute of Siddha and recognized universities ensure rigorous training in both theory and practice. Standardized guidelines and licensing protocols aim to preserve the sanctity of this tradition while preventing the rise of unqualified practitioners.

At the same time, it is crucial to preserve the integrity and timeless wisdom embedded within the master-disciple Siddha lineages, which have flourished for thousands of years. These traditions, thriving beyond the confines of regulated certification, stand as a priceless national treasure of India’s heritage.

Above: Siddha medicine was traditionally passed orally and experientially from master to disciple in a sacred teacher-student lineage.



Bundle of herbs: Herbal poultices wrapped in cotton and soaked in medicated oil are prepared for the Patra Pinda Swedana treatment.

fostering overall balance and well-being. External treatments are particularly valued for their ability to restore equilibrium in the body's three doshas (vata, pitta and kapha). These therapies utilize various techniques, ranging from manual manipulations to specialized applications of herbal and mineral-based preparations.

1. Oil Massages and Heat Treatments

One of the most prominent external therapies in Siddha medicine involves oil massages, often combined with heat treatments. These therapies are designed to enhance circulation, balance the doshas and rejuvenate the body's tissues. Medicinal oils are prepared using precise formulations of herbs and minerals, each tailored to the patient's specific condition.

The oils are applied with rhythmic movements to penetrate the skin and reach deeper tissues. This promotes detoxification, reduces inflammation and alleviates pain. For chronic conditions like arthritis, muscle stiffness, or nerve-related issues, oil massages are often accompanied by heat treatments. Heated herbal compresses or steam baths are used to relax the muscles further, increase blood flow and improve flexibility. This method not only addresses physical discomfort but also promotes mental relaxation, making it a cornerstone of Siddha's external therapies.

2. Herbal Poultices and Leech Therapy

Herbal poultices are another common technique in Siddha medicine, used for localized healing and detoxification. These poultices are prepared by combining medicinal herbs with other natural substances, such as oils or vinegar, to create a paste. The mixture is then wrapped in cloth and applied to affected areas of the body. Depending on the condition, the poultice can be heated or cooled to achieve the desired therapeutic effect. This method is often used to treat inflammation, skin conditions and injuries.

3. Leech Therapy

Leech therapy, known as hirudotherapy, is a time-tested practice in Siddha medicine for detoxification, improving circulation and slowing down aging. Leeches are carefully applied to specific areas of the body to draw out impure blood, reducing swelling and promoting healing. This therapy is particularly effective for conditions like varicose veins, abscesses and localized pain. Siddha practitioners emphasize the importance of precision in applying leech therapy, ensuring that the treatment is both safe and effective.

4. Sensory Purification: Eye, Ear and Nasal Drops

Siddha medicine recognizes the vital role of the sensory organs in maintaining overall health. Therapies targeting the eyes, ears and nose are integral to the system's external treatments, aiming to cleanse and rejuvenate these critical pathways.

Eye drops prepared from herbal extracts are used to treat conditions such as conjunctivitis, cataracts, or general eye strain. These

Varma: Energy Loci

BY JOSHUA BARR

AH, VARMA—IT'S NOT JUST A THERAPY, IT'S A DANCE WITH the vital forces of life itself! In the ancient Siddha tradition, we describe the human body as a vessel of pulsating energy, with 108 primary varma points acting like secret gateways. These points govern the flow of pranic energy, similar to rivers feeding a lush landscape. When the flow is smooth, health thrives. But when these points are blocked—due to trauma, emotional stress or lifestyle imbalances—the entire system can falter, manifesting as pain, illness, or mental distress. By skillfully stimulating or releasing these points, we reawaken the body's natural intelligence, restoring balance not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually. It's like tuning an ancient instrument, bringing it back to its divine resonance.

Training in varma isn't something you just pick up in a weekend workshop—believe me! I had the honor of apprenticing under a recognized Siddha master in South India, learning not only the intricate map of varma points but also the ethics, mantras and spiritual discipline that come with this sacred knowledge. It's considered a privilege and responsibility, because these points, if misused, can cause

harm. A true practitioner must cultivate humility, intuition and a steady mind, alongside years of hands-on training and theoretical study.

A typical varma session feels like entering a sacred space. The patient lies comfortably, while the practitioner reads their pulse, observes their energy, and begins gently stimulating specific points through calibrated pressure, rhythmic tapping or guided breathwork. Sometimes we incorporate herbal oils, subtle manipulations or even mantras. It's a deeply individualized experience. We commonly treat ailments like chronic pain, migraines, digestive issues or injuries—but varma's reach goes much deeper. For modern challenges like depression, anxiety or burnout, it's incredibly potent. By unlocking stagnant energy at key varma points connected to the nervous system and emotional centers, the therapy helps release deeply held stress, calming the mind and reconnecting one to their vitality.

One success story that always lights me up. I worked with a young man plagued by severe anxiety and insomnia, exhausted by years of failed conventional treatments. Through a series of varma sessions—combined with herbal support—he not only regained restful sleep



but also reported feeling a sense of lightness and purpose he hadn't known in years. Stories like his are common, though formal clinical studies are still catching up. There's growing interest in researching varma, especially its role in psychosomatic disorders and rehabilitation.

Of course, varma faces challenges in gaining modern medical acceptance. It's an oral tradition, often shrouded in secrecy, and deeply interwoven with spirituality—something Western medicine struggles to quantify. However, in recent years, there's been a promising shift. Collaborations with integrative health centers, research institutions and educational programs are emerging, both in India and abroad. In countries like the U.S. and Europe, a small but passionate community of varma practitioners is adapting the practice while honoring its roots, offering treatments within wellness centers and even martial arts schools, where the knowledge often overlaps.

We're living in exciting times. As the world looks for holistic, sustainable ways to heal, varma—this ancient, mystical art—has much to offer. It's not just about treating illness; it's about awakening the body's innate intelligence, its capacity for harmony and transformation.

Needleless acupuncture: A patient receives varma therapy from Dr. Janani at the Sri Narayani Holistic Centre—an ancient healing art that activates subtle energy points.



MADISON CARTER

remedies not only address physical symptoms but also enhance vision and prevent age-related degeneration. Similarly, ear drops are employed to remove impurities, alleviate earaches and improve auditory health. Nasal drops, known as *nasiyam*, serve a dual purpose: clearing nasal passages and stimulating the central nervous system. Nasiyam is particularly effective in treating migraines, sinusitis and neurological disorders.

Holistic Integration of External Therapies

The external therapies of Siddha medicine illustrate its deeply holistic approach to health. They focus not just on treating symptoms but on harmonizing the body, mind and spirit. Whether through the application of medicinal oils, the use of leeches for purification, or the cleansing of sensory pathways, these therapies work in tandem with internal remedies to promote long-term well-being.

Siddha medicine emphasizes personalization. Each treatment is carefully customized to address the unique constitution and condition of the patient, ensuring optimal outcomes. This tailored approach, combined with the wisdom of ancient practices, highlights the timeless relevance of Siddha medicine in fostering health and balance.

Varma: Vital Points and Energy Balance

As part of the Siddha healing tradition, Varma is an ancient system that has been continually practiced for thousands of years in the

Tamil culture of Southern India. This unique practice, steeped in mysticism and biology, addresses the body's vital points, which are believed to be the convergence of prana, or life force, with the material body. These points, often likened to energy nodes, are strategically located across the body and are thought to govern the flow of life force. In the Siddha tradition, the manipulation of these points is central to restoring balance and health.

The Siddhas incorporated Varma into their holistic approach to health to integrate the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of the individual. Practitioners, who are deeply trained in the ancient texts and the intricate mapping of the body, use precise techniques involving pressure, gentle strikes or subtle movements to influence the flow of prana. It is believed that by stimulating or calming these points, the healer can correct energetic imbalances, which, in turn, heal the physical body.

Varma's influence extends beyond healing—it was integral to martial practices, where knowledge of vital points could both restore health and incapacitate an opponent. Archaeological findings, such as ancient texts and medical treatises, reveal that Varma was incorporated into the training of warriors. Notably, Varma was used in the training of warriors to enhance their physical endurance and to protect the body from injuries. This blend of martial, medicinal and spiritual knowledge underscores the complexity and versatility of Varma within the Siddha system.

From a scientific perspective, Varma could be seen as an early form of neurophysiological therapy. Despite its mystical underpinnings, Varma's techniques reflect a deep understanding of anatomy,

Movement: *Yoga supports the integration of body, emotions and mind—a core component of Siddha healing philosophy.*

with each pressure point correlating to internal organs and systems within the body. Modern research has begun to align certain Varma techniques with known concepts in acupuncture and trigger point therapy, where pressure applied to specific points in the body influences the nervous system, leading to biochemical changes. The connection between energy flow and physical health—while mysterious in its ancient form—hints at a sophisticated understanding of human physiology that predates contemporary medicine. Through its integration of the physical and energetic, Varma stands as a testament to the ancient wisdom that sought to bridge the invisible forces of the universe with the tangible workings of the human body.

Why Metals?

Siddha pharmacology is an intricate science that incorporates herbs, minerals and metals, each with unique therapeutic properties. Metals hold a special place in Siddha medicine due to their transformative potential and perceived divine energy. Properly purified metals like gold, mercury and copper are believed to enhance vitality, promote longevity and strengthen the connection between the physical and spiritual realms. These metallic preparations, known as bhasmas, undergo a meticulous process of purification and incineration to remove toxicity while retaining their medicinal potency. The result is a substance imbued with healing power, often associated with concentrated cosmic energy.

Gold, for instance, is considered a rejuvenator, enhancing strength and immunity. Mercury, referred to as *rasa*, symbolizes the divine energy of transformation and is used in alchemical formulations to treat some of the most persistent, chronic conditions. Copper is valued for its antimicrobial properties and ability to detoxify the body. Siddha practitioners regard these metals as more than physical elements; they are seen as carriers of cosmic energy that bridge the material and spiritual worlds.

The Use of Rasamani in the Siddha Lineage

Rasamani, a unique metallic preparation, holds a revered place in the Siddha tradition. It is crafted using purified mercury combined with sulfur and other stabilizing agents, resulting in a solidified form of mercury. This alchemical masterpiece symbolizes the union of Shiva and Shakti energies and is considered a sacred tool for spiritual and physical transformation.

Rasamani is believed to harness immense cosmic energy, making it an integral part of Siddha practices. It is often used as a meditation aid to enhance concentration, spiritual awakening and the balance of the body's subtle energies. Additionally, Siddha masters attribute Rasamani with the ability to regulate body heat, boost vitality and aid in the rejuvenation of tissues. Its careful preparation follows rigorous protocols to ensure safety and potency, aligning with the principles of Siddha alchemy.



Common Misconceptions

Despite their profound contributions to medicine and spirituality, the Siddhas are often misunderstood, sometimes perceived as mythical figures or mere alchemists obsessed with immortality. In reality, they were highly advanced yogis, healers and scientists who developed an intricate system of medicine rooted in deep observation of nature, human physiology, and consciousness. While their practices included elements of alchemy and longevity techniques, these were not mere pursuits of physical immortality but rather tools for refining the body and mind to achieve higher states of awareness.

It is important to note that comparisons between Ayurveda and Siddha medicine are of limited value. Both systems are extensions of the same ancient body of knowledge, sharing foundational principles related to the balance of the doshas and the connection between body, mind, and spirit. However, Siddha medicine delves more deeply into the alchemical transformation of the body and emphasizes the spiritual evolution of the individual as an essential part of healing. Certain aspects of Siddha knowledge, particularly those concerning internal alchemy and higher yogic practices, are considered sacred and are therefore closely guarded, passed only to those who have attained the necessary spiritual maturity and discipline to wield them responsibly. A true Siddha doctor is not only a physician but also a master of consciousness, embodying wisdom that transcends mere book knowledge.

Another common misconception is that Siddha medicine is purely mystical. While it does incorporate esoteric elements, such as energy work and mantras, it is fundamentally a holistic medical system based on rigorous experimentation and knowledge transmission. The Siddhas meticulously documented the effects of herbs, minerals and lifestyle modifications on health, many of which align with modern pharmacology and modern healing principles. By bridging the gap between spiritual wisdom and empirical science, Siddha medicine offers a unique approach to wellness that remains as relevant today as it was millennia ago.



MADISON CARTER

Kaya Kalpa: The Art of Rejuvenation

A crown jewel of Siddha medicine, kaya kalpa is a revered practice designed to transform the body, extend life and facilitate spiritual evolution. The term itself translates to “body transformation” or “immortal body,” representing one of the most advanced techniques within the Siddha tradition. Rooted in the philosophy of harmonizing physical, mental and spiritual dimensions, Kaya Kalpa aims to unlock human potential and reverse the effects of aging.

The Process of Kaya Kalpa

Kaya Kalpa therapy is a systematic journey that encompasses detoxification, rejuvenation and spiritual awakening. Conducted under the guidance of a Siddha master, this practice requires precision, discipline and a deep understanding of an individual’s constitution (*prakriti*) and imbalances (*vikriti*).

The process begins with purification, where the body is cleansed of accumulated toxins due to improper diet, lifestyle choices, chronic

stress, or disease. Herbal decoctions and specialized preparations play a crucial role in purifying the digestive system, blood and tissues. Techniques such as purgation (*virechana*) and medicated enemas (*vasti*) help eliminate impurities from the gastrointestinal tract, while fasting or a restricted diet resets digestion and enhances detoxification.

Once the body is purified, rejuvenation follows, aiming to restore vitality and rebuild cellular structures. This stage involves the administration of rejuvenating tonics (*rasayanas*) and potent metallic preparations like gold (*swarna bhasma*) and mercury (*rasa*), believed to enhance immunity and energy. Oil massages infused with medicinal herbs nourish tissues and stimulate energy flow, often complemented by steam baths that promote deeper absorption of therapeutic oils. Yogic postures and breathing exercises (*pranayama*) further support the body’s renewal by activating energy centers and increasing the flow of *prana* (vital energy).

Beyond the physical transformation, spiritual and mental elevation are integral to Kaya Kalpa. Meditation, mantra chanting and yogic

Body work: *Abhyanga*, the traditional oil massage, nourishes the body tissues, calms the nervous system and prepares the body for deeper healing.

techniques awaken dormant energy, aligning the mind and body with higher consciousness. This process is traditionally performed in secluded environments—forests or caves—where external distractions are minimized, allowing practitioners to focus entirely on self-healing and spiritual advancement.

The Role of Diet and Lifestyle

A *sattvic* diet plays a central role in Kaya Kalpa therapy, consisting of fresh fruits, vegetables and light soups that are easily digestible and free of toxins. Foods such as alcohol, meat and processed items are strictly avoided, as they disrupt energy flow and introduce impurities.

Lifestyle modifications further enhance the rejuvenation process. Aligning daily routines (*dinacharya*) and seasonal practices (*ritucharya*) with natural cycles helps maintain balance. Regular sleep, mindfulness and physical activity are emphasized to support the body’s regeneration and sustain its newfound vitality.

Legends and Legacy

Siddha texts are filled with accounts of extraordinary longevity and vitality achieved through Kaya Kalpa. Bogar, a celebrated Siddha master, is believed to have perfected this technique, allowing him to live for centuries. Agasthiyar, revered as the father of Siddha medicine, also developed and practiced Kaya Kalpa methods to extend his lifespan, enabling him to share divine knowledge across many generations. These stories not only highlight the transformative power of Kaya Kalpa but also inspire practitioners to explore deeper dimensions of health and well-being.

The Profound Benefits of Kaya Kalpa

Kaya Kalpa therapy offers a multitude of benefits, encompassing physical, mental and spiritual dimensions. It revitalizes tissues, strengthens immunity and reverses aging, fostering physical rejuvenation. Mentally, it enhances clarity, reduces stress and promotes emotional balance. Spiritually, it deepens meditation, awakens dormant energies and accelerates personal evolution.

As a testament to the *Siddha* tradition’s profound understanding of human potential, Kaya Kalpa provides a pathway to radical transformation. By integrating ancient wisdom with disciplined practice, it allows individuals to achieve harmony within themselves and with the universe.



Reliable Sources

1. National Institute of Siddha (NIS)—Chennai, Tamil Nadu: Located in Tambaram, this is one of the foremost institutions dedicated to Siddha medicine. Operating under the Ministry of AYUSH, it offers advanced education, clinical services and research opportunities in Siddha. With a strong focus on integrating traditional Siddha knowledge with modern healthcare, NIS plays a pivotal role in promoting and preserving Siddha medicine nationally and internationally.

2. Government Siddha Medical College—Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu: Established in 1964, this is one of the oldest and most respected Siddha medical colleges in India. Affiliated with The Tamil Nadu Dr. M.G.R. Medical University, the college is renowned for its rigorous academic programs and comprehensive Siddha hospital services.

3. Sri Narayani Holistic Centre—Thirumalaikodi, Tamil Nadu: Under the divine guidance of Sri Sakti Amma, the Sri Narayani Holistic Centre is emerging as a key center for the revival and preservation of some of the most ancient and sacred aspects of Siddha medicine. This center emphasizes the spiritual depth and mystical elements of Siddha healing, integrating them into personalized care for modern patients. Sri Sakti Amma’s leadership ensures that the esoteric knowledge of Siddha—particularly its inner alchemy and transformational practices—is transmitted responsibly, respecting its sacredness and making it accessible only to those prepared to receive it. The center stands as a bridge between the deeply guarded wisdom of the Siddhars and contemporary seekers of holistic well-being.

For those eager to learn more, several online platforms provide accurate insights into Siddha medicine. Websites like the Ministry of AYUSH (Government of India), Siddha Central Research Institute, and peer-reviewed journals on integrative medicine offer reliable knowledge. Emerging digital archives of palm-leaf manuscripts and teachings by contemporary Siddha practitioners also provide valuable resources for deeper study.

Above: Statues of eight of the legendary Tamil Siddhas, immortalized for their mastery in medicine, alchemy and spiritual transformation.



MADISON CARTER

A Case Study: Chronic Psoriasis

Patient: Mr. RK, 42 years old, resident of Chennai. *Condition:* Chronic Psoriasis (10+ years). *Background:* Mr. RK had been living with severe chronic psoriasis for over a decade. Despite trying various conventional treatments, he experienced only temporary relief, with frequent flare-ups causing significant physical discomfort and emotional distress. Seeking a more sustainable solution, he approached the Siddha clinic for holistic care.

Siddha Treatment Approach

Upon thorough evaluation, the treatment plan was tailored to address Mr. Kumar's underlying dosha imbalance, focusing on deep detoxification and rejuvenation. The key components of his treatment included the following.

- ❖ **Leech Therapy (Hirudotherapy):** Applied locally to the affected areas, leech therapy facilitated the removal of stagnant blood flow, reduced inflammation and improved circulation. This ancient technique accelerated healing and helped eliminate toxins contributing to the skin condition.
- ❖ **Internal Medicines:** Herbal formulations such as Sivanar

Amirtham and Parangipattai chooranam were prescribed to cleanse the system and strengthen immunity.

- ❖ **External Applications:** Medicated oils, particularly Dinesavalathi Ennai, were applied to alleviate scaling, itching and irritation.
- ❖ **Dietary Guidance:** A strict pathiyam (Siddha dietary regimen) was recommended, emphasizing cooling, unprocessed foods while eliminating heat-inducing and allergenic substances.
- ❖ **Lifestyle Modifications:** Mr. Kumar was guided to incorporate gentle yoga, meditation, daily oil massages and adherence to seasonal routines to support systemic balance and emotional well-being.

Results: Following just two sessions of leech therapy, Mr. Kumar experienced a noticeable reduction in itching and inflammation. Over three months, with the combined support of herbal medicines, diet and lifestyle changes, flare-ups significantly decreased. After one year, his skin remained clear and stable, with no reliance on steroids or chemical-based treatments. Additionally, he reported improved digestion, energy levels and mental calmness.

This case highlights the efficacy of Siddha medicine's comprehensive approach in treating chronic conditions. The integration of

Subtle diagnosis: A practitioner performs Siddha pulse diagnosis, an intuitive and skillful method of assessing imbalances through the radial artery.

therapies such as leech therapy, combined with personalized herbal remedies, dietary discipline and lifestyle guidance, proved instrumental in restoring Mr. Kumar's long-term health and well-being.

Final Thoughts

The Siddhas' timeless wisdom continues to illuminate the path to true health. Their integration of physical, mental and spiritual healing offers invaluable insights for modern seekers. Unlike fragmented approaches that focus solely on treating symptoms, Siddha medicine provides a deeply interconnected view of health that acknowledges the profound relationship between body, mind, spirit and cosmic energies. As interest in natural healing and ancient wisdom continues to rise worldwide, Siddha medicine stands poised to offer guidance, balance and renewal to those seeking a more profound connection with their well-being.

By embracing the teachings of the Siddhas, we are not only reclaiming a lost heritage but also rediscovering a way of life that harmonizes human existence with the greater universe. Their legacy is a testament to the power of human life, and as we move forward, integrating their wisdom into modern wellness practices could redefine the future of medicine and spirituality.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary is a neurologist, neuroscientist, Ayurvedic practitioner, sound medicine expert, author and advocate for integrative healing. Her journey began in the world of conventional medicine where she spent over a decade treating complex neurological disorders—multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, migraines—at Scripps Memorial Hospital. But her approach was different. She sought to understand why her patients were suffering and how they could heal at the root. That search led her into the ancient sciences of Ayurveda and Siddha medicine—where healing is about more than prescriptions. "The mind and body are not separate," she explains. Dr. Chaudhary established the Sri Narayani Holistic Centre, a sanctuary dedicated to reviving ancient healing practices. There, she witnessed firsthand the power of these systems to restore balance, rewire the brain, and unlock human potential. Today, Dr. Chaudhary shares her knowledge through her books *The Prime and Sound Medicine*, as well as immersive experiences ranging from transformational retreats in India and Tuscany to online courses and sound healing practices. Sound Medicine blends ancient wisdom with modern science, tracing the history of sound therapy and the use of specific mantras from previously unknown texts linked to the Siddhas.



Malaysia Sri Lanka Mauritius

DALL·E

Siddha's Global Presence

A growing global recognition of traditional healing systems is emerging as the limitations of modern medicine—rooted in a disease-focused rather than a health-centered approach—become increasingly apparent in developed nations. In India, Siddha medicine is experiencing a renaissance, with government initiatives such as the Ministry of AYUSH actively fostering research, standardization and accessibility. The establishment of Siddha research institutes and collaborations with modern healthcare systems have enhanced its visibility. Public awareness campaigns and the inclusion of Siddha therapies in wellness programs have further contributed to its growing popularity.

Beyond India, countries like Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Malaysia have embraced Siddha medicine as a vital component of their cultural heritage and healthcare systems. Sri Lanka's Ayurvedic hospitals often integrate Siddha treatments, recognizing its holistic approach to healing. Similarly, Malaysia's diverse population has shown an increasing interest in traditional Siddha remedies for chronic conditions and wellness practices.

Meanwhile, in Western nations, the Siddha's emphasis on natural and preventive medicine has begun to resonate with modern wellness movements, where yoga, herbal remedies and alternative therapies are gaining traction. This global acceptance reflects a broader shift toward integrating ancient wisdom into contemporary health paradigms.



From setup...



to main event...

...to breakdown

Kumbh Mela 2025: Behind the Scenes

FESTIVALS

Just what does it take to build a temporary city for 660 million people?

By PRAMIL DWIVEDI, PRAYAG

MONTHS BEFORE THE FIRST PILGRIM arrived at the Sangam, preparations for the 2025 Kumbh Mela were already underway. With a budget of us\$750 million, the Uttar Pradesh government, along with municipal bodies and sanitation partners, undertook the enormous task of creating a functional, hygienic ecosystem capable of supporting over 660

million visitors across several weeks. Massive logistical efforts unfolded to uphold the sanctity of the land and the purity of the river. The sanitation initiative in particular stood as a testament to modern India's capacity to blend devotion with discipline.

Infrastructure by the Numbers

The temporary city (really a giant campground) covered 23 square miles, divided into

25 administrative sectors. Dredging along the river reclaimed 64 acres of land, tripling the ghat bathing capacity compared to 2019. In addition to the existing 280 miles of roads within the site, 250 miles of temporary roads were created. Over a quarter million checkered steel plates, each weighing up to 440 pounds, were laid down in critical sections. Thirty pontoon bridges crossed the Ganga to the far side of the Mela grounds.

Between 150,000 and 200,000 tents or other temporary structures were installed for pilgrims, including some high quality—and expensive—accommodations.

Water supply lines and drainage systems were laid beneath the temporary roads, with more than 800 miles of pipelines working in tandem with a responsive sewage management plan. Biotoilets and mobile waste-processing units were introduced to mitigate environmental impact and handle the enormous daily output of human waste.

More than 150,000 toilets and urinals were installed, creating the largest temporary sanitation system ever seen at a human gathering. This infrastructure was strategically placed across zones to ensure accessibility and to maintain a pollution-free

environment.

The state deployed a workforce of some 15,000 sanitation workers, most of whom were stationed in shifts around key bathing days. Each worker was trained not just in cleaning, but in maintaining dignity and respect for the sacred purpose of the Mela.

This effort was supported by a comprehensive monitoring system involving on-ground supervisors and digital dashboards that tracked cleanliness status in real time. Regular chemical treatments and mechanical suction ensured toilets remained pleasant and usable throughout the event.

The Mela set a Guinness world record for largest synchronized cleanliness drive as 15,000 sanitation workers assembled in a coordinated effort to clean across all sectors

Mela making: (left to right, top to bottom) river bank work to increase ghat area; part of digital exhibit; Ganesha on a bridge pillar; row of toilets; tent city at ready; nearing the end of demolition; (inset) recycling

of the Mela grounds. Throughout the Mela, cleanliness drives were carried out in rounds, sometimes multiple times a day. Waste segregation points were established, and waste was transferred to a central facility in Baswar capable of processing over 1,000 tons per day. Recyclable and biodegradable materials were separated on site to reduce landfill burden.

Beyond physical cleanliness, an awareness campaign promoted hand hygiene and responsible garbage disposal among pilgrims.



This was done through street plays, public announcements and engagement volunteers. The emphasis was not only on infrastructure but also on behavioral change, contributing to the long-term goal of the Clean India Mission launched in 2014.

Feeding the Faithful

At the heart of Kumbh—amid sacred chants, ritual baths, and divine gatherings—lay another miracle: the seamless and expansive system that fed millions of pilgrims every day, ensuring that every visitor to the Mela had access to nourishing food.

One of the key beneficiaries of the government's food security initiative was the Kalp-wasis—those who observed a month-long vow of renunciation and spiritual discipline while living on the riverbanks. To support their basic sustenance needs, the state issued ration cards for the month providing a total of 18 kilos of wheat flour, 12 of rice, six of sugar and six gas cylinders. Likewise, the many Akhara orders received subsidized

raw food grains according to the number of sadhus and followers in each.

The government established five major food storage depots. From these, supplies were dispatched to 138 distribution centers strategically located across all sectors, enabling pilgrims to access their allotted rations without long travel or crowding. This system not only prevented shortages and confusion but also created a sense of order in an otherwise dynamic and fluid space.

While government efforts laid the foundation, the spiritual heart of food service at Kumbh beat strongest through nonprofit organizations and religious institutions who provided free meals to hundreds of thousands of pilgrims every day.

One example was Shri Gangdev Ji Virakshat Mandali, affiliated with Hari Om Ashram in Badavaha, Madhya Pradesh. Over the six-week course of the Mela, this group served free meals daily to more than 66,000 people at a total cost of US\$750,000.

This coordinated food system—combining

administrative strength with spiritual generosity—embodied the true essence of dharma. In every ration card issued, in every plate served, and in every act of kindness shared across the dusty roads of Prayagraj, the spirit of the Kumbh echoed—pure, generous and unshakably human.

Dismantling with Precision

As the last conch faded across the Sangam and the final dip rippled through its holy waters, Kumbh Mela 2025—sprawling, sacred, and staggering in scale—came to a close on February 26th. But for the authorities and workers on the ground, a different journey had just begun: the dismantling of the world's largest temporary city covering 23 square miles and including 530 miles of road, with up to 60 thousand tons of steel plates, 150,000 toilets, 800 miles of underground water pipes and 930 miles of electrical cable. The coming summer heat and approaching monsoon required swift action.

continued on page 57...

The Kumbh's Temporary School with a Lasting Impact

As millions of pilgrims descended upon Prayagraj for Kumbh Mela 2025—drawn by faith, ritual and the call of the Sangam—an unlikely sanctuary of learning quietly took root amid the chaos. From the background of chanting, processions and sacred dips, a school emerged. Not permanent, but deeply purposeful.

Vidya Kumbh was set up within the heart of the Mela grounds, offering structured education to the children of migrant laborers, sanitation workers, vendors and other families who relocated to Prayagraj for the duration of the festival.

At its peak, 270 children were enrolled. Each morning, they arrived in clean uniforms provided by the state government—an act that instilled pride and routine in young hearts often unaccustomed to stability. The school, housed in orderly tents, featured blackboards, desks, stationery and a small playground.

Children learned Hindi,



The Mela school: Students being instructed in Hindi and English during one session at the temporary education center

English and mathematics. They practiced handwriting, read aloud in groups and played outdoor games under the winter sun. Values-based lessons developed character alongside intellect. For many, this was their first encounter with formal education. For others, it was a return to a world they had been forced to leave behind.

Children learned how to use computers, type in both Hindi and English and understand the ethics of connecting to a wider world they had never

imagined themselves part of.

Behind this endeavor stood a small team: six teachers and the headmaster, Shri Dilip Kumar Mishra. "We don't just teach," he remarked. "We try to give them rhythm, structure and hope—things they can carry long after the tents are gone."

Each school day began with a morning assembly, prayers and songs, followed by lessons, interactive sessions and lunch breaks where the children ate together.

The school was designed not

just as a place of instruction but as a sanctuary of care. Many of the children lived in uncertain conditions during the Mela, with families preoccupied with daily work. Vidya Kumbh offered them a safe space, where their names were called with respect, their questions were answered with patience and their dreams were taken seriously.

The initiative was made possible through the coordination of local education departments, child welfare groups and volunteers. Though temporary by design, the spirit of Vidya Kumbh has been anything but fleeting. It serves as a living example of how large-scale religious events can—and should—accommodate human development alongside spiritual pursuit.

When the Mela concluded, and the city of tents began to dissolve, Vidya Kumbh, too, packed up. But what remained was a lasting impression on 270 young minds—and a model that could inspire similar efforts in future Melas and beyond.

How to Feed 660 Million People



ALL PHOTOS: PRAMIL DWIVEDI



Lots and lots of food, pots and cooks: (clockwise from above) One of many dining tents; happy diners; stacking rice to the ceiling; pots upon pots; these huge karahi (woks) were the default cooking method, either over a propane burner (here) or a wood fire; a vegetable section; automatic mixer in the back preps the chappati dough, rest is by hand; and finally, ready to serve on biodegradable plates!





The amazing temporary city: (left to right) overview of the thousands of tents and other temporary structures on both sides of the Ganga; a sturdy shelter provided some protection from the rain for its hundreds of occupants, but offered no relief from the very cold nights

Sacred Meets AI: The Digital Mahakumbh Experience

Faith and tradition surged through every path, every dip, every chant at the Kumbh. But in the heart of Sector 1, a new kind of spiritual encounter quietly unfolded—one powered not by ritual alone, but by pixels, projections and immersive storytelling.

The Digital Mahakumbh Experience Center stood as a first-of-its-kind initiative, blending ancient wisdom with cutting-edge technology. More than just a tech pavilion, it offered pilgrims a journey through history, dharma and devotion—without stepping into the river.

Months before the first conch blew at the Sangam, planning was underway to create a space where the legacy of Kumbh could be told through technology. The result was a massive, climate-controlled exhibition structure—surrounded by the dust and devotion of the Mela, yet unlike anything it had seen before.

Inside, the center was equipped with 360-degree LED screens, virtual reality headsets, interactive walls and multi-sensory audio-visual experiences. Content creators, coders, historians and technicians worked alongside religious scholars to ensure the digital narrative was both accurate and awe-inspiring.

The construction itself was a feat. While most structures at the Kumbh were temporary tents or bamboo frameworks, the Digital Mahakumbh Center was built to house



Temple walls: (above) 3D animated display of the Kumbh's origins; (below) Doordarshan interviews an augmented Narad Muni

thousands per day in a smooth, air-cooled, high-tech environment—complete with power backups, crowd control gates, and guided visitor flow. It was modern India meeting timeless Bharat.

Stepping into the center felt like crossing into another world. The experience began with a 3D film on the origins of Kumbh (above), tracing the scriptural Samudra Manthan and the celestial descent of the nectar of immortality. As the visuals enveloped the room, visitors watched Gods, demons and sages move around them—



transported into the very heart of the legend.

Next came interactive exhibits featuring the history of the four Kumbh sites—Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik. Touchscreens allowed pilgrims to explore key historical moments, saints' teachings, maps of ancient rivers and even astrological timelines tied to the Kumbh cycle.

For many, the highlight was the Virtual Shahi Snan experience—a VR booth where one could simulate the ritual bath, complete with chants, flowing waters and a guided spiritual

narrative. Elderly pilgrims who couldn't make it to the crowded ghats were visibly moved, some with tears in their eyes, after the experience.

Another section used augmented reality mirrors, where visitors could "meet" and pose with revered saints and sages, and receive personalized blessings in the form of recorded mantras based on their input. It was both playful and profound.

What made the Digital Mahakumbh stand out wasn't just its gadgets, but its intent. Everything was rooted in service: helping people understand the spiritual significance of the Kumbh, preserving its legacy in digital form, and offering access to those unable to physically participate.

For first-time pilgrims, it was a gentle and informative introduction. For seasoned devotees, it was a reminder of the deep myths behind their lifelong faith. For children and young adults, it was a bridge between belief and the world they inhabit every day.

The center also ran educational screenings, talks by dharma scholars and interactive quizzes for school groups and yatriks alike.

The Digital Mahakumbh Experience Center was not merely a novelty—it was a vision of how India can carry its ancient traditions into the future. It showed that technology, when used with reverence and purpose, can deepen rather than distract from spiritual experience.

How the "Eye Kumbh" Brought Clear Vision to Thousands



ALL PHOTOS: PRAMIL DWIVEDI



Clearing the blur: (clockwise from upper left) hundreds await their exam; eye care specialists examine each person with state-of-the-art equipment; personalized prescription lenses are produced on site and fitted in frames for each person—all free of charge

While millions gathered at Kumbh Mela 2025 for spiritual cleansing in the sacred waters of the Sangam, a quieter, yet equally transformative current flowed through the temporary city. Netra ("eye") Kumbh 2025, situated within Sector 6 of the Mela grounds, was a dedicated eye-care camp offering thousands of pilgrims a chance to experience something truly life-changing: clear vision. From this single, expansive setup, over 500 healthcare professionals, including ophthalmologists, optometrists and trained volunteers, worked tirelessly each day.

The camp offered comprehensive eye checkups, regardless of the pilgrim's age, background or socio-economic status. A hallmark of the initiative was its paperless, barcode-based registration system, which minimized waiting times and ensured orderly processing even amid the high footfall of the Mela. By the end of the Mela, Netra Kumbh had distributed 162,945 pairs of spectacles, all free of

cost. Each pair was tailored to the recipient's prescription, representing not just medical support, but dignity and care. The estimated cost per pair—us\$15—was fully supported by 22 organizations, most prominently India's National Medicos Organization.

These spectacles often marked the first experience of clear vision for many recipients. Pilgrims who had spent years struggling to read, walk safely or see their loved ones clearly found themselves suddenly empowered, independent and filled with renewed joy.

Netra Kumbh became a sanctuary for healing, reminding the world that service is as sacred as prayer. Here, seva was not metaphorical—it was measurable, tangible and life-changing. The volunteers didn't seek attention, and the doctors didn't work for recognition. Theirs was the dharma of healing—quiet, steady, and inspired by something greater than reward.

continued from page 54...

More than 2,500 administrative and camp structures, including hospitals, police stations, akhara compounds, community kitchens and pilgrim shelters, had to be dismantled. Over 20,000 workers, engineers and sanitation staff were mobilized for the dismantling operation. Working in coordinated shifts, they carefully rolled back every layer of the Mela's infrastructure. Materials were categorized—steel plates, bamboo, plastic, canvas and wiring—and dispatched for either reuse, storage or recycling.

One of the first priorities was restoring water flow—removing temporary bunds and bridges over smaller streams, reopening

blocked channels and stabilizing embankments used during the event.

More than a thousand tons of residual waste was processed at the Baswar Plant. Teams conducted soil testing and chemical treatment in high-use areas such as kitchen zones, bathing ghats and toilets to ensure no long-term contamination.

Water quality was checked at multiple locations along the Ganga and Yamuna to confirm that the Mela had not left behind ecological damage. Officials confirmed the reestablishment of pre-Kumbh environmental parameters by late March, 2025.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the dismantling effort was its speed and scale. Within 30 days, nearly 90% of the temporary

city had been cleared. Within 45 days, the area had returned to its natural state—with the riverbank cleaned, leveled and restored.

Recyclable materials were stored in government depots for future events. Structures built for medical camps, schools and kitchens were packed up and sent for local rural outreach programs. By early April, the sprawling city of faith had quietly folded back into the land, leaving behind only footprints, memories and stories.

The sanitation operation at Kumbh Mela 2025 marks a watershed moment in how large-scale religious gatherings can be organized in harmony with public health priorities while maintaining the dignity of both pilgrims and the land that received them.

REFLECTION

My Life's Three Kumbhs

Every time the Kumbh Mela returns to Prayagraj, something in me returns, too

BY PRAMIL DWIVEDI

I HAVE LIVED IN PRAYAG ALL MY LIFE. I have walked the same roads that become the veins of the world's largest spiritual gathering every few years. I've crossed the bridges, heard the temple bells, and watched the Yamuna meet the Ganga beneath pink and gold skies. But in the years when the Kumbh occurs, the city becomes something else entirely—something breathing, ancient and sacred in ways that are hard to explain unless you've felt it from the inside.

I've witnessed three Kumbhs within conscious memory—2013, 2019 and 2025. Each one changed me. Each one met me at a different stage of life. But the one that lives closest to my heart is my very first: 2013. I was a boy, holding my father's hand. He was working with the Civil Defence organization as a three-star officer that year, and because of his duty, our family had a pass to witness the procession of an Akhara heading toward the Sangam for their sacred bath. I didn't know the name of the Akhara. I didn't even understand what the procession meant. But I remember the drums. I remember the dust. I remember the saffron. I remember the energy—something between thunder and stillness—that flowed through the ground and up into my body.

It was the first time I saw sadhus covered in ash, walking like kings yet carrying nothing. There were elephants. Horses. Conches. Flags waving like fire. The crowd moved and chanted as one. And I—small, wide-eyed—stood there in awe, my hand wrapped tightly in my father's, my mother behind me, all of us lost in the spectacle.

Even now, I can close my eyes and see it exactly: the light falling through the smoke, the chants bouncing off the tent walls, the sense that something far older than me was unfolding before me. That was the moment the Kumbh entered my life.

By 2019, I was older—curious, observant, beginning to understand the spiritual and cultural layers beneath what had earlier felt like just a giant fair. That year, I wandered more. I asked questions. I carried my camera with intent. I began to understand the meaning of Kalpwas, the significance of the Shahi Snans, the reason people walked barefoot for hundreds of kilometers to reach the Sangam. But it was still mostly from the outside looking in. It wasn't until 2025 that Kumbh became personal in a new way—through work, through purpose, through exhaustion and grace.

This year, Kumbh 2025, I worked as a correspondent and photo-journalist for HINDUISM TODAY magazine. For 45 days, I lived the Mela—not as a visitor, not just as a resident, but as a witness and documentarian. I walked through ghats before sunrise. I met volunteers, workers, saints, pilgrims. I visited eye camps, digital museums, temporary schools and sanitation sites.

I slept little. I carried equipment in dust and wind. I lost about 16 pounds over the course of those weeks—not from effort alone, but

from being absorbed completely by something larger than myself.

There were days I felt overwhelmed, nights when I felt something between silence and surrender settle over me. And yet, there was always something that kept me going.

Sometimes it was just a cup of chai handed to me by a sadhu I had just photographed. Sometimes it was the unexpected kindness of a stranger who offered food. And there was so much food. Wherever I went, there were people feeding others—not just langars and akharas, but everyday pilgrims, setting up small stalls to give out puris, khichdi, bananas, water. No one ever needed to ask. Hunger was not something you felt at the Kumbh.

If I look back at my photography journey, I realize that Ganga ji was my very first muse, and perhaps my most constant guide. Before I ever held a press pass or shot stories for publications, I would quietly walk the ghats and riverbanks of Prayagraj with my camera—sometimes in the golden haze of evening, sometimes in the solitude of morning fog. I didn't have formal training, but I had light, water, faith and time. I photographed boats, birds, ripples, saints, people praying, floating flowers, abandoned slippers—whatever Ganga ji showed me, I clicked. Slowly, silently, I learned how to see.

Over the years, I've built a personal collection of over a thousand photographs of Ganga ji—each one carrying a different season, a different emotion, a different story. In many ways, photographing Her taught me patience, stillness, and timing. She taught me to observe before clicking. She taught me that beauty doesn't always shout—it flows. So when I walked into the Kumbh Mela with a press badge in 2025, I wasn't stepping into something unfamiliar. I was walking into the extended home of my first teacher.

There's something strange about watching the city you've always known be transformed by the rest of the world. For a few weeks, Prayagraj doesn't feel like it belongs to us. It becomes everyone's home. Our streets, our signs, our bus stands—everything becomes part of a massive, sacred stage.

And yet, when you're from here, you also understand the flow in a different way. You know the shortcuts. You know the quiet ghats. You know how the fog will roll in before sunrise, how the light touches the river just before the Shahi Snan. Locals live the Kumbh like a host watching guests fall in love with something they've always cherished. We help. We guide. We also quietly observe. This year's Kumbh didn't just give me photographs. It gave me silence. It gave me stories I hadn't earned but was allowed to tell. It gave me a deeper connection to my city, my people and something much older than either.

As someone from Prayagraj, I am proud of what we built—and even more proud of how we let it go with grace. There's a lesson there: that the most sacred things are not the ones that last forever, but the ones that return, again and again, asking you to look deeper. The Kumbh Mela will return in 2037. I don't know where I'll be then, or who I'll have become. But I do know this: when the rivers call, I will answer. Because once Kumbh touches your life, you are never quite the same.

Pramil Dwivedi (above) is a Delhi-based, award-winning photographer known for blending street aesthetics with human stories. His work has been featured in prestigious platforms like NatGeo, Canon, LensCulture, and in the government-released book Rowing Down the Ganges, unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi



SHUBHAM MISHRA

DEVOTION

My Daughter's Kumbh

What we had to overcome just to get to the Mela, leave alone have a divine experience

BY CHOODIE SHIVARAM

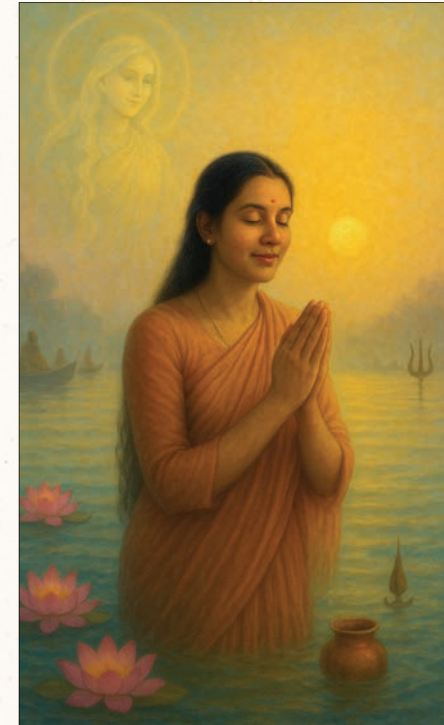
THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2025 WAS overpowered by the Mahakumbh at Prayagraj. Literally all news channels and newspapers were full of stories of various dimensions. Whatsapp and social media were flooded with personal accounts of people at the Mahakumbh, unverified forwards, blends of truth and misinformation. FOMO ("Fear of missing out") was driving people crazy. From celebrities, believers, non-believers, to the common man, everyone wanted to head to the Mahakumbh.

I was extremely fortunate to have covered the 2010 Kumbh Mela at Haridwar for HINDUISM TODAY. Some of the most divine mystical experiences I have had are etched in me for a lifetime. Contented with this, I had no plans to go for the Mahakumbh. Having heard about my divine experiences at the Haridwar Kumbh, my daughter Gayathri was determined to experience the Mahakumbh. She thought I was a veteran and would enable her to have such experiences. With the surging crowds, non-availability of accommodation, extensive restrictions where people had to walk for miles and miles—I had no hope we would make it happen. All our efforts to get accommodation were met with a negative. I resigned myself from the idea, but my daughter wouldn't give up; her resolve was firm.

In nothing short of a miracle, just days before the Mahakumbh was to conclude, everything worked in our favor. It was like God had just put the jigsaw puzzle in place. Accommodation at Prayagraj, transport and even trips to Ayodhya and Kashi on Shivarathri just worked out.

To my daughter, going to the Mahakumbh was a guarded secret; a very sacred sentiment for her. She is part of a generation where boundaries of respect are violated when it comes to one's faith and beliefs. For ten weeks we were moving heaven and earth to enable us to go to the Mahakumbh. She didn't want people to make negative comments and portend negative energy.

Media was rife with horror stories of stampede, unhygienic conditions and waste matter polluting the river. We are surrounded by a society where everything to do with Sanatana Dharma is judged; there is personal space when it comes to living life a certain way, but not when it comes to other people's religion, especially Hinduism. Offices have very stringent policies and guidelines when it comes to not interfering or making comments about gender, sex, sexual



orientation, but somehow people think it's OK to impede on this sacred space of religious beliefs of a Hindu.

Word got around that my daughter was heading to Prayagraj. Friends and people in her workplace started sending her articles about the crowds, poor sanitation and river pollution. Her personal space and spiritual beliefs were being violated; efforts were on to discourage her from making this trip. It even went to the extent of mocking at her wanting to take a dip in the "contaminated river."

My daughter's determination and unflinching faith in Sanatana Dharma set the tone for what was to be the most miraculous journey over the next few days. The drive from Ayodhya to Prayagraj (we were advised to reach Prayagraj by 5 am) was the first experience. Around 3 am, twenty miles before Prayagraj, roads were blocked, leaving us with prayers and crossed fingers that went stiff. Suddenly, a few vehicles were allowed to pass and we got out. Every road leading to Prayagraj was closed. In a smart move, my son-in-law negotiated with the villagers to help us bypass the blocked roads and led us to Prayagraj through the narrow lanes of the village. We just about made it into the city without any hindrance!

God's mercy is unfathomable; the entrance to the jetty that would take us to the Sangam was barely a few feet away from our accommodation. We hardly had to walk. The boats took us to the heart of the Sangam for a peaceful dip. What more could we ask for?

For my daughter, it was a dream fulfilled, a lifetime experience she had yearned for. It was around 6 am, the Sun was rising, and she was able to see the colors of the Sangam. There were no crowds. She must have taken 30 or more dips, going back into the river again and again, walking deeper into the Sangam. She couldn't contain her emotions of feeling that she had touched God. Beaming with newly acquired radiance, she said, "I feel so cleansed. There was not even a speck of worry or thought about all the negative reports of pollution. You are consumed

by just Her (Ganga's) purity. She is so pure, faith overpowers, nothing else matters, we forget the world." It was like she was in a trance.

My daughter had collected water from the Sangam. It looked muddy with sediments. On returning to Mumbai, fifteen days later she found that it had turned crystal clear with no trace of any sediment.

I couldn't thank God enough for enabling the most contented trip to the Mahakumbh, for enriching my daughter's faith in Sanatana Dharma. Her steadfast devotion had won; no one can shake the firm faith in a Hindu.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Choodie Sivaram has been a journalist for over three decades. She writes on current affairs, policy matters, constitutional and legal issues, heritage and culture. She wrote and directed the documentary, "At the Altar of India's Freedom—The INA Veterans of Malaysia," produced by the Indian High Commission in Malaysia. Choodie holds degrees in journalism and law.



PERSONAL DIARY

Immersed in the Sacred

A pilgrim's diary from the Mahakumbh Mela

BY HURDITYA DEVA

FROM AN EARLY AGE, I HAVE BEEN CAPTIVATED BY THE VIBRANT religions, languages, art and culture of India. Attending the Kumbh Mela had always been a wild dream. But this year was different. This wasn't just any Kumbh—it was touted as the Purnakumbh, a once-in-144-years convergence of celestial alignments, making the pilgrimage historically momentous. Now, as a postdoctoral researcher specializing in the material and visual cultures of South and Southeast Asia under the PURANA Project at Leiden University, I had the perfect reason to witness the world's largest religious gathering at Prayagraj.

Experiencing the Kumbh Mela was no simple feat. With millions of pilgrims flocking to the Triveni Sangam, accommodations were scarce. I reached out to ashrams and friends, but by the time I had committed to the journey, every place was booked solid. Determined not to miss the Sahi Snan on Mauni Amavasya on January 29, I explored tented camps, but learned those luxurious options were far beyond my researcher's budget. Just when it seemed impossible, I secured an Airbnb a few kilometers from the Sangam—a modest yet practical base. Little did I know that this journey would be far more than just a research trip; it would be an experience of a lifetime.

On January 27, I luckily secured one of the last seats on a direct flight from Delhi to Prayagraj. That evening, I joined a long procession of pilgrims from all over India making our way toward the parade ground, where the main events took place and other official sites were located. My first goal was to get my bearings and locate the akharas I wanted to see, as well as the Naga Sadhus.

The area was bustling with activity—not just with pilgrims but also a massive media and press center, an exhibition hall and a variety of food outlets, including cafes and even pizza joints! I learned the Kumbh was divided into three areas: the main site, where the information center was located; the eastern Arail Ghat, home to luxurious tented accommodations and international ashrams, where many Western devotees stayed; and the tented city on the Jhusi side (east side of the Ganga), where major akharas from across India were based.

On the 28th, I woke up just before Brahma Muhurta (hour and a half before dawn). The streets were quiet, with only a few pilgrims walking toward the Sangam. My prearranged motorcycle and driver were nowhere to be seen, so I hailed a random one passing by. However, when we reached the pontoon bridge, it was closed, and every shortcut we attempted was blocked. Frustrated but undeterred, the driver led me on foot to the main bridge where vehicles crossed, only to find it closed as well. The crowd was growing, and movement seemed impossible. Then, without a word, the driver guided me under a restricted area, climbing under barbed wires, jumping over puddles and eventually dropping me off beneath the bridge. Ahead of me was a small group of young men

and a Baba wearing a real human skull around his neck. Without hesitation, I followed them down a narrow path, keeping close to the Baba. His swinging skull nearly hit me a few times. At the foot of the bridge, we reached a fence just a few meters away from the police barricade. One by one, we climbed over—first the Baba, then me—until, at last, we made it onto the bridge and walked across to Jhusi.

Upon arriving, I made my way south to Sector 19. Passing a familiar ashram, the Ramakrishna Mission, I stepped inside for a brief darshan and unexpectedly ran into T. S. Mohan, a longtime friend. We had met more than a decade ago, during the Kailasa-Manasarovara Yatra. It felt like destiny—reuniting on yet another pilgrimage. We made plans to meet later in the afternoon.

Arriving at Sector 19, I found the small, scattered camps of Naga Sadhus, starkly contrasting with the imposing, gilded facades of the well-established akharas. Some sadhus were completely naked, others half-clad, most sitting around their *dhunis* (sacred fires), attended by Indian devotees. A few sadhus playfully struck me on the head with peacock feathers as a blessing, while others demanded money. Speaking Hindi often led people to assume I was from Northeast India, which made things easier. I had expected the Naga Sadhu camps to be exotic, as in a National Geographic documentary, but the reality was much more ordinary.

By afternoon, the crowds thickened as pilgrims gathered for the upcoming Mauni Amavasya Snan. Many of them seemed to be from villages. They walked in a line, tying themselves to a rope like schoolchildren.

Returning to the RK Mission, I realized that unregistered guests were not allowed to stay, and every available sleeping spot was already taken. The massive crowd prevented me from crossing back to the other side, so I had little choice but to hide inside the main temple. Finding a spot among the volunteers, I lay on a bed of hay and wrapped myself tightly in a blanket as the temperature dropped to 5°C.

At 3am on the 29th, the sounds of excited devotees stirred me from sleep. A procession was forming, led by monks en route to another akhara. Mohan, his wife Vidya, and I joined in, but the monks walked so fast that at times we had to run to keep up. The crowd surged in all directions, and at a major intersection, chaos struck—a stampede had just occurred. Police intervened, cutting our group in half. The monks ahead were unaware, leaving behind a group of elderly Bengali devotees, along with us. Panic spread.

By the time we crossed the intersection, we had lost the monks entirely. Realizing there was no way



ALL PHOTOS: HURDITYA DEVA

Ground reality: (clockwise from left) bathing in the freezing water; view of the mela area; sadhu parade; sadhus in their tent

to rejoin them, Mohan, Vidya and I decided to make our own way to the river. At that point, we abandoned the idea of bathing at the precise Triveni Sangam—anywhere along the river would suffice, as long as we took our dip at the auspicious muhurta, which would begin around 5am.

We reached the riverbank at 4am. Vidya, overwhelmed by the ordeal, refused to wait for the muhurta and insisted on bathing immediately. We found a safe spot to leave our belongings while she changed. Volunteers patrolled the area, warning people not to venture too far despite the floating barriers in place.

After assisting Mohan and Vidya, taking turns holding their belongings while they bathed, I chose to wait. I wanted to observe the crowd and their rituals, and to also take my bath according to tradition, which I had researched before coming.

The tradition dictates that one must submerge in the river five times, while facing different directions. First and second dips should be done facing east to obtain blessings from the sun. Then one should dip facing north, paying homage to Lord Siva and the Sapta-rshis. For the third, one should face west, honoring semi-divine beings such as yakshas, kinnaras and so on. The last should be done facing south, making offerings to the ancestors.

Each of the Sahi Snan days has its designated muhurta for bathing. For Mauni Amavasya in 2025, the first bath, the Brahma Muhurta bath, takes place from 5:24 to 6:18am. This is followed by Labha Kala, believed to bring prosperity, from 7:11 to 8:32am. The most auspicious time, Amrta Kala, occurs from 8:32 to 9:53am. Determined to partake in all three kalas, I waited on the riverbank and took two more dips at the designated times.

Standing there, witnessing this sacred moment unfold, I prepared myself for my own immersion into the waters of the Ganga, first at the auspicious hour of Brahma Muhurta. After paying homage to Surya by offering *arghya* (pouring out water from a cup while reciting mantras), I dipped into the river, which was so ice cold that I was unable to dip five times in different directions and jumped out of the river after the third dip. I waited around for another hour then took the Amrta Kala Snan. Having completed the ritual baths, I returned to my hotel and departed for Delhi the next morning.

Despite the stampede, which was unsurprisingly blamed on the organizers and the government, I must say the overall organization of the Mela exceeded my expectations. Having visited numerous



pilgrimage centers across India, often on the busiest holy days, such as Mahasivaratri, I had anticipated the worst-case scenario. Unfortunately, the stampede fit that description—but given the sheer volume of devotees, such incidents seemed almost inevitable.

The scale of the crowd, as reported in the news, was immense. I witnessed villagers in tears, separated from their groups, children misplaced and elderly individuals struggling to navigate the sea of people. Certain areas of the tented city, especially at intersections, were particularly hazardous. Here, streams of people converged from multiple directions, and once at the center, any movement became almost impossible. The police attempted to manage the flow by closing some lanes, but in doing so, they unknowingly separated people from their groups, leading to panic and distress.

I also witnessed many positive aspects I had not expected. Street sweepers diligently carried out their work without supervision. Local boatmen played a crucial role in safeguarding the riverbanks, while volunteers assisted pilgrims at key locations. These were clearly locals who knew the city and the river well, working quietly behind the scenes to keep things running smoothly.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Kumbh Mela is truly the survival of the fittest. To participate in this grand and spiritual event, one must possess not only physical stamina and good health but, above all, an immense amount of courage, faith and devotion. Embarking on the Kumbh journey requires a readiness to endure the harsh conditions, the overwhelming crowds and the intense spiritual fervor that defines this remarkable festival. You must witness firsthand the devotion of the monks, the solemn rituals of the sadhus, and the unwavering faith of pilgrims who have journeyed from every corner of India and beyond. It is a transformative experience—one that demands courage, patience, and an open heart to embrace the sacred chaos unfolding around you.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hurditya Deva is an opera singer and scholar, with a Masters and PhD in Sanskrit Studies. He researches Sanskrit texts and epigraphy in India and Southeast Asia.



D H A R M A

Seva: A Quiet Superpower

Selfless service builds character during our formative teen years

BY BHOOMI JOBANPUTRA, NEW YORK

DO YOU EVER FEEL LIKE YOU ARE JUGGLING a million things as a teenager in high school? Imagine these scenarios:

Maya is totally swamped with AP everything, SAT/ACTs, sports, extracurriculars, stressing about college apps and so on. However, she still finds time to tutor younger students at the local community center. It is not just “because it looks good for colleges,” even though it kind of does, but she actually feels a genuine satisfaction in witnessing that spark of understanding in a child’s eye.

Then there is **Rohan**, who spent his entire summer break sweating it out at the temple, organizing a huge cleanup initiative for the annual Patotsav.

Also, there is **Priya**, who ran a bake sale every weekend to fundraise for the cost of the repairs of the aging Shikhar (roof tower) of the temple.



What do all these “superheroes” have in common? They use their innate power of helping others. It is way more than just checking off the volunteering box for college. In Hinduism, there is a powerful concept called *seva*—a spiritual practice that acts as a unique kind of inner strength. It is a hidden superpower that transforms both the giver and the receiver in practical and impactful ways.

What Is Seva?

Seva is a Sanskrit word for “selfless service,” possibly considered the most important practice in Hinduism. Aligned with karma yoga, it is an act of giving or doing without expecting anything in return, such as praise, rewards or recognition. At Hindu temples all over the world, children and adults are taught about choosing a selfless path towards *moksha* (liberation) through the examples of Lord Hanuman in the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. We are taught

Joyful seva: (clockwise from left) Author Bhoomi Jobanputra (photo center) in the Diwali Annakut human chain at Shree Swaminarayan Mandir Vadtaldham in New Jersey; preparing Hindola Deity swing with vegetables in New York; the finished swing; gathering soil for planting trees in India

about character traits, such as devotion, humility and gratitude, and unselfish actions such as *tan*, *man* and *dhan* seva in order to attain the Supreme.

Tan-seva refers to service performed with the body, the physical effort and action, like Rohan’s temple cleanup. *Man-seva* involves service through the mind, offering our knowledge, skills or emotional support, like Maya’s tutoring. Finally, *dhan-seva* is service through monetary or material contributions, like Priya’s fundraising efforts. Just as karma yoga emphasizes performing one’s duties without attachment to the fruits of those actions, *seva* encourages us to act with a pure intention, focusing on the benefit to others rather than personal gain. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Shri Krishna says: “Without being attached to the results of your actions to help others, one should act as a mere act of duty, because by working without attachments, one attains the Supreme.”

Why Does Seva Matter for Youth?

Are you so focused on your own grades, your own friend drama or your own social media feed that you can easily feel like you are liv-

ing in a bubble? If yes, *seva* is like a pin that pops that bubble. When we are actively engaged in helping others, we are forced to step outside our own world and see things from someone else’s perspective. This is not just about being “nice.” It is a powerful way to build empathy by truly understanding others’ experiences. Surprisingly, it also cultivates leadership skills, like the old saying, “A true leader is a servant first.”

When we focus on the needs of others and work to support them, we will naturally develop qualities like responsibility, initiative and the ability to work as part of a team. For example, when Rohan organized the temple cleanup, he delegated tasks and motivated people. That is a real superhero power that grew out of a desire to serve. Also, the beauty of *seva* lies in its availability; it does not require grand gestures. Simple everyday actions like helping classmates, caring for siblings or offering emotional support to a friend can start a wave of positive impact.

Service Testimonies

A powerful example of *seva* in action is the annual Annakut Seva during Diwali at many Hindu temples across the world. This is my favourite time of the year. My friends and I are engrossed in the vibrant chaos and joyous energy as dozens of volunteers, many of them teenagers, gather to prepare and arrange hundreds of dishes for an offering to the Deities. “This is not just about cooking. It is a profound act of physical effort (*tan-seva*) as we chop, stir and meticulously orga-

nize, often for hours on end,” said Heyli. We arrange all the dishes according to Indian sweets, American baked items, salty snacks (*farshans*), cooked vegetables (*shaaks*) and various flatbreads (roti, puri, naan, etc.). Additionally, we organize an immense human chain to pass all the food items and make a mountain of food (*annakut*) for the Deities.

According to Vedanti, a youth volunteer, “My favorite *seva* is during Hindola (swing) season. I love creating various colorful decorations with vegetables, beads, flowers and paper origami around the swing of God during Jasmati and Holi.” The reward is not individual praise, but the collective joy and spiritual fulfillment of participating in such a grand act of devotion. Witnessing the rows of food, knowing you played a part in this immense offering, or being part of creating aesthetically pleasing decorations for Deities, provides a unique sense of connection and purpose that transcends the everyday.

Steps to Start Your Seva Journey

Seva can be motivated by one’s inner reflection. It is crucial to find your passion by identifying a cause that resonates with you. Do you like helping animals, the environment, education or the elderly? Try to be creative and think beyond just donating money. As young adults, we can offer our valuable time, our great skills (tutoring, tech help, artistic talents), or simply our high energy. So, gather up a team and invite your friends, family members and classmates to join you. Starting a *seva* team can amplify your impact and make it more fun! Lastly, always reflect and learn after each act of *seva*. How did it make you feel? What did you learn about yourself and the world around you?

Mahatma Gandhi famously stated, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

Final Thoughts

Find your superpower today! Embrace the various forms of *seva* (*tan*, *man*, *dhan*) in your everyday activities. *Seva* is not just an abstract ideal but a practical pathway for teenagers to actively shape a more caring and connected world, one act of kindness, one moment of service at a time. Let this hidden superpower transform you into not just a better student or friend, but a more compassionate and stronger human being.

BHOOMI JOBANPUTRA, 16, is a high school sophomore in New York, US. She is the Youth Education Coordinator at the nonprofit *Sat-sang with a Smile*, where she creates and runs workshops for young children integrating Hindu culture and moral character values. She is also a Youth Leader at a Hindu temple in New Jersey.

Email: bjobanputra7@gmail.com





ALL PHOTOS: COURTESY PRODUCTIONS SARFATI

THEATER

Art's Power in Our Changing World

“Without the past, there is no future; we must honor and protect our traditions to ensure their survival.”—Akram Khan

BY LAVINA MELWANI, NEW YORK

AKRAM KHAN'S DANCE-THEATRE PRODUCTION *Gigenis* was inspired by the *Mahabharata*, in particular the story of Queen Gandhari who had a hundred sons (see sidebar next page for a summary of the story). The name *Gigenis* combines Greek roots meaning “earth” and “birth,” or “origin,” and can be understood as “earth-born” or “generation of the Earth.” The title reflects the ancient, mythic scale of the story and its deep connection to human origins, loss and legacy.

I was personally amazed by the individual performances. Each dancer engages in the dance form they specialize in. Kapila Venu, who plays the mother and narrates the story, is a doyenne of the oldest theater style, Kutiyattam, while her two sons are played by Mavin Koo, adept at Bharatanatyam, and Akram Khan, who is a strong Kathak performer. All seven dancers—including

Bharatanatyam dancers Mythili Prakash, Vigna Vasudevan and Renjith Babu, and Odissi dancer Sirikalyani Adkoli—enact the powerful story with live music of original compositions, as well as traditional folk tunes and a lyric and composition by Rabindranath Tagore.

“The ensemble dancing throughout creates fascinating patterns, and the performers apply their great skills in perfect synchroization,” wrote Stuart Sweeney in the *CriticalDance* blog. “Khan has amalgamated beautiful, classical Indian dance and music with state-of-the-art production and Western dance formations.”

There are no ornate stage sets, no flashy costumes—yet without a single bullet being shot or a cannon being fired, you are in the depths of a terrible war, a mighty epic battle worthy of the *Mahabharata*. In the stark surroundings, you can see it, smell it, hear it and feel yourself on the battlefield of life.

The past lives on in the present—but do we learn from our mistakes? As the globe faces many challenges currently, are we set to repeat the errors of our ancestors? *Gigenis* comes at an apt time and through music and dance makes us meditate on good and evil, the challenges we face as human beings.

Indian classical dance is alive and well, but in Akram Khan's language of movement, Kathak, Bharatanatyam and Odissi all converse with contemporary dance through stomping footwork and hand gestures from ancient memory. He shows that dialogue between the past and the present is not only possible but also powerful.

Gigenis had its world premiere in August 2024 at the Grand Theater de Provence in France, then traveled to Singapore, London, Paris, New York, Santa Barbara and Washington D.C. This year it continued its world journey, including to the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Center in Mumbai.

Mahabharata through movement:

(left) A mother's grief as she tries to salvage family and blood relationships; (right) Mavin Khoo, a renowned Bharatanatyam dancer with a background in classical ballet

The Man and His Vision



Akram Khan is a famed dancer and choreographer who has revolutionized the world of dance by weaving tradition and contemporary forms to creatively interpret stories and draw you into thinking about them. A master of Kathak and contemporary dance, he weaves these forms into innovative movement narratives. In *Gigenis*, he collaborates with an ensemble of six renowned artists of Indian classical dance and seven live Indian classical musicians.

Transcending time and civilizations, Khan's productions tend to be dark, with minimal lighting. As he explains: “My work is often complex with intricate movement and large-scale ensemble work so sometimes it feels necessary to strip things back. In a sense, I am inviting audiences to truly connect with the performance.”

As a Kathak dancer living in the West merging different dance forms, Khan says growing up in a Bangladeshi community in London naturally shaped his “voice.”

“For many years, I avoided the Indian classical dance world because I felt I wasn't fully accepted. Deep down I was hurt by that, but

I also understand why. I was born and raised in England, and my style is different. I recognize that my language is not pure, but when I see the artists in *Gigenis*, I really feel I can appreciate the forms in their purest, most traditional sense.”

How does he find the experience of working with six classical dancers and seven musicians from the country that birthed classical Indian dance? “It's deeply moving to bring this work back to the place where these traditions came from. *Gigenis* is a profound tribute to the past and a celebration of our shared love for dance, while also responding to the growing endangerment of these traditions.”

He says working on stage with these artists is a testament to their shared humanity. “Really, it has been such an enlightening experience. Each artist has brought so much depth of tradition and discipline, and I feel deeply humbled to have witnessed this up close. There's a real sense of honoring what's come before, but also a shared excitement for discovering new ways of telling stories through our respective forms.”

Khan has collaborated with numerous global artists through his distinguished career, celebrating both Kathak and contemporary dance, so what aspect has brought him the most joy? His answer shows that dance is a continuing story, that even masters are always students in some respects: “The greatest joy for me comes from the process of learning—letting go of one's ego and fully surrendering to the unknown. The exchange that unfolds in the studio, surrounded by my collaborators, whether through movement,



ideas or cultural perspectives, is fascinating.”

What are the biggest threats to age-old classical Indian dance today, and how can they be addressed? “I often say that without the past there is no future. We must honor and protect our traditions to ensure their survival. These practices are like endangered species. Classical dancers are sometimes made to feel they are working in an old style. If they don't do something contemporary, then they are not valuable or relevant. But when something is beautiful for me, that is truth—whether it's classical or contemporary. There is real beauty in timelessness.”

He speaks of how Indian dance can

Gigenis: A Review

BY CECY PLACENTI, NEW YORK

Awoman emerges out of the darkness, slashing her arms with brutal force as if fighting an unseen adversary. Sounds of crashing thunder accompany her ferocity. With a terrifying grimace she reaches down and pulls invisible entrails from her slain foe and holds them to her face. This gruesome scene is the opening to Akram Khan's *Gigenis: The Generation of the Earth*. The work is inspired by the *Mahabharata*, the Indian epic tale in which Queen Gandhari, portrayed by Kapila Venu, loses her sons in a war brought about by their own ambition.

An impeccable storyteller who both directs and performs in his adaptation, Khan tells this tale of seductive power and cyclical violence through the lens of a mother's grief. Known primarily for his work in contemporary forms, Khan returns to his roots in Indian classical dance with *Gigenis*. Trained in Kathak, he gathers expert dancers and musicians adept in Bharatanatyam and Odissi for this production, directing an ensemble of artists from the classical tradition for the first time in his career.

Following its brutal beginning, the narrative turns briefly to happier times. The wedding blessing of a man and woman evolves into

solos, trios and ensemble dancing that portray young love and maturation, then discord and divide. Scenes from Gandhari's past flow by with seamless transitions as Venu, an intensely powerful performer, mirrors each dancer, echoing their movements alongside them, ghost-like, as if remembering. Her intensity—bulging eyes, glowering lips, carving arms that push the air as if it weighs a ton—holds the entire audience in a silent concentration I have rarely witnessed or experienced at a dance performance.

After their father the king dies, Khan and Khoo fight over the crown until one kills the other, the action overlaid by a soft female voice narrating: “In another time, I was a daughter, then a wife, then a mother.” The tragedy unfolding on stage is magnified by the score and haunting vocalizations of the onstage musicians. Melodies float and overlap and the drummers drive a ceaseless momentum. The sound is dramatic, meditative, roaring and sensitive all at once.

Sounds of war—loud booms and crashes—interrupt calmer tones as the score repeatedly rises to a crescendo, arrests in moments of silence, and repeats, mimicking the cyclic nature of life itself, full of pain and joy. *Gigenis* leaves us considering the harrowing aspects of existence as it closes. “This is not war,” the narrator says. “This is the end of the world. And again, I am alone.”

.....
Originally published on *The Dance Enthusiast*, a moving arts project: <https://nall.ai/gigenis>. Used with permission.



contribute to Western dance forms. "Indian classical dance is deeply rooted in rituals and storytelling—things that are often hard to explain but carry great depth. In the West, there's pressure on young South Asian dancers to remove those elements in order to make their work more abstract and accessible. But in doing so, something vital is lost."

Mavin Khoo, Dancer



Khoo says it was not challenging to adapt to Akram Khan's vision. "I think all of us are very confident in our identities, in our solo practices and in what we do. So, this was a chance to experience what it would be like to be in his world. We were confident enough about what we do in our world. So collectively, there was a very, very beautiful sense of no ego in the space, and everyone really being open to the unknown and eager to experience what it would be like to not know what would happen, but just to dive into it."

Is Indian classical dance evolving enough to remain relevant in a globalized world? "It is absolutely relevant. It may not seem relevant in the context of this globalized

Western identity and values, but what I'm very proud about in *Gigenis* is that it was convincing, clear and unapologetic in being un-Western in its politics, un-Western in its theme." As Khoo points out, *Gigenis* is absolutely unapologetic about being about storytelling that is definitely Indian. And it is incredibly relevant to today's world that *Gigenis* comes across as a work with a politics that is poetically present, delivered with poetry and metaphor.

Gigenis is so relevant because even today the human race is about family, love and conflict. He says, "I think the message that we hope audiences take away from the *Gigenis* is the idea of love, death and the complexity of family. We have always said that the work is inspired by the *Mahabharata*, and really it is the dynamics of family."

Sirikalyani Adkoli, Dancer



How challenging was it to adapt to Akram Khan's style? Sirikalyani Adkoli shared, "The brilliance of Akram's vision and his direction made a place for the Odissi form in the production. The real challenge was in

adapting my body to the choreography in the group works, which is clearly different from Odissi's fluidity. His movements are more full range, with sudden shifts in different directions. I had to learn to move my body differently, relearn the capabilities of my own body. The constant shift between Odissi and contemporary forms felt rather natural to my body after months of practice. Equally, if not more challenging was dancing alongside the masters and sharing the floor with them."

Each classical dance form has unique storytelling methods: dramatic expression in Bharatanatyam, fluidity in Odissi and the rigorous rhythms in kathak. How do these styles interact in *Gigenis*? "I think Akram designed the production to flow with our traditional styles. Each of us brought our individual pieces to the production. I feel it's the musical orchestration that binds our artistry together. There is never any compromise of one dance form over another."

Adkoli believes that *Gigenis* is about loss, understanding and therefore dealing with loss: "Akram says that we as humans are trained to believe in the existence of something only when we see it. He draws from Indian mythology, which says that it's the belief that enables one to see. So, in times of hopelessness, it is important to believe in hope, so that hope can manifest. I hope young people in the audience also see that youth is very brief, and that they should make the most of it in this ever-changing violence-inflicted world."

BC MANJUNATH—Percussion



"I think the live music is one of the essential parts of *Gigenis*, Manjunath observed. "This project evolved with choreography and music amongst dancers and musicians trying a

lot of things out again and again. Also, in every show there will be some change to make the flow better. We all know how Akram works with his fast-thinking capacity. The narrative is always fine-tuned and musicians are always there to execute it either to elongate or shorten some parts. Experienced musicians adapt naturally to this."

Manjunath had thoughtful ideas on adapting classical Indian music to contemporary choreographic interpretations. "For me, contemporary is actually classical art form dealt in the present-day format fitting to the new rational ideas that an artiste thinks about.

"Without the help of traditional/classical knowledge it might be difficult to stay in the scene for so long. But the bottom line is that artists should be ready to adapt and 'break some rules.' Of course, people who break



Aiming high: (from left) As brother turns against brother, the fabric of relationships is destroyed; *Gigenis*, while echoing the past, is about the violence and distrust which exists in today's world; Kapil Venu, the mother, comes from the ancient Kutiyattam theater tradition of Kerala

rules do so consciously with deep-rooted knowledge in their respective field. And all the artistes here are super adaptable and also hungry to try out new things."

He added, "If we start with a specific raga or tala and then get stuck in certain preconceived ideas, it does not allow us to really indulge in something new that we are trying to search for together."

HARIRAM LAAM—Violin & Viola



Hariram Laam says the beauty of live music (especially given the spontaneous nature of Indian Classical music) is that it gives us room to vary some of our musical ideas without

deviating or distracting you from the main focus. While the music for the entire production has been composed and set according to the narrative, there is space for minute changes and development: "We musicians are therefore in position to respond to those changes on the go. And because it's a live performance, you are immediately absorbed

into the ambient nature of the production, which one would and should experience.

"While classical music is rooted in tradition, it would be entirely false to say that it has not undergone immense change and development. Thanks to the contribution of revolutionary artists of each time period, classical music to date remains an art form that is constantly being studied, explored and updated. In this production, while the majority of us are practitioners of Indian Classical art forms, the narrative takes precedence. So, rather than confining ourselves to a particular genre, we have all drawn on our expertise and mediums to tell the story, even if that meant breaking away from what we are most familiar with."

A Union of Past and Present

Each dancer had prepared their respective items, including pre-composed pieces that they had workshoped and arranged to suit the narrative. Aside from that, every other piece was an original composition, and the inspiration came from various cultures. Although each dance form was distinct in its own way, a conscious decision was made to develop a sound that would fit across all the items while preserving the originality



of the dance form. The result is an amalgamation of multiple genres designed to appeal to all kinds of audiences, say the musicians.

Laam shared, "It feels incredibly special to bring this particular production to India—it wouldn't feel complete without doing so. This work is deeply personal and connects to my roots, but there are also universal themes that everyone can relate to—love, loss, despair and innocence. Akram tries to show us a way forward through dance and music, especially as the world goes through difficult times. Right now, I feel a deep urgency, a strong conviction that we have collectively lost touch with nature, with Mother Earth, and with the ancient myths that once guided us. I hope this work encourages a return to listening to those who are deeply rooted in nature and carry both the ancient wisdom and the future potential of this Earth."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lavina Melwani is a New York-based journalist who has written on the arts, spirituality and life for several international publications. She reports on the Indian diaspora for *The Week* and is a co-founder of *Children's Hope India*. She blogs at www.lassiwithlavina.com. You can follow her @lassi_with_lavina



Sri Lanka Temple tour with Amma

January 3 – 8, 2026



“When you walk the paths that Rama, Sita, and Hanuman walked, your soul remembers what the mind has forgotten.” — Amma Sri Karunamayi vvv

- Experience the Power of Sacred Geography as you walk the holy path through the ancient temples of Sri Lanka in the company of Her Holiness Amma Sri Karunamayi.
- Immerse in the living legacy of the Ramayana.
- Relive timeless stories where they unfolded.
- Be spiritually rejuvenated amidst powerful shakti sthalas and Amma’s blissful Darshan.

For full itinerary, updates and application, visit:

srimanidweepa.org/temple-tour-2026/



manidweepa

The Amma Book Store

- Elevate Your Spiritual Practice
- Unlock the Divine within
- Transform Your Life

“Each item in our catalog is blessed by Amma Sri Karunamayi and infused with healing Shakti.”

Handcrafted Gemstone Malas blessed for your spiritual journey. Embrace tranquility and focus.

Exquisite Murthis that bring divinity into your home; perfect for worship and meditation.

Panchamukhi Shivalingas – Live with powerful representations of the Absolute Divine who grants protection and spiritual strength.

Inspirational CDs – Delight in divine music.

Two of Amma’s sacred teachings

- “Recite the Gayatri Mantra daily with sincerity and light will dawn within.”
- “Mrutyunjaya Mantra grants protection and renewal. It is the soul’s shield from fear and illness.”



manidweepa

www.theammastore.org ● ammastore@karunamayi.in

Hindu Heritage Endowment

You Can Help Support Iraivan Temple

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami had a unique vision of Lord Śiva on February 15, 1975. “Gurudeva was in his room at Kauai’s Hindu Monastery in a state of deep sleep. He was in one of those profound states of slumber that are neither awake nor full of dreams, his conscious mind fully absent. In this clear space above physical consciousness the 48-year-old satguru experienced a three-fold vision that would be the spiritual birth of the great Śiva citadel called Iraivan Temple, and its surrounding San Marga Sanctuary.



An aerial view of Iraivan Temple as of March, 2025

Here is the description of this powerful vision in Gurudeva’s own words. “One early morning, before dawn, a three-fold vision of Lord Śiva came to me. First I beheld Lord Śiva walking in a valley. Then I saw His face peering into mine. Then He was seated on a large stone, His reddish golden hair flowing down His back. That was February 15, 1975.”

It is said that the most powerful temples are those founded by the Gods themselves through visions. Certainly to have such a powerful vision of Lord Śiva as the initial impetus for a temple is one of Iraivan Temple’s unique and important qualities. Gradually a master plan for the San Marga sanctuary was unfolded from the devonic, or angelic worlds. The plan included the ambitious goal of a hand carved, traditional chola stye granite temple for Lord Śiva to be called Iraivan Temple.

Though the vision of Lord Siva was in 1975, the actual carving of Iraivan temple did not start until 1990. The assembly of the carved pieces in Kauai started in 2001. As of January, 2022, both of these tasks were completed. As of March 26, 2023, the temple became fully functional, with daily pujas by our resident Indian priest, Sivasri Pravinkumar Gurukkal.

The construction of temples in the United States over the last forty years has typically involved taking a loan of millions of dollars to get the work done quickly. Gurudeva’s approach was the opposite. While we were building the temple, we were also building an endowment to support the temple. As he decreed, roughly half of all donations received have been placed into an endowment, which as of December 2024 has a balance of approximately \$10.6 million.

This may sound like a large amount, but Gurudeva’s vision for the endowment was that it cover 100% of the temple’s operating expenses. Specifically, he envisioned the temple having enough financial abundance to, as its first priority, maintain the Iraivan Temple, the samadhi shrine of the temple’s founder and the other shrines as well as payment of priests. Its second priority is to maintain the gardens and grounds of the current 70 acres, plus any subsequent connecting or nearby lands. This includes care of plants and ponds, paths and forests, fencing and gardeners. Gurudeva also set the endowment up so that 10% of the grant is given to charities of which at least 5% will be given away on Kauai to provide support to the broader island community.

If you would like to help the monks in their efforts to manifest Gurudeva’s visions of a fully endowed Iraivan Temple you can donate to the Iraivan Temple Endowment at https://www.hheonline.org/funds/fund_o2.html

The endowment allows the monastery to use your funds as an investment and draw on the grant income over time. This way your donation’s impact endures into perpetuity.

APRIL TO JUNE ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment		Lalitha Bangle	299.00	Total	1,632.25
Fidelity Charitable	US\$60.00	Mekaladeva Veerasamy Batumallah	11.33		
Ambika Alagere	6.42	Hansa & Jitendra Deva	299.00	Hindu Education Endowment	
Gurdial Chadha	101.00	Sriram Mantravadi	249.00	Fidelity Charitable	50.00
Aravindraj Chandrasekaran	14.66	Tejwantee Meetoo	32.22	Arjun & Revathi Pennathur	75.00
Rajendra Giri	153.00	Bhaveshan Moorghen	8.60	Total	125.00
Brijianand Jugurnauth	32.13	Ravindra Nana	108.00		
Kulagan Moonesawmy	12.85	Jiger & Swati Patel	249.00	Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund	
Gowri Nadason	205.83	Rajasegaran Ponniah	249.00	Udai B. Singh	1,100.00
Shamalah Nataraja	5,005.00	Swati Tendolkar	249.00		
Purany Ponniah	200.00	Sonal Parimal Thakor	299.00	Kauai Aadheenam Religious Art and Artifacts Fund	
Ravi & Vaishnavi Ramakrishnan	101.00	Joann A. Yukimura	300.00	Mary Etta Wagner	20.00
Chamundi Sabanathan	78.75	Total	2,366.00	Matthew Wiczork	20.00
Hitesvara Saravan	63.00			Total	40.00
Gouri Shanker	401.00	Kadavul Nataraja Ardra Abhishekam Endowment			
Tejasinha Sivalingam	11.00	Aravindraj Chandrasekaran	14.65	Thank You Bodhinatha Fund	
Mangaleswary Vimalanathan	150.00	Kalpana Devasagayam	375.16	Rakesh & Pritibha Bhardwaj	251.00
Michael Zimmermann	5.00	Omayya Devasagayam	34.86	Sumathi Raja Chanda	450.00
Anonymous	708.00	Leena Lakshmi Devasagayam & Anand Kumar Letchuman	69.72	Aravindraj Chandrasekaran	14.66
Total	7,309.14	Umasankaran Mohambourame	153.00	Michael Doyle	324.00
		Gowri Nadason	205.83	Debashis Ghosh	300.00
Iraivan Temple Endowment		Nuckiren Pyeneeandee	42.84	Lisa Marston	108.00
Fidelity Charitable	172.00	Parimala Selvaraj	93.00	Poongkodi Mogan	1,182.40
Kanda Alahan	201.00	Anonymous	286.00	Mano Navaratnarajah	150.00
Satyakumar & Rinika Amirichetty	1,000.00	Total	1,275.06	Cassan Pancham	1,250.00
Eshwar & Aarati Bandlamudi	303.00			Nuckiren Pyeneeandee	42.84
Narendra Bhat	21.00	Nadesan Family Lord Muruga Shum Fund		Nandi Devi Sivanathan	55.29
Serge Bilan	300.00	Sadhunathan Nadesan	300.00	Ravi Thaker	66.00
Frank Burkhardt	20.00			Thanaletchmi Umamaheswaran	50.00
Ajay & Jamuna Chalasani	100.00	Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam		Anonymous	4,540.00
Omkar Kodambari Chavan	42.00	Anonymous	30.00	Total	8,784.55
Lucy Kawaihalau	100.00			Udayan Care Endowment Fund	
Rajagopal Krishnan	324.00	Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund		Ajay & Jamuna Chalasani	100.00
Vasaant Krishnan	90.00	Anonymous	75.00		
Gowri Nadason	409.10	Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment		Manitha Neyam Trust Fund	
Bhavani Nataraj	15.00	Mano Navaratnarajah	75.00	Anil Ananda Badhwar	30.00
Easvan Param	202.00			Nutanaya Sivaceyon	10.00
John Reiss	21.00	Malaysia Hindu Renaissance Fund		Jeeva Velusaami	33.00
Mohan & Rajalakshmi Sabapathy	400.00	Hari Chandra	5.00	Anonymous	75.00
Nutanaya Sivaceyon	10.96			Total	148.00
Sri Keerthi Suggu	1,000.00	Hinduism Today Production Fund		Mahajana College Fund	
Rajangam Velayutham	10.00	Ambika Alagere	6.42	Anonymous	350.00
Guhan Yoganathan	324.00	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	8.54	Pranshu Gupta	100.00
Other Donations	167,883.08	Brijianand Jugurnauth	32.13	Total	450.00
Anonymous	3,316.00	Rajagopal Krishnan	60.00		
Total	176,264.14	Kulagan Moonesawmy	12.85	Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund	
		Silvarajoo Muniandy	36.02	Rajiv Verma	150.00
Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund		Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01	Mangaleswary Vimalanathan	50.00
Dhivya Ethiraj	500.00	Nuckiren Pyeneeandee	32.04	Total	200.00
Malvi Gandhi	75.00	Anonymous	1,063.00		
Usharani Iswaran Magana	125.00	Total	1,301.01	Himalayan Academy Publications Endowment	
Inna Linnyk	150.00	Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund		Fidelity Charitable	54.00
Ioana-Gabriela Manoliu	85.00	Benevity	652.50	Vel Mahalingum	12.85
Vallie Mathuvrin	107.09	Available Available	20.00	Mano Navaratnarajah	225.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	49.98	Samuel Gunn	5.00	Anonymous	711.00
T.S. Sri Shanmuga Rajah	90.00	Tamnash J. Gupta	432.00	Total	1,002.85
Manishankar Sagum	12.85	Chamundi Sabanathan	78.75		
Nandi Deva Sundaram	300.00	Hitesvara Saravan	36.00	Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund	
S.R. Thancanamootoo	12.96	Matthew Wiczork	300.00	Fidelity Charitable	51.00
Anonymous	54.00	Anonymous	108.00	Rajendra Giri	153.00
Total	1,561.88				
Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund					
Thirujnanam Arnassalon	12.85				

APRIL TO JUNE ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Nandi Devi Sivanathan	67.54	Anonymous	549.00	Velika Lawrence	9.99
Anonymous	33.00	Total	1,957.49	Ioana-Gabriela Manoliu	170.00
Total	304.54			Umasankaran Mohambourame	153.00
Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment		Hindu Association of West Texas Endowment		Kulagan Moonesawmy	6.42
Arnab Chatterjee	42.00	Agata A. Sieron	45.00	Roshini Muralidharan	101.00
Menaka Ganesathasan	150.00			Bhavani Nataraj	15.00
Vimala Muniandy	90.00	Bharathi Yoga Dhama Fund		Shamalah Nataraja	5,005.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01	Gandhreti Tanuja	1.00	Jagdish Ragade	500.00
Nandi Devi Sivanathan	22.45			Eswar Raman	40.00
Piragash Swargaloganathan	251.00	Panchangam Endowment Fund		Gubbi Nagaraj Ranganath	1,000.00
Gandhreti Tanuja	1.00	Sidharth Sankar	20.00	Tarangadeva Sinhaputra	63.00
Anonymous	667.00	Eswar Subramanian	21.00	Nandi Devi Sivanathan	55.29
Total	1,273.12	Anonymous	50.00	Vibha Sundaram	303.00
		Total	91.00	Ravi Thaker	18.00
Maha Ganapati Temple of Arizona Endowment		Digital Dharma Endowment		Jeeva Velusaami	8.00
Anonymous	75.00	Rajendra Giri	153.00	Saravan Veylan	324.00
		Kulagan Moonesawmy	12.85	Anonymous	1,331.00
Bharatiya Ekta Mandir of Arizona Endowment		Eswar Raman	40.00	Total	11,100.15
Saman Yousfi	5.00	Anonymous	572.00		
		Total	777.51	Concord Shiva Murugan Temple (CSMT) Endowment Fund	
Anantha Ladies Home Endowment		Kauai Aadheenam Feed the Monks Fund		Natraj Narayanswami	45.00
Anonymous	75.00	Benevity	500.00	Vallikannu Rameshbabu	100.00
		Fidelity Charitable	324.00	Krishna Thamilsaran	51.00
Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples (Kovil Maadu) Endowment		Ambika Alagere	6.42	Total	196.00
Arun Aarooren	75.00	Yuvaraj Athur	153.00		
Ambika Alagere	6.42	Anandkumar Ayyachamy	75.00	Himalayan Acres Endowment	
Rajendra Giri	153.00	Serge Bilan	100.00	Anonymous	151.00
Brijianand Jugurnauth	32.13	Arnab Chatterjee	18.00		
Srinivas R. Madaboosi	375.00	Charles Close	108.00	Antyodoy Anatha Ashram Orphanage Endowment	
Natraj Narayanswami	60.00	Iryna Doroshenko	108.00	Venu Gopal Sunkara	100.00
Rodney & Ilene Standen	30.00	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	8.54		
Piragash Swargaloganathan	101.00	Rajendra Giri	153.00	Total Contributions	\$220,296.69
Shalini Tayal	501.00	Brijianand Jugurnauth	32.13	Funds at Market Value, Jun 30, 2025	
Arunasalam Vathavooran	75.00	Namit & Nidhi Kapoor	400.00		
		Madhan Srinivasan Kumar	11.00	Grand Total	\$26,230,091.00

MISSION STATEMENT: Hindu Heritage Endowment is a publicly supported, charitable organization recognized as tax exempt by the IRS on April 22, 1994. Employer ID 99-0308924. Founded by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, its philanthropic mission is to provide secure, professionally managed financial support for institutions and religious leaders of all lineages of Sanatana Dharma.

PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS: Halbert, Hargrove, Investment Counsel; Lynn M. Gaumer, J.D., Stelter Co. and Sonoda & Isara LLP, certified public accountants. HHE is a member of the Partnership for Philanthropic Planning, the source for education, research and advocacy for professionals who have a role in designing and implementing donors' philanthropic plans.

I WANT TO PARTICIPATE: Where should I Send My Donation? You can send your gift to an existing fund, create a new endowment or request information through the address below. Donations may be made online at www.hheonline.org to join our family of benefactors who are Strengthening Hinduism Worldwide. Thank you.



HINDU HERITAGE ENDOWMENT

KAUAI'S HINDU MONASTERY
107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA
808-822-3012 • hhe@hindu.org
www.hheonline.org • www.facebook.com/hhecares





LOTUS SCULPTURE

WWW.LOTUSSCULPTURE.COM

EVERY STATUE TELLS A STORY

A HAND-CRAFTED LEGACY
FROM OUR FAMILY OF
ARTISANS TO YOURS.

Kyle Tortora

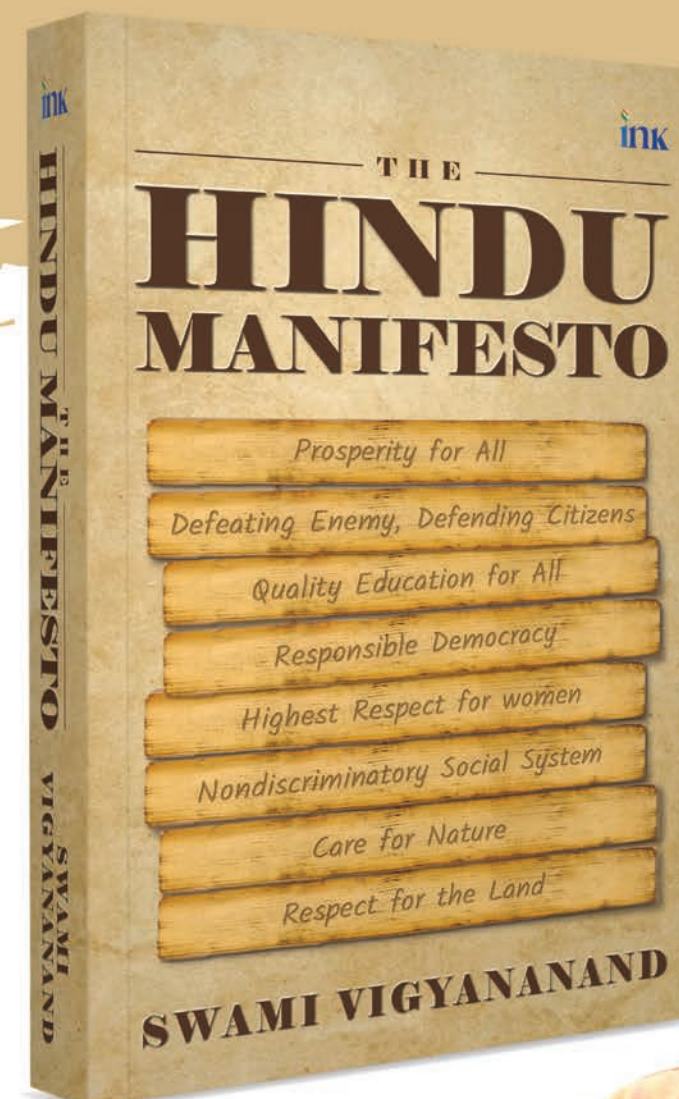
Founder, Lotus Sculpture

7 FOOT MEDITATING
GANGA SHIVA 2F10

10% OFF with code **HINDU** | (760)994-4455 | info@lotussculpture.com

ink

A BLUEPRINT FOR HINDU CIVILIZATIONAL RENAISSANCE



PRE-ORDER YOUR
COPY NOW



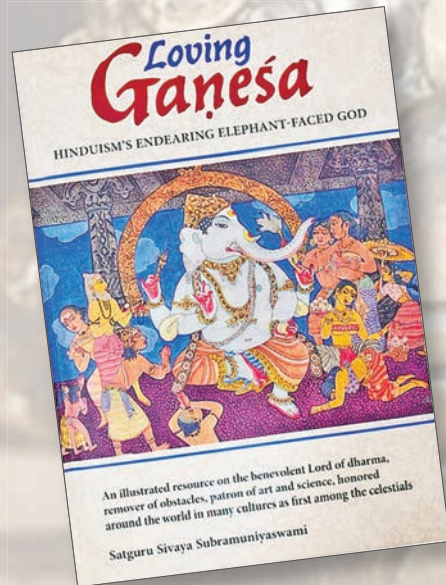
www.thehindumanifesto.com

[@svigyananand](#)



MiniMela

Kauai Hindu Monastery's
Spiritual treasure box



Newly released 3rd edition of *Loving Ganesha*

by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami is now available with more exquisite illustrations and now in full color. In the clearest, most captivating terms, the satguru introduces you to this great God, shows the many ways to develop a rapport with Him so as to illumine and uplift your life. Learn about this endearing God who, of all the Gods, is closest to us. Learn how to contact Him, pray to Him and celebrate His presence in your home.

Hinduism's most essential

teachings as presented and illumined by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami. The three volumes may be acquired together or separately. They elucidate Hinduism's:

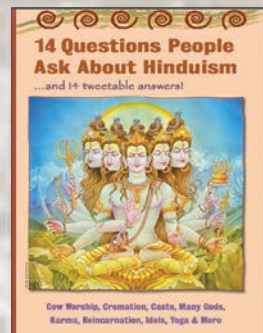
- tenets and philosophy, vol. 1
- lifestyle, culture, ethics, vol. 2
- metaphysics and mysticism, vol. 3



Path to Siva • Composed by Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami to present Hinduism's teachings in a way youth could more immediately appreciate. It contains all of Gurudeva's teachings rearranged, compacted, trimmed, and turned it into a delightful, beautifully illustrated 96-page handbook of liberating knowledge and wisdom. (Adults are also fond of this book.)



14 great answers to those 14 tough questions people ask you and your children (Why many Gods? Do Hindus worship cows?... etc.)—a 16-page booklet created by Hinduism Today's editors.



36-bead rudraksha mala grown and assembled by devotees of Kauai's Hindu Monastery and blessed by the swamis.



5 rudraksha beads grown at Kauai's Hindu Monastery and blessed by the swamis.

Study materials and guided studies:
bit.ly/ha-master-course

And much more at:
minimela.com

HAWAII HEAVEN



Two-story home in a quiet cul-de-sac in beautiful Wailua Homesteads

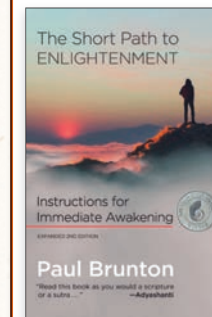
- two large decks and patio for indoor/outdoor living
- second water heater —> potential for a guest house
- 10 min. from Hindu Monastery
- See mls#721545

Yelena Okhman Realtor®(S) • Remax Kauai
808-635-6552 • yelenastars@gmail.com

EXPANDED SECOND EDITION

The Short Path to Enlightenment

Instructions for Immediate Awakening



PAUL BRUNTON

"Paul Brunton is one of my 'eyes.' My shakti [spiritual power] is working through him. Follow him closely." —Ramana Maharshi

"Read this book as you would a scripture or a sutra and let it open your eyes to eternity"

—Adyashanti

This new, updated edition of our currently most popular title brings out the importance of joy and love and grace in Short Path practice—with meditations and expanded teachings to help readers achieve their goal.

6 x 9 paper | 182 pages | \$18.95

"What is Karma? is filled with pithy gems on the link between conduct and consequence, character and destiny, ethics and spiritual practice."

—Frederic A. Brussat, *Values and Visions*

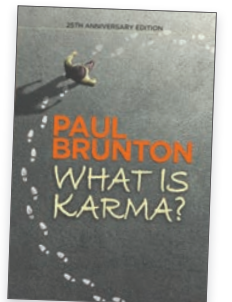
25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

What Is Karma?

PAUL BRUNTON

A concise and refreshing view of karma!

5 x 7.5 paper | 130 pages | \$11.95



For more information on Paul Brunton visit
www.PaulBrunton.org

LP To Order—
LARSON PUBLICATIONS • www.larsonpublications.com

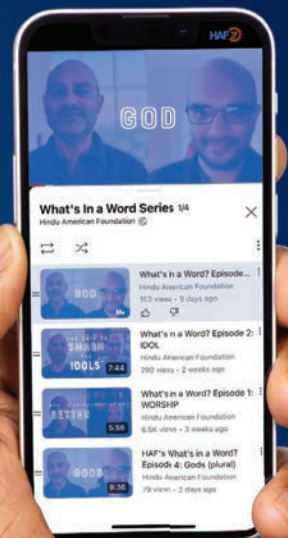
WATCH OUR WHAT'S IN A WORD? VIDEO PODCAST!

What's in a word? A lot actually. English words like idol, god, and sacrifice are often used—without careful consideration—to translate Sanskrit words common in Hindu Dharmas. In doing so, quite a bit gets lost in translation.

What can we do about it? Educate!
And our team at HAF is doing just that.

START WATCHING TODAY

myhaf.org/wiaw-ht



Hindu American Foundation
hinduamerican.org



Vegan Vitamins & Supplements

No animal products or derivatives of any kind

High quality
Wide selection
Affordable prices



...and many more!

Available for purchase at:

WHOLE FOODS & other
Natural Health Food Stores.

October-November-December 2025

(888) 988-DEVA
www.devanutrition.com
info@devanutrition.com



DEVA vitamins are 100% vegan, vegetarian and certified by the Vegan Society, the non-profit organization that actually invented the word "vegan."

SACRED STATUES & ART FROM INDIA & TIBET



This magnificent 6-foot tall sandstone Surya and other fine, hand-carved statues are available in the USA now, ready to be shipped anywhere.

713-668-2948
surtal2014@gmail.com
www.zarposhindia.com

Zarposh India

We specialize in orders from monasteries & temples



THE FINEST COLLECTION OF ANTIQUES & ART FROM INDIA, TIBET AND NEPAL

We offer group tours to visit temples in INDIA



Hindu Global Charity



We have projects in India, Pakistan and Kenya. Above, food distribution in Pakistan.

American Hindu World Service (AHWS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to educating the American public and the world about Hindu perspectives on global health and international development. It is now working in education, women's empowerment and maternal/child nutrition. It is active with other religious communities on interfaith issues, and serves without discrimination as to ethnicity, gender, nationality, or creed • More at www.ahwsngo.org

AHWS • PO Box 1483, Laurel, MD 20725-1483, USA
+1-443-761-9890 • ahwsngo@gmail.com



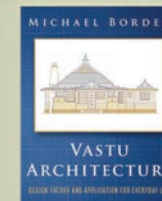
Life Insurance and Estate Planning

Rely on a professional for Retirement and Estate Planning

For information, contact one of the most highly trained financial advisors:

Niraj P. Baxi, msi, clu, chfc
Tel: 800-686-8436
niraj@baxifinancial.com
www.baxifinancial.com

VASTUVED INTERNATIONAL



Building design in the ancient tradition of Vastu Shastra
Residential and Commercial Properties
Comprehensive Vastu Design Theory and Application for Everyday Life

<http://www.vastu-design.com/vastu-architecture-book.php>
www.vastu-design.com 1-641-472-2157



CoHNA

COALITION OF HINDUS OF NORTH AMERICA

EMPOWERING NORTH AMERICAN HINDUS THROUGH **ADVOCACY, EDUCATION, & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**



**THIS FESTIVE SEASON,
UNDERSTAND THE
“WHY” BEHIND EACH
HINDU TRADITION.**

Visit CoHNA's specially curated pages for detailed information and resources:

cohna.org/festivals



**CHANGE BEGINS
WITH SEVA. CHANGE
BEGINS WITH YOU.**

Your gift can create a lasting impact and uplift our Hindu community. Give today by scanning the QR Code or visiting:

cohna.org/donate

MORE INFORMATION AT:
WWW.COHNA.ORG



SUPPORT US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:
[LINKTR.EE/COHNA](https://linktr.ee/COHNA)

Lemurian Scrolls

ANGELIC PROPHECIES REVEALING HUMAN ORIGINS
Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami



An illustrated, clear-sighted revelation of man's sacred journey to Earth from the Pleistocene millions of years ago, and the struggles faced through the ages to evolve and realize their ultimate destiny and Christing.

Gain a great understanding about where human-kind is headed at this point in time, why we originally came to this plane of existence, the reason we have gone through all that we have gone through, where it will all lead and what is the purpose of it all.

Lemurian Scrolls consists of akashic messages that were revealed mystically to the founder of Hinduism Today magazine, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (Gurudeva) in 1973. After decades of being kept private, Gurudeva decided, one day, to release them to the world. If you know Gurudeva's other teachings, you know that you can expect sound, clear information that will mean a great deal to you.

400 illustrated pages • hardback • color • US\$35

www.minimela.com/lemurian

Yoga Tantra SriVidya Sacred dance Kirtan Samskrit Samskara Puja

MATHA GITANANDA ASHRAM

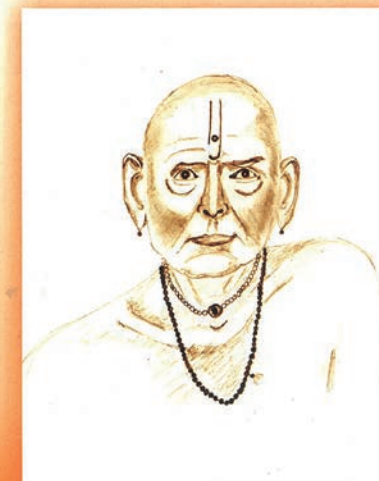


a traditional Hindu ashram in Italy

| +39 019 584692 |

| monasteriindu@gmail.com | www.gitanandashram.it |

ETERNAL FRIEND ŚHRĪ SWĀMĪ SAMARTH MAHĀRĀJ OF AKKALKOT



By
MUKUND M. HANUMANTE, Ph.D

Find the Divine within

Eternal Friend offers the keys to the Divine that ever resides within—is always there, ready to guide and help you attain that peace and contentment which is your true nature.

“Eternal Friend is a doorway to auspiciousness and infinite peace.”—Shri Sathya Sai Baba

“Eternal Friend helps people manifest their deepest soul potentials.”—Dr. David Frawley:

By M. Hanumante, PhD • 142 p.
hardcover • color

mukund@juno.com

<https://akkalkotswamisamarth-usa.org>

CLASSIFIEDS

Classified ads are us\$55 for 20 words, \$1 for each additional word. "Box ads" are \$80 and \$150 • 10% to 35% discount for repeat ads • 888-464-1008, 808-634-5407 fax: 888-217-3108 • ads@hindu.org www.hinduismtoday.com

Devotional Supplies

For All Your Spiritual Needs

Shop at the home of **Hinduism Today** for all your devotional and spiritual supplies. Books, including the complete works of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, incense, rare rudrakshas, malas of all types, elegant statues, children's books and much more. www.minimela.com

Free Products & Services

Home-Study Course in the Vedanta. Contact Parashakti Vidya Gurukul, PO Box 250, Spring Valley, NY 10977 parashaktividya@aol.com

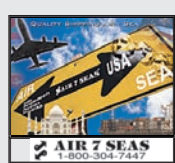
Miscellaneous

Vedic Life Associationz
We are proud to be Hindu!
<http://www.vediclifeassociation.org/>

Professional Products & Services

Freight Forwarder

Ship >45 kg or more
Anywhere from US
+1-888-247-7732
Sales2@air7seas.us
www.air7seas.com



Indoor/outdoor painting—No. California
Residential, commercial, interior & exterior. Color consulting. Licensed, bonded & insured. Vama's Painting Co., 925-279-1051.

Fine Quality Neem Products

Specializing in fresh neem leaf, neem sticks, living neem trees and other Ayurvedic herbs. Our complete line of neem products contains more neem than any other U.S. manufacturer, all at fresh-from-the-farm prices.

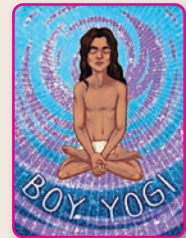
www.neemtreefarms.com
877-500-6336



Creation of a Great Yogi

The inspiring true story of a teen who courageously meditated non stop for 12 years and became the great Shri Shivalayogi Maharaj. View on Amazon. Free in the USA:

germaine108@yahoo.com



Publications

Sri Aurobindo books. Ayurveda. Reiki. Vedic astrology. Alternative health. Plus over 14,000 health & wellness products. Wholesale-retail-mail order. Free catalogs. Lotus Press, HT Box 1008, Silver Lake, WI 53170 USA • www.lotuspress.com

Babaji's Kriya Yoga Publications

Books, correspondence course, seminars, ashrams, audios, videos, pilgrimages. babajiskriyayoga.net
1-888-252-9642



Dreaming Peace: The History of Positive Thinking and What It Means in the Post-Truth Era, by Nori Muster norimuster.com/books/

Sri Chinmoy Books

Sri Chinmoy's soulful offerings in the form of books, music and art have been the source of inspiration and wisdom for seekers for over 50 years.

+1-734-994-7114
srchinmoy.org
srchinmoybooks.com



Divine Life Society Publications

Choose from over 100 free e-books and 300+ printed books on Hindu philosophy, yoga, meditation and more by Swami Sivananda and his disciples.

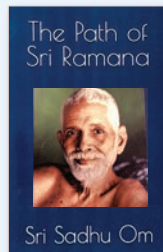
www.dlsebooks.org • www.dlsbooks.org



The Teachings of Sri Ramana

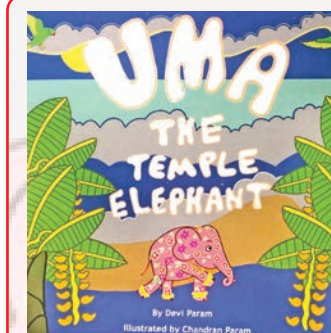
The best comprehensive and introductory book on the teachings of the great sage by Sri Sadhu Om, one of his direct disciples. Available at Amazon marketplaces worldwide.

ramanahou.org
[vimeo.com/ramanahou](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvmeo.com/ramanahou)



Wishing you a joyous and a divine Diwali !

EASAN KATIR
private wealth management since 1983
easan.katir@gmail.com
1-530.320.3287 (USA)
easankatir.com

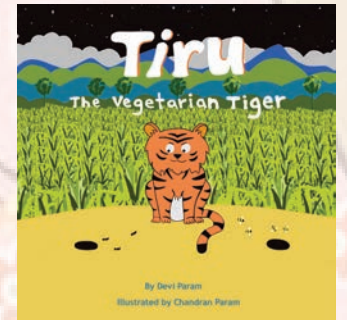


Uma, (Story of dreams)

Baby Uma was born to be a worker elephant but this is not the life she wants. Determined, she dreams of

another world where she can make her own choices.

Tiru (Story of friendship) Baby Tiru has lost his mother. Hungry and afraid he meets Thamby, a vegetarian village boy who shows him that friendship lasts forever.



By Devi Param
Illustrated by Chandran Param
Order from Amazon.com

Eternal Tree Books

Books introducing children to inner meanings of Hindu festivals, deities & values

"Authors have even depicted the science behind Holi rituals in a very interesting and unique way."
— **Hema Malini**

"Truly wonderful children's story explaining humane values of India and Hinduism."
— **Anupam Kher**

"Designed to introduce children to Hindu festivals' 'inner meanings' and to Hindu traditions."
— **Prof. Ved P. Nanda**

Sharing Dharmic ways, thoughts & sciences

"Teaches children the importance of living in harmony with nature and with all forms of life."
— **The Dalai Lama**

"Teaches children about desirable personal qualities."
— **Kirkus Reviews**

"...covers the essence of Yoga for kids."
— **Swami Mahesh**

Place your orders on www.eternaltreebooks.com
Free shipping across USA with discount code: **FREESHIP**
For bulk orders and wholesale discount write to us at info@eternaltreebooks.com

Help Iraivan Temple welcome its pilgrims soon



Iraivan's major event of 2023 has been the Crystal Lingam installation ceremony, held in March and May, which culminated a year of myriad accomplishments. We are now creating new infrastructure to allow for public access through the Rudraksha Forest and the magnificent San Marga path so future pilgrims can worship & meditate in this spiritual haven.

Donate at himalayanacademy.com/iraivan
Contact iraivan@hindu.org



“—
“The practical solutions offered by HPN
enable our children to live and breathe
Sanatana Dharma.” —
~ Parent of a 5th Grader

HINDU PARENTS NETWORK

EMPOWERING HINDU
PARENTS THROUGH
EDUCATION & ADVOCACY



Encouraging conscious Hindu
parenting through workshops,
resources & community



Promoting respectful Hindu
education in school classrooms
and standing against bullying



Inspiring confidence in Hindu
teens through immersive camps,
workshops, and programs



Explore our **Beautiful
Tree Program** that
connects diaspora Hindu
kids to their heritage! Join
by visiting bit.ly/hpn-btp

CONNECT WITH LIKE-MINDED PARENTS & BECOME A VOLUNTEER!

✉ contact@hinduparentsnetwork.org

🌐 www.hinduparentsnetwork.org

📷 linktr.ee/hinduparentsnetwork



LEARN.
VOLUNTEER.
DONATE.



सा विद्या या विमुक्तये

KNOWLEDGE IS THAT WHICH LIBERATES

Vedic Wisdom - Online

Mission

The Hindu University of America provides education in knowledge systems based in Hindu thought involving critical inquiry, ethics, and self-reflection. Committed to fostering the culture and traditions of Hindu Dharma in an atmosphere of academic excellence and freedom, it prepares students for service, leadership, and global engagement.

Vision

Promoting dialogue across disciplines, cultures and civilizations, while enabling self-discovery, conscious evolution and harmony, the Hindu University of America will set the standard for the study of Hindu Dharma.



www.hua.edu

Hindu University of America is an institution of higher learning, teaching, reflection and research based in the knowledge systems rooted in and emerging from Hindu thought, where you will find a welcoming, global community of learners led by passionate faculty.



HELP SAVE INDIA'S ANCIENT TEMPLES & TRADITIONS



Temple Renovation



Oil Donation
to Poor Temples



Annadanam

Practicing Hindus Preserving Our Past

India's ancient temples are dying. In Tamil Nadu alone, more than 12,000 temples do not have any poojas happening or even a single lamp being lit. Thousands of temples across the state are lying in ruins waiting to be renovated. Behind Every Temple is a 501c3 Non-Profit organization dedicated to ensuring these sacred sites are protected and renovated for future generations. In addition to temple renovation, we also provide free oil to ancient temples in poor condition and regularly perform annadanam (feeding) for intellectually disabled people. We are entirely volunteer-run, so 100% of your tax-deductible donation goes directly to these projects.

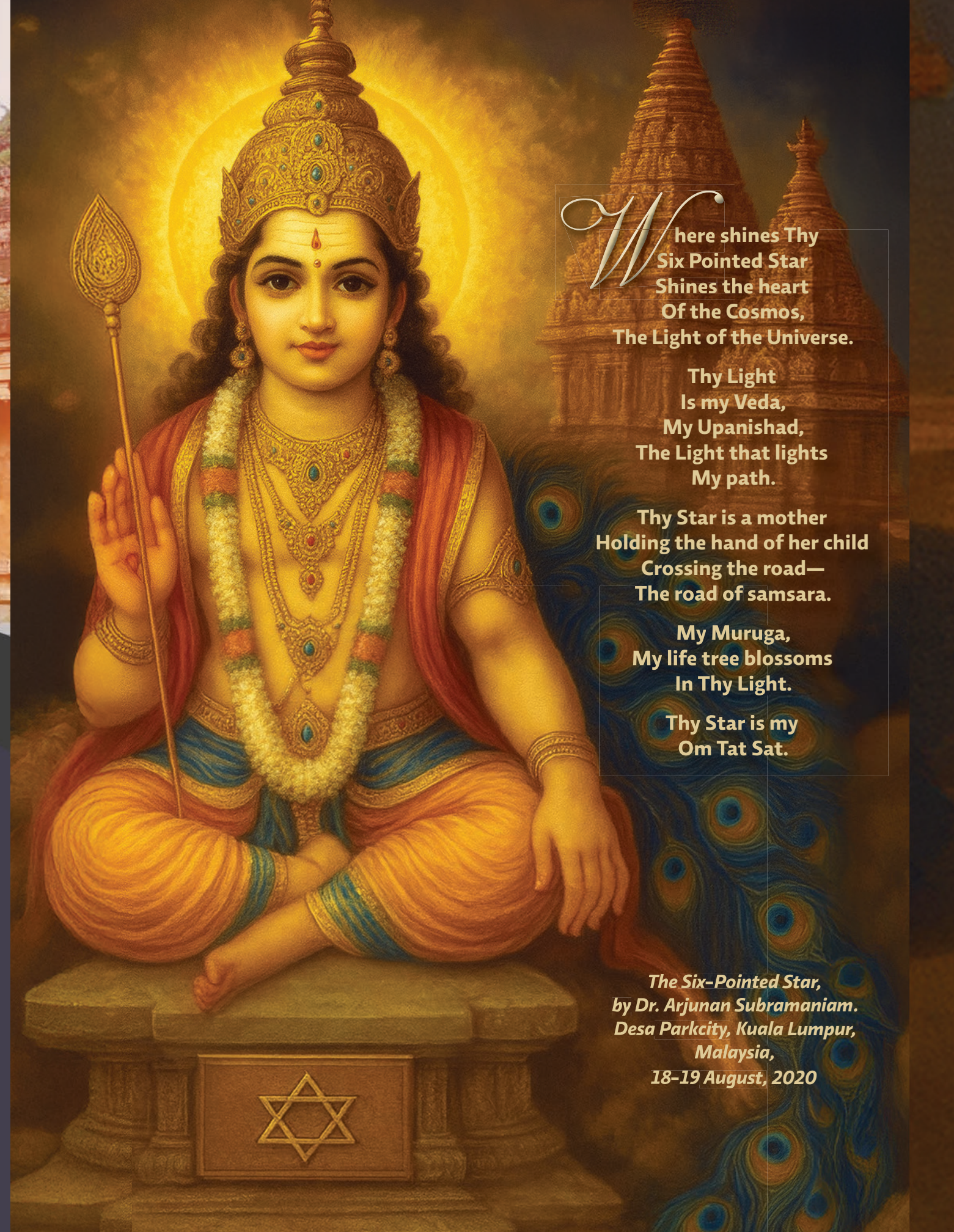
For Hindus, dana (giving) is an integral part of one's dharma, so we invite everyone to help participate in these noble projects and help keep India's temples and traditions alive



To learn more please visit us at
www.behindeverytemple.org



SCAN ME



*W*here shines Thy
Six Pointed Star
Shines the heart
Of the Cosmos,
The Light of the Universe.

Thy Light
Is my Veda,
My Upanishad,
The Light that lights
My path.

Thy Star is a mother
Holding the hand of her child
Crossing the road—
The road of samsara.

My Muruga,
My life tree blossoms
In Thy Light.

Thy Star is my
Om Tat Sat.

*The Six-Pointed Star,
by Dr. Arjunan Subramaniam.
Desa Parkcity, Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysia,
18-19 August, 2020*

Joys of Illumination



Kerala muralist Suresh Muthukulam has captured the joy and freedom felt by the yogi who experiences the deepest samadhis. As the yogi dances, so does God Siva twirl and flail His sixteen arms, rejoicing in the yogi's spiritual attainment. Below is Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, witnessing his disciple's rare achievement—the most profound and difficult of all human enterprises. Above, the devas have formed a celestial band to provide the music. Left to right, they play the kanjira, mridangam, vina, ghatam clay pot, flute, tambura and cymbals.

Canada CAD 10
India INR 225
Malaysia MYR 14
Mauritius MRU 115
Singapore SGD 10
UK GBP 5

