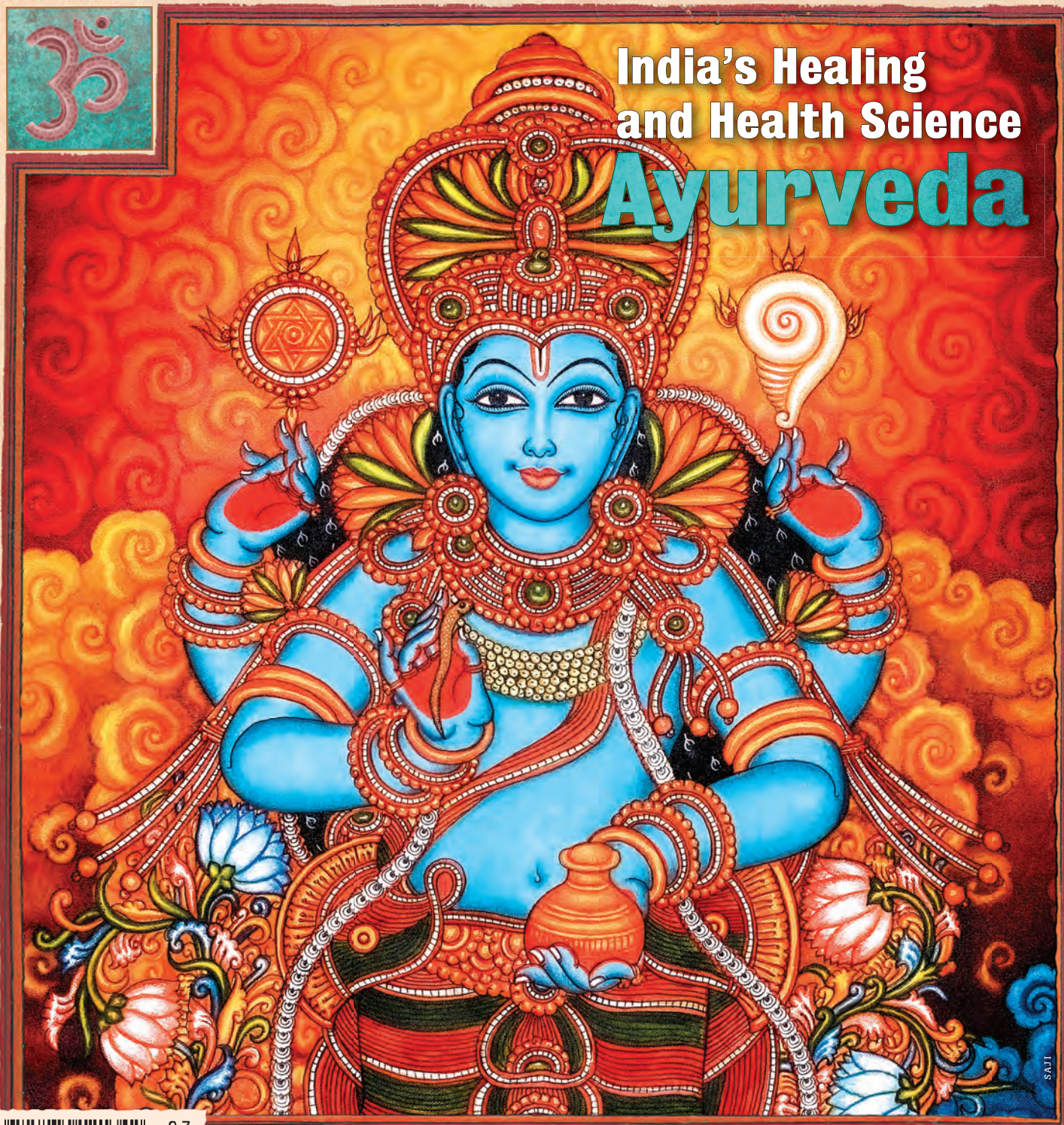


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Affirming Sanatana Dharma and Recording the Modern History of a Billion-Strong Global Religion in Renaissance



(Cover) Dhanvantari, the Deity of ayurveda, holds a pot of herbs, nature's medicines; (above) photographer Saahil Rahman's drone-carried camera captures a lone truck plying a remote road through a coconut plantation in Kerala

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Meet Our Next Generation of Hindu Priests



Dressed in simple cotton veshtis, boys from the priest training academy near Bengaluru, India, gather for a class photo. Despite living a strict life, they are clearly full of joy. Their story starts on page 18...

GLOBAL DHARMA

PSYCHOLOGY

Studying Aggression Against Those Who Don't Eat Meat

WHY, ONE WONDERS, DO some people—even vegetarians—display such animus towards vegans? Is it really because vegans are insufferable in their “holier-than-thou” smugness and proselytization? Or that a vegan’s presence at a traditionally meat-centric meal disrupts social convention in predominately meat-eating societies? Certainly that would explain a reaction of the moment. But a long-term abhorrence toward all vegans? Not likely.

In an article in *Psychology Today*, Gordon Hodson Ph.D. describes some interesting results from his lab’s ongoing studies of prejudice and discrimination against vegetarians and vegans in Canada. Some highlights from their work show that, among their subject pool, such discrimination from meat-eaters was on par with expressions of angst towards immigrants and

racial minorities. Results also showed that prejudice towards vegans is higher than towards vegetarians; that meat eaters who do show prejudice are less likely to have moral concern for animals; that vegans and vegetarians in Canada feel discriminated against and marginalized, even by friends and family; and that the amount of beef that one eats directly correlates and can predict the degree of one’s anti-vegetarian sentiment.

Social scientist Hank Rothgerber of Bellarmine University in Kentucky considers this phenomenon a defense mechanism. “Basically,” he says, “we live in an era today, at least in the Western world, where there’s more and more evidence, more and more arguments, and more and more books about how eating meat is bad.” The eating of meat has been challenged on many fronts—the environmental



Eating plants: Who would have thought that a tasty and healthy meat-free lifestyle could incite aggression in those of a different dietary flavor?

toll of animal agriculture, the diseases associated with the consumption of meat, the cruelty of factory farms, the basic ethics involved in killing and eating other sentient beings. It seems the more these messages gain official status, the more challenged the meat eaters feel. Aware they may be judged as callous, cruel, unethical and environmentally irresponsible, they become defensive; and as the saying goes, the best

defensive is a good offense. Some devise arguments to justify their practice, and others simply react with rage.

Tellingly, humans seem to be made most insecure by people who live more fully by our own morals than we do ourselves. Psychologist Benoit Monin of Stanford University says some vegetarians feel even more threatened by vegans than meat eaters do.

HEALTH

Namaste for Health!

IN THESE DAYS OF CONCERNS about COVID-19, the pandemic spread by the new coronavirus, many people are looking for a way to offer a courteous and graceful greeting without the physical contact involved in shaking hands. The ancient Hindu greeting of Namaste has recently been endorsed by both Prince Charles of England and Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel.

The Namaste gesture, dating from the time of the Indus Valley, is made by placing the two hands together, thumbs near the chest and fingers pointing upwards. Used as both a greeting and farewell, it expresses reverence for our inner divinity

which Hindus consider the essence of the soul. The gesture is usually accompanied by the word “Namaste” (these days, some say, “Namastay safe and healthy”) and sometimes by a slight bow as an additional show of respect. In addition to avoidance of physical contact, the Namaste greeting is appreciated for being free of the power-play aspects of a handshake.

With Johns Hopkins University reporting over 3 million cases and 200,000 deaths worldwide at the time of this writing, and most transmission of the coronavirus believed to be from hand to face, the importance of a handshake alternative seems unquestionable.



Better than a handshake: A young girl in Mumbai gives the traditional Namaste greeting

PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK



ARCHAEOLOGY

Discover the Tiger Caves

APPROXIMATELY THREE miles from Mahabalipuram, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal some 35 miles south of Chennai is the little-known rock-cut “Tiger Cave,” so called for the eleven fierce tiger-like heads carved around its entrance. Actually not tigers but yalis, ancient mythical guardian creatures, each has goat-like horns on its head. Four steps lead up to the entrance, which is bordered by two pillars carved as standing tigers (or yalis). To the left, two massive elephant heads are carved into the rock. Above each of these is a small square chamber, and inside these are sculptures apparently representing Siva and Parvati, as if riding on the elephants. The cave itself now contains little more than a bare floor. Archaeologists speculate the ruler may have sat in this pavilion—probably much cooler than the surroundings—to give audience or

observe festivities.

On the same site is a small rock-cut cave temple to Lord Siva, which was only discovered in 2005 after inscriptions on the Tiger Cave were deciphered. Inside is a black Sivalingam, with sculptures of Lord Siva adorning the walls. A small Nandi faithfully faces a tall Lingam in front of this temple. A large stone nearby bears an intricate carving of the Goddess Durga, mounted on Her tiger, slaying demons.

These edifices are variously credited to the Pallava kings Narasimhavarmam I (7th century) or Rajasimha (8th century). The site is now protected by the Archaeological Survey of India; admission is free.

Carved in stone: The granite Sivalingam in the cave’s recently discovered chamber; the cave’s entrance, replete with yali carvings



NEW ZEALAND

Ode to New Zealand’s Youth

THE FOURTH NEW ZEALAND HINDU Youth Conference, hosted by Hindu Youth New Zealand (HYNZ) and New Zealand Hindu Students’ Forum (NZHSF), was held in Auckland on February 29, 2020. The conference attracted over 120 delegates of all ethnicities from around the world, including Fiji, Australia, Malaysia and India. Inaugurating the conference was Jenny Saleza, the NZ Minister for Ethnic Communities, who pointed out that Hindus are the fastest-growing and second largest community in New Zealand. Saleza encouraged the participants to become involved in politics. Offering mentorships and partnerships, she told attendees their faith and community would be a big part of the country’s future. The offer of mentorships was repeated by National MP

Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi. HYNZ has created a registration portal for those interested: tiny.cc/HYNZopportunities.

Five panels, including international guest speakers, addressed a range of topics that included economy, education, politics, media, human rights and engagement with the government. Other sessions focused on effective communication, mentorship and making your voice heard. Various international organizations offered exclusive internship opportunities. Participants took full advantage of chance to network during the day-long program.

It is planned that delegates from this conference will represent New Zealand at the World Hindu Youth Conference in Mumbai this coming December.



Standing strong for Hinduism: participants at the fourth New Zealand Hindu Youth Conference in Auckland

PHOTOS: HINDUISM TODAY, MUTHU BALAKUMAR; NZ HINDU YOUTH CONFERENCE



INDIA

The World's Tallest Sivalingam

EARLY IN JANUARY 2020, THE India Book of Records certified the now-tallest Sivalingam in the country, a 111.2-foot-tall icon at the Maheshwaram Sri Siva Parvathi temple in the village of Chenkal, in the Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala.

The hollow structure contains eight floors. On the bottom floor are 108 Sivalingams, where pilgrims can perform abhishekam. The other seven floors represent the chakras of the human body and are colored accordingly. A spiral ramp leads up through muladhara (red), svadhishtana (orange), manipura (yellow), anahata (green), vishuddha (blue) and ajna (indigo) to the top—sahasrara (violet), a model

Kailasam where the pilgrim is treated to the sight of Siva and Parvati in the snow-covered Himalayas. Each floor has a meditation hall where pilgrims can meditate on the respective chakra. Along the walls are murtis, paintings and carvings of meditating monks.

Maheswarananda Saraswathy, the spiritual leader of the temple, designed the structure and supervised its construction, which began on May 3, 2012. Incorporated into the structure are soils, rare ayurvedic medicines and water from holy places including Kashi, Badrinath, Gangotri, Gomukh, Gaimukh, Rameswaram, Dhanushkodi and Kailasa. Quoted in a 2018 *Times*

of India article, he explained that the Lingam was constructed primarily to promote meditation: "Everyone now is in a rat race for money and gains. This has disturbed the peace and co-existence in the world. ... That's why we wanted to construct a symbol to foster peace." Meditation, he said, "helps cleanse our minds of hatred and promote universal co-existence."

.....
A towering presence:
(clockwise) The 111-foot-tall lingam under construction in 2018; an aerial view of the completed monument; Maheswarananda Saraswathy oversees the cave-like sculpting



BRIEFLY...

THE COUNTRY'S FIRST HINDU UNIVERSITY has been opened in Bali, Indonesia titled after the name of Sugriva, a character from the *Ramcharitamanas*. The University was formally the Hinduism State Institute of Denpasar, and now has the full title and credentials as "Gusti Bagas Sugriva State Hindu University." Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim

population. However, Hinduism is well-settled in its culture.

WITH BIPARTISAN SUPPORT, THE Education Policy Committee of Alabama's House of Representatives has approved a bill which would reverse a 1993 ban on the teaching of yoga in K-12 public schools. The bill would allow school districts to offer yoga as an elective class, but only

if instruction is strictly limited to physical poses, exercises and stretching techniques. Only English names may be used for the poses. Expressly prohibited would be any chanting, mantras, mudras, mandalas and use of the Namaste greeting. The bill was introduced to the House by Rep. Jeremy Gray, a Democrat and former professional football player who lauds yoga's effects on posture, flexibility, balance and strengthening the core muscles. "I really don't see what the big deal is," Gray said. "I mean, my wife does this, my

mother does this on the floor of her Methodist church."

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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.



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IN MY OPINION

Reincarnated in the West

Hindus can organize a cohesive narrative through the establishment of accredited educational institutions

BY ANKUR PATEL

Growing up Hindu in America, Sanatana Dharma was always part of my identity, but never something our family discussed in depth. Beyond basic thinking around reincarnation, karma and moksha, my understanding of Hinduism was folkloric. Amongst my extended family we gathered for pujas, celebrated holidays and accepted that as our tradition. My being a Hindu piqued the curiosity of my peers, but I felt ill-equipped to answer their questions. Without a modern system for studying Hinduism, I believe many other American-born Hindus will find themselves in the same situation.

At that point in my youth I felt ungrounded and spiritually isolated. When going to mandir—where this feeling should disappear—language barriers and a lack of sufficient answers from elders only continued to make me feel disconnected. Many young people have become resigned to having unanswered questions and have concluded that our traditions don't make sense, don't communicate purpose, and are therefore not relevant to our daily lives. Personally, I went off to find purpose in civics, government work and public education instead.

When I later ran for State Assembly in California, I once again started participating with Hindu organizations. Naturally I had the intention of raising money and collecting votes, but I also continued to align my actions with my beliefs. I eventually enrolled in a Hindu University of America (HUA) course titled *Orientation to Hindu Studies*. We Hindus have inherited thousands of years of sophisticated thought on the nature of the universe, life and humanity, which came through in this course. This was a far different introduction than the Eurocentric version of history I'd received in California public schools in my youth.

But it is not enough to critique the dominant perspective. Alternatives are needed, and the HUA is part of that.



Overarching and competing systems like government and religion have broad influence in public consciousness wherever we go. The diverse and insightful depths of Hinduism should compete in this marketplace of ideas. In order for the average Hindu American to become confident in sharing and talking about their traditions and correcting popular misconceptions, we need to develop and agree on a coherent Hindu narrative. Currently there are competing Hindu narratives—some imposed by outsiders, some hijacked by politicians. But for me, the real Hindu narrative is about the interconnectedness of everything, while giving purpose, motivation and direction to all people who are trying to live their best lives while aspiring towards enlightenment and moksha.

We need legitimate institutions that have broad appeal, are respected, capable, and have a long-term vision for where we are going. Different faith traditions in America have recognized these ideas in one way or another and have diligently worked to better represent their own beliefs in public consciousness. We, as Hindus, are lagging behind. For me, that means we need to be sharing our ideas in the marketplace of education at all levels. An academic institution such as Hindu University of America can be part of the evolving global ecosystem that opens the planet up to a more inclusive dharmic perspective. Dharma sustains us all and is critical for order and balance everywhere.

Hindu University of America has helped me take an important step in a dharmic direction, and I encourage you to enroll in the Orientation to Hindu Studies course to further this conversation and our collective understanding.

ANKUR PATEL is Director of Advancement for Hindu University of America. See: ankur.patel@hua.edu



Should Parents Teach Their Kids Religion?

In a globalized world, people are questioning the need to pass their faith on to the next generation. Let’s talk about that.

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

FOR MILLENNIA, IT HAS BEEN STANDARD PRACTICE for religious parents to pass on their tradition to their children. It has also been common for parents to want their children to join the family’s faith community. Times have changed. Nowadays, a significant number of parents consider themselves spiritual but profess no religious affiliation. Many follow secular humanism. Others focus exclusively on the secular education of their children, not wanting them to participate in religious activities or classes, as they see no career value in religion. Some are simply against religion. Marriages are now common between spouses of different faiths, particularly in Western countries. Recently I have heard some parents question if they even have the ethical right to ask their children to accept their religious beliefs and practices, reasoning that each human being should find his or her own spiritual way forward.

Then there are the pragmatic rationales: too busy to teach religion at home, not knowing enough about the religion, not attending religious activities on a regular basis, not being proud enough of their faith, and wanting their children to blend in well in an international school setting.

Hindu parents who don’t plan to teach religion in the home need to give serious thought as to how the next generation will learn the basics of good conduct and duties to family and community. Religions have traditionally been the most common source of this knowledge. On the web, you can find statements as to how children, given time, will figure out by themselves all about conduct and duty. However, I know educators who have sufficient personal experiences to strongly disagree. They have shared with me their dismay that many students in their school regularly cheat to get ahead in class. To them, winning is what matters, and the virtue of honesty is of lesser import.

Are there nonreligious resources for teaching ethical conduct? “Positive Psychology” is a one example. Respected for its comprehensive approach to learning values and duties, it has developed twenty-four character strengths described as “...the psychological ingredients for displaying human goodness, and they serve as pathways for developing a life of greater well-being.” See: www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths-via

A Study of How Religions Are Teaching Children

To understand how religion is being taught we can turn to the 2019 book *Religious Parenting: Transmitting Faith and Values in Contemporary America*, authored by Professor Christian Smith and coauthored with Bridget Ritz and Michael Rotolo, who interviewed hundreds of individuals of diverse religious backgrounds, including Hindus and Buddhists. They discovered that, despite massive diversity,



parents share a nearly identical approach to socializing their children religiously. For almost all, religion is important for the foundation it provides for becoming one’s best self on life’s journey.

On a small scale, we did some research in Asia among Hindu parents and found that many hold a similar perspective: that faith training develops character and helps their children to more confidently and effectively handle life’s challenges. Parents shared with me that religion is like a kite string that holds individuals to their earth-bound reality and keeps them from drifting into oblivion. One parent explained that learning about the many challenges Hinduism faced in past centuries teaches children

how great Hinduism is; it cannot be destroyed. In my opinion, the ways in which Hinduism can provide benefits to our next generation are significant and should not be dismissed. Let’s explore three.

Finding Enduring Happiness

Parents are naturally focused on raising their children to be successful. To many, success is defined almost exclusively as material prosperity, which is best achieved by pursuing a high paying, highly demanding professional career. Of course, this strategy includes marrying an equally educated and socially positioned spouse. This definition of success ignores a crucial component—being happy. I have met dozens of men and women who shared that they had always thought professional achievements and financial abundance would make them happy but found that it did not. Hinduism teaches that lasting happiness does not come from what we achieve in the material world. That kind of fulfillment is fleeting. Whatever is gained can be lost. Enduring happiness comes from abiding in our soul nature, our inner, spiritual self. My guru, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, stated it this way: “Learn to be happy by seeking happiness, not from others but from the depths of the soul itself.” To achieve this, he taught: “Put a smile on the faces of other people. Gain your happiness and your positive states of mind by making other people happy.” He knew that contentment, comes from giving and not from getting.

Controlling Anger

There are few things that ruin the quality of life more than anger. Therefore, learning to minimize expressions of this negative emotion and eventually eliminate them is important. A deep understanding of the law of karma allows us to accept what is happening to us as what should be happening to us and not become angry about it. We accept that it is in our karma to experience what we are undergoing, both positive and negative. Whatever is happening to us is precipitated by our actions in this and past lives.



Reducing Stress

Hindu children face stress in the form of major exams in school, which start as early as age eight in Asian countries. Under such stress, they can’t do their best work or learn effectively. Hatha yoga asana routines have the power to balance the nervous system and reduce anxiety if performed regularly every week. Another method is the regular practice of diaphragmatic breathing. The basic idea is to train yourself, and your kids, to breathe from the diaphragm and not from the chest. This is the natural way. It is how babies breathe. However, once we take on life’s tensions, the diaphragm tightens and we tend to expand the chest when we breathe. The diaphragm can be felt right below your solar plexus, just below where the ribs separate. To locate it, place your fingertips on the diaphragm and cough. When your fingers are directly on the diaphragm, they will jump as you cough. Whenever you need to relax, such as before (and during!) an important meeting or exam, take just one minute to breathe deeply from the diaphragm. Doing this a few times will convince you of pranayama’s power to ease tensions in the nervous system. It will become a tool you can use in many situations.

These three examples clearly show that the beliefs and practices of Hinduism are designed to help an individual live a happier, more creative and more successful life.

Here’s a quote from a participant in our informal survey in Asia: “Learning religion is paramount—especially with the kind of challenges children face these days. More often than not, Hindu religion is narrowly viewed from the ritualistic point of view. Many fail to

Religious training: Each of us has a duty to pass our heritage on to the next generation. Above, a young mother teaches her child that even the distant moon is worthy of our reverence, acknowledging the Hindu understanding of the interconnected sacredness of all things

see the entirety of the religion and how it encapsulates human life as a whole in all aspects—metaphysics, yoga, ayurveda, human values, rituals, vastu, astrology and culture. If Hindus realize how wholesome the religion truly is, I am sure they will be more than willing to teach it or send their children to religious classes.”

There is no better way to conclude than to draw from the bold wisdom of my Gurudeva In speaking to an audience of Saivite Hindus, he stated: “Yes, we have but one duty to perform: to pass our religion on to the next generation, the next, the next and the next. How is this done? Through Saivite education, building more schools. We must educate our youth well. The alternative is to allow Saivism to be conquered by atheism, to be conquered by Christianity, to be conquered by Islam, to be conquered by existentialism and Western rationalism, materialism and secular humanism, and to be conquered by the liberal neo-Indian postulations which seek to cut the roots of tradition. Our only hope lies in educating the children, the young minds which are open and eager to learn, but which are being enticed away from their heritage. Hold them close, protect them, love them dearly and give them the treasures of Saivism. That is the greatest gift you can offer them. Everything else will perish. Everything else will decay.”



LETTERS

Almost Like Being There!

In his carefully documented article on a pilgrimage to the temples of Char Dham, (HINDUISM TODAY, APR/MAY/JUN 2019, *Char Dham: The Holy Himalayan Pilgrimage to Four Temples is Both Grueling and Grace-Giving*) author Devraj Agarwal, quotes a devotee who goes to the closing ceremony of the annual events: "It overwhelms me each time I watch it... that is why we pilgrimage, to have the experiences one cannot have at home."

As an inspired reader, I pause to reflect and deny. Though even a trek to the grocery store can sometimes be fatiguing, the journey for spiritual soul searching is a far greater task. Yet, through the pages of HINDUISM TODAY, a stable of talented writers and beautifully reproduced imagery of Deities, temples and pilgrims, I can truly imagine myself there.

As with many elders on the spiritual path, with various and sundry physical challenges, the body tires of waiting for renewal. There are times that I feel impatient. Like the uncensored grandchildren of mine, I want it now—the high speed internet connection, a megabyte-fueled magic carpet to a spiritual destination without too much wait time or digital effort.

Albeit at a physical distance, sometimes there is that Divine travel—these fine stories bring intimacy to the reader, and thanks to the talent and insight of thoughtful writers, photographers and exemplary editors, I can still travel to these wonderfully inspiring destinations. Thank you.

BOBBI GAIL
HONOLULU, HI, USA

The Practice Must End

As a white, European-origin Hindu, it was interesting to discover, through the words of your article on Pashupatinath temple, that "those [Western] Hindus so excluded [from entering the temple] understand the need to control tourists and are content to worship outside the main temple." The article is thoroughly mistaken when it comes to Hindus being excluded from entering one of the most famous Siva temples in the entire world. I would not in any way be content to worship outside the main temple, at Pashupatinath or any temple. Such exclusionary practices—whether explained in logistical terms, or in quasi-spiritual terms, or using tradition as justification, as is the case in some other temples—in no way live up to the lofty spiritual vision that is the core of Hinduism. This practice must end.

MAT McDERMOTT
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Hikers at Nepal's largest temple: Students from New Zealand visit areas of the Pashupatinath complex that are open to the general public.

Shocked by Excusing Racism

HINDUISM TODAY is such a fine magazine that I was shocked to read in the article about Pashupatinath Temple that "White" people are categorically not allowed, even though some may be in fact Hindus," followed by the writer's justification of the discrimination by saying it would be too challenging for officials to sort out actual Hindus. The discrimination by the temple officials is bad enough; the article's minimizing and excusing it is deeply offensive.

BETH JONES
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✓ The point about the reaction of Western Hindus was inserted in the article by the editors of HINDUISM TODAY, not the article's main author. Many "white" bhaktas feel legitimately offended when this happens. Every religion works to protect the sanctity of worship. Still, virtually all Hindu temples allow free access to worshipers. A small percentage

of large, traditional temples seek to control access, which can appear hypocritical when they allow a dark-skinned Christian access and then turn away a white-skinned devotee who has sincerely adopted Sanatana Dharma. There is certainly a legitimate issue here: how can managers of a Hindu temple maintain the sanctity of worship and prevent it from becoming a menagerie for tourists and onlookers oblivious of Hindu rites? We would welcome letters with positive solutions. Our founder, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, had a strict one. He required his Western devotees to formally convert to Hinduism and change their legal name. A Hindu name, usually with the attributes of the Divine, says volumes about sincerity and commitment. In many cases, if you are well-dressed and show your passport or your namakarana certificate with a name like "Lakshmi Tandavan," access is granted. Read more about that in the story on the back cover of this issue, "How to Become a Hindu."

God Exists as the "X" Factor?

The argument that "God Exists as the X Factor" (*Letters*, Apr/May/Jun 2020) grabbed my attention, but I don't think the argument is sound. Nature may have no known or human origin, but that does not validate the conclusion that "God made it", or that any 'X' (unknown) created nature. The teleological argument ("argument by design" or "intelligent design" theory) is William Paley's famous watch argument ("Natural Theology") which was widely discredited by a range of philosophers, primarily the empiricist philosopher David Hume ("Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion") but also by Immanuel Kant, and even by Epicurus during the Hellenistic age.

The initial part of the watch argument is: 1) a watch is a product of intelligent and purposeful design, and 2) the universe resembles human creations e.g., watches, 3) therefore it is probable that the universe was intelligently and purposefully designed.

Hume argues that we have observed man-made objects (e.g., a watch) being designed, but we have not witnessed the design of a universe to complete the analogy. Also, we observe a watch in its entirety, but we cannot observe the universe in its entirety, due to its

size. So, although we observe order in parts of the universe, this doesn't rule out disorder in other parts. We cannot argue from parts to a whole. Also, any analogy depends on two things being similar, and human and universal design are too dissimilar for analogy (comparing apples to oranges). The knowledge we have of how a watch is built cannot lead us to how a universe would be built since we have knowledge only of the former, and we have no other universes to test the analogy.

Hume continues that there simply is no inference of Designer from observation of the complexities of nature, and even if one accepted the conclusion of Necessary Designer, there is no reason to necessarily conclude a benevolent omnipotent Being. For example, applying only inductive reasoning, we may just as well interpret creation of viruses like Covid-19 to be of non-benevolent design ("evil"). Logic simply won't bridge the gap between observations and purposeful design. We just don't know, so cannot correctly make the watch analogy stick.

'X' is an unknown factor, but not necessarily attributable to God or Intelligent Creation. I think we are left with the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard's conclusion that all rational arguments for the existence of God fail and a Leap of Faith (not Kierkegaard's

words) is the alternative. This doesn't necessarily lead to atheism, but simply the recognition that Faith and Will, not Reason must be the basis of religious convictions. If we emphasize our beliefs, traditions, and faith—even if not supported by logic and reason—we avoid the pitfall of needing to explain and theorize to justify God's cosmic necessity. We don't need to rationally affirm God through inference, but to love God. Reason and logic will not help towards that goal.

KAILASH DHAKSHINAMURTHY
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✓ Letters in response from a Hindu philosophical position, with references to the Upanishads and Agamas, would help to round out this very interesting on-going discussion.

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

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107 Kaholalele Road
Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA
or faxed to: (808) 822-4351
or visit: www.hinduismtoday.com/letters

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

Financial Challenges in Changing Times

HINDUISM TODAY's great success in digital realms has caused a dip in income

LIKE THE WORLD AT LARGE, HINDUISM TODAY is feeling the effect of the great changes happening at this time. And, like nearly everyone, we are striving to meet the collateral challenges. We asked our publisher, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, how our magazine is navigating through these changing winds and what plans might be afoot.

"Two worldwide changes have affected the magazine in recent years," Satguru explained. "They offered us rich opportunities. We seized them, and they have turned out well. But at the same time, they have created some new financial challenges.

"Over the decades, we have been able to meet our current, ongoing expenses rather easily. But then, along came the digital age and turned everything upside down—a tornado that we, and the whole publishing world, are still adjusting to.

"We put a great deal of thought and resources to expand HINDUISM TODAY into the digital realms, and the results have been gratifying. Thanks to our

several apps, digital versions and strong presence on the web, our readership has soared. We couldn't be happier. But there is a side effect. All of our digital offerings, being free, do not compensate for the ensuing loss of revenue from dwindled print subscriptions and copy sales.

"There is another trend challenging us further. It has always been a part of our mission to provide free copies to worthy recipients, such as swamis, leaders, students, ashrams, temples and cultural societies. The good news is: their number is increasing rapidly. We are discovering more and more such great souls and institutions out there. It is a wonderful sign for Hinduism and a marvelous fulfillment for our magazine, an ever-wider opening for disseminating a treasury of Hinduism to those who will make the most of it.

"But this propitious trend also has its repercussions. As it grows, costs increase without an offsetting income."

Until now, we have asked for support for the magazine's two endowments, the Production Fund and the Complimentary Subscription Fund. We certainly want to



Publisher of Hinduism Today:

In these changing times, we need to build up a financial reserve to respond to sudden needs or opportunities.

maintain that support, as it guarantees the future. But henceforth, we suggest that support be best done through one's estate plan; see honline.org

And to meet today's needs, we would suggest directing yearly, monthly or occasional gifts to HINDUISM TODAY's current expenses fund at bit.ly/help-ht, or by contacting us:

1-888-464-1008 • support@hindu.org

QUOTES & QUIPS

“Only a mind purified by meditation is without stored karma”

Rishi Patanjali (2nd to 4th century bce), *author of the Yoga Sutras*

People don't realise that to be free means to be firmly attached to a system, that discipline is the road to a higher freedom. **Chandrashekarendra Saraswati** (1894-1994), *68th Jagadguru of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham*

We become wiser by adversity; prosperity destroys our appreciation of the right. **Seneca** (4 bce-65 ce), *Stoic philosopher*

In me alone originates the All, in me the All is established, in me all things come to rest. I am that Brahman without a second! *Kaivalya Upanishad 19*

You create your future by your thoughts now; if you think nobly, you will be

noble in conduct. If you think basely, no environment will make you different. Thus, thoughts and actions are interdependent. Be vigilant and allow only good thoughts in your mental field. **Swami Sivananda Saraswati** (1887-1963)

Joys and sorrows are time born and cannot last. Therefore, do not be perturbed by them. The greater the difficulties and obstructions, the more intense will be your endeavor to cling to His feet and the more will your prayer increase from within. **Anandamayi Ma** (1896-1982), *God-intoxicated yogini and mystic Bengali saint*

It is impossible to begin to learn that which one thinks one already knows.

Epictetus (c.55-c.135 ce), *Stoic philosopher*

A student went to his meditation teacher and said, "My meditation is horrible! I feel so distracted, or my legs ache, or I'm constantly falling asleep. It's just horrible!" "It will pass," the teacher said matter-of-factly. A week later, the student came back to his teacher. "My meditation is wonderful! I feel so aware, so peaceful, so alive! It's just wonderful!" "It will pass," the teacher replied matter-of-factly.

The most important lesson that man can learn from life, is not that there is pain in this world, but that it is possible for him to transmute it into joy. **Rabindranath Tagore** (1861-1941)

If you damage the character of another, you damage your own. *Yoruba Proverb*

Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself. **Rumi** (1207-1273), *Sufi mystic*

We learn little from victory, much from defeat. *Japanese Proverb*

Be not afraid of anything. You will do marvelous work. It is fearlessness that brings heaven even in a moment. **Swami Vivekananda** (1863-1902)

It is easy to hate and it is difficult to love. This is how the whole scheme of things works. All good things are difficult to achieve; and bad things are very easy to get. **Confucius** (551-479 bce), *Chinese philosopher*

Speak only if it improves upon the silence. **Mahatma Gandhi** (1869-1948)

Bondage and Liberation are of the mind alone. **Sri Ramakrishna** (1836-1886)

Every step is on the path. **Lao Tzu** (4th or 6th century bce), *author of the Tao Te Ching*

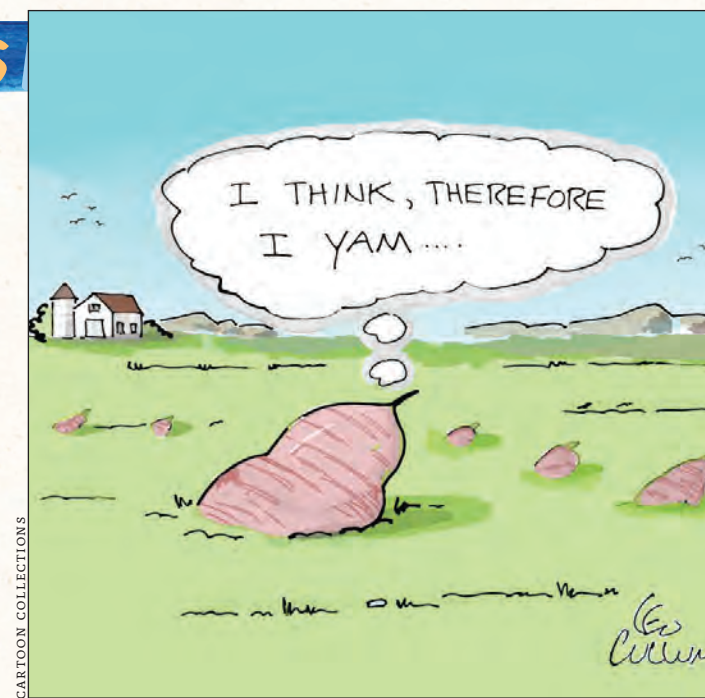
Perfect health, sincerity, honesty, straightforwardness, courage, disinterestedness, unselfishness, patience, endurance, perseverance, peace, calm, self control are all things that are taught infinitely better by example than by beautiful speeches. **Sri Aurobindo** (1872-1950)

We're not trying for perfection, we're trying for improvement. **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami**, *publisher of Hinduism Today*

It is a great power to be able to look beyond ourselves and see others as they really are, how they really think and how they really

feel. When we are wrapped up in our own individual ego, this is hard to do. We surmise that those we know are exactly like us, and we find fault with them when they are not. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927-2001), *founder of Hinduism Today*

CARTOON COLLECTIONS



FUN & GAMES

Crossword Puzzle

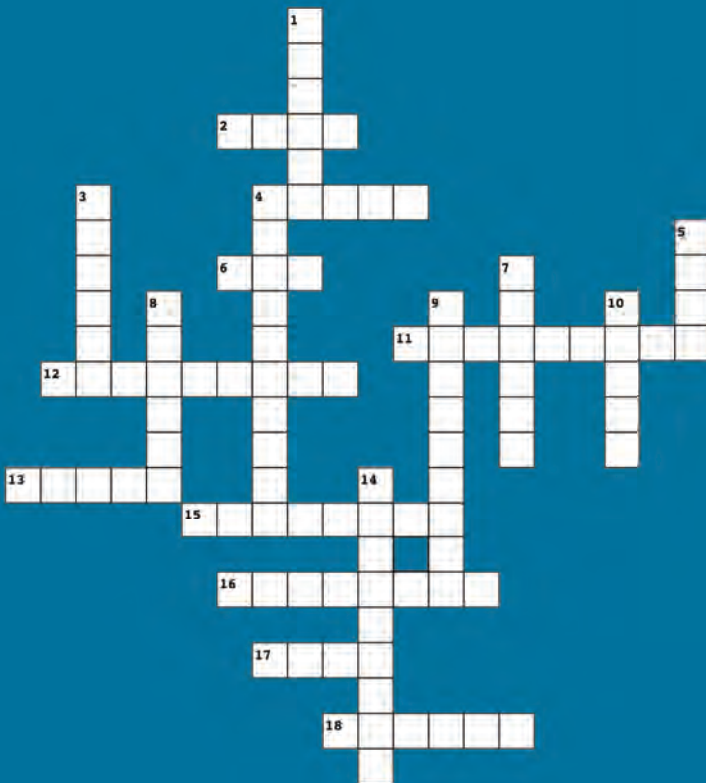
Across

2. Hindu God of Death**
4. Marked courage or bravery
6. The external personality or sense of "I" and "mine."
11. "Serpent power."**
12. Goddess of the arts and learning**
13. Vedic God of rain and thunder**
15. To love or consider with respect and admiration
16. Time without beginning or end.
17. "Union"***
18. Hari**

Down

1. "Noninjury," nonviolence or nonhurtfulness**
3. "Liberation." Release from the cycle of birth and death**
4. Of a diet which excludes meat, fish, fowl and eggs.
5. God of Fire**
7. "A power, accomplishment; perfection."**
8. "Wheel"***
9. Remaining quiet, still, or calm; inactive
10. Wood-apple (or bael) tree**
14. A Hindu monk or swami**

**Sanskrit word



Online version: crosswordlabs.com/view/2020-04-11-362

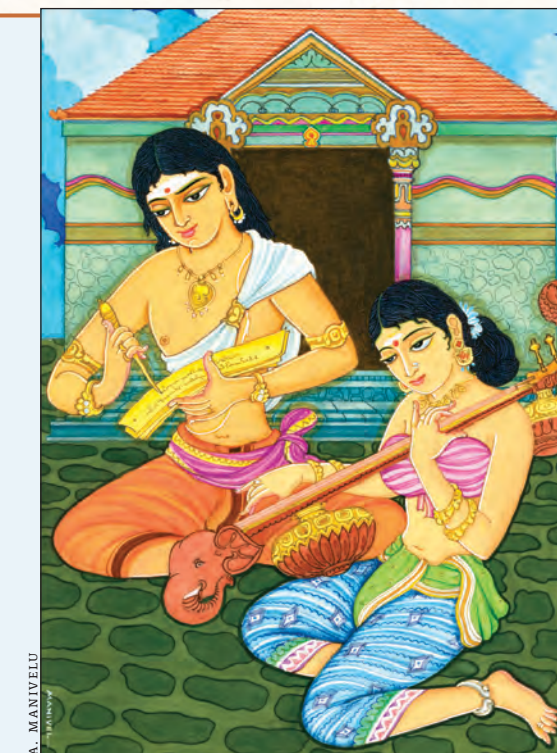
Answers on page 15, at the bottom, upside down

BASICS

Sixty-Four Arts

THE SIXTY-FOUR ARTS ARE A CLASSICAL curriculum of sacred sciences, studies, arts and skills listed in various Hindu shastras. Their most well-known appearance is in the *Kama Sutra*, which (apart from its main focus on arts related to love-making) lists 64 *bahya kalās*, or practical arts, as required study for cultured persons. They are: 1) singing, 2) instrumental music, 3) dancing, 4) painting, 5) forehead adornments, 6) making decorative floral and grain designs on the floor, 7) home and temple flower arranging, 8) personal grooming, 9) mosaic tiling, 10) bedroom arrangements, 11) creating music with water, 12) splashing and squirting with water, 13) secret mantras, 14) making flower garlands, 15) head adornments, 16) dressing, 17) costume design, 18) perfumery, 19) jewelry making, 20) magic and illusions, 21) ointments for charm and virility, 22) manual dexterity, 23) cooking, eating and drinking, 24) beverage and dessert preparation, 25) making

and mending garments, 26) embroidery, 27) playing vina and drum, 28) riddles and rhymes, 29) poetry games, 30) tongue twisters and difficult recitation, 31) literary recitation, 32) drama and storytelling, 33) verse composition games, 34) furniture caning, 35) erotic devices and knowledge of sexual arts, 36) crafting wooden furniture, 37) architecture and house construction, 38) knowing precious stones and metals, 39) metalworking, 40) gems and mining, 41) gardening and horticulture, 42) games of wager involving animals, 43) training parrots and mynas to speak, 44) hairdressing, 45) coding messages, 46) speaking in code, 47) foreign languages and dialects, 48) making flower carriages, 49) spells, charms and omens, 50) making simple mechanical devices, 51) memory training, 52) reciting verses from hearing, 53) decoding messages, 54) the meanings of words, 55) dictionary studies, 56) prosody and rhetoric, 57) impersonation, 58) artful dressing, 59) games of dice, 60) board games with dice, 61) making dolls and toys for children, 62) personal etiquette and animal training, 63) knowledge of dharmic warfare and victory, and 64) physical culture.



A cultured life: A young couple practices the classical arts of poetry writing and playing the vina.

Loving Gaṇeśa

HINDUISM'S ENDEARING ELEPHANT-FACED GOD



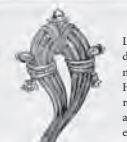
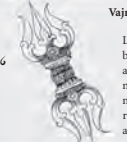
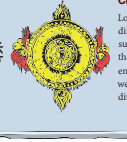
An illustrated resource on the benevolent Lord of dharma, remover of obstacles, patron of art and science, honored around the world in many cultures as first among the celestials

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

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Ever since its first black and white edition in 1996, *Loving Gaṇeśa* has been a popular book among Hindus of all denominations each of whom reveres the portly Deity who is first to be worshiped among all the Gods.

Even the most austere yogī starts his inward journey by invoking this God, who softens karma and guides dharma. He reigns over our beginnings, our changes, earthly decisions and problems—always there when needed, never aloof. Here a Hindu master invites us into Gaṇapati's interior meanings, rites, mantras and sacred symbols, unfolding an intimate depiction of the mysterious Deity. *Loving Gaṇeśa* is part of the comprehensive works of Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927-2001), founder of Hinduism Today magazine.

1996	2020
Paśa, Noose  Loving Gaṇeśa's provident mind, like the noose, draws close those He loves most dearly and reaches out to encircle and save strayed ones in extraordinary ways.	Paśa, Noose  Loving Gaṇeśa's provident mind, like the noose, draws close those in need and reaches out to encircle and save strayed ones in extraordinary ways.
Vajratriśūla, Lightning Bolt  Loving Gaṇeśa, like His brother Murugaṇ, wields a sure weapon, the lightning bolt: spirit over mind, mind over matter, ruling both the higher and lower chakras.	Vajratriśūla, Lightning Bolt  Loving Gaṇeśa, like His brother Murugaṇ, wields a sure weapon, the lightning bolt: spirit over mind, mind over matter, ruling both the higher and lower chakras.
Chakra, Discus  Loving Gaṇeśa holds the discus, symbol of the sun and of the mind, as the moon symbolizes the emotions. Employed as a weapon, it is the intellect divinely empowered.	Chakra, Discus  Loving Gaṇeśa holds the discus, symbol of the sun and of the mind, as the moon symbolizes the emotions. Employed as a weapon, it is the intellect divinely empowered.

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FROM THE UPANISHADS

What Is the Primal Cause?

Reflections on the subtle origins of existence, resident within us all

The following is a translation of the Svetasvatara Upanishad from The Principal Upanishads by S. Radhakrishnan. This Upanishad belongs to the Krishna Yajurveda. The following verses, 1 to 16 are drawn from Chapter 1 and have been lightly edited for clarity.

- Those who philosophize about Brahman state: "What is the cause of creation? Is it Brahman? Whence are we born? By what do we live? On what are we established? O ye who know Brahman, tell us of who presides over our lives, which are of varied conditions of pleasures and pains.
- Time, inherent nature, necessity, chance, the elements, the womb or the person, should they be considered as the cause? It cannot be a combination of these because of the existence of the soul. Even the soul is powerless in respect to the cause of pleasure and pain.
- Those who were devoted to meditation saw the self-power of the Divine hidden in its own qualities. He is the One who rules over all these causes, from time to the soul.
- We understand Him as a wheel with one outer rim, with three tires, 16 ends, 50 spokes, 20 counter-spokes and six sets of eights, whose one rope is manifold, which has three different paths, whose one delusion arises from two causes.
- We meditate on Him as a river of five streams, from five sources, fierce and crooked, whose waves are the five vital breaths, whose original source is the fivefold perception, with five whirlpools, an impetuous flood of five pains, divided into 50 kinds of suffering with five branches.
- In this vast brahma wheel—which enlivens all things, in which all rest—the soul flutters about thinking that the self in him and the Mover (the Lord) are different. Then, when blessed by Him, he gains life eternal.
- This has been sung as the supreme Brahman and in it is the triad. It is the firm support, the imperishable. The knowers of Brahman, by knowing what is therein, become merged in Brahman, intent thereon and freed from birth.
- The Lord supports all this, which is a combination of the mutable and the immutable, the manifest and the unmanifest. And the soul, not being the Lord, is bound because of his being an enjoyer. By knowing God, the soul is freed from all fetters.

- There are two beginningless ones, 'the knowing' and 'the unknowing;' the first is all-powerful and the other is powerless. Then there is another, connected with the enjoyer and the objects of enjoyment. And there is the infinite Self of universal form—non-active. When one finds out this triad, that is Brahman.
- What is perishable is the primordial matter. What is immortal and imperishable is Hara (the Lord). Over both the perishable and the soul, the one God rules. By meditating on Him, by uniting with Him, by reflecting on His being more and more, there is complete cessation from the illusion of the world.
- By knowing God there is a falling off of all fetters; when the sufferings are destroyed, there is cessation of birth and death. Meditating upon Him is the third stage. This brings about separation from the body, universal lordship, absorption into oneself alone and fulfillment of desires.
- That Eternal which rests in the self should be known. Truly there is nothing beyond this to be known. By knowing the enjoyer, the object of enjoyment and the Mover of all, everything has been completed. This is the threefold Brahman.
- As the form of fire when latent in its source is not seen and yet its seed is not destroyed, but may be seized again and again in its source by means of the stick drill, so it is in both cases. The Self has to be seized in the body by means of the syllable aum.
- By making one's body the lower friction stick and the syllable aum the upper friction stick, by practicing the drill of meditation, one may see the God, hidden, as it were."
- As oil in sesame seeds, as butter in cream, as water in riverbeds, as fire in friction sticks, so is the Self found in one's own soul if one looks for Him with truthfulness and austerity.
- The Self which pervades all things, as butter is contained in milk, which is the root of self-knowledge and austerity, that is the Brahman, the highest mystic doctrine. That is the highest mystic doctrine.



SARVAPELLI RADHAKRISHNAN (1888-1975) was an Indian philosopher and statesman, India's first Vice President (1952-1962) and second President (1962-1967).

Sri Sundaramurthy Sivam Sivachariyar (center right), founder and head of the Veda Agama Samskrutha Maha Patashala, Sri Sri Gurukulam, with teacher Mahesh Sharma Dwivedi (center left) and the 29 students of the Patashala's 18th batch, who joined in 2019 and range in age from ten to 18



SPECIAL FEATURE

Training Priests for Our 21st-Century Hindu World

An unusual school dedicated to training new generations of Saivite Hindu priests is situated in a sheltered corner of the cosmopolitan Art of Living campus founded by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar on the outskirts of Bengaluru, India. One of Sri Sri's early aspirations was to recreate the ancient gurukulam system of priest training in a manner suited to modern times. Now, eighteen years later, the resulting *gurukulam* has found resounding success.



BY CHOODIE SHIVARAM, BENGALURU

AMID THE SERENE SURROUNDINGS OF Kanakapura village, about 19 miles from the city of Bengaluru, sits the 65-acre central campus of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's Art of Living (AOL) ashram. This vast teaching and service center teems with devotees from around the world, engaged in its innumerable activities. Along with hundreds of acres of adjoining ashram properties, it is a city unto itself.

Tucked away from the main activity center is the campus of the Veda Agama Samskrutha Maha Patashala, Sri Sri Gurukulam. Here, in the lush greenery deep inside the ashram, over 300 students of varying ages are learning our ancient scriptures as they train to become temple priests. While 95 are studying the four *Vedas*, our focus is the 210 who are studying the *Agamas*, the scriptures that guide traditional temple worship.

At the entrance to the campus is the temple of Pratapa Ganapathy, Lord of Learning, in a large open-air roofed pavilion. The temple is surrounded by classrooms—spacious thatched huts called *kuteeras* made of bamboo and bricks, well ventilated and placed well apart. Each is named after a rishi. We feel a powerful sense of joy and serenity on entering the school. The air reverberates with the chanting of slokas from all directions.

Though the students range in age from nine to nineteen, there is no cacophony of mindless chatter, no childish running around as they move from the living quarters to their classrooms. Dressed in spotless white shirts and dhotis, they walk in a disciplined line with happy smiles on their faces.

Origins

Mrs. Bhanumathi Narasimhan, Chairperson of the Patashala, recounts the school's evolution: "We started Ved Vigyan Maha Vidya Peeth School for Veda in 1981 to provide a scientific reappraisal of the *Vedas*. We added *Agama* study after Sundaramurthy Sivam Sivachariyar joined us in 1995." In 2002, the Veda Agama Samskrutha Maha Patashala



(Pāṭhaśālā) was founded and placed under his stewardship. It is exclusively dedicated to learning the Saivagama tradition and rituals connected with temple worship.

The gurukulam follows the pattern of the ancient schools where students lived in the home of the guru. It traces its genesis to

Kailash Ashrama Mahasamsthana, founded in 1960 by Sri Tiruchi Mahaswamiji at Rajarajeshwarinagar, Bengaluru. Sundaramurthy, an alumnus of that gurukulam and devoted student of Tiruchi Mahaswamiji, relates, "I studied at Sri Kailash Ashram Patashala and grew up under the grace of Mahaswamiji. Sri Sri Ravishankar used to regularly visit the ashram and had a close association with Tiruchi Mahaswamiji. During his visits he would talk to us. In the early days, before starting this Art of Living ashram, he used to regularly perform Devi puja on a grand scale at his residence in Jayanagar on Fridays. During one of these celebrations, he invited Mahaswamiji to his house, and I had gone along. Then in 1994 Sri Sri planned a grand Chandi Homa at his ashram and requested Mahaswamiji to send us to perform it. Thereafter, every year we would come to the AOL ashram to perform Chandi Homa. Thus started my association with Sri Sri and AOL."

The original Veda Patashala catered to learning *Rig* and *Yajur Vedas*, serving about 100 students. This was not a residential program; students also attended regular school and took their lessons in *Vedas* during the mornings and evenings.

Sundaramurthy continues: "In 1999, Sri Sri said he wanted me to start a gurukulam in

.....
Gurukulam: (clockwise from left) Sundaramurthy Sivam Sivachariyar, principal; all students gather in the main assembly hall; entrance to the main hall; Sundaramurthy and faculty address the school; a typical class group of about 25 study together in an open-air kuteera



The Gurukulam Revival

INDIA'S TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING SYSTEM, THE GURUKULAM, IS A profound repository not only of invaluable educational content, but the very traditions and culture of Sanatana Dharma. Through history, gurukulams transferred knowledge in a highly defined process from generation to generation. Fundamental to the system is the guru-disciple relationship, a sacred bond that ensures effective learning. The guru is responsible for the intellectual, moral and spiritual growth of his students.

From 800 ce onward, continuous invasions forced the gurukulams to retreat and shield themselves behind closed doors. The British in particular made every effort to shut down this indigenous system and replace it with their own, which eventually overshadowed the gurukulam system. During their rule, countless Indians, including political leaders, were the product of their fashionable imported system of education. Even today, the British system prevails in India.

The late 20th century saw a newfound interest in and revival of the nearly lost indigenous system. Much credit goes to the spiritual gurus who set up gurukulams at their ashrams to train disciples in-house. Newer gurukulams gained in popularity as part of an overall resurgence of Hindu values and traditions. Parents sending their

children to the schools were eager to give their offspring what they themselves had missed—the ancient Indian experience of education. Many gurukulams exist today in India, and elsewhere, too. Each has its unique curriculum and ideology, but all help to foster the current revival of Hindu awareness, including its scriptures, traditions, learning methods and the Sanskrit language.

In particular, priest training in South India today is accomplished in a variety of ways. At one end of the spectrum, temple priests train at home their children and sometimes those of associate priests. Larger temples have formal schools for priesthood candidates. Some such schools, like that of Pichai Gurukkal in Pillaiyarpatti are supplying highly trained priests who work in temples around the world.

The Agama Patashala at the Art of Living Ashram and the Tirupati Temple Patashala in Andhra Pradesh are working to take the training a step further, having earned certification to grant university degrees that are recognized by their state's higher education system. For graduating priests, this results in higher pay and greater respect and social standing in the community.

There are hundreds of thousands of Hindu temple around the world, and each is in need of one, sometimes a dozen or more, competent pujaris. The authenticity of worship and the proper management of temples rests on the shoulders of the priest in charge. As new temples are built, the need grows. The padashalas are the only proper path to achieving this.

School in Session...





the Saivagama tradition. *Saiva Agama* has sections not only for performing worship such as puja and fire homa but also for teaching the philosophy behind these rituals. Sri Sri wanted to train youngsters to understand the significance of rituals, why they are done, and know how to perform them perfectly without any omissions.

"At first I was hesitant and questioned whether I had the capability to shoulder such a huge responsibility. But Sri Sri had confidence in me. In 2002, seven years after I came here, we started this Agama patashala as a residential program, with 15 students. This gave us direction and momentum. We knew it was important to establish a center for knowledge. I felt it was a virtuous deed to teach children and instill our traditional knowledge systems in them."

Recreating the Training System

A huge void was created in India when the traditional practices were replaced by Western education. The hereditary vocation of temple priests in particular has dwindled. Most priests nowadays have little or no proper training in priesthood, having chosen the profession out of necessity—even though the salaries of priests are deplorable.

AOL's Veda Agama Samskrutha Maha Patashala, along with other patashalas, is helping to shoulder the huge responsibility of removing that void by training priests qualified to create a bridge between the devotee

and the Divine—priests who are knowledgeable in the *Agamas*, who can dispel misinformation and put back on track the lost values of Sanatana Dharma.

Starting with just 15 students and three faculty members 18 years ago, the gurukulam has grown to 219 students and over 40 full- or part-time faculty members who are training students at various levels. Currently 114 students are preparing for the bachelor of arts program, 45 for their masters, five pursuing their MPhil and two are working on their PhD. Now serving in temples in their own community and around the globe are the 450 students who have already graduated. Among them, 72 students graduated as Acharyas, with Master's degree in *Saivagama*.

The gurukulam is not run on a commercial model; tuition, accommodation and the entire welfare of students throughout their stay is free of charge. Some 50 to 60 applications are received every year. There is no restriction on the number admitted, but a screening committee assesses each applicant to understand his intention and level of commitment. Most students belong to the Sivachariyar community and desire to continue in the priestly family profession.

"We don't want to turn away a deserving student," says Dr. V. Abhirama Sundaram, senior faculty and member of the school's governing board. "Sri Sri's aim is to create a thousand Sivachariyars." Dr. Sundaram is an Associate Professor at Vivekananda College, Chennai.

On selection, students are ritually initiated into the gurukulam to purify them, in the *diksha* ceremony mandated in the *Agamas*. A mantra is given to the student along with a new name that gives him a spiritual identity. In this two-day program, every student is individually initiated into the mantra by the guru. "Some of them display an immediate change in their personality after receiving diksha," says Sundaramurthy. "It's like a new energy has been infused into them. Receiving diksha puts them on a self-imposed regimen, performing *sandhyavandana* (certain rituals and Vedic recitation done three times a day), meditation and other practices. This automatically provides them a firm grip on their personality. Diksha gives them the strength to receive what is taught."

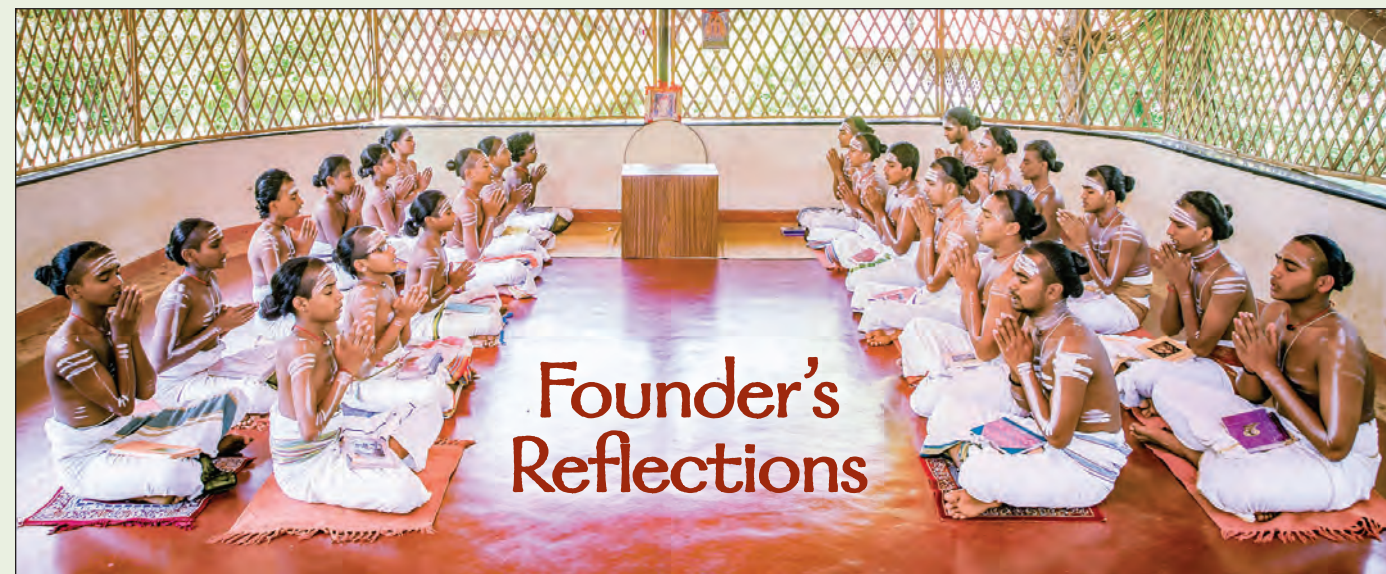
The screening process ensures that in each classroom the standard of understanding and IQ levels of students is nearly uniform. "In each class we want students to be on the same wavelength, irrespective of age. During the entry interview, we evaluate a student's capability to receive what is taught. Hence there is no room for competition and jealousy," explains Abhirama. "We follow a zigzag pattern where a class can have a nine-year-old

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Learning by doing: (below) students perform puja on campus; (right) a session of chanting practice in one of the gurukulam's picturesque open-air classrooms

Learning by Doing



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Founder's Reflections

DURING MY VISITS TO THE GURUKULAM, I CAN SEE THAT THE children are very comfortable with Sundaramurthy Sivam and his wife. Dr. Abhirama Sundaram comments to me, "He is a meticulous person; I have not before found such a dedicated and qualified man. He keeps a very hectic schedule from 5:30 am to midnight. Often he takes rounds in the middle of the night to see that things are in order and the boys safe. He takes personal care of each one of them." In a special interview, Sundaramurthy shared the following insights on founding the school 19 years ago.

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"The responsibility of taking care of the children is a huge challenge. Right from the time they wake up to the time they go to bed at night, it's our responsibility to ensure they are safe and happy. They would have been brought up with so much love and attention in their homes. We should ensure that they get adjusted to the gurukulam and the system here. We should be able to give them that love and attention. Once they are in class, their minds are occupied with lessons, but later their minds switch off and they become homesick. All issues relating to behavior of the students come to me alone. Patience and forgiveness are the keys to maintaining harmony, and I have always practiced this.

"In traditional homes like ours, we had our grandfather teaching us and transferring the rich traditional knowledge. So I felt I should engage in teaching and perform this duty of knowledge transfer. Even as a teenager I had this dream of starting a patashala. I never imagined that one day I would be starting a gurukulam on such a large scale. When Sri Sri gave me this opportunity, it was like materializing my dream.

"In the initial days of the patashala, we had a space crunch. The classroom was small, and it also served as the residential area. We had around 100 children, and managing everything was not easy. We were also learning how to run a gurukulam. The children did not adjust easily; they missed the comforts of home. We had to counsel and motivate them about why they were here and what the future held. When their morale would run low, it was a big challenge for us to raise their spirits high and keep them motivated. That could be done only with loving care and gentleness. But all these problems were stepping stones to building the gurukulam. Today we are completely competent to face any challenge. We are able to plan well.

"In the first year, in some cases involving certain incidents from students, there would be times when the thought would cross my mind, 'Why did I agree to shoulder this responsibility?' But we had the support of parents who let us discipline the boys and take

corrective measures. They encouraged us to make the gurukulam a success. ...When the gurukulam was started, the surrounding area was still under development. Civic facilities were sparse, and commuting was next to impossible. Transport facilities from the city were erratic. Students returning from their home town had to spend the entire night at the bus stand and would reach the ashram only in the morning. There were no mobile phones; contacting traveling students was impossible. Until they reached the ashram, we would be worried for their safety.

"When I'm away, my wife keeps a watchful eye on the children, their health, studies, behavior and whether they are doing their work properly. When they engage in seva (gardening, cleaning the surroundings, upkeep of the gurukulam), my wife monitors them. She also takes care of being a hostess to the teachers and visitors.

"Parents have come back to us saying that when the boys go home they bring about a healthy change by creating an atmosphere of calmness and sanctity. They have become so meticulous that they influence their parents to adapt a routine of timeliness, proper eating habits, cleanliness, frugality and not wasting time on frivolous things. Parents have come back and told us how they have changed for the better because of the children.

"Some children refuse to go home for vacation. In such cases, we let them stay here. But we do counsel them and tell them how important being with family is, to spend time with parents and siblings. We don't want them to get alienated from the family. In case there are any family functions and celebrations, we send them home to be part of the events.

"When I was age 11, my grandfather directed me to study the *Vedas*. It was not just the verses and pronunciation; I was trained to watch and observe the guru, the expressions on his face that gave meaning to what he was chanting. Without expression, learning is incomplete. One cannot learn from the Internet or mobile phone. Learning from a guru embeds it into us emotionally, spiritually and intellectually. With such learning, even if a student is awakened from deep sleep and asked to chant, he will do so without error.

"To follow and practice what we inherit from our lineage, from our forefathers, is important. It is our primary duty. We have a commitment to continue the practices of the community we belong to in order to preserve its traditions. We also have a social responsibility: we become a bridge between people and the practice of rituals. We have to teach other priests to perform the rituals without shortcomings, to bring the worship to people in its correct form. We have to do good to society, not just live for ourselves."



and a fourteen-year-old together. Age doesn't matter; the yardstick is whether the student is able to absorb what is being taught. That is why we are able to manage."

Thorough Training and Education

Running a traditional gurukulam in a world dominated by modernity and urban attractions is no easy feat. Abhirama explains, "To the best of our ability we are conducting lectures on the real facets of our tradition. The main problem today is we fail to understand the value of our own practices and their significance. As Swami Vivekananda rightly said, we are working like slaves, not as a master. So in our own way we are highlighting the significance of our traditions to our boys so that they will be torch bearers to society, so they will propagate the right values."

"Once the boys are well equipped," he continues, "they can counter any argument with facts and logic confidently. Why is there a problem of religious conversion? Because we do not know the *Bhagavad Gita* or *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*. Earlier, when we lived in joint families, our grandmothers would tell us stories from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Now the responsibility is on the elders to educate themselves and then lead the youngsters. Children are inquisitive and will not accept things blindly. We must tell them in a convincing way."

The patashala's six-year course comprises one year of primary education followed by

five years during which students are empowered with the knowledge of *Vedas*, *Agamas*, astrology, Saiva Siddhanta, music, yoga, *Thirumurai*, *Shilpa Shashtra*, and Sanskrit.

Besides their religious curriculum, students are trained to be computer competent. The gurukulam introduces students to the essentials of modern education to keep them globally engaged. Sports is a strong part of their extracurricular activity.

Graduating students receive the title *Sivagama Vidyavidhi*, which is equivalent to a bachelor of arts degree. "Students are given practical training in making arrangements for kumbhabhishekam, Chandi (a form of Parvati) homas, Yajnas preparation, puja vidhis—virtually every aspect of worship," explains Sundaramurthy. "Besides qualifying in the exams conducted by our gurukulam, students are simultaneously prepared for Saivagama exams conducted by HR&CE Tamil Nadu government, Sanskrit exams by Samskrutha Bharathi Trust and Rashtriya Samskri Sansthan, Delhi." On clearing the Sanskrit examination conducted by the Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments, the government of Karnataka, and Maharaja College of Mysore, students acquire the title *Sivagama Pravara*.

The gurukulam has been recognized for its outstanding quality of education and students. In 2015 the first set of 45 students received their post-graduation in Saivagama in association with the prestigious Sri Venkateshwara

Vedic University, TTD Tirupati. The then vice chancellor, Dr. Devanathan, told Abhirama that this was the first time in the history of the university that more than 40 students had graduated in Saivagama.

There are plans to elevate the gurukulam to a deemed university exclusively for Vedic and Agamic studies. Sri Sri aspires to make the school a full-fledged autonomous institution with higher studies in Saivagama. The patashala's governing council is pursuing an affiliation with Karnataka Sanskrit University to start a new bachelor of arts program in Saivagama.

Up until 2019, the Sanskrit College at Madras University had permitted students of the gurukulam to appear as private candidates. In 2015, a postgraduate student of the gurukulam secured the first rank.

Day-to-Day Functioning

Corporal punishment is forbidden at the gurukulam. In the first two years, students are normally not punished at all, only spoken with. For persistent issues, mild punishments like time out or staying outside the

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Learning the priestly arts: (clockwise from right) older students perform arati to the parade murthis of Siva and Parvati riding on Nandi; sipping water in preparation for worship; blessing the water; inward visualization of the Gods



The Art of Worship





class may be used. But most often, according to Abhirama, erring students are counseled. "That works well almost all the time. In the case of senior boys, if we find anything amiss we call their parents and keep them informed of the boy's behavior and counsel him in their presence. If we find that his behavior disturbs others, the boy is removed, but that's quite rare." In its 18 years of existence not a single student has voluntarily dropped out of the gurukulam, and only in the beginning years were a few expelled.

Students are divided into groups of six or seven. They are provided a complete schedule of activities. A senior student is assigned as leader; his task is to monitor and mentor his juniors. He sees that they stick to the proper sleep schedules, follow the daily routines and do their studies.

Separately organized teams of students are assigned responsibilities in rotation—assisting in the kitchen, sweeping the surroundings, cleaning the classrooms, serving food and other chores. This is how traditional gurukulams functioned. "Each team is a mixed group of students from different classes. Here the most junior students will not be directly entrusted with work, but will be trained. This system creates a healthy rapport and sustains a disciplined system of personality development," Sundaramurthy explains.

Ragging and bullying are strongly discouraged, and students caught doing either are corrected. "The leaders are trained and sensitized about handling children. In choosing a leader, we look at his personality and nature. We choose only boys who have the right attitude and personality. Every alternate day

the principal meets the leaders and receives their feedback. He silently monitors everyone at the gurukulam, keeping a watchful eye," states Abhirama.

The greatest challenge faced by all educational institutions today is students' access to gadgets and technology and the ensuing addictions that are possible. In the sacred environs of the gurukulam, these would become a huge risk in contrast to the culture and philosophy of the institution if not controlled. "Our whole program is so tight that it gives no room for distractions. No cell phones, not even a watch. And students are not allowed to accept gifts," Mrs. Bhanumathi informs us.

Abhirama adds, "The gurukulam is tucked away in the interiors of the Art of Living campus. It is next to Sri Sri's private residence. There is heavy security; one has to pass through multiple gates from the main campus. So students moving around independently is impossible. Also, because of our experience, we are able to detect any behavioral aberration instantaneously—body language is a give-away. We have strict norms restricting the use of mobile phones. It is a herculean task for us, but thanks to the environment and atmosphere in this gurukulam we have been able to manage."

On visits home, of course, the children are exposed to mobile phones, cinema and cricket (which is practically a religion in India); but that all gets curtailed when they return to the gurukulam. The gurukulam does arrange for screening cartoons, mythological and historical value-based films once a month to give the students a recreational experience.

Over 60 percent of the students at the

gurukulam are from economically weaker backgrounds, and many carry emotional baggage. The faculty at the gurukulam are sensitive to these issues and handle the students with care and love, especially at first.

"For the initial two years," Abhirama elucidates, "it's a very difficult task for us. We have a mix of streams. Some parents send their children here because of their inability to bring them up or send them to any other school owing to poverty. They may have no knowledge of the importance of shastras. Sometimes there is complete ignorance of what a gurukulam is. Others, such as village priests without a decent income, may send their children just to learn how to do pujas and assist them in the temple. They are not particular about the background knowledge; just being competent to perform rituals is enough. Other parents send their children with the ambition of making them highly qualified scholars in our shastras; these students are seeking a quality education to gain knowledge of the *Vedas* and *Agamas*."

As in any other institution, the gurukulam conducts test and exams at every level, monthly, quarterly and half yearly. There is a controller of examinations and an entire section dedicated to the examination and evaluation processes. "Most schools conduct two to three examinations, but we conduct

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Daily routine: (clockwise from above right) Blessing a meal. The school brochure lays out a typical day's schedule; sports include sack races (which are popular) and foot races.

Daily Schedule :

Morning		Evening	
04:30 AM	WAKE UP	05:30 PM	ANUSHTANAM
05:30 AM	PRATHAMARANAM & YOGA	06:15 PM	DAILY PARAYANAM & POOJA
06:00 AM	GO POOJA	07:00 PM	SPECIAL COACHING CLASSES
06:30 AM	ANUSHTANAM	08:00 PM	DINNER
07:00 AM	DAILY PARAYANAM & POOJA	08:30 PM	SELF STUDY
08:00 AM	SEVA	09:30 PM	SELF EFFACING TIME
09:00 AM	BREAKFAST		
09:20 AM	COMMON ASSEMBLY		
09:30 - 12.30 PM	MORNING SESSION CLASSES		
12:30 PM	MADHYANHIKAM		
01:00 PM	LUNCH		
01:30 PM	BREAK FOR PERSONAL WORKS		
02:30-05.00 PM	AFTERNOON SESSION CLASSES		
05:00 PM	SEVA		

21 examinations in the span of six years," explains Raj Kumar Sivam, coordinator at the principal's office.

Graduation and Beyond

The gurukulam's graduation ceremony, held every two years, is a grand event attended by eminent personalities. Forty to sixty students,

two batches, graduate together. During the gurukulam's first graduation in 2010, Swami Dayananada Saraswati addressed the crowd: "If anyone wants to start a gurukulam, they must come and see this gurukulam. This is a model for any Vedagama Patashala." At Swami's suggestion, the patashala added more subjects to the curriculum, including logic,

mimamsa (interpretation of Vedic texts), astrology and *tarka* (debate).

The gurukulam is today regarded as a premier institution with an outstanding faculty of luminaries and scholars. Students who have graduated come back and teach at the institution for at least one year out of gratitude. A few stay on as faculty.

Good Meals and Good Fun



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY VEDA AGAMA SAMSKRUTHA MAHA PATASHALA



Job placement after graduation is 100 per cent. Some students go back to their ancestral temples and fulfill the duties of priest; others take posts in India or abroad. Mrs. Bhanumathi relates proudly, "Our boys are placed well as soon as they graduate; they are in Orissa, Nepal, US, London and Canada. Immediately after graduation they are fully equipped to stand on their own feet. They are doing well. When I visited US, I discovered that the one priest I met was an alumni of our gurukulam, and he drives a Lexus! People praise him so much, and we feel elated. Our students walk out of the gurukulam as competent priests, and that speaks volumes about the leadership here."

The gurukulam is also at the forefront of research and publication, encouraging students to go beyond their syllabus and delve into other documents to enhance learning. Resulting research papers are published by the gurukulam for the benefit of students as well as for the literary repository. Nearly 50 books have been published to date in this way. "Students well versed in desktop publishing and typing help us in with such publishing in the research wing. Former students working abroad provide financial support," explains Abhirama.

The gurukulam was entrusted with the responsibility of editing over 11 manuscripts of the *Sahasragama*, a part of *Saiva Agama*. "We are honored to have been entrusted with this prestigious work," proclaims Abhirama.

"Copying from the original manuscript is an elaborate task requiring unique skills. With the help of the National Manuscript Mission we conducted a short-term course in manuscriptology to train and orient students to read manuscripts."

"What do you expect from students when they leave?" we asked Abhirama. "Sri Sri always said don't expect anything," he replies, "only do your duty properly. So, we don't expect anything from our students. But we have an objective: to make them the best Sivachariyars they can be. They should be the torchbearers for our intangible culture. They should work with utmost devotion, dedication, perfection and be model citizens of this country. That is our objective. When I go to class and teach, I want my students to be contributors, not in the form of money; I want them to come back and teach. We want them to contribute to the learning and progress of their juniors. In this vein, some graduates have expressed their desire to help us in research. One of our old students, Arun Kumar, who secured the first rank in post-graduation, is now teaching the higher classes. Our principal always tells our old students to keep coming back to the gurukulam and contribute, to spend some time with the students and impart whatever they can, to be mentors."

Conclusion

The gurukulam infuses in its students a sense of belonging, the feeling that the institution

belongs to them. That sense of responsibility is evident as I watch them move around the premises. Pride is writ large on their faces. This gurukulam is made not merely of building materials, it is made up of souls, of sentiment and attachment to learning and sharing.

Gurukulam graduates are of pedigree quality. Immediately after graduation, temples are waiting to engage them. Many are going back to their hometown or hereditary temples and have been able to resuscitate them. The Veda Agama Samskrutha Maha Patashala is a temple in itself, an edifice that will protect, preserve and propagate the traditional priestly practices. Sanatana Dharma is in safe hands here.

Dr. S. Shanmukha Shivachariar, one of the governing council members, sums it up nicely: "The fruits will be seen in another two decades when these children from the gurukula with strong foundations of our texts will be performing pujas in temples, infusing new energy. There will be a whole generation of priests from this school who will be able to guide devotees in the right direction, and there will be a huge improvement in the way pujas are performed. The seed has been sown here."

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Mind and spirit: (left to right) a view of the gurukulam's lush campus; faculty and students with HINDUISM TODAY publisher Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami



Student Voices



Kailash, London

"I came here because both my grandfather and father are priests. I have to carry on the profession of my lineage. When I came here four years ago, at age 10, I was going crazy, feeling sad and missing my country. After some time, I got used to this place. I don't even miss my friends in London now. There I had around 25 friends, but here I have 200 of them. Living at the gurukulam has brought a lot of changes to my lifestyle. I used to wake up late in the mornings, but here I'm up

by 4:30 in the morning. I wash my clothes, study by myself, and do my own work. I have become strong. It was difficult to adjust in the beginning, but my friends and guru gave me the courage and motivation to overcome these challenges very soon. Yes, the outside world in London and the schools there did attract me. But my father advised me to be brave and said it is going to be a wonderful experience at the gurukulam. When students come here, they realize the value of our traditions. At this gurukulam they tell us stories from the *Puranas*, of why we should follow our traditions, dress code, why we should have a *shika*, why we must follow rituals. This makes us feel proud of our traditions and gives us the resolve to follow them. And I love Sanskrit; I love the shapes of the letters."



Arun Kumar, Erode, Tamil Nadu

"I came here a fortnight before the gurukulam started, in 2002. I was keen on pursuing our traditional practices. I was 14 and the gurukulam's very first student. Motivation came from home, my parents and grandparents. Our principal is very inspiring; he is our role model. He is closely known to our family, and it was he who suggested that I should join the gurukulam. Unlike other schools outside, to come here and pursue education at the gurukulam requires commitment. Af-

ter four years of learning, we also start teaching simultaneously. So there's a lot of learning that happens for us. I feel very proud that I'm able to come back and teach at the institution that gave me a platform to learn. Getting praise and recognition outside is nothing compared to the honor of being recognized by our teachers and the institution that gave us this learning opportunity. There is a hunger to learn more, and we can engage in seva. This institution teaches us to be ourselves wherever we go. There is no need to change because of others. For example, we have this dress code; the dhoti and veshti. This is what

we wear all the time. No matter where I go, which country, I am proud of my attire and will never change to suit the world. On the contrary, I have seen that people respect our traditional dress and individuality. We should never let go of our traditions. I find great pride in holding on to them."



Srihari, Mauritius

"I came here in 2015 when I was 10. My father is a priest at Draupadi Amman Temple. I just knew I was going to train to be a priest. I was attracted to reading *Vedas* and *Agamas*. What I like most about the gurukulam is seva, chanting and studying. I like waking up early at 4:00 am. When I go home for vacation, I assist my father at the temple in pujas and archana. I do my personal religious practices. I like India. I'm not attracted to sports or the material world."



Naganatha Sivam, Toronto

"I came here when I was 11 and have been here for seven years. My father is a priest in Toronto. I will go back to Canada and teach. Though the gurukulam atmosphere won't be there, I am confident that I can teach children in Canada. I had no idea about the gurukulam or routine here. My mother had advised me about the hardship I may face here. My father was insistent that I study at the gurukulam. I love the *Agamas*. Gurudev is my inspiration."



K. Dhanishhara Sharma, Sri Lanka

"I was 10 years old when I came here. Now I'm 12 and in the 18th batch. My father is a priest in the Vishalakshisametha Vishwanatheshwara Temple in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka. I have a lot of friends; we engage in group activities. I like this country. I like the unity here; we don't fight. When I go home for vacation, I miss the gurukulam. Scriptural studies, especially of the *Agamas*, attract me a lot."

Cultural and Educational Institutions





RAJAPANE RAJU

INDIA

Music as an Expression of Soft Power

The annual Chennai Music Season is a prime driver by which India's sophisticated musical tradition influences culture on a global scale

BY SUDARSHAN RAMABADRAN, CHENNAI

THE CHENNAI MUSIC SEASON has positioned music as one of India's major soft power assets. This annual two-month music festival begins in the Tamil month of Margazhi (mid December through mid January), when temperatures in the city are coolest and most pleasant. No where else in Asia is classical music given such a grand forum: Chennai has historically hosted some 1,500 to 2,000 concerts over the six to nine weeks of the season (bit.ly/CSPPramod). The recently concluded season hosted nearly 3,800 concerts and performances at 90-plus locations in Chennai, with an estimated attendance of 50,000 across all venues (bit.ly/CSPLakshmi).

The Chennai Music Season is reputedly older than the Edinburgh International Festival and almost as old as the Salzburg Festival (both canceled for 2020 on account of the COVID-19 pandemic). Its origins are

associated with freedom fighter and Indian National Congress leader S. Satyamurthy and the formal establishment of The Music Academy in the city. Satyamurthy, who was well connected with the musical community, successfully proposed a music conference in conjunction with the India National Congress Party's 1927 session in Madras. Largely due to his influential position, this became an annual event.

Noted historian and author V. Sriram writes, "S. Satyamurthy was a famed lawyer, theatre actor, orator and freedom fighter. Given his friendship with the musical fraternity, he pressed for the organizing of an All India Music Conference to coincide with the party session. This was agreed, and the conference and exhibition of musical instruments were held at the Spur Tank, Madras, beginning from 24 December 1927. Concerts were held at a pandal erected in the Spur Tank, and conference deliberations were held at the

Museum Theatre" (bit.ly/CSPSriram).

The Music Academy was set up in the following year, 1928; and in 1929, the annual Chennai Music Season was institutionalized. Countless organizations, artists and enthusiastic audiences have since participated to help make the Chennai Music Season what it is today. Artists and audiences converge on the city not only from all over India but from all over the world. Other music festivals are held elsewhere in India from time to time, but the magnitude of Chennai's event has not been replicated in any other part of the country.

Sixty-plus full-time organizations and part-time participants help curate and organize the Music Season. Several temples in

In concert: (above) Los Angeles-born Sandeep Narayan, a leading classical Carnatic singer, performs at the Kapaleeshwarar Temple in Mylapore



Music Bridges the World's Cultural Divides

SOFT POWER IS THAT UNIQUE ASPECT OF a country's foreign policy comprising elements of their culture that other countries and citizens want to learn from or adopt. Music and the other performing arts have always been embedded into India's soft power story and narrative, not only because of those who wish to learn and perform, but equally those who sit, listen, watch and admire. It is evident in UNESCO's rich description of the city of Chennai and its culture that music has always formed an intrinsic part of city life, and that one of its aims is to ensure social cohesion in the best possible way (bit.ly/CSPChennai).

The Chinese philosopher Hu Shih (1891-1962) famously said, "India conquered and dominated China culturally for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her border" (bit.ly/CSPShih)."

Leading musicians and performing artists who have contributed significantly, not just to the Chennai music and performing arts scene but to the world of performing arts at large, include M. S. Subbulakshmi, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, T. M. Krishna, Padma Subrahmanyam, Trichur Brothers, Dr. Narthaki Nataraj, Nritya Pillai, Aruna Sairam, Bombay Jayashri, Abhishek Raghuram, Sid Sriram, Anita Ratnam and Anil Srinivasan, as well as countless other instrumentalists, dancers and vocalists.

To understand the power of music, consider the the famous 1971 Concert for Bangladesh, organized by Ravi Shankar and George Harrison at Madison Square Garden in New York. Music helped the international community understand the plight of the refugees of then East Pakistan (today's Bangladesh) with a power that neither of the media platforms then available—TV

and print—could match. Therein lies the power of music: its ability to speak and communicate.

David Ludden, a psychology professor, has pointed out that musicians can communicate with music across cultural and linguistic boundaries in ways that one can't possibly do with ordinary languages. He goes on to argue that with pitch and tempo, music can contribute to conveying basic emotions such as happiness or sadness (bit.ly/LuddenPT). Abhishek Raghuram, an accomplished and much-loved young singer from Chennai, seconded this view, saying Indian music can indeed converse with any form or system of music in the world (bit.ly/CSP30Abhishek).

Popular Chennai musicians are pioneering new programs to extend the reach of Indian music. Pianist Anil Srinivasan's Rhapsody educational series reaches 60,000 children in South India. His approach integrates music into the school syllabus in innovative ways. For instance, one can learn both arithmetic and geography through music (bit.ly/CPS30Anil). This effort has been so successful that schools in London are adopting the same methodology.

The 2018 Soft Power 30 report by Portland Communications and the University of Southern California's Center on Public Diplomacy mentions the key role of music in advancing a nation's brand: "A nation's brand is much more credible when exported by athletes, musicians, artists and businesses, than by politicians" (bit.ly/CSPSP30).

In Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2016 tour of Central Asian countries including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, he was enthralled by encountering the popularity of Indian music during

his meetings with most dignitaries of these countries (bit.ly/CSPAjay).

Though the impact of music in its various forms has been widely recognized, we should undertake a systematic study of its usefulness as an important facet or instrument of international relations. Some experts have described music as a tool of soft power diplomacy since the advent of the 17th century (bit.ly/CSPZawisa). And during the Cold War period, the US sent jazz bands on music tours to foster an understanding of societies founded on pluralistic values and identities.

Indian music, with its variety of forms, has had a rich history from a civilizational point of view. According to Bharatanatyam dancer Dr. Narthaki Nataraj (a holder of the coveted Padma Shri award), the ancient Tamil text *Silapathikaram* expounds in great detail the significance of a variety of art forms and their aesthetics.

Shashank Subramanyam, acclaimed flutist and Grammy nominee, underscored the power of music during an interview with the India Foundation's Center for Soft Power: "This is the identity of India. It is a great asset we have that has been recognized. Indian art forms like music and dance have always fascinated people from outside India. And, the revenue that Indian musicians bring into the country is huge. Music is quite a power to reckon with" (bit.ly/CSP30ShashakSu).

Shashank Subramanyam: the now world-famous flutist was introduced to India at the age of ten with a stunning performance at *The Music Academy* during Chennai's 1991 Music Festival



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SHUTTERSTOCK

The Music Season Stars: (clockwise from top left) Thamarakkad Govindan Namboothiri; Sudharshan; Nirmala Rajasekar; Indian flute; Bhushany Kalyanaraman

the city lend their premises for performances. Others with an integral role in shaping the Chennai Music Season, especially in times to come, are entrepreneurs, other private industry, civil society and the tourism and hospitality industries.

Notable among the numerous *sabhas* (music organizations) involved is the Tamil Isai Sangam, which has strengthened the Season and significantly ensured that Tamil music, culture and lyrics are not diluted. C. N. Annadurai, former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, has urged Tamil singers, artists and musicians to propagate the music of the state in its native language and contemporize it with changing times. To accomplish this, he suggested the Sangam explore the idea of incorporating additional themes, possibly even including Tamil warriors (bit.ly/CSPAnnadurai).

The Season as India's Soft Power Asset
The inaugural address for the recent Season was given by S. Iswaran, Singapore's Minister for Communications and Information. Underlining the worldwide impact of this annual event, Iswaran mentioned particularly its enormous benefit to the Indian diaspora. He further pointed out the tremendous scope for strengthening this impact in the future (bit.ly/CSPArt).

Toward this end, in December 2019 the Center for Soft Power initiated a unique concept called the "Music Inspired by India Series." In one event, CSP hosted Ahsan Niloy, a Dhrupad singer from Bangladesh, who has moved to India to learn from the Gundecha brothers in Bhopal. Niloy is committed to bringing India and Bangladesh closer through cultural relations.

Two gifted bass guitarists and musicians from France, Pascal Lovergne and Stefan

Orins, consistently visit Chennai during the annual Music Season. In the recently concluded Season they performed in collaboration with some leading musicians. There are many cases of such reverse migration, where musicians from Western countries come to India to spend time during the Season and learn the art form. That is soft power in action—organic, without force or coercion.

To give a further sense of the impact of the Chennai Music Season, the Center for Soft Power is implementing a dream project called "Chennai Soft Power 30" to document the experiences of Indian artists while touring abroad and their success in proliferating Indian culture through their art. To date, almost twenty interviews have been completed as part of this project.

One CSP30 episode features Vikku Vinayakram, renowned master of the *ghatam*, a clay pot used as a percussion instrument (bit.ly/CSP30Vikku).



On his first trip out of India, Vikku accompanied the legendary M. S. Subbulakshmi in a concert to promote world peace at the United Nations. He mentions that Zakir Hussain has become like a brother to him, even though the rhythm of their instruments is their only common language. Other artists documented in the CSP30 series include child piano legend Lydian Nadhaswaram and Dr. Narthaki Nataraj, the first transgender artist to be awarded the Padma Shri.

The Music Season Needs a Makeover

It is important that the Chennai Music Season keep up with the times to be even better. Toward this end, I offer four suggestions:

1) The Season must nurture social cohesion. The Chennai Music Season is commonly perceived to be steered and attended by the elite, and only accessible to certain sections of society. I think it imperative that this image and modus operandi change to foster and promote social cohesion. This is one of the main reasons that UNESCO has placed Chennai on the Creative Cities Network.

Existing efforts toward this goal include the Urur-Olcott Kuppam concerts and certain other events around the city coinciding with the Season as part of the Chennai Smart City project; but the organizations involved in steering the Season itself could well take a lead. For example, they could curate theme-based performances focused on social reformers such as Nandanar and Ayyankali. This could also be done for a particular

week by a particular organization. We must also encourage the attendance of socially disadvantaged children so they may educate themselves in music and the performing arts. Some leading artists are already empowering children in this way, but more is needed.



RAJAPPANE RAJU

2) Innovate to attract youth and millennials. Chennai can be proud of organizing the largest private Music Season in India, but innovation is needed in order to increase attendance by the youth, especially millennials.

3) Seek more private investment from entrepreneurs. Organizers must envisage a sustained long-term plan to convince the moneyed to invest in performing arts and music as potent soft power tools that will catapult the nation's brand.

4) Work together on all levels to brand the Season as one of India's major soft power

assets. Every organization involved in the Season should join hands with the government at the central and state levels, and all relevant players must position the Chennai Music Season as one of India's global soft power brands in the years to come. The media and film fraternity should also be enlisted to help in this effort.

In 2016 alone, the tourism industry supported close to 40 million jobs, according to the World Economic Forum. Transforming the Chennai Music Season into a global cultural brand will certainly strengthen the tourism industry and contribute to job opportunities. As a model, participants in this effort might explore the Indian government's successful branding of the 2019 Kumbh Mela by taking ambassadors from various countries serving in Delhi to the event in Prayagraj.

Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, former president of India, once said, "Music can become a medium of national development, for great music not only acts as

a pain-remover but also has a social responsibility" (bit.ly/CSPKalamMusic). Now is the time for India to step up her game and use music as a tool to enable greater social cohesion. And to the extent that this endeavor is successful, the strength of India's music as a global soft power will be immeasurably enhanced.

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Sudarshan Ramabadran is Senior Research Fellow and Administrative Head, India Foundation's Center for Soft Power

Music as a Cultural Influencer

THE CHANTING OF OM, DRONE of the tanpura, seven notes in Indian classical music and the melodies of Bollywood all have one thing in common: their ability to bypass the confines of language, ethnicity, age and other markers of individuality.

Music permeates through language and cultural barriers in a way that economic, technical or even military influence cannot. Eoin Hennessy notes, "America's power over the music industry transcends language barriers. Americans held 71% of Ger-

many's top hits between 1965 and 2006, while they also held 78% of the Netherlands." Other examples of influence include sitar maestro Ravi Shankar's effect on the Beatles and the Japanese craze for American jazz. When music captures the minds and hearts of listeners, it becomes a part of distant countries' shared histories.

Performing artists are global ambassadors of music. Laden with powerful emotion, music impacts audiences at a core human level that transcends time and space. Indian classical music,

as experienced in the Chennai Music Season, is devotional. The Carnatic compositions, filled with bhakti and technical genius, are a rich cultural treasure trove. A Hindustani classical concert similarly allows connoisseurs to enjoy the nuances of each raga.

Popular forms include film and folk music, as well as newer genres such as Carnatic rock or Bollywood devotional. These appeal to people of diverse cultural backgrounds, which can be experienced first-hand when taxi drivers from Iran or Indonesia

sing a line from a famous Hindi film song, sharing that it was one of their childhood favorites.

Just as yoga and meditation bypassed all obstacles to become firmly entrenched in the US and Europe, music from India has become rooted in various parts of the globe. Indian music in the diaspora can be found not only in its traditional genres, but in ever-evolving forms. Recently, Hollywood's remake of Disney's Aladdin featured long, dramatic Bollywood song-and-dance sequences. Another example is the Indo-Caribbean genre of Chutney, a mixture of Bhojpuri and local Caribbean music.

By Lakshmi Chandrashekar Subramanian



SRI LANKA

A Palace of Tamil Devotional Poetry

Discover this unique Sri Lankan shrine with 108 Sivalingams paying homage to the 658 holy hymns of Saint Manikkavasagar's renowned *Thiruvasagam*

BY ANURADHA GOYAL, GOA

ATWO-WHEELER SALESMAN VISITS the Sivapoomi Palace of Thiruvavasagam before heading to his office. He offers abhishekam, water oblations, to all 108 nearly identical Sivalingams in the premises before starting his workday. This is his daily routine, driven by his love for God and his knowing that Siva will take care of his sales for the day.

More and more people come here on Thursdays, the day of the guru, to do their abhishekam. A small pond surrounds a chariot of ash-grey stone; here devotees pick up pails of water to offer to Siva. One would assume that this might be a place of ancient relevance, but in fact, this sanctuary was still under construction just a few years ago.

This newly built palace—the latest go-to place for Tamils of Jaffna and other parts of Sri Lanka—is dedicated to the devotional songs of Tamil poet saint Manikkavasagar, the ninth-century author of *Thiruvasagam*, 51 compositions expressing his aspirations, trials and realizations, praise the Namasivaya mantra, and nurturing love of Siva.

Here in Jaffna, what began simply as a place dedicated to the ancient bhakti canon—sung at all kinds of occasions, from school

prayers to funerals—has fast become a divine destination for residents and visitors.

Following a tiled path towards the temple, I pass a chariot-shaped shrine that houses a Sivalingam along with the statue of Manikkavasagar. The temple itself is built in typical Sri Lankan style. A curvilinear mandapam housing a balipitham and a Nandi faces Siva as Dakshinamurti, the silent teacher, who is enshrined in the sanctum. The vimanam, the superstructure typically decorated with many colorful carvings, is covered here with Sivalingams. Wherever you stand and wherever you look, you see Sivalingams around you.

I walked the corridor that goes around the temple and was struck by the main series of Sivalingams, which run the length of the sides and back of the compound. These were carved by local Jaffna sculptors, some of whom come from the sipli tradition. Each Sivalingam costs about 40,000 Sri Lankan rupees (\$207 USD), and were sponsored by 25 different donors. Each Sivalingam is about three feet in height, adorned with a 108-bead rudraksha mala and wrapped with a piece of silk veshti cloth.

A bell hanging over each Sivalingam is duly rung by devotees when they offer water or when circumambulating the compound.

A constant ringing of bells is heard as devotees continually make their rounds. On the walls are inscribed all the 658 verses of *Thiruvavasagam* written in the Tamil language. The same local carvers who made the Sivalingams created the polished black granite wall panels in just 18 months. At the end of one corridor, the first poem, *Siva Puranam*, is engraved in twelve language scripts, including Arabic. The rest of the poems are written in native Tamil.

Inspiration for the Temple

Dr. Aru Thirumurugan, the man behind the manifestation of this unique temple, comes from a family of teachers in Jaffna and has served as a principal of the Skandavarodaya College, where he taught Hindu Civilization and political science. After the civil unrest in Sri Lanka, he dedicated himself to social work. His first initiative was assisting with the orphanage and temple under the Thirkai Amman Kovil trust, guided by his guru, Thangamma Appakutti. The orphanage now supports and educates 121 girls. In 2002 Dr. Thirumurugan founded the Sivapoomi Trust, which runs special-needs schools, elderly homes for the poor, mathams, pilgrimage guest houses, art galleries, ashrams and



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vocational training programs. They also publish a monthly paper and are scanning rare manuscripts.

When we asked Dr. Thirumurugan about the history of the Palace, he told us of giving a talk on *Thiruvavasagam* at a 2017 conference at Thiruvannamalai, India (where Manikkavasagar composed his *Tiruvempavai*). In his talk, he had pointed out that in Sri Lanka the poems of this composition are regularly sung at temples and everyday as school prayers, but they are seldom sung in India where they originated. He explained it is believed the poems of the *Thiruvavasagam* were scribed by Siva Himself. After the talk, a holy man, a siddha, beckoned to him and had him sit on the floor beside him. Praising his talk, the siddha said that Sri Lankans live and breathe *Thiruvavasagam* and that he must do something to safeguard this heritage. To inspire him, he cited the example of Rajaraja Chola, the king who built the magnificent stone temple of Thanjavur despite having little stone available within his own territories. The siddha was trying to tell him that if you have the will, the means will follow. Dr. Thirumurugan has no idea who the siddha was, and he never saw him again. He remembers him only as an extremely knowledgeable person.

The Vision Manifests

Dr. Thirumurugan was pondering initial concepts for the Palace of Thiruvavasagam during a trip to Australia later that year. Over dinner at Saravana Bhavan Vegetarian Restaurant with Australia-based cardiologist Dr. V. Manomohan and his wife Dr. Siva Gowri Manomohan, Dr. Thirumurugan shared his mystical meeting with the siddha and the budding plan for a temple. Immediately upon hearing the idea, Dr. Manomohan offered to donate a prime piece of land on Kandy Road in the Navatkuli area of Jaffna for the project. This magical beginning set the tone for the manifestation of the project.

The initial plan was to build a simple temple dedicated to Siva as Dakshinamurti and inscribe the 658 songs of *Thiruvavasagam* in granite. The Dakshinamurti form was chosen because that is how Siva appeared to Manikkavasagar, as an ascetic guru, inspiring him to write heart-melting poetry. There were no architectural plans, so no engineers or architects were engaged in the beginning.

However, Dr. Thirumurugan kept getting more ideas in his dreams. During the construction of the vimana, which was proceeding in the usual manner, he saw it full of Sivalingams in his dream. In the morning, he shared this vision with his team and told them that instead of all the usual statuettes there would be Sivalingams in black stone.

Thirumurugan, also inspired by the ancient stone chariots of Mamallapuram in India, wanted to build something similar here. Enlisting the help of architect K. Purushothaman Stapathi from Chidambaram, a 21-foot-high stone chariot was built which holds a Sivalingam and the stone murti of Manikkavasagar. Next to the chariot when I visited was an image of Agastya Muni, waiting to be installed in its own shrine nearby. In addition, a bell tower is being built for a huge bell made in London. The bell is so designed that it will reverberate 100 times when struck once, with a sound that can be heard up to two miles away.

The Palace not only houses the *Thiruvavasagam*, but is a library of hundreds of books, translations and articles on *Thiruvavasagam*. Most of the books are in Tamil. The collection can be accessed by university students, scholars and the general public, and a dedicated research lab has been set up for its exploration. Future plans include arrangements for people to stay for a time to meditate. All these endeavors are supported in part by the Sivapoomi Trust.

The temple opens daily at 6am, when the priest does the abhishekam, and remains open till 7pm, with no breaks during the

Palace of devotion: (far left) three women ring the bells above the Sivalingams that encircle the shrine; (above) a view of the main courtyard and cupola tower; priests perform arati to the central form of Dakshinamurti; (inset) Dr. Thirumurugan, founder of the Palace of Thiruvavasagam

day. It is most crowded on Thursdays, when many people come to perform their own abhishekam, and it is also then that food donations are given out. Every full moon day, people come from all over, including India, to sing *Thiruvavasagam* at the Palace during the morning hours. The biggest festival celebrated here, Mahasivaratri, attracts as many as 100,000 people in a 24-hour period. The temple is fast becoming famous, as people have already started believing that doing abhishekam here fulfills their wishes. So include the Palace of Thiruvavasagam in Jaffna on your pilgrimage map of Sri Lanka!

Manikkavasagar

Living during the 9th century in South India was one of our best-known and most revered Saiva saints, Manikkavasagar. He was born in the town of Tiruvathavur on the River Vaigai just south of Madurai. His brilliance was recognized at an early age, and he became the prime minister of the Pandyan king while still quite young. While in this position, exposed to all the pleasures of the world, he eventually became conscious of the impermanence of worldly life and sought spiritual direction. As the story goes, the shift in Manikkavasagar's life occurred when he was sent by the king to purchase some special horses from a foreign trader in the distant city of Perunturai.

While on the way, Manikkavasagar came upon a group of devotees seated around a sage beneath a Kuruntha tree. Overwhelmed by the spiritual serenity and darshan emanating from this guru and his sishyas,



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Manikkavasagar immediately knew that he must leave behind his worldly life. He joined the other devotees of the sage. After spending a short time with the guru, all of the disciples and the sage himself disappeared, leaving Manikkavasagar all alone. At this point the realities of his duties as prime minister returned to him, and he realized that

in his religious fervor he had given away to the guru all the funds that were to be used to buy the horses. In despair, he prayed to Siva, whom he knew was the ultimate guru, to help him. His prayer was answered by a miracle: a pack of jackals nearby turned into beautiful horses.

With these handsome steeds, Manikka-

vasagar returned to a very pleased king. But in the middle of the night the horses turned back into jackals, waking everyone up with their howling. In a rage the king had Manikkavasagar thrown into a dry river bed and tied to stones, to die of heat exposure on the hot sands. But due to Manikkavasagar's prayers, Siva prevented this from occurring



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A literary heritage: (above) 108 Sivalingams encircle the central shrine at the Palace of Thiruvvasagam; (far right) The stone statue of Manikkavasagar at the Palace of Thiruvvasagam

life as desired.

Manikkavasagar returned to the place where he had met his guru, but no one was there. He now had to face alone his new life, having given up one of the most powerful and respected positions of his country. He had nowhere to turn but to Siva. Manikkavasagar began wandering from Siva temple to Siva temple throughout South India, doing sadhana and tapas in Siva's name. In his hymns written during this

time, which can be found in his famous collection of hymns called the *Thiruvvasagam*, there is the very real and human lamenting to Siva to not forsake him, but to fulfill his only desire of being merged in Siva's love. The very humanness of this time of tapas is also shown in his hymns where he prays to Siva to keep his mind from being distracted

by the beautiful maidens who frequented a river where he was performing his austerities. Manikkavasagar's tapas found its bloom at the Chidambaram Siva Temple, where he melted himself into loving oneness with his Lord of Tillai (Chidambaram). Some of his hymns speak of the experience of Self-Realization. He describes mukti as surrendering oneself completely to Siva and losing one's identity in Siva.

Manikkavasagar's life is said to have ended miraculously. One morning there appeared before the Nataraja Deity at Chidambaram pages of mystic hymns written by the poet saint, which by their nature seemed to have come from the Deity Himself. The devotees searched out Manikkavasagar to explain the meaning of this. Manikkavasagar answered them by saying, "What it means is this..." and he then walked to the Nataraja Deity and dissolved his essence into the murti, disappearing before the awe-struck devotees. They understood his message. Manikkavasagar had become his Lord.

Manikkavasagar's message was one of love—love of God, love of guru, love of God's devotees, love of all. The beauty of his soul is enshrined in the Thiruvvasagam and a second smaller work, the Thirukovaiyar. These two profound works constitute volume eight of the Tirumurai, the sacred anthology of Tamil Saiva Siddhanta.

Sivapuranam, Manikkavasagar's Ode to Siva

Translated by P. R. Ramachander, with minor edits for clarity

The first prayer in *Thiruvvasagam* is the *Sivapuranam* (not to be confused with the more ancient *Siva Purana* epic). In his *Sivapuranam*, composed in the Thirupurumthurai temple in Tamil Nadu, Manikkavasagar, portrays the soul's evolution towards oneness with the Lord. Due to the sweetness of his poetry, a Tamil proverb says, "Thiruvvasagathukku urugaar, yebbasagathuk-kum urugaar," meaning, "One who does not melt for *Thiruvvasagam* will not melt for any literary work." Here is a major excerpt.

1-5 Long live Namasivaya, long live the holy feet of our Lord, long live the feet of Him who does not move away from my mind even for a second. Long live the feet of my Guru who ruled over Thiruvavaduthurai, long live the feet of Him who became holy books and comes near us, long live the feet of the God who was one but appeared as many.

6-10 Let the feet of the God who stabilized my mind be victorious. Let the valorous

anklets of Lord Siva, who cuts off the cycle of birth, be victorious. Let the God with flower-like anklets, who is scarce to those who stand away from Him, be victorious. Let the anklets of the King who happily lives in the mind of those who salute Him be victorious. Let the anklets of that great one who uplifts those who bow their head to Him be victorious.

11-15 Praise to the feet of God, praise to the feet of my Father, praise to the feet of my Friend, praise to the red feet of Siva, praise to the feet of the pure God who stood in love, praise to the feet of the King who cuts off the illusion called birth, praise to the feet of God who is in holy Thirupurumthurai.

16-20 Praise to the God who gives never-fading joy, like a mountain of mercy; because that Lord Siva stood in my thought, I would salute His feet by His grace, and with a joyful mind recite the *Sivapurana*, so that the entire karma which I have earned earlier disappears.

Praise for the praiser: (right) Long halls hold massive polished black granite panels into which have been carved Manikkavasagar's 658 Siva-centric verses; (inset) two of the verses from his famed poem "Tirupalliyechuchi." For the entire poem visit: bit.ly/ManikkaPoem

21-25 I came because the God with an eye in His forehead showed me His eye of mercy, and stood there saluting the anklet whose prettiness is beyond the reach of the mind, and God who filled the sky and the earth, and who is being seen as a glittering light, God who is beyond all limitations—I who am one with bad karma, and do not know the ways to praise Your great qualities.

36-40 Divinely pure Lord who is heat, cold as well as life, You came and showered Your grace so that all lies are banished, and shined as knowledge of the Divine light of truth, God of sweetness to this one who does not have any knowledge, as Great Wisdom who is removing my ignorance.



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41-45 God who does not have birth, life or death, You are the one who makes all the world, You would protect, destroy and also shower Your grace, destroy the illusion, and make me to serve You, God, who is like a scented flower, though You are far, far away, You are near, Lord of *Vedas*, who is beyond mind and thought.

67-70 Ever-satiating nectar, God who is beyond measurement, light who hides Himself in a mind which is not interested, God who made my mind melt and stood there as

my dear life, God who does not have happiness or hardships and who stands inside me.

71-76 Friend to your devotees, God who is everything as well as nothing, God who is a flame, God who is darkness, God who is never born, primeval one who has crossed the state of middle as well as end, Lord who as a father attracted me and made me yours, God who can be known only by the very intelligent ones. Their look is rare one which is to be appreciated, and their understanding You is a rare feeling.

About the Tamil Inset in the Photo

The granite panel holds two verses from the famed "Song to Awaken Siva." On a special day each year called Tiruvembhavai, maidens wander together at dawn singing this song through the lanes, beseeching their Lord to wake up and bless them.

Verse 3

Shouted the cuckoos! Shouted the hens! Chirped the sparrows! Sounded the conches! Disappeared the stars! The light, the luminance, spreads in the dawn with our joy. O Divine! Show Your Good ornate parallel feet, O Lord Siva of Thirupperunthurai! O Difficult to be understood by anybody! O Simple for us! My Lord, Bless us by getting up!

Verse 4

One side—nice musicians of vina and yal. One side—chanters reciting Rig Veda. One side—people with chaste floral garlands. One side—worshipers, criers, people with hands losing strength. One side—people with hands folded hands above their head. O Lord Siva of Thirupperunthurai! My Lord, Who blesses well, taking me, too, as slave! Bless us by getting up!

Modern-Day Ayurveda

A South Indian clinic follows traditional methodologies—which foreshadow such cutting-edge insights as epigenetics, sound therapy and quantum physics



EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

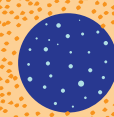
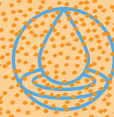
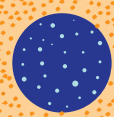
An accomplished doctor prescribes a remedy after considering the patient's nature, the disease's nature and the time of year.

Tirukural, verse 949

BY DR. KULREET CHAUDHARY

As a doctor who has extensively studied and practiced both Western and Eastern medicine, I believe we need to bridge the gap between the two in terms of their approaches to understanding biology, blending research and discoveries from both worlds in order to create a united and enhanced understanding of life. In our current system, an artificially divisive line has long been drawn between Western and alternative medicine as if one must necessarily be abandoned for the other—when, in fact, the two, taken together, offer advances in treatment that don't exist in one discipline alone. As mystical as healing tools such as mantra can initially seem, I believe in uncovering the science and looking at the biological models to explain why and how any component works to sustain or restore our health. Although ayurvedic medicine as it was practiced by the ancients is slowly beginning to reemerge in modern medical research, we haven't yet embraced the capability and dynamism of the human body and spirit. If we can synthesize the evidence-based practice of Western medicine with the metaphysical concepts of ancient cultures and alternative medicine, we will be rewarded with stunning discoveries.

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Nature's pharmacy: Using a granite mortar and pestle, a practitioner grids herbs, turmeric, ginger and peppercorns in careful proportion to help a patient's body heal itself



Ayurveda

India's Age-Old Healing Science

"The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet and in the cause and prevention of disease." —THOMAS EDISON

EVERYBODY TALKS ABOUT THE GENES THAT THEY RECEIVED from their mother and father for this trait or the other, but in reality, those genes alone have very little impact on life outcomes. Our biology is way too complicated for that and deals with hundreds of thousands of independent factors. "Genes are absolutely not our fate," remarked pioneer genomic researcher Craig Venter, known for leading the first draft sequence of the human genome in 2000 with the National Institutes of Health (NIH). "They can give us useful information about the increased risk of a disease, but in most cases they will not determine the actual cause of the disease, or the actual incidence of somebody getting it. Most biology will come from the complex interaction of all the proteins and cells working with environmental factors, not driven directly by the genetic code."

It was a forward-thinking speech, a visionary approach to the human genome and our future health, and yet it unwittingly recalled the ancient Eastern traditions—ayurvedic medicine among them—that similarly maintain that we are in constant genetic communication with our environment. Although epigenetics focuses on the physical body—specifically the way our genes are turned on and off when altered by external circumstances—Eastern medical philosophy considers the subtle energy body as well, maintaining that it, too, has a profound effect on DNA expression and, by extension, our health. The two branches of knowledge have remarkably analogous views on the effects of lifestyle on genetic expression and, subsequently, cellular modification.

Both Eastern and Western traditions, for example, indicate that genetic inheritance is far-reaching in that a trauma suffered by one's

ancestors might still play out down the line, affecting not only an individual's children but also their children's children and future generations from there. What modern science now calls an "epigenetic imprint" was known as "ancestral karma" in Vedic medicine.

In fact, when experienced ayurvedic practitioners take the pulse of their patients, we can often glean the traumas from generations past. I once had a patient—I'll call her Emma—while running my neurology practice in San Diego. She was battling severe digestive issues. Though she had been suffering since childhood and had tried a variety of Western treatments and medicines in addition to natural therapies throughout her life, she was still unable to hold down her food much of the time. She frequently either vomited or suffered diarrhea after eating a meal. Emma was in her late fifties, with a regal presence that shone through despite her being hunched and emaciated due to her disorder. At five foot seven, she was barely ninety pounds. As soon as I felt Emma's pulse, a picture of starving people came into my mind with another flash of a young boy indicating to me that the memory of whatever this was still persisted in her DNA. "Which generation in your family went through a famine?" I asked.

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South Indian clinic: (clockwise from right) Author Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary examines a patient's pulse, a key tool in determining the vitality of organs and systems; meditation and hatha yoga are essential to the ayurvedic approach to regaining balance in body and mind; the Sri Narayani Holistic Centre, which Dr. Kulreet heads, is located in the pristine plains of South India.

She blinked a couple of times and then said that a distant relative on her father's side—she believed it was her great-great-grandfather—had lived in southern Ireland during the Great Famine, between the years of 1845 to 1849, during which a million people died, the greatest loss of life in nineteenth-century Europe. Many others, including Emma's great grandfather, emigrated. From that generation onward, the family, including Emma's mother and grandmother, had suffered what they considered to be hereditary digestive issues.

Interestingly and coincidentally, given Emma's situation, the most significant studies of trans-generational transmission of trauma were based on the Dutch Famine, known to those in German-occupied Netherlands as the Hongerwinter, which occurred near the end of World War II when a German blockade cut off food and fuel shipments from farm towns to the northern parts of the country. More than twenty thousand men, women and children died. Millions of others suffered but survived. Among this population were pregnant women whose children, as studies in the 1980s showed, later grew up to have high rates of obesity, diabetes and mental illness. By the time this group reached old age, the risks increased, according to L. H. Lumey, an epidemiologist at Columbia University: the Hunger Winter cohort (as those who were in utero during the Dutch Famine are referred to by researchers) died at a higher rate than people before or afterward. "We found a ten percent increase in mortality after 68 years," said Dr. Lumey, who, along with his colleagues, reviewed the death records of hundreds of thousands of Dutch people born in the mid-1940s. Furthermore, when the grandchildren of men and women exposed to the famine were studied, they, too, were reported to

have had higher rates of illness.

In my work with Emma, I prescribed herbs and mantra meditation, but I also asked that she address and connect with her ancestral history in a way that I felt would release that trauma from her body. She was dubious, but also determined to wrestle her life back from this mysterious illness. I started by having Emma chant a bija mantra as well as work with a Reiki practitioner to help her make the connection between her digestive issues and the fear and loss that her great-grandfather experienced during the Dutch Famine. She knew a bit of his story from family lore—that he had large, pale blue eyes, that he'd seemed a fairly nervous person but very kind, too—and so she was able to bring some detail to her imagined sense of her great-grandfather. In doing this, she began to feel a kind of kinship with him when she thought about him in her mantra meditations.

In India, in order to address ancestral karma, people perform special ceremonies such as the puja ceremony, a spiritual ritual often used to honor

someone after they die. (The Sanskrit word *puja* means reverence, homage, adoration, worship.) Sometimes, too, Indian families make an offering on their ancestors' behalf, such as giving a cow to a poor family. In fact, every year Hindus spend fifteen days in a period of ancestor worship called Pitru Paksha devoted to the remembrance of ancestors, during which they donate food to the hungry and reflect on the contributions of their forefathers. In ayurvedic medicine, by doing a positive thing and creating good karma, the idea is that you release some of the negative or troubled karma that has been passed down. In Emma's case, I asked that she do something equivalent to



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honor her family, such as making donations to food banks on behalf of her great-grandfather.

The notion that doing good can have meaningful health outcomes was evidenced by a remarkable 2013 study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, wherein a team of professors from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of California, Los Angeles, showed that acts of genuine goodness can have measurable impacts on our genetic expression and health outcomes. According to their research, the human body is able to perceive when the pursuit of wellbeing is aimed at a noble purpose and when it is being sought for simple self-gratification. They found that different gene regulatory programs are engaged for each. When a more “positive affective experience” (i.e., a noble purpose) is the goal, there is a down-regulation of the CTRA gene profile, associated with cardiovascular, neurodegenerative and neoplastic diseases, which are conditions that cause tumor growths.

Emma had been living for so long as if she, too, were in a famine, that it took us nearly two years to shift her cellular memory and mind toward a healthier track. But, little by little, with Emma’s unyielding determination and her willingness to try things that, at first glance, seemed to have little to do with her digestion, her so-called genetic disorder did resolve itself. When we finished working together, Emma was up to 125 pounds and her body was able to metabolize food normally. It was, from my perspective, quite a beautiful transformation. I was so pleased, of course, that Emma was feeling better, and looking so healthy, but I also enjoyed watching her psychological growth as she unburdened herself of such long-held subconscious anguish.

Divine healings: (right) Dhanvantari, the Deity of ayurveda, holds a pot of herbs, nature’s medicines, in a traditional Kerala-style artwork by Saji; (below) two trained attendants apply herbs to the body of a patient, part of a multi-day regimen of health



SAJI/EXOTIC INDIA

The Basics

Striving for Balance

THE WORD *AYURVEDA*, DERIVED FROM THE SANSKRIT ROOT *ayus*, meaning “life” or “longevity” and *veda*, meaning “science” or “sacred knowledge,” can be traced back to India five thousand years ago. A description of this practice is found in ancient Vedic texts such as the *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, which offer richly detailed depictions of the physiology and interrelated systems of the body, the variations in human constitution, as well as the use of herbs and herbal mixtures, in addition to rituals for achieving and maintaining health. It is a complete system for managing all aspects of health including healing disease, increasing longevity, performing surgery with precise instruments of the doctors’ own making, and addressing ethical dilemmas and spiritual development.

Ayurvedic medicine embraces the ancient system of *koshas* (sheaths) and *chakras* as part of its understanding of the subtle and physical bodies. The five sheaths make up the biofield, or subtle energy body; the *chakras* are the energy centers that transmit the information from the biofield to the body. A third part of this diagnostic system is the *doshas*.

Ayurvedic medicine considers the human body also to be made up of the five elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth), which combine to form three fundamental physical-mental-emotional types, or *doshas*: *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. Discussion of the doshas can be found as far back as siddha medicine, so it’s likely that this philosophy developed earlier and then was partly adopted by ayurvedic medicine. Creating balance between the physical, mental and emotional in each of us requires a dynamic harmony among the five elements in the body as expressed through the doshas. Ultimately, these five

elements that exist in the universe also exist within us. But while the sheaths and chakras are energetic, the doshas are emblematic of what is happening in the entire human biofield. Here we can draw another parallel to epigenetics: What geneticists call a phenotype is the observable physical interpretation, or characteristic, for a set of genes in the DNA. In ayurvedic medicine, the doshas offer the observable physical interpretation, or characteristic, of the entire human biofield. Where a geneticist would say that our DNA offers instructions that our bodies follow, an ayurvedic practitioner would say the biofield performs that function. Ultimately, both terminologies express the same fundamental concept—that the body is an expression of information gathered at a primary level.

Ayurvedic medicine takes this idea one step further, however, in that it uses the doshas—which delineate different body-mind types, each with specific responses to diet, seasons and the environment and each with its own set of predispositions to illness—to make diagnoses and offer health plans for explicit changes in lifestyle, diet, stress and environment in order to cultivate the highest potential of health in a person.

Each dosha type is defined as a combination of two of the five elements that constitute the universe and a correlated set of qualities. Vata, for example, is a combination of the lighter elements, ether and air. This dosha governs all movement, including blood flow, contraction of the heart, breathing and communication of cells through nerve impulses. Pitta is a combination of fire and water and represents digestion, metabolism and transformation, including appetite and endocrine functions. Kapha is a combination of the heavier

Vata Dosha

A PERSON WITH PREDOMINANT VATA TENDS TO BE slight and fine-boned; Audrey Hepburn was a good example of this type. Vata represents movement for all bodily processes; its characteristics are dry, light, quick, cold, rough, subtle, mobile and clear. On a seasonal basis, vata is at its peak in the fall, when it is generally windy and dry, and at the change of each season. Vata types are always in motion—they are alert and tend to walk and talk fast. They grasp concepts quickly but also forget them just as quickly; and they are flexible in their ideas and creativity. As such, one of the basic principles for this dosha is to create regularity in the daily routine to help ground the moving energy.

In the body, vata resides in the colon, brain, ears, bones, joints, skin and thighs. Vata people tend to be more susceptible to diseases involving the

principle of air—such as emphysema and pneumonia—as well as arthritis, gas, dry skin and hair, neurological conditions, constipation and mental confusion.

When out of balance, vata individuals can feel unstable in the midst of change; they also become fearful, nervous and anxious. Given their wiry energy, vata types fatigue easily and often need a lot of sleep.

The bija mantras prescribed to help bring vata back into balance are those that help calm the hyperactive qualities of this dosha. The first is Hrim (pronounced *hreem*), which is a specific mantra for the heart, emphasizing the physical health of the heart but also creativity and compassion. The second is Klim (pronounced *kleem*), which promotes blood flow and digestion as well as smooth skin. It can also help calm the brain and boost the reproductive and immune systems.

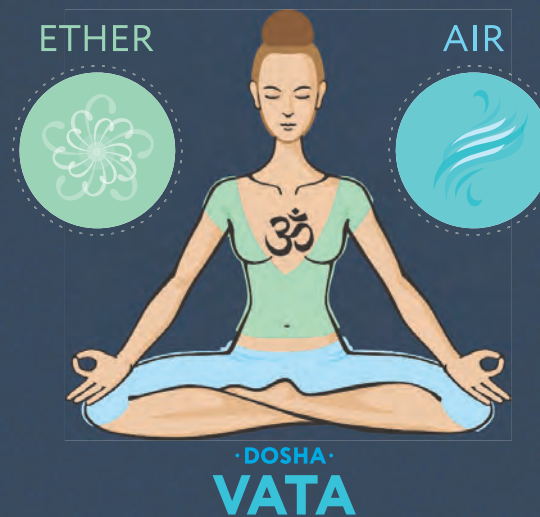


OUT OF BALANCE

hypertension, constipation, weight loss, weakness, arthritis, prone to worry, insomnia, digestive challenges

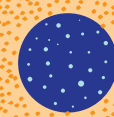
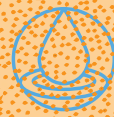
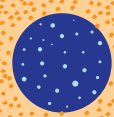
AYURVEDA

• BODY TYPES •



IN BALANCE

excellent agility, dry skin and hair, thin frame, creative, energetic, flexible, love excitement and new experiences



elements—earth and water—and regulates structure and cohesion of the body, including strength, fluid balance and weight. Although ayurvedic medicine asserts that each person is made up of all three doshas, there is typically one that is dominant. But, just as life isn't static, people can have a combination of two doshas, with one dosha rising to be more powerful at different points in life. Disease, it is believed, is caused in the body by either an excess or deficiency of vata, pitta or kapha, an imbalance which ultimately causes cellular dysfunction.

At the core of ayurveda is the belief that, by engaging in a meditation practice and by altering our diet and lifestyle according to the dominant dosha or doshas within us, we can modify our genes and alter disease. As an ayurvedic practitioner, I don't tell all of my patients to eat a vegan diet or that they should all walk ten thousand steps a day; those prescriptions would not benefit every dosha. Instead, I would suggest to someone with a vata physiology to do gentle yoga, while I

may tell someone else with a kapha build to aim for twenty thousand steps a day. Ayurvedic medicine also offers behavioral recommendations to improve the mental health or life circumstances for a particular constitution. Again, I would not give the same advice to everyone. A patient who is having trouble with budgeting—be it with time and energy or, speaking more literally, with money—will need different counsel based on the dominant dosha. A vata patient, for instance, is more likely to give far too much away in all circumstances and, therefore, I would advise that person how to not spend down so many resources, financial or otherwise. On the other hand, kapha individuals are more likely to be overly cautious, depleting themselves in a counter-intuitive way by spending much of their time and

attention on hoarding their energies and coffers. I would encourage this person to behave a bit more freely, offering more of themselves in relationships and making charitable donations. In this way, the doshas offer not only detailed epigenetic prescriptions but holistic approaches to health and well-being.

The ayurvedic plan offered for each dosha contains thorough instructions for daily and seasonal routines—including the time to go to bed and when to wake up, the time to eat, the time to exercise, and the time to meditate, among other activities. Diet and nutrition are advised, right down to the texture and qualities of the food. The season and even geographic location of the person are considered when tailoring a diet for each dosha. The ayurvedic plan also has recommendations for behavior, including how to interact with peers, as well as those who are younger and older. Broadly, advice and guidance should be given to

those who are younger, and respect should be given to teachers and elders. Love and compassion should be extended above all else. These behaviors, ayurvedic medicine signifies, affect health on the physical level. They not only make the world a better place—they also restore the mind and body.

Food as medicine: (above) ayurveda places great stress on natural foods, like this dosa and chutney at the Vellore clinic; (below) oil is slowly poured into the nostrils of a patient to cleanse and detoxify the sinuses



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Pitta Dosha

PITTA INDIVIDUALS EXEMPLIFY MANY OF THE QUALITIES of fire: hot, intense, penetrating, sharp and agitated. Pittas have a powerful intellect and a strong ability to concentrate. As such, pittas are high achievers, ambitious and driven: think Steve Jobs. Success, accomplishment, and satisfaction in one's activity are important for pitta individuals.

Pittas are usually of medium size and weight. They have very strong digestion when they are in balance and naturally warm body temperature. Pitta individuals have soft and fine hair and are prone to early graying or balding. Pitta has a lot of energy. One of pitta's main challenges is not using up more energy reserves than is available due to their naturally



competitive and passionate nature. When out of balance, pittas may suffer from skin rashes, burning sensations in the gut or skin, excessive body heat, and heartburn.

Pitta is dominant, perhaps appropriately given the blazing nature of this dosha, during the summer. The tendency of pitta is to get overheated and impatient; the basic principle, therefore, for keeping pitta in balance is to keep it cool—physically and emotionally.

Two cooling bija mantras that are useful for balancing this dosha are: Aim (pronounced *aym*), which opens the voice and lungs and clears the senses, and Srim (pronounced *shreem*), which can boost overall energy and concentration as well as feelings of nurturance.

Mantras & More

The Role of Sound in Healing

IN ADDITION TO OTHER ASPECTS OF AYURVEDA, EACH DOSHA HAS a specific bija mantra meant to bring the body back into balance. Typically, it is recommended to chant the bija mantra for at least fifteen minutes a day once the dosha imbalance has been identified. Start by chanting out loud and then, once it feels comfortable to do so, chant it silently in your mind. Continue to chant this mantra in your practice until the symptoms of dosha imbalance resolve. For example, this will be apparent when the qualities of a vata dosha feel more grounded, when those of a pitta dosha feel cooled down or when someone who has balanced a kapha dosha feels more stimulated. Once this occurs, revert back to the chakra mantra (explained on page 46), which is great for keeping all of the doshas in maintenance. The bija mantras for the doshas are a correction for an acute issue in the short term, whereas the chakra mantra is a form of long-term maintenance.

The healing power of mantras and sound is inextricably woven into ayurvedic medicine. Mantras are a vehicle for raising individual consciousness to universal consciousness while also reversing both mental and physical disorders. Bija mantras are a potent way to alter the body. Therefore, they are a crucial part of the prescription when helping a patient to balance the doshas.

Just as important, mantras also once played a fundamental role in the preparation of medicine. Traditionally, the entire process was, in fact, inseparable from sound. In training to be an ayurvedic doctor, the student would first live with his teacher and engage in a committed mantra practice meant to enliven the consciousness of the aspiring physician. When the guru deemed his student receptive enough

to imbibe the knowledge of ayurvedic medicine, he would begin to plant the seeds for the ayurvedic herbs—chanting a specific mantra for each one. When the herbs were harvested, another mantra was engaged; these mantras were chanted yet again while the herbs were administered to patients.

Over the last several hundred years, however, as ayurvedic medicine has become more popular and institutionalized in India, it has been taught using methods akin to Western medicine. Sadly, modern life does not allow for the long, intensive training once required to be an ayurvedic practitioner; there are only a few people left in the world who are taught in the classic way.

Thanks to my childhood mantra practice, I have inadvertently approached the study of ayurveda in the traditional way. Because of this early exposure to mantra meditation, its profound influence in ayurveda was a natural connection for me to make as I shifted my neurology practice toward integrative medicine. Most modern-day ayurvedic physicians, however, have not been raised with a mantra meditation practice and therefore don't have a full appreciation for the important role it plays in this system. Over time, the discipline has become less holistic. In general, mantras are no longer used during the preparation of the herbs—today they are processed in factories. Ironically, many modern ayurvedic physicians focus mainly on physical complaints, dismissing mental and spiritual complaints as irrelevant to their practice. Sadly, when mantra practice is not used to purify and equip the mind of the healer and strengthen the effect of the herbs, and is not included as part of the prescription for patients, the benefit is not nearly as effective.

OUT OF BALANCE

skin rashes
heartburn
excessive body heat
burning sensations
short-tempered
argumentative

AYURVEDA

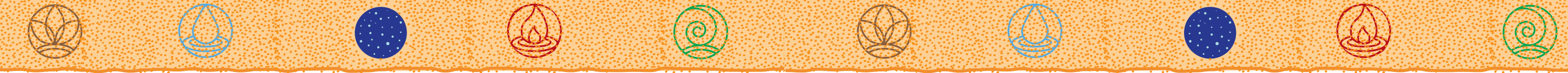
• BODY TYPES •



• DOSHA •
PITTA

IN BALANCE

perfect digestion
lustrous complexion
strong appetite
precise
sharp-witted
direct
outspoken



GABRIEL SWIFT

Psychological conditions, in particular, are much more difficult to cure through herbs and diet alone. Returning to the ancient traditions of sound in ayurvedic medicine is essential to the efficacy of this discipline. Without it, it is impossible to understand the full nature of the human body or its ultimate goal of attaining access to the higher consciousness, and energy, of Brahman. To that end, we must turn to the earliest notions of sound within ayurvedic medicine and explore the ancient philosophy of sound as a form of yoga as I do in my book, *Sound Medicine*.

A Mantra for Balancing the Chakras

I was taught a chakra mantra by Sri Sakthi Amma. It is unique in that it combines all of the bija mantras for the chakras with another mantra, Om Namah Shivaya—with the aim of creating a connection to the universal consciousness through the five elements that serve as the building blocks for the material world (ether, air, fire, water and earth). When the mantras are combined in this way, they create a powerful alchemy for a specific purpose—which, here, is to uniformly move energy through all of the chakras, clearing out obstructions to health while also bringing the body into closer participation with the universal energy field.

THE BIJA MANTRAS FOR THE CHAKRAS

Root Chakra	(mūlādhāra)	Lam
Sacral Chakra	(svādīsthāna)	Varṁ
Solar Plexus Chakra	(maṇipūra)	Raṁ
Heart Chakra	(ānāhata)	Yaṁ
Throat Chakra	(viśuddha)	Ham
Third Eye Chakra	(ājñā)	Om
Crown Chakra	(sahasrāra)	Om

SRI SAKTHI AMMA'S CHAKRA MANTRA

In a most subtle way, the chakra bija mantras combine with the sacred mantra Om Namah Shivaya, in that the first bija of each pair (in bold) is one syllable of the mantra.

HARE OM
NAM, LAM
MAM, VAM
SIM, RAM
VAM, YAM
YAM, HAM
SIVA OM
SWAHĀ

PRACTICE

Chant this mantra aloud for ten minutes for three days, fifteen minutes for the next ten days, and then twenty minutes each day thereafter. Once it becomes familiar, you may chant it silently.

Always chant the entire mantra, in order to disseminate energy equally throughout the body. I do not recommend chanting a single bija mantra—if, for example, you want only to activate the throat chakra—because this can build up disproportionate heat in one area and cause an imbalance.

For those interested in hearing the version of the chakra mantra that my husband and I recorded, you can find it on my website: drkulreetchaudhary.com.

Natural healing: (left) patient at the Sri Narayani Holistic Centre in Vellore, India, is bathed with oils, an important part of the extensive remedies; (right) artist's depiction of the chakras, with ether, air, fire, water and earth depicted behind; (below, left) healer palpates a patient's forehead to energize the nervous system



PIETER WELTEVREDE

Kapha Dosha

THE QUALITIES OF KAPHA ARE HEAVY, STEADY, SLOW, COLD, soft and solid. Kapha individuals, consequently, tend to have a slow metabolism, shun exercise, and gain weight easily. They have large physical frames but with well-developed muscles and joints. Physically, kaphas have a great deal of strength, stamina and endurance. They learn slowly but their long-term memory is excellent. They tend to be deep sleepers and often have trouble waking up in the morning.

When kapha types are in balance, they tend to be generous, have loving personalities, and remain stable and grounded in the midst of chaos—they are like the eye of a hurricane. Oprah Winfrey strikes me as a kapha in this way. When kapha individuals get out of balance, however, they can experience greed, possessiveness and lethargy. The key to keeping kapha in balance is to stay



mentally and physically stimulated.

Kapha individuals are more likely to have diseases connected to the water principle, such as flu, sinus congestion, excess mucus production, obesity, diabetes, water retention and headaches. Winter and spring are the seasons when kapha accumulates most in the body, and spring is an ideal time for seasonal detoxification programs, because kapha begins to “thaw” as the temperature gets warmer, and toxins are ready to be released from the body.

There are two warm and stimulating bija mantras that help to balance the kapha dosha. Hum (pronounced *hoom*) stimulates energy throughout the body, from the digestive tract to the immune system to the brain. Dum (pronounced *doom*) is, despite its phonetic spelling, intended to create protective energy, spiritually and physically.



OUT OF BALANCE

sleep excessively
overweight
suffer from asthma,
depression,
diabetes;
resistance
to change
stubbornness

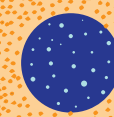
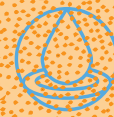
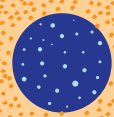
SHUTTERSTOCK



IN BALANCE

excellent stamina
large and soft eyes
strong build
thick hair
smooth skin
loyal
patient
steady
supportive





What Is My Dosha?

It will be helpful to know, in a general way, which of the three doshas is commanding your character and constitution. Despite the fact that each of us is, of course, a unique combination of the three doshas, best evaluated in person by an ayurvedic practitioner, answering the following questions will help you get a basic sense of which nature most represents your body and mind.

FRAME

- ☐ a) I am thin and slender with prominent joints and lean muscles.
- ☐ b) I have a medium, symmetrical build with good muscle development.
- ☐ c) I have a large or stocky build.

SKIN

- ☐ a) My skin is dry and rough.
- ☐ b) My skin is warm, reddish in color and easily irritated.
- ☐ c) My skin is moist and oily.

HAIR

- ☐ a) My hair is dry, brittle or frizzy.

- ☐ b) My hair is fine, thin or prematurely gray.
- ☐ c) My hair is thick and wavy.

EYES

- ☐ a) My eyes are small and active.
- ☐ b) I have a penetrating gaze.
- ☐ c) I have large, pleasant eyes.

JOINTS

- ☐ a) My joints are thin, prominent and have a tendency to crack.
- ☐ b) My joints are loose and flexible.
- ☐ c) My joints are large, well knit and firm.

BODY TEMPERATURE

- ☐ a) My hands and feet are usually cold, and I prefer warm environments.
- ☐ b) I am usually warm, regardless of the season, and prefer cooler environments.
- ☐ c) I am adaptable to most temperatures but do not like cold, wet days.

UNDER STRESS ...

- ☐ a) I become anxious or worried.
- ☐ b) I become irritable, intense or aggressive.
- ☐ c) I become withdrawn or depressed.

SLEEP

- ☐ a) I am a light sleeper with a tendency to awaken easily.
- ☐ b) I am a moderately sound sleeper, usually needing less than eight hours to feel rested but have vivid dreams.
- ☐ c) My sleep is deep and long. I tend to awaken slowly in the morning.

WEATHER

- ☐ a) My least favorite is cold weather.
- ☐ b) My least favorite is hot weather.
- ☐ c) My least favorite is damp weather.

WEIGHT

- ☐ a) I tend to lose weight easily.
- ☐ b) I maintain my weight easily.
- ☐ c) I gain weight easily.

APPETITE

- ☐ a) On a daily basis, my appetite varies and I have delicate digestion.
- ☐ b) I feel uncomfortable if I skip a meal and I can eat almost anything.
- ☐ c) I like to eat, but can skip meals easily. I have a slow digestion.

BOWEL MOVEMENTS

- ☐ a) Tend to be hard with occasional constipation.
- ☐ b) Tend to be loose with occasional diarrhea.
- ☐ c) Tend to be well-formed or sticky with occasional constipation.

PERSONALITY

- ☐ a) I am lively and enthusiastic by nature. I like change.
- ☐ b) I am purposeful and intense. I like being efficient and in control.
- ☐ c) I am easygoing and caring. I like to support others.

ACTIVITY

- ☐ a) I like to be active, and it can be hard to sit still.
- ☐ b) I enjoy activity that has a purpose, especially competitive.
- ☐ c) I like leisurely activities and staying home.

WALKING

- ☐ a) I walk quickly.
- ☐ b) I have a determined walk.
- ☐ c) I walk slowly and steadily at a leisurely pace.

MOODS

- ☐ a) My moods change quickly, with a tendency toward anxiety.
- ☐ b) My moods change slowly, but I can become angry easily.
- ☐ c) My moods are mostly steady and most things don't bother me.

MEMORY

- ☐ a) I learn quickly and forget quickly.
- ☐ b) I have a good memory.
- ☐ c) I learn slowly but have a good long-term memory.

ORGANIZATION

- ☐ a) I am good at getting things started, but not at getting things done.
- ☐ b) I am very organized and can focus on a project from start to finish.
- ☐ c) I need help getting things started, but I am good at seeing things to the finish.

MONEY

- ☐ a) I spend money almost as quickly as I make it.
- ☐ b) It is important for me to

- ☐ c) I don't like to spend money and prefer saving it for a rainy day.

IN RELATIONSHIPS, I USUALLY ASK ...

- ☐ a) What is wrong with me?
- ☐ b) What is wrong with you?
- ☐ c) Are you sure there is something wrong?

WHEN OUT OF BALANCE, I FEEL LIKE ...

- ☐ a) A leaf in the wind.
- ☐ b) A raging inferno.
- ☐ c) A bump on a log.

MY MOTTO IN LIFE IS ...

- ☐ a) Throw caution to the wind and live for today.
- ☐ b) No pain, no gain.
- ☐ c) Don't worry, be happy.

If you chose mostly A's:
you are primarily vata.

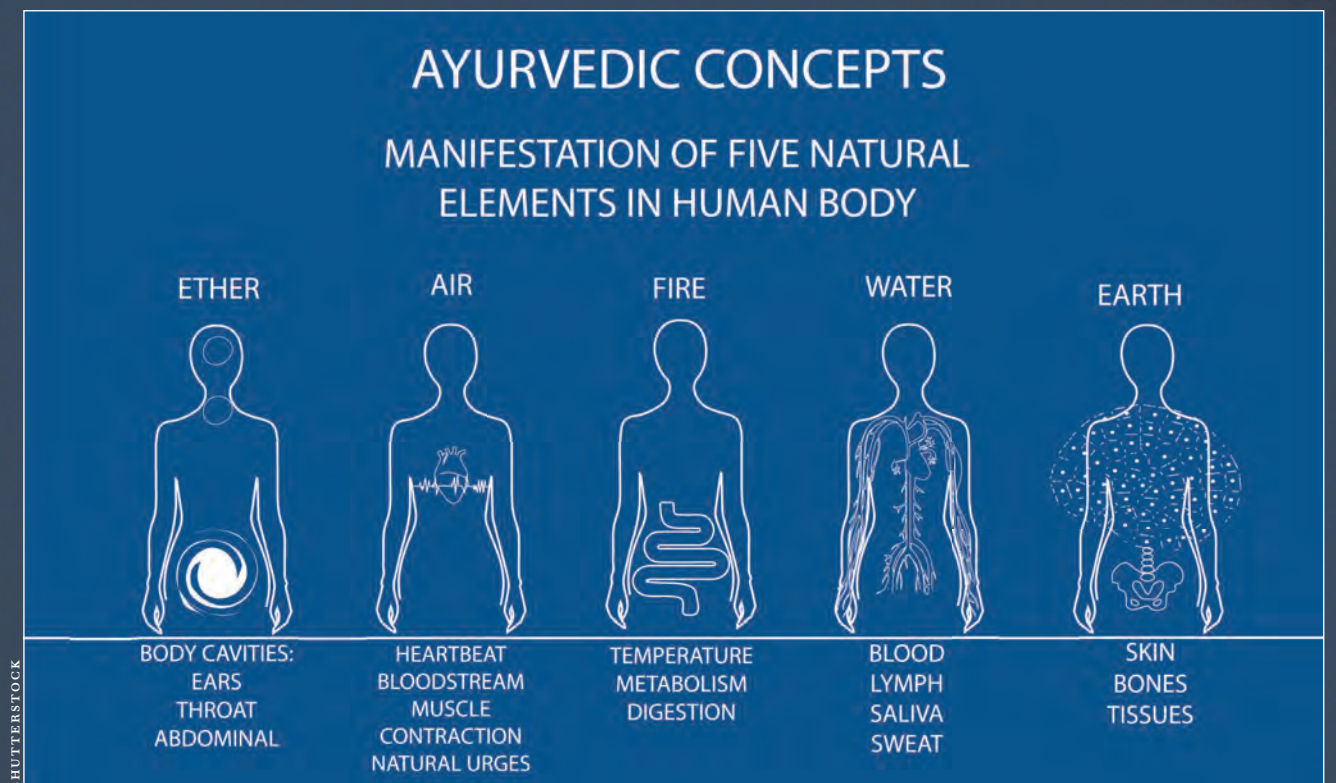
If you chose mostly B's:
you are primarily pitta.

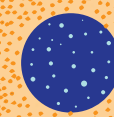
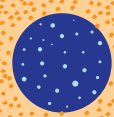
If you chose mostly C's:
you are primarily kapha.

.....
Elementary: (left) the newly inaugurated Sri Narayani Holistic Centre in Vellore, India; (below) a chart summarizes ayurveda's understanding of the relationship of the elements and the human systems



SHUTTERSTOCK





Sound Medicine

Healing with Vibration

"Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything." —PLATO

Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary, the author of this Insight, published a new book this year entitled Sound Medicine, sharing her years of experience with this subtle healing art. Here is an excerpt.

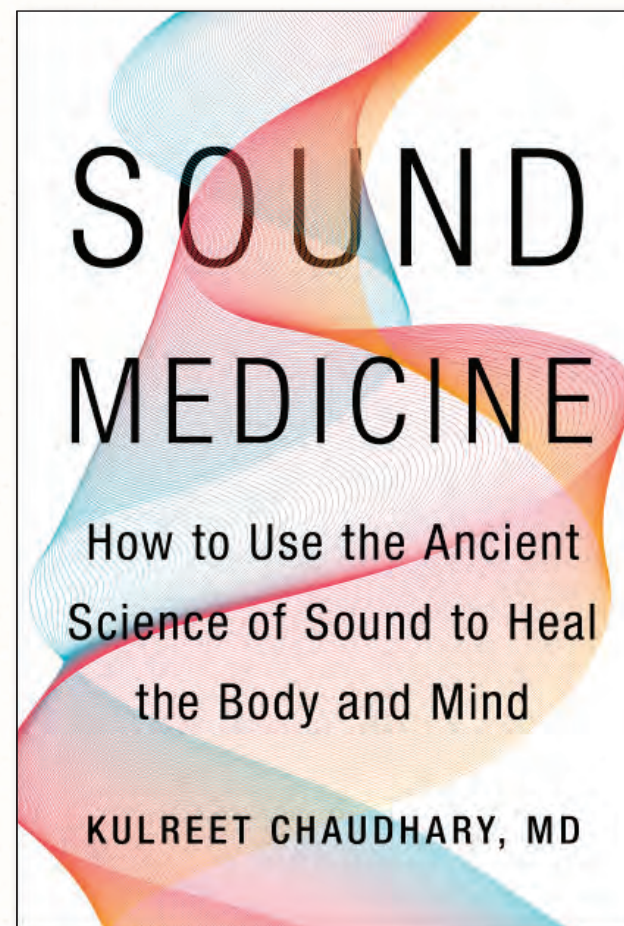
LOOKING BACK ON MY LIFE HISTORY, IT MAKES SENSE THAT IT has always felt effortless for me to move between the world of sound medicine—with elements drawn variously from ancient cultures and quantum physics—and the world of neurology, with its more intellectual, independent approach to the body. My early exposure to both Vedic medicine and quantum physics helped me to understand the dissonance between my inner reality—the timeless, disembodied realm of my meditations—and the external reality, in which I collectively took part at medical school and in the professional world.

Yet even with this particular ability to straddle both worlds, I still find it a challenge to wrap my mind around some of the more black-and-white models of science. In medical school, for example, I had difficulty with chemistry as well as classical physics—not because I couldn't understand the principles, but rather because I struggled to accept them as being ultimately true. Some of the concepts stood in stark contrast to the way I intuitively understood the world. When we learned about how neurotransmitters work with receptors, for

example, I was steeply challenged by the notion that all it takes for a neurotransmitter to bind to a receptor—triggering the electrical signals that inform our complex thoughts and rich emotions—is for it to randomly slam into it. (When this happens, the neurotransmitter "unlocks" the cell's response—giving rise to the term "lock-and-key"—causing changes to it.) There is something so inelegant about this idea, as if our thoughts arrive on a system akin to bumper cars. It felt at odds with the sophisticated design of our brains; it just didn't seem a complete or thorough enough explanation to me.

I also couldn't accept that the intense energetic connectedness I'd encountered in my mantra meditations—the same energy that had helped my patients to improve their health—should be omitted from medical explanations to patients. I knew that deepening our connections with our silent inner realities and letting go, if only temporarily, of the ping-ponging thoughts and unchecked emotions we experience all day long has a measurable and dramatic effect, making me and my patients not only physically and mentally healthier but also happier and more capable in our everyday lives.

The current Western model doesn't have a definitive, or complete, explanation for what creates consciousness. We know that too much or too little of a particular neurotransmitter can have a negative psychological outcome; we understand that information from the



brain is relayed to the body via the spinal cord and the peripheral nerves in the peripheral nervous system. But how our complex thoughts and emotions actually form is not accounted for in these mechanisms. I have come to believe that there is something missing from our understanding, something that would account for how our bodies receive and transmit information.

The answer to that question, and the way I have come to bridge the gap between physiology and consciousness, is a sense of spirituality. Before you mistake my use of this word to mean that I am trying to imbue medicine with religion, let me explain. In the Vedic tradition, the spirit is considered to be that which animates the body and gives us consciousness, as well as the ability to be aware of oneself in the world. It is the distinguishing mark of living things and our vitalizing force. Early Greek philosophers would have called this the soul, but you could also call it qi, as Chinese philosophy refers to this energy flow, or Brahman in the manner of the Vedic scholars. I do not believe there is only one right term; I mean all of these things when I refer to spirituality. If we don't take into account that which makes us living beings—that is, if we discount energy as a meaningful entity in medicine—we cannot comprehensively address our health.

In Western thought, quantum physics is uniquely reflective of energy's underlying and essential role in the universe; indeed this discipline describes nature at the smallest scales of energy levels. Throughout my studies, it has been a place of profound resonance for me, since it proposes scientific explanations, as well as a modern context, for the metaphysical revelations of Vedic medicine. I believe that holding in mind both the sense of spirit proposed by the ancients and the rigor and research of science will allow us to open our minds to valuable and beneficial therapies, particularly in the realm of sound medicine.

Vibratory vitality: (above) Cover of the author's newest book; (below) inner courtyard of the clinic in Vellore, India, overseen by the author

From the Book

WHY DOES A BABY'S CRY INSTANTLY FLOOD A MOTHER'S body with a myriad of stress hormones? How can a song on the radio stir up powerful emotions, from joy to anger, regret to desire? Why does sound itself evoke such primal and deeply felt emotions?

Sound is a vibration that travels through air, water and solids. It's produced by all matter and is a fundamental part of survival for every species. Yet there is a hidden power within sound that has only begun to be investigated. From leading neurologist, ayurvedic expert and author Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary comes *SOUND MEDICINE: How to Use the Ancient Science of Sound to Heal the Body and Mind*, a rigorous scientific investigation of the healing power of sound. This practical guide demonstrates how readers can use sound to improve their mental and physical well-being, taking them on a journey through the structure of the mouth, ears and brain to understand how sound is translated from acoustic vibrations into meaningful neurological

impulses. Dr. Chaudhary explains how different types of sound impact the human body and brain uniquely, and explores the physiological effects of sound vibration, from altering mood to healing disease.

Blending ancient wisdom with modern science, *SOUND MEDICINE* traces the history of sound therapy and the use of specific mantras from previously unknown texts—traced back to the Siddhas, a group of enlightened masters who created a healing tradition that served as the precursor to ayurvedic medicine—to explain the therapeutic application of sounds for a wide range of conditions. Dr. Chaudhary offers practical, step-by-step lessons for using music and mantras, whether you're a beginner or searching for a more advanced practice, to improve your health in body, mind and spirit.

Hardcover: 272 pages, 6 x 9 inches; Harper Wave, 2020. Link to Purchase the Book: bit.ly/SoundMedicineAmazon



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary is an integrative neurologist, neuroscientist and the former director of Well-spring Health at Scripps Memorial Hospital. She received her Internship in Internal Medicine at UCLA and her Neurology Fellowship from UCSD. She has participated in over twenty clinical research studies in the areas of multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, ALS and diabetic peripheral neuropathy. She is currently the head of the Sri Narayani Holistic Centre in Tamil Nadu, India, where she is implementing the use of sound medicine into the treatment of chronic disease, and also studying the ancient Siddha texts that have been hidden from public view for centuries. Dr. Chaudhary is the author of *The Prime* and a new book, *Sound Medicine*. She has appeared as a medical expert on numerous programs, including The Dr. Oz Show and Home & Family.

For more information visit: drkulreetchaudhary.com. For more about the Sri Narayani Holistic Centre, visit snhcentre.com.



PARENTING

A Young Hindu Responds to Hindu Parents

Reflections on how parents in Western countries can pass down dharma to their children and future generations

BY KESHAV FULBROOK

I AM AN AMERICAN HINDU OF ANGLO-CHRISTIAN heritage who left my faith of birth at the age of thirteen. After a period of seeking in different paths, I developed and pursued a profound interest in Sanatana Dharma from the age of 19 to my current age of 26. I had my namakarana samskara at the age of 22, wherein I was named Keshav by the pandit of my hometown mandir. I have studied diligently, through Kauai Aadheenam initially and through the resources of the Arsha Vidya and Arsha Bodha Center up to present. I am on my fourth year of Hindi language study and am slowly working on learning Tamil, Nepali and Sanskrit.

During my visits to temples and various Hindu events, I meet people, often older than myself, who are curious about what sparked my passion to learn and dedicate such a large part of my youth to studying the teachings of the rishis, yogis and siddhas of our tradition. “I moved to the US and my children are being raised here,” one person told me. “I am trying to get them motivated to learn about our sanskriti, shastras and dharma. What are your recommendations, as a person who has been interested in these things from an early age, to a parent who wants to cultivate this same interest in their children?” Time and time again I encounter this question. I frequently see parents concerned that their children are moving far



away from the culture, values and philosophies which had been faithfully preserved for generations in their families.

The first bit of advice I offer is to not underestimate the value of planting seeds. It is a fact that many individuals may not develop a spiritual interest until somewhat later in life. When that interest develops, however, the samskaras planted by their upbringing will prove invaluable in orienting them. The key to this is the key characteristic of so many other endeavors: regular spiritual practice and detachment. Take them to temple whenever you can, let them know it is important that they are present during your home pujas. Encourage the study of shastras and the recitation of shlokas at mealtime, before bed and upon waking. It was in seeing the example of a good friend of mine who was committed to his sadhana that my path became solidified for me. Trust in the power of your own example and leave the result in the hands of Bhagavan.

In my experience, language was an invaluable asset in being firmly established in a tradition other than the one I was born into. A language conveys not only words, but a worldview. There are many ideas which can be expressed more richly in Indic languages (especially Sanskrit, of course) whose meanings are skewed or somewhat lost when conveyed in English. This is because the Indic languages



were formed from a prevailing dharmic context. Dharmic ideas are more easily conveyed because of this. Hindu thought permeates the Indic tongues. Encourage the study of your *matri bhasha* (native language) along with Sanskrit. This will serve as an anchor for them in the future.

I also recommend taking them on pilgrimages with you. If you visit India regularly or semi-regularly, take them to holy places if you can. There is something powerful which occurs during darshana which defies my ability to express in words. Before I became committed to the Hindu path, I attended Ganesh Chaturthi pujas. The samskaras impressed in me during those pujas eventually germinated into a significance I couldn't fully appreciate at the time.

My last personal recommendation is to practice and encourage meditation. Nothing I mentioned above would have been possible had I not learned how to meditate from the age of 13 onwards. An inward-facing mind is a key, a shelter and a ship that will cross innumerable oceans and endure the *samudra manthanas* of life.

Reaching out to Hindu parents for their input on how to cultivate a love of Hinduism in their children, I received a plethora of thoughtful replies from parents of varying backgrounds, mainly based in the US. A Hindu father of Indian descent who wished to remain anonymous home-schools his son. “Preserving Hindu culture wasn't an explicit goal for our homeschooling decision, but it certainly is highly relevant to our hopes for our son,” he told me. “I don't drill anything about Hinduism into him, but occasionally share stories in the context of whatever we are talking about. He knows this is a very big predilection for me and respects it.”

The emphasis on not overly or strictly imposing Hindu observances on children was a common theme in many of the responses. The core message was essentially to be the best example that you could and make your preferences known to your children without being unyielding. This same respondent went on to say, “My solution to parents' concerns is to redirect their emphasis in Hindu pedagogy as just informational and practice-based to a broader cultivation of Hindu sensibilities about current issues. The most important thing parents could do, frankly, is to step up to the plate and encourage conversations about fighting Hinduphobia in school and elsewhere.”

Vandana Jain, a Hindu of Indian descent living in the US, mentioned she and her husband were initially less conscious of their Hindu roots, but their appreciation deepened through facing the various challenges their lives threw at them. “For both of us, inculcating good human values in our children was very important. However, looking back, I wish we had been conscious enough then to give them a solid foundation in Sanatana Dharma early in their lives.” She explained how she had met her guru and how that catalyzed many life changes for her and her husband. “We started attending satsang, and our children saw us make time in our life for spirituality. However, we still did not articulate to them the fact they were being raised as Hindus. Somewhere around 2011, I heard Rajiv Malhotra speak for the first time. I was blown away by what he said, and so many missing pieces of the puzzle fell into place for me about my



Hindu parenting: (Far left) a young mother leads her daughter up the steps of Trimandir Temple in Ahmedabad, India; author, Keshav Fulbrook; (above) Vandana Jain and her family

own way of thinking. I read up more on his ideas, and they had a big influence on how we spoke to our kids about Hinduism, our traditions and culture.”

Vandana discussed some of the benefits and unique challenges of raising Hindu children in the US. She mentioned that aspects of American culture such as hyper-individualism being emphasized at such a young age made cultivating values like humility, gratitude and deference to elders more difficult. “When as a Hindu parent I would try to make a change, I would hear my kids tell me that the world around them thinks differently. I was for quite some time this person in their lives who seemed controlling, too traditional, too much into religion. This would not have been the case had they been

raised in a Dharmic way right from the beginning,” she reflected. “However, this did not stop me from continuing to communicate with them Dharmic ideas and concepts to challenge their popular culture conditioning.”

This statement in particular struck me, and it highlights another theme I noticed in many of the responses. That theme is to trust your own parental instincts. Even among a million other influences, never underestimate the power of yours. Do the best you can to provide a foundation for them and trust them to grow with your support.

The final interview I conducted was with Lakshmana Dasa and his wife Syama Priya. Lakshmana, a Caucasian Hindu of Canadian descent, recounted how his previous wife's family ostracized him for being Hindu and did not agree with

their grandson's being raised in his parampara. “One of the most heart-wrenching experiences of my life,” he recalled, “was when my son's grandmother fed my son meat right in front of me because she took it upon herself to make sure he was getting enough protein, because she was a nurse and was taught that if he didn't eat meat his brain wouldn't develop.” This myth is indeed all too common. As a side note, I am glad that college nutrition courses in Western universities are beginning to debunk many of those myths surrounding vegetarianism and are recommending plant-based diets, with inclusion of dairy, for their health benefits.

Lakshmana went on to explain the ravages of his community's ostracism for his faith and the toll it took, which eventually and regretably ended his first marriage. He has been married to Syama Priya for eleven years now, and they raise two children in their household. Having lived in various parts of Canada, they still occasionally struggle with lack of support or understanding from the extended community.

Both Lakshmana and Syama Priya stressed one thing as essential: The best approach is to be the best example for your children and leave the rest to them. Offer the seeds and inspiration, but trust them to make use of those in finding direction in their lives.

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India From Above

SPECIAL PHOTO FEATURE
By Saahil Rahman
and Anuradha Goyal

THERE IS NO NATION LIKE IT ON EARTH, in diversity, history and visual array. We seldom see it from the eagle's point of view. That is about to change...

A farmer, in red and blue, takes a break on a green footpath through rice paddy fields that have been harvested and kept fallow. Small irrigation ditches divide the fields, which are now just mud baking in the South Indian sun.



Two gifted fans of India team up to bring us a glimpse of Bharat Mata's specialness. Photographer Saahil Rahman's aerial photos can be seen at photogrist.com/india-saahil-rahman and Anuradha Goyal's amazing collection of India stories can be found at www.inditales.com

The Poem Called India

BY ANURADHA GOYAL, NEW DELHI

INDIA IS A CLASSIC POEM THAT REFUSES to age—an eternal poem. It is a living, breathing poetry, a poetry that thrives amidst its chaotic diversity, amidst the layers and layers of cultures it wears, living within geographical boundaries defined ages ago. Political boundaries have changed a million times and would keep changing, but the boundaries of India and its consciousness are defined in its scriptures, with Himalayas in the North and the Indian Ocean in the South. It neither expands beyond nor shrinks within these limits. It is a space holding the meditative energies of thousands of years of seekers who chose to live in its mountains, forests and on its riverbanks.

Be a bird or a cloud à la “Meghdoot,” the classic poem of poet Kalidasa, and see India from that perspective. In “Meghdoot” a lovelorn Yaksha sends a message to his beloved wife in the city of Alkapuri, somewhere deep in



the Himalayas, from the hills of Ramtek in central India through a traveling cloud, just before the beginning of the monsoons. Lovelorn, he tells the cloud what to see as it travels to his beloved. He talks about the landscapes the cloud will see, the hills, rivers, flowers, the flora and fauna. He tells the cloud about the cities like Ujjain where opulence is the norm and the forest people living on the path to Ujjain. It is as if the Yaksha himself is traveling back through that path, even if just in his imagination.

A first glance from the sky would show India wrapped in a soft cover of sand and snow, with hills creating the folds that hold the forests where the likes of lions, tigers, elephants and rhinoceros roam free with herds of deer jumping around playing hide and seek with them. A narrow strip of sand surrounds the peninsula along its long coastline. The Thar desert in the Northwest entices with its mystical vistas full of sand dunes. Somewhere right in the central part, a fossil park holds memories of the time this land was a part of Gondwanaland, and the forests here hold sand beneath

their greenery.

The Himalayas sit like a snow-capped crown on the head of India. Its glaciers give birth to the many rivers running through



the plains, including the most revered ones—Ganga, Yamuna and Sindhu. So do the other hills, be it Vindhya of central India, Kodugu Hills in the South or Sahayadris in the West. The place where the rivers originate becomes

a pilgrimage; the place where they meet and become one becomes a pilgrimage; and finally, when they merge with the ocean on either side, that too becomes a pilgrimage. Rivers are like the veins in the body of India; they circulate waters that have nurtured civilizations on their banks since ages, just like the blood nurtures our bodies. The only other thing that competes with the rivers running across the country are the railway tracks, the world's fourth most extensive, passing through tunnels cutting across hills, connecting shores with bridges and literally mapping the whole of India with train station codes.

Along the Gandaki River that borders Nepal and India, single horned rhinos that get their local name, “gairda,” from the river roam around freely, as they do in the tall grass of Kaziranga in Assam, surrounded by the vast expanses of tea gardens that help Indians wake up every day. In the waters of Ganga and Chambal rivers live the river dolphins, ghariyals—the national aquatic animals of India. Along the banks of Narmada, pilgrims can be seen walking with the river to their right, circumambulating on foot all 1,740 miles of it.



A stepwell, surrounded by steep stone stairs for fetching the emerald green water; paddy fields

and coco palms surround a village; a Kerala temple; a bridge meanders above blue offshore waters





Rice amid the coconuts, bus station, beach bungalows



IN THE FORESTS OF CENTRAL INDIA, rivers like the Denwa and Panna are favorite places to spot tigers coming to quench their thirst. In the jungles of Pench, the stories of Mowgli and Shera come alive. Ganga near Rishikesh is home to herds of elephants, just as Teesta nurtures them on its banks in the foothills of eastern Himalayas.

At the given celestial positions, Kumbh Mela that repeat every 12 years, the biggest-ever gathering of human race takes place at the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna at Prayagraj. It also happens at Haridwar where Ganga enters the plains, on the banks of Kshipra in Ujjain that is the zero meridian of India, and on the banks of Godavari in Nasik. The rest of the year the ghats of rivers at divine places like Ganga at Haridwar and Varanasi, Yamuna at Mathura, Narmada at Omkareshwar and Maheshwar and Godavari at Nasik are buzzing with activity as pilgrims come and pray. On days like Kartik Purnima, which comes a fortnight after Diwali, pilgrims take holy dip in all the sacred water bodies across the country. The world's largest camel fair takes place close to the holy Pushkar lake in the city of Brahma.

If one were to zoom in a bit, the small Kathkuni temples, with alternate panels of stone and wood and slanted roofs in slate stone, dot the foothills of Himalayas in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. They are abodes of Deities sitting on hilltops, overlooking the regions they protect. A million streams here join to form rivers like Sutlej and Beas. The high lakes like Chandratal in Lahaul or Nako in Spiti seem like they have descended from the heavens. They tell you a million stories of mystics who lived on their banks and shepherds who come every summer with their sheep.

In the Thar desert of Rajasthan, home to the favorite stone of modern-day builders—white marble and yellow Jaisalmer stone—the hill forts seem to rise out of the sand, matching its golden color, with camels roaming around joining the color scheme. The world's second and third largest walls surround and secure the forts of Kumbhalgarh and Amer. Inside the forts, the colorful wall murals create a mélange that makes you feel royal the instant you step inside. Staying in some of the palaces-turned-hotels is living the true-blue royal lives of Rajasthan royalty.

Ornate bowls smiling from the surface of Rajasthan and Gujarat, resplendent in their symmetric and geometric steps, with stories of scriptures adorning the walls all around are the famous stepwells. These stepwells made life possible in areas with no natural source of water and limited rainfall. Some of them, like Rani ki Vav in Patan that extends seven storeys below the ground, give you the impression they are leading you to the world below, or maybe inside the womb of the earth.

Kerala is named after the coconut palm with "Kera" meaning coconut tree and "Alam" meaning land. It is literally the "Land of Coconut Trees." Here a coconut farmer has left the sky open to his crop of rice.





Winding Our Way South

IMAGINE THE TRAVELERS SEATED ON the roadside to rest for a while, or women in their colorful Odhnis sitting after a day's work to chat and rest before collecting water. The Ajanta caves hold 2000-year-old paintings telling stories of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Ellora caves hold the biggest engineering wonder of India, a monolithic temple carved from top to bottom, scooping out mountain granite that was not needed. Look at it and wonder when, where and how did we lose our ancestors' knowledge?

While most of the temples in North India were lost to various invasions, the temples of Khajuraho survived to give us a glimpse of royal temples as they existed over 1,000 years ago. They try to recreate the Kailash Parvat or Mount Kailash with the cascading North Indian Nagara style shikharas, a style that is seen across North India and peaks in the temples of Odisha. The city of stones with hundreds of Hindu and Jain temples has many stories to tell. Best known for the erotic sculptures on the outer walls, they are poetry in stone with a rhythm of music in its folds. A little to the east, the thick forests of Dandakaranya find a mention in *Ramayana*, and even today you can see the tribal communities here worshipping trees with reverence deep inside dense forests.

The current state of Bihar, the land of Sita in *Ramayana* and Buddha in our age, holds the stories of enlightenment of Buddha under the Bodhi tree at Bodhi Gaya. Nearby are the brick-red ruins of Nalanda University, from the glorious days when it attracted students from across the world, including XuanZang, whose memorial can be seen there. The quaint villages of Madhubani can be recognized from a distance with their painted walls of each house, an art form that has traveled from the dusty lanes of this rural outpost to galleries around the world.

One can follow a monsoon cloud as it starts from the southern tip of India in Kerala at the peak of summer season in June and slowly moves north, soaking the parched lands desperately waiting for them to rain.

In Kerala, you see the thousand shades of green almost challenging your eyes to count the colors, if you can—from the light green of a fresh banana plant to the dark green of a pepper vine wrapped around coconut trees. This is the land of spices, be it the black pepper for which traders landed on India's shores since ages, or the cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg or cloves. The lush green forests are full of elephants, and domesticated

elephants come together to celebrate the big temple festivals. The water channels of the backwaters of the Arabian sea crisscross this land, like the no man's land between the sea and the Indian peninsula. In the middle of the monsoons, men and women take out their long, narrow snake boats to race in the backwaters as part of the Jalotsava or the Water Festivals of the temples here, cutting through the waters celebrating the monsoons. Wooden temples tell these tales on the dark wood panels that looked soaked in coconut oil.

A little eastwards, in the Tamil country, live the biggest and probably the oldest poetry in stone. You are spoilt for choice, where to



look and zoom in between Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram, Thanjavur, Srirangam and Chidambaram. A shore temple stands almost at the eastern edge, overlooking the waters of the Bay of Bengal—looking at its sister temples beneath the waters, surrounded by the five Ratha shrines named after the five Pandavas, a phenomenon that repeats across the landscape of India. It is an effort to take the eyes off the sculpted wall called Arjuna's Penance or the Krishna's butter ball, but then you must look at the tall colorful gopurams of Shiva and Shakti temples trying to pierce the sky. Srirangam, the largest living Hindu temple complex in the world, has 21 soaring gopurams surrounding its seven walls, almost a living city.

Each temple contains wall after wall full of stories. Every little detail about the sculptures has a meaning for the one who understands. The bodies, human or divine, are sculpted with perfection that is hard to believe—as you stand before them, you wonder if they will start speaking. They do speak: they tell you tales of their times—the exquisite jewelry, the fine clothing, the elaborate hairdos and fashionable footwear all take you back to their times. Deities sit on their vehicles holding their icons, ready to interact with you, bless you or just let you know they are there with you, within you. Tales from the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* adorn the temple walls, no matter which part of India you are in. Ram Setu, an umbilical cord that still joins the island of Sri Lanka

to India, is seen at the narrowest distance between the two.

From the coffee country in Coorg flows the river Cauvery, nourishing the southern peninsula on its way to the Bay of Bengal. The fabled kingdom of Mysore, still famous for its Dussehra festival, once flourished on its banks. In the Chalukyan land of North Karnataka, you can see the laboratories where temple carving was taught in Aihole, close to the almond-colored caves of Badami and the unique architecture of the temples of Pattadakal.

Not too far from there are the ruins of the majestic and royal city of Hampi of the Vijayanagara empire, probably the most beautiful ruins that you can see of one of the richest cities the world has seen. Nearby, the Godavari meanders through the rice fields of Andhra. The river Krishna nurtures the red hot chilies of Guntur, witness to ancient Amaravati that has resurfaced as the latest new city on the landscape. And in Odisha, Vishnu lives as Jagannath, surrounded by another set of exquisitely carved temples, caves amidst the artist who paint lovely stories. The Konark Sun temple still maintains its chariot shape, with well-carved wheels on all sides, even in its ruined state.

Move up to Bengal, where in the absence of any stone, artisans baked the stories in terracotta tablets for the temple walls, desperate to ensure that the stories are not lost to the next generations. The same stories are picked up by the weavers to weave on the famous Baluchari and Swarnachari sarees. The rustic, hauntingly divine Baul music can be heard in the lanes of small towns and villages here, including Shanti Niketan, the university founded by Rabindranath Tagore.

Sun temples at Modhera in the West, Konark in the East, and some in the northern hills whisper of the glorious days of sun worship, the one who provides rhythm to our lives with its cycle of day and night. In the heart of India is Naimisharanya, the forest mentioned in every Indian scripture as the abode of sages, where the scriptures were discussed, debated, shared and written. Here you can still find the trees that probably listened to them, a pilgrimage for anyone on the path of Dharma.

Finally, India as consciousness still lives in the villages that are scattered across the country, villages with lotus ponds, cattle sheds, platforms beneath ancient trees and where life is simple and elements of nature remain sacred.

Like Martin Luther King said—"To other countries I may go as a tourist, but to India I come as a pilgrim." Yes, here is a country where every hill, every stone, every river, every lake is divine, and every traveler a pilgrim. 🇮🇳

Left, In India water is especially precious and thus a large reservoir dominates Jaipur City in Rajasthan; below, a solitary truck snakes along a remote roadway through the forest





The Magical Realm of Our Sleep

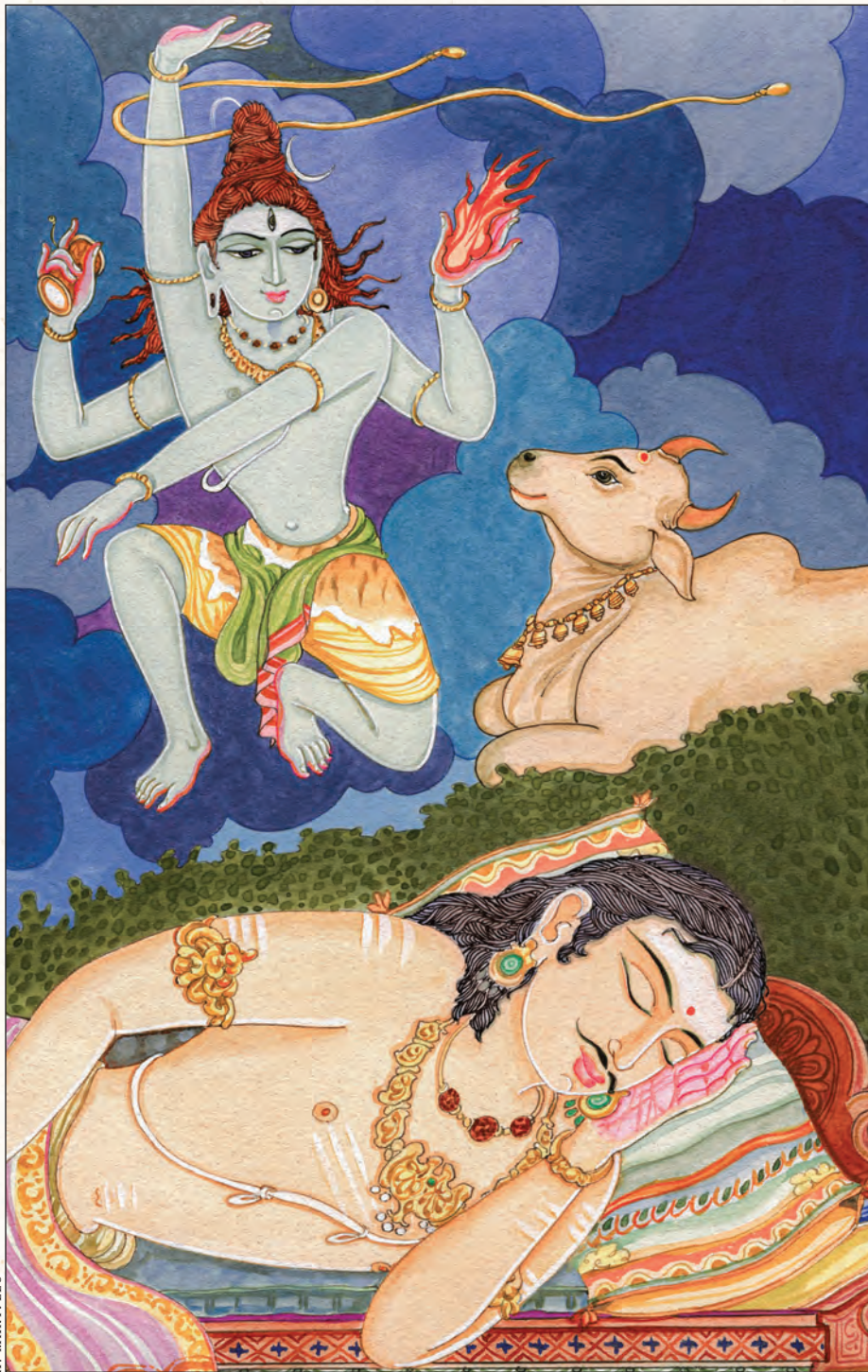
A Hindu view of sleep and dreams, with insights from rishis and experts in ayurveda and modern medical science

BY PANSULA GANESHAN, CHICAGO; WITH RESEARCH BY MAYURESH VISSWANATHAN, SAN DIEGO

SLEEP AND DREAMS ARE A PSYCHIC reservoir of restoration, power and mystery. Like waves crashing upon the shore, then receding, our individual awareness vacillates between wakefulness and unconscious or semiconscious dream states. The *Mandukya Upanishad*—the twelve-verse Vedic masterpiece which Adi Shankaracharya’s paramaguru, Gaudapada, called “the essence of all Vedanta”—outlines four states of consciousness: waking (*jagrat*); dreaming (*svapna*); deep sleep (*shushupti*); and a fourth state (*turiya*), which is witness to them all. Sages have proclaimed that deep contemplation upon this scripture can itself lead to enlightenment, owing to its philosophical poignancy.

As an individual awareness, we experience the cycle of waking, dreaming and deep sleep; but the ground of this experience, the *Mandukya* explains, is the supreme consciousness which is beyond and witness to them all. Thus the sages famously propounded, “Atman is Brahman”—meaning the individual soul, when examined, is really the supreme consciousness itself. The focus of the *Mandukya Upanishad* ultimately is upon AUM. It elucidates how each vibrational segment of this mantra corresponds to one of the four conditions of consciousness, and the silence after the mantra’s utterance corresponding with *turiya*, the timeless, causeless resting place.

The rishis saw the waking, dream and deep sleep states as part of a continuum of consciousness. One’s individual awareness experiences and identifies with each state in turn, mistaking “I” for the physical body, or for the astral body in the case of dream experience. Raja-siddha yogi Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (founder of HINDUISM TODAY) explained, “Pure awareness never sleeps. This mercury, mirror-like substance travels here and there, guided by the will of the perceiver. It is the venerable eye of the *purusha*. It is constantly aware, from the moment of the creation of the soul; and at the soul’s final merger in Siva it experiences super, super, superconscious totality.” With awareness thus identified as the individuated aspect of consciousness that travels through various states of mind, it is easier to see that the waking and dreaming states are one and the same thing. They are real when experienced, but ultimately



A. MANIVELU



illusory in relation to Brahman, the supreme consciousness.

Three Worlds and Five Bodies

In Vedic-Agamic cosmology, there are three worlds of existence. The Bhuloka is the earth plane, which we experience through the physical body. The Antarloka (astral plane) is experienced through the subtle astral body; this corresponds with the mental, emotional and pranic *koshas* (bodies/sheaths) which surround the soul body. The Antarloka is known to have higher and lower realms, thus allowing for a wide range of experiences—

everything from confusing, subconscious, nonsensical dream scenarios and encounters with disembodied souls lost in “hellish” states, in the lower realms, to life-transforming visions of ancestors, Gods and gurus in the higher. The Third World (Brahmaloka or Karanaloka) is the causal plane of light and blessedness. There are countless stories of artistic and scientific breakthroughs stemming from higher dream states in the Third World. The Indian math genius, Srinivasa Ramanujan, famously reported that his groundbreaking formulas were given to him in dreams by his family devata.

Subramuniyaswami’s mystical insights mirror revelations in the *Mandukya Upanishad* while adding unparalleled esoteric detail. He reflects, “Why do we sleep? The mental body, which we dream in, is within the astral body and functions through the astral brain of that body. Through certain hours of the day during the waking state, the astral body uses the physical body, and the mental body works through the astral-body brain and the brain of the physical body. There is also another body to be considered, and that is the soul body [*anandamaya kosha*]. This body is what we touch into at

The Mandukya Upanishad Speaks of Our States of Mind

1. Aum! This Imperishable Word is the whole of this visible universe. Its explanation is as follows: What has become, what is becoming, what will become—verily, all of this is *Aum*. And what is beyond these three states of the world of time—that, too, verily, is OM.

2. All this, verily, is Brahman. The Self is Brahman. This Self has four quarters.

3. The first quarter is *Vaishvanara*. Its field is the waking state. Its consciousness is outward-turned. It is seven-limbed and nineteen-mouthed. It enjoys gross objects.

4. The second quarter is *taijasa*. Its field is the dream state. Its consciousness is inward-turned. It is seven-limbed and nineteen-mouthed. It enjoys subtle objects.

5. The third quarter is *prajna*, where one asleep neither desires anything nor beholds any dream: that is deep sleep. In this field of dreamless sleep, one becomes undivided, an undifferentiated mass of consciousness, consisting of bliss and feeding on bliss. His mouth is consciousness.

6. This is the Lord of All; the Omniscient; the Indwelling Controller; the Source of All. This is the beginning and end of all beings.

7. That is known as the fourth quarter: neither inward-turned nor outward-turned consciousness, nor the two together; not an undifferentiated mass of consciousness; neither knowing, nor unknowing; invisible, ineffable, intangible, devoid of characteristics, in-

conceivable, indefinable, its sole essence being the consciousness of its own Self; the coming to rest of all relative existence; utterly quiet; peaceful; blissful: without a second: this is the Atman, the Self; this is to be realized.

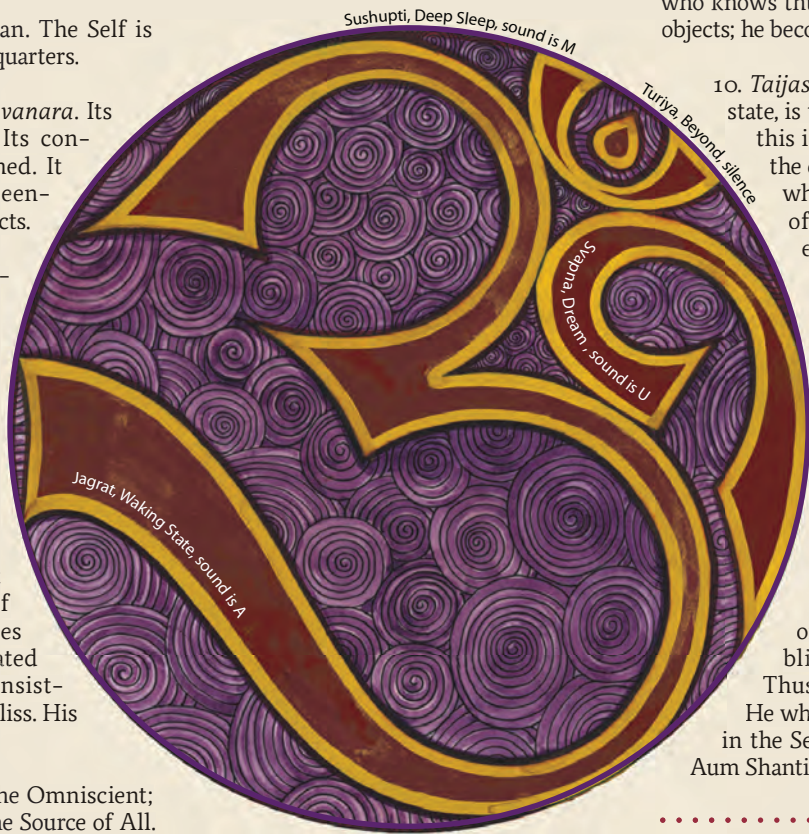
tical with the four quarters of the Self. The components of the syllable are A, U, M.

9. *Vaishvanara*, whose field is the waking state, is the first sound, A, because this encompasses all, and because it is the first. He who knows thus, encompasses all desirable objects; he becomes the first.

10. *Taijasa*, whose field is the dream state, is the second sound, U, because this is an excellence, and contains the qualities of the other two. He who knows thus, exalts the flow of knowledge and becomes equalized; in his family there will be born no one ignorant of Brahman.

11. *Prajna*, whose field is deep sleep, is the third sound, M, because this is the measure, and that into which all enters. He who knows thus, measures all and becomes all.

12. The fourth is soundless: unutterable, a quieting down of all relative manifestations, blissful, peaceful, non-dual. Thus, *Aum* is the Atman, verily. He who knows thus, merges his self in the Self—yea, he who knows thus. *Aum Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.*



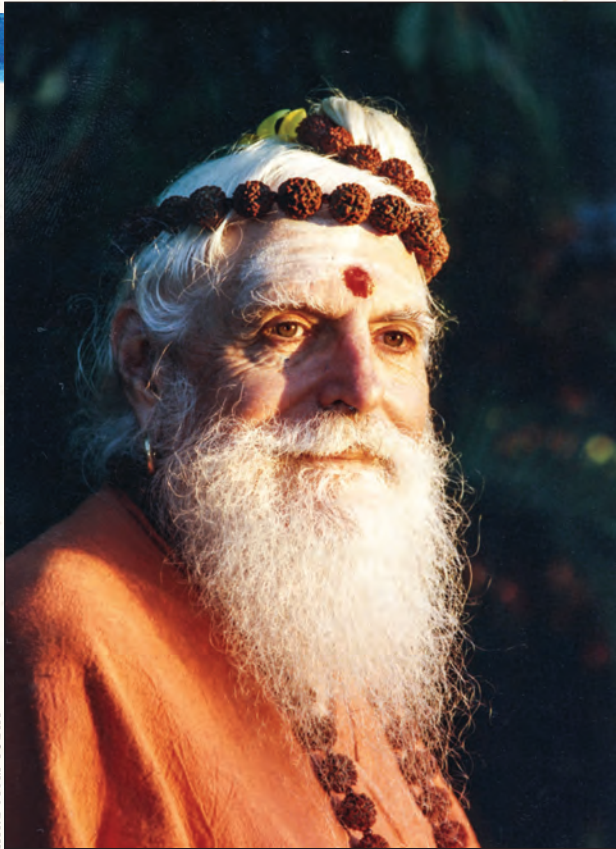
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States and sounds: Each part of the Sanskrit AUM relates to one of the four states. *Jagrat* is the sound A and is *sattva* or clarity; *Svapna* is the sound U and is *rajas* or activity; *Sushupti* is the sound M and is *tamas* or inertia; and *Turiya*, represented by the dot, is the soundless beyond state representing supreme consciousness.



least once through the sleeping state, and that gives not only a release of the karmas, often karmas that have been concluded, but also a new flush of energy into the astral, mental and physical bodies. So, we touch into the Divine through sleep.”

Sleep as Spiritual Discipline
Most of us have a robust dream life. Sometimes we experience high degrees of lucidity while dreaming; but for most dreams, we hardly remember them at all. Subramuniyaswami provides insight as to why this might be: “We do not usually remember our astral experiences, because the astral brain and the physical brain are of two different rates of vibration. Therefore, when we return to the physical body after being in the astral body during sleep, any knowledge that we have gained on the astral plane begins to seep through into the physical plane during a period of four days afterwards. This knowledge accumulates, and we call it an inner knowing. Ideas seem to come to us from within, but actually we did learn and discuss them previously on the astral plane.”

Subramuniyaswami, who was trained by several gifted occultists prior to his samadhi and initiation by his satguru in Sri Lanka, approached dream life as a spiritual discipline, just as he approached waking life. He said the willpower we use in our daily activities is the same willpower we bring into our dream life. For instance, the willpower that someone might use to do five extra pushups is the same will that is used to fly or jump in a lucid dream or go deep into the inner planes of consciousness. It is the same will, energy and awareness commanding the astral/dream body, just as it animates the physical body in the waking state. For Subramuniyaswami, sleep was “a cleanser for the subconscious mind,” but it was also, for meditating yogis, a time for gaining higher knowledge which would later filter through into the conscious mind as intuition. For this reason, he taught his devotees to aim for the deepest levels of the astral world and to prepare for sleep systematically. He recommended pranayama, hatha yoga and japa prior to sleeping to help in depolarizing prana from the conscious mind. He was also adamant that his devotees settle all disputes before going to bed; he said issues “go to seed” during sleep. Interestingly, this view was later corroborated in the journal *Nature Communications*, where researchers Liu, Y., et al., reported that after sleep “consolidated aversive memories retain



Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami: *His book Merging with Siva tells about the metaphysics of consciousness and explores what happens when we sleep.*

their emotional reactivity and become more resistant to suppression.”

Granted that sleep is a biological need for all humans, Hindu rishis throughout time have approached it also as a tool for enlightenment, known as yoga nidra. Dr. Vasant Lad, renowned for his expertise in ayurveda, expounds upon yoga nidra as a Vedic science of psychic sleep: “Because deep sleep is a way of being close to the inner source of being, when you sleep with awareness and maintain that awareness in the deep sleep state, you will become enlightened; that kind of sleep becomes a form of samadhi. Sleep is not samadhi, but samadhi is like sleep when it occurs with total awareness. In that awareness, there is no judgment, no criticism, no likes or dislikes. In this awareness, there is a complete cessation of ego, because to some extent we forget our ego or identity in a deep sleep. Hence, the ayurvedic approach to sleep is one of the gateways to becoming enlightened. In deep sleep, even a king and a beggar are the same. The moment they wake up, they become king and beggar again. This is due to identification.” (See sidebar on page 66 for more on yoga nidra.)

Ayurvedic View of Dreams

The ayurvedic lexicon deals with the three fundamental qualities of prakriti, primal nature, called the gunas: sattva is purity, peacefulness, illumination; rajas is passion,

activity; and tamas is darkness, inertia. These three qualities govern awareness as it goes through waking, dreaming and deep sleep states. Lad clarifies, “Jagrat, the wakeful state, functions with more of a sattva quality, which is clarity and purity. Sattva creates individual consciousness and the concept of an observer. The moment we become conscious of consciousness, it creates a center—this is the observer. This observer projects outside of itself because of the rajasic quality. The movement of observation is rajas, and it relates to the dream state. When awareness flows from one point to another, it becomes attention, and that flow of attention is perception. Perception is the process of rajas carrying awareness through the doors of perception (the senses) to meet with the objective world, which is tamas. The visible world is an expression of tamas, which is inertia, matter. Tamas relates to the state of deep sleep.”

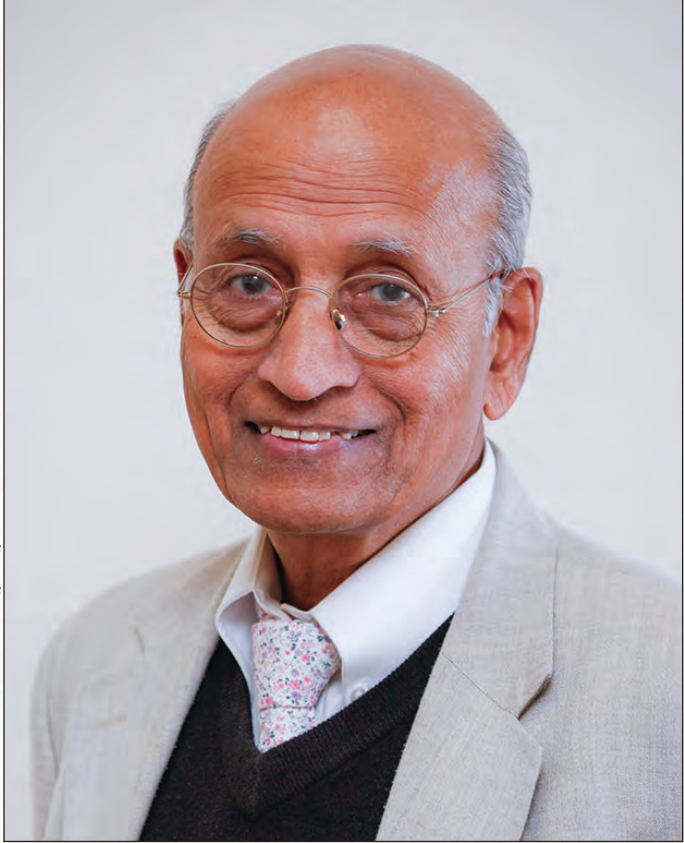
Evolutes from the gunas are the five elements, which are governed by the three doshas in the human body: *vata* rules space and air, *pitta* rules fire and water, and *kapha* rules water and earth. In ayurveda, *prakriti* describes one’s basic constitution (a combination of three doshas); whereas *vikriti* describes the current state of disease or imbalance of those doshas. Dr. Lad shares, “The nature of sleep varies according to a person’s prakriti and vikriti doshas. For a vata person, sleep is light and interrupted. Pitta people find it difficult to go to sleep, but once they fall sleep, they have relatively sound sleep. They are intermediate sleepers. Kapha people have deep, prolonged sleep.”

Ayurveda classifies dreams according to the doshas and also recognizes their influence upon the different dream states. “In these dreaming states, systemic vata dosha may activate *prana vayu* “breath/vitality wind), systemic pitta dosha may stimulate prana vayu, or systemic kapha dosha may disturb prana vayu, leading to three different categories of dreams.”

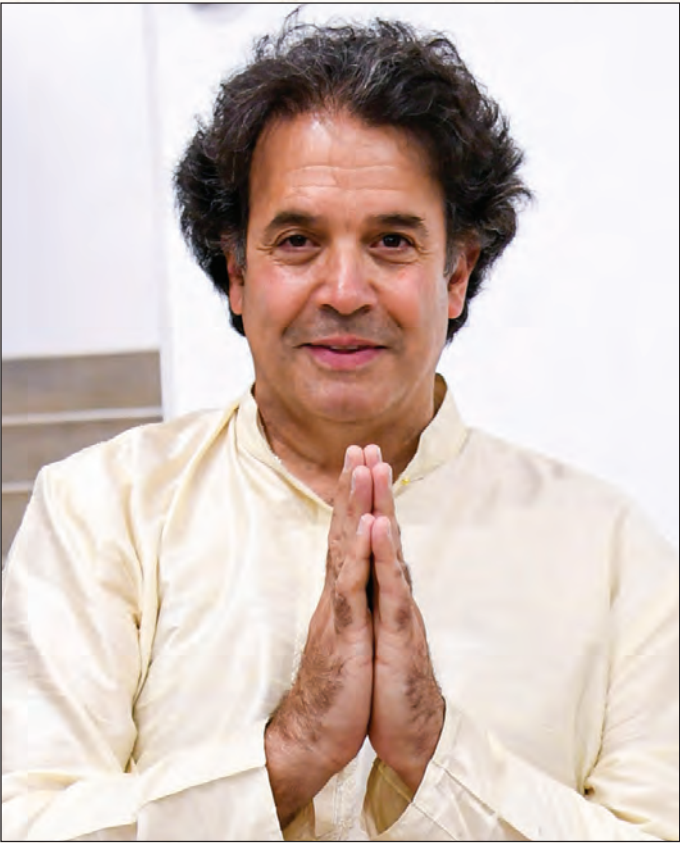
Dealing with Insomnia

Ayurveda also classifies doshic types of insomnia and offers holistic ways of managing the disorder through lifestyle changes, and practices such as *abhyanga* (oil massage) and/or the application of bhringaraj oil to the soles of the feet.

Dr. Rudolph Tanzi, a Harvard-trained epigeneticist famous for finding a link between insomnia and Alzheimer’s, explains in *Super Genes*, which he co-authored with Deepak Chopra: “In the tradition of ayurveda, in-



AYURVEDIC INSTITUTE IN ALBUQUERQUE



RAJUMAR MANICKAM

Two of our experts on sleep: (above left) Dr. Vasant Lad, professor and director of the Ayurvedic Institute in Albuquerque, an early pioneer of ayurveda to the West with over 40 years’ experience, explains the classic Indian view of sleep from the point of view of the gunas and doshas; Dr. Rudolph Tanzi, the Joseph P. and Rose F. Kennedy Professor of Neurology at Harvard University, Vice-Chair of Neurology and Director of Genetics and Aging Research, explains issues related to insomnia.

somnia is rooted in an imbalance of vata, one of the three doshas or basic physiological forces. Vata, which is linked to biological motion, causes all manner of restless, irregular behavior. When it is out of balance, people find it hard to keep to a routine in diet, digestion, sleep and work. Mood swings and anxiety are related to vata. Without asking anyone to adopt an ayurvedic perspective, we think it’s helpful to see that vata links mind and body in a very realistic way. Appetite, mood and energy levels are all thrown out of balance when sleep—a natural remedy for vata imbalance—is deprived.” To get a better view of how sleep and vata dosha can go out of balance together, see Tanzi’s chart on the next page.

Dr. Tanzi recommends that to take “advantage of the vata-sleep connection, you should

Stages of Sleep

IN WESTERN & AYURVEDIC TERMS

CHART BY DR. VASANT LAD

Stages	Time Period	What happens
1	5-10 minutes	Theta waves. Gradual cessation of prana vata.
2	10-25 minutes	Rapid, rhythmic brain waves. Temperature drops, breathing, and heart rate slow down. Cessation of sadhaka pitta, the fire of motivation.
3	20-30 minutes	Delta waves. Slow brain activity. Deep sleep induced by tarpaka kapha, a brain secretion associated with bliss and total contentment.
4	20-30 minutes	Delta waves. Governed by tarpaka kapha. However, prana may become active, causing bedwetting or sleepwalking.
5	Initial occurrence can be very short but each cycle becomes longer, lasting up to an hour as sleep progresses	Rapid eye movement (REM) stage of sleep, which indicates activation of prana. This is the dream stage. Respiration becomes faster and repressed emotions activate, causing some to have dreams of sex in this stage.



Yoga Nidra—Conscious Sleep

YOGA NIDRA IS DEFINED AS YOGIC SLEEP, BUT in practice it names a self-guided meditation that aims to systematically disengage awareness from the body and thinking mind. The practice has been duplicated and modified by countless practitioners through the ages, but the basic process is relatively uniform. Assuming a sleeping position, lying comfortably on the back, the practitioner goes through a simple diaphragmatic breathing practice along with a body scan, moving awareness to focus (nyasa) on one body part or energetic center at a time, starting with the feet and going to the top of the head, using auto-suggestion to relax and gradually let go into gravity and space. The aim in yoga nidra is to skim as closely as possible to the most restful and rejuvenating place in consciousness with-

out falling asleep. According to Indian tantric knowledge, one hour of yoga nidra is equivalent to four hours of sleep, and performing yoga nidra before sleeping allows for a more restful and deeper sleep. A person in deep yogic sleep has the ability to learn an abundance of information, such as languages, faster, or to gain spiritual knowledge of scripture, because it bypasses their conscious state of mind and goes directly into their unconscious state of mind. Practicing yoga nidra allows one to refocus their mental and physical strength into one specific area or direction. Doing so allows a yogi to rechannel their willpower into a single-pointed focus in order to make maximal spiritual progress. In a world of information overload and

multitasking, taking a “yoga break” to relax has become a modern fad and an economic opportunity. Teachers are offering expensive programs, and for a vacation you can book a stay at a yoga nidra retreat where you can receive guidance and rejuvenation. The the first and definitive work on the practice is Yoga Nidra, published by Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar in 1977. Some say the process of resting nyasa goes back before recorded history. Tibetan Buddhism has an offspring called “dream yoga.” It has migrated to the West, with Stephen LaBerge, who made “lucid dreaming” famous. Dr. Richard Miller openly acknowledges “the ancient teachings of yoga nidra,” but took out a copyright on modern methods. See www.irest.org. The US Army Surgeon General has listed iRest® Yoga Nidra as a Tier 1 approach for addressing Pain Management in Military Care.

Sleep Training in the Military

ACCORDING TO SHARON ACKMAN, A WRITER for veterans and the military, “The US Navy Pre-Flight School developed a scientific method to fall asleep day or night, in any conditions, in under two minutes. After six weeks of practice, 96 percent of pilots could fall asleep in two minutes or less—even after drinking coffee, with machine gunfire being played in the background.” Ackman shares the military’s systematic technique, which is excerpted here: In a process similar to yoga nidra’s nyasa, starting from the head and working one’s way down the body to the legs and feet, the hopeful sleeper is enjoined to first slow their rate of breathing and relax the face, forehead, tongue, cheeks and jaw. Although one’s eyes may be shut, Ackman warns they may still

not be relaxed. Ackman claims that “when you relax your face and let your eye sockets go limp, you signal to the rest of your body it’s time to unwind.” The face, she explains, is like one’s emotional epicenter, and it is the key to the relaxation process. Moving on from the face, the shoulders and neck are targeted next. Let the shoulders drop as low as possible, allowing the muscles in the back of the neck to completely relax. Maintain a rhythm of deep inhalations and slow exhalations, letting go of all tension. After the shoulders and neck are relaxed, Ackman suggests moving on to the arms. Start with the dominant side, letting the upper arm go limp, then the forearm, and finally the fingers and hand. Repeat this process on the other side when finished. Ackman

suggests that if a body part resists relaxing, “tense it first, then let it go loose.” The same process is repeated with the legs, starting with the dominant thigh, calf, ankle and foot. The last step is to let go of all thoughts for 10 seconds. “When you’re physically relaxed and your mind is still for at least 10 seconds,” Ackman reports, “you’ll be asleep.”

..... Yoga nidra and sleep-banking: (left) Resting with focus, Neal Ghoshal performs an iRest® Meditation, copyrighted by Richard Miller; (above) a soldier “banks” extra ZZZ’s. Sleep banking for seven to ten days prior to an assignment could be the difference between winning and losing—or life and death. Search “sleep banking” at armyupress.army.mil

first recommit to getting a good night’s sleep. Letting a full 8 hours turn into 5 or 6 is a slippery slope,” he says. “If you have a problem with insomnia, either finding it hard to fall asleep or waking up during the night, don’t turn to pills—sleep aids of every sort are not the equivalent of establishing a natural sleep rhythm.” “The vata-sleep connection links most of the choices to conventional insomnia advice in Western medicine,” Tanzi confirms. “Only a few things need further explanation. To begin with, the overlooked things that keep many people awake are too much light in the bedroom, too much noise, and minor aches and pains that escape notice until you start to go to sleep. If you have the kind of sleeplessness that’s typified by waking up in the middle of the night or too early in the morning, attend to these three factors as first-line remedies.” Blue light emanating from computer screens, phone screens and LED lights after the sun has gone down has also been shown to disrupt sleep. It does this by suppressing

Our Sleep Is Disturbed by:

- Anxiety, depression
Overexertion
Staying up late
Cold temperature
Irregular eating
Poor nutrition
Emotional upsets
Physical aches & pains
Excitement, agitation
Stress and worry
Grief
Harsh surroundings
Excessive noise
Excessive light in room

melatonin, a hormone that induces sleep and regulates the circadian rhythm. This phenomenon has been dubbed the “Blue Light Problem” and has substantial scientific evidence to support it. Consider visiting blue-lightatnight.com to begin your own research. Tanzi writes of sleep rhythms, “In sleep research terminology there are “larks” (early risers) and “owls” (late risers) whose sleep habits are set for life. How such habits get set isn’t known, and this may be a fruitful area for epigenetics to explore, since it’s through

epigenetic marks that genetic predisposition intersects with experience. Disrupting someone’s natural sleep rhythm is known to have widespread implications for the body. Workers on the night shift, for example, never fully adapt to their unnatural schedule of waking and sleeping. About 8.6 million Americans work the night shift or rotate shifts, and they are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity. Since the same conditions are associated with inflammation, there could be a strong link there.” Tanzi points out, “The tendency to lose sleep as we age has a vata link, since according to ayurveda, this dosha increases with age. It’s prudent not to take sleep for granted, even if you have always enjoyed good, sound sleep. Adopt healthy habits early and you will prevent future problems. Lack of sleep has been associated with triggering Alzheimer’s. Lack of sleep is also associated with high blood pressure, which tends to increase by the decade as we age.”

Interview with Dr. Brandon Westover

Dr. Westover captures data from new brain monitoring tools and uses artificial intelligence to research and improve medical care for patients with brain injury, seizures, sleep disorders, etc., and to develop closed-loop control technology for precision control of anesthesia in the ICU. HT: Why do we sleep? A: Because we’re tired! No, it’s a good question, and not completely settled yet. There’s evidence for at least two reasons, cleansing and memory. It was recently discovered that while you are awake and your brain is working hard, thinking about things, the cells in your brain, the neurons, actually swell. They get larger. Then, when you go to sleep (or if you get anesthesia for a surgery), the cells shrink a little bit, creating space between them. The cerebrospinal fluid can then pass easily through your brain tissue, washing out some of the waste products that accumulate during your waking hours. That small increase in space causes a dramatic increase

in the rate at which the brain can flush out waste products. The deepest stage of sleep, the so-called non-REM Stage Three, or slow wave sleep, seems to be most helpful for that. HT: How does sleep affect memory? A: Sleep also seems important in helping with memory consolidation. Different rhythms arise during different parts of sleep. During a light to medium-deep (“non-REM Stage Two”) sleep, the brain produces slow waves punctuated by little rhythms, called the spindle oscillation, that turn on and off, on and off. We think these help move short-term memories into the long-term memory part of the brain. People whose slow waves are disrupted, for example, with anesthesia or certain sleeping medicines, have performed worse on cognitive tests in the morning. They’re not as refreshed as they would have been, and they don’t remember things as well as if they had slept normally. So sleep is believed to be very important for memory consolidation—transferring short-



M. Brandon Westover, MD, PhD: Physician Investigator (CI), Neurology, Associate Professor of Neurology, Harvard Medical School, Associate Neurologist, Massachusetts General Hospital

term memories into long-term memory, and rehearsing things you did, maybe skills you learned while you were awake. But though we have evidence for these things, they’re not fully proven yet.



HT: What has changed in sleep research?

A: People are starting to recognize that healthy sleep is just as important as exercise or eating well, maybe more important. I am trying to help hospitalized patients make it through with their brain health intact as much as possible. When you have a kidney problem or a heart problem, it accelerates what happens in life. People might get confused while they're in the hospital, even when they came in with no brain problem. In the past people paid no attention to the brain; they just assumed patients got completely better after the primary medical problem was corrected. But during the last decade we've found that if you don't take good care of the brain, it does not completely recover from this confusion. Some people have impairments as a result of their critical illness that last for a year or more. We are realizing hospitals should routinely monitor the brain as well as the heart and lungs, in order to keep people's brains from getting sick. One of the important factors turns out to be sleep. A typical hospital stay still involves beeping noises, lights on at all hours, and people waking you up all the time. We are barely starting to see that's a problem and address these issues so we can provide better care for the sick.

HT: What do you regard as the most exciting new direction for sleep research?

A: I'm excited about our own research into sleep monitoring tools. These help us figure out what things really work to improve the quality of your sleep and your long-term brain health span. You'd like your health span to match your lifespan, so your brain is functioning well as long as you're alive. Objective sleep measurement should improve our ability to study exercise, meditation and other factors, to learn which things work and which things don't.

HT: What do you measure to test brain health?

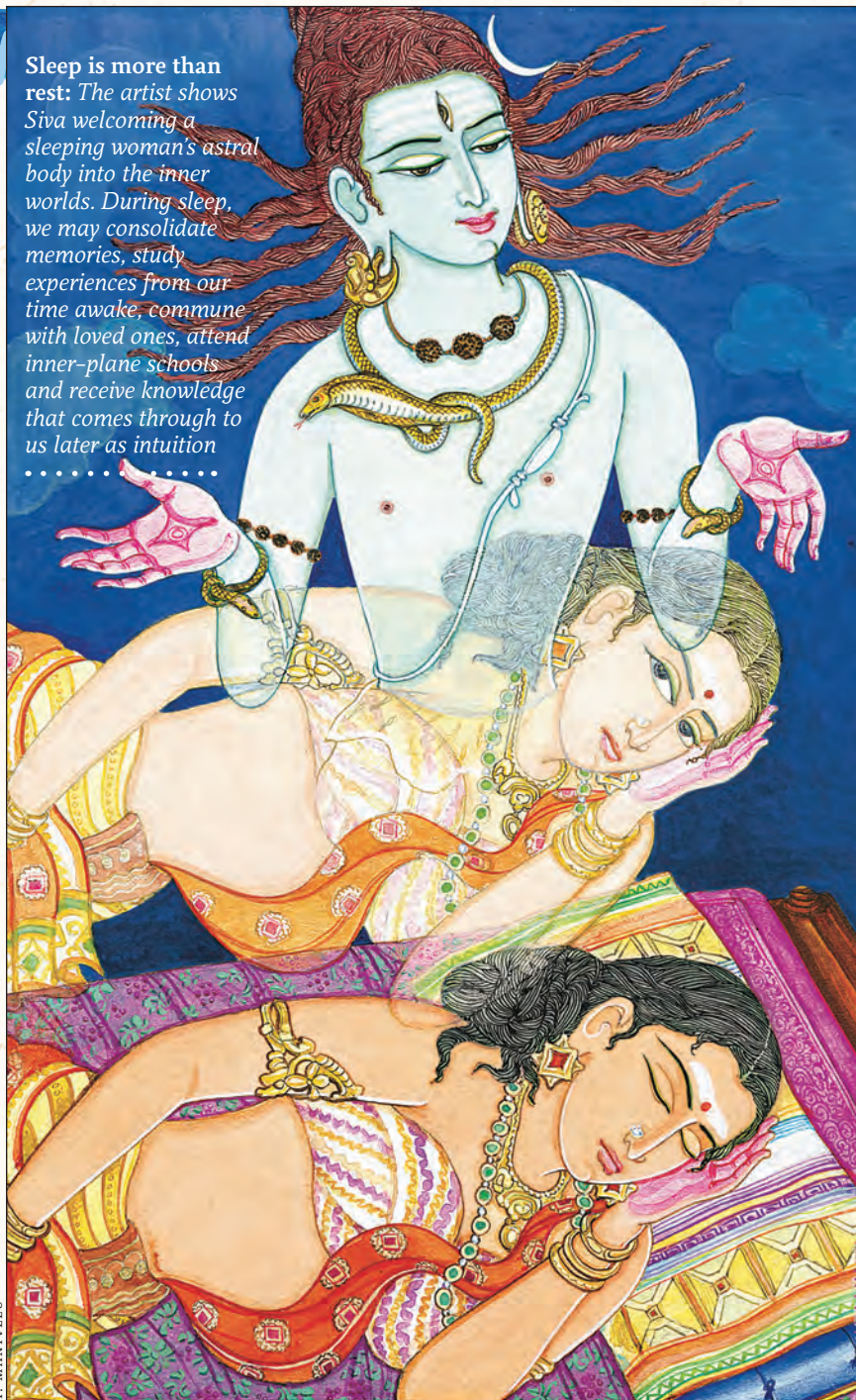
A: The brief answer is that we measure more than five hundred little features of brain activity. None of them by itself is good enough to make overall predictions; your brain activity is not simple. One of the easier things to explain is the power of the signal—the amplitude of the little electrical oscillations in the signal. A very flat electrical signal would have zero power or very little power. Roughly speaking, a healthy signal oscillates a lot and is highly variable.

Each waking or sleeping state is characterised by certain healthy rhythms. For example, when you're awake, if you close your eyes and just stay calm, there should be, near the back of your head, a beautiful sine wave signal. As you get older, or if you get sick, the amplitude of that alpha rhythm will get smaller, very low amplitude peak to peak. Also, the rhythm at which it oscillates will go from say ten cycles per second down to a lower frequency. Maybe seven cycles per second.

Similarly, one of the Stage Two patterns is called the spindle oscillation. These are little rhythms that turn on for a couple of seconds and then turn off, and on and off. These are involved in memory consolidation. They, too, will tend to get smaller and lower in frequency with disease or age. The slow waves provide a third example; their amplitude will get smaller. It's easy to imagine how these are related to the im-

Sleep is more than rest: The artist shows Siva welcoming a sleeping woman's astral body into the inner worlds. During sleep, we may consolidate memories, study experiences from our time awake, commune with loved ones, attend inner-plane schools and receive knowledge that comes through to us later as intuition

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A. MANIVELU

portant functions of sleep we spoke of earlier.

The Mystery of Sleep

Modern science has not yet definitively explained why humans need sleep. But as it gains understanding of the importance of sleep and sleep rhythms, it resonates more and more closely with ayurveda's holistic approach. It is clear that we should make any necessary lifestyle adjustments to ensure getting enough sleep, preferably at regular times. A Hindu view might propose ultimately that sleep and dreams are necessary for the biology and psychology of the indi-

vidual, and that dreams can be of many different types and reflect the energies of many different states of consciousness.

The Western sciences have barely touched upon the esoteric treasures in the Hindu understanding of the inner worlds and dream life. As we evolve, mastery of sleep becomes a vehicle for spiritual evolution and a channel for communion with the devas and our own superconsciousness. The *Man-dukya Upanishad*, however, reminds the contemplative Hindu that always and forever, whether awake, dreaming or in deep sleep, we are already at home in Brahman.

Hindu Heritage Endowment

New Fund Helps Feed the Monks of Hawaii Monastery

The Kauai Aadheenam Feed the Monks Fund provides for annadhanam (giving of food) for the monks of the monastery in Hawaii, in memory of Gurudeva, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, the founder.

Being located in Hawaii gives Kauai Aadheenam many unique blessings, but it also brings grocery prices that are the highest of any state in the nation—some 70% higher than the national average. A tomato from Safeway can cost \$5, for one! As part of their self-sufficiency, the monks grow most of the vegetables and fruits they eat. They manage hydroponic green houses for raising vegetables indoors, away from fruit flies and other pests that would attack them. These efforts provide a daily source of truly fresh, organic vegetables while reducing the need to purchase costly produce from stores, thus offsetting Hawaii's food costs. The monks also ship in from the US Mainland items such as rice, flour, dahls and lentils in fifty pound sacks every three months to keep food costs as low as possible.

Padmini Samuthiran, who lives with her family in Singapore, is a co-creator of the Feed the Monks Fund. She shared with us, "Since the time when I was in my thirties, I had the goal and wish to set up some sort of Annadhanam Fund that will serve food for hungry people and/or will ensure nobody goes hungry. Without food, the mind will not function effectively. The monks are doing amazing work both in terms of the nature and magnitude of their mission, so to establish a fund named 'Feed the Monks' appropriately fulfills my goal/wish. When the fund amount exceeds a pre-determined amount, sufficient to meet the needs of the monks at Kauai, its usage will be expanded to serve people at large, to ensure, as much as possible, that people do not go hungry."



Padmini Samuthiran

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Poumagal Mootoosamy

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Poumagal Mootoosamy, co-creator of this fund, is originally from Mauritius and now lives with her family in Montreal, Canada. She explained to the Hindu Heritage Endowment staff, "For some years now, my husband Agum and I have gladly been sponsoring a meal for the mathavasis of Kauai Aadheenam. I grew up in a family where Annadanam (the sacred offering of food) has always been considered a blessing and privilege, done with much love and humility, without thought of reward.

"The idea of creating a Feed the Monks endowment fund came to light in 2015, after having the darshan of Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami at Montreal Murugan Temple. We wanted to do something more permanent than a once-a-year meal sponsorship. Sannyasin Shanmuganathaswami provided me with the required information on HHE and once the minimum fund was collected, the procedure was very simple.

"Caring for Gurudeva's mathavasis is a natural way of ensuring the continuity of their most unique and noble work, as well as setting an example for our children. We hope the fund will grow to generate sufficient income to cover all food expenses in the future. We are happy for the opportunity to show our immense gratitude to Gurudeva!"

Grants from the Feed the Monks Fund will provide an additional source of income to help the monks manage Hawaii's high food prices. When the principal of the fund reaches \$100,000, portions of the grant may also be used to feed other worthy and qualified charitable organizations, at the discretion of the presiding satguru of Kauai Aadheenam. The goal of this fund is three million US dollars. It is anticipated that earned revenue from this amount will cover the entire food budget for the monks each year.

It is wise to consult with your tax professionals if you are contemplating a charitable gift under the extended law. Start your estate plan by downloading the pdf file at www.hheonline.org/tool-kit.shtml.

Give to the Feed the Monks Fund at www.hheonline.org/feedthemonks.

JANUARY TO MARCH ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment		Snehapriya Rao	299.00	Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund	
Roshan Harilela	US\$375.00	B. Ramesh Reddy	299.00	Benevity	44.00
Muthuraman Iyer	501.00	Tushar Shinde	299.00	Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund	-100.00
Gayatri Rajan	50.00	Venkat Somaskandan	299.00	Benevity	44.00
Chamundi Sabanathan	78.75	Usha Kasturirangan & Kash Srinivasan	100.00	Jessica Dunaway	195.00
Hitesvara Saravan	63.00	Anonymous	18.89	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	6.67
Jai Sivakumara	600.00	Total	6,659.89	Tamnash J. Gupta	318.78
Anonymous	226.16			Roshan Harilela	375.00
Total	1,893.91			Chamundi Sabanathan	78.75
		Gurudeva's Trilogy Distribution Fund		Hitesvara Saravan	36.00
Iraivan Temple Endowment		Vel Mahalingum	15.25	Rodney & Ilene Standen	30.00
Frank Burkhardt	30.00	Jai Sivakumara	108.00	Total	1,028.20
Rajesh & Poonam Damodharan	101.00	Total	123.25		
Amey Surendra Gangal	11.00			Hindu Education Endowment	
Gaurav Malhotra	151.00	Kadavul Nataraja Ardra Abhishekam Endowment		Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund	500.00
Matthew Morrison	111.00	Umasankaran Mohambourame	75.13		
Anonymous	184.00	Gowri Nadason	128.64	Hindu Press International Endowment Fund	
Total	588.00	Mrunal Patel	1,008.00	Rajendra Giri	151.00
		Parimala Selvaraj	93.00		
Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund		Anonymous	273.00	Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund	
Rajni & Ranna Jani	251.00	Total	1,577.77	Chellappa Deva	25.00
Sivakumaran Kurunathan	32.34			Mano Navaratnarajah	225.00
Umasankaran Mohambourame	33.96	Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund		Jai Sivakumara	108.00
Jogendra Moorooogen	1.27	Shyamadeva Dandapani	36.00	Total	358.00
Vidyadevi Moorooogen	1.27	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	4.09		
Agumbarum Mootoosamy	178.12	Rajendra Giri	151.00	Positive Discipline Endowment	
Matthew Nadason	120.00	Kulagan Moonesawmy	15.25	Vinaya Alahan	66.00
Karoumee Pareatumbree	251.00	Gowri Nadason	128.64		
Subramaniam Pennathur	49.98	Ram Ramamoorthy	45.00	Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund	
Chinmayie Rajasankara	44.00	Aran Sambandar	144.00	Sathyainkara Balendra	4.00
Manishankar Sagum	5.09	Jai Sivakumara	308.00	Nuckiren Pyeneeandee	25.80
Rajeshkumar Shah	600.00	Vayudeva Varadan	54.00	Anonymous	108.00
Nandi Devi Sivanathan	113.89	Total	885.98	Total	137.80
Total	1,681.92				
Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund		Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam		Murugan Temple of North America Pillaiyar Shrine Fund	
Thirujnanam Arnassalon	5.09	Anonymous	324.00	Pathmini Saravanapavan	250.00
Hemakheshaa Naatha Batumallah	20.00	Sri Subramuniya Ashram Scholarship Fund		Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	15.00
Mekaladeva Batumallah	20.00	Anonymous	324.00	Total	265.00
Gunavadee Caremben	2.62			Thank You Bodhinatha Fund	
Somasoundarum Caremben	2.62	Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund		Shyamadeva Dandapani	108.00
Sukanta Caremben	2.62	Anonymous	375.00	Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai	324.00
David Case	299.00	Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment		Jessica Dunaway	196.00
Satish Chandra	299.00	Mano Navaratnarajah	75.00	Debashis Ghosh	300.00
Vidya Dixit	299.00	Krishanth Rajasooriyar	60.00	Inna Linnyk	300.00
Mythili Durai	174.00	Total	135.00	Dasarathi Minjur	25.00
Madan L. Goel	200.00	Hinduism Today Production Fund		Matthew Morrison	160.00
Arvind Iyer	299.00	Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund	5,001.00	Mano Navaratnarajah	150.00
Anant Vijay Joshi	299.00	Community Foundation of Greater Memphis	108.00	Ambhigai Paghan	30.00
Sharat Joshi	299.00	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	6.67	Siva Penamakuru	12.00
Juhivaasana Koothan	7.63	Rajendra Giri	151.00	Nuckiren Pyeneeandee	25.80
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Praveen Kumar	273.00	Rajagopal Krishnan	40.00	Aran Sambandar	216.00
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Ashwini Maureemootoo	31.97	Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01	Rajeshkumar Shah	101.00
Saroja Maureemootoo	155.87	Nuckiren Pyeneeandee	25.80	Anba Dayananden Valayten	9.92
Bhaveshan Moorghen	5.01	Gayatri Rajan	100.00	Vayudeva Varadan	63.00
Shanda Kumaran Moorghen	7.63	Aran Sambandar	144.00	Sahunthala Vinothachandran	240.00
Udeyadeva Moorghen	10.25	Suresh Sangani	101.00	Michael Wasylkiw	648.00
Hemant Pande	299.00	Anonymous	5,474.00	Anonymous	678.22
Karoumee Pareatumbree	240.69	Total	11,276.73	Total	3,794.94
Nand Parkash-Garg	299.00			Murugan Temple Yalpanam Festival Fund	
Rakesh Pathak	299.00			Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00
Laxman Prajapat	299.00				
Deepa Ramachandran	299.00				
Sainath Ramaswami	299.00				

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Mahajana College Fund		Murugan Temple of North America		Panchangam Endowment Fund	
YourCause	132.30	Puja Fund		Anonymous	20.00
		Pathmini Saravanapavan	100.00		
Taos Hanuman Fund		Nigel Subramaniam Siva	1,008.00	Digital Dharma Endowment	
Texas Instruments Foundation	2,202.00	Vayudeva Varadan	54.00	Shyamadeva Dandapani	501.00
Anonymous	108.36	Total	1,162.00	Goindamah Moothoosawmy	4.93
Total	2,310.36			Poomaly Mootoosamy	2.47
		India Hindu Temple Cleaning Fund		Kannan Venguswamy	51.00
Swami Vipulananta Children's Home Endowment		Omarnauth Bissoon	20.00	Anonymous	389.24
Canaganayagam Kugendra	60.00	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	6.90	Total	948.64
		Kulagan Moonesawmy	7.63		
Hindu Literature Fund		Krishanth Rajasooriyar	60.00	Kauai Aadheenam Feed the Monks Fund	
John & Abha Wiersba	102.00	Total	94.53	Thulasidas Nadarajah	122.00
		Anantha Ladies Home Endowment		Gayatri Rajan	75.00
Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund		Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	30.00	Ravi & Vaishnavi Ramakrishnan	101.00
Rajagopal Krishnan	20.00			Padmini Samuthiran	216.00
		Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples (Kovil Maadu) Endowment		Anonymous	108.00
Himalayan Academy Book Distribution Fund		Anil Ananda Badhwar	20.00	Total	622.00
Shyamadeva Dandapani	36.00	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	6.88	Concord Shiva Murugan Temple (CSMT) Endowment Fund	
Nrusimhayya Manda	30.00	Srinivas R. Madaboosi	150.00	Ravi Nadesan	10,000.00
Total	66.00	Natraj Narayanswami	33.00		
		Krishanth Rajasooriyar	60.00	Insurance Premium	
Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund		Padmini Samuthiran	216.00	Mrunal Patel	3,003.00
Anonymous	33.00	Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00		
		Arunasalam Vathavooran	75.00	Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment	
Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment		Anonymous	23.52	Other Donations	600.00
Yovani Cupren	25.00	Total	734.40		
Tamnash J. Gupta	108.00	Jaffna Kannathiddy Kali Kovil Endowment		Total Contributions	\$54,747.43
Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01	Nigel Subramaniam Siva	1,008.00		
Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00	Anonymous	108.36	Funds at Market Value, Mar 31, 2020	
Poobarlene Soobramanien	76.28	Total	1,116.36		
Anonymous	1183.16			Grand Total	US\$15,909,373.56
Total	1,592.45	Pakistan Hindu Empowerment Fund			
		Michael Zimmermann	4.00		

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30, Dallas, TX

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29-31, Austin, TX

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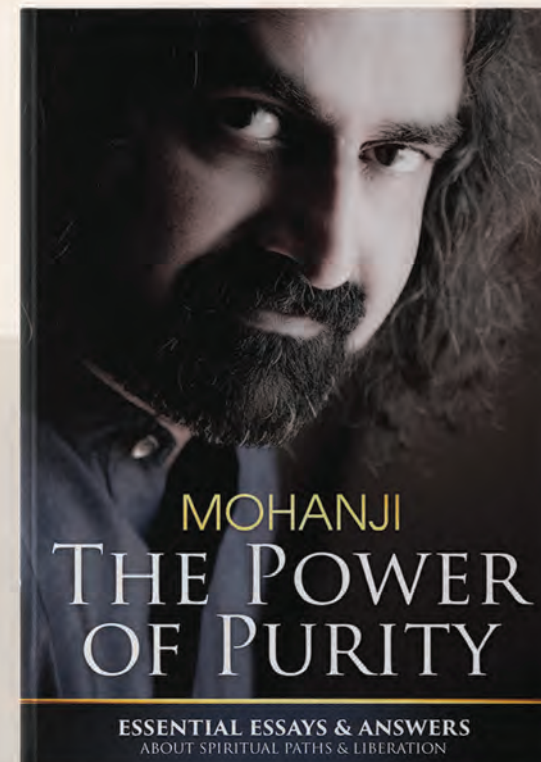
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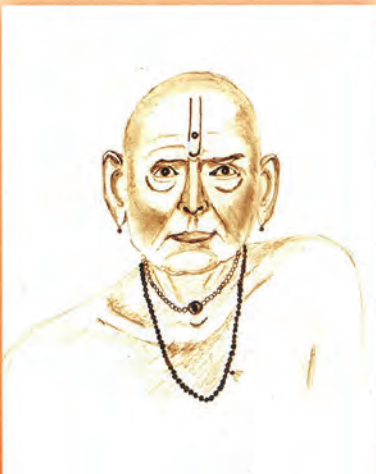
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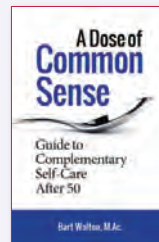
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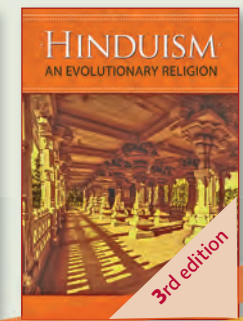
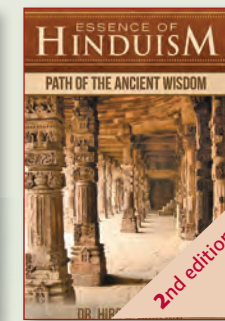
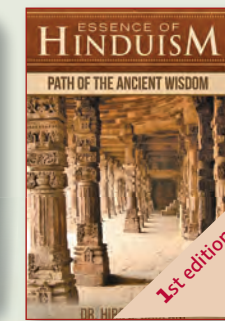


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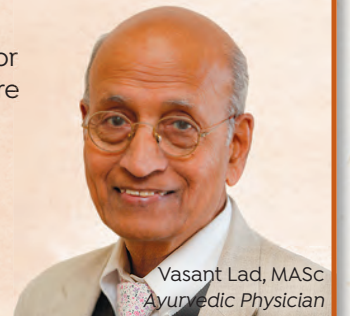
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*In the rising Sun,
I see Thy Radiance.*

*In the full Moon,
I am immersed in Thy Love.*

*In the bracing breeze,
I feel Thy Touch.*

*In my White Lotus
Looking beyond the valley,
Towards the hills in the distance,
I am blessed with Thy Gift.*

*My Lord of Light,
Keep me safe,
Keep me safe,*

*From the desires of the day,
The temptations of the night,
The fantasies of my heart.*

*Keep me safe
In Thy Embrace.*

Keep Me Safe in Thy Embrace, by Dr. Arjunan Subramaniam, 2016, Desa Parkcity, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

DIGITAL DHARMA

ETHICAL CONVERSION

WikiHow to Be a Hindu?

MANY DO NOT KNOW THAT SATGURU Sivaya Subramuniyaswami published the first edition of *How to Become a Hindu* as early as 1989. After the Web came to be, the second edition (2000) was published in print and online. It describes the steps of "ethical conversion." Now it has taken on a life of its own: wikihow.com/Be-a-Hindu incorporates the steps he prescribed, plus additional material to produce an online guide. Pictures and concise descriptions take you through:

1. Learn the Basic

- Embrace pluralism
- Learn about the main denominations
- Read the major sacred texts of Hinduism
- Familiarize yourself with the Hindu Deities.

2. Converting to Hinduism

- Join a Hindu community
- Distinguish between your past and present beliefs
- Sever from former mentors
- Adopt a Hindu name
- Have a traditional Hindu name-giving ceremony (*namakarana samskara*)
- Publicly announce your conversion
- Enjoy a "welcoming" ceremony (*vratyastoma*)

3. Practicing Hinduism

- Uphold nonviolence and be kind to all living things
- Perform the five daily duties (*pancha maha yajnas*)
- Practice the five constant duties (*pancha nitya karmas*)
- Worship the Gods through puja
- Take up other Hindu practices

For a thorough description and in-depth testimonies from those who have adopted (having had no previous religion) or converted to Hinduism, see the original work at himalayanacademy.com/view/how-to-become-a-hindu. For related documents you can use, go to himalayanacademy.com/readlearn/basics/conversion.

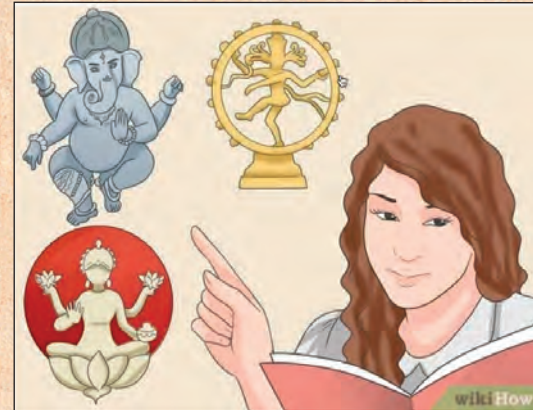
Here are excerpts from Satguru Sivaya Subramuniya's introduction to his groundbreaking work: "Those who know history know that the concept of changing one's faith is nothing new to Hinduism. While Hindus today are worried about Christian

efforts to 'save the Pagans,' millions in the West are quietly adopting Hinduism in a remarkable and little-discussed silent conversion, a conversion no less powerful and far more extensive than in the past. Sincere seekers in Europe, Africa and the Americas are starting to call themselves Hindu and seek formal entrance into the faith. They are the result of 150 years of Hindu philosophy surging out from India in several waves: first as scriptural translations, then itinerant holy men such as Swami Vivekananda, and most recently as part of the diaspora of Hindus out of India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, and the resulting establishment of temples and ashrams in nearly every country of the world. The central Hindu concepts of karma, dharma, reincarnation and the presence of the Divine in all things are now understood by tens of millions not born in the faith but exposed to it through music, film and television.

"To the born Hindu of today, the question of entering Hinduism may seem unnecessary, for by one common definition Hinduism is a way of life, a culture, both religious and secular. The Hindu is not accustomed to thinking of his religion as a clearly defined system, distinct and different from other systems, for it fills his every experience. It encompasses all of life. This pure, simple view has to do, in part, with Hinduism's all-embracing quality, to accept so many variations of belief and practice into itself. But this view ignores the true distinctions between this way of life and the ways of the world's other great religions. There is no denying that Hinduism is also a distinct world religion, and to hold otherwise in today's world is fraught with risk."



www.hinduismtoday.com



Showing how it is done: four sample illustrations from WikiHow to Be a Hindu. (top down) Getting to know the Gods; severing from the former religion; having a *namakara samskara* (name-giving ceremony); choosing a Hindu name; making a legal change of name.

