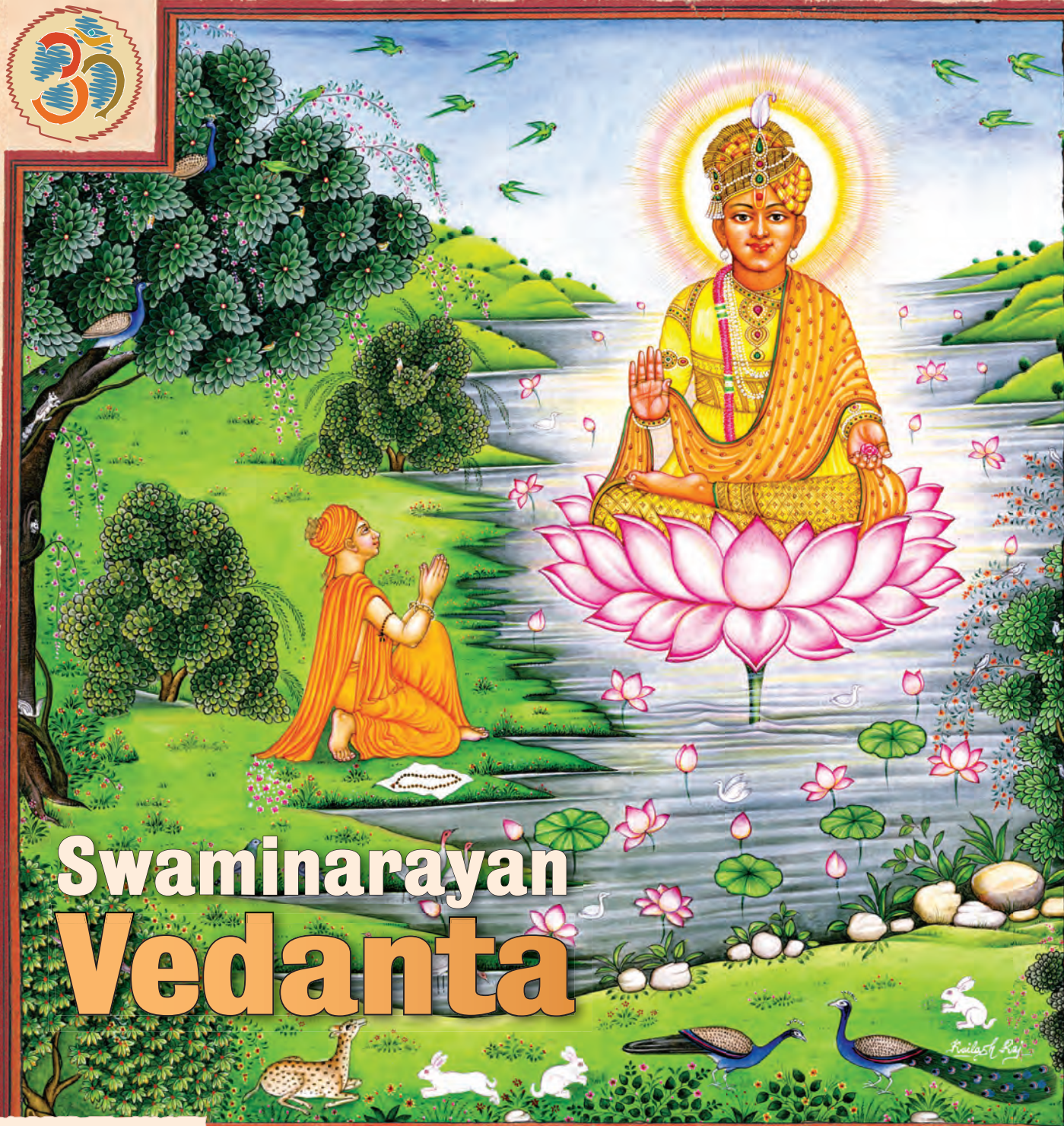


HINDUISM

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



(Cover) Artist Kailash Raj depicts Bhagawan Swaminarayan (1781-1830) blessing his loyal disciple and successor, Gunatitanand Swami, of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha; (above) five costumed dancers greet arrivals to the Dilli Haat crafts exhibition with a dramatic piece of performance art.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 2019 • THE HINDU YEAR VIKARI, 5121

Bodhinatha Veylanswami
www.gurudeva.org

INTERNATIONAL

- Hindu of the Year:** Honoring Jagadguru Swami Shri Nischalanada Saraswati of Puri **12**
- Feature:** Partition's Ordeals Have not Ended. Lavina Melwani Takes Us inside the Sindhi Refugee Communities in Jodhpur and Bhopal **18**
- Prayer:** Why Should Hindus Participate in Legislative Public Prayer in the US? **34**

LIFESTYLE

- Insight:** BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha Sums Up the Philosophy of its Unique School of Vedanta **36**
- Health:** An Ayurvedic Approach to Colds and Flu **33**
- Arts:** Join Our Tour of Delhi's Rich Craft Exhibit **54**
- Tradition:** Diving Deeply into Water and its Near-Magical Role in Human Health and Hindu Ritual **62**

OPINION

- In My Opinion:** The Insincerity of Selling Yoga **9**
- Publisher's Desk:** A Hindu View of Mindfulness Letters **10**
- From the Kularnava Tantra:** Scripture Reflects on the Necessity of Guru Devotion **17**
- Minister's Message:** Swami Paramatmananda Saraswati Boldly Tackles Vital Issues Confronting Modern Hindus **32**
- Trends:** The Promising State of Hindu Leadership in India, as Gauged by Vamadeva Shastri **70**

DIGESTS

- Global Dharma** **6**
- Quotes & Quips** **14**
- Digital Dharma** **86**

USA Contacts: Letters to the editor, subscription and editorial inquiries may be sent to HINDUISM TODAY, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304 USA, letters@hindu.org. HINDUISM TODAY (ISSN# 0896-0801; USPS# 023082), October/November/December, 2019, Volume 41, No. 4. Subscriptions from USA and Canada 1-877-255-1540; subscriptions, copies or bulk orders from other countries 1-808-822-7032, ext. 103; subscribe@hindu.org; advertising: 1-888-464-1008, ads@hindu.org. HINDUISM TODAY is published four times a year in January, April, July and October by Himalayan Academy, a nonprofit educational institution at 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304 USA. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, Founder; Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, Publisher; Paramacharya Sadasivanatha Palaniswami, Editor-in-Chief. Global subscriptions: US\$35/1 year, \$65/2 years, \$95/3 years, \$155/5 years, \$299/lifetime. **International Contacts:** In Malaysia: Sanathana Dharma Publications, Kovind Enterprise, No. 17, Jalan Ungu U9/29, Sunway Kayangan, 40150 Shah Alam. Tel: 016-380-2393; E-mail: silveraraj05@yahoo.com. In Singapore: Sanathana Dharma Publications, Blk 210 #06-326, Pasir Ris Street 21, 510210. Tel: 9664-9001; E-mail: dsam55@gmail.com. For permission to republish a HINDUISM TODAY article, e-mail letters@hindu.org. Printed in USA. Periodicals postage paid at Kapaa, Hawaii, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HINDUISM TODAY, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304.

© 2019 HIMALAYAN ACADEMY, 107 KAHOLALELE ROAD, KAPAA, HAWAII 96746-9304 USA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



www.hinduismtoday.com

subscribe.hinduismtoday.com



Brazil BRL 14
Canada CAD 10

India INR 150
Malaysia MYR 14

Mauritius MRU 115
Singapore SGD 10

Trinidad TTD 48
UK GBP 5

The Magical Spirit of Water

Our rishis knew that water has memory and intelligence, and now modern science is catching up to water's amazing role in life. Page 62.

Devotees gather at the Har Ki Pauri ghat to witness the evening arati honoring Ma Ganga at Haridwar



GLOBAL DHARMA

YOUTH

Time to Get Woke

IN LATE MAY OF 2019, STUDENTS and young professionals from the US tri-state area of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut joined together at the Shanti Mandir in Walden, NY, for the Hindu Students Council's annual weekend camp. The camp's purpose is to help young Hindus establish a sense of community and learn about their cultural heritage. It delves into vital areas such as key scriptures, karma, dharma, Hindu symbols and yoga.

The theme for this year's camp was "How to Be a Woke Hindu." The aim was to improve attendees' understanding of issues that face both the American Hindu community and the broader global community, with a focus on how young Hindus can use the principles of their religion to

create positive change at a community and global level. HSC president Parth Parihar explains, "Part of the problem our community faces is that we lack young, confident ambassadors. HSC is changing that."

After the camp's daily morning yoga sessions, presenters delved into a variety of topics, sparking thought and lively discussion among participants. One presentation discussed the jati-varna system, which is often misrepresented as the "caste system," and explained that caste-based discrimination is not a part of Hindu dharma, even though it is often portrayed as such. Another presentation highlighted examples of how Hinduism is so negatively portrayed in mainstream media. Others



Learning together: The attendees of the 2019 HSC Annual Collegiate Camp outside the Shanti Mandir in Walden, NY

looked closely at environmental protection, vegetarianism and pressing social issues.

The camp's structure could serve as a good model for other organizations. The combination of spiritual and religious ideas with discussions of practical issues facing Hindus provided

an engaging and uplifting experience for the participants. As Andrew Latchman, a Guyanese American from the University of Maryland, said, "I learned more about not only Hindu faith, but about myself and others and how we implement Santana Dharma in our lives."

SINGAPORE

Many Communities, One Shared Future



SINGAPORE'S LATEST EFFORT towards religious harmony was the 2019 International Conference on Cohesive Societies (ICCS) held in June. Over 250 organizations signed a commitment outlining specific ways in which Singaporeans should interact with one another. The agreement acknowledges sensitivities and compensates for religious differences in all

public settings and day-to-day interactions.

At the opening ceremony, Singapore's President Halimah Yacob stated, "A society is fragile if its members view each other in mutual incomprehension. It is vulnerable when its communities live parallel lives and inhabit separate worlds. Only a cohesive society built upon mutual trust can harness the strength of its

diversity, so that its people can build a better future."

Christian leaders admitted to the issues posed by unwelcome proselytization. Dr. Mohamed Fatris Bakaram, a Muslim mufti, expressed concern about tendencies towards religious isolation, stating that good Muslims are good citizens who actively participate in their community. "We will tighten

Crafting harmony: Members of the National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony with Singapore's President Halimah Yacob

up the administrative aspects of ensuring that our preachers, our teachers—and especially foreign speakers invited to speak to their own respective communities in Singapore—(will) understand the unique circumstances that we have been enjoying for many years," said Dr. Fatris.

Although nearly one fifth of Singapore's population identify as holding no religious beliefs, this tiny island is actually the world's most religiously diverse nation. With this commitment and other related initiatives, perhaps this small island can be an example for other nations who face similar challenges in today's intensely connected world.

U S A

Separation of Yoga & State?

THE USE OF YOGA IN PUBLIC schools has become widespread throughout the United States. However, this continues to be a point of contention, due to its deep roots as a Hindu religious practice. Many school districts have gone to great lengths to remove Hindu-related content from hatha yoga, such as the use of mantras and Sanskrit names for poses. But for many parents, that is not going far enough.

The principle of separation of church and state bars public

schools from teaching Christian practices, so non-Hindu parents ask why a Hindu practice would be allowed. Yoga proponents, meanwhile, point to improvements in student behavior and academic performance.

In one important ruling, a 2013 California court stated that yoga, as commonly taught in public schools, is so far removed from its origins, and so lacking in religious content, that it does not function as a gateway into Eastern religions.



Fitness or faith? Sunaina Ayyagari, a freshman at DeBakey High School in Texas, holds a yoga pose during health science class



Beneath the lake: Local villagers use a backhoe to excavate the two monolithic Nandis, long buried in the now dry lake bed

MYSORE

Uncovering Nandis

ELDERS OF THE VILLAGES around the Arasinakere area in Mysore have long been fascinated by seeing the stone horns of Nandi the bull peering out from the nearby lake whenever the water got low. This year the lake completely dried up, presenting an opportunity to explore further.

Villagers began excavating the area by hand, but soon acquired the assistance of a backhoe. After four days, they had unearthed two massive statues which face each other. One stands at fifteen feet long and the other at twelve.

The statues likely date back to the 16th or 17th century, to the post-Vijayanagar period. They seem to be incomplete, as they lack many of the usual details associated with Nandis of that period. They are also facing each other, making it possible that they were to be moved elsewhere once completed. Villagers, however, believe there may be an ancient Siva temple nearby.

Further excavation has been temporarily halted, awaiting state agencies to officially continue the work.

ARGENTINA

A Taste of Indian Culture

ON JULY 14, 2019, THE CELEBRATION of Argentina's 70 years of diplomatic relations with India was expressed in the form of "BACelebra India." This India-centric street fair in Buenos Aires provided residents and tourists with a fun and festive introduction to many parts of Hindu/Indian traditions. It included dancing and ayurvedic cooking, along with over 50 stands flaunting delicious Indian foods, traditional handicrafts, henna tattoos, clothing, books, teas and more.

The whole of Argentina has only 2,030 persons of Indian origin and about 1,300 non-resident Indians. Hinduism accounts for less than one percent of the nation's religious landscape. Many Hindu practices, however, are widespread. In addition to forms of yoga used for health and fitness, these include many beliefs and practices brought by Indian gurus, sought for by seekers and translated from Hindu texts throughout the twentieth century.



Enjoying cultures: a Buenos Aires resident gets a henna tattoo at one of the booths at the BACelebra India street fair

Memorizing the Vedas

THE VEDAS ARE UNQUESTION-ably one of the world's most astounding and comprehensive works of religious literature. Further, for most of their history they were passed on not through writing, but through perfect oral memorization. In a recent article in the *Indian Express*, Archana Garodia Gupta and Shruti Garodia provided the following description of how this transmission of knowledge was—and still is—accomplished:

"To preserve the purity of the *Vedas*, ancient Indians came up with ingenious techniques. In addition to memorizing each mantra the standard way, they would learn the same sentence in many different ways—backwards, forwards, combining two words at a time and so on. There were ten or eleven ways to learn each verse!

"Let us illustrate a few of these ways with a simple five-word phrase like 'The sun is shining

today.'

"*Vakya patha* (sentence recitation): First, students would learn each verse by simple continuous repetition, of words one through five, repeating, 'The sun is shining today, the sun is shining today, the sun is shining today' many times over.

"*Pada patha* (word recitation): Then they would recite each word of the sentence separately, without any intonation: 'The. Sun. Is. Shining. Today.'

"*Krama patha* (step recitation): Each word was then repeated twice, being connected to both the word that came before and after it which sounded like, 'the sun, sun is, is shining, shining today.'

"It got even more complicated as the students grew older.

"*Jata patha* (woven recitation): Two words were first recited in their original order, then repeated in the reverse order, and finally repeated again in the original order. 'The sun, sun the, the sun. Sun is, is sun, sun is. Is shining, shining is, is shining. Shining today, today shining, shining today.'

"There were other even more complex recitation styles such as *mala* (garland), *shikha* (peak), *dhvaja* (flag), *rekha* (line), *danda* (stick) and *ratha* (chariot). "However, one of the most complicated ways was the *Ghana patha*. So



Preserving the Vedas: (Top) Hindu priests chant Vedic slokas during a havana; (above) students at the Veda patashala in Kumakonam memorize hymns from an early age. (left) Today the Vedas are all written down, but that doesn't subtract from the glory of having memorized one of them.

much so that in the south the name Ghanapatim denoted someone who had mastered the Ghana style of reciting the *Vedas*; and it would take them almost 13 years of full-time study dedicated to learning to get there!

"Ghana patha (compact recitation): There is an arithmetical

system of permutation and combination in the chanting, which would sound something like, 'the sun, sun the, the sun is, is sun the, the sun is. Sun is, is sun, sun is shining, shining is sun, sun is shining, etc.'

"Reciting the entire *Rigveda* in the Ghanam style, just once, could take up to 450 hours."

experiencing poverty at regional, national and sub-national levels. Rather than simply focusing on finances, multidimensional poverty includes other factors such as health, drinking water, electricity, work quality and education. The index found that of these nations, 13 billion (23% of their total population) are multi-dimensionally poor, with half that number under age 18. Some of the countries are successfully tackling poverty, most notably India. The report found that in just over a decade, India

lifted 271 million people out of multidimensional poverty.

Global Dharma
news provided by
**HINDU PRESS
INTERNATIONAL**

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



HINDUISM TODAY was founded on January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927–2001). It is a nonprofit educational activity of Himalayan Academy, with the following purposes: 1. To foster Hindu solidarity as a unity in diversity among all sects

and lineages; 2. To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; 3. To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; 4. To protect, preserve and promote the sacred *Vedas* and the Hindu religion; 5. To nurture and monitor the ongoing spiritual Hindu renaissance; 6. To publish resources for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, photographs, reports on events and by encouraging others.



Founder:

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

Publisher:

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Editor-in-Chief:

Paramacharya Sadasivanatha Palaniswami

Publisher's Aide: Paramacharya Sivanatha Ceyonswami

Deputy Editor: Acharya Kumarnathaswami

Managing Editor: Acharya Arumuganathaswami

Production Manager: Sannyasin Brahmanathaswami

Subscription and Distribution Manager:

Sannyasin Shanmuganathaswami

Advertising Manager: Sannyasin Kaivalyanathaswami

Assistant Editor: Yogi Jayanatha

Correspondents: Rajiv Malik, Delhi; Choodamani Shivaram, Bengaluru; Lavina Melwani, New York; Sally Acharya, Nepal; Paras Ramoutar, Trinidad. Copy Editor:

Chamundi Sabanathan. HPI Staff: Chandra San-

kara. Consultants: Dr. S. P. Sabharathnam Sivachariyar.

Photo Contributors: Thomas L. Kelly, Dinodia Picture

Agency, Dev Raj Agarwal, Dehradun, Arun Mishra,

Mumbai. Digital Team: Andre Garzia, Dharmalingam

Siddhan. Distribution: USA: Ingram Periodicals, New

Leaf, EBSCO Subscription Services, Ubiquity. Europe:

SWETS Subscription Service, Malaysia: Kovind Enterprises.

Singapore: Sanathana Dharma Publications India:

Central News Agency Limited, Delhi. Mauritius: CODIP.

Trinidad: Pandit Narendra & Ashwinee Ragoonanan.

Printer: Quad/Graphics, Midland, Michigan.

IN MY OPINION

Rishikesh in the Kali Yuga

Yoga is being "sold out" as a commercial enterprise that is far from the original vision of the rishis

BY NAINA LEPES

My third day in Swargashram Rishikesh, I hear a young Russian woman's agitated question: "How can someone who has never done yoga before get a certificate to teach after studying for one month only? I do not understand! It is not right;...one month only. I do not understand." So this is what's happening to spirituality in Rishikesh! Yoga for sale in India: Travel to India, for \$1,000 to \$2,000—get a one-month certificate, go back home and become a yoga teacher! Especially good for the unemployed with no prior spiritual or vocational training. No qualifications required!

Rishikesh has probably changed more quickly than many places in India. There are always the sincere devotees from around the country who come to bow in adoration at her shrines, bathe in the purifying waters of Mother Ganga and cook chapatis by the her banks. But now you have the city people who use her sacred sands to take selfies, parading around in new Western clothes that create the illusion of freedom and happiness, totally removed from the intent of the rishis.

The most revolutionary change is that yoga is now presented as a means of making money. The power of years of tapas by Swami Sivananda and Baba Kalikamli and thousands of ancient anonymous rishis, strictly for the well-being of humanity, is being swept under the sands of time, now available only to only those few pure souls who see past the commercialization.

As a marketing, moneymaking scheme, the meaning of yoga has been shorn down to health and physical fitness. Training groups of a month or two offer participants a certificate allowing them to teach, even if they never practiced yoga before—provided they pay one or two thousand dollars to take the course. This submergence of spirituality to money sucks away anything spiritual from the original intended sacred practice.

How would Patanjali, author of the *Yoga*



Sutras, view all this! Ancient India scorned pandits who taught for money, considering them frauds! The ancient tradition of biksha, voluntary offering to the guru, keeps the motivation of teachers and aspirants pure while opening doors to faith in the teachings of karma. Instead it is all "Me...me...me...top dog," as the all-pervasive greed mental-

ity sweeps all unto itself in this Kali Yuga! Can a course based on bucks ever lead to spirituality? Does it not require deep aspiration, practice and time? These people should forget about becoming a yoga teacher...for a while anyway!

Physical fitness is certainly a valid first step in the practice of yoga. Learning to harmonize body with mind and breath, strengthening awareness of body movement from the space of the witness, the *sakshi*, prepares one for the ascent of divine shakti. But offering "teacher training" as described above is a deceitful practice that erodes the meaning of yoga and of "teacher" for potential students. It encourages body-ego identification and clinging to material values. After all, Patanjali taught that the first two steps of yoga, on which all else rests, are yama-niyama—inner and outer purification.

A non-deceptive training would present physical fitness as a first step toward the value-based, healthy living which would help students separate body identification from real Self. If you value Indian culture and human beings, do not offer training courses in meditation and kundalini yoga until real inner purity is being lived by the teachers and aspiring students. And keep in mind that wherever our starting point, as awareness of our highest ideal becomes a steady companion, we will surely be guided to cross over this inscrutable maze of maya—while evolving along the way!

NAINA LEPES, is the author of *From Maya to Oneness and other books*. More recently she has been writing poems and travel stories. Visit her website at www.thegitaspace.com

BRIEFLY...

THIS YEAR CAMBODIAN

archaeologists reported their discovery of nearly one hundred ancient Hindu temples in the Kratie province's historical Samphu Borak area along the Mekong River. These are small Hindu temples, of which only the foundations still remain. Archaeologists say they may date back to the

sixth or seventh century, making them older than the famed Angkor Wat temple complex, built in the 12th century.

THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOP-

ment Program has released its 2019 Multidimensional Poverty Index highlighting the number of people in 101 countries around the world who are

A Hindu View of Mindfulness

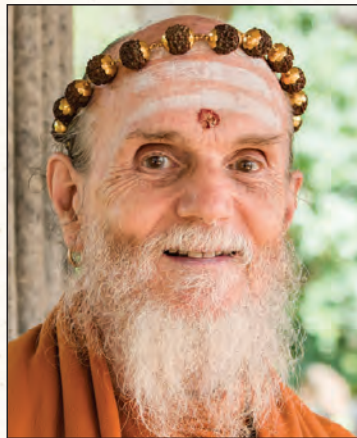
While mindfulness has been redefined for popular secular purposes, its original spiritual intention remains unchanged

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

MINDFULNESS. YOGA. MEDITATION. AS similar as they are, they have important differences. Of them all, mindfulness is in the ascendant in popular culture, though the others have built up a larger following over time. A Google search yields 1.2 billion hits for yoga, 415 million for meditation and 207 million for mindfulness. As is commonly known, yoga originated in and is still an integral part of Hinduism, though in today's popular culture it is viewed as a secular practice generally limited to stress reduction and physical health. Originally, and still today in India, it had a more profound spiritual role as a comprehensive eightfold discipline known as raja yoga. Mindfulness has followed a similar path. With origins in Hinduism, it became a key element in Buddhist meditation, and in today's mainstream culture it is largely regarded as a non-spiritual practice, used to support emotion management, reduce stress and focus the mind.

In the Hindu approach, emotional management, stress reduction and enhanced mental focus are also important goals. However, they are beginning-level goals. The Sanskrit term *smriti*, which means remembering, speaks of the idea of being mindful, remembering ourselves and our relationship with what we are aware of, being present to that. Mindfulness is a preparatory practice for raja yoga, which leads to the advanced attainment of higher states of consciousness and, ultimately, union with the Divine as the omnipresent and loving consciousness within us. These mystical states are not part of today's secular definition of mindfulness.

An article in the April 5, 2019, *New York Times* shows how far mindfulness training has drifted from its Hindu meditative roots: "Mindfulness—the practice of using breathing techniques, similar to those in meditation, to gain focus and reduce distraction—is inching into the military in the United States and those of a handful of other nations. This winter, Army infantry soldiers at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii began using mindfulness to improve shooting skills—for instance, focusing on when to pull the trigger amid chaos to avoid unnecessary civilian harm." The article goes on to list a few other countries that are also providing this training to their military. There is mindfulness for elite athletes, for actors in films, for Michelin chefs and for three-year-olds in day care. It is both tragic and ironic that this spiritual discipline has been repurposed as a tool for training soldiers to shoot the enemy better. What exactly is mindfulness? The Positive Psychology Program, The Netherlands, offers a terse definition: "Mindfulness is attention in the here and now." Said another way, it is directing our full attention to what is going on in the present moment without letting the mind think about or be



distracted by something else. For example, in performing simple chores such as making a meal or washing the car, the full mind is on that task. In listening to a friend explain what he or she did yesterday, we focus 100% of our mind on what is being said, not allowing ourselves think about something else at the same time. While eating a meal, we focus on experiencing the different tastes and textures of each dish.

In the teachings of my guru, Sivaya Subramuniyiswami, attention is the first step of the progressive mental practices of raja yoga, which he defined as attention, concentration,

meditation, contemplation and Self Realization. He described attention as holding awareness steady, centralized in only one area of the mind. "Attention is awareness poised like a hummingbird over a flower. It doesn't move. The flower doesn't move, and awareness becomes aware of the flower—poised. The entire nerve system of the physical body and the functions of breath have to be at a certain rhythm in order for awareness to remain poised like a hummingbird over a flower. Now, since the physical body and our breath have never really been disciplined in any way, we have to begin by breathing rhythmically and diaphragmatically, so that we breathe out the same number of counts as we breathe in. After we do this over a long period of time—and you can start now—then the body becomes trained, the external nerve system becomes trained, responds, and awareness is held at attention."

Here is a mindfulness exercise that involves detailed observation of our environment. Take a walk, ideally in nature. Notice every detail that you can about what you see. Perhaps you have had the experience of walking with a young child who spontaneously described details that you hadn't noticed. Young children have keen powers of observation because their intellect is not overactive nor have they accumulated excessive burdens of unresolved past experiences that consume adult minds and memories. We can try to be like children by noticing as many details as possible.

The practice of mindfulness is integral to success in meditation. The common experience of beginning meditators is that thoughts go all over the place, with the meditator unable to quiet them. So, instead of meditation being a quiet pond, it is a stormy sea. The ability to control our thoughts can be compared to utilizing a muscle. To make a



Minding the mind: Rishi Patanjali, author of the *Yoga Sutras*, sits in meditative posture on a five-headed snake, which represents the kundalini power and consciousness coiled at the base of the spine.

individuals habitually spend a significant amount of time thinking about past and future, thoughts that result in no positive benefit. These journeys into the "there and then" and the "where and when" are a waste of mental energy and increase our level of worry and stress. Such thoughts are counter productive to being present in the "here and now."

Gurudeva gave a helpful practice for reducing these pulls to past and future: "It's easy to live in the now if you work with yourself a little every day and concentrate on what you are doing each moment. To begin to work toward establishing yourself in the eternal now, first limit time and space by not thinking about or discussing events that happened more than four days past or will happen more than four days in the future. This keeps awareness reined in, focused. Be aware. Ask yourself, 'Am I fully aware of myself and what I'm doing right now?'"

He then takes the exercise a step deeper. "Once you have gained a little control of awareness in this way, try to sit quietly each day and just be. Don't think. Don't plan. Don't remember. Just sit and be in the now. That's not as simple as it sounds, for we are accustomed to novelty and constant activity in the mind and not to the simplicity of being. Just sit and be the energy in your spine and head. ...Don't think about yesterday or tomorrow. They don't exist, except in your ability to reconstruct the yesterdays and to create the tomorrows. Now is the only time."

Sitting quietly in the present moment can put us in tune with a deeper part of our nature—our intuition. During such quiet moments, we can have intuitive insights, such as clearly seeing patterns in our life and in the lives of others. For example, we may find that in taking on a new project we do so with great enthusiasm but as soon as we encounter the first major obstacle we become negative and give up. Armed with this insight, we can work to create a new habit of persevering in our endeavors when faced with obstacles. Sitting quietly, in touch with our intuitive or soul nature, also has the benefit of feeling at peace with ourself, more content with our situation in life and more accepting of the experiences we are undergoing. Freed of the past, unfazed by the future, we live in the security of the present, the eternal now.

Rishi Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras* defines yoga as the restraint of mental activities. This is usually thought of as a discipline that applies only during meditation. The traditional Hindu concept of mindfulness expands that idea to include restraining the movements of the mind during our everyday activities. Clearly, the more mindful we are, the easier it is to quiet the mind during meditation, which will lead to profound experiences of our intuitive soul nature.

muscle stronger requires exercising it on a regular basis. The more we use it, the stronger it gets. The ability to control the mind is the same. The more we control our thoughts, the stronger our ability to do so. If we can control our thoughts during ordinary daily activities, say for eight hours a day, then we have put in a great deal more effort than we do—during a thirty-minute meditation. Sixteen times as much exercise. This will definitely accelerate the speed at which we are becoming better at controlling our thoughts!

Our definition of mindfulness uses the term "here and now" to describe the present moment. The past can be described similarly as the "there and then," and the future as the "where and when." Many



Our 2019 Hindu of the Year

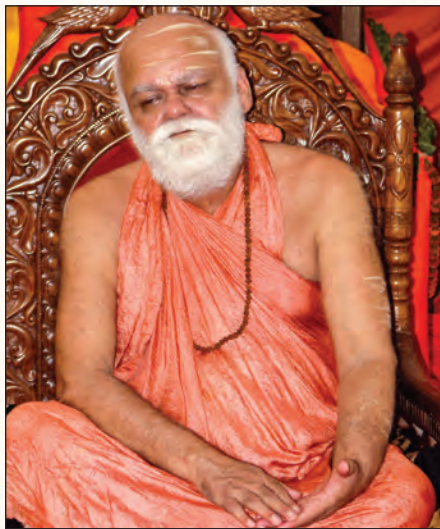
Honoring the orthodox life and teachings of the Shankaracharya of Govardhan Peeth, Puri

HIS HOLINESS JAGADGURU SWAMI Shri Nischalananda Saraswati is current Shankaracharya and religious head of the Govardhan Peeth of Puri, one of the cardinal institutions established by Adi Shankaracharya in the seventh century. HINDUISM TODAY interviewed him at the 2019 Kumbh Mela and found him an articulate spokesperson for Hindu concerns—though not all may agree with his views on every issue. In recognition of his years of teaching and counseling, his efforts to resolve troublesome matters concerning the famed Jagannath Temple and his determination to thwart political and legal interference by the government, he is the recipient of the Hindu Renaissance Award as our “Hindu of the Year” for 2019 (see plaque below).

The 145th in the lineage of Govardhan Peeth (govardhanpeeth.org), Swamiji was appointed in 1992 by his predecessor, Swami Niranjan Deva. After intense study of scripture and visits to many holy places, he took initiation from Swami Karapatri, a disciple of Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath. Swami Karapatri conferred upon him his present name, Nischalananda Saraswati.

Now age 75, Shankaracharya travels regularly to teach. “If one achieves Self Realization, which is the form of God, before death, it can be said that such person has fulfilled the goal of his life.” Along with such high-minded spiritual teachings, he addresses contemporary concerns about youth, women, the environment and peaceful coexistence among people. As Shankaracharya, he is the permanent head of the Mukti Mandap, which advises the Sri Jagannath Temple authorities on matters of rites and rituals. His guidance was sought, for example, when it was necessary to move the main Deities for repairs inside the temple. During the temple’s famed chariot festival, Swamiji is the first to greet the Gods.

He has founded several organizations for education, medical care, cow protection (for which he was once jailed as a young man) and general sociocultural development. In 2007, he started a new tradition along the lines of the popular riverside “Ganga Arati” at Rishikesh, initiating a similar seaside worship of the ocean, Mahodadhi Arati, at Puri.



GOVARDHAN PEETH

At the Kumbh: *The Shankaracharya was one of the foremost saints available to devotees at the January Mela in Prayagraj*

Shankaracharya has not shied from controversy. He speaks out strongly against child marriage and female foeticide. He criticized Mother Teresa for converting Hindus to Christianity under the guise of social work, as well as her receipt of foreign funds for that stealth endeavor. He opposed the Indian government’s plan to open part of the Ram Setu shoal, believed to be what’s left of the bridge built by Lord Rama to cross to Lanka as told in the *Ramayana*.

In recent years he has been deeply involved

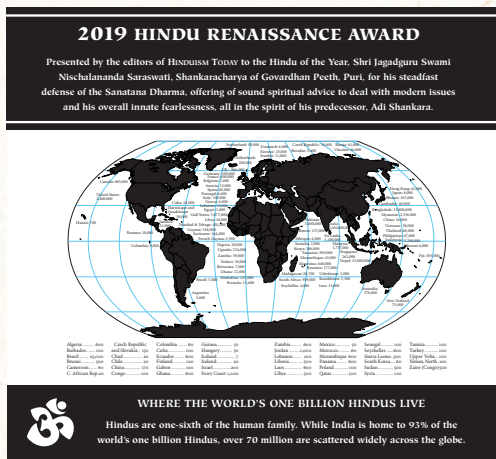
with management issues at the Puri Sri Jagannath Temple; even India’s Supreme Court has consulted him. In a 2018 interview with *Swarajya* magazine, he criticized the state government’s management of Hindu temples, including Jagannath: “From ancient times, mandirs were the cultural, religious, philosophical, educational and social centers of all Sanatanis. But once the state took over the mandirs, and due to a number of other factors that were designed to harm Sanatana Dharma and Indian society, the cultural, social, educational and other functions of the mandirs disappeared.”

The government takeover of the temple management was justified by charges of corruption of the previous management. But corruption remained, he pointed out, and the government uses the temple funds for projects entirely unrelated to Hindu religion, including the funding of Muslim madrasa schools. One consequence has been the gross underpayment of temple priests and workers. Educated specifically for temple work, he explained, they cannot get other jobs. “So they are left with no option but to harass and fleece devotees.” All this could be corrected, he pointed out, by proper spiritual management of the temples.

During our interview with him at the Kumbh Mela, the Shankaracharya criticized the event as too political and social: “The role it should be playing in the raising of religious and spiritual consciousness is not happening.” He largely blamed first the British and then the government of independent India. “After one hundred years, due to the Machiavellian policies of both governments, there are hardly any Hindus whose mind and intellect is sanatan. Only a few who have a strong character due to their good karma in past births are truly following Sanatana Dharma. The rest of our people have polluted hearts and minds.”

Toward the end of his talk with us at the Mela, he offered this assessment of the world’s and India’s spiritual prospects. “When there is a crisis, then only the path to come out of that crisis is found. When anarchy reaches its peak, then only a healthy revolution with the appearance of the Gods takes place. Though today the number of those knowledgeable in the Vedic traditions is not very high, the world has no alternative to the philosophy and vision offered by Sanatana Dharma to solve its problems. There is no other dharma that can offer the needed balance of philosophy, science and practicality. In the name of development, America and Britain have reached a situation where they see only destruction, and have to turn to us. As for our own situation, we are directionless until we ourselves start to follow our own principles.”

With reporting by M.P. Mohanty, Orissa



Threat of Christian Fanatics

The article written by Madhu Kishwar (HINDUISM TODAY, Apr/May/June, 2019) is an eye-opener. The pictures have added to the dismal facts. Ms. Kishwar took pains in having interviews with the Christian intruders and with high officials like the Prime Minister of India. Thousands of Hindus know about the very disturbing tactics that the Christian missionaries have been using for decades in India and elsewhere. However, Ms. Kishwar put those questionable tactics in concrete words. Some organizations like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Ekal Vidyalaya, for example, do try to reduce the negative effect of the destructive work of the Christian missionaries. However the tidal waves of Christian political clout and tremendous foreign money power are hard to subside. Moreover, the hands of pro-Hindu officials and leaders are tied under the nasty

so-called secularism brought by the founding leaders like Nehru, Gandhi and others. I recommend to Ms. Kishwar and to HINDUISM TODAY to send the article for republication in as many magazines and organizations as possible, such as *Hindu Vishwa*, *Threads*, *Sanskrit Bharati*, *The Hindu* in Calcutta, *Swarajya*, *Hindu Post*, Friends of India Society, Hindu Student Council, and more. I will be happy to provide their addresses.

PRABHAKAR JOSHI
ILLINOIS, USA
JOSHIPPS@HOTMAIL.COM

Worship God through Dance

The article on the dance from Kerala, Theyam, (HINDUISM TODAY, Jul/Aug/Sep, 2019) was quite interesting. It informed me about this form of dance for the first time in my life. The most popular dance forms of Kerala are Mohini Aattam and Kathakali. I enjoyed

reading this article as it always good to know something new. All dance forms of India are about worshiping God.

LAKSHMI SRIDHARAN
TMLAKSHMI@GMAIL.COM

Correction

On page 32 of the July/August/September issues, the photos of Swami Divyananda and Sadhvi Divya Giri were inadvertently switched. We apologize for the error.

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

Letters, Hinduism Today
107 Kaholalele Road
Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA
or 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.

How Hinduism Today Magazine Inspired a Psychologist

Dr. Sharma takes knowledge of Hinduism and with it changes lives

“It was only when I moved from India to the USA in 1970 at age 29 that I began to appreciate Hinduism,” recalls Dr. Greesh Sharma, retired clinical psychologist. “I began studying the religions of the world and marveled at Hinduism’s unique greatness and value. Then, as I worked in my field over the years, I noticed that the treatments, procedures and advice that worked best were nearly always harmonious with Hindu precepts and wisdom. My passion to help people merged with a growing understanding of Hinduism and inspired me to evolve solid ways to uplift those who came to me.”

“Many ailments today are caused, as I see it, by a lack of a sound, living philosophy to fall back on when challenges come. This is our opportunity, professionals or otherwise, to share those positive perspectives so well known in the East. People often have a low opinion of themselves and carry a lot of stress as a result. I’ve encouraged them to dismantle the imaginary barriers they’ve created and see the world as a reflection of themselves. This simple advice often sufficed to bring a happier frame of mind. The right word at the right time can work wonders.”

Dr. Sharma has been a faithful reader of HINDUISM TODAY since 1993. “It’s helped me personally attain self-esteem and self-respect and feel a part of the Hindu diaspora,” he reports. “It gave me the confidence, the



Dr. Sharma at the foot of Mount Kailash in 2004. “Thanks to Hinduism and Hinduism Today, I always had near at hand the means to provide assistance.”

quality for my profession and my own nature. No politics, no power games or special agendas. HINDUISM TODAY is one of the purest voices in our world today, humbly, quietly bringing people together, giving them confidence and the conviction that they are good enough. I say to my friends that this magazine is Hinduism’s and India’s best ambassador today.”

Dr. Sharma has been supportive of HINDUISM TODAY in a number of ways. He is a lifetime subscriber, was for a long time an advertiser, and is now is a generous donor to the Hinduism Today Production Fund. “There is a lot, a lot of important work to be done out there, and there will be more as time goes on, perhaps even more challenging than we now imagine. I see nothing so well suited to see us through them than Hinduism and its steady voice, HINDUISM TODAY. I hope many will find it in their hearts to support the Hinduism Today Production Fund as our best protection going forward.”

Donate to the Production Fund at hheonline.org/donate/pf • Contact us at: 1-888-464-1008 or hhe@hindu.org and subscribe to our Production Fund e-newsletter.

QUOTES & QUIPS

“Aim high, aim at the highest, and all lower aims are thereby achieved.”

Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879–1950), *South Indian mystic*

You must never forget that greatness does not guarantee happiness, but goodness always does. **Sri Chinmoy** (1931–2017), *renowned spiritual leader, author and athlete*

Samadhi may also come through devotion to Ishvara. **Rishi Patanjali**, *author of the Yoga Sutras*

The world is not a courtroom. There is no judge, no jury, no plaintiff. This is a caravan filled with eccentric beings telling wondrous stories about God. **Saadi Shirazi** (1210–1291), *Persian poet*

Look, and it can't be seen. Listen, and it can't be heard. Reach, and it can't be grasped. Above, it isn't bright. Below, it isn't dark. Seamless, unnamable, it returns to the realm

of nothing. Form that includes all forms, image without an image, subtle, beyond all conception. Approach it and there is no beginning; follow it and there is no end. You can't know it, but you can be it, at ease in your own life. Just realize where you come from: this is the essence of wisdom. **Lao Tzu** (ca 600 bce), *Chinese philosopher*

Realization is real religion, all the rest is only preparation. Hearing lectures, or reading books, or reasoning is merely preparing the ground; it is not religion. **Swami Vivekananda**

The secret of success in life is time rightly used. **Swami Sivananda** (1887–1963)

Birds sing not because they have answers but because they have songs. *African proverb*

Without loving God you will not get anywhere. Remember this at all times. **Anandamayi Ma** (1896–1982), *mystic Bengali saint*

The mind creates the abyss. The heart crosses over it. **Nisargadatta Maharaj** (1897–1981), *Hindu sage*

Short cuts make long delays. **J.R.R. Tolkien** (1892–1973), *English writer*

My brain is only a receiver; in the Universe there is a core from which we obtain knowledge, strength and inspiration. I have not penetrated into the secrets of this core, but I know that it exists. **Nikola Tesla** (1856–1943), *Serbian-American inventor*

Words spoken with love are as fragrant

as the most beautiful flowers. **Amma Karunamayi**, *Hindu spiritual leader*

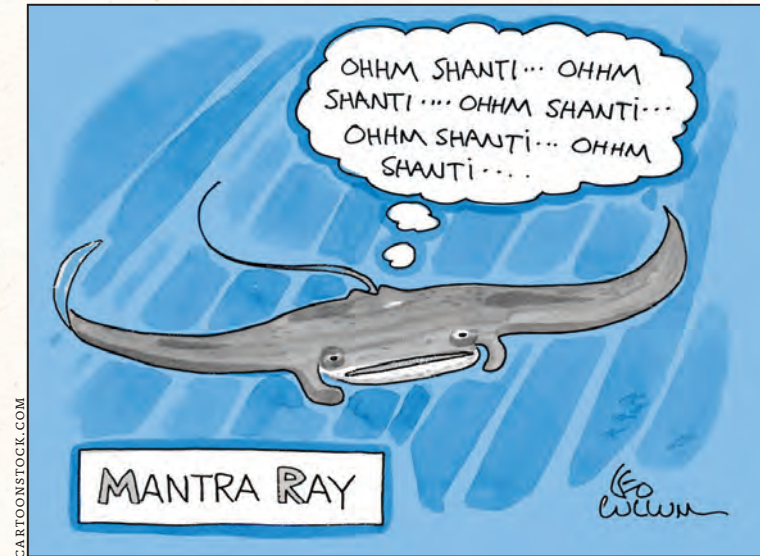
The world is a drama, staged in a dream. **Guru Nanak** (1469–1539), *founder of Sikhism*

No religion which is narrow and which cannot satisfy the test of reason will survive the coming reconstruction of society in which the values will have changed and character, not possession of wealth, title or birth, will be the test of merit. **Mahatma Gandhi**

Religion is the secret of life. It teaches us to love, to serve, to forgive, to endure, and to interact with our brothers and sisters with empathy and compassion. Advaita is a purely subjective experience. But in daily life it may be expressed as love and compassion. This is the great lesson taught by the great saints and sages of India, the exponents of Sanatana

Dharma. **Mata Amritanandamayi Ma**, *Kerala-based hugging saint*

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit. **Aristotle**



Happiness depends on what you can give, not on what you can get. **Swami Chinmayananda** (1916–1993),

founder of Chinmaya Mission

Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less. **Marie Curie** (1867–1934), *Polish/French scientist*

The first realization is not the end of the path; it's the beginning of a new path. It is like a graduation. Then you have a new set of disciplines you need to uphold so that it is sustained. **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami**, *publisher of Hinduism Today*

The Saivite Hindu perspective is that contentment is a reflection of centeredness, and discontentment is a reflection of externalized consciousness and ramified desire. **Satguru Sivaya**

Subramuniyaswami (1927–2001), *founder of Hinduism Today*

DID YOU KNOW?

A Nation of Nations

INDIA IS ARGUABLY THE MOST CULTURALLY DIVERSE COUNTRY ON the planet, with over 20 major languages, 700 dialects and 29 states—each with its own unique cultural contributions. Although India is known as one of Earth's most populated countries, it is hard to comprehend its vastness by the simple population statistic of 1.3 billion. An example, for perhaps a better perspective, is the small 44,000-square-kilometer state of Haryana, which has a population similar to the 76 million-square-kilometer continent of Australia. The state of Uttarpradesh has close to 200 million citizens—just over 3.4 times larger than the population of Italy and over 23 times larger than the population of Switzerland. To make matters even more interesting, the state of Tamil Nadu has a population of 72 million people while France has a population of just 65 million, yet Tamil Nadu is just under a quarter the size of France. India has historically been one of the most productive countries in the world, and before the ravages of Mughal and colonial invasions it at times accounted for a quarter of the world's GDP. If India were to have the same GDP per capita as a developed nation such as France, the GDP of India would be over 50 trillion dollars, making India the most powerful and prosperous economy in the world, as it has been throughout much of history.



India's states: a map of the subcontinent depicting the nation's states in relation to countries with which they share near equal populations

BASICS

Worshipping the Holy Feet

THE UNINITIATED MAY WONDER WHY THE feet of holy ones are so reverently worshiped in the Hindu faith. According to tradition, the totality of the satguru is contained within his feet. All nerve currents terminate there. The vital points of every organ of his bodies—inner astral, inner mental and soul—are there. Touch the feet and we touch the spiritual master.

Mystics teach that the big toe on the left foot exudes the most grace. The left leg is the revealing grace, and the big toe of that leg connects to the guru's pituitary gland, the entrance to the door of Brahm, deep within the sahasrara chakra where, in contemplation, he merges with God.

The vibration of the satguru can be subtly felt through gently touching his sandals. In doing so, one tunes in to the feet of the preceptor's physical, pranic, astral, mental and

soul bodies. In deep spirituality there is little presumption of ego. All that one hopes for, all that one prays for, all that one strives for is to touch the Divine in the most modest of ways. Worship of the feet epitomizes this humble attitude. Devotees worship the feet of the guru as the feet of God, the attainable attainment, seeking to partake of, absorb into themselves, the vibration of their guru, ultimately to become like their guru, who has realized his oneness with God.

Devotees are admonished to choose their guru carefully, forsaking all previous beliefs, religious inclinations and aspirations and adopting his revelation of the Sanatana Dharma as their own. Therefore, choose your spiritual model carefully, because you are going to become like that model if you worship that guru's feet.

There is yet another meaning of the holy



feet. When a person walks upon the Earth, only the feet touch the ground. Similarly, when God and guru contact the Earth, it is the esoteric feet, the lowest part of consciousness, which make that contact. This, then, becomes the locus of communion with the Divine. In India the greatest of all initiations is for the satguru to place his holy feet upon the worthy disciple's head.

SPECIAL FEATURE

72 YEARS AFTER PARTITION Hindus Still Flee

Most of these glum refugees from Pakistan—here gathered to meet HINDUISM TODAY's reporter and photographer—have languished for years in the austere Aanganwah camp a few miles outside Jodhpur



Ongoing threats to life and property in Pakistan, compounded by the abduction, conversion and forced marriage of girls, continue to drive thousands to India

To say Hindu roots in Sindh—now in Pakistan—are deep is an understatement: a large part of the Indus Valley civilization, including Mohenjo-Daro, was located here. Hindus lived in harmony with their Muslim neighbors until the horrors resulting from Partition, which spared few. Those who remained—many too poor to flee—made the best of an uneasy situation, but an increasingly hostile environment is steadily forcing their descendants to escape to the safety of India. Once across the border, though, they endure an uncertain life for years in Rajasthan and other states. Here we tell two stories: of those who settled last century in Bhopal and those who have come since to Jodhpur.

BY LAVINA MELWANI, JODHPUR & BHOPAL

WHEN YOUNG HINDU GIRLS GO TO school each morning in Sindh, Pakistan, their parents do not know whether they will ever see them again. Two Hindu sisters in Daharki in Sindh's Ghotki district, both minors, were not even safe in their own home. According to a March, 2019, report in the *New Indian Express*, a group of "influential" men kidnapped 13-year-old Raveena and 15-year-old Reena Meghwar from their home while they were playing Holi. They were converted to Islam and forced into marriage with Muslim men. The same report says 1,000 Hindu girls are converted to Islam in Pakistan every year. They vanish, then reappear with Islamic names, married to Muslim men. Legislation to outlaw forced conversion was shelved by the Sindh legislative assembly in 2015 after protests from conservative Muslim groups.

A *Los Angeles Times* article from 2012 detailed the process: "Hindus say the forcible conversions follow the same script: The victim, abducted by a young man related to or working for a feudal boss, is taken to a mosque where clerics, along with the prospective groom's family, threaten to harm her and her relatives if she resists. Almost always, the girl complies, and not long afterward, she is brought to a local court, where a judge, usually a Muslim, rubber-stamps the conversion and marriage, according to Hindu community members who have attended such hearings. Often the young Muslim man is accompanied by backers armed with rifles.



The Sindhi's Chosen Deity: Statue of Jhulelal, a form of Varuna, God of the Sea, at the Jhulelal Tirthdham temple under development in Kutch, India, near the border with Sindh, Pakistan

and the danger of their young daughters being kidnapped and pushed into forced marriage and conversion to Islam.

For Hindu Sindhis, Partition has never ended. Even today they struggle for their basic human rights to pray to their God and bring up their children in the ways of their forefathers. As Meera Bai, a Hindu who fled Pakistan, told the media, "Muslims in Pakistan will never treat Hindus as their own. For them, we will always remain the 'other.' We escaped religious and cultural persecution when we came to India. We are happy here. At least here we know that no one will steal our cattle or our daughters."

Professor Satya Narayan of Jodhpur echoes. "The growing religious radical fundamentalism is so widespread that there seems to be no safe room left for minorities, particularly in Pakistan. Minorities are facing forced conversions and marriages, abductions, land grabbing, rapes, murders, kidnapping for ransom, fake blasphemy cases leading to

A brighter future: (below left) in Pakistan, perhaps half the boys and a quarter of the girls were in school. In India, 70% of the boys and 60% of the girls are now. (below right) Hardened beyond their years, these girls can at least live without fear of kidnapping and forced conversion.

Few members of the girl's family are allowed to appear, and the victim, seeing no way out, signs papers affirming her conversion and marriage." (bit.ly/Pakistan2012)

Gut-wrenching experiences like these have caused thousands to leave home in search of spiritual freedom, security and justice for their daughters. It is estimated that at least 10,000 Hindu Sindhis have fled to India in just the last seven years.

Even 72 years after Partition, daily life remains traumatic for many Hindu Sindhi families in Pakistan. Their religious freedom and their ability to embrace their spiritual culture and traditions remain in jeopardy. They endure persecution, scarce ways to earn a living as a minority in an Islamic country,



Mapping the exodus: In 1947, two million Sindhis escaped for India, with many settling around Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. At least 12,000 Sindh Hindus a year have recently fled Pakistan. Many have been housed in camps around Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

For These Lucky Children, a Chance at a Good Life—Eventually



minority settlements being set on fire and people being burned alive, disgracing dead bodies of Hindus and attacking, setting fire to and demolishing of Hindu temples.”

As Narayan points out, not only are Pakistan's minorities unsafe as nationals in Pakistan, they have no basic rights as migrants in India. The latter was not a signatory—for geopolitical reasons—to the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees. India nevertheless accommodates the refugees and provides them a path to citizenship, albeit a very long one.

This topic has always been central to my life because I, too, am the child of Sindhi refugees who fled from Pakistan at the time of Partition. All our lives, the Partition narrative has been a part of our existence. I particularly remember a photograph of my father, who was a jeweler, standing grimly besides his sealed shop. His shop and home were confiscated and he received no compensation. He came to New Delhi as a refugee with five children. Fortunately, he had good friends and was able to restart his business and a new life in the new India.

Over the years, Sindhi refugees have continued to come by train, bus or on foot to areas near the border in Rajasthan and Gujarat where they try to start a new life. I proposed to HINDUISM TODAY that I visit to



HINDUISM TODAY

get a first-hand report on how these newest and youngest survivors are faring as they walk the tightrope of refugee life between Pakistan and India. I also visited in Bhopal the community of Sindhis formed by those who fled Partition in 1947.

Human Rights Work

For most, the Hindu Sindhi refugees are a forgotten people for whom the fast-moving

world does not have time. Yet they have a friend in Hindu Singh Sodha, who himself fled from Chachro in Tharparkar, Sindh, to Jodhpur, India, just before the 1971 Indo-Pak war. A law graduate from Jodhpur University, he has spent two decades in the city, greeting many of these first arrivals who had neither a place to stay nor food to eat. From the 90s he has worked as a human rights activist, and he founded Seeman Lok Sangathan and Universal Just Action Society (SLS/UJAS) to help rehabilitate the Pakistani minority migrants. One media article has referred to the gentle yet determined Sodha as “the god of small people.” He and Ashok Suthar, also a refugee and social activist (whom we will tell more about later), served as my guides in Jodhpur.

According to Kavita Tekchandani, a lawyer and community activist who works with UJAS from California, there are currently 85,000 Pakistani

.....
Life in the camps: (counterclockwise from above left) refugee advocate Hindu Singh Sodha: kitchen in a mud hut; (inset) char-poy beds suffice; a veiled older girl student, likely fluent in Urdu or Sindhi, studies Hindi in their temporary school; younger students likewise learn to make Hindi compound letters; solar panels power a mud hut's TV dish

Hindu refugees who have crossed the border into Rajasthan, India, due to the recent instability in Pakistan. Most come from Sindh, Southern Punjab and Balochistan. She says, “Like other religious minorities, they have become soft targets for crime, and many have faced issues with discrimination, kidnapping for ransom and kidnapping for marriage, forcing a trickle migration.”

In his book *Fence without Fencing*, which he has coauthored with Ashok Suthar, Tekchandani mentions how 13,000 migrants succeeded in getting Indian nationality through UJAS support.

According to Sodha, most of the migrants coming into western Rajasthan are Hindus of different castes, such as Mehwals, Bhils, Kolhis, Odhs, Rajputs, Brahmins, Suthars, Sonars, Prohits, Jats, Nais, Darzis and others. Most are low on the economic scale, with scant resources at their disposal. Many come to India on pilgrimage visas. Sodha estimates in his book that the current total population of recent Pakistani minority migrants in India, increased through births, is nearly one million. Most are staying in Rajasthan, then Gujarat, followed by Madhya Pradesh and some other states. The new migrants go through many difficulties—they have to wait at least years before they can be eligible for citizenship, and during a least part of that



HINDUISM TODAY

period they cannot leave the city where their visa was registered. They have difficulties in obtaining homes or driving licenses, among other problems. A recent article from Al-jazeera new service quotes Sodha as saying, “[Indian] government officials often pose unwarranted questions, such as who do they call up in Pakistan and how many times they call.” Such actions add to the refugees’ sense of insecurity.

“This group is not helped by the government, and none of the national and international human rights organizations have yet shown an interest in taking care of their agonies,” stated Sodha. “They are deprived access to basic rights, including the right to justice, the right to self-recognition, the right to work, education and healthcare.”

They come to India for the intangible concepts of religious and economic freedom; but settling into camps in the Rajasthan border areas, these refugees have almost no electricity, no clean drinking water, limited food, no shelter and very few resources. Many are being treated for malnutrition in addition to other conditions.

“Currently it is estimated that about 250 to 500 people are coming into the Jodhpur temporary camp grounds every two weeks due to the rise of violence across the border,” stated Tekchandani. “Without proper work permits and legal status, they are liv-

ing in a no-man’s land. They feel unsafe to return to Pakistan, yet they cannot easily earn their livelihood in India.” According to Sodha, they are engaged in street vending or working as day laborers on farms, in rock quarries, in the handicraft industry or other such arduous work.

The refugees can only gain Indian citizenship after living in India for 11 out of the preceding 14 years. They wait in makeshift camps, without the means to work and legally live in India. Sodha claims that some give up, return to Pakistan and convert to Islam simply to survive. If India were to sign on to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, Pakistani Hindu migrants and others who are victims of violence, or who have a well-founded fear of persecution based on their religion in

Mud Huts and Sparse Belongings Define Refugee Life



HINDUISM TODAY



UJAS



UJAS

their home countries, would be given the opportunity to gain legal residence permits on an as-needed basis.

At a bare minimum, Tekchandani recommends, India should provide basic resources for the Pakistani Hindu and other persecuted refugees upon arrival, including tents, clean water, medical care, and means for children to transition into local schools to avoid disruption in education. Further, these migrants should be subject to less wait time for legal work permits, in order to more quickly become self-sufficient and less vulnerable to exploitation.

According to UJAS, which works with migrants, these families are poverty stricken. Many have the status of scheduled castes and tribes, and they become more susceptible to discrimination and exploitation when they are further stereotyped as women and children of Pakistani migrants. UJAS is working with local government organizations to help get the rights, visas and citizenship of these migrants addressed.

Aanganwah Refugee Camp

It was heart-wrenching to visit the dusty wasteland of Aanganwah refugee camp



HINDUISM TODAY

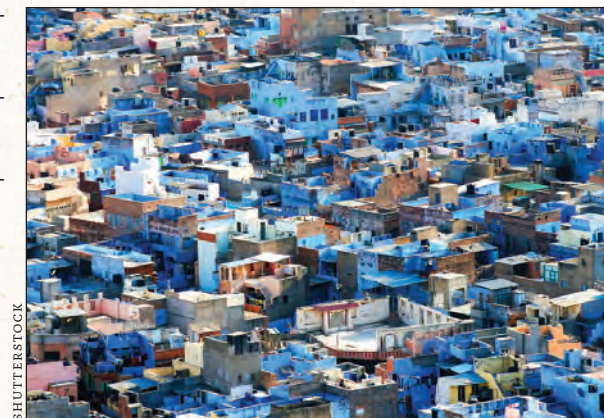
about nine miles outside of Jodhpur with Singh and Sodha, and meet the refugees face to face. The squalor here, in the midst of sparsely occupied farmland, was in stark contrast to the lovely city of Jodhpur we had just left. Here the small community of refugees live in mud dwellings with thatched roofs, tending their cattle. It is a nowhere land with no electricity, no nearby stores or medical facilities. Seventy percent of the refugees have lived here five years or more; others are as recent as two months. Rough and hot, with rocky, dusty ground and no paved roads, this is their new home. There are about 300 households in this area with a total population of 1550 people, nearly half of them children. Currently four NGOs are working in the community with the government, assisting with schooling, midday meals and health camps.

We had an open-air *panchayat*, com-

Surviving in an arid land: (left) an elderly refugee at the Jodhpur facility; (below) view of the Mehrangarh Fort, built in 1459 by Rao Jodha, extended in the 17th century by Jaswant Singh and today of one of the largest remaining forts in India

munity gathering, sitting on spread-out *dhurries*—the thick carpets which are a speciality of Rajasthan. Hot tea was passed all around as men, women—many with *ghunghats* veiling their faces—and children gathered around us and discussed their concerns. On request, the young girls came forward and told us about their new lives. They spoke about being enrolled in high school, and one of them happily shared her plans to study medicine. But overall this was a very subdued group of people, the adults quiet and withdrawn and the children abnormally reserved. We walked around the area with them and were taken inside some of the humble mud homes, which were furnished with the most basic of necessities—string *charpoy* beds, for example, wood for cooking and metal trunks for their few possessions.

One of the first structures built by the refugees in the Aanganwah refugee settlement was a temple to bless their new endeavors in a new country. They had traveled hundreds of miles and faced dangers to gain this basic right. Here they can worship freely with no



SHUTTERSTOCK

restrictions. It is here that they celebrate all Hindu rituals and festivals, without fear of reprisal or abduction.

At the UJAS office, which is some distance from the camp, we met the small, dedicated staff and ate a vegetarian meal with them. One of our guides, Ashok Suthar, is himself a recent refugee who left Mithi, Sindh, to safeguard his young daughters. A graduate in sociology from the University of Sindh, he has authored several books on social development and devoted himself to working with

migrants. He mentioned that most of the refugees are tribal families and their children have great needs, as many are illiterate or can only communicate in Sindhi.

As we spoke, Neha, his lovely daughter, now in her teens, returned from high school, smiling radiantly in her white school uniform and talking excitedly about a career in fashion design. I knew Sodha had made the right decision to risk the unknown to come to India. Had they stayed on in Pakistan, there is a strong chance she would have had a very different life.

Later we visited another camp in the heart of the city where Sindhi migrants were also housed. This camp had more conveniences, such as furniture and modern cooking equipment. It was a solid brick-and-mortar building where the migrants weren't

At last, success for some: (above) View of the "blue" city of Jodhpur from Mehrangarh Fort; (below) this grandfather refugee recently acquired his Indian citizenship, securing his family's future after many uncertain years

Jodhpur, the "Blue City"

A Family Celebrate Their New Citizenship



SHUTTERSTOCK



HINDUISM TODAY

at the mercy of the elements as were the refugees in Aanganwah. Here they had proper kitchens, bathrooms and electricity. Still, they looked shell-shocked and grim, and the children didn't laugh and play in the carefree way children normally do.

Gradually, life does get better for the refugees. We visited a private home in the city where many of the earlier Sindhi migrants had gathered to meet us. They were boisterous and happy, as some had just got their citizenship papers after many years. We were served hot tea and samosas; there were garlands for us and a fancy turban presented to Hindu Singh Sodha to honor him for the work he does with the migrants.

Our host was a successful refugee who had been here for several years. His home was a comfortable three-floor apartment. His three sons had set up several shops in the area, and the children, even the little daughters, were playful and confident. They all attended school in the area. It was as good a life as it can get—and there were unexpected bonuses too. I was pleasantly surprised to see that one of the stores which sells fabrics and women's clothing was run totally by women—the daughters and daughters-in-law of the house. Their heads were covered in decorous Sindhi small-town fashion, but they were clearly independent, making a

living and being the boss—something which would never have happened in Pakistan.

Preserving Language and Culture

In an attempt to help safeguard the refugees, the Hindu faith and the fast-fading Sindhi language, supporters in New York as well as the UJAS and other NGOs in India are helping these latest refugees establish a community center and school in Jodhpur. As we went to press, I received the first photographs of the launch of the UJAS Asha Kendra being funded by Children's Hope India, a New York organization I am affiliated with. It was satisfying to see the ribbon cutting of the temporary school building as the permanent structure is being built. The teachers have already been hired. Now these children will not have to walk many miles to school; they will travel by school bus, for which the funds are being raised in New York. Here they will learn Hindi, the national language, which will make them a part of their new homeland of India. They will also learn English. Sewing machines are available for the women; there is a new skills-training center and there are plans to help them market their creations.

On my last day in Jodhpur, I visited the famous Clock Tower open market. This is a big tourist attraction and is also a vital market

for the locals. It has everything from groceries to clothing at reasonable prices. Some 80 percent of the businesses are run by former Sindhi refugees, who with their perseverance and enterprise have literally cornered this market. One of the most popular businesses is a spice chain run by seven young sisters, the daughters of a former Sindhi refugee. They are known as the Spice Girls, and so successful is their business that tourists flock to their three bustling stores. Even the tourist bible *Lonely Planet* has written about their famous spices.

The business of the seven sisters had its origin in the fresh spices their refugee parents used to grind in the camps back in 1947—the only work they could do in the desolate camps. Like most Hindu refugees, they have taken a difficult time in their lives and turned it into the foundation of their future.

Light at the end of the tunnel: (clockwise from right) Siblings in the Jodhpur city camp pose in the sewing shop; these sisters-in-law work in the family store in Jodhpur; these two Sindhi men, born in India, enjoy the gathering with our HINDUISM TODAY correspondent, Lavina Melwani, who sits at left on the carpet in the next photo, interviewing members of the community



Seventy Years Later, Bhopal's Sindhis Have Made Good



Bhopal, Where Sindhis Have Thrived Since 1947

THE RIGHT TO PRAY TO ONE'S GOD IS FUNDAMENTAL. Rather than lose this right, many Hindus, faced with the bloody, traumatic partition of India in 1947, chose to flee what became the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the freedom of the new secular India. In the mayhem that followed, hundreds of thousands of Hindu families lost their homes and livelihood, their properties and their loved ones. They arrived in India as refugees, dazed and broken, often not knowing how they would survive. Yet they had come to a place where they could breathe free and practice the faith of their forefathers openly. Spreading all over India, the Sindhi refugees struggled and made new lives for themselves.

They settled in large numbers in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, where today there is a thriving Sindhi community—an inspiration to the new refugees languishing in and around Jodhpur. Among the original refugees was Paramhans Sant Hirdaram Sahibji (1906–2006), who founded the Jeev Sewa Santhan (JSS) to look after the needs of the community. A spiritual head to the Sindhi community, Sant Hridaram worked to

help the needy and infirm. He believed in the power of education for strengthening a new generation—especially women. He saw to it that all Hindu holy days, including the Sindhi festival of Cheti Chand, were celebrated joyously and in the open. Bit by bit, he rehabilitated and gave spiritual sustenance to the Sindhi community.

Many of the Partition survivors have passed on, but I met with several—now quite aged—to hear of the ordeals they encountered in order to retain their Hindu dharma. Most, I was told, first took shelter in rough refugee camps in Rajasthan, then moved on to Bhopal where they were given land in Barrackpore. Like Barrackpore in West Bengal, the city was named for its large numbers of British army barracks. The abandoned barracks became home for the refugees.

Some, like Hazari Mal Bacho Mal Khubchandani and his family, still live in these barracks, where in railroad fashion one room leads into the next. He is a youthful 95 with a yellow turban and a bristly white mustache. His wife, now 85, cannot walk much and likes to sit on a chair beside her home shrine and pray. The couple have 14 children,

many grandchildren and a thriving number of businesses, including footwear factories.

Khubchandani was just 23 when he came to India. Even today he is ramrod straight, and he credits that with his job of milking the family cows and looking after them. He still continues to work as a bidi (tobacco) entrepreneur. In a very millennial way, he has built his brand around himself: his turbaned profile appears on every pack of bidis!

Why did he leave Pakistan? He recalls life in his homeland: the Hindus were a small minority but had lived side by side with Muslims, who were often their barbers, their weavers and their cleaners. They

.....
Marks of success: (clockwise from above right) eye examination at the Sewa Sadan Eye Hospital established by the Sindhi community in Bhopal; part of the JSS campus of seven schools, five colleges and the eye hospital, all built with donations from the international Sindhi community; Hazari Khubchandani, 95, in his barracks home with his wife, a few of their 14 children and one of their many grandchildren

each worshiped their own Gods, and harmony prevailed. He feels it all changed when politics entered the picture. Doubts and suspicion set in at the time of Partition. They could not sell their properties at any price, because everyone knew it would all eventually belong to the Muslims. Leaving home with very little, the Hindus put their faith in Jhulelal, the *ishta devata* of the Sindhi people, and set out into the sands of Rajasthan.

Khubchandani spoke wistfully of their lost homeland: "I miss that. It was a simple life where family and community was everything. When guests wanted to depart, we would confiscate the reins of their horse carriage because we did not want them to leave and would insist they stay on!" Such was the love and hospitality among the Sindhis, a heartfelt and pure way of life and belief which is hard to duplicate in a fast-changing India.

In Bhopal, too, of course, the Hindu Sindhi hospitality is a given. Our meeting was joined by an ever-expanding circle of Khubchandani's extended family—sons, grandsons and great-grandsons, sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. They plied us with thick, sweet, milky tea and snacks concocted by Sindhi entrepreneurs—chickpea or besan murmula,



and milked them all. When his beloved Amma cow died, he built a memorial to her, and on every death anniversary they hold prayers for her.

The Sindhi community showed me a few other barracks which have survived. In one, the sole occupant is a 90-year-old woman. We did not meet her, as she was traveling to see relatives. Her family have done well in government jobs, but she refuses to move in with them, so independent and attached is she to her dilapidated barracks home.

After 72 years, she still does not have possession of this home. The family is fighting the case. Khubchandani, too,

has no papers to his home, and he, too, is waiting for reparation from the government, 72 years after Partition. Many refugees have died, still waiting to get justice and the title deeds for the property in exchange for all the land and property they had to abandon when they left Pakistan. Yet, it is a positive community which moves on and is involved in the present, not the past.

We next visited Gobindram Kewlani, who at 90 is more articulate than many of us and heads the Sindhi Panchayat, which works with the local government in seeing to the welfare of the Sindhi community. He also

Sindhi chikki sweets and peanuts. Later we met the matriarch around whom the family revolves, including seven daughters-in-law. All live together in the sprawling, renovated barracks which now house their businesses too—fabric stores, grocery stores and other small retail businesses. On the apex of the building is a sculpture of Lord Krishna.

Educational and Medical Facilities Benefit Entire Community



collects and donates wedding attire, jewelry and home products to help young Hindu girls from needy families get married. He is known to the whole town as *Mama* or Uncle because he continues to look to the interests of the community. When we met him, the elections were around the corner, and he was busy organizing the Sindhis for a Congress rally so the community would get their rights. As we left, the aroma of hot fried samosas was in the air. Crowds swirled and loudspeakers blared out the life of current-day India—and 90-year-old Mama Kewlani was a cheerful, vibrant participant.

Hindu Sindhis are part and parcel of Bhopal and have greatly enhanced its economy. Starting from scratch, they have given life to Bhopal's famous Market of Utensils and Market of Fabrics. The earliest refugees rolled papads, made pickles and sorted spices in the camps, and the manufacturing of food products became a practical way of making a living. This enterprising and quick-witted community sells everything from street food to packaged goods.

Few restaurants offer Sindhi food, but one Sindhi entrepreneur has started a chain called Manohar Restaurant—three famous restaurants with vegetarian food and special *mithai* sweets. Now the third generation is getting into white-collar jobs, with many



holding government jobs.

A local stalwart, Mr. Babani, says that today there is no city in India where Sindhis are not present or have not made an impact. They have become doctors, engineers and are also in public service. The Sindhis have organized panchayats, grassroots organizations across Bhopal so that they can have a say in the political and civic life.

With the Bhopal Sindhis every Hindu festival and holy day is celebrated boldly, joyfully, the most natural thing to do—a hard-won right for these devotees who trudged across the deserts, lost their ancestral land but never gave up their faith or their God. Unfortunately, many younger Sindhis have gradually lost their language, which is not taught in the mainstream schools. Language is often lost by migrants as they try to assimilate into a new culture. Vigilant parents have tried to keep it alive at home, and activists try to inculcate the language and writing skills in the young people both in India and the diaspora.

In the busy marketplace I met Raj Kumar Mangtani, a Sindhi entrepreneur whose grandparents were refugees from Sindh. Along with his father and brothers, he presides over a bustling three-floored shoe emporium. He said that in spite of their business success, for the last decade their interest has primarily focused on the education of their children and ensuring that they succeed in

.....
Benefitting Bhopal: (counterclockwise from above) King Bhoja founded the city in the 11th century; preparing for exams at one of the JSS colleges; a Sindhi-owned sweet shop very popular with the city's residents; students at one of the JSS schools

whichever profession they choose.

The work of JSS has continued through the years, aided by an unheralded army of supporters—successful Sindhi Indian entrepreneurs who had sought their livelihoods in far-off countries and are now ready to give back. Many of these Sindhi benefactors are themselves refugees or the children of 1947 refugees, and with their financial help JSS has built several institutions for the poor and middle-class people in Bhopal.

Over the years JSS has built a large campus with seven schools, five colleges and an eye hospital, all created by donations from Indians of the diaspora, from Hong Kong to the US, Singapore and Dubai. Every institution has a temple and celebrates the values of the Hindu faith.

Due to the enterprising efforts of this small Sindhi community, the town once known as Barrackpore has come to be known as Sant Hirdaram Nagar. Today Hridaram's successor, Hotchand Dhanwani, named Siddh Bhau by his guru, runs this massive network of hospitals, schools and colleges. Siddh Bhau is the spiritual and social champion of the Sindhi community who continues the legacy of Sant



Hirdaram through JSS. He is assisted by Mahesh Dayaramani, who is the catalyst who connects overseas donors to the projects and makes things happen.

The majority of the local Sindhi children are graduates of the schools and colleges founded and created by Jeev Sewa Sansthan, where Hindu Sindhi spiritual teachings are a part of the education. A large number of local non-Sindhi children also attend. Respect for elders is part of the curriculum, and touching the feet of teachers every day is part of

the routine. Every school has a small Hindu temple. The morning begins with a 20-minute assembly with prayers and the national anthem, followed by classes including everything from science to computer education.

On our final day we visited Siddh Bhau. He lives in a simple cottage in the shadow of a Hindu temple dedicated to the saint who gave Bhopal Jeev Seva Sansthan. At that moment it was crystal clear that the Sindhi community in Bhopal had prospered due to the spiritual strength and moral fiber offered by JSS. The network of schools, colleges and hospitals as well as the familial caring for widows and children had set the moral compass of the community.

Far from Home, But Holding Strong

The name of Sindh is sung in the national anthem, *Jana Gana Mana*, but Sindh is no longer part of India. The Indus River itself—source of the words *Hindu* and *India*—was partitioned from India. The Sindhis are the only people in India without their own state. Their beloved homeland may be thousands and thousands of miles away in an alien country, but the heartbeat of the Sindhi ethos and culture remains strong in these migrant people. They have internalized *Sindhyat*, the distinctive features of the Sindhi community, and all that it stands for.

For Sindhis and Others, a First-Class Education



Very Sweet Success for this Sindhi Family



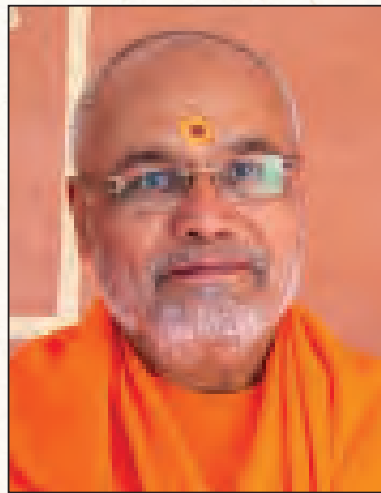
MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Key Issues Facing Hindu Society Today

Sagely advice on the media, youth, family and how to remain a Hindu

BY SWAMI PARAMATMANANDA SARASWATI

During the 2019 Kumbh Mela at Prayag, Hinduism Today interviewed Swami Paramatmananda, present convenor of the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha (arshasampradaya.org/activities/acharyasabha), an apex body of religious leaders founded in 2003 by Swami Dayananda Saraswati.



TO USE HARSH WORDS, I WOULD SAY HINDUS ARE orphaned today. There exists such an atmosphere in electronic and social media that if one talks of dharma, one is labeled a fundamentalist, one is labeled as intolerant. Such is the environment that exists today. The challenge is to improve perception of our own selves in our own country. This has not been discussed during the Kumbh or on any other platform, because there is a belief that politics should not be discussed by the mahatmas. Mahatmas should only talk of dharma-related matters. A discussion of how Hinduism is perceived in India is not even on the agenda.

The media today are acting like opinion makers rather than presenters of facts upon which people can decide for themselves. I give a simple example. If any Hindu is asked who abducted Sita, the answer would be that a demon named Ravana came dressed as a saint and deceived her. This is the correct way to present the facts. But today if someone wearing saffron robes does something wrong, then for days the media will be saying that a saint did this or that. After many days they will finally state that the person in saffron was not a saint but a criminal wearing saffron clothes. But by then the damage has been done, and the impression left with the public is that a sadhu has done something wrong.

The media has to report things in a fair and responsible manner. The effort should be to increase the faith, or at least not to break the faith. Why should we break the faith of someone? Why should we try to break or damage the cultural heritage of someone? If there is a serious problem with someone's character, then it is okay to report, but in general the traditions and culture should be respected. Those who have faith should be encouraged to follow their faith. Media's role should be such that it inspires even our coming generations to follow their faith. Things should be presented in a way that the younger generation do not get alienated from their cultural roots. Our youth should be proud of belonging to this tradition and continuing with this tradition. The media must not denigrate somebody in the name of modernization. They are hurting people.

Some of our youth are connecting with Sanatana Dharma, and others are not. It is a worrisome situation. My message for the youth is not to throw out the baby with the bath water. They dismiss things without thinking, without a proper rationale. They have a tendency to disown the tradition, cultural values, religious values. I wish they would at least study the culture thoroughly before they disown it. The beauty of our culture is that it offers the freedom to choose. But the right choice can only be made once we sincerely try

to understand it. Influenced by news and opinion, the youth end up knowing neither Western culture nor Indian culture.

Parents need to connect with their children emotionally and spend quality time with them. Unfortunately, everyone is running after their own professional advancement, and in the process, the family is suffering. Today there are few siblings. Many families have only one or two children. When we were young, families had at least three or four children, and getting together a volleyball or even cricket team was not uncommon. There was an emotional infrastructure to fall back upon for support. Today, that is missing. Today, there are no playgrounds and no friends on the street and no friends in the school. The only focus is on study or work.

Husband and wife will have to set their priorities. Once they become parents, they have a responsibility towards their children. They should manage their time to be sure they are available to their children, especially the wife. I think today technology and gadgets have benefitted women. Women had to work very hard in olden times. Today we have ovens, pressure cookers and washing machines, etc., reducing the burden of women in a big way. Now we have nuclear families, which require less time for food preparation. If the husband is cooperative, it is possible more time can be spent together as a family.

With regard to the question about couples living together who are not married, I feel this is wrong. Such a live-in relationship is very different from *gandharva vivaha*, where a couple in love get married on their own [with just the exchange of garlands]. Marriage is making a home, making a family. It is sustaining a family and fulfilling all duties. Even after a *gandharva vivaha*, the duties have to be fulfilled and a home has to be made. It is easy to marry but it is difficult to make a home. A live-in arrangement is not a marriage. There is no home. It is living like animals. It is living for one's sexual fulfillment or emotional fulfillment for a period of time and rarely lasts.

My message to the Hindus in India and all over the world is that they should remain Hindus. They were born as Hindus and they should be Hindus in thought as well as word and deed. We become Hindus by thought when we study our own scriptures, but today we are neglecting scriptures. We must take time out to study the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*. Then only you will be a true Hindu. Being a Hindu by birth is one thing; living a Hindu lifestyle after one has studied and understood it is a different thing. Try to become a Hindu by conviction, by clarity, by cognition, not simply because someone tells you something and you follow that. The educational infrastructure is not teaching children what Hinduism is. The media keeps sending the message that Hinduism is old, backward and incorrect. This needs to change.

AYURVEDA

Preventing Colds & Flu

A balanced immune system is your best friend in the quest for health and the conquest of disease

BY DR. VIRENDER SODHI

EVERYONE HAS RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS. STATISTICS show that an average adult can expect to get two to three colds per year. When the body is invaded by disease, the immune system makes every effort to destroy both the germs and the infected cells.

Because we are surrounded by bacteria and viruses constantly, even when we are healthy, these impurities can't be the sole cause of disease. Otherwise, we would always be sick. We become ill when there is a breakdown in our immune system due to some physical imbalance. Ayurvedic medicine is a science of balance. Whenever we have a disease, there is an imbalance inviting that disease to occur.

Ayurvedic medicine believes that the digestive system, especially the stomach, plays an important role in our overall health. We create stress on our digestive system when we fail to follow the laws of nature. Such failure would include the consumption of unhealthy foods, food taken in improper combinations or food incorrectly prepared. Excessive use of sugar can also cause problems.

Other factors, such as stress resulting from work, family discord or environment influences, can also have a negative effect. These imbalances create *ama* (the ayurvedic term for a kind of undigested mucus toxin). Because this mucus is a natural breeding ground for viruses and bacteria, it can become a cause for upper respiratory infections. Medical science has recognized several hundred different types of viruses and bacteria which can cause these afflictions.

As we've seen in past years, flu shots are limited. I feel that vaccinations are only important for the elderly, especially if their natural immunity has been compromised due to cancer, heart disease, asthma, lung infections, smoking or bronchitis. These patients have a high mortality rate due to pneumonia.

If a young person who has not been vaccinated contracts an upper respiratory infection, he or she generally recovers more quickly than those who have been vaccinated. Similarly, patients who take antibiotics experience delayed healing as compared with those who receive herbal medicines. Most upper respiratory infections are viral and do not need antibiotics. During all my years of practice, I have never used influenza vaccinations for myself or my family. In spite of exaggerated exposure to these germs, I have warded off the flu with care and natural remedies only. Most people recover from a common cold or the flu within a week. When I am asked how these common illnesses might be avoided, this is the advice that I give:

- **Breathe.** Perform breathing exercises (outside if possible), and circulate more fresh air throughout your home. Exercise regularly. Walking for 45 minutes a day will increase the body's immune defense mechanism. However, do not over-exert yourself. Exercising longer than 90 minutes per day may actually increase your risk of upper respiratory infections.

- **Reduce the "allergenic load" in your house.** Carpets, gas heaters, wood burning fireplaces, fungi, mold and chemicals of any kind can weaken your immune system. Consider using electrostatic

and charcoal filters in your house to clean the air.

- **Reduce your sugar and dairy intake.** Eat fruits and vegetables instead. Winter is a holiday season when we tend to consume a lot of sugar. According to published studies, seven tablespoons of sugar a day retards the immune system dramatically. One can of soda pop contains nearly four tablespoons of sugar. Avoid foods you are allergic to. You may need to ask your doctor what these are.

- **Take antioxidants!** My personal favorite is Amla Plex, available from my company, Ayush Herbs Inc. It is a natural source of antioxidants and an excellent immune builder. Take one teaspoon three times a day during the winter. Add to this vitamin C (up to 1,000 mg), vitamin E (400 IU), selenium (200 mcg), and natural carotenoids (25,000 IU).

Ayurvedic herbs can also be taken, such as trifala (500 mg three times per day), holy basil standardized extract (250 mg three times per day) and turmeric extract (250 mg three times per day). When you have a cold or an upper respiratory infection, drink ginger, licorice and holy basil tea. Garlic and green tea also have immune balancing properties. Drink plenty of



warm fluids.

- **Wash your hands frequently.** At Purdue University, in a study of 60 day-care centers, researchers found that people who washed their hands frequently got 50 percent fewer colds than those who didn't. I do not like antibacterial soaps because they sometimes force the body to develop drug-resistant bacteria. Avoid frequent touching of your nose, eyes and ears.

- **Get ample sleep.** Get at least seven to eight hours of sleep every night. Studies have shown that a lack of sleep can increase your chances of catching a cold.

- **Minimize stress.** For many, the holiday season can be stressful. Mental and emotional weaknesses have an effect on the physical system and actually increase the risk of catching cold. Perform yoga or tai chi and spend quality time with your friends and family. Surround yourself with people you care about and those who care about you. A Carnegie Mellon study published in *The Journal of American Medical Association* found that people who report three or less social ties, such as with friends, family, coworkers or community groups, are more than four times at risk of catching a cold than those with six or more such ties.

- **Do not use antibiotics indiscriminately.** According to a study published by *The Journal of American Medical Association*, 50 percent of the patients suffering with colds, upper respiratory infections and bronchitis demanded antibiotic prescriptions. Most of the upper respiratory infections are caused by viruses. Antibiotics are effective against bacteria. Overuse of antibiotics may lead to antibiotic-resistant bacteria which can be life threatening. Antibiotics can weaken your immune system.

The key is to keep a balance in all that you do. It can come from a healthy mind and body, with meditation, stress reduction, exercises and eating nutritious foods. A few exceptions are fine, as long as they are not in excess. Learn to listen to your body's needs. Your body is your best doctor.

DR. VIRENDER SODHI holds an M.D. (Ayurveda) from India and a N.D. from Bastyr College of Naturopathic Medicine, USA. Email: drsodhi@ayurvedicscience.com. Web: www.ayurvedicscience.com

Hindu Prayers in US Legislatures

How Hindus can and should participate in legislative prayer in the United States

BY ARVIND KRISHNAMOORTHY,
MASSACHUSETTS, US

AT THE DAWN OF THIS CENTURY, THE late Prime Minister of India, Atal Behari Vajpayee, addressed a joint session of the US Congress. On this special occasion, for the very first time, a Hindu priest was invited to deliver the opening prayer in the House of Representatives. This was Venkatachalapathi Samudrala from the Shiva Vishnu Temple in Parma, Ohio. Unfortunately, this historic event evoked protests in some conservative Christian media. Seven years later, the US Senate invited Hindu cleric Rajan Zed of Nevada to deliver an opening invocation, but he was interrupted by conservative Christian protesters even before the prayer began.

This intolerance to non-Christian invocations seemed to have died down by 2013, when Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami delivered the opening prayer in the US House. There have been Hindu invocations in several state legislatures since, and the positive trend has generally persisted, except for a lone 2015 boycott in the Idaho Senate.

Most legislators now seem to recognize that freedom of religion and diversity form the foundation of the United States, and they have given proper honor to Hindu invocations held in legislative chambers. Veeramani Ranganathan, a cofounder of the Hindu Temple of New Hampshire, delivered the opening prayer as Guest Chaplain in the New Hampshire House of Representatives in March

2019. Ranganathan recalled that the Speaker, legislators and staff were warm, welcoming, respectful and appreciative. He notes that such events help "spread a global message of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence."

Most people in India see the United States as a bastion of science and technology. When they hear about Hindu invocations in a legislative body, they are usually surprised by this seeming incongruity. They are unaware that, in the United States, the free exercise of one's religion is a foundational principle enshrined in the Bill of Rights. Unlike India, where the Constitution affirms the equality of religions by adopting a secular posture, the US approach accommodates all faiths without favoring any one. In fact, a US Supreme Court opinion states that the Founding Fathers of the nation looked at prayer invocations as a practice whose effect harmonized with the tenets of some or all religions.

The United States Congress has opened its legislative sessions with prayer right from the first Congress in 1789. It borrowed this custom from the British parliament, which had observed the practice for a long time. Most state legislatures eventually adopted this same tradition. Founding Father Benjamin Franklin championed this custom in his speech to the Constitutional Convention: "I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth; that God governs in the affairs of men... I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance

of heaven, and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business."

The constitutionality of legislative prayers has been tested in courts. The US Supreme Court upheld their constitutionality in 1983 in its decision on *Marsh, Nebraska State Treasurer, et al v. Chambers*. The court ruled that Congress and state legislatures do not violate the US constitution's separation of church and state even when clergy are paid to lead daily devotionals. Chief Justice Warren Burger, in the opinion he wrote on behalf of the majority, said that the use of legislative prayer "is not an establishment of religion or a step toward establishment; it is simply a tolerable acknowledgment of beliefs."

Hindu temples and organizations in the United States can promote the integration of Hindus into the local community by making use of opportunities to lead legislative prayers. When a Hindu chaplain leads the general community in prayer, he or she not only brings recognition and visibility to the Hindu faith but also displays love and respect for people of other faiths in the community. This is indeed a great way of affirming the Hindu tenet that the world is one big family or "*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*." This, in turn, can create a genuine feeling of inclusion in the community for Hindus, one which is based on an acceptance of what you truly are rather than just on professional connections.

Hindu prayers in legislatures can help remove distortions and misconceptions about Hinduism that are prevalent in the community. At the core of Hinduism are the notions of unity and pluralism. It asserts the oneness and interconnectedness of all life and the divinity inherent in all beings. It appreciates and affirms the validity of multiple perspectives and paths to approach the Divine. These abstract notions manifest themselves in Hindu life as core guiding values such as *satya* (truth), *dharma*, *shanti* (peace), *prema* (love), *ahimsa* (non-violence), and *seva* (service). Yet, respect for all life has been distorted in the mass mind as cow-worship, and pluralism as irrational polytheism.

President John Adams, a Founding Father of the United States, in his 1813 letter to President Thomas Jefferson, another Founding Father, talked about

the sacred Hindu *Shastras* written in Sanskrit "with the elegance and sentiments of Plato," and wondered, "Where is to be found Theology more orthodox or Philosophy more profound" than the *Shastras* that say "God is one, creator of all, Universal Sphere, without beginning, without End."

Legislative prayers provide the opportunity to acquaint today's political decision-makers and the broader community with the underlying core tenets of Hinduism, the wisdom of the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and other Hindu scriptures, as well as the beauty of the Sanskrit language and the peace of the prayer chants.

Professor Anil Saigal, the Asian American Commissioner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, says, "Hindu prayers at legislatures give a public validation to Hinduism as a well-respected religion. As Hindus, it is important for us to share our deep, scriptural wisdom for the benefit of all."

Such public validation and sharing can be particularly helpful to the younger generations of Hindu children and youth, whose perception of Hinduism is colored by shallow or negative coverage in textbooks and the media. Images of Hindu prayers in legislatures, along with their universal messages of peace, tolerance, and oneness, can contribute to contemporary portrayals of Hinduism in textbooks that balance out or drive out stale, poorly informed or mischievous depictions.

There are around three million Hindus in the United States, and these legislative prayer events are an excellent opportunity to have our voice heard in the halls of power. Hindu temples and organizations have not made full use of this opportunity, either because of the protest incidents in the past or due to a lack of awareness or interest. They should reconsider and start exploring how they can take part in prayer services in legislative bodies.

The easiest way to start is to participate at the local level. HINDUISM TODAY's managing editor at Kauai's Hindu Monastery says they have upon warm invitation "given blessings at the County council meetings, at Martin Luther King Day, Peace Day and the County

Farm Fair—all very warmly welcomed."

At the state or congressional level, such participation is usually arranged through politicians such as a congressional or state representative or senator. For example, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami's prayer service in Congress was arranged through the Hindu American Foundation by Rep. Ed Royce (R) of California's 39th district and Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (D) of Hawaii's 2nd district. It read as follows: "May today's session of the House of Representatives, to which Americans rightly turn for leadership, be abundantly blessed by the Lord Supreme. Through personal introspection, a collaborative heart and by God's all-pervasive grace, may the members present here, despite differing views and staunchly held convictions, find the wisdom to craft mutually acceptable solutions to our nation's challenges. The tragic Boston Marathon bombings, still vivid in all our minds, implore us to advocate the humanity of a nonviolent approach in all of life's dimensions. Hindu scripture declares, without equivocation, that the highest of high ideals is to never knowingly harm anyone. May we, here in this chamber, and all the people of our great nation, endeavor to face even our greatest difficulties with an unwavering commitment to seek out and to find nonviolent solutions. Peace, peace, peace to us, and peace to all beings."

Veeramani Ranganathan's prayer service in the New Hampshire legislature was arranged through the efforts of State Rep. Latha Mangipudi (D). With today's larger numbers of legislators of Indian origin, the process of arranging services by Hindu chaplains should be easier now.

State legislatures differ in whom they may call to deliver the prayer. Visiting chaplains and even guests are called in many bodies, but some chambers allow only a designated official of the legislature to deliver the prayer. Legislative assemblies also differ in their guidelines for delivery of the prayer. Some legislatures have no set guidelines at all. Others may set limits on the length of the

Religious inclusion: (far left) a portrait of Thomas Jefferson painted by Rembrandt Peale in 1800; (above) Veeramani Ranganathan delivers the opening prayer as Guest Chaplain in the New Hampshire House of Representatives in March 2019; Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, publisher of HINDUISM TODAY, delivers the opening prayer for the US House of Representatives in June 2013.

prayer, require that the prayer be entirely in English, proscribe the mention of a particular political issue of the day, or require that the prayers be reviewed in advance. For example, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami's prayer in the Congressional House of Representatives was in English and less than 150 words, as required by the House Chaplain's office. In contrast, Veeramani Ranganathan's prayer service in the New Hampshire House was longer and was in Sanskrit, followed by an English translation.

Sanskrit chants do tend to have a musical quality about them and can produce a peaceful spiritual aura, even if the listener does not comprehend the meaning. The sounds of Vedic chants capture their divine essence, and music speaks to the soul.

In selecting the content and language of the prayer, it is important to keep in mind the guideline from the National Conference of Community and Justice to avoid religious sectarianism: "Accepting an invitation to lead the general community in prayer includes a genuine responsibility to be sensitive to the diversity of faiths among those in whose names the prayer is being offered."

Participation in legislative prayers offers Hindus a unique opportunity to serve the community and promote integration into the American melting pot. It enables Hindus to assert the validity of their religion and nullify distorted perceptions of it. It provides a channel to share the deep wisdom of this eternal religion and to spread its lofty messages of tolerance, peace, love and universal brotherhood.



GEOFF FORESTER, CONCORD MONITOR; CSPAN



REMBRANDT PEALE

"THE BILL FOR ESTABLISHING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, the principles of which had, to a certain degree, been enacted before, I had drawn in all the latitude of reason and right. It still met with opposition; but, with some mutilations in the preamble, it was finally passed; and a singular proposition proved that its protection of opinion was meant to be universal. Where the preamble declares, that coercion is a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, an amendment was proposed, by inserting the word 'Jesus Christ,' so that it should read, 'a departure from the plan of Jesus Christ, the holy author of our religion;' the insertion was rejected by a great majority, in proof that they meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mahometan, the Hindoo, and Infidel of every denomination."

Thomas Jefferson, Founding Father,
third president of the United States

Akshar–Purushottam School of Vedanta

BY SWAMI PARAMTATTVADAS

A BAPS Disciple of Guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj



A presentation of the Swaminarayan philosophy, which was recently recognized as an authentic school of Vedanta, in line with yet distinct from the philosophies of Shankara, Ramanuja, Maḍhva, Nimbarka, Vallabha and Chaitanya

This is the story of a rare occurrence in Hindu sacred literature, the appearance of a distinct school of Vedanta. It has been hundreds of years since such a happening, and the Hindu world celebrates. In this Educational Insight, the monks of the Swaminarayan Fellowship share a summary of their philosophy and the amazing events that gave birth to this philosophical

revelation, a story inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, captured in a five-volume Sanskrit commentary by his disciple Swami Bhadreshdas and reconciled with academic authenticity by Swami Paramtattvadas. While the subject is technical and complex, readers will find it fascinating to step into this theological realm and watch as history unfolds before our eyes.

The practice of earnest inquiry has long been embedded in Hindu devotional life and intellectual discourse. For example, the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* opens with the following series of questions: “What is the cause? Is it Brahman? From where are we born? By what do we live? And on what are we established? Governed by whom, O you knowers of Brahman, do we live in pleasure and pain, each in our respective situation?” Such lofty questions represent a heartfelt quest to know ourselves, the world around us, and the supreme power by which everything is enlivened, sustained and can be ultimately transcended for eternal freedom and bliss. This perennial seeking of spiritual knowledge and liberation, when grounded in the sacred authoritative texts of the *Brahmasutras*, *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad-Gita*—collectively known as the *Prasthanatrayi*—is known as the classical system of Indian thought called Vedanta.

Vedanta as Darshan: The *Vedas* are considered the highest scriptural authority in Hinduism. *Vedanta*, as the name indicates—*Veda* + *anta* (literally “end”)—refers to the conclusive essence of the *Vedas* that is enshrined in their final set of treatises, the *Upanishads*. Together with the *Brahmasutras* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which further clarify and consolidate the teachings of the *Upanishads*, these three sets of scriptures comprise Vedanta Darshan.

Vedanta is classified as a darshan because it is described as the art of seeing. *Darshan* is derived from the Sanskrit verb-root *drś*, to see,¹ which in a deeper sense means to perceive or know.² *Darshan* thus literally means seeing, and can also mean “that by which one can see,” i.e., the eyes. In a fuller, cognitive sense, a darshan is a system of wisdom and practice that helps one know, experience and realize the truth; it provides a vision and insight into the reality of ourselves, the world and God. Of the six ancient systems of Indian philosophy, classically called the Shad-Darshan, Vedanta is the most prominent and widely practiced today.

Darshans within Vedanta: Within Vedanta Darshan itself there emerged several individual schools of thought, each one also identified as a darshan. A tradition arose in which each school established itself according to the teachings of the *Prasthanatrayi*; only then would it be accepted as an authentic school of Vedanta. Hence, exponents from each of the Vedanta schools formulated commentaries on the *Brahmasutras*, *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad-Gita*, providing their own interpretations of the complex texts to demonstrate that their doctrines were grounded in the original revelatory sources, thus validating their school of thought. [Continued on following page.]

In a special chair that lifted him high in the air, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj performs the pran-pratishta (infusing ceremony) for the huge murti of Bhagwan Swaminarayan at the Akshardham temple in New Delhi, India



BAPS SWAMINARAYAN SANSTHA

A Distinct School of Vedānta

Hinduism has been blessed with magnificent scholars over the centuries who have written commentaries on the *Prasthanatrayi* and established or consolidated their respective schools of Vedānta. Among these, some of the most notable exponents and the distinct darshan they each propounded include the following: Shankara’s Advaita Darshan, Ramanuja’s Vishishtadvaita Darshan, Madhva’s Dvaita Darshan, Nimbarka’s Dvaitadvaita Darshan, Vallabha’s Shuddhadvaita Darshan, and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s Achintyabhedabheda Darshan.³ Akshar-Purushottam Darshan, as revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, is positioned within this rich tradition of Vedānta darshans.

In line with this hallowed tradition, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the previous spiritual guru of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, instructed Bhadreshdas Swami in 2005 to write Sanskrit commentaries on these sacred texts. Bhadreshdas Swami, one of the leading scholars of our time, had already been studying Swaminarayan texts, Sanskrit and the classical schools of Indian philosophy for over 24 years under the inspiration and guidance of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. With his guru’s blessings and his own scholarly expertise and tremendous hard work, Bhadreshdas Swami completed the mammoth task in less than three years, offering the five-volume, 2,000-page classical commentaries to Pramukh Swami Maharaj before the end of 2007. Titled *Swaminarayan Bhashyam*, these commentaries provide a word-by-word explanation and elaboration of the *Brahmasutras*, ten principal *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* according to the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Bhadreshdas Swami subsequently composed the *Swaminarayan Siddhanta Sudha*—a classical *vadagrantha*, or didactic treatise that offers a systematic and comprehensive exposition, justification and defense of the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan’s theological and philosophical principles. He offered this work to His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj in 2017. Together, these classical texts have helped Akshar-Purushottam Darshan be recognized among scholarly communities in India and abroad as a distinct, authentic school of Vedānta.

Scholarly Impressions

The scholarly works of Bhadreshdas Swami have received worldwide critical acclaim from eminent experts of Indian philosophy, theology, Indology, Sanskrit and other related fields, where they have both praised the literary value of the texts and recognized Akshar-Purushottam Darshan as a distinct school of Vedānta.

The late Professor N. S. Ramanuja Tatacharya, former Vice-Chancellor of the prestigious Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth at Tirupati and award-winning researcher at the French Institute of Pondicherry, was one of the most senior and renowned scholars in India on Navya-Nyaya and Ramanuja Vedānta. He writes: “In the past, eminent *ācāryas* such as Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva and Vallabha have put forth immense effort to establish Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita and Śuddhādvaita, respectively. They have done this by composing commentarial texts based on the *Prasthānatrayī* according to their own teachings and corresponding schools of thought.... Sadhu Bhadreshdas’ complete commentary on the *Prasthānatrayī*, entitled the *Svāmīnārāyaṇabhāṣyam*, is exemplary of this continued tradition. The work presented by Sadhu Bhadreshdas is a monumental exposition of a novel philosophy and is a priceless contribution to the world.”⁴

Professor Tatacharya further explains, “Although some of the principles of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva and others of the Vedānta tradition are similar to one another, there are many principles... that are characteristic of these schools of thought, and hence, distinguish them from one another. The Svāmīnārāyaṇa tradition is also to be understood as being distinct for these same reasons.”⁵ Furthermore, “Although Swaminarayan did not himself compose commentaries on the *Upanishads*, *Gita*, or any other sacred texts, he often cited and offered his interpretations on them in his discourses. These interpretations of the verses were distinct from those offered by *ācāryas* including Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, who preceded him and offered their own interpretations according to their respective schools of thought. Swaminarayan’s expositions were unprecedented and novel; thus, many were unaware that his *sampradāya* has its own distinct philosophy.”⁶

The late Professor Radhakrishnan Bhatt, former Head of



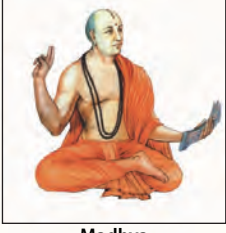
Shankara



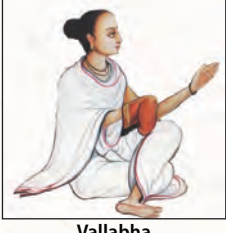
Ramanuja



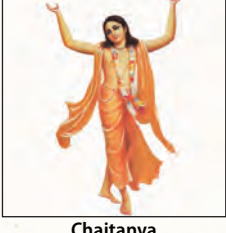
Nimbarka



Madhva



Vallabha



Chaitanya



Swaminarayan

Vedānta Philosophies Compared

Time of Inception	Exponent	Name of Darshan	Metaphysical Entities	Key Features
8th century	Shankara	Advaita	One: Nirguna Brahman	* The attribute-less, formless Brahman is the only reality¹ * The universe, its constituents and all individual selves are unreal² * Brahman and the individual self are metaphysically non-dual³ * Knowledge is the only and ultimate means to realizing one’s identity as Brahman⁴
11th & 12th	Ramanuja	Vishishtadvaita	Three: Chit, Achit & (Saguna) Brahman	* Individual souls and the universe exist as distinct metaphysical categories, but are ultimately wholly dependent on God, as the body is on the soul⁵ * Brahman has a divine form⁶ and infinite positive attributes⁷ * Bhakti is the ultimate means to attaining liberation, but is aided by the knowledge of God’s glory (gnan) and performance of one’s duties (karma)⁸
12th or 13th	Nimbarka	Dvaitadvaita	Three: Chit, Achit and Brahman	* Krishna is the supreme being and Radha his principal devotee⁹ * Individual souls (chit) and maya (achit) are distinct from Brahman (dvaita), yet cannot exist independently without Brahman (advaita)¹⁰ * Bhakti is the principal means for liberation¹¹
13th & 14th	Madhva	Dvaita	Two: Swatantra-tattva and Paratantra-tattva	* Vishnu is the sole independent entity¹² * All other entities, including the universe and individual selves, are real but dependent on Vishnu for their existence¹³ * There is a five-fold substantial difference within realities: 1) between the jivas and God, 2) between insentient matter and God, 3) within jivas, 4) between jivas and insentient matter, and 5) within different forms of insentient matter¹⁴ * Bhakti, founded upon knowledge of God’s glory, is the means to liberation¹⁵
15th & 16th	Vallabha	Shuddhadvaita	Three: Chit, Achit and Brahman	* Brahman is the singular metaphysical entity to exist¹⁶ * Brahman, by his own will (lila), becomes the jivas and world¹⁷ * Brahman remains forever pure, despite his association with jivas and maya, and jivas and maya are understood as pure, because of their association with Brahman¹⁸ * Complete refuge in and nine-fold bhakti of Krishna is the primary way to liberation¹⁹
16th	Chaitanya Mahaprabhu	Achintyabhedabheda	Three: Chit, Achit and Brahman	* Krishna is the supreme Godhead²⁰ and is worshiped alongside Radha²¹ * Chaitanya is the combined manifestation of Radha and Krishna²² * The difference (bhed) and non-difference (abheda) between God and the individual selves, the universe, and his powers is inconceivable (achintya), as between fire and its sparks²³ * Bhakti-rasa is the ultimate means and end²⁴
19th	Bhagwan Swaminarayan	Akshar-Purushottam	Five: Jiva, Ishwar, Maya, Akshar (Brahman) and Purushottam (Parabrahman)	* Swaminarayan is Parabrahman Purushottam, the highest reality²⁵ * Akshar is distinct from Purushottam and greater than all else except Purushottam²⁶ * Purushottam remains present on earth through Akshar, who takes the form of the living guru, for the continued liberation of countless souls²⁷ * The way to and fruit of liberation is to realize oneself as Akshar and offer devotion to Purushottam with loving servitude²⁸

Footnotes

1. Shankara, *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 3.2.14; Shankara, *Upadeśasāhasrī* 1.109.
2. Shankara, *Upadeśasāhasrī* 17.13-21; Grimes (ed.), *The Vivekacūḍāmaṇi of Śaṅkarācārya Bhagavatpāda* 20, p. 70.
3. Shankara, *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 4.4.4.
4. Shankara, *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya* 9.1-3.
5. Ramanuja, *Sribhāṣya* 1.2.2.
6. Ramanuja, *Sribhāṣya* 1.2.1.
7. Ramanuja, *Sribhāṣya* 3.2.11.
8. Ramanuja, *Vedārthasaṅgraha* 238.
9. Sarma, *An Introduction to Mādhva Vedānta*, p. 50.
10. *ibid.*
11. *Viṣṇutattvavivirṇaya*.
12. Prabhatījanācārya, Vyāsakere and Vādirāja, *Mahābhārata Tatparyanirṇaya of Śrī Madhwacharya: With the Commentary of Śrī Vādirājatīrtha / Anandatīrtha Bhagavatpāda* (Bangalore: Sri Vyasa Madhwa Seva Pratisthana, 1998), 1.85, p. 40.
13. Nimbarka, *Vedāntapārījātasaurabha*
14. Srinivasa, *Vedāntakaustubha*.
15. Srinivasa, *Vedāntakaustubha*.
16. Devarshi Ramanath Shastri, *Shuddhadvaita Darshan*.
17. Vallabha, *Tattvārthadīpa* 65.
18. Hariyā Gokulanātha, Richard Barz (tr.), *The Bhakti Sect of Vallabhacharya* (Faridabad: Thomson Press, 1976), p. 79, and *Shuddhadvait Martand* 27-28.
19. Devarshi Ramanath Shastri, *Shuddhadvaita Darshan*.
20. O. B. L. Kapoor, *The Philosophy and Religion of Śrī Caitanya* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1994), p. 101.
21. Graham Schweig, “Krishna, the Intimate Deity” in Edwin Bryant and Maria Ekstrand (eds), *The Hare Krishna Movement: The Postcharismatic Fate of a Religious Transplant* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 19.
22. Steven Rosen, “Who Is Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu?” in Edwin Bryant and Maria Ekstrand (eds), *The Hare Krishna Movement: The Postcharismatic Fate of a Religious Transplant* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 63.
23. Ravi Gupta, “Where One Is Forever Two: God and World in Jiva Gosvāmī’s Bhāgavata-sandarbhā” in Ravi Gupta (ed.), *Caitanya Vaisnava Philosophy: Tradition, Reason and Devotion* (Ashgate, 2014), pp. 35-60.
24. Schweig, *Krishna, the Intimate Deity*, p. 20-22.
25. *Vachanamrut* Gadhada 2.13, Gadhada 3.31, Gadhada 3.38 and Amdavad 7.
26. *Vachanamrut* Gadhada 2.3.
27. *Vachanamrut* Gadhada 1.71.
28. *Vachanamrut* Loya 12 and Gadhada 2.3.

Sanskrit Research and Publication at Karnataka State Open University in Mysore, deduced from the *Brahmasutra Swaminarayan Bhashyam*: “By studying this commentary, one concludes that the Svāminārāyaṇa *sampradāya* and the Akṣara Puruṣottama Siddhānta is an independent tradition that is based on the ancient Vedic principles. The tradition’s principles greatly differ from Rāmānuja’s Viśiṣṭādvaita, Vallabhadāsa’s Suddhādvaita and the philosophy of Madhva, Nimbārka and other Vedānta darśana.”⁷

On 31 July 2017 in Varanasi, India, prominent members of the Shri Kashi Vidvat Parishad,⁸ after studying the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* commentaries and the *Swaminarayan Siddhanta Sudha*, concluded that “Sadhu Bhadreshdas is an acharya and a contemporary commentator in the lineage of commentators on the *Prasthanatrayi*” and “it is in every way appropriate to identify Shri Swaminarayan’s Vedānta by the title of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan. Therefore, we all unanimously endorse that this Akshar-Purushottam Siddhanta revealed

by Parabrahman Swaminarayan is a Vedic siddhanta that is distinct from Advaita, Vishishtadvaita, Dvaita and all other schools.” In commemoration of this historical contribution to Vedānta Darshan, the Shri Kashi Vidvat Parishad presented a written proclamation attesting to the above, which they presented again, as an engraved copper plate, in New Delhi on 13 August 2017.

At the 17th World Sanskrit Conference at British Columbia University in Vancouver, Canada, in 2018, Bhadreshdas Swami presented a succinct introduction to Akshar-Purushottam Darshan in the inaugural session, outlining its salient features and roots in the *Prasthanatrayi*. The assembled scholars welcomed the lucid presentation and applauded the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* and *Swaminarayan Siddhanta Sudha* as a major contribution to the world of Sanskrit literature. Further sessions also saw various academic papers presented on Akshar-Purushottam Darshan and a panel discussion of leading Sanskrit scholars of Western and Indian academia on the *Swaminarayan Siddhanta Sudha*.⁹

This 16-page educational Insight offers a brief overview of this distinct school of Vedānta called Akshar-Purushottam Darshan.

Footnotes

1. Gajanan Balkrishna Palsule, *A Concordance of Sanskrit Dhātupāṭhas* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1955), p. 186.
2. Sayanacharya, *Mādhyamīyā Dhātuvṛtti [a treatise on Sanskrit roots based on the Dhātupāṭha of Panini]*, Dwarikadas Shastri (ed.) (Varanasi: Prachya Bharati Prakashan, 1964), 1.707, p. 286.
3. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vols 1-5 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1922-1955).
4. N.S. Ramanuja Tatacharya, “Sādhu-Bhadreśādāsa-Viracita-Prasthanatrayi-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam-Saṅkṣipta-Paricayaḥ,” *Journal of The Oriental Institute*, 66.1-4 (September-December 2016 to March-June 2017), 280.

5. *ibid.*
6. *ibid.*, 280-281.
7. N. Radhakrishnan Bhatt, “Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam,” *Journal of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute*, 1.1 (2018), 179.
8. The Shri Kashi Vidvat Parishad is a highly esteemed, time-honored council that has been formed for the protection of Vedic dharma. It adjudicates on matters of Vedic teaching and research, carrying authority throughout India. The council comprises some of the most illustrious scholars in India from a wide array of fields, including grammar, logic, poetics, philosophy and literature.
9. *The 17th World Sanskrit Conference: Conference Programme*, pp. 27, 32 & 33.

Left: Shastriji Maharaj (1865-1951) clarified Akshar-Purushottam Darshan and initiated its propagation worldwide, popularizing it with the name *Akshar-Purushottam*. He is the founder of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. *Right:* Swaminarayan (seated on right) is revered as Purushottam, the Supreme Reality, who works through and is revealed by his worshipful sadhu, Gunatitanand Swami (left). The fellowship regards him and all subsequent successors as Akshar, i.e. perfect vessels of Swaminarayan.

The Divine Life of Bhagwan Swaminarayan

Bhagwan Swaminarayan is Parabrahman Purushottam, the highest existential reality. He manifested on Earth in human form on 3 April 1781 in the tiny village of Chhapaiya, near Ayodhya, in north India. He chose to be born into a modest, pious family, to mother Bhakti and father Dharmadev. They named him Ghanshyam, though he would be known by many names throughout his life, including Neelkanth, Sahajanand Swami, Shrihari and Shriji Maharaj.

Ghanshyam brought great joy to his family and everyone who met him. But even as a child, it was obvious that he was no ordinary human. He sent animals into trances, overcame evil beings with his miraculous powers, and often revealed his higher purpose on earth—to liberate countless souls from their ignorance and grant them the eternal bliss of God. Once he brought a catch of fish back to life, teaching the fisherman that ahimsa is the

highest ethical code, and inspiring him towards a life of non-violence and compassion.

Dharmadev tutored Ghanshyam in Vedic literature, the *Puranas*, the epics, and other key texts of Hindu wisdom. Ghanshyam’s divine genius meant he quickly mastered the sacred scriptures. When he was only 10, he won a debate with the pundits of Varanasi, employing incisive scriptural testimony and irrefutable logic.

On 29 June 1792, having served his parents to their final breath, 11-year-old Ghanshyam renounced his home and family to embark upon a spiritual journey of epic proportions. For seven years and almost 8,000 miles, Ghanshyam traveled the length and breadth of India, crossing into Nepal and Tibet (China), and through Myanmar and Bangladesh. During this time, he came to be known as Neelkanth. Barefooted and alone, carrying no

The Philosophy: Akshar-Purushottam Darshan

Sources: God, Guru and Scripture

Bhagwan Swaminarayan was Parabrahman Purushottam. He himself revealed Akshar-Purushottam Darshan, which is an exceptionally significant feature of this darshan. God himself is describing what he is and how to realize him. Indeed, when he manifested on earth just over two hundred years ago, he is *showing* who he is, making the revelation especially gracious, direct and powerful.

During his manifestation on earth, Bhagwan Swaminarayan delivered extensive discourses in which he articulated the doctrines of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan. These discourses were meticulously documented by four of his most senior and learned swamis.

This compilation came to be known as the *Vachanamrut*. Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s teachings from the *Vachanamrut* thus form one of the most important sources of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan.

According to a central Hindu belief, it is imperative to seek a qualified guru to understand such scriptural wisdom. For example, the *Mundaka Upanishad* instructs:

*Tadvijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet
samidhpaṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma niṣṭham |*

“To realize that [higher knowledge], imperatively go, with sacrificial wood in hand, to only that guru who is the knower of the true meaning of revealed texts, who is



maps, no food and no money, he crossed raging rivers, faced ferocious animals, and survived the freezing winter of the Himalayas. Wearing nothing but a loincloth around his waist, he trekked to Kedarnath, Badrinath and Gangotri, navigating the treacherous mountainous terrain at heights of more than 19,000 feet and enduring temperatures that regularly plummeted to -20° C (-4° F). He even reached Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar in Tibet.

During the monsoon of 1793, Neelkanth arrived in Pulhashram, near Muktinath, in Nepal. For 68 days, Neelkanth stood on one leg in yogic posture, performing austerities in torturous weather to bless the world with his purity and goodness. By the age of 14, Neelkanth had mastered ashtanga yoga.

Wherever Neelkanth traveled, he blessed the land and liberated spiritual aspirants along the way. His journey was a story of courage, kindness and enlightenment.

On 21 August 1799, Neelkanth arrived in western Gujarat, from where, as Sahajanand Swami, he went on to establish the Swaminarayan Sampradaya in 1801 at the age of 20. One of his first works was to introduce a powerful new mantra for daily worship. It often sent people into samadhi, a trance-like state where they enjoyed divine visions, including seeing Sahajanand Swami as the supreme reality. Its widespread popularity led to Sahajanand Swami becoming synonymous with that mantra, *Swaminarayan*.¹

Bhagwan Swaminarayan spent the next 28 years traveling around Gujarat, ushering in many religious and social reforms and spearheading a spiritual awakening. He preached against superstitions, addictions and violence, he served the poor and needy, and he championed the welfare of women, children and the underprivileged. For example, he admonished malpractices such as *sati* (widow immolation) and *dudhpiti* (female

Brahman, and who is firmly established [in God].”

That is, only the guru who is the living form of Brahman (“*brahma*”) and fully established in Parabrahman (“*niṣṭham*”) can have the most direct and perfect realization of scriptural truths (“*śrotriyaṃ*”), making him the most qualified and able to convey them.¹ To be precise, according to the *Bhagavad-Gita* at 4.34, such gurus are not only knowers of the revealed truth (“*jñāninaḥ*”), but direct seers (“*tattvadarśinaḥ*”) of it.²

In Akshar-Purushottam Darshan, the guru is the human embodiment of Brahman on earth and is referred to varying by such names as *Sant*, *Ekantika Bhakta* or *Satpurush*. In being a pure and complete vessel of Parabrahman, through whom Parabrahman Purushottam reveals himself and leads devotees to himself, the Aksharbrahman Guru serves as the perfect medium to correctly explain the meaning of the scriptures. Thus, Bhagwan Swaminarayan proclaims the guru throughout the *Vachanamrut* as the exclusive authoritative guide to scriptural knowledge and spiritual realization. For example,



BAPS SWAMINARAYAN SANSTHA

infanticide), encouraged education and established places of worship for all women.

His charismatic life, profound teachings and works of edification attracted followers from all over India and a spectrum of religious and cultural backgrounds. During his lifetime, he amassed an estimated fellowship of more than two million, and ordained around 3,000 swamis, 500 of whom were of the highest monastic order, called paramhansas. They worshiped him as God.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan garnered the respect of British officials and Christian clergy, including the Governor of Bombay, Sir John Malcolm, and the Bishop of Calcutta, Reginald Heber. Bishop Heber writes about Bhagwan Swaminarayan in his journal of 1824-25: “His morality was said to be far better than any which could be learned from the Shaster [scriptures]. He preached a great degree of purity, forbidding his disciples so much as to

after delivering an exceptionally important discourse on the nature of God, in particular alluding to himself as Purushottam, Bhagwan Swaminarayan appends his address with the following caveat: “However, such discourses regarding the nature of God cannot be understood by oneself even from the scriptures. Even though these facts may be in the scriptures, it is only when the Satpurush manifests on this Earth, and one hears them being narrated by him, that one understands them. They cannot, however, be understood by one’s intellect alone, even from the scriptures.”³

As perfect vessels of Parabrahman Purushottam, the life and teachings of the Aksharbrahman Gurus also serve as vital sources of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan, including, for example, the *Swamini Vato* of Gunatitanand Swami. The *Siddhanta Alekh* written by Pramukh Swami Maharaj,⁴ a succinct creedal treatise of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan, is another example of an exceptionally valuable and venerable source of theological revelation.

The *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* and *Swaminarayan Siddhanta Sudha* also have a prime place within the corpus of primary sources for Akshar-Purushottam Darshan, having been commissioned, guided and ratified by gurus Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj.

It is through this revelation of Parabrahman Purushottam Bhagwan Swaminarayan as received through the Aksharbrahman Gurus and the scriptures they explain that one is able to properly understand Akshar-Purushottam Darshan. Currently, that guru is Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Ontology: The Five Eternal Entities

Ontology is the study of being; the philosophical inquiry into the nature of reality and existence. A discussion of any classical school of Vedanta Darshan invariably begins with such an inquiry into its basic entities of existence or realities: Which metaphysical entities does it accept as real? The answer to this fundamental question more often than not reveals much about the school’s basic premises and beliefs. For example,

Left: Swami Bhadreshdas kneels to receive blessings from the present guru, Mahant Swami Maharaj. Right: Swaminarayan as a child debates with the pundits of Varanasi.

look on any woman whom they passed. He condemned theft and bloodshed; and those villages and districts which had received him from being among the worst, were now among the best and most orderly in the provinces.”²

Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s moralizing impact on the lawless populace of that time led the British to gift him some land in Ahmedabad to build a temple. Between 1822 and 1828, Bhagwan Swaminarayan consecrated six majestic temples. He also inspired the creation of scores of scriptural texts, including the *Vachanamrut* [see sidebar on p. 48-49], and thousands of bhajans. He was hailed as a patron of the arts and education, while also reviving several Hindu institutions of devotion and festivity, but devoid of the indiscipline and indignity that had crept in over centuries of negligence or misinterpretation.

When Bhagwan Swaminarayan visibly left this Earth on 1 June

Shankara posited a singular, attribute-less Brahman, which necessarily requires the visible world to be unreal and illusory.⁵ In contrast, Ramanuja argued for a Brahman that qualifies sentient and non-sentient entities, allowing for the world to be real as well as individual souls to be distinct from God.⁶ Madhva, on the other hand, propounded a Brahman that is radically distinct and independent from all else.⁷ Uniquely, Bhagwan Swaminarayan revealed that there are five metaphysical entities that are eternal and forever distinct from one another:

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. Purushottam (also known as Parabrahman) | 3. maya |
| 2. Akshar (also known as Aksharbrahman & Brahman) | 4. ishwar |
| | 5. jiva ⁸ |

Strikingly, he posited *two* Brahmans—Aksharbrahman and Parabrahman. How can this be? And what implications does this have for

such a system of Vedanta? The ensuing discussion based on Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s teachings and the *Prasthanatrayi* commentaries will help explain some key aspects of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan while affirming its position as a distinct and authentic school of Vedanta.

Akshar and Purushottam in the *Vachanamrut*

Akshar and Purushottam are the two ontological entities expounded throughout the *Vachanamrut*, which covers every aspect of their nature, function, relationship, means of knowing, etc. Below are excerpts from two separate discourses in which Bhagwan Swaminarayan reveals the essence of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan.

In *Vachanamrut* Loya 12, when outlining varying degrees of faith, Bhagwan Swaminarayan explains that a person with the highest level of resolute faith “realizes that countless millions of brahmands [planetary realms], each encircled by the eight barriers, appear like



BAPS SWAMINARAYAN SANSTHA

1830, he had already become an epochal figure of public stature and adoration. Henry George Briggs, a notable 19th-century British historian and traveler, wrote in his famous *The Cities of Gujarastra* in 1849, “As the announcement of his death was winged, one wail—loud, piercing and bitter—rang throughout Gujarat, upon the signal calamity which was believed to have befallen the country.”³ Manilal C. Parekh, a Gujarati Anglican theologian and historian, wrote: “Indeed, so remarkable are the life and work of Swami Narayana that it is no exaggeration to say that these constitute a very important chapter not only in the religious life

of India, but in the history of Religion in general. In him, Hinduism approximates to the Perfect Form of Religion as in few others, and his life, work and the movement he led have few parallels in the entire range of history.”⁴

1. The *Swaminarayan Siddhanta Sudha* explains at pp. 8-9 that in the Swaminarayan mantra, *Swami* refers to Akshar, and *Narayan* refers to *Purushottam*. In other words, Swaminarayan is synonymous with Akshar-Purushottam and thus an encapsulation of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan.

2. Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India from Calcutta to Bombay 1824-1825* (London: John Murray, 1828), Vol. 3, p. 29.

3. Henry George Briggs, *The Cities of Gujarastra: Their Topography and History, Illustrated in the Journal of a Recent Tour; with Accompanying Documents* (Bombay: James Chesson, 1849), p. 239.

4. Manilal C. Parekh, *Shri Swami Narayana: A Gospel of Bhagavata Dharma or God in Redemptive Action*, 3rd edn. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1980), p. ix.



mere atoms before Akshar. Such is the greatness of Akshar, the abode of Purushottam Narayan." He then immediately states: "One who worships Purushottam realizing that [Akshar] to be one's own form can be said to possess the highest level of resolute faith."

Bhagwan Swaminarayan reiterates this doctrine in Vachanamrut Gadhadra 2.3. This time, when defining *brahmagnan*, he uses *Brahman* for Akshar and *Parabrahman* for Purushottam. He first describes Brahman as "the cause of all," as its "support," and that which "pervades all through its indwelling powers." When describing Parabrahman, Bhagwan Swaminarayan expounds:

"Transcending that Brahman is Parabrahman Purushottam Narayan, who is distinct from Brahman, and is the cause, the support and the inspirer of even Brahman."

Bhagwan Swaminarayan thus clearly distinguishes Aksharbrahman from Parabrahman, and clarifies Parabrahman as superior to Aksharbrahman.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan goes on to add in the same discourse:

"With such understanding, one should develop a oneness between one's jivatma and that Brahman, and worship Parabrahman while maintaining a master-servant relationship with him. With such understanding, brahmagnan also becomes an unobstructed path to attaining the highest state of enlightenment."⁹

This is the essence of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan, which is comprehensively described and established throughout the *Vachanamrut*.

Akshar and Purushottam in the Upanishads

Brahmagnan is synonymous with *brahmavidya*, which is the focus of the *Upanishads*. For example, the *Mundaka Upanishad*, which forms a part of the *Atharva Veda*, lauds *brahmavidya* as the "highest"¹⁰ and "foundation of all forms of knowledge."¹¹ It then defines it explicitly in the following verse:

*Yenākṣaram puruṣam veda satyaṁ provāca
tām tattvato brahmavidyām ।*

"*Brahmavidya* is that by which Akshar and Purushottam are thoroughly known."¹²

(Above) Pramukh Swami Maharaj (center, seated on black chair) with several hundred of the more than 1,000 BAPS sadhus; (right) Swami Bhadreshdas has been honored for his historical contributions to Indian philosophy by more than 150 universities and academic institutions around the world; (opposite, below) devotees struggle to pump several feet of flood waters out of Swami Bhadreshdas' basement office where years of work was damaged

The *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* substantiates this definition by citing profusely from the entire *Mundaka Upanishad* and other *Prasthanatrayi* passages. For example, the distinction and relationship between Akshar and Purushottam is evident in the *Mundaka Upanishad* at verse 2.1.2. It states:

Puruṣaḥ... akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ ॥

"That Purush' [i.e., Purushottam] is... greater than Akshar, which is greater than others."

The *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* explains that Akshar is described here as greater than all other beings and things—jivas, ishvars, maya, even liberated souls—except Purushottam, thus confirming the mutual distinction and relationship between Akshar and Purushottam.¹³ Bhagwan Swaminarayan also repeatedly describes Purushottam's supremacy in relation to Akshar, often using the adjective *aksharatit* (transcending Akshar),¹⁴ demonstrating that Akshar is the highest benchmark by which to understand Purushottam, but one which he still surpasses. In other words, it is only after understanding the greatness of Akshar that one can truly appreciate the greatness of Purushottam. That is, it is essential to know both Purushottam (Parabrahman) and Akshar (Aksharbrahman) to master *brahmavidya*.

In further support of the two types of Brahman, the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* cites from the fifth chapter of the *Prashna Upanishad*. Here, in reply to the question posed by Satyakama pertaining to the after-life, Pippalada states:

Etad-vai satyakāma paraṁ cāparaṁ ca brahma yad-aumkāraḥ ।

"That, O Satyakama, which is the syllable of *Aum*, is verily the higher and lower Brahman."

The dual classification of "higher" and "lower" confirms the meta-

One Monk's Tale of Sacrifice & the Guru's Grace

Bhadreshdas Swami (b. 1966) is the author of *Swaminarayan Siddhanta Sudha* and the five-volume *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* commentaries. He was barely 14 when His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj initiated him into the BAPS monastic order in 1981. The ensuing 38 years of spiritual tutelage under gurus Pramukh Swami Maharaj and then Mahant Swami Maharaj, as well as guidance from senior swamis, engaged Bhadreshdas Swami in a rigorous program of devotion, austerities, studies and academic research. Above all, by the gurus' grace and blessings, he developed into one of the world's leading scholars of Vedanta and an internationally acclaimed expert of the Swaminarayan Hindu tradition.

But Bhadreshdas Swami's journey has been far from straightforward. In 2007, while writing the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* commentaries, a flash flood struck the village of Sarangpur, in India, where he stayed. Within minutes, his basement study was completely submerged, ruining his entire library and more than 2,500 pages of research notes he had painstakingly compiled. These notes contained all of his arguments and definitions of key philosophical terms that would form the framework of the commentaries he was writing. Despite attempts to salvage the mud-sodden pages, they were lost forever. Shocked and desperate, he called guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who was traveling in America at the time. Pramukh Swami Maharaj lovingly reassured him, "Everything that you weren't supposed to write has been washed away. Now when you write, Bhagwan Swaminarayan and our gurus will write everything through you." What had been a colossal task before—Pramukh Swami Maharaj had requested all five volumes of the commentaries to be ready by December of 2007, in time for the centennial celebrations of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha—seemed near impossible now. But with the grace and blessings of his guru and his own indomitable faith, Bhadreshdas Swami returned to writing. Within six months, working 18 to 20 hours a day, the commentaries were ready.

Bhadreshdas Swami followed this magnum opus with another mammoth undertaking, the *Swaminarayan Siddhant Sudha*—a classical treatise that offers a systematic and comprehensive exposition, justification and defense of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan. Together, these works of philosophical genius have led to a string of qualifications and accolades making Bhadreshdas Swami one of the most decorated Indian scholars of our time.

The historical significance of Bhadreshdas Swami's work can hardly be overstated. His Sanskrit opus is unique because: 1) it is the first such commentarial work in a school of Vedanta for 150 years; 2) it is the first complete set of commentaries on the *Prasthanatrayi* (the *Brahmasutras*, *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad-Gita*) by a single acharya in 1,200 years; 3) and it is the first time ever that a single acharya has authored both a complete set of *Prasthanatrayi* commentaries together with a *vadagrantha* of their darshan tradition.

Bhadreshdas Swami's monumental work has been widely recognized and critically acclaimed by eminent scholars around the world, including from over 150 universities and academic institutions in India,



Europe and North America. They hail his work as being exquisitely lucid, fascinatingly original and profoundly compelling, recognizing him as a modern-day "Acharya" in line with Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Nimbarkacharya and Vallabhacharya.

Bhadreshdas Swami remains immersed in study, research, writing, teaching and devotion. He is currently working on a classical commentary of the Vedas, treatises on Yoga Darshan and Samkhya Darshan, and an agamic treatise on devotional practices according to Akshar-Purushottam Darshan. Bhadreshdas Swami continues to travel the world engaging with scholars and delivering academic presentations. He teaches Nyaya, Vedanta, History of Indian Philosophy, and classical Indian music to swamis at the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya in Sarangpur.

Yet for all his accomplishments and the honors heaped upon him, Bhadreshdas Swami unfailingly attributes all the credit to his gurus. He says, "Whatever I have written, it has only been possible through the blessings, love and constant guidance of guruhari Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. Whenever I sit down to write, I pray to them and I feel their presence, as if they are writing through me. So I have no hesitation in acknowledging—without their wish, none of this would have been possible." Bhadreshdas Swami thus opens his commentary on the *Brahma-Sutras* with the acknowledgement that his work is "by the guru's grace; for the guru's grace."¹

For a detailed account of Bhadreshdas Swami's extraordinary journey in writing the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* commentaries through the grace of his gurus, see pages 54-57 of the April/May/June 2014 issue of HINDUISM TODAY.



physical distinction between “*para*” Brahman, i.e., Parabrahman, and “*apara*” Brahman, i.e., Aksharbrahman. This distinction between the two is especially evident when the fruit of meditating on *Aum* is described in the same verse as attaining “either” of them.¹⁵

Akshar and Purushottam in the *Bhagavad-Gita*

The two entities Akshar and Purushottam are evidently established in the *Bhagavad-Gita* by these two very names. Indeed, the eighth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* is titled “Aksharbrahman Yoga,” while the fifteenth chapter is titled “Purushottam Yoga.” Both chapters hold key discussions about Akshar and Purushottam. For example, Arjuna asks in the opening verse of the eighth chapter,

Kim tad brahma (What is Brahman?)
Krishna replies simply: *Aksharam brahma*
(Akshar is Brahman).¹⁶

The eighth chapter then goes on to describe the glory of Akshar as a divine place entered by those who practice brahmacharya and are without desire, and as proclaimed by the knowers of the *Vedas*.¹⁷

In the fifteenth chapter, the *Bhagavad-Gita* succinctly and clearly describes the nature of Purushottam and its distinction from Akshar and other entities. As the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* explains, there are two types of beings in the world: *kshar* and *akshar*. All those bound by *maya* are *kshar*, i.e., subject to change; whereas the one who is unchanging—forever beyond *maya*—is Akshar. The Supreme Being is distinct from and superior to both *kshar* and Akshar; he is called Paramatma and known in the world and *Vedas* as Purushottam.¹⁸



Akshar and Purushottam in the *Brahmasutras*

The *Brahmasutras* is an esoteric text of aphorisms that elucidate Brahman. It seeks to clarify, systematize and harmonize the meaning of the *Upanishads*, hence its focus of study is also “brahmavidya” or “brahmagnan.” The first aphorism, “*Athā’to brahmajijñāsā*,” holds the key to unlocking the various schools of Vedanta. Every acharya, while describing Brahma according to his own particular system, deconstructs *brahmajijñāsā* in largely similar ways, that is, to mean “the desire to know Brahman,” where *brahma* in the Sanskrit compound is in the singular. The *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* commentary on this aphorism provides a remarkable new interpretation, claiming that the *brahma* in *brahmajijñāsā* denotes not just Parabrahman but also Aksharbrahman; that is, taking *brahma* not in the singular but in the dual case. This makes the subject of *brahmagnan* both Aksharbrahman and Parabrahman, also known as Akshar and Purushottam. The *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* substantiates this interpretation by citing several passages of the *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad-Gita*, a few of which have been mentioned above.¹⁹

In this way, some of the fundamental and key distinguishing doctrines of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan are established and articulated in the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the *Prasthanatrayi* scriptures.

Mukti and Sadhana

The goal and fruit of all darshan is liberation from the ravaging influence of *maya* so that one is free of all suffering and can experience supreme bliss.

In Akshar-Purushottam Darshan, such liberation, or mukti, is more than a state of being *maya*-free and released from the pain and limitations of the incessant cycle of births and deaths. It is a new, higher spiritual state—indeed, the highest, perfect spiritual

state—that is enriched by the complete realization of Parabrahman Purushottam. It entails not merely the dispelling of ignorance, but the positive receiving of Aksharbrahman’s qualities, so one is perfectly faultless and fulfilled, absolutely free of all worldly desires and ego, and forever engrossed in unhindered devotion to God while experiencing his limitless, unending bliss. Bhagwan Swaminarayan calls this preeminent spiritual state being aksharup or brahmarup (“like Akshar or Brahma”).²⁰ It is described in the *Bhagavad-Gita* as *brahmi sthiti*²¹ or being *brahmabhuta*.²²

This state of liberation is of two types:

Jivan-mukti, meaning “living mukti,” is attaining and experiencing the state of *aksharup* while alive, in this very body.

Videh-mukti is liberation after death, enjoying the superlatively blissful darshan of Purushottam in Akshardham along with the personified form of Akshar and other liberated souls (muktas).

While the location of the experience might be different, the

experience of bliss for both muktas is the same.

The way to mukti is called sadhana. Bhagwan Swaminarayan explains this extensively throughout the *Vachanamrut*, as do the Aksharbrahman Gurus through their teachings and lives. Primarily, it entails the complete loving association of the Guru through thought, word and deed.²³ This incorporates Ekantika Dharma, a four-fold system of praxis (spiritual endeavors) defined by Bhagwan Swaminarayan as comprising the following:

1. **dharma**: leading a righteous life by observing the moral codes of the scriptures;
2. **gnan**: realizing oneself to be the atma, distinct from the body;
3. **vairagya**: being dispassionate towards worldly pleasures; and
4. **bhakti**: offering selfless devotion to God while realizing his greatness.

This sadhana is summarized in the sadhana mantra provided by Mahant Swami Maharaj: *Akṣaram aham Puruṣottamadāso’smi*. It is

Left: His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, the present guru of the BAPS Swaminarayan Fellowship; right: Sacred images of Parabrahman Purushottam Swaminarayan and his unbroken lineage of spiritual successors, the Brahmaswarup Guru Parampara.

A Living Guru Lineage

Akshar-Purushottam Darshan was revealed and established by Bhagwan Swaminarayan during the early 19th century. It has been protected, sustained and advanced till today by an unbroken succession of Aksharbrahman Gurus—the Guru Parampara. *Parampara* literally means “one after the other,” a succession. The *Halyudhakosha*, a famous Sanskrit lexicon, defines the term *sampradāya* as “gurukramah,” a lineage of successive gurus. In the BAPS Swaminarayan tradition, this succession has continued unabated for over 200 years, from Gunatitanand Swami (1784-1867), Bhagatji Maharaj (1829-1897), Shastriji Maharaj (1865-1951), Yogiji Maharaj (1892-1971) and Pramukh Swami Maharaj (1921-2016), to the present guru, His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj (b. 1933). The BAPS Swaminarayan fellowship believes that today Bhagwan Swaminarayan wholly dwells in and works through Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Having a living guru with perfect realization ensures that the tradition, while steadfast in its timeless core beliefs, remains fresh through an active process of reflection and interpretation, by which theological insights and spiritual practices are tested, protected and transmitted.



In fact, the very definition of *sampradaya*, even if translated as “tradition,” points both ways—not just to the past but, ironically, also to the future. When elaborating upon the second half of the *Bhagavad-Gita* verse 4.34: *Upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninas tattvadarśinaḥ*. (“Enlightened seers of truth will preach that knowledge to you.”), the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* is keen to point out the use of the future

tense in the verb *upadekṣyanti* (will preach) and the plurality in the nouns *jñāninaḥ* (knowers) and *tattvadarśinaḥ* (seers of truth). The verse thus affirms the succession of Aksharbrahman gurus who will continue to transmit this revelatory knowledge to generations of seekers indefinitely into the future.

chanted by devotees daily, reminding them to offer devotion to Bhagwan Swaminarayan as Purushottam—albeit through his most accessible form, the current Aksharbrahman Guru—after qualitatively realizing oneself as Akshar by spiritually and lovingly associating with that same Aksharbrahman Guru. This is the essence and foundation of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan, by which all of its doctrines are illumined and consummated.

Living Darshan

Darshans are a way of life, not just a topic of philosophical debate. Indeed, the success of any system of thought is how it is applicable to and implemented in daily life. True to this, the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan is a living tradition being practiced by hundreds of thousands of devotees around the world today. It is lived out in their daily acts of devotion, such as the personal nitya puja with which they each start their day, the religious markings they apply, the two-stranded kanthi of tulsi beads they wear around their necks, the darshan they enjoy of the murtis at mandirs, at home or online, the arati they sing, the discourses and bhajans they listen to, and much more. All these are reflective of and imbued with the doctrines of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan. Indeed, in thousands of mandirs, homes and hearts, there thrives the daily worship of Parabrahman Purushottam Bhagwan Swaminarayan as exemplified by the Aksharbrahman Gurus.



The Vachanamrut

The primary sacred scripture of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya is the *Vachanamrut*. It is a collection of 273 discourses delivered by Bhagwan Swaminarayan between 1819 and 1829. These discourses were meticulously documented and compiled by four of his most learned and senior disciples—Gopalanand Swami, Muktanand Swami, Nityanand Swami and Shukanand Swami—and later presented to him for review and personal verification (see, for example, the mention in *Vachanamrut* Loya 7). This compilation came to be known as the *Vachanamrut*, which literally means ‘immortalizing ambrosia in the form of words.’

This vitality and flourishing of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan is possible because of the living guru. The *Swaminarayan Siddhanta Sudha* concludes with this very thought, that the principles expounded at length in the text are lived and experienced by devotees in their daily lives through the association of the Aksharbrahman Guru. In fact, it stresses, there are many devotees in the Swaminarayan community who have been and are perfectly fulfilled by their absolute conviction in Akshar-Purushottam Darshan. They are unburdened by any lack of knowledge of the scriptures, because they have the direct association of the guru, which exceeds millions of such texts. Indeed, it asserts, nothing is greater than the blessed association of the Aksharbrahman Guru through whom devotees experience the supreme love, bliss and inner fulfilment of Parabrahman Purushottam Bhagwan Swaminarayan here and now.²⁴

Footnotes

1. Sadhu Bhadresdhas, *Mundakopaniṣat-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 1.2.12, pp. 253-256.
2. Sadhu Bhadresdhas, *Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 4.34, p. 110.
3. *Vachanamrut* Gadhada 2.13.
4. This can be found as an appendix, “Theological Principles of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha: Creedal Statement by Pramukh Swami Maharaj,” in Swami Paramattvadas, *An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hindu Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 321-325.
5. John A. Grimes, *The Vivekācāṣaṇi of Śaṅkarācārya Bhagavatpāda: An Introduction and Translation* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), verse 20, p. 70.
6. S.S. Raghavachar, *Vedārtha-Saṅgraha of Śrī Rāmānujācārya* (Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1968), verse 117, p. 90.
7. Deepak Sharma, *An Introduction to Mādhva Vedānta* (London & New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 50.
8. *Vachanamrut* Gadhada 1.7 and *Vachanamrut* Gadhada 3.10.
9. See also Bhadresdhas Sadhu, “Brahmajñāna in Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana and Viśiṣṭādvaita Darśana,” *Brahmaviśāyā: The Adyar Library Bulletin*, 81-82 [Śrī Rāmānujā Sahasrabī Volume] (2017-18), 471-488.
10. Sadhu Bhadresdhas, *Mundakopaniṣat-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 1.1.5, pp. 236-237.
11. Ibid, 1.1.1, p. 232.
12. Ibid, 1.2.13, pp. 256-257.
13. Ibid, 2.1.2, pp. 258-261.
14. *Vachanamrut* Gadhada 1.31, Gadhada 1.42, Gadhada 1.51, Gadhada 1.66, Gadhada 1.78, Sarangpur 5, Gadhada 2.13, Gadhada 2.18 and Gadhada 2.31.
15. Sadhu Bhadresdhas, *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 5.2, pp. 214-216.
16. Sadhu Bhadresdhas, *Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 8.3, pp. 173-177.
17. Ibid, 8.11, pp. 182-185.
18. Ibid, 15.16-18, pp. 314-316.
19. Sadhu Bhadresdhas, *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 1.1.1, pp. 3-12.
20. For example, *Vachanamrut* Gadhada 1.21 and *Vachanamrut* Gadhada 2.20.
21. Sadhu Bhadresdhas, *Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 2.72, pp. 68-69.
22. Ibid, 18.54, pp. 360-361.
23. *Vachanamrut* Vartal 4.
24. Sadhu Bhadresdhas, *Svāminārāyaṇa-Siddhanta-Sudha*, p. 459.

Left: During his life, Swaminarayan delivered hundreds of discourses in various villages, all dutifully recorded by his disciples and compiled as the *Vachanamrut*.

The text is divided into ten sections, based on the various villages and towns in which the discourses were delivered. The sections are chronological in order and named as follows: Gadhada 1, Sarangpur, Kariyani, Loya, Panchala, Gadhada 2, Vartal, Amdavad and Gadhada 3, with an additional section including discourses from Amdavad, Ashlali and Jetalpur. Each individual discourse is also called a “*Vachanamrut*,” and these are arranged chronologically and numbered sequentially within each section. *Vachanamrut* Vartal 11, for example, is the eleventh recorded discourse delivered by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the town of Vartal.

Ingeniously, each *Vachanamrut* opens with an introductory paragraph meticulously describing the setting of the assembly in which the discourse was delivered. Even at the risk of sounding repetitive, the compilers invariably recorded the date, the place, and a mention of the audience seated in the assembly. In many instances, they also noted the time of day and described the clothes and adornments worn by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. In some instances, they even described the seat upon which he was seated and the direction in which he was facing. All this lends considerable historical authenticity to the sacred scripture.

In literary style, the *Vachanamrut* is highly dialogical and didactic, with most discourses taking the form of a question-and-answer

What Are the Five Eternal Entities?

Jivas

Jivas are distinct, individual souls, indivisibly minute in size and innumerable in quantity. Each one is bound by maya, which shrouds the jiva’s radiant self that is composed of existence (*sat*), consciousness (*chit*) and bliss (*anand*). They are doers of good and bad karmas, and experiencers of the fruits of those karmas.

Ishwars

Ishwars, by the will of Purushottam, are assigned various tasks of creation, sustenance and dissolution within a particular *brahmand* (planetary realm), of which there are countless millions. Compared to jivas, ishvars have greater power, knowledge and lifespan, but like the jivas, ishvars, too, are shrouded by maya since the beginning. Compared to Akshar and Purushottam, however, ishvars are utterly powerless. Like jivas, ishvars also are doers of good and bad karmas, and experiencers of the fruits of those karmas.

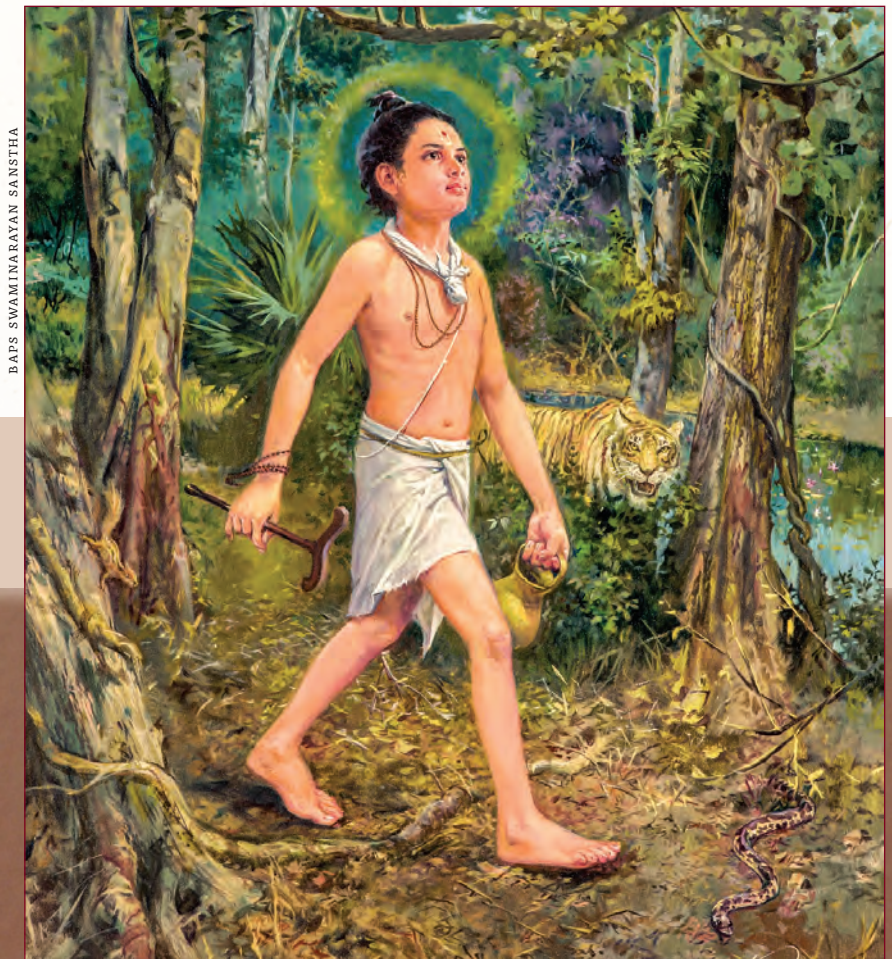
Maya

Maya is characterized by the three *gunas*—*sat-tva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It is eternal while continually mutating. As an instrument of Purushottam, it constitutes the base substance from which this material world is formed. It also forms the ignorance in the form of “I-ness” and “my-ness” that shrouds jivas and ishvars, causing them to be

bound in the incessant cycle of birth and death. Akshar and Purushottam are eternally and entirely untouched by maya and transcend it, yet they also pervade it and control it. Maya is the only non-sentient (non-living) entity of the five; the other four are all sentient (living).

Akshar

Akshar, also called Aksharbrahman and Brahman, is distinct from and subordinate only to Purushottam; it transcends jivas, ishvars and maya. Like Purushottam, it is one, eternal and a sentient entity. It is forever divine, replete with infinite redemptive virtues, devoid of all qualities of maya, and forever faultless. The form, qualities, powers, etc., of Akshar are dependent only on Purushottam. By the



Right: As a child, Swaminarayan trekked barefooted through mountains and forests, fearless of the dangers that might lurk, carrying his yoga *danda* (staff) and *kamandalu* (water pot).

session, where either Bhagwan Swaminarayan asks the questions or members of his audience do, sometimes at his urging. Even if he begins a sermon unprompted, he would sometimes question his own explanation to confirm if his audience had understood him correctly or to anticipate and answer opposing views in advance. More often, though, his aspiring seeker-followers, ranging from senior monks to lay farmers, would be braced with questions from their current readings of Hindu texts or their own personal application of those teachings. As Bhagwan Swaminarayan would answer, sometimes a series of follow-up questions or counter-questions would ensue as they probed for further clarity or refinement in their understanding of his teachings. This orality (speaking) and reciprocal aurality (listening) between Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his disciples situates the *Vachanamrut* in the ancient Upanishadic tradition of a guru-disciple dialogue.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan spoke in the local language of Gujarati, presenting complex concepts in simple, lucid terms, drawing extensively on popular stories from the *Puranas* and epics, and employing analogies and day-to-day examples. He also cited profusely from the

Upanishads, *Bhagavad-Gita*, *Bhagavata Purana*, and various other authoritative Hindu texts.

Most importantly, the *Vachanamrut* is accepted within the Swaminarayan tradition as the primary revelatory scripture by which its doctrines are established and articulated. This abiding status of the *Vachanamrut* is grounded on the distinctive belief of the devotees that Bhagwan Swaminarayan, as the self-manifestation of Purushottam, is both the source and subject of divine knowledge comprised within it. In other words, in the *Vachanamrut*, it is God talking about God.



eternal will of Purushottam, Akshar is the cause, support, controller, indweller and *shariri* ("soul") of the entire insentient and sentient creation.

Although Akshar is one entity, it serves in the following four ways:

1. Abode: Akshar takes the form of the divine abode of Purushottam, known as Akshardham. There is only one such Akshardham; it is eternal and forever transcends the three *gunas* of maya. Only liberated souls who have become *aksharrup* ("like Akshar") are able to enter it.

2. Sevak: Akshar also serves Purushottam in Akshardham as an exemplary devotee. Like Purushottam, Akshar has a divine human-shaped form complete with two arms and other features. He remains forever engrossed in the worship of Purushottam and is the ideal for the liberated souls worshipping Purushottam in Akshardham.

3. Divine Light: This is a form of ethereal space, known as Chidakash. It is extremely radiant, and is an all-pervading form of Akshar that permeates, envelopes and upholds the infinite *brahmands*.

4. Guru: Akshar manifests in human form as the Guru, with Purushottam, in every *brahmand*. He is the eternal and complete vessel of Purushottam. Through his divine association, he establishes in jivas and ishvars the highest level of resolute faith in Purushottam and elevates them to the state of *aksharrup* so that they may offer perfect devotion to Purushottam. He thereby grants them eternal liberation from the bondage of maya, releasing them from the cycle of birth and death and ultimately granting them an eternal place in Akshardham where they experience the highest bliss of Purushottam. Purushottam remains forever manifest through an unbroken succession of such Aksharbrahman Gurus, by whom he grants liberation and devotees experience his highest bliss. While this succession continues forever, the path to ultimate liberation remains open through only one such Guru at any one time.

Purushottam

Purushottam, or Parabrahman, can be understood through the following four aspects of his being:

1. Sarvopari ("supreme"): Purushottam is the supreme being, the highest existential reality; one and unparalleled. He is forever beyond time and space—he is eternal and all-pervading—and forever limitless in his power, knowledge, splendor, bliss and virtues. He is always completely free of any defiling qualities of maya, hence "*nirguna*," and is replete with countless superlatively excellent auspicious qualities,

hence also "*saguna*." He is the cause of and master of all *avatars*; he is the *avatari*. An *avatar* manifests when, by his special wish, he pervades an ishwar for a particular task, but that *avatar* is, by its very being, distinct from Purushottam. Purushottam is also distinct from, transcendental to and the lord of even Akshar.

2. Karta ("doer"): Purushottam is the ultimate all-doer. Nothing can happen without his will. In fact, he is the *shariri* ("soul") of the entire world; just as a soul is to an otherwise inert body, Purushottam indwells, enlivens, supports and governs everything, including the mayic world, jivas, ishvars, liberated souls, even Akshar. He is both the efficient cause (agent) and material cause (substance) of the world, thus its ultimate creator, sustainer and dissolver. While permitting jivas and ishvars to act according to their free will, and inspiring them to will, know and do, he is also the dispenser of the fruits of their karmas.

3. Sakar ("with form"): Purushottam is eternally human in form yet fully divine. In his abode, Akshardham, he is seated on a divine throne in his eternally divine, extremely radiant and human-shaped youthful form, complete with two arms and other human-like features. There he is worshiped by the personal form of Akshar and infinite brahmic-bodied, *aksharrup* liberated souls. Without relinquishing this transcendental distinct form, Purushottam pervades the infinite *brahmands* through his immanent form by his divine powers.

4. Pragat ("manifest"): Purushottam cannot be perceived by mayic senses and minds. Yet, while remaining in Akshardham, he manifests in each *brahmand* with all his divine virtues, powers, etc., in human form and becomes visible to all. This is by his own divine resolve and out of loving compassion, to fulfill the wishes of his beloved devotees and for the ultimate liberation of infinite jivas and ishvars. That manifest form of Parabrahman Purushottam is Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Even after he retracts his earthly manifestation, he forever remains fully manifest through the Aksharbrahman Guru, making possible his worship in a manifest form and the path to ultimate liberation here and now.

The above summary is based on Pramukh Swami Maharaj's creedal treatise, *Svāminārāyaṇ Darśanā Siddhānto Alekh*, and summarized from Swami Paramattvadas', *An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hindu Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

.....
Dynamic fellowship: (below) A weekly satsang assembly at the BAPS temple in London, UK; (right) BAPS has currently built over 1,200 temples worldwide, of which 44 are large, traditional mandirs, like this one in London.



BAPS SWAMINARAYAN SANSTHA

BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha Today

Shastri Yagnapurushdas, better known as Shastriji Maharaj, was the third guru of the Guru Parampara and the founder of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. He is credited within the tradition for clarifying Akshar-Purushottam Darshan and initiating its propagation worldwide, popularizing it with the name Akshar-Purushottam.

In the early 1900s, against seemingly insurmountable challenges and with barely any means—he had no money, no other resources, hardly anything to even eat at times—and with only five swamis and a handful of devotees, Shastriji Maharaj began work on establishing mandirs dedicated to Akshar-Purushottam Darshan.

To formally propound Akshar-Purushottam Darshan, he established Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) in 1907. Through incessant traveling, discoursing and letter-writing, he tirelessly explained the meaning of Akshar-Purushottam to devotees and seekers wherever he went.

By the time he passed away in 1951, Shastriji Maharaj had built five glorious mandirs, consecrating within them the murtis of Gunatitanand Swami (Akshar) and Bhagwan Swaminarayan (Purushottam) in the central shrines, thereby elucidating and immortalizing the doctrine of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan. He had also sown the seeds of BAPS outside of India, sending sanctified portrait images for a mandir in Nairobi, Kenya.

Shastriji Maharaj was succeeded by Yogiji Maharaj. Between 1951 and 1971, Yogiji Maharaj propagated Akshar-Purushottam Darshan around India, in East Africa, and also in Britain, where he inaugurated the first Swaminarayan Hindu mandir in the West, in Islington, north London, in 1970.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who had been appointed president of BAPS as a 28-year-old by Shastriji Maharaj, succeeded Yogiji Maharaj in 1971. He worked tirelessly until passing away in 2016, building more than 1,100 mandirs and expounding Akshar-Purushottam Darshan around the world.

The current guru of BAPS is Mahant Swami Maharaj. He travels the world, discoursing, writing letters and meeting people, inspiring them towards the beliefs, practices and values of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan. He also continues the tradition of building mandirs dedicated to Akshar-Purushottam Darshan. In 2017, he performed the groundbreaking ceremony for a traditional stone temple in Johannesburg, South Africa, and Sydney, Australia. In April of this year, he did the same for the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi.

BAPS currently has 44 traditional spired mandirs and more than 1,200 other mandirs across a global network spanning North America, Britain, mainland Europe, Africa and the Middle East, the Asia-Pacific, and all of India. These mandirs welcome millions of worshipers, pilgrims, visitors and seekers every year. They are vibrant hubs of devotion, service, learning, festivity and community outreach—but above all, they are edifices of Akshar-Purushottam Darshan, dedicated to the worship of Parabrahman Purushottam Bhagwan Swaminarayan as exemplified by the Aksharbrahman Gurus.¹ Each week, these mandirs are host to more than 3,850 satsang assemblies that teach this upasana (form of worship) and instill such Hindu values as personal integrity, family harmony and social responsibility. They are served by more than 1,000 BAPS swamis and 55,000 dedicated volunteers.

1. Bhagwan Swaminarayan explains in *Vachanamrut* Gadhada 2.27 that the very purpose of building mandirs is to uphold *upasana*.

Illuminating the Philosophy of BAPS

Swami Paramtattvadas offers a technical, yet approachable, analysis

BY SHANNA N. PATEL

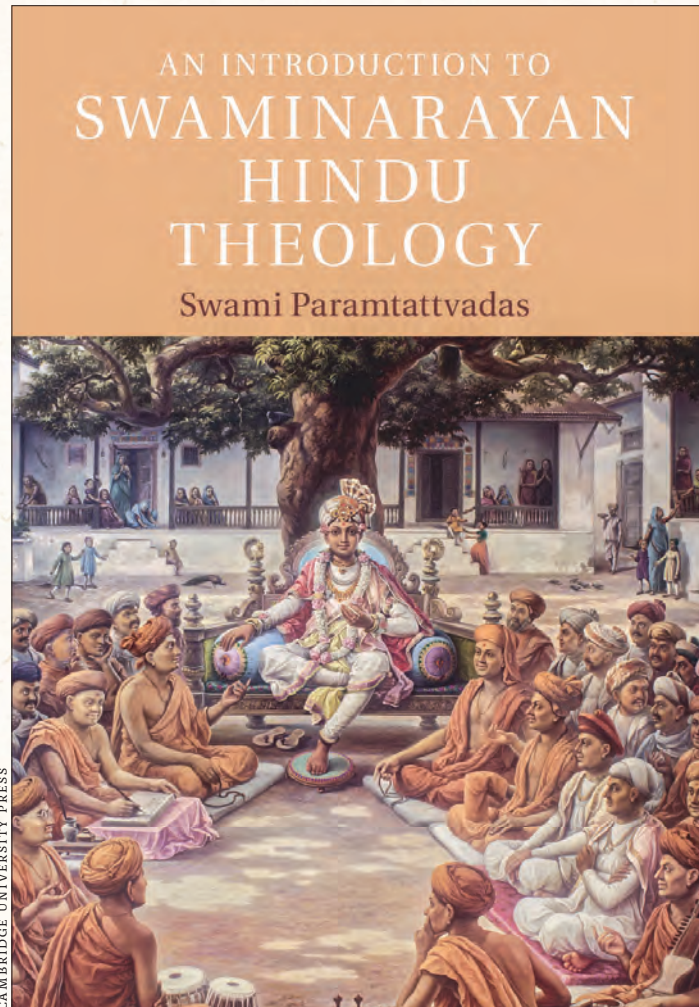
Swaminarayan Hinduism maintains a significant presence both in India and the Hindu diaspora. Founded at the beginning of the 19th century by Sahajanand Swami—referred to by followers as Bhagwan Swaminarayan—the tradition now has millions of followers. The lineage has become well-known for its ornate temples around the world, of which there are over a thousand. Despite its being a highly recognizable face of Hinduism, relatively little academic work has been done in English on the Swaminarayan sampradaya's core beliefs. *An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hindu Theology* sets out to systematize and document the doctrines that undergird its expressions of devotion and faith.

With a unique personal and educational background, the author is well-placed to examine the Swaminarayan belief system and present it in an engaging manner to varied readerships. Swami Paramtattvadas was born and brought up in the United Kingdom and subsequently renounced his lifestyle in 1992 to be ordained as a swami of the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), one of the largest denominations of the Swaminarayan sampradaya. He subsequently completed 14 years of studies in India, both in a traditional ashram and in a modern university setting. Equipped with a strong background in Sanskrit and Vedanta, he then entered the Western academic world to study theology and religious studies at the University of Oxford, completing his doctoral thesis under the supervision of Gavin Flood, Professor of Hinduism at Oxford. Swami's book is a developed form of that thesis. As Professor Francis X. Clooney, a comparative theologian of Harvard Divinity School, rightly points out, the author's deep immersion within the tradition and his unique perspective allow him to bring together his Western and Indian disciplines to treat the subject systematically yet accessibly.

Echoing the views of eminent scholars of Hinduism such as Clooney and Julius Lipner, Paramtattvadas first establishes the pressing need for scholarly exploration in English of core Hindu beliefs by practitioners—that is to say, Hindu theology by Hindus. Such an exercise, expressed in accessible academic English, not only "take[s] Hindu theology beyond its usual national and linguistic borders" but also, crucially, "affirms the viability, validity and value of Hindu theology more generally." His methodology is described as "systematic theology," which draws on the basic framework of classical theological analysis. Recognizing that the task involves the translation of deep ideas and concepts, which is much more difficult than simple linguistic translation, the author does well in finding a happy middle between the use of native expressions and common English theological terms.

Paramtattvadas employs a two-part structure in his book. First, he presents the tools and sources of theology that prepare the reader to engage with the principles of Swaminarayan Hinduism in a meaningful way. With this background, he proceeds in the second part to dive deep into the defining aspects of the tradition's theological system. He explains that this structure "allows the book to cover the three key topics associated with classical Vedantic inquiry: *pramana-mimamsa* (epistemology), *tattva-mimamsa* (metaphysics) and *mukti-mimamsa* (soteriology)."

In the afterword, the author discusses various avenues for scholarly enquiry for those with an interest in Swaminarayan Hinduism, Hindu doctrine more generally, and (inter-religious) comparative theology.



The book's well-organized structure is complemented by Paramtattvadas's lucid writing style; the book will thoroughly engage scholars of theology and those with familiarity in Vedanta while providing a challenging, yet rewarding, read to the layperson.

Theology as an academic discipline is, in simple terms, the attempt to understand the Divine. Paramtattvadas points out that before we can begin such an endeavor, we must ask, "Can God be known at all?" He goes on to juxtapose statements of *shastra* that, on the one hand convey the imperceptibility and ineffability of God, and on the other emphasize the imperative of knowing or realizing God. Here, he introduces the key tool of (Swaminarayan Hindu) theology: revelation. The author explains that God can only be properly known when He reveals Himself. In addition to the scriptural sources of revelation (i.e., the sermons of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his subsequent lineage of gurus) where God "tell[s] us what He is like," Paramtattvadas posits that revelation also includes the instances where God "show[s] us who He is." For the latter, therefore, the author includes the



COURTESY BAPS SWAMINARAYAN (NOT FROM BOOK)

"self-manifestation of Parabrahman in the person of Swaminarayan" and the continued presence of God in the guru. While establishing revelation as the highest *pramana*, Paramtattvadas coherently explains the vital roles of reason, praxis and tradition as tools in theological exploration.

Central to any Hindu school of the thought is its understanding of metaphysical entities. Monism defines Sankara's thought, just as Ramanuja makes a case for his "jiva-jagat-jagdish" trio. Swami Paramtattvadas explicates Bhagwan Swaminarayan's philosophy of five distinct and eternal metaphysical entities: *Parabrahman*, *Aksharabrahman*, *maya*, *ishvara* and *jiva*. In addition to being endowed with the commonly attributed characteristics of being omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, omnibenevolent, etc., Parabrahman in Swaminarayan theology is above all recognized as being *pragata* (manifest before one's eyes), *sakara* (eternally possessing a form), *sarvopari* (supreme to all), and *karta* (cause and support of all). Knowing God is the foremost principle of Swaminarayan Hindu theology; Paramtattvadas contends that all religious endeavors must be grounded in, revolve around, and have as their aim the complete knowledge of God.

The author elaborates in detail on each of the five entities. Perhaps one of the most noteworthy aspects of the Swaminarayan tradition is its distinction between two types of Brahman: Parabrahman and Aksharabrahman. Paramtattvadas clarifies this unique Swaminarayan understanding, offering scriptural support from *Swaminarayana-Bhashya*, the tradition's Vedanta commentaries, and notes that both entities manifest in human form. Most interestingly, he discusses the notion that Parabrahman maintains a substantive presence on Earth through Aksharabrahman in the form of the Brahmasvarupa Guru. Indeed, we discover that the guru is wholly central to the Swaminarayan theological system in his chapter on *mukti*. Paramtattvadas explains that the means to liberation is to realize oneself as "brahmarupa" by spiritually associating with the Aksharabrahman

Initiation: (above) On January 20, 1810, at a grand yajna in the village of Dabhan, Swaminarayan blesses Gunatitanand Swami, revealing him as Akshar and his first spiritual successor; (left) book cover of *An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hindu Theology*, published by Cambridge University Press in 2017

guru in order to offer perfect devotion to Swaminarayan as Parabrahman.

This book is a comprehensive introduction to Swaminarayan Hindu theology that will be an enlightening resource for many a reader. It is worth noting that the publication has received significant acclaim from esteemed members of the academia. At a book launch for the event in America, Professor Raymond Williams, who himself has worked on the Swaminarayan tradition for almost 40 years, praised the book, saying it is "written in beautiful English, and it is accessible and compatible with the best of Western scholarship." Indeed, the book was recently subject of a specially commissioned review essay in the esteemed *Harvard Theological Review* in which respected professor of comparative theology at Boston College, Catherine Cornille, correctly summarizes that the book is "a very important contribution to Hindu thought" in general and "an invaluable resource for those belonging to the tradition." Both scholars speak to the accessible tone employed by Swami Paramtattvadas as well as the rigorous and systematic way in which he approaches the subject. Professor Cornille goes on to write, "The vitality of a tradition may be seen to lie in the willingness and ability of its own intellectuals to reflect creatively on the meaning of the tradition in light of both past and present theological ideas and thus to move the tradition forward." Swami Paramtattvadas has not only enriched our understanding of Swaminarayan Hinduism but has invigorated a desperately-needed discourse on Hindu theology in the scholarly world, a discourse in which a Hindu voice is a welcome addition.



DIMPLE KAUL

ARTS & CRAFTS

Artisans Reign at the Dilli Haat Exhibit

Each year Jaya Jaitly assembles a crafts bazaar in Delhi that charms the world

BY DIMPLE KAUL, NEW DELHI

IN JANUARY 2019, TEAM HINDUISM TODAY met a little-known woman who, by rights, should be widely recognized and lauded for her role in giving Indian handicrafts their place of pride and importance.

A meeting with Ms. Jaya Jaitly is inspiring. She is a lithe and gracious woman whose amiable nature is a great foil for her drive and determination. Welcoming us with a warm smile, she gave no inkling of the painful throat infection she was nursing. With equal steadfastness, she has been fighting and winning hard battles on behalf of craftsmen for a long, long time.

That is Jaya Jaitly for you. Even as she handled numerous operational issues that any exhibition would entail, she inspired the *kaarigars* (craftsmen and women) of her Dastkari Haat Samiti, which she founded in 1986, to lodge their protest against the high-handedness of the organizers of the Dilli Haat through the yellow ribbon campaign. She

has single-handedly transformed the lives of many craftsmen across the country, providing them with training and acquainting them with techniques and technologies targeted at improving their trade and product marketing.

While lovingly tickling the ears of the canine that seems to have made Dilli Haat its residence, Jaya Ji explained to us that Dastkari Haat Samiti (DHS) is not just an association of craftsmen but a movement aimed at making the craftsmen thrive and propagate their art. She also spoke about the various workshops conducted by DHS in collaboration with various countries and their impact on the members.

All DHS members pay an annual membership fee for the sustenance of the organization. In turn, they enjoy a world of benefits that help them in their growth. The organization inspires them to go beyond the traditional motifs and experiment with material. Among the skills taught by DHS to its members is calligraphy. Development workshops

equip members with the soft skills required to deftly meet the necessities of today's trade, such as salesmanship, fair price display, respect for the customer and their own art, and the ability to photograph and showcase their artifacts. All these skills help DHS members expand their business.

So overwhelmed was one artiste upon learning calligraphy that he carved a "Tree of Life," saying it signifies how "Talim Insan ko farsh se arsh tak pahunchati hai" (Education takes a man from the ground to the sky).

Dilli Haat is Jaya Ji's baby, and she has nurtured it as such from the initial days, creating a disruptive concept that has been replicated across states. In spite of the present-day onslaught of alternatives for the customer, she recognizes that certain traditional products compete well, including handloomed fabrics, khadi cloth, chatai mats, and handmade utensils. She explained that at first the automation boom seemed to overshadow handicrafts through synthetics galore. However,



Interacting with the artists: (facing page): painter holds a ceramic bowl in one hand and applies intricate colors with the other; (right, clockwise from top left): hand-painted furniture is popular, and can be customized; a weaver at her loom; making a hammock with hemp rope; decorating a three-wheeled cart; embroidery is a patient art; making mats from grass; woodworkers and their tools

the Indian government has been supporting handicrafts more than any other government in the world. Outside India, only private enterprises are involved in crafts. Indian handicrafts remain affordable primarily because of government support. However, the deeply bureaucratic governmental approach comes with a limited understanding of the sector. The "patronage mindset" towards handicrafts needs to go in order to offer a fresh lease on life and faster avenues of growth.

In the initial years, the government accepted advice from passionate people such as Pupul Jaykar and Kamala Rani Chattopadhyay who had an understanding of handicrafts. Later, Jaya Jaitly, who has been working from the ground up, was given credence and her input welcomed. Now, apparently, the government, steered by the IAS babus, claims to know everything and so listens to no one. The expertise and appreciation needed for guiding the nation's artisans is visibly lacking. For example, the general sales tax on handicrafts began with 5% tax on handloom items and 12% on embroidery, which reveals a lack of understanding of this unorganized sector. And this unorganized nature meant that there was nobody to lobby for the craftsmen. Despite Jaya Ji's stature as a recognized expert, approval and implementation of her recommendations is iffy and slow.

The crafts sector is a poster boy for job creation, and its success can ensure a stream of sustained employment through job creation. Most of the craftsmen that we spoke to employ people from outside their family and from among the community. The implementation of intelligently designed policies on travel, marketing and design would go a long way in developing the sector. Specialised platforms, skills upgrading and fostering communities would also help.

The government needs to realize that they will have to handhold the crafts community through non-governmental bodies, while being mindful of spurious organizations posing as handicrafts NGOs. Genuine work must not be neglected while these bodies get financially rewarded. In order to identify genuine people, the concerned officers will need a process to collect sound feedback, monitor schemes and build safeguards. Also, the system should be made easier for the artisans; at

PHOTOS: AMIT KUMAR AND DIMPLE KAUL





AMIT KUMAR

Carving anyone?: (above) At one of the larger stalls at the exhibition, a craftsman shows off his wares: elephants, murtis, Buddhas, boxes and fanciful animals.

present the website is generally not responsive, and the current expenditure utilization form is tedious to complete.

Jaya Ji's recommendation for categorizing the sector's NGOs emphasizes the use of eligibility criteria, such as number of years of operation and presence across regions. Such a framework can ensure that only genuine outfits receive grants and that taxpayers' money will not be swindled.

Our freewheeling interactions with some supremely talented, well-recognized artistes and craftsmen provided insight into the role that Jaya Ji and her organization have played in their lives at all levels. Dastkari Haat Samiti has created a democratic, egalitarian space that fosters collaborations and friendships across faiths, regions and genders. Every craft is based on the craftsmen's own culture. Their lifestyle is reflected in their art, much of which depicts the Deities and embodies the devotion for them which pervades Hinduism.

In the following paragraphs, we attempt to share a glimpse of these hard-working, gifted people who through determination, openness and keenness to innovate have made a mark for themselves and their craft. Most are entrepreneurs, self-employed individu-

als who have created their own businesses which also provide employment to others in their community.

Block Printing

We first interview Arshad, whose block printing artifacts are showcased in stall number 16. Son of a Shilp Guru National Awardee, hailing from Pilkua, district Hapur, Faokhabad, Arshad comes from a family of artistes that has been inlaying silver in wood for years. His grandfather Anwar Hussain was a block maker, and his father experimented with various mediums from wood to brass. His children are studying in school, but they also go to his workshop regularly, as he wants them to continue the family legacy.

Arshad's association with DHS began in 2004. He attended DHS workshops and learned calligraphy as part of Project Akshara, where craftsmen are taught Indic languages. He has worked with people from many countries, including Thailand and Indonesia. His initial designs were bereft of color, until a Thailand workshop gave him the idea of incorporating color. Jaya Ji gave him ideas for designs beyond the traditional, encouraging him to enhance his product range by

including items of utility, such as note pads and lamp shades. He attributes his growth to the "marg darshan" that he received and the space and opportunity for sales. His customers' love of his products gladdens his heart and inspires him to keep innovating. He particularly appreciates DHS because he can focus on his craft, knowing that the team is handling the operations, logistics, marketing and all the rest.

His only fear is that if automation is not controlled and the genuine concerns of craftsmen are not addressed by the administration, these traditional crafts might vanish. While he appreciates the introduction of technology, e-bidding and more, he urges the decision makers to be mindful of the skills and infrastructure at the craftsmen's end.

Art on Cloth

We stop next at a Pattachitra ("cloth picture") stall where the artiste, Shri Swain, is painting a white leopard with intricate motifs. Pattachitra is a traditional Orissi painting technique centered around the renowned Indian tales found in *Ramayana*, *Krishna Leela*, *Bhagwan Jagannath* and nature. The canvas, he explains, is made by joining cotton fabric using *imli* gum. The traditional motifs are painted on this cloth. Each piece requires many hours of hard work and intense focus, which few of today's youngsters wish to

undertake. Even if the money earned is no different, most would rather complete their education and "get a real job."

Shri, however, grew up in the heritage village of Raghurajpur, near Puri, where almost everyone in the village, including his entire family, is engaged in one of the nine crafts for which the village is famous. His mother started it all by creating flowers from palm leaves, which foreigners would buy. Shri studied till 7th standard, then took training in palm leaf and Pattachitra styles, studying in Bhubaneswar for four years.

Shri met Jaya Ji shortly after finishing his training. His association with DHS has allowed him to visit Singapore and Sri Lanka to showcase his work. DHS has helped him explore new design ideas for today's consumers. With modern technology, he can receive orders by phone. Before beginning a project, he sends a pencil drawing to the prospective buyer, who can be anywhere in the world, and he keeps them updated from time to time as he works. DHS has taught its members to transmit pictures properly, taking into consideration light and angles so that their work is impactfully displayed. Far from being a threat, mobile phones and the digital data revolution have been a boon for the craftsmen.

Shri particularly loves painting animals, and he has found that buyers are attracted

Pottery Factoids

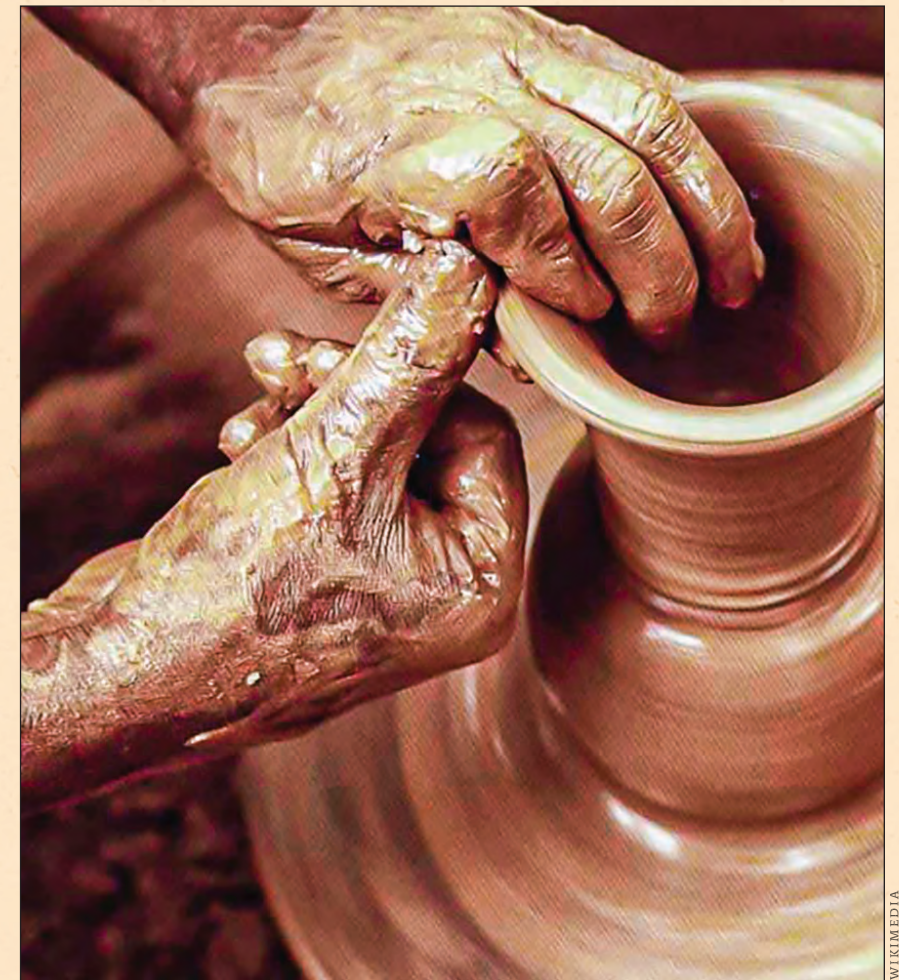
Pottery is famous in most Asian countries and is considered one of the most iconic elements of Indian regional art. Its history, exquisite beauty and chic features have made it a modern form of Indian decor.

History indicates the art of pottery had its origins in India, in the Neolithic age. Evidence of pottery has been found during the Vedic period, the Indus Valley Civilization and also during the Mughal Period. Vedic pottery was handmade and unpainted, raw in nature and very utilitarian. These pots were used to store water during summer. Later, pottery was also used to manufacture plates, glasses, cups and even saucepans. There was a time when pottery was the main source of income for the traditional Indian business class.

The phase of painted pottery started in India during the 12th century, during the Mughal period. The Muslim rulers encouraged potters from Persia, Central Asia and the Middle East to come and settle in India. With the rise of pottery culture in India, Indian pots were exported to different parts of the world.

Red polished potteries are still widely found in Gujarat, Rajasthan and West Bengal. Modern India calls pottery by the Italian name *terra-cotta*, literally "baked earth." The East Indian state of Orissa is the ambassador of terra-cotta handicrafts.

The ancient art of pottery has today become a chic and modern way to design and decorate traditional Indian homes. Architects and interior designers have learned that the presence of terra-cotta handicrafts creates an ambiance of warmth inside the home. The old has again become new.



WIKIMEDIA



DIMPLE KAUL

Toys Are Not Just for Play

BY LIFESTYLE, NEW DELHI

Toys have existed in India since the Indus Valley Civilization 5,000 years back. Toys and games were not only meant to keep children entertained, but also to teach them how to develop their minds and understand what life had in store for them. Unlike the fancy and expensive toys sold in stores today, traditional Indian toys and games were simple and took their inspiration from nature. They were designed on the basis of how a child would react to them and how it would apply to real life.

Dolls: Quite unlike the dolls of today, traditional Indian dolls were made from the simplest materials, such as plant shoots, cloth and clay. At times, a mixture of cow dung, sawdust and clay were shaped into dolls and coated with bright paints. In northern India, Janmashtami is related in its entirety by means of clay dolls. In South India, the Dasara festival is called Bommai Kolu or a display of dolls. Traditionally, a married woman was supposed to add at least one doll to her collection every year.

Puppets: Puppets were not only the tools of skilled puppeteers, they were also used by parents to tell stories to their children. The children themselves used puppets to create their own stories, spurred by their imagination. It gave them a way to convey their emotions by transferring them to an inanimate object.

Bhatukdi: These miniature versions of kitchen utensils and other household items were scaled down to the greatest detail



WIKIWAND.COM

and were made from copper and brass. These were played with by children as they watched their mothers cook and their family members make use of everyday household items. Today these miniature utensils give us an idea of what life was like in rural households.

Chaturaji: Four-handed Chaturaji is an apparent predecessor of modern chess. The game is played by four players, unlike two players on the conventional chess board. In addition, it involves a component of chance in the form of a single stick dice known as the *daala*. The players form two teams: Players 1 and 3 against players 2 and 4. Each player gets eight characters: four pawns, a king, an elephant, a horse and a ship.

Pachisi: The Pachisi board was made of cloth in a patchwork design. The four arms/limbs of the board are conjoined at the center, called *charkoni*. Each arm of the Pachisi has three marked squares, which are called "castles." The game set comes with a set of 12 beehive-shaped wooden pawns in colors of yellow, black, red and green. The players throw cowrie shells on the charkoni, and the moves of the pawns are determined by the number on the shells that fall with the open face. Each player is allocated four pawns, and the objective of the game is to get all four to complete the round of the board before your opponents do. The game's modern variants include Ludo and American Parcheesi.



AMIT KUMAR

to this form. He is teaching the craft to the elder of his two children.

Weaving in Wool

Wandering the exhibits, we encounter businessman and character Parvat Bhai from Sarli Gaon, (Bhuj, Kutch) Gujarat, who introduces us to his woven masterpieces. Parvat learned the ropes from his father, who wove the Dhabla shawls of desi wool and sold them in nearby villages.

In 1991 Pramukh Swami Maharaj of Akshar Dham took Parvat Bhai to the US for a three-month demonstration tour. In 1994 he received the Rashtriya Puruskar award, and in 2011 he qualified for India's prestigious Geographical Indication tag, which is a huge endorsement and provides brand protection for his creations.

He employs around 40 men from his extended clan, as well as some 150 women who

are mostly engaged in embroidery work. Everything is handmade. Parvat creates unique designs and colors, both natural and artificial. Both his sons are fully engaged in their father's trade. He has been associated with DHS for more than 25 years, and theirs is the only exhibition that he attends in Dilli Haat. He appreciates their dedication to art and their hard work to ensure a platform for the craftsmen. Through them he has attended many International fairs.

Parvat Bhai likes to keep an eye on "what's working in the market." Ethnic traditional patterns serve as the foundation for his work, but he continually re-imagines products to address changing customer tastes. He proudly shows us his masterpiece stole which, he explains, "requires mind, heart, eye coordination on each thread" and takes almost a month to complete.

He has traveled the globe and continues to

Painterly toys: Many of the handicrafts are fanciful and fun, making perfect small gifts; (left) exhibit pioneer Jaja Jaitly

draw inspiration from everywhere. His biggest gripe is that artists are still expected to personally barter prices with every customer. To address that, he sets a fixed price and sticks to it, hoping people will wake up to the value and heritage that each of his creations represents.

Working in Wood

Neeraj Mohanwal, a graduate of Maharshi Dayanand University, hails from a family of five national award-winning craftsmen from Bahadurgarh in Haryana. He learned his woodworking craft at home and came to love it when he discovered that art creation kept

him from getting bored. His rampant imagination manifests inventive patterns, and he often dreams of new designs in his sleep. Using specialized tools created by the family, he transfers his designs to the wood.

Neeraj's great grandfather used to carve designs in ivory, but after it was banned in 1992, he started using sandalwood. When prices of that wood soared, he moved on to wood from the kadamba tree (*Neolamarckia cadamba*).

His father, Mahavir Prasad Monhawal, who won the National Award in 1979, pioneered the "undercut" technique which was later adopted by craftsmen in Agra and Rajasthan. Neeraj proudly displayed a wood carving of an elephant designed by his father—a masterpiece seemingly impossible to create. The family's skills have brought many awards, including the National Award, a UNESCO award and a Shilpi Guru trophy. Neeraj won first prize in the 2015 State Award.

The entire clan is engaged in this singular art. They live together, work together and share one kitchen. Neeraj speaks proudly of his five-year-old son, who can already hold tools like a pro; but he explained that teaching the craft to the next generation will depend on the kids. For reasons of sustenance as well as legacy, he hopes the youth will continue in the tradition: "This work can be done at home, and no one needs to ever go hungry."

Neeraj praises DHS for providing his clan with a platform to showcase their work through exhibitions, and for bringing buyers who place orders which are then fulfilled from home. He has attended workshops in Sri Lanka and Iran and says the exchange of ideas has helped him create new designs.

Silk Saris

Maqbool Aalam Ansari makes lovely silk saris. Beginning with his great, great grandfather, this National and State Award re-



Taking a break: (above) A woman finds a quiet moment before the crowds arrive for the day. Once the Dilli Haat gates open, she won't have a moment's respite; (below) surrounded by her creations, an artist demonstrates her craft for exhibition goers

cipient and his extended family have been immersed in the world of weaving for generations. Everyone in his clan, in Bunkar Haat Kshetr, is involved in the craft. Men, women

and children of the family chip in to carry the hand loom tradition forward. Knowing that weaving by hand could become extinct, they actively train people in their neighbor-

hood in the craft. At one time Varanasi was witnessing a reduction in hand looming, but now, Maqbool observes, these arts are experiencing a renaissance.

Maqbool has always worked mostly with silk. One can feel the craftsman's connection to his fabrics as he brings his creations before us, one after another. We are awed by the masterful fabrics. Traditional motifs are there, but also new designs. Earlier Maqbool would weave with mulberry silk, but now he uses moth silk, called Tussar and Moonga, to spin the threads. The weaving style is also being changed to ensure that the saris are not as heavy as earlier, for modern women prefer a lighter sari. When we asked if sari wearing has decreased in modern times, he responded that the trend has actually started to rise. He credits his two decades of association with DHS for giving him more exposure and a chance to experiment.

Toys

Lastly, we interviewed the soft-spoken but resolute Noor Salma from Karnataka, who spoke to us in fluent Hindi, breaking many stereotypes in one meeting. This gifted Channapatna lacquer artiste has been in the trade for thirty years. She recalled skipping school to learn the craft in her village.

Daughter of an engineer father, she recounted how after losing her parents she turned her hobby into a profession. Her father-in-law encouraged her to pursue and persevere, and that is exactly what she did. She is proud of the struggle that she put up, especially as there were no NGOs when she started as an artiste. She spoke about improvements and innovations, such as the progress from paints to food-grade color in toys and the expansion of the range from Dussehra art to utility items such as candle stands and jars and even accessories such as necklaces.

Noor attends exhibitions to showcase her work and seek buyers. Her long-standing association with DHS has taken her to foreign lands such as South Africa and Sri Lanka, and she learned a lot from these experiences. Talking about her visit to South Africa she offered, "We think we have hardships here, but then we realize that there are women who face even greater hardships."

Noor Salma believes in a blend of traditional with modern and has been awarded the Kamla Devi Award by the crafts council, the news of which she was given few days before this year's event. Though her sons are not interested in the craft, she hopes to teach it to her daughters-in-law and grandkids in due course.

Conclusion

Though these artistes are highly skilled, few are familiar with the complete details of their craft. A proper induction into the history and evolution of their craft, in our view, could go a long way in continuing the legacy they bear.



Our author, DIMPLE KAUL is a learner, writer and life enthusiast who writes on various topics across genres. You can explore her work at bit.ly/DimpleKaul and bit.ly/IndicPen and follow her on Twitter at [@DimpleAtra](https://twitter.com/DimpleAtra).

Water: Vehicle of Grace

Long revered in Hindu rituals, life-giving water has amazing properties, including memory, which scientists are only now discovering

BY VATSALA SPERLING, NEW YORK

MY HUSBAND AND I HAD BEEN TALKING about our son Mahar, who had just turned three, and preparing him for his *mundan sanskar* (first head shaving). He had never seen a barber before, but he calmly let her go snip-snip and watched the curls of his birth hair fall to the ground. Mahar was all attention watching our family priest, Punditji Kailashan, as he decorated the floor in geometric forms using colored fabric, grains and seeds representing the *navagraha* (nine planets) and positioned a *purna kalasha* (literally “full or complete vessel”) full of water in the center of this pattern. Using the fire ceremony and mantras, Punditji Kailashan invoked the Deities into the kalasha. After the Ganapati and navagraha homam were completed, Punditji continued chanting in Sanskrit, dipped a cluster of mango leaves into the water contained in the kalasha, and sprinkled it liberally on Mahar, all the guests. Then he went through the house, sprinkling water in every room.

“I have already showered. Why is Punditji giving me another shower?” Mahar asked while moving his hand gently over his shaven head. “Mahar, by chanting mantras, Punditji has invited and welcomed Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Indra, Varuna, Karttikeya, Ganesh, navagrahas, ashta-dikpalakas, and the Goddesses Lakshmi, Parvati and Saraswati. He has requested them to take a seat in the water contained in the kalasha and worshiped them with kumkum, akshat, chandan, turmeric, ghee lamp and incense. He has offered them flowers, fruits, grains and prasadam and prayed to them to be kind to our household and everyone connected with it, to bless you and all of us with healthy, happy and long life. Trusting that the Gods have heard his prayers, arrived into the water in the kalasha, accepted warm welcome and all the offerings, he has gone around sprinkling the God-infused water on you, our home, and on all our guests. You got a fresh shower with cool, God-infused droplets of water.”

Mahar was full of questions: “Ganesh is so big. How did He enter the kalasha? Why did Pundit call so many Gods? Why did he use water? Why not milk? Ganesh and I like milk.”

Water in Hinduism

One question stuck with me—why water? I thought about other liquids—milk, honey, yogurt, oil, ghee, tea, coffee, alcohol, blood. Though long known to humankind, none of these had won the race to the purna kalasha. But water is used in all Hindu ceremonies—not just for cleansing and preparations leading up to the puja, but also as a conduit for conveying the essence of our prayers and offerings to the Gods. When given to us as *tirtha* on our outstretched, cupped right palm, or sprinkled over us, it is considered to convey God’s blessings to us via each of those cool droplets.

This question deserves to a sound answer. Years ago, I had asked my parents about two sealed brass pitchers in our home shrine that were said to contain water from River Ganga. To answer me, Mother chanted the Ganga stotram composed by Adi Shankaracharya, narrated the story of the birth of Ganga as described in *Vishnu Purana* and told me how Ganga’s water contains the powers of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Therefore it has the ability to create, sustain and destroy life (so it can be created again). She said that, besides Ganga, other rivers are sacred, too.

After major floods, looking up at the Himalayas or any distant mountains, one can see dozens of gushing waterfalls. It is the ever-living depiction of the famous Puranic story of the waters falling furiously on Shiva’s head—it was Devi Ganga who softened the flow and then brought Ganga to earth to purify us from sin. This image is indelibly stamped on the Hindu collective consciousness. Water is similarly used in other religions, purifying worshipers for communicating with the Divine.

In Hinduism, water is all this and so much more. The ancient Saivite *Agama* scriptures understood the power of water to capture the shakti of inner worlds, in memory and substance, through intention, mantras and fire. It prescribes placing a purna kalasha with a coconut and mango leaves between the sacred fire and the Deity of the temple. With powerful chanting, and one-pointed intent, the priests invoke the shakti of the Deity from the inner worlds into the pot of water in this world. This charged water

is then used for abhishekam, bathing. This could be for blessing a child and a household like ours, one or more of the temple Deities or, most famously, the towers atop a temple during mahakumbhabhishekam (a temple renewal ceremony held ever twelve years). No Vedic ceremony can be performed without water.

The mystical chant to water, called Mantra Pushpam, found in the *Krishna Yajurveda*’s Taittiriya Aranyaka, is recited in temples toward the end of every puja. It is also chanted in pious Hindu homes on special occasions and even daily. Mantra Pushpam alludes to a higher knowledge—that to understand water is to understand the cosmos, the marvels of nature and life itself.

All living cells in the body communicate with each other via the medium of water. Our rishis knew that water has memory and intelligence. Modern science is just catching up to the importance and properties of water and trying to figure out how it all works.

The Physics of Water

Water’s unique physical and chemical properties make it indispensable for sustaining life. And it is highly versatile. At Earth’s normal temperatures and pressures, water can exist as solid (ice), liquid (water) or gas (vapor). And now it has been discovered that a fourth, “liquid crystal” phase also exists. Water can change from solid to liquid to gas while retaining all its physical and chemical properties.

In its solid state, ice, enormous amounts of water are held in reserve at Earth’s two poles and in mountain ranges. Large inter-molecular spaces allow ice to float on water. This creates a protective blanket that preserves life in ice-covered lakes and water bodies. Below an adequately thick layer of ice, the heat of the earth keeps water liquid at 4°C (39°F), a temperature at which aquatic life forms can live. If ice were heavier than water and sank rather than floating, life forms would perish in the icy coldness.

Water is present on Earth in all four states simultaneously and has a built-in self-purification process. While changing from solid or liquid into vapor form, it becomes pure. Modern material sciences have methods for



HIMALAYAN ACADEMY

Spiritually charged: (above) In temple rites, water in silver or brass pots is charged with mantras during homa (fire ritual), then poured over a Deity image. In the elaborate rite shown here, 1,008 water pots are being infused with spiritual energy; (right) Priests pour blessed water over the topmost spires of a temple in a rite of renewal; (below) at another temple, devotees bathe the Deity inside the central sanctum.



HIMALAYAN ACADEMY



UNKNOWN



turning solids into liquids and gas (and vice versa), but only by expending enormous amounts of energy. For example, iron (solid) turns to liquid when heated to 2,759°F. Carbon dioxide gas can be solidified at -109.2°F. Such temperatures are not normally found on Earth's crust. Water is the only known substance that can exist as solid, liquid and gas at temperatures and pressures normally found on Earth.

A stable proportion of saltwater to fresh water is maintained at 40:1. This proportion keeps the density-driven salt water in the ocean and does not allow it to seep into the fresh-water aquifers in the ground. Water also has the ability to dissolve into itself almost anything it comes in contact with. Carrying the solution to the ocean, it brings sustenance and nutrition to marine life.

The net water content of the Earth remains pretty much constant. Due to Earth's gravity, water vapors do not escape into outer space and disappear from our atmosphere.

Origin of Water

"Nasadiya Sukta," the *Rig Veda's* Hymn of Creation, says that the cosmic soup was nothing but water. Where did Earth's water come from? There are two views on this. Some believe water is released from Earth's core by volcanic eruptions. Alternatively, Professor Luis Frank of University of Iowa proposes that water was delivered via asteroids.

Water is composed of two molecules of hydrogen bound to one molecule of oxygen. Earth's atmosphere contains 20.946% oxygen but only 0.000055% hydrogen. Where did all the hydrogen for forming water come from? This question would support Prof. Frank's asteroid delivery theory. Also, the ratio of deuterium (a stable isotope of hydrogen with approximately twice the mass) and normal hydrogen is the same in ocean water as in the asteroids. "Mantra Pushpam," in the *Yajur Veda*, tells us that water on Earth originates from moon, fire, heat, air, sun, stars, clouds and the rainy season.

Scientists are using models to support their point of view. But models are problematic, as it is impossible to know the exact situation that existed as the Earth was forming. Therefore, the debate about water's origin will continue.

Water Memory in Our Lives

Let us revisit the topic of Punditji's chanting powerful, positive and deeply meaningful mantras in Sanskrit and how the water in the brass vessel is affected. Specific frequencies of vibrations created in the air by the sound energy are carried to the water molecules, which begin to vibrate at the same frequency and form clusters that contain the information brought to them by the sound



Purifying baths: Pilgrims wait their turn to be doused with purifying water at Rameshwaram Temple at the southern tip of India. Like the girl who is being flooded with a bucket of temple water, each in turn will be cleansed. They will visit a succession of 27 wells at this temple. It is said the water from each well removes a specific kind of sin, clearing life's karmas from this and former lives.

energy. The clusters communicate to all water molecules in the vessel, and the entire water volume becomes charged.

This unique ability of water to receive, copy and transmit information exposed to it is used brilliantly in kumbhabhishekam and other elaborate temple rites. Such Agamic rituals rely on the power of water to accept, multiply and transmit information. In modern times these properties have been validated by the water crystal photographs of Masuru Emoto, by French scientist Jacques Benveniste (dilution of medicine with water) and Nobel Laureate Luc Montagnier (memory of water).

This subtle technology has enormous potential. Using our positive thoughts, intentions, words and feelings, we can expose water to these vibrations in a mindful manner,

and drink this water as a spiritual medicine that we can make for ourselves every day. Creating a positive and mindful impact on ourselves doesn't get easier than that.

Through water—in its solid, liquid crystal, liquid and gaseous states—we are connected with everyone and everything else in the universe. We breathe air that contains moisture. We breathe out, and the exhaled air contains moisture from our body. Exhaled air and water vapor mingle with the vapor content of air in the atmosphere that every other being breathes in. Air and water vapors cannot be confined within the boundaries of any country; they belong to the whole world. Through breathing in and out, we are connected to past, present and future, and to every known and unknown being. Since water cannot escape to outer space, no water is



Rites of water: (above) A woman performs tarpana (literally "to please or gratify"), pouring water through her hands as a gesture of recognition, thanking and pleasing Gods, sages or ancestors; (right) a temporary altar established for Mahar's sacramental head shaving. The silver pot of water has been blessed during the ritual to invoke the Deities' presence. After the rite, the water will be used to bless the boy, his family, guests and every corner of the house.



ever lost. It is a perpetually circulating, self-contained system. We drink the same water that touched the lips of our ancestors. When we hold a cup of water in our hands, we embrace eternity.

Through this cosmic web, water empowers us to create the change we want in ourselves and others. Using Emoto's technique in our daily life, we can infuse water with the positivity we want to experience. By consuming this water we become the information signature, the vibration of the positive change we seek in the universal scheme of things. When enough of such positively oriented people aggregate (cluster, satsang), a positive outcome of more significant dimension is possible.

Water absorbs all frequencies it is exposed to—not just the positive ones. Therefore, it is imperative that we live our life according to

the tenets of Sanatana Dharma, causing the least amount of negativity, disruption and damage to others and to the environment we live in, whether by our thoughts, words or actions.

Where does matter end and spirit begin? Considering that we are nothing but the signature of energy that we embody and emit as vibrations into endless space, we are both at the same time. In a particular frequency, a vibration of subatomic particles results in a certain type of matter, say for example gold.

In another frequency, it results in a human being. This is what our scriptures and quantum physics have been telling us: vibrations, frequencies and intentions convey a message. Our ancient scriptures have taught us the power of water to absorb this message, retain it, memorize it, multiply it and transmit it to sanctify us and our environment. How sophisticated and deep is this knowledge! Amazingly, it is our collective heritage. All we have to do is tune in and enjoy the many blessings of water.



PHOTOS BY HARI MAHIDHAR

Water in Hindu Rites

ABOVE THE PRIEST CHANTS MANTRAS TO invoke the Deities from the homa/ yagna fire on the left into the sacred pots (wrapped in red silk) on the right. This is a scene enacted in temples across the globe. When this water is used for abhishekam/bathing it is often accompanied by the Nadi Stuti mantra from the *Rig Veda*, (10.75), "I salute Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Sutudri and along with them you, Parusni. Askini, Marudvrdha, Vitasta, Arjiky, listen O Susoma." These are ancient rivers that find their source in the Himalayas (some of which dried up long ago).

Nadi Stuti is often accompanied by Ahnika Sutravai, 106, which celebrates seven rivers, "gange cha yamune chaiva godavari sarasvati narmade sindhu kaveri jale-smin sannidhim kuru," "River Ganga and Yamuna, and also Godavari and Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri; please be present in this water (and make it Holy)." Ganges is the most sacred of all. She is Mother Ganga, Shakti descending from heaven to the earth, purifying our sins, sustaining life's connection to the pure water of the Causal Ocean. Every evening during the *sandhya* hour (at dusk), this reverence for the

ancient rivers is celebrated on the Ganges and elsewhere with joyful devotion by waving massive lamps above the edge of the river. Wherever Hindus find themselves next to a body of water, they often do libations, *tarpana* (offering), by making a cup with their hands and pouring the water back into the river while reciting mantras to the celestial beings or ancestors. Water is used in the first rite of puja, *achamanam*, at the temple or at home, cleansing the hand and then sipping three times while reciting mantras. Every temple has a pond nearby where devotees wash hands and feet before entering.

Mantra Pushpam (excerpts)

Translation by P. R. Ramachander

He who understands the flowers of water,
He becomes the possessor of flowers,
children and cattle.
Moon is the flower of the water,
He who understands this fact,
He becomes the possessor of flowers,
children and cattle.
He who knows the source of water

Becomes established in himself,

Fire is the source of water,
He who knows this
Becomes established in himself,
Water is the source of fire.
He who knows this
Becomes established in himself.
He who knows the source of water
Becomes established in himself

Air is the source of water...
Water is the source of air...
Scorching sun is the source of water...
Moon is the source of water...
Water is the source of moon...
Stars are the source of water...
Water is the source of stars...
Clouds are the source of water...
Water is the source of clouds...
Rainy season is the source of water...
Water is the source of rainy season...

Apah Suktam, Rig Veda 10.9

chanted to invoke the blessings of water for rejuvenation and purification of one's soul

Waters! You are health giving,
Give us energy, so that
We may look on great delight.

Give us a portion of the sap, the most
Beneficent you have,
Like mothers longing with love.
So gladly do we go with you
To the home for which you make us live.

Waters! Give us progeny.

Gracious be Divine waters for
Our protection, be there for our drink,
And stream on us bliss and happiness.

Sovereigns over precious things,
And rulers over men, Waters!
We seek your healing balm.

Within waters—so Soma has
Told me—all healing balms,
And Agni, benign to all.

O waters, teem with medicine to keep
My body safe from harm,
So that I long may see the sun.

Whatever sin is found in me,
Whatever evil I have wrought,
If I have lied or falsely sworn,
Waters remove that far from me.

The waters I this day have sought,
And to their moisture have we come,
O Agni, rich in milk, come and
With your splendor cover me.

Researchers Learn H₂O Is Far More Than We Know

IN 1988, FRENCH IMMUNOLOGIST JACQUES BENVENISTE PUBLISHED a study of his experiments showing how water could have an imprint of human antibodies it was exposed to without having a single molecule of the antibody remaining in the water. Further, he said, this imprint could be digitized. Later, attempts to replicate his work were highly obfuscated by Nature magazine investigators.

Benveniste died in 2004, a broken man whose science was scorned. Since then, it has been shown that water molecules exhibit mysterious "social" behavior and show an intelligent, organized response to quantum phenomena. Science is only beginning to understand the nature of water. We share a few highlights with links you can follow for more.



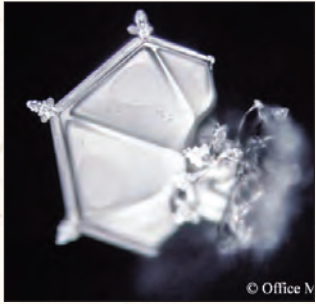
Love and gratitude



Honesty



I can do it



I can't do it



Hannya shingyo (the Buddhist heart sutra)



The universe



Namu amida butsu (mantra "I take refuge in the Buddha")



Buddhist hope mantra

Crystals of Water

Japanese alternative-medicine doctor Masaru Emoto began studying water in 1988. His work is startling and he was questioned for not following good scientific methods. In 2001 he published two volumes about his work. In his book, *The Hidden Message of Water*, Emoto writes: "When we are born, we are 90% water; as adults, we are 70% water. If we have clear understanding of water, we will better understand human body and even be able to unlock the mystery of why we were born and exist as we do."

With these ideas in his mind since 1988, Masaru Emoto had a eureka moment. While reading a book, he saw the words, "No two snow crystals are exactly the same." He began taking photographs of crystals frozen from water exposed to thoughts, words, music and feelings. He took water from different sources, for example, chlorinated tap water, spring water from underground rivers, water from glaciers and rivers at their origin, distilled water from pharmacy and so on. He exposed



Masaru Emoto, 1938-2014, believed that the message of water is to show us how careful we must be with thoughts and words, which can change people's lives; (above) photographs of ice crystals formed after water was exposed to various words and mantras.

formed fragmented crystals. He concluded, based on physical and reproducible evidence, that water responds to and remembers the energy it is exposed to. With his photographs of water crystals and his relentless pursuit of differences between water exposed to different energies and vibrations, Emoto concluded that water has the ability to memorize, copy and transport information. See: www.masaru-emoto.net and youtu.be/ePY73ozlnI8

The Cellular Effects of Water

The famed Yopam chant from the Vedas extolling water says, "He who knows the source of water becomes established in himself."

This ancient verse is being played out in modern science. The website globalfreedom-movement.org/understanding-science-water/ tells us, "The New Science of Water, pioneered by a number of contemporary researchers and as postulated by Dr. Gerald Pollack, Ph.D., shows that not only does water occur naturally in three different states (solid, liquid and vapor), but water also occurs in a fourth lattice-structured state resembling that of a liquid crystal. This form

of structured water (H_3O_2) is energized, negatively charged, and is the vital element in all living organisms and natural ecosystems and is crucial for growth, well-being and longevity."

In the introduction to his book, *The Fourth Phase of Water*, he explains, "This phase occurs mainly next to water-loving (hydrophilic) surfaces. It is surprisingly extensive, projecting out from the surface by up to millions of molecular layers. Of significance is the ob-

servation that this fourth phase is charged; and, the water just beyond is oppositely charged, creating a battery that can produce electrical current. Light charges this battery. Thus, water can receive and process energy drawn from the environment in much the same way as plants. Absorbed light energy can then be exploited for performing work, including electrical and mechanical work, as well as the work of proteins inside cells."

Dr. Pollack says that although we are 70%

Water Clusters

THE CELLS OF THE RETINA OF YOUR EYES as they read this page are emitting electromagnetic frequencies that go to the brain. The chlorophyll in green plants uses light to split water into separate elements, hydrogen and oxygen. All plant, mineral and animal matter emit characteristic frequencies at a quantum level. These frequencies can be picked up, retained and transmitted to nearby water molecules. Dr. Bill Gray explains this phenomenon in his book, *Homeopathy, Science or Myth?* He states that Newtonian physics has served well to explain gross physical behavior of water, but Einsteinian theories are needed to demonstrate the interaction between subatomic forces and field phenomena.

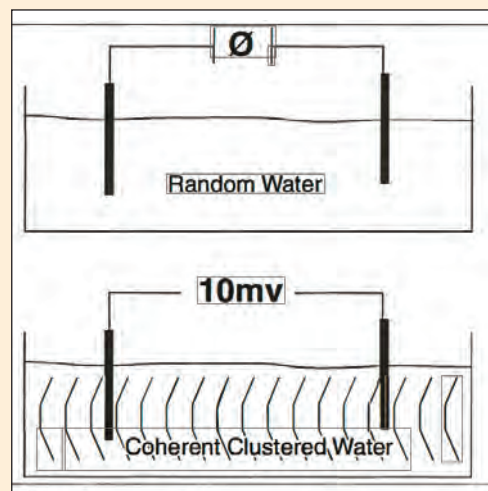
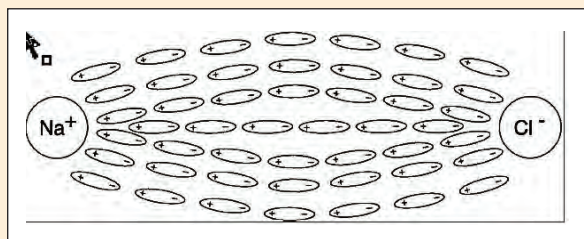
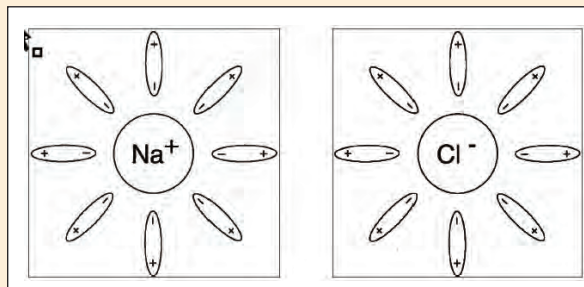
Dr. Gray takes us on an intricate adventure, surveying the work of a variety of scientists and universities. We learn that electromagnetic fields align water molecules in space. Their movements are not random. The hydrogen atom—two of which combine

introduced into water, or when a "solute" is added (plant, mineral or animal matter) that is dilute and succussed (vigorously shaken), water molecules begin to realign themselves toward the positive and negative charge. Such clusters of water molecules (George Vitthoulkas, 1994) are bound by forces sufficient to generate further clusters. These new clusters are copies of the original cluster formed by water molecules in response to exposure to the charge or to a solute; and they can carry complex and subtle information.

The clusters of water molecules form coherent regions and couple strongly with other clusters. These clusters have enough energy to reproduce themselves and are very stable. The coupling of coherent water clusters in a bottle of water affects all the water in the bottle. Not only that, the clusters are strong enough to "metastasize" and pass their information on to nearby random water, which begins to mimic the same cluster. This effect disappears if the water is beyond 120°F for over 30 minutes. This is the method used in preparation of homeopathic remedies. A plant, mineral or animal substance, such as bee venom, is diluted and shak-

en vigorously in water until its vibrational signature is retained in water clusters. This process is repeated many times, and the finished homeopathic remedies do not contain even one molecule of the original medicinal substance. Using sucrose as a base, small pills are then made from the water. Upon ingestion, the whole body, which is made of 70% water, gains the new information.

Still the defining guide to understanding the science of water memory, Dr. Gray's book is available at Amazon Books.

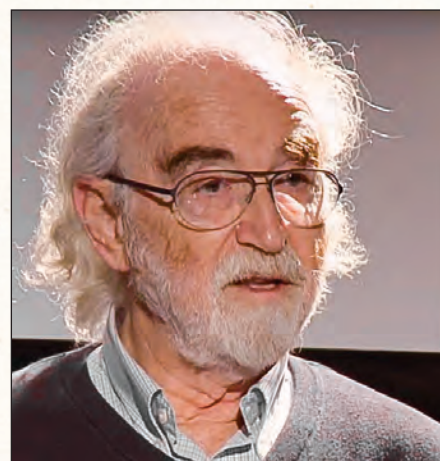


.....
Dr. Bill Gray: (above) After receiving his allopathic training at Stanford Medical School under the tutelage of five Nobel Prize winners, he took up homeopathy 47 years ago, when it was still scorned in the United States; (above right) in a high concentration of NaCl, water molecules are aligned to each element; (middle) at extreme dilutions the water forms coherent clusters; (right) even if not a single molecule of salt can be found, the water has memory of and conveys specific information of the "salt cluster."



with one atom of oxygen to make a water molecule—has a positively charged proton and an orbiting, negatively charged, massless electron.

A water molecule can be viewed as a dipole magnet. When an electric charge is



Dr. Gerald Pollack, a professor of bioengineering at the University of Washington, is a leading research scientist in the physics of water. He has published numerous peer-reviewed scientific studies and received awards from the National Institute of Health.

water by weight, the water molecule is so small that numerically we are made of 99% water molecules. See Dr. Pollack's TEDx Talk here: youtu.be/pgUCochfXcg

Diving into the Deep End
Nobel laureate Luc Montagnier, who is credited with co-discovering the AIDS virus,

later shocked the scientific community with his research of water memory. We quote from Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luc_Montagnier):

"In 2009, Montagnier published independently-made, controversial research studies, one of which was entitled 'Electromagnetic Signals Are Produced by Aqueous Nanostructures Derived from Bacterial DNA Sequences.' [meaning that the water had a record of DNA sequences, even though the bacteria is no longer present in the water.] It has been said that, if its conclusions are true, 'these would be the most significant experiments performed in the past 90 years, demanding re-evaluation of the whole conceptual framework of modern chemistry.' [Andy Coghlan, 'Scorn over claim of teleported DNA,' *New Scientist* 12 January 2011] The paper concludes that diluted DNA from pathogenic bacterial and viral species is able to emit specific radio waves and that 'these radio waves [are] associated with nanostructures in the solution that might be able to recreate the pathogen.'

"In a December 24, 2010, *Science* magazine interview entitled 'French Nobelist Escapes Intellectual Terror to Pursue Radical Ideas in China,' he was questioned about his research and plans. In the interview he stated that Jacques Benveniste, whose controversial homeopathic work had been discredited, was 'a modern Galileo.' He also mentioned that his applications for funding had been turned



Luc Antoine Montagnier received the Nobel prize for the discovery of the HIV virus and today continues the work on water memory begun by Jacque Benveniste

down and that he was leaving France to set up shop in China so he could escape what he called the 'intellectual terror' which he claimed had prevented others from publishing their results. He says that China's Jiaotong University is more open minded to his research. There he is chairman of the editorial board of a new journal which publishes his research. Watch 'Water Memory,' the video of his life work, at youtu.be/R8VyUsVOico."

Revitalized Water

IN EUROPE THE FACT THAT WATER HAS MEMORY is now well known. Homeopathy is a standard medical practice there. Now another technology puts water memory front and center. Johann Grander (1938-2012) developed a method to take the highly structured, mineralized water of the Stephanie Spring, which originates at a depth of 520 meters in the shafts of the Kupferplatte (Copperplate) mine in the Kitzbuehel Alps, Austria—uniquely protected from environmental influences—and transmit its qualities to ordinary water. In his device, a pipe carries incoming water through the spring water. There is no contact, but the outgoing water is said to be revitalized—to pick up the "memory" of the spring water that surrounds the pipe.

This has been called "pseudo-engineering" by scientists—but they have had to "shut their mouths," because industries that use the device have solid measurements that the revitalized water is saving them money.

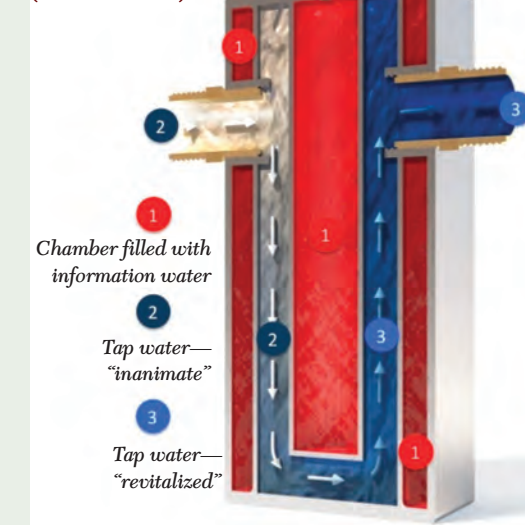
Metal smelting plants which require large amounts of water to purify and cool their systems find that Grander Revitalized Water



Johann Grander (1938-2012).

prevents corrosion of the pipes in the plant. Large laundry operations find they need less detergent. Farmers claim to get better production and larger vegetables, and their family's health is improved. It has been successfully used in physical therapy. Cities and hotels have begun to use it. Public swimming pools that use Grander Revitalized

The Grander Device (cross-section)



Water need less chlorine, and common skin ailments that children get from public pools are reduced.

Watch the short documentary "The Waterman of Tirol" here: youtu.be/iYqiDghoUGo

India's Historic 2019 Election

How the World's Largest Democratic Election Changed the Future of Hinduism for Decades

BY PANDIT VAMADEVA SHASTRI

INDIA IS BY FAR THE WORLD'S LARGEST DEMOCRACY. TO put this into perspective, India has a population greater than North and South America combined, while in size it is comparable to all of Europe. Because of this complexity, India's elections take place in seven phases over a period of more than a month. The ability to regularly conduct such an enormous task is amazing and requires extensive planning and resources.

The only other country with a comparable population, China, has no similar democratic tradition. In the entire region, only Hindu-majority India has a robust democratic tradition. Many would attribute this to Hindu pluralism, which honors many paths and has built a tremendous cultural diversity over thousands of years.

Yet India's 2019 election was monumental in many ways. First of all, it produced a clear national winner in a resounding victory. This is unusual in India, which has been dominated by coalition governments owing to its many regional political parties. In 2019 a single national party, the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) won more than 300 of the 543 seats, a majority on its own. And with its alliance partners, over three hundred and fifty seats were secured, nearly a two-thirds majority.

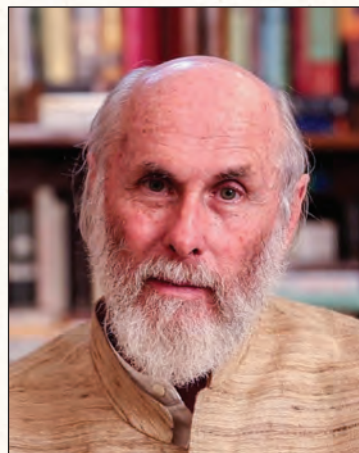
India voted in a remarkable consensus for the sitting prime minister, Sri Narendra Modi. His first victory, in 2014—only slightly less spectacular—was a win that most felt could not be repeated. Such a one-sided national vote for two consecutive terms had not been achieved since the time of Indira Gandhi decades ago. Indian voters usually have strong anti-incumbency sentiments, but in this case the incumbent Modi gained electorally.

Lord Shiva and the Hindu Vote

The 2019 election featured the largest number of politicians visiting Hindu temples during their campaigns, including politicians who had rarely visited temples in the past. PM Narendra Modi, a dedicated Shiva bhaktar, has done this throughout his career. Recognizing this as an important factor in his popularity, the other politicians decided to imitate him. Being Hindu has become a matter of pride and respect in India, while not long ago very few politicians would call themselves Hindu without giving some apology or qualification. Clearly, the appeal to Hindu sentiments did not pay off electorally for the parties that suddenly adopted it merely as a political ploy.

The presence of Lord Shiva towered high above the election. The magnificent Kumbha Mela held in Prayagraj from January to March, the world's largest religious festival, was attended by over two hundred million pilgrims. Shiva as Lord of the Yogis is the central Deity form in this sacred event on the Ganga. Additional Shiva and Yoga influence included PM Modi's promotion of International Yoga Day, which he initiated in 2015 shortly after he was first elected.

Meanwhile, Modi chose Varanasi, the famous city of Lord Shiva on the Ganga, as his own constituency again in 2019, as he did in 2014.



During his first term, Modi renovated the ghats at Varanasi, did much to clean the Ganga, renovated the Kashi Vishwanath temple, the famous Shiva Jyotir Linga (the most sacred site in the city), and built a corridor to the river.

At the end of the 2019 campaign, Modi traveled to Kedarnath, the main Shiva shrine and Jyotir Linga in the Himalayas, for solitary meditation a few days before the election results were counted. The picture of the PM wrapped in orange in a cave at Kedarnath went throughout the entire country. Furthermore, Narendra Modi took his dip in the Ganga for the Kumbha

Mela on February 25 wearing the color black, which is only worn for invoking Bhairava, Lord Shiva as fierce protector. The next day India retaliated on Pakistan at Balakot. Modi is openly and publicly a Shiva bhaktar.

Reactions in the Media

In contrast to India's vote, which showed a strong sense of national unity and purpose and a renewed sense of Hindu dignity, the media responses express a fear of India's new strength and leadership. Such voices would paint gentle, yogic Hinduism as an intolerant and divisive faith, not understanding the nuances of Sanatana Dharma that embrace the whole of life and human society.

Why is the Western media afraid of a strong India? India's contribution to the world has been yoga, not jihad or missionary conversion. It is not an economic threat like China, and it has no history of aggression and invasions of other countries. India has the greatest cultural diversity of any country in the world, and many religious groups have taken refuge in India to escape oppression elsewhere. Meanwhile, Indians worldwide are peaceful and prosperous and do not cause any problems in their countries of their residence or travel. In short, the anti-India sentiments that arose after the BJP election victory sound more like a colonial, racist hangover than any objective analysis.

The election shows that India is rising both in terms of development, which is for all, and in terms of culture, which embraces India's great dharmic civilization and its legacy. Hindus in India are now proud of their heritage and traditions. The economy is growing, and infrastructure is being transformed. Under Modi's administration, the poor have been given electricity, toilets, help with housing, bank accounts and national health care. Pride in culture, religion and spirituality is also growing, extending to the new middle class. In terms of foreign policy, India is now taking its place on the world stage as a global leader, reclaiming the place it has held throughout most of history. This new resurgent India owes a great deal to PM Narendra Modi. He has become a conduit for the aspiration of the people of India.

India stands strong for a new century, regaining its vital role in the world. It is time for the West to give up its missionary, Marxist and colonialist views of India and humbly approach the eternal land of the rishis, yogis, gurus and avatars in full respect for their wisdom traditions.

PANDIT VAMADEVA SHASTRI, author of over thirty books on Vedic subjects, received the prestigious Padma Bhushan award in 2015. Founder, American Institute of Vedic Studies: www.vedanet.com.

Hindu Heritage Endowment

Why the Will Is Just One Part of Your Estate Planning Package

With fuel and food prices sky high, it's natural for a family to think about its future financial security. The last place you might think to look for help in such matters is a Hindu monastery. But, in addition to spiritual direction, monasteries around the world offer practical guidance to help stabilize society during changing times. Many of you have supported Kauai's Hindu Monastery for years, and we, in turn, want to help your family's future. That is one reason the monastery is happy to provide a free, well-thought-out estate planning tool kit. A good estate plan will not make high prices lower. But it will protect your family from unnecessary court costs, attorney fees and taxes. These can do real damage, especially at a time when prices continue to trend upward.

One of the most basic but misunderstood estate planning tools is the will. Some people think a will avoids probate, the costly court process that supervises the distribution of wealth to others at death. Not true. Your will is a ticket to probate court. Think of your will as a letter to the judge, telling him or her who gets your estate. The judge supervises distribution following your will, making sure the right people get the right things.

Some think the executor of your will can step in and manage your assets if you are too ill to do so. Not true. The executor has no power until after your death. Some think wills can direct who gets everything you own. Not true. Some of your assets—life insurance and retirement plans, for example—indicate who gets what through their own beneficiary designations. Wills cannot simply override these designations.

Despite these and other limitations—costs, delay, and their public nature—wills are a blessing to families who would otherwise watch helplessly as the court distributes their loved one's estate according to an impersonal formula that might have little to do with the decedent's wishes. This is why a will is usually the first document people think of when drafting an estate plan. Even so, 58 percent of adult Americans don't have one according to a survey from lawyers.com. Here are some other interesting statistics from the survey's findings:

- 18 percent of Americans experience problems, due to a lack of or a flawed estate plan, after the death or incapacitation of a loved one.
- Nearly eight percent of Americans without an estate plan say they do not have one because they do not want to think about dying or incapacity.

Most attorneys encourage their clients to consider a living trust, a power of attorney for property management, an advance health care directive and a will. These are all topics covered in the estate planning tool kit.

Strengthen your family's future and continue your support of Hindu Heritage Endowment by downloading the PDF file at www.hheonline.org/tool-kit.shtml.



HINDU HERITAGE ENDOWMENT

KAUAI'S HINDU MONASTERY, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA
808-822-3012 ext 6 • fax: 888-217-3108 • hhe@hindu.org • www.hheonline.org

APRIL TO JUNE ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment		Gurudeva's Trilogy Distribution Fund		Chamundi Sabanathan	78.75
Anonymous	US\$335.82	Vel Mahalingum	22.00	Rodney & Ilene Standen	30.00
Roshan Harilela	375.00	Kadavul Nataraja Ardra Abhishekam Endowment		Total	952.58
Gayatri Rajan	75.00	Anonymous	198.12	Hindu Education Endowment	
Chamundi Sabanathan	78.75	Umasankaran Mohambourame	111.27	Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund	100.00
Hitesvara Saravan	63.00	Gowri Nadason	128.65	Rajendra Giri	151.00
Muthu & Nandini Senthilkumar	100.00	Sakuntalai Periasamy	68.57	Total	251.00
Jai Sivakumara	600.00	Kanesanathan & Shanta Devi			
Other Donations	46,000.00	Sabapathipillai	75.00	Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund	
Total	47,627.57	Parimala Selvaraj	93.00	Anonymous	66.66
		Devaladevi Sivaceyon	68.97	Mano Navaratnarajah	225.00
		Jai Sivakumara	108.00	Kunjai Thaker	20.00
		Vayudeva Varadan	18.00	Total	311.66
		Total	869.58		
Iraivan Temple Endowment				Spiritual Park of Mauritius Endowment	
Frank Burkhardt	30.00	Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund		Anil Kumar	27.00
Amey Surendra Gangal	33.00	Shyamadeva Dandapani	36.00		
Anonymous	281.12	Kulagan Moonesawmy	16.46		
Other Donations	95,583.00	Gowri Nadason	128.65	Positive Discipline Endowment	
Total	95,927.12	Ram Ramamoorthy	225.00	Vinaya Alahan	66.00
		Aran Sambandar	108.00		
		Vayudeva Varadan	36.00	Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund	
		Anonymous	108.36	Sathyainkara Balendra	8.00
		Other Donations	4,800.00	Anonymous	108.00
		Total	5,458.47	Total	116.00
Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund		Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam		Hindu Heritage Endowment Administrative Fund	
Haran Kandadas	750.00	Anonymous	424.00	Shekhar & Gauri Ambe	101.00
Anil Kumar	18.00				
Ashwini Maureemootoo	6.93	Sri Subramuniya Ashram Scholarship Fund			
Saroja Maureemootoo	5.43	Anonymous	324.00	Murugan Temple of North America Pillaiyar Shrine Fund	
Jogendra Moorooogen	2.76	Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund		Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00
Vidyadevi Moorooogen	2.76	Raj & Damayanthi Bharathan	150.00	Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	15.00
Cassan Pancham	2,016.00	Anonymous	375.00	Total	165.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	49.98	Gita & Dhushy Sathianathan	180.00		
Manishankar Sagum	11.03	Thilaka Sunder	4,200.00	Thank You Bodhinatha Fund	
Anonymous	168.00	Vigna & Nirupa Vignarajan	300.00	Anonymous	1189.11
Fritz Wenisch	35.23	Manny & Vinothini Yogarajah	300.00	Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai	324.00
Nagarjuna & Padma Yerra	200.00	Total	5,505.00	Brintha Devi	15.00
Total	3,266.12			Debashish Ghosh	600.00
		Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment		Timur Izmaylov	17.00
Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund		Anonymous	1,000.00	Murugesu Kandasamy	23.67
Sri Siva Vishnu Temple	299.00	Mano Navaratnarajah	75.00	Silvarajoo Muniandy	101.00
Chandrasegaran Arnasalon	330.21	Nuckiren Pyeneeeandee	40.74	Toshadevi Nataraj	100.00
Thirujnanam Arnassalon	11.03	Krishanth Rajasooriyar	60.00	Mano Navaratnarajah	150.00
Arunachalam & Vall Arunachalam	301.00	Total	1,175.74	Sakuntalai Periasamy	209.07
Mahesh Sanyas Ashram	299.00			Suselah Periasamy	174.22
Hemakheshaa Naatha Batumallah	15.00	Hinduism Today Production Fund		Purany Ponniah	100.00
Mekaladeva Batumallah	15.00	Community Foundation of Greater Memphis	108.00	Nuckiren Pyeneeeandee	40.74
Gunavadee Caremben	5.52	Ron & Jennifer Burke	100.00	Sumathi Raja	450.00
Somasoundarum Caremben	5.52	Prabhakar C Ghosh	90.00	Shamala Raman	34.84
Sukanta Caremben	5.52	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	4.12	Tristan Ramirez	40.00
Achal & Amrith Channarasappa	300.00	Ian Johnson	60.00	Aran Sambandar	162.00
Lutcheemee Curpen	299.00	Rajagopal Krishnan	20.00	Rita Samey	209.07
Ruchik Desai	299.00	Kulagan Moonesawmy	16.46	Hridaya Sivalingam	15.00
Jayanta Kumar Dirghangi	299.00	Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01	Sivaneswaran Sockanathan	34.84
Amitabh Goswami	299.00	Nuckiren Pyeneeeandee	40.74	Vignesh Sukumaran	216.00
Tarakini Gunasegaran	91.70	Gayatri Rajan	75.00	Vei Sutherland	34.84
Lakshmi Gutta	299.00	Aran Sambandar	108.00	Anba Dayananden Valayten	10.70
Ravi S. & Vidya Joshi	299.00	Greesh Sharma	5,000.00	Vayudeva Varadan	63.00
Vasudev R. Kamath	299.00	Anonymous	63.00	Michael Wasylkiw	648.00
Vinod Kanbi	299.00	V. Adiyar Vipulananda	213.52	Total	4,962.10
Juhivaasana Koothan	8.24	Total	5,948.85	Udayan Care Endowment Fund	
Manoj Kumar	299.00	Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund		Tamnash J. Gupta	108.00
Ashwini Maureemootoo	13.65	Benevity	356.71		
Maneesh Mehra	299.00	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	4.12	Sri Chandra Madhab Debnath Endowment	
Sapna Misra	299.00	Tamnash J. Gupta	108.00	Shyamal Chandra Debnath	100.00
Bhaveshan Moorghen	8.24	Roshan Harilela	375.00		
Shanda Kumaran Moorghen	8.24				
Udeyadeva Moorghen	8.24				
Anonymous	330.61				
Narayan Narain	299.00				
D.V.R. Reddy	299.00				
Narendar B Sahgal	299.00				
Nambi Sankaran	299.00				
Gopinath Selvaraje	299.00				
P.V. Shankar	299.00				
Sai Singh	120.00				
Banu Venkat	299.00				
Total	7,557.72				

APRIL TO JUNE ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Murugan Temple Yalpanam Festival Fund		Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment		Jaffna Kannathiddy Kali Kovil Endowment	
Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00	Anonymous	1,284.46	Anonymous	36.12
		Rajendra Giri	151.00		
Tiptur Shiva Temple & Youth Hostel Fund		Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01	Pakistan Hindu Empowerment Fund	
Kunjai Thaker	20.00	Devaladevi Sivaceyon	68.97	Appamal Athimulam	61.00
		Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00	Anil Kumar	18.00
		Poobarlene Soobramanien	82.32	Michael Zimmermann	5.00
Taos Hanuman Fund		Total	1,786.76	Total	84.00
Anonymous	36.12				
		Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund		Panchangam Endowment Fund	
Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund		Vayudeva Varadan	54.00	Vardharajan Shanmugavelu	10.00
Anonymous	100.00				
		India Hindu Temple Cleaning Fund		Digital Dharma Endowment	
Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund		Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	4.78	Anonymous	390.54
Tamnash J. Gupta	51.00	Kulagan Moonesawmy	8.24		
		Krishanth Rajasooriyar	60.00	Kauai Aadheenam Feed the Monks Fund	
Swami Vipulananta Children's Home Endowment		Total	73.02	Lutcheemee Curpen	100.00
Canaganayagam Kugendra	60.00			Amey Surendra Gangal	11.00
		Anantha Ladies Home Endowment		Anonymous	10,295.12
Hindu Literature Fund		Yogeswaran & Anitha Pararajasingam		Ripla Malhotra	201.00
John & Abha Wiersba	153.00	Jai Sivakumara	1,000.00	Raju Patel	75.00
		Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	108.00	Gayatri Rajan	25.00
		Total	30.00	Padmini Samuthiran	10,108.00
Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund		Total	1,138.00	Total	20,815.12
Rajagopal Krishnan	40.00	Hindu American Foundation Endowment		Insurance Premiums	
		Rajendra Giri	151.00	Mrunal Patel	3,003.00
Himalayan Academy Book Distribution Fund		Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples (Kovil Maadu) Endowment		Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment	
Shyamadeva Dandapani	36.00	Maulik Bhatt	36.39	Other Donations	600.00
Nrusimhayya Manda	30.00	Anonymous	60.11		
Total	66.00	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	4.78	Total Contributions	\$210,755.04
		Srinivas R. Madaboosi	150.00		
Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund		Natraj Narayanswami	33.00	Funds at Market Value, Jun 30, 2019	
Sakuntalai Periasamy	68.57	Krishanth Rajasooriyar	60.00	Total Endowment Funds	\$16,966,315.
Anonymous	33.00	Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00		
Total	101.57	Arunasalam Vathavooran	75.00	Grand Total	\$16,966,315.29
		Total	569.28		

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

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

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



HINDU HERITAGE ENDOWMENT

KAUAI'S HINDU MONASTERY

107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA

808-822-3012 ext 6 • Fax: 888-217-3108 • hhe@hindu.org

www.hheonline.org • www.facebook.com/hhecares





Your Hawaiian Pilgrimage Destination

Visit the spectacular gold-domed, all-white-granite *Iraivan Temple* being constructed at Kauai's Hindu Monastery—from stones quarried and hand-carved in India. Bring the children. Read more, see photos, videos and/or donate at: himalayanacademy.com/iraivan.org
808-822-3012, x108 • iraivan@hindu.org



A ten-minute spiritual workout to ground your inner progress

For today's busy spiritual aspirants Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, publisher of *Hinduism Today*, has crafted a new way to study Himalayan Academy's *Master Course*. It requires just ten minutes a day.

The course lasts for two years and the student's only commitments are to acquire the *Master Course Trilogy* and set aside 10 minutes each day. The books provide the complete teachings of Gurudeva Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami.

Optional videos, audio recordings and apps enhance the study.

Our free mobile app, titled *Spiritual Workout*, can be used to guide your ten-minute sessions. (Apple's App Store or Google Play).

Read more about the *Master Course Online Study*, or get started at: gurudeva.org/course • courses@hindu.org

Welcome to your wondrous journey of self-discovery!

Invest dharmawise

We prudently manage wealth, screening for investments which affirm dharmic life.



EASAN KATIR

private wealth management
since 1983

elasan.katir@gmail.com

1-530-231-5646 (USA)

easankatir.com



Hindu Global Charity



We are currently planning projects in Nepal, Pakistan and Nigeria.

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

AHWS • PO Box 1483, Laurel, MD 20725-1483, USA
626-475-7149 • ahwsngo@gmail.com



This Diwali,
light your diya and
make a donation!

Visit www.hafsite.org/donate to show your support.

Hindu American Foundation

Promoting dignity, mutual respect, and pluralism.
HAF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.





Howdy, Modi!

Houston Welcomes Prime Minister SHRI NARENDRA MODI

Sunday, September 22, 2019

Hindus of Greater Houston, representing over 30 temples and religious organizations, extend a hearty welcome to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the world's most popular leader, on his forthcoming visit to Houston.

Modiji made the Hindus all over the world proud and initiated the International Day of Yoga.

The Young Hindus of Greater Houston are eagerly looking forward to Modiji's visit.

Event Hosted by Texas India Forum



WWW.HOWDYMUDI.ORG



hindusofhouston.org



info@hindusofhouston.org



713-962-8523



Hindus of Greater Houston
Bringing Hindus Together.....

SACRED STATUES & ART FROM INDIA & TIBET



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

713-668-2948

concept@wt.net

www.hindugods.net

Zaposh India

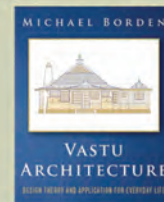
We specialize in
orders from
monasteries & temples



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

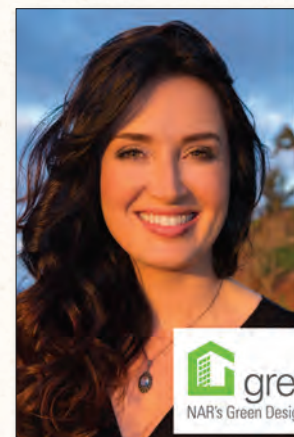
We offer group tours to visit temples in INDIA

VASTUVED INTERNATIONAL



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

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



Moksha McClure R(S)
Diligent Buyer Representation.
Extreme Marketing for Sellers.
(808) 652-7387
M@OasisHawaii.com
www.MokshaMcClure.com
RS #73174



Oceanfront Sotheby's
INTERNATIONAL REALTY
Each office is independently owned and operated



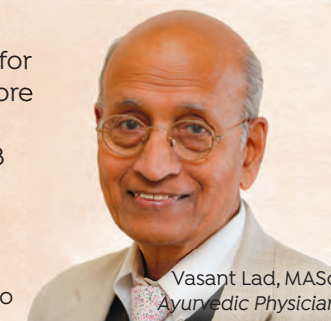
Have you always wanted to know more about Ayurveda?

- ◆ With a couple of hours, you can watch our free video library.
- ◆ With a weekend, come to our amazing seminars and webinars.
- ◆ With a week, enroll in a summer intensive.
- ◆ Study with us in India: Panchakarma Therapist Training and Gurukula Program
- ◆ Train to become an Ayurvedic professional with Vasant Lad, BAM&S, MASc. Our Ayurvedic Studies Certificate programs are nine months each.

Visit Ayurveda.com for videos, recipes, & more about Ayurveda.
Call (505)291-9698



Albuquerque, New Mexico



Vasant Lad, MASc
Ayurvedic Physician



Recover & maintain your health by yourself, at home

During a lifetime of medical practice, Dr. Gowda MD observed that the ailments that burden people can almost always be improved or remedied easily by applying simple, basic principles and practices. He now

with simple, easy practices that have proved effective for thousands of years

shares his knowledge and experiences in highly illustrated GYM3. The title is an anagram referring to the three traditional practices: exercise, yoga and meditation.

106 pages • \$13.30, including shipping less for quantities • contact us:
2025 Priest Road, Nashville, TN 37215 USA
615-665-1565 • kkhgsg@gmail.com

SRI GAYATRI

The Inner Secrets Revealed

3 volumes with 2 chant CDs



Amma Sri Karunamayi explains the sacred Gayatri mantra, syllable by syllable, in this uplifting collection.

"Gayatri Devi is One who is self-luminous. She not only illumines all the organs and chakras in the bodies of humans and all living beings, She also gives light to all the worlds in the entire universe."



Check out these and other inspiring books and CDs at our website.

HAWAII HEAVEN



Beautiful 3-bed, 2-bath, fully furnished, turnkey VACATION RENTAL

- cedar home, screened in lanai
- large new lpe wood deck allows for indoor and outdoor living
- build another house or guest cottage on the adjacent property and create a family compound
- located just before double bridges



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

TRIHEALTH



Ayurveda

The science of vital power from the balance of nature

The most effective herbal remedies available in the US.

- Sourced from a family lineage in the ancient tradition.
- Constantly evolving in application to meet the health needs of the day.
- Through the optimal combination of potent herbs the efficacy has been ensured.

"Of all nectars, Ayurveda is Supreme"

800-455-0770 • www.trihealthayurveda.com



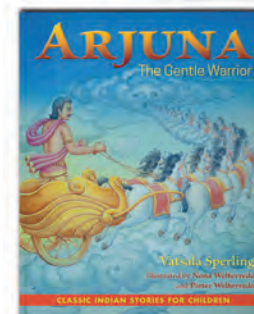
LOTUS SCULPTURE

THE LARGEST SELECTION OF HINDU & BUDDHIST STATUARY IN THE WORLD!

Explore our Vast Collection of Hand Crafted, One of a Kind Hindu Murtis

www.lotussculpture.com | (760)-994-4455 | info@lotussculpture.com | Statues ship directly from California

CLASSIC INDIAN STORIES FOR CHILDREN



Arjuna
The Gentle Warrior

Vatsala Sperling
Illustrated By **Nona Weltevrede**
and **Pieter Weltevrede**

A children's story featuring Arjuna, a compassionate warrior who must choose between abstaining from battle or fulfilling his destiny to end the war

\$15.95 • ISBN 978-1-59143-203-6



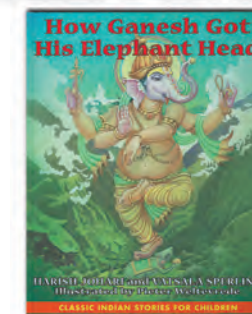
The Magical Adventures of Krishna

How a Mischief Maker Saved the World

Vatsala Sperling
Illustrated By **Pieter Weltevrede**

Features Krishna, one of the most beloved characters of the Hindu pantheon, a spirited naughty boy who grows up to save the world

\$15.95 • ISBN 978-1-59143-110-7



How Ganesh Got His Elephant Head

Harish Johari and Vatsala Sperling

Illustrated By **Pieter Weltevrede**

The magical story of how Ganesh, the son of Shiva and Parvati, was brought back to life with the head of an elephant

\$15.95 • ISBN 978-1-59143-021-6



Vatsala Sperling, Ph.D., fluent in a number of Indian languages and Sanskrit, learned these traditional stories at her mother's feet. Before moving to the United States, she was the chief of Clinical Microbiological Services at the largest children's hospital in India. She lives in Vermont with her husband and son.

INNER TRADITIONS
BEAR COMPANY

Available Wherever Books Are Sold

800-246-8648 • InnerTraditions.com • f t i

Text ITIBCO to 33233 to Receive Special Offers and Discounts

CLASSIFIEDS

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

Appeal

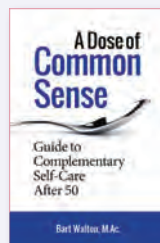
Help Hinduism toward a brilliant future by helping HINDUISM TODAY flourish. Support the Hinduism Today Production Fund which is a part of Hindu Heritage Endowment. The fund was established to empower current and future editors to produce an ever more potent journal in both print and digital realms, able to reach ever more souls. Be a part of the global Hindu renaissance, donate at www.hheonline.org/donate_pf Subscribe to our Production Fund newsletter at: gurudeva.org/email-news Contact: 888-464-1008 • productionfund@hindu.org

Ayurveda/Health

Low-cost blood test. Eg., PSA, \$20, HIV screen, \$20 • www.BloodTestInChicago.com or Call Dr. Siva, tel: 1-866-505-1556 (USA).

Take Charge of Your Health

An excellent guide-book for self-care after 50. Simple home strategies for health and well-being by respected practitioner and consultant to staff of Hinduism Today, Bart Walton, M.Ac. • Amazon.com Japanesehealingarts.com



Devotional Supplies

Top Quality Rudraksha beads and malas Jai Hanuman Ltd. • gdg4044@yahoo.com 641-919-2448 • www.rudraksha.com

Free Products & Services

Shri Shivabalayogi Maharaj Meditation Blessings. Peace, Bliss and Self-Realization are Guaranteed through Meditation. Receive Shivabalayogi's photo, holy ash and meditation instructions. Free. Sanjay Singh, 8300 Halston St. # 7, Louisville, KY 40222 USA. thesksmail@yahoo.com www.meditate-shivabala.org

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

Professional Products & Services

Fine Quality Neem Products

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

www.neemtreefarms.com
877-500-6336



Freight Forwarder

Ship >45 kg or more
Anywhere from US
Fx: 1-800-396-6659
Sales2@air7seas.us
www.air7seas.com



Publications

Divine Life Society Publications

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

www.dlsebooks.org • www.dlsbooks.org



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

Wisdom Wave Publications

Shrikrishna Kashyap was a beloved holy sage and Ayurvedic healer. Wisdom Wave offers Mantra CDs/downloads, plus books of his teachings on health, Vedic scriptures and philosophy.

www.wisdomwave.org



Sri Chinmoy Books

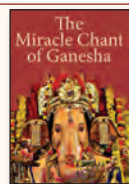
Wisdom of ancient India made clear and simple.
Free catalog: 1-734-994-7114
SriChinmoyBooks.com
SriChinmoy.org



Dreaming Peace, by Nori Muster. "Every right action, word and thought has a good effect." • dreamingpeace.net

Rely on Ganesha

Miracle Chant of Ganesha is a guidebook/workbook for chanting His mantra to successfully manage your life • livingsattva.com



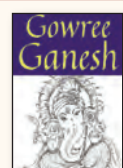
Year-Round Recipes

Modern, traditional Pongal recipes for all occasions. Sweet, salty, various grains. Available on Amazon livingsattva.com



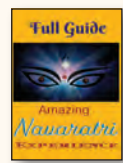
Gowree Ganesh

Small children learn Sanskrit and invoke Ganesha with this illustrated kirtan book. Available on Amazon livingsattva.com



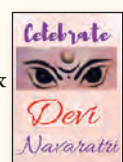
Guide to Navaratri

Learn how to connect with the Divine Mother and tap into divine knowledge. Available on Amazon livingsattva.com



Devi Navaratri

Learn to honor the Divine Mother at this sacred time & achieve oneness with her. Available on Amazon livingsattva.com



Lemurian Scrolls. Celestial messages given in 1973 to Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, founder of Hinduism Today, that help us understand the times we live in and what it all means • www.minimela.com

Babaji's Kriya Yoga Publications

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



The Spiritual Island

KAUAI, HAWAII



Come Live in Paradise

Single Family Homes
Farms
Condos
Land

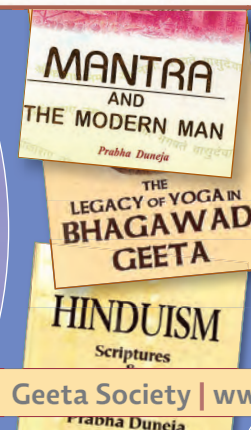


Claire Sunita Keaton
RS-73854

808-652-9543

clairekeaton@yahoo.com

Kauai *Landmark* Realty
4-356 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa HI 96746
www.kauaihomeseacher.com



Geeta Society | www.geetasociety.org | 925-484-5411 | duneja@aol.com

Life Insurance and Estate Planning

Rely on a professional for Retirement and Estate Planning

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

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

Resources to enhance life

Prabha Duneja is recognized for her deep devotion and lauded for her ability to capture Hinduism's spirit, philosophy and mysticism. Her works are used in universities, and her spiritual insights continue to inspire many, some of whom testify that she has transformed their lives. Search YouTube/Prabha Duneja



Vegan Vitamins & Supplements

No animal products or derivatives of any kind

High quality
Wide selection
Affordable prices



...and many more!

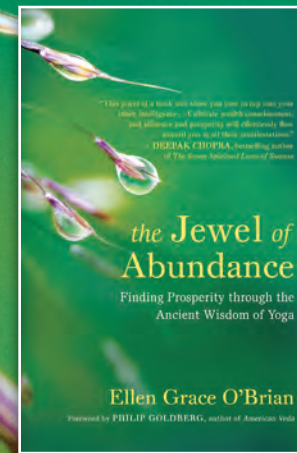
Available for purchase at:
WHOLE FOODS MARKET & other
Natural Health Food Stores.



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

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

FINDING PROSPERITY THROUGH THE ANCIENT WISDOM OF YOGA



"This jewel of a book will show you how to tap into your inner intelligence, the ultimate and supreme genius that mirrors the wisdom of the cosmos. Cultivate wealth consciousness, and affluence and prosperity will effortlessly flow toward you in all their manifestations."

— DEEPAK CHOPRA,
author of *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*

NEW WORLD LIBRARY    
www.newworldlibrary.com | Also available as an ebook

Second revised edition, quality paperback
224 pages 16 pages of photos
\$8.00 plus \$3.00 postage

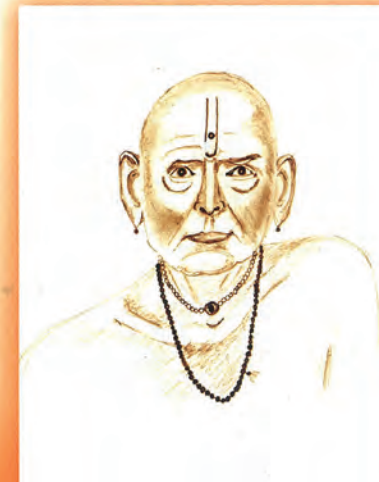


Revised Second Edition 2018
**PARAMAHANSA
YOGANANDA**
As I Knew Him
Experiences and Reflections of a Disciple
ROY EUGENE DAVIS

706-782-4723 weekdays 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.
or e-mail info@csa-davis.org
online at www.csa-davis.org

Center for Spiritual Awareness Post Office Box 7
Lakemont, Georgia 30552

ETERNAL FRIEND ŚHRĪ SWĀMĪ SAMARTH MAHĀRĀJ OF AKKALKOT



By
MUKUND M. HANUMANTE, Ph.D

Find the Divine within

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

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

"*Eternal Friend* helps people manifest their deepest soul potentials."—Dr. David Frawley:

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

mukund@juno.com
<http://akkalkotswamisamarth-usa.org>

American Institute of Vedic Studies

Expand your horizons in Vedic Knowledge and Hindu Dharma. Practical teachings of Pandit Vamadeva Shastri (David Frawley), D.Litt, Padma Bhushan. Authentic Vedic knowledge in a clear and modern idiom. Courses, publications, programs and retreats—with students from all over the world.



Recent books:

- *Shiva: The Lord of Yoga*
- *Universal Hinduism*
- *Art and Science of Vedic Counseling*
- *Vedic Yoga: The Path of the Rishi*

Institute Courses:

- Ayurvedic Healing Course
- Yoga, Ayurveda, Mantra & Meditation Course
- Ayurvedic Astrology Course
- Integral Vedic Counseling Course

American Institute of Vedic Studies
PO Box 8357, Santa Fe, NM 87504-8357 USA
tel: 505-983-9385 • www.vedanet.com

Yogini Shambhavi Devi

Yogini Shambhavi Devi is a mystic yogini, spiritual guide and educator rooted in the ancient traditions of Bhakti Yoga, Shakti Sadhana, Vedic Astrology, Mantra Yoga and Ayurveda.



Shambhavi is co-director of the American Institute of Vedic Studies. She is a direct disciple of Sadguru Sivananda Murty, who has empowered her as a spiritual teacher.

- Yoga Shakti retreats in India, Europe, Canada and USA, 2018
- One-year experiential Yoga Shakti training programs
- Spiritual Guidance and Mantra Initiation with Yogini Shambhavi Devi
- Vedic astrology consultations with Yogini Shambhavi Devi

shambhavi.yogini@gmail.com
www.vedanet.com

Lotus Press • Lotus Press • Lotus Press • Lotus Press • Lotus Press

Shiva

The Lord of Yoga

David Frawley (Pandit Vamadeva Shastri)



ISBN: 978-0-9406-7629-9
\$19.95 • 296 Pages

Lord Shiva is the personification of all the main practices of Yoga, as the origin and ruling power over asana, prana, mantra, inner seeing and meditation. He is the ultimate Yoga guru reflecting the highest Self-awareness. Yet this centrality of Shiva in Yoga is rarely understood and utilized. The current book unfolds the presence, light, energy and consciousness of the Supreme Shiva to take us beyond all death and duality.

Dr. David Frawley (Pandit Vamadeva Shastri), is one of the most respected modern teachers of the deeper secrets of Yoga and the Vedas, an author of more than forty books in twenty languages worldwide. He has received the prestigious Padma Bhushan award from the government of India for his outstanding work in the Vedic field.

Lotus Press, Inc., a majority woman-owned, family business,
P O Box 325, Twin Lakes, WI 53181 USA • Office Phone: 262 889 8561
Office Fax: 262 889 2461 • Toll Free Order Line: 800 824 6396
Email: lotuspress@lotuspress.com • Website: www.LotusPress.com

Pandit Vamadeva Shastri • www.vedanet.com

Lotus Press • Lotus Press • Lotus Press • Lotus Press • Lotus Press

Yoga Tantra Sri Vidya Sacred dance Kirtan Samskrit Samskara Puja

MATHA GITANANDA ASHRAM



a traditional Hindu ashram in Italy

+39 019 584692 |
monasteroindu@gmail.com | www.gitanandashram.it



Once more,
A wave of destiny
Carries me to Thy grounds:

Bold but silent;
Solemn but vibrating;
Imposing and inspiring.

Father,
The splendor of Thy Edifice,
In the Moonlit night,
Silences me.

Oneness with silence
Nourishes my body,
Inspires my soul,
Stirs my spirit,
To be
With Thee.

Candi Prambanan on a Moonlit Night
by Dr. Arjunan Subramaniam, 15th–30th July, 2018
Desa Parkcity, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

DIGITAL DHARMA

HINDUISM'S WEB PRESENCE

YouTube Emerges as the New Front Line of Hindu Soft Power

IF YOU WERE TO LOOK FOR INFORMATION ON Hinduism on the Internet five years ago, you would be disappointed. Most pages reflected the views of Western academics, a bias compounded by one-sided Western news reports on India. Fast forward to 2019. Little has changed with news from *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*—which seem to be caught in a Congress Era time warp as far as India is concerned. But Hindus are using YouTube to turn the tables on “who owns the narrative of India and Hinduism.” With instant access on cell phones, they are far exceeding the views of mainstream media.

Waking Up the Complacent

There is no question that Rajiv Malhotra, through his Infinity Foundation, is leading the way by openly challenging Hindus to take charge of their own narrative. In a 2018 lecture about developing new schools of Dharmic Thought, he warns about the danger of thinking that the Indian “left” is no longer a threat. (See: youtu.be/JwNIZ-DIUt8o.) He says Marxism has morphed and

reincarnated in “postcolonial Indology” scholarship with new ways of misrepresenting Sanskrit texts and Hindu dharma in what they pass on to students. In another thoughtful series, Malhotra calls upon Indian Sanskrit scholars to challenge Western Indology. See bit.ly/VakyarthaSadasPlaylist

For a new look at India, now and in the future, there’s nothing like Karolina Goswami’s videos. See one of her latest: *What Is the Future of India?* youtu.be/E_QgKll7Hpo.

A new player on the video scene is Srijan Foundation. Originally involved in social service in India’s schools, it is “emerging as a notable voice in driving a paradigm shift in the minds of ordinary Indians with respect to their own history and heritage.” The presenters are challenging present day misconceptions with detailed data in lengthy videos, such as *Indian Civilization: The Untold Story*: youtu.be/RGyivyXEkdc.

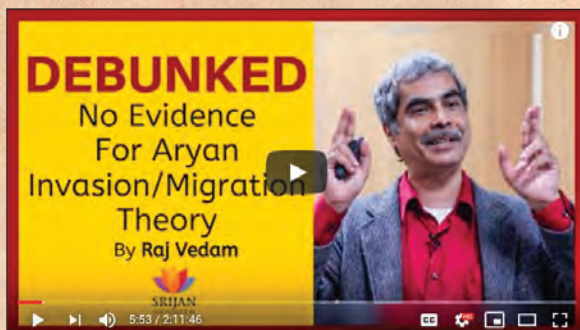
A search on YouTube for “debunked aryan invasion” yields an amazing list from an array of experts.

Soft Power—Tell It Like It Is

Standing up to misconceptions is one prominent platform. Another is re-telling the story of Sanatana Dharma in short clips. In this category we have Himalayan Academy/Uberoi Foundation India History movies. Recently added are music videos for 11-year-olds on the same chronology. See bit.ly/history-playlist (which has an aggregate of five million views). The spoken narration of BAPS *Introduction to Hinduism* in twelve minutes is marvelous:

Taking Back the Narrative: (top left) Rajiv Malhotra’s hard-hitting interviews on key issues; (bottom left) Srijan Foundation goes online with evidence-based presentations; (right top) Himalayan Academy’s video series of Hindu History with six million plus views and now including music videos; (right bottom) India Consulate of Chile shows how the Sindhis preserved their Hindu culture far from the Mother Land.

www.hinduismtoday.com



youtu.be/Vig1CECtGc. Note that the visuals are focused on their lineage and do not encompass the wider range of Vaishnavite or Saivite traditions. And you will find the soft power of Hinduism in unusual places. Take for example, the story of Indian immigration to Chile, produced by the Indian Consulate of Chile. They don’t use the word *Hinduism*, but it is all about how the Sindhi community preserved their tradition through the temples they founded: youtu.be/3IRLG-B_ucw.

Here are three more videos that caught our attention. Put in your ear buds and go for an exciting adventure! *The History of Yoga*, youtu.be/g2J-JPChaeI; *Timeline of 17,000+ Years of Unbroken Indian Civilization*, youtu.be/3tsyZrDg2n4; *Ancient Updates To Surya Siddhanta*, youtu.be/bQNhQ7wxOvA.