

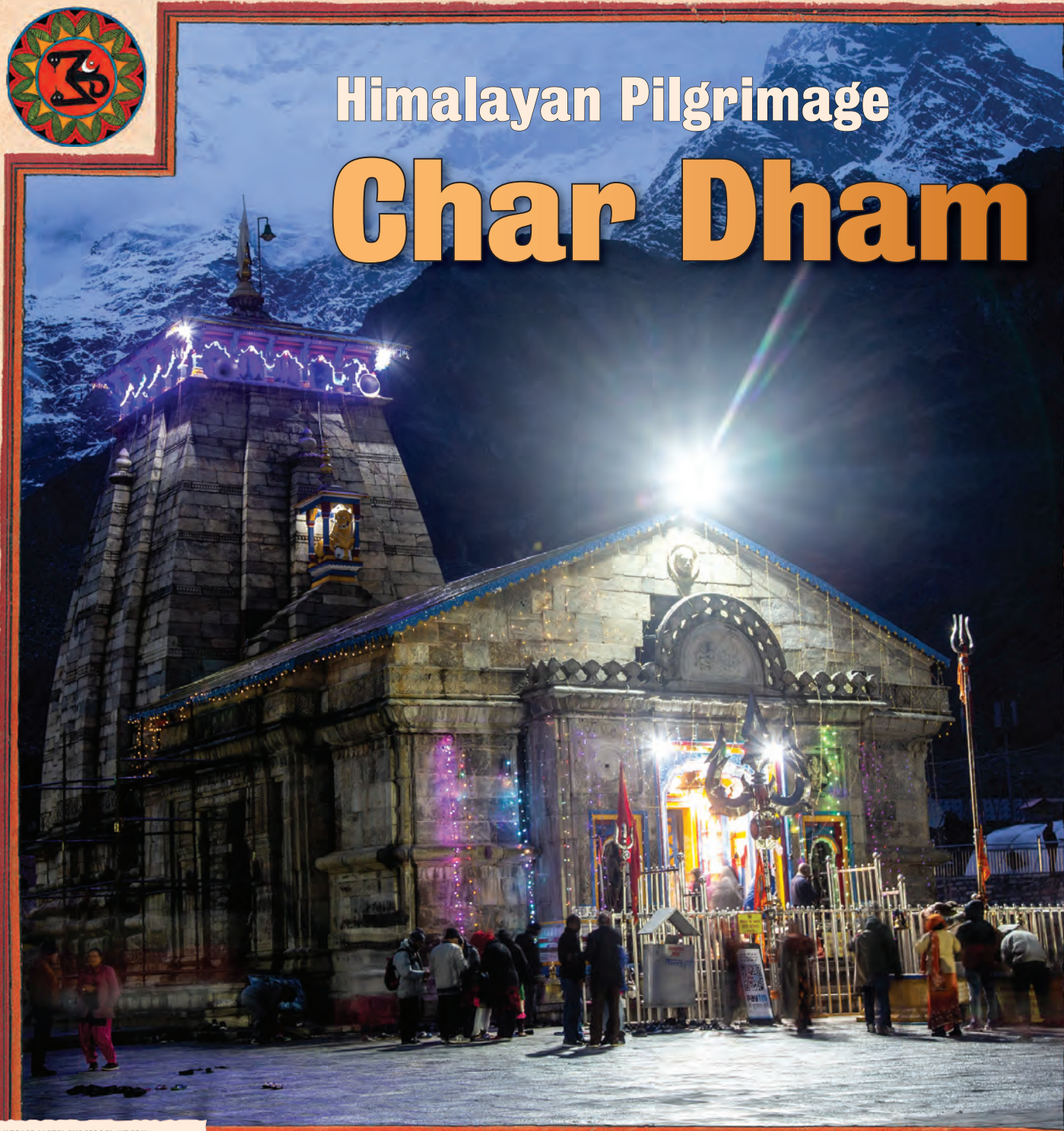
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HINDUISM TODAY

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



Himalayan Pilgrimage Char Dham



(Cover) High in the snow-bound Himalayas, at 11,755 feet, the ancient temple of Kedarnath shines brightly throughout the night; (above) all Indian art, literature, drama and dance forms draw on the *navarasas*, nine emotions to be invoked in an audience (page 38).

APRIL/MAY/JUNE, 2019 • THE HINDU YEAR VIKARI, 5121

Bodhinatha Veylanswami

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A Sacred Journey through The High Himalayas

Join Our Pilgrimage, at the Top of the World, to
Four of the Most Revered Holy Sites. ... Page 18

*Photo: The temple of Badrinath
in Uttarakhand, dedicated to
Lord Vishnu. The influence of
Tibetan architecture is apparent
in the structure's ornate, colorfully
painted arches and doorways*





GLOBAL DHARMA

U S A

The Rising Utilization of Yoga and Meditation

I N NOVEMBER OF 2018, THE National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), released its report of a recent survey detailing the rise in yoga and meditation practices among adults and children in the US over the past five years. The report compares surveys taken in 2012 and 2017. According to David Shurtleff, Ph.D., acting director of NCCIH, "The 2017 NHIS survey is the most current and reliable source of information on the use of specific complementary health approaches by US adults and children. The survey data suggest that more people are turning to mind and body

approaches than ever before." One of the greatest increases was that of meditation among children (ages 4–17), which rose from 0.6 percent in 2012 to 5.4 percent in 2017, while the use of yoga among youth increased from 3.1 to 8.4 percent. Among US adults, yoga continues to be the most commonly used complementary health approach, and has increased in usage from 9.5 percent in 2012 to 14.3 percent in 2017. Meditation among US adults has risen more than threefold, from 4.1 to 14.2 percent. If trends continue, we are likely to see more and more Americans enjoying the proven benefits of both practices.



Going within: (top) the practice of hatha yoga and meditation often go hand in hand; (graph) it's clear that meditation is on the rise among US adults

MUSIC

Evolving the Nagaswaram

T HE MOST MEMORABLE sound from any South Indian temple event might well be the nagaswaram. This double-reed instrument, among the world's loudest woodwinds, has an ancient place in Hindu temples. Its origin is as elusive as that of the whole of Carnatic music, but there are hints to its precursors in the ancient *Rig Veda* scripture, which

describes wind instruments called *Nadi Santhanam* being used at fire ceremonies. Through the ages, various styles have emerged, the two primary being *timiri* and *baari*. Timiri is a smaller, high-pitched version, while the baari, of lower pitch and is about two to two and a half feet long. They are commonly made of fromebon wood harvested from the forests

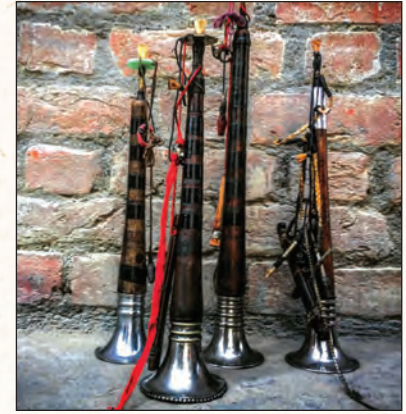
of Thanjavur and other nearby areas. Playing the timiri nagaswaram, in particular, requires enormous effort. Nagaswaram player Enjikudi E.M. Subramaniam told *The Hindu* in a recent article, "Timiri was needed when there were no loudspeakers. Singers also rendered songs in a high pitch to reach out to the man sitting in the last row." According to Thiruvavaduthurai T.N.



Sound craft: (left) a variety of nagaswaram styles; (above) N.G.N. Ranganatha Asari at his workshop in Narasingampettai. They are operating a rustic lathe; the master cutting with a chisel while his helper spinning the blank with a handled cord.

Rajarathinam Pillai, a famed nagaswaram player of the early 1900s, the timiri is unable to properly play the *mathyama shruti* (a specific interval between notes). Inspired by this lack, he commissioned instrument maker N.G.N. Ranganatha Asari to re-imagine the instrument for modern times.

Ranganatha succeeded, producing the pari nagaswaram, which has a pleasing sound and is much easier to play than its predecessor. December 2018 marked Ranganatha's birth centenary. At Narasingampettai, a small town in the Thanjavur district, his sons continue to make nagaswarams today.



I N D I A

Shivakumara Swami Attains Mahasamadhi at age 111

O N JANUARY 22, AT 111 YEARS of age, Sree Sree Dr. Shivakumara Swami left his earthly frame. Swami was the recipient of the 2013 Hindu Renaissance Award as "Hindu of the Year" for his exemplary leadership, with an impact not only in Karnataka but around the world. When Swamiji was born, Mahatma Gandhi was a 39-year-old lawyer in South Africa and Swami Sivananda a 21-year-old medical student in Tanjore. World War I ended when he was 11; the Soviet Union formed when he was 14; World War II began when he was 37 and Neil Armstrong landed on the Moon when he was 61.

By the 1990s, Sree Sree Dr. Shivakumara Swami was in his

80s—well beyond normal retirement age, but far from retired. As head of Siddaganga Math, one of the foremost Lingayat maths in Karnataka, he continued to not only fulfill his religious duties, as he had since 1941, but was also teaching mathematics, Sanskrit and English in the Siddaganga school system. He remained fully immersed in the affairs of the math, overseeing the running of its 132 educational institutions, which serve 9,000 students drawn from the poorest regions of the state, and seeing to the needs of hundreds of thousands of devotees. For our story on Swamiji and his work, from the Apr/May/June, 2013 issue of HINDUISM TODAY, go to: bit.ly/Siddaganga (case sensitive).



Front and center: An ancient Ganesha statue from Cambodia—one of the exhibition's primary pieces

MUSEUMS

The Playful Protector

A RECENTLY ORGANIZED EXHIBITION at the Denver Art Museum brought forward Hinduism's beloved Lord of Art and Science. "Ganesha: The Playful Protector" introduced museum guests to this portly elephant-faced God with one of the earliest known Ganesha statues from mainland Southeast Asia. The exhibition ran from October 1, 2018, to January 13, 2019.

from the National Museum of Cambodia as the centerpiece for the exhibit, is dated between the 7th and 8th centuries. The Denver Art Museum's own collection of Ganesha-related sculptures, paintings and textiles were also on display. The exhibition ran from October 1, 2018, to January 13, 2019.

ECONOMICS

Owning Up to Plunder

A N ESSAY RECENTLY PUBLISHED IN THE COLUMBIA University Press tackled the intriguing question of just how much wealth Britain took from India over its 200-year rule. The essay's author, Utsa Patnaik, is a respected economist who has done ample research on the tax and trade data between colonial Britain and India. She has concluded that what was drained from India between 1765 and 1938—in terms of taxes and trade goods such as textiles, precious metals, teas, spices and more—amounts to just under \$45 trillion. Not million, not billion, but \$45 trillion. The net worth of the UK's economy in 2016 was just shy of \$10 trillion. If India had that much money today, it could buy the entire UK four and a half times.



Crown jewels: Can you guess what country the giant Koh-i-Noor diamond on the British royal crown comes from?



FOOD

The Rise of Plant-Based Dining

IF YOU'RE A VEGETARIAN OR vegan in the United States, you might be familiar with the challenge of finding decent restaurant options that fit your diet. While countries like India have long had ample options for those wanting to avoid harming animals or who simply want to stay healthy, many Western countries have a long-standing culture of meaty menus. Thankfully, there appears to be a trend towards plant-based meals as more and more restaurants are finding it crucial to maintain vegetarian and vegan items on their menus to avoid losing customers.

A recent survey by the National Restaurant Association asked 700 chefs from the American Culinary Federation for their thoughts on what the most popular culinary concepts for 2019 would be. Of the chefs, 64 percent gave high importance to the use of plant-based protein

such as vegan sausages and burgers, with three of five chefs giving mention of substituting veggies where one would usually see starches. Other important trends were the use of vegetable-forward cuisines, menus that provided hyper-local, all natural ingredients, and a growing commitment to food waste reduction. Even McDonalds is moving towards providing plant-based options, such as their recent release of a veggie Happy Meal in the UK.

Though not one's idea of "eating out," if you've ever found yourself in a hospital, then you probably know just how unappetizing hospital food can be. However, there might be a brighter, hospital-food future in the works if current trends continue. In September of 2018, California Governor Jerry Brown signed into law a first-of-its-kind bill, SB 1138, which requires licensed California health care facilities and state prisons to make available plant-based meal options containing no animal products or by-products, including meat, poultry, fish, dairy or eggs. According to an article published in *AP News*, California Physicians Committee president Neal Barnard, MD, stated, "Thanks to Sen. Nancy Skinner and Gov. Jerry Brown for passing this historic law that will provide plant-based options to



Healthy options: (Left) The new vegan "McFalafal" happy meal at McDonalds; (above) examples from the rise in gourmet vegan and vegetarian cooking. Yum!

hospital patients looking to fight heart disease, diabetes and obesity—or who simply want a more healthful meal. Now, it's time for California hospitals to start putting into practice the plant-based meals recommended by the American Medical Association and the American College of

Cardiology." This follows a 2017 declaration from the American Medical Association calling on US hospitals to improve the health of patients, staff and visitors by providing plant-based meals.

BRIEFLY...

COMMEMORATING THE 20TH DEATH anniversary of Hindu thinker and scholar Shri Ram Swarup, the Indic Academy has instituted a Ram Swarup-Sitaram Goel Memorial Fund for promoting Indic research and publication. Shri Ram Swarup and Shri Sitaram Goel are towering intellectuals, widely regarded as the pioneers in Indic history

research and politics in the post-Independence time frame. The memorial fund, established with an initial corpus of approximately US \$28,600, is aimed at the propagation, research and publication of studies in different areas of Indic history.

ON DECEMBER 4, 2018, THE HINDU American Foundation launched

a new campaign, "I Am Hindu American" to improve awareness of the Hindu religion and Hindu Americans. The multi-platform initiative includes a social-media campaign, a 30-second PSA, and a companion website to provide valuable resources about Hinduism and Hindu Americans. In collaboration with more than 300 community partners around the country, the PSA is being distributed through social media networks nationwide to boost awareness and clarify common stereotypes

and misunderstandings about Hinduism.

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IN MY OPINION

An Evolutionary Religion

Hinduism's commitment to remain open and adaptable will long be one of its greatest strengths

BY DR. HIRO BADLANI

Hinduism is regarded as the oldest living religion of the world. Even so, it has remained dynamic. As the American philosopher J. B. Pratt has aptly stated: "The reason for the immortality of the Vedic religion of Hinduism is that while retaining its spiritual identity, it has been changing its outward form in accordance with the demands of the time."

This vibrant character is also the reason for Hinduism's survival through millennia, while most other ancient religions have perished. Importantly, these changes have taken place in a subtle manner, without serious protest and bloodshed. For, in Hindu culture the old are revered and not openly defied and antagonized. This allows for old philosophies, rituals and customs to be sustained, even alongside new ones, leaving individuals to decide for themselves how they wish to practice. Thus the religion evolves peacefully. For example, it is not uncommon in a Hindu family for members to worship different Deities and have different rituals and religious practices.

It is imperative to realize that Hinduism was not started by one single founder. It is rather a conglomerate of the spiritual wisdom of many ethnic tribes that have inhabited the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere. Thus it has had a pluralistic foundation from the beginning. In accommodating the opinions and beliefs of many, it is also non-dogmatic and unbiased. Hinduism's spiritual leaders and rishis have repeatedly prompted us to maintain harmony and peace, and to look at all beings as creatures of one divine family. In the earliest of the Hindu scriptures, the *Rig Veda*, one can find the foremost principle of "Truth is One, paths are many." With this eternal principle in mind, at no time has any Hindu religious leader ever claimed that Hinduism is the only way to salvation or God-Realization.

In the Hindu faith, there are no overarching, set parameters, no fixed rules. Hinduism is a vastly liberal religion. In fact, it openly



and fervently encourages and tolerates differences of opinion, use of discretion, and interpretation based on one's own circumstances and perceptions. At the same time, there are strong ethical principles and rituals that characterize this religion. The great *Vedas* and *Upanishads* affirm these spiritual principles in an organized compilation.

Belief in the authority of these ancient scriptures is one of the chief prerequisites of Hinduism.

Hinduism does not have only one scripture as the sole authority; rather, there have been innumerable scriptures, each depicting its different ideas and viewpoints. This free flow of spiritual literature from early times provided an abundant scope with which Hinduism could change and modify itself, thus keeping up with times, circumstances, and with people's individual aptitudes. Yet, the essential principles of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* remained untouched. Different ethnic races and tribal groups that amalgamated toward the Hindu religion were able to retain their individual identity to a considerable extent. This openness and freedom of thought has remained an anchor for Hinduism over millennia and has contributed immensely toward its evolution.

In recent times, Swami Vivekananda and many other Hindu leaders have faced countless difficulties while working in foreign lands. They've dealt with these challenges courageously. They've negotiated in a soft manner, made big changes in their own systems, adopted major reforms in their worship centers and generally accommodated to the needs of their time and place. They have stuck to the age-old Hindu ethos of avoiding direct confrontation and have instead chosen tact, humility, compassion and goodwill. Such attitudes have yielded great rewards

DR. HIRO BADLANI, 85, has dedicated his last 20 years to learning and writing about Hinduism, and authored *Hinduism: An Evolutionary Religion*. See: hinduismpath.com



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

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



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Coping with Negative Events

Reflecting on how bad things can happen to good people, and offering insights on dealing positively with life's difficulties

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

OVER THE YEARS I HAVE MET A NUMBER of Hindus who have not been able to accept recent negative life events as something that should have happened. They lament, "Our family has been living a virtuous and dutiful life, and that fact should keep all negative happenings away from us. This is something that should not have happened to us." In extreme cases, their faith had been shaken by their inability to answer the question, "How could God allow this to happen?" The answer I give explains their dilemma in terms of a key Hindu concept—karma, defined as follows in our online lexicon.



Karma: "Action," "deed." One of the most important principles in Hindu thought, karma refers to 1) any act or deed; 2) the principle of cause and effect; 3) a consequence or "fruit of action" (*karmaphala*) or "after-effect" (*uttaraphala*), which sooner or later returns upon the doer. What we sow, we shall reap in this or future lives. Selfish, hateful acts (*papakarma* or *kukarma*) will bring suffering. Benevolent actions (*punyakarma* or *sukarma*) will bring loving reactions. Karma is a neutral, self-perpetuating law of the inner cosmos, much as gravity is an impersonal law of the outer cosmos.

Some religions teach that God metes out rewards and punishments for one's actions. Hinduism, however, explains that it is all handled through the law of karma. I like to compare karma to computer software or a computer game. God has created a software program and installed it in the universe. The program contains all possible human actions and the corresponding "fruits of actions."

Our actions in past lives have created karmic fruits, some of which are to be experienced in this life. It's as though there's a big magnet inside of us that attracts these experiences to us, both positive and negative. Living a good, dharmic life in the present is not sufficient to totally eliminate the negative karmic fruits created in past lives. However, the performance of selfless service (*seva*) can proactively soften the intensity of the karmas we are yet to experience.

When we do not accept the rightness of a negative happening, we become disturbed and distracted. This takes up a lot of mental real estate. Accepting the happening as self-created, on the other hand, allows the disturbance and distraction to gradually fade away.

A common response to a negative event is to focus on those who were involved. It is human nature to be upset with them and possibly even plan to get back at them, to exact some form of revenge. Such responses clearly lead to additional mental anguish while simultaneously missing the main point—you were destined to have this

experience as a "fruit of karma," your own self-created karma. If these individuals didn't treat you wrongly in this way, others would do so in the future. Karma, like gravity, is a never-failing principle; it cannot be entirely averted.

My guru, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, spoke strongly against blaming others: "Each time you blame another person for what has happened to you, or cast blame in any way, tell yourself, 'This is my karma which I was born to face. I did not come into a physical body just to blame others for what happens to me. I was not born to live in a state of igno-

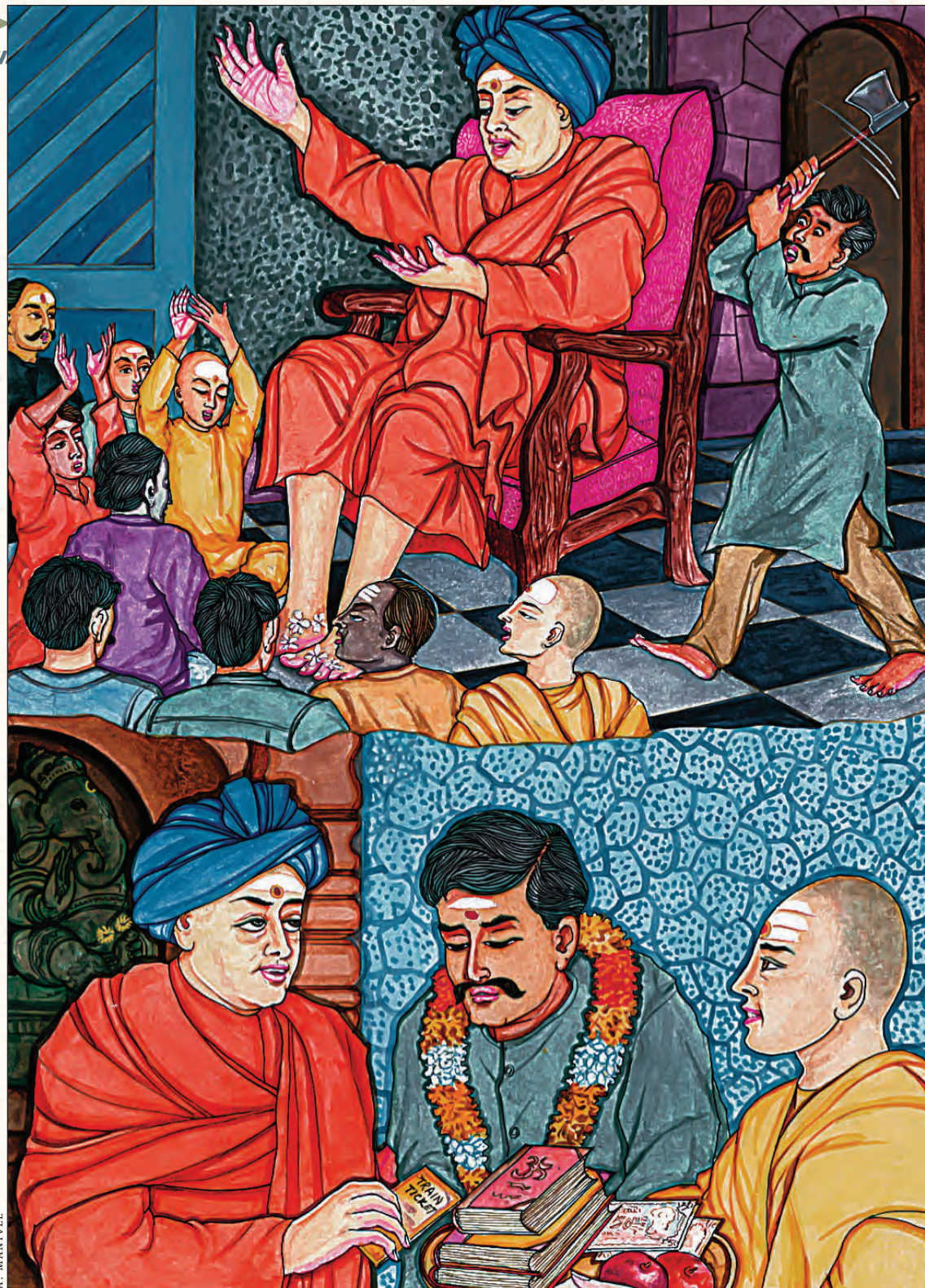
rance created by an inability to face my karma. I came here to spiritually unfold, to accept the karmas of this and all my past lives and to deal with them and handle them in a proper and a wonderful way."

Not blaming others is the first step. To make the second step—erasing any hard feelings toward those who mistreated you—you can follow this high-minded advice from the *Tirukural*: "If you return kindness for injuries received and forget both, those who harmed you will be punished by their own shame."

Being the recipient of a negative "fruit of action" offers the opportunity to learn from the experience. We are treated by others as we treated others in the past. If we swindled money from a business associate in the past, we will someday have that same experience—not immediately, but in time. The *karmaphala*, what the youth might call comeuppance, forces us to experience what the victims of our actions felt when we mistreated them. Such a realization can be seriously upsetting and disruptive, motivating us to never swindle others again. In this way, karma is our teacher. It teaches us to better understand the consequences of our behavior and, if we are attentive, improve it.

Gurudeva spoke on the importance of learning from our experiences: "The basic laws of life are so simple that many people don't heed them. Why? Generally because the opportunities afforded us to fail these tests are so plentiful that we generate very good reasons for not paying attention to our lessons. Shall we say it is normal to fail some of these tests? Yes, isn't this like getting a failing grade on a report card in school, not passing some of the tests and having to take a course over again? We must learn from our experiences or find ourselves repeating them again and again."

Another question that Hindus regularly ask me is why is there so much violence in the world today. The most extreme form of this



Forgive the offender: Swami Sivananda was once attacked and injured by a man wielding a hatchet. Devotees subdued the man and had him arrested. The following day Sivananda visited the man in jail, placed a garland around his neck and thanked him for fulfilling his karmas. He then asked that the assailant be released and bought him a ticket to his home village.

conflict want their group's ways of belief, culture, language, etc., to be followed by others. There is a lack of tolerance for other ways of life.

In contrast, many countries today are known for their sense of pluralism, defined as "a state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious or social groups maintain and develop their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization."

My advice is to adopt the perspective that violence and warring conflicts have nothing to do with God; they arise from individuals holding a belief in tribalism. Holding this view can take away any mental disturbance caused by the high level of hurtfulness we see each day. My guru taught: "Gain the perspective first that it is a wonderful world, that there is nothing wrong in the world at all."

Two more key Hindu viewpoints can help us face life's difficulties: 1) Hindus do not accept the concept that some individuals are evil and others are good. Hindus believe that each individual is a soul, a divine being, that is inherently good. 2) The whole world is one family, "Vasudhaiva kutumbakam."

Nearly everyone in the world is family oriented. The goal of most human effort is to benefit all members of our family. We want them to be happy, successful and religiously fulfilled. When we define family as the whole world, we wish everyone in the world to be happy and fulfilled.

In conclusion, negative events will continue to occur in our life as the fruits of our actions in this and prior lives are magnetized to us by the never-failing law of karma; but these events do not have to be a source of disturbance, distraction, doubt about God and blaming of others. Rather, we can accept them as our own self-created karma, learning from life's difficulties to avoid repeating the cycle again. As for the world, we can accept what is happening as the working out of the remaining tribalism, as the mass consciousness gradually shifts toward a global pluralism; We can also be proactive in sharing our Hindu belief in the divinity of all people and the perspective that the whole world is a one family.

अयं बन्धुरयं नेति गणना लघुचेतसां उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकं
Ayam bandhurayam neti ganana laghuchetasam udaracharitanam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam.

"Only small men discriminate, saying: 'One is a relative; the other is a stranger.' For those who live magnanimously, the entire world constitutes but a family." *Maha Upanishad*, Chapter 6, Verse 72.

challenging question is, "How can God exist if there is so much violence in the world?"

The Wikipedia page entitled "List of Ongoing Armed Conflicts" contains 60 active conflicts of large, medium and small scale. The cause of these armed conflicts has nothing to do with God. It has everything to do with mankind. Unfortunately, there is still a significant amount of "tribalism" on the planet. Tribalism is defined as "tribal consciousness and loyalty, especially exaltation of the tribe above other groups." In other words, individuals involved in





LETTERS

It Has Changed My Life

Thank you for the blessing: at the beginning of the month I received the September issue of HINDUISM TODAY. I cannot put into words enough to justify how moving it has been, being able to read the articles. The magazine has changed my life. I have learned so much about Indian culture and Hinduism. I've learned how to deal with issues in my life as well as issues concerning my past. In many ways HINDUISM TODAY has made me think better, more clearly and it has made me strive to be a better me, and because of that I believe I can be a more successful person. I hope to be able to continue learning from the magazine and hope other can be uplifted by it too.

CONSTATE MILLSI
INDIANA, USA

Ritual Is a Communication

It is unfortunate that so many modern Hindu youth apparently dismiss ritual as irrelevant and unnecessary ("Let's Hear From Hindu Youth," Jan/Feb/Mar 2019). A ritual is simply a method, a way of getting something done. Writing a computer program creates a ritual for the computer to follow. Keying in a telephone number or URL is a ritual for contacting another person or reaching a website. If not done, or not done correctly, the desired result will not occur. Similarly, Hindu worship rituals are proven methods of contacting the Deity being worshiped. Performing or attending the ritual, correctly invoked, with an open heart, one can feel the burst of shakti that is released from the Deity which uses the murti as a temporary physical-plane body. Of course, if one's heart and mind are closed, or the attention is elsewhere, or one does not attend at all, the shakti is not felt.

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Greatness of God in Hinduism

I enjoyed reading "A Search of Self-Inquiry" by Shivali Bhammer and "Claiming Your Omnipresence" by Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami (HINDUISM TODAY, Jan/Feb/Mar 2019). The former states, "God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent," whereas, the latter states, "God is Satchidananda (Sat-Chit-Ananda) or (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss)." Existence corresponds to the Omnipresence aspect of God; Consciousness corresponds to the Omniscience aspect of God; and Infinite corresponds to the Omnipotence and the Bliss aspect of God. As we can see, all the three characterizations of God are compatible with each other. Thus, while God is undefinable, it is still possible to have an

understanding of God at the intuitive level and this understanding can be utilized to meditate on God, attain Self-Realization, and thereby achieve the Ultimate Goal of Moksha (liberation from the cycle of birth and death).

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Not a Religion. What Is it Then?

I enjoyed reading "A Search of Self-Inquiry" by Shivali Bhammer which is very well-written. But it accepts dharma as another religion. Following Sanatana Dharma or being Hindu is not following a religion or believing. It is not faith. Dharma is an endless search for truth: very simply doing yoga to achieve samadhi to free oneself from the cycle of birth and death, achieving liberation by becoming one with the creator and the creation.

Any religion must have a beginning, an originator and a following. Sanatana Dharma cannot and does not have any of these attributes. It is indeed unfortunate that many Hindus miss this point and so does HINDUISM TODAY in its articles. It's a crying shame. It needs correction. As a result of this misunderstanding, many Hindus are converting or have converted to religions, be they alien or Indian, such as Buddhism or Sikhism, or going by a guru's teachings, such as Shirdhi Sai Baba, or calling oneself an "Arya Samaji" or "Swaminarayana." We Hindus or followers of Sanatana Dharma have no God. We are a godless culture. The word God is a Christian creation. To accept the word God is to confuse oneself as followers of diluted Christianity.

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A Godless, Non-Religion?

Regarding the excellent article by Maria Wirth ("Identity: Be Proud to Call Yourself Hindutva!" Oct/Nov/Dec 2018), I wish to submit the following: Hinduism is described variously as "Sanatana Dharma," a term used to denote the "eternal" or "absolute," set of duties incumbent upon all Hindus. In general Sanatana Dharma consists of virtues such as honesty, refraining from injuring living

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beings, purity, goodwill, mercy, and asceticism, etc. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

Unlike most other religions, Hinduism has no single founder, no single scripture, and no commonly agreed set of teachings. Throughout its extensive history, there have been many key figures teaching different philosophies and writing numerous holy books. For these reasons, writers often refer to Hinduism as "a way of life" or "a family of religions" rather than a single religion.

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✓ Our publisher, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, addressed the issues raised in the last two letters in his April/May/June, 2013 Publisher's Desk. Here are some pertinent excerpts:

"Isn't Hinduism simply a way of life?" This is a question I am frequently asked at sat-sang gatherings. Years ago, Swami Chinmayananda, founder of Chinmaya Mission, gave a dramatic lecture on the subject (bit.ly/hinduism-a-way-of-life). Here are key excerpts: "Hinduism is not a religion. It is a way of life.' You can today hear it in every drawing room wherever youngsters are sitting and discussing Hindu culture and India. This is a false statement! No thinking man will accept it or give it any credit at all. It is an empty, high-sounding statement."

Hindus inquiring about the merits of this infamous statement are generally not immersed in the practice of Hinduism. They may have in mind that the sum total of Hinduism is to follow dharma, to live virtuously and fulfill one's duty, and that there is no need to do more. Hinduism is a way of life, but it is a spiritual way of life, encompassing good conduct, worship, selfless service, scriptural study and meditation. And what is the definition of a spiritual way of life? Religion!

It is intellectual suicide and a global public relations disaster to deny that our faith is a religion. Standing together under the banner of Hinduism, we enjoy the many protections given to religions, and we have a respected, unified voice to the media, to government, to boards of education and planning departments. Hinduism's finest future is to stand side-by-side with other religions, not other ways of life. Hindus who parrot the notion that Hinduism is not a religion are not serving Sanatana Dharma well. They have failed to see how wrong-headed this posturing looks in the eyes of the world.



Hinduism Today Gets Two Key Votes of Confidence

IN THE COURSE OF THE REPORTING FOR THE CHAR DHAM PILGRIMAGE, our correspondent, Dev Raj Agarwal, interviewed Swami Ramdev and Swami Avdeshanand at the closing ceremonies of Badrinath Temple, November 20, 2018. During the interview, they gave spontaneous endorsements of our efforts.

Swami Avdeshanand offered: "I have known Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami and the editors for a long time. I read HINDUISM TODAY for the first time in the United States, during the 2000 World Peace Millennium Summit, and have been reading it since then. The magazine is striving hard to preserve Hindu sanskars, culture and consciousness, especially the sentiments of all the *sampradayas* (religious traditions) we have in this country. My best wishes to HINDUISM TODAY."

Swami Ramdev said, "HINDUISM TODAY is working as a messenger, a representative, of Hinduism to conserve Indian knowledge, culture and Vedic civilization in the most authentic way. It is the torchbearer of Indian religion, philosophy and spirituality and showing the way to practice it as a ritual. Holding the sublimity of our Char Dhams and the great deeds of our ancestors in the highest esteem, the magazine compares and contrasts the Hindu religion and culture with other cultures, religions and civilizations of the world. The main objective



Accolades: Swami Avdeshanand (right), Mahamandaleshwar of the Juna Akhara, and Swami Ramdev, renowned yoga teacher and founder of Patanjali Ayurved, with Dev Raj Agarwal at Badrinath Temple

of our life is to move forward and work hard for a bright tomorrow, always reminding ourselves of our history and rich cultural heritage. This is what HINDUISM TODAY is doing with absolute authenticity. Hinduism is a perfect blend of religion, science and spirituality. May you keep up the good work of promoting it. My blessings and best wishes!"

How Hinduism's Brilliance Helps Light Our Way

YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN A BOON is about to come your way, Niraj Thaker of London, UK, reminisced with our staff recently. "One day in '98 or '99 I found HINDUISM TODAY online—a simple click that started a major download for me."

Niraj was born in Mumbai in 1977 and came to the UK 12 years later. His family were devout Hindus. "They would take me to Ganesha puja and Siva festivals, which I enjoyed very much—I've always been spiritual. But the understanding was missing, a vacuum that became more troublesome as the years went on. I never imagined answers to my questions even existed—well, maybe deep in India, somewhere far away. Then my sample magazine arrived and within a few minutes my answers were flying off the page, about the Gods, us, me. So, here's what life's for... Practical and esoteric answers. Most amazing of all, I was suddenly confident I'd found a source I could really count on. Twenty years later, I still feel that way."



"It's good to have found a source you can trust, especially today amid all the disinformation."
Niraj Thaker.

For years, Niraj, a technical project manager in a London bank, has been ordering 20 to 40 copies of each issue that he distributes all around London to individuals, bookstores, grocery stores,

temples and libraries. "One day BBC heard about my enthusiasm and interviewed me for a 20-minute spot on the basics of Hindu belief and practice. I had become that knowledgeable," he laughs.

In 2014, Niraj introduced Thom Drinkwater of Manchester to the magazine. The moment was transforming for Thom, also. He, too, had long been spiritually inclined, but living with urgent, unanswered questions. Thom, 40, is a business development manager for a freight forwarder. "The job has me traveling a lot, which used to be grueling. Now it is my opportunity to listen to audios of Hindu teachings and practice Hindu mindfulness, trying to hold on to the Now, letting go of the irrelevant." At home, Thom does daily sadhana under the guidance of his guru, attends Manchester's Gita Bhavan temple weekly and occasionally dreams of God Siva. "I love



Thom Drinkwater and fiancée Georgina on their engagement day. "Hinduism helps people be kinder."

Hinduism," he confides. "It helps you become more who you want to be. I am grateful, which is why I like to support HINDUISM TODAY. I know from experience how much it helps people." Niraj and Thom both donate generously to the Hinduism Today Production Fund via a monthly automatic donation.

You, too, can help people find a spiritual source they can count on. Can there be a greater cause? Donate to the Production Fund at hheonline.org/donate/pf

Contact us at: 1-888-464-1008 or hhe@hindu.org



QUOTES & QUIPS

“Devotion, devotee and God are one. At the top of devotion, there is God.”

Swami Avdheshanand Giriji, Acharya Mahamandaleswar of the Juna Akhara

The question “Who am I?” is not really meant to get an answer. The question “Who am I?” is meant to dissolve the questioner. **Ramana Maharishi**

Even kings and emperors with heaps of wealth and vast dominion cannot compare with an ant filled with the love of God. **Guru Nanak** (1469–1539), *founder of Sikhism*

You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul. **Swami Vivekananda**

If a tree, which is not a highly elevated living entity, can be so tolerant and merciful to give sweet mangoes even

when hit by anyone; being a king, should I not be more merciful and tolerant than the tree? **Chhatrapati Shivaji** (1830–1880), *founder of the Maratha Kingdom*

The worlds of the elders do not lock all the doors; they leave the right door open. *Zambian proverb*

The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed. **Carl Gustav Jung** (1875–1961), *Swiss psychiatrist who founded analytical psychology*

The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its

powers; and when they realize at the center of the universe dwells the Great Spirit, and that its center is really everywhere, it is within each of us. **Black Elk** (1863–1950), *Medicine man of the Oglala Lakota (Sioux)*

If you have time to chatter, read books. If you have time to read, walk to the mountain, desert and ocean. If you have time to walk, sing songs and dance. If you have time to dance, sit quietly, you happy, lucky idiot. **Nanao Sakaki** (1923–2008), *Japanese poet*

Don't think money does everything or you are going to end up doing everything for money. **Voltaire** (1694–1778), *French writer*

When you practice what is right even though you do not like doing it, and



avoid what is wrong, even though you want to do it, you slowly change. Later, you find yourself in a position where what is to be done is what you like to do and what is not to be done is what you do not like to do. That is, indeed, a successful life.” **Dayananda Saraswati**

A diplomat must always think twice before he says nothing. *Irish Proverb*

We can know only that we know nothing. And that is the highest degree of human wisdom. **Leo Tolstoy** (1828–1910), *Russian writer*

Just as true humor is laughter at oneself, true humanity is knowledge of oneself. **Alan Watts** (1915–1973), *British-American scholar of Comparative Religion*

Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better. **Maya Angelou** (1928–2014), *American poet*

It is better to deserve honors and not have them than to have them and not deserve them. **Mark Twain** (1835–1910)

Even if there is only one possible unified



theory, it is just a set of rules and equations. What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe? **Stephen Hawking**

If lightning is the anger of the gods, then the gods are concerned mostly about trees. Lao Tzu (604–531 bce), *Chinese philosopher*

If you want to see a distant galaxy, what do you do? You go to an observatory, you use a powerful telescope and you can see that which otherwise you can't see. If you want to see into a cell, what do you do? You

go to a laboratory and you use an electron microscope and you can see anything you want in the cell. God's the same way. You go to the temple, and through the sanctified murti, that's how we can easily see God. The temple and the murti within it are set up so that anyone can feel God's presence if they have enough devotion. **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami**, *publisher of Hinduism Today*

As long as we react to karma, we must repeat it. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927–2001), *founder of Hinduism Today*

DID YOU KNOW?

Siva's Disappearing Temple

IF YOU TAKE A TWO-HOUR DRIVE WEST FROM VADODARA, GUJARAT, you might be able to find an unassuming beach with a wonderfully unique Siva temple. The Sri Stambheshwar Mahadev Temple is a small open-air shrine housing a stone Sivalingam in its center. What's unique about this 150-year-old temple is that every day the Sivalingam receives a natural abhishekam from Mother Nature as the sacred stone disappears beneath the waves of the Arabian Sea.

Devotees flock from far and wide to be there for the moment the Lingam is covered by the ocean, and again for the celebration of its return as the waves recede. During low tide, while the Lingam is visible, devotees are able to perform worship and offer flowers. Once the tide rises, the flowers float out into the glistening waves. Though unadorned and simply constructed, this temple and its connection to the diurnal rhythms of nature are deeply appreciated by devotees. Here they can enjoy the soothing sounds of the waves, the fresh sea breeze and the area's surrounding simplicity.

Rising tides: (above) Stambheshwar's stone Sivalingam at low tide; (below) a view of the temple as the ocean rises to cover the lower tier



BASICS

Perfect Goodness

Verses from the ancient *Tirukural*, by Saint Tiruvalluvar

Verse 981: It is said that all good things are natural to those who know their duty and walk the path of perfect goodness.

982: Perfect men hold as good their own good character. They count no other goodness so genuinely good.

983: Love, modesty, propriety, a kindly eye and truthfulness—these are the five pillars on which perfect goodness rests.

984: Penance is the goodness that refrains utterly from killing. Perfection is the goodness that refuses to utter others' faults.

985: Humility is the strength of the strong and the instrument the wise use to reform their foes.

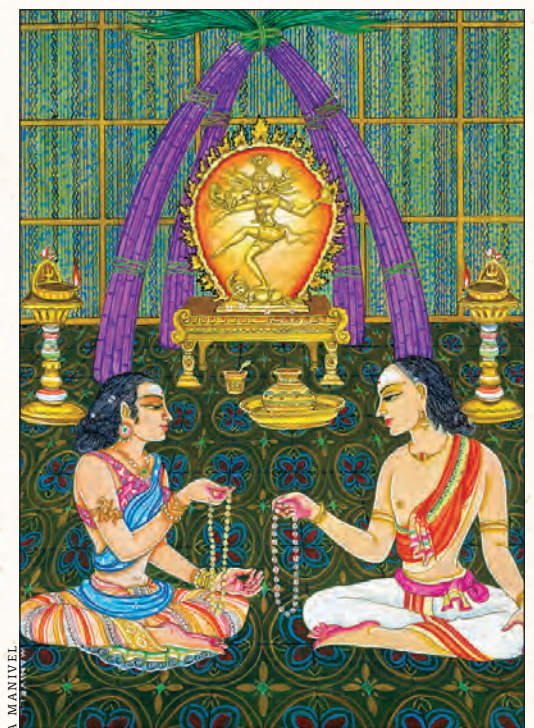
986: The touchstone of perfect character is accepting with dignity defeat from one's inferiors.

987: Of what gain is perfect goodness if it does not do good to all, even to those who have done painful things to others?

988: Deprived of all else, one remains undisgraced if still endowed with strength of character.

989: Destiny's last days may surge with oceanic change, yet perfectly good men remain, like the shore, unchanged.

990: Should the perfect virtue of perfect men ever diminish, this mighty Earth would bear our burdensome weight no more.



Char Dham

The Holy Himalayan Pilgrimage to Four Temples Is Both Grueling And Grace-Giving

The famed temple of Kedarnath sits at 11,755 feet in the magnificent Kedarnath mountains. A flash flood down the hills behind devastated the town in 2013 but left the temple miraculously undamaged.



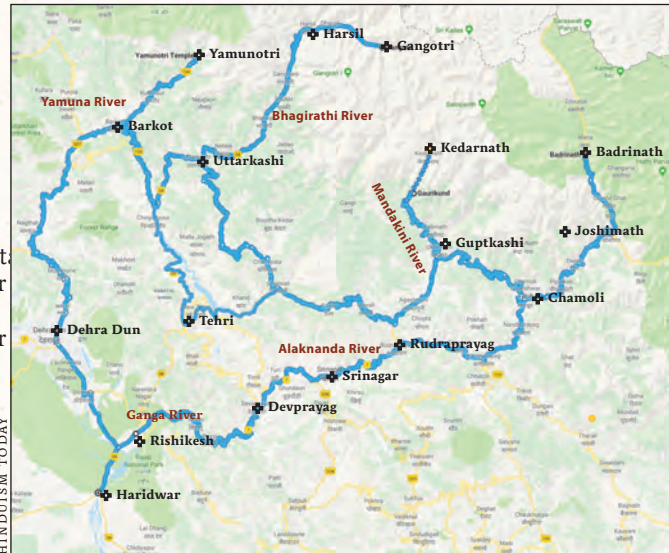
PHOTOGRAPHED AND REPORTED
BY DEVRAJ AGARWAL, DEHRADUN

THE CHAR DHAM PILGRIMAGE of India's Uttarakhand state attracts nearly a million pilgrims a year to all or some of four remote Himalayan temples: Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath. The official name, Chota Char Dham (literally, "small four abodes"), distinguishes this pilgrimage from the Char Dham of greater India, which includes Badrinath, Dwarka on India's western coast, Puri on the eastern and Rameshwaram at the southern tip.

Though its overall distance is relatively short, the Chota Char Dham pilgrimage was arduous until modern times. The high Himalayan paths, snowy and icy even in summertime, deterred all but the bravest; most pilgrims were sadhus. Even today, only Badrinath and Gangotri can be reached by road. Yamunotri is a three-hour hike from the end of the road; Kedarnath, especially since the 2013 floods, is a grueling all-day trek—or for the less adventuresome, a five-minute helicopter ride.

The Indian government has initiated an ambitious US\$1.7 billion project to build an all-weather road system connecting the temples to main highways at lower elevation.

The work is well underway, and one periodically encounters road sections under construction. An even more ambitious \$6 billion



The four-temple pilgrimage: Pilgrims today travel by highways along the area's major rivers, starting their trek at Haridwar, about four hours' drive north of Delhi

rail project is in the planning stages; this will match developments on the Chinese side of the border. Both projects will improve military access to areas near the disputed border. Fortunately for pilgrims, the existing roads are adequate. Strategic border issues are driven from the mind by the overwhelming beauty of the Himalayas, so wonderfully summarized centuries ago in the *Skanda Purana*: "In a hundred ages of the Gods, I could not tell you the glories of the Himalayas. As the dew is dried up by the morning sun, so are the sins of mankind by the sight of the Himalayas."

My home is in Dehradun, on the route to Yamunotri. I can personally attest that

the land of Char Dham reverberates with the spirituality that led sages and saints to choose these remote regions to find solace, explore mountains, forests and river valleys, and perform sadhana in their search for Self

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Visiting Goddess Yamuna: (clockwise from above right) a priest at Kedarnath temple offers food to the young Neelkanth Varni (later Bhagwan Swaminarayan) in 1792; a rugged part of the three-hour trek to the temple; Kharsali Temple above the parking area, winter home of the Goddess; looking down at Janaki Chatti, trailhead for the path to Yamunotri



Realization. They meditated in caves, temples, monasteries and temporary shelters. As part of this holy environment, they ventured to these four sacred temples.

Uttarakhand has a natural border, formed by the snow-covered mountains of the main chain of the Himalayas. To the north is China, to the east, Nepal. Famed for its picturesque valleys and forests, the state is flanked by the holy Yamuna River in the west, close to Himachal Pradesh, and the main branches of the Ganga in the east—the Bhagirathi, Mandakini and Alaknanda. The four temple are situated in the high valleys of these rivers, close to the tree line, around 10,000-foot elevation.

The pilgrimage starts at Haridwar, where the Ganga enters the plains of north India. Earlier, the Char Dham journey began with blessings from the Maharaja of Tehri, considered in these regions an avatar of Lord Vishnu and protector of the four temples.

Until modern times, the four temples were inaccessible in winter, and the Deities were temporarily moved to lower "winter homes." The tradition continues to this day, even though one can now reach the higher temples throughout the year. There have been recent proposals to keep the Deities at the higher temples, but the temple priests oppose such a change.

Before the 20th century, the Char Dham pilgrimage was a major challenge. There were no roads or proper bridges. It took months to make the journey. In a few



stretches we trace the ancient track to Char Dham, which is still used by some sadhus who perform the holy pilgrimage on foot. The old route ran east to west, crossing up and over the high mountain ranges and alpine meadows of sublime beauty. Today's roads follow the river valleys and are much longer in distance.

We have a historical account of this sadhu route in the biography of Bhagwan Swaminarayan (1781-1830) who established the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. He renounced his home at the age of 11 and embarked on a seven-year spiritual journey across India, three years of which were in the Himalayas. He arrived at Kedarnath at the onset of winter in 1792, took darshan of the famous Jyotirlingam, then trekked to

Badrinath. He crossed glacier after glacier and traversed deep gorges, covering approximately 80 miles in nine days. Without maps, food or money, wearing nothing but a loincloth around his waist and completely alone, he navigated the treacherous terrain at heights of more than 19,000 feet and survived temperatures that plummeted to -20°C (-4°F). It was the rare sadhu who attempted this route.

In more recent times, ashrams and affluent people have built modest hostels along these high routes and laid paved paths in places. Thirty years ago I spent a numbingly cold night with sadhus at such a facility at Panwali Kantha in Tehri Gharwal. Hardly any sign is visible of that noble yatra now.

Assigned by HINDUISM TODAY to photograph and report on the Char Dham pilgrimage, I depart Dehra Dun on September 22, 2018, late enough in the year to hopefully avoid the monsoon rains but before the temples would close for winter a few weeks later.

On the Way to Yamunotri

Traveling about 37 miles across the Mussorie Hills from Dehra Dun I reach the wide valley of the Yamuna River, a tributary of the Ganga. Though not many miles from the Bhagirathi and other tributaries, Yamuna travels another 800-plus miles south, passing through Delhi, before joining Ganga at Prayagraj.

The picturesque valley is away from main highways, uncrowded and with few facilities

The arduous trek to the first temple: Yamunotri

Char Dham Routes and Yamunotri Temple





until one reaches the small town of Barkot, 40 miles upstream. Hotels and restaurants here accommodate pilgrims who stop for the night and reach Yamunotri the next day.

It rains all night, and the morning is cold. I take a lovely drive along the meandering river. The valley is dotted with rustic hill villages still insulated from the onslaught of modernization. As we gain elevation, the vegetation changes abruptly, with firs and rhododendrons testifying to the altitude. The monsoon rains have created hundreds of waterfalls along the valley sides.

An unexpected late-September spell of rain had changed everything in Yamunotri valley. The landslide at Syanachatti went active the day before our arrival, blocking the road and forcing hundreds of pilgrims to spend the night on the road, drenched, hungry and stranded. Earth-moving equipment, permanently stationed nearby, has the road opened by morning, so we are only slightly delayed. But the number of pilgrims arriving at Janki Chatti, the small, ill-kempt town at the end of the road, is double normal. Pilgrims proceed on foot or by mule from a huge parking lot. Porters will carry the old and infirm in a *palki* strapped to their back, a method that is hazardous for both porter and pilgrim, should there be a slip.



Those who can walk leave without a second thought, while others bargain with porters, mules and *palki* providers. Prices suddenly go up, and pilgrims grimace at the extra burden on their meager budgets.



The sun shines briefly but fails to warm the valley. The rain continues. I had planned to hike to the temple, but since I am running late, I decide to take a pony—at a price three times higher than the regular charges—in order to get back to Barkot by evening.

The ride is beautiful, with giant conifers flourishing in the narrow valley. The regular path along the riverbank has been washed out by recent rains, forcing pilgrims to negotiate an alternate route with very steep and slippery sections, with no railings to hold on to. A few young officers of the Uttarakhand Police help those who need assistance. I reach the temple, at an elevation of 10,797 feet, in an hour and a half, soaking wet.

Men and women are gathered in clusters at the temple, some coming out of the crowded hot water pool, some changing their clothes in the

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On the way to Gangotri: (counter-clockwise from left) Highway 134 hugs the left bank of the Yamuna River; the small Yamunotri Temple (inset) sits beside the river a few miles from its source; (inset) priest at the Divya Shila shrine; the Syanachatti landslide pilgrims must pass to and from Kedarnath; Gangotri town and temple on the river bank



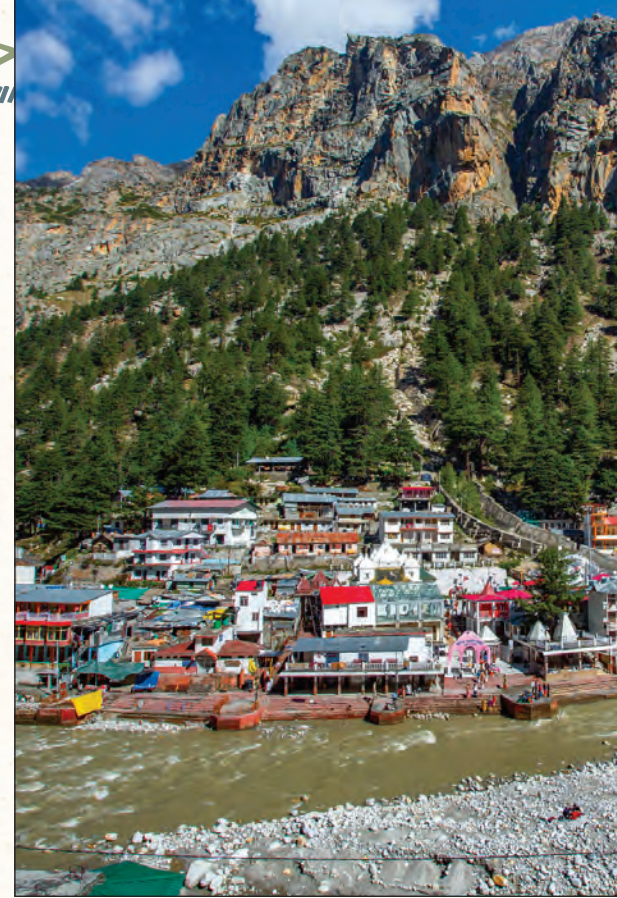
small shed, all wet, struggling to keep belongings dry. It all seems barely manageable in the tight space.

The present Yamunotri temple was constructed by the Maharani of Jaipur in the late nineteenth century. The main object of worship, visited by all pilgrims, is the Divya Shila, a small stone representing the Goddess Yamuna. It is enshrined just outside the temple.

The main prasad is rice cooked in small packets in the boiling hot water of the thermal spring called Surya Kund, which also supplies the hot water for a pool where pilgrims take a dip. As at the other Char Dham temples, many pilgrims make offerings to their ancestors.

Overall, the facilities here could be greatly improved, especially in comparison to the other three temples of the pilgrimage. Pundit Pradeep Uniyal, one of the priests, compares living here to living in the sixteenth century. "The government is absolutely negligent about the development of Yamunotri." For example, nobody from the government came here after the floods in July washed away four shops and some of the bathing ghats.

I return to Barkot in the evening, just before the Syanachatti landslide area again becomes impassable, leaving pilgrims stranded



business places. The dirty and disorganised Yamunotri left a sour taste. We should instill in our children love for our culture, holy places and value system."

Onward to Gangotri

I proceed from Barkot the next morning. Nourished by the monsoon rains, the mountainsides wear a glistening blanket of fresh green grass. As we head eastwards, the winding road passes through spectacular pine forests, then enters the Bhagirathi River valley and passes through Uttarkashi, "Kashi of the North," one of many sacred places and river confluences along the Char Dham route. Uttarkashi is a must for many pilgrims and has lots of good hotels and ashrams. We travel north past Gangnani, with its popular sulfur springs. About 43 miles from Uttarkashi, the valley opens up into a famous apple-growing region started by Frederick Wilson, a British soldier who deserted following the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 and sought refuge

here. We stop for the night at Harsil, just below the rustic village of Mukhwa, winter seat of Gangotri. The temple, a replica of Gangotri, is reached across a small suspension bridge. Further up is a similar

on both sides. At Barkot I meet four Gujarati families from Mumbai who have also just returned from Yamunotri. Rajul Patel mentions he was a bit dejected by the experience, "Holy places should be holy places and not

Yamunotri and on to Gangotri





temple, Markandeyapuri, the seat of Goddess Annapurna, who comes down with Ganga for the winter.

At Bhironghati, we stop at the tea shop of Mathura Prasad, who started his business here 45 years ago. The unexpectedly sagacious chaiwala shared his observations on the changing face of the yatra over the years: "Most of the visitors come for fun now. Yatra is just a little part of their itinerary. Days of poor pilgrims carrying their belongings on the head and surviving on *sattu* [a mix of ground barley, chickpeas, sugar and salt] are gone. The yatra took months back then, and you either braved the ordeals of the journey and made it home, or just perished. That was a true yatra."

Bhaironghati is at the junction of two roads: one leads to Gangotri, just nine kilometers to the east, and the other north to Nelang Valley, from where one can enter Himachal Pradesh or Tibet. This was a popular trade route before the Chinese aggression of 1962. Judging by temple statues and art-work, I believe many artisans and laborers must have come from Tibet to work on the temples of Garhwal along such routes. For



example, in many places the face of Lord Siva resembles that of Buddha.

One is again and again overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of the mountains. As I approach Gangotri, the still-distant 21,000-foot Sudarshan Parvat stands like a tower far ahead, looming above the giant conifers nearby. I cannot resist the temptation to go down to the thundering Suryakund waterfall before visiting the temple. What a soul-stirring sight it is to watch the surging water of the Bhagirathi falling abruptly into a giant

crater. The resulting noise and vibrations are beyond words.

The present temple of Gangotri was constructed by a Gorkha commander named Amar Singh Thapa in the early eighteenth century. The banks of the river have all been turned into walls of concrete. Platforms used by pilgrims for rituals flank the river for quite a distance.

This temple lacks the intricate art-work and pillars we often see in older temples of the Himalayas, but it is beautifully constructed. The sanctum sanctorum enshrines majestic display of five murtis: Ma Ganga, flanked by Durga, Lakshmi, Annapurna and Saraswati. Also enshrined here are murtis of Bhagirathi, Yamuna, Jahnvi and Ganesh.

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Gangotri: (counter-clockwise from left) A family join hands as they perform puja to the river; pilgrims wait to enter the temple; pilgrims gather at the river ghats to make pindaan offerings to their ancestors; a fully functional kitchen set up by Nepalese tour operators by the side of the highway



The crowd swells as the day progresses. A long queue of pilgrims is systematically moving towards the temple for darshan, managed competently by a few young women officers of the Uttarakhand Police.

Groups of pilgrims sit on the river bank, against the backdrop of Sudarshan Parvat. A group of 32 from Chhattisgarh state in central India are busy in a collective ritual of *pindaan*, food offerings to their ancestors. Even though the weather had prevented them from visiting Yamunotri, their focus is on gratitude. One of them, Lachchhi Ram Rathore, expresses this beautifully: "The blessings of our ancestors brought us here. What a feeling of joy it was to offer pindaan to them. I felt as if I was sitting in heaven."

Pundit Ganesh Semwal, the pujari and the Joint Secretary of the Temple Committee, tells me the tradition at Gangotri Dham is to have local Teertha Purohits instead of the Ravals usually brought from South India. Their priests hail from the Semwal families of Mukhwa, the winter abode of Ma Ganga.

I am captivated by a bus with Nepal plates



to visit its fabled Kashi Vishvanath Temple, which stands in the middle of a large complex dotted with smaller temples, all wearing a modern look. I sit on a bench for more than thirty minutes, lost in listening to the Siva Mahima Stotram. Mahant Jayendra Puri, the chief priest, tells me it was predicted in the *Skanda Purana* that Lord Siva would establish a second Kashi in Uttarakhand, which would be known as Uttarkashi. The queue of devotees is almost unending till nightfall.

The Road to Kedarnath

Thanks to the all-weather-road project, the day's travel is quick—130 miles in just seven hours. The route takes us along the Tehri dam and reservoir until we intersect the road that goes from Rishikesh to Badrinath, last of the Char Dham temples. We take the route to Guptkashi and Phata, where there are many resorts and helicopter companies. The original 75-mile path to Kedarnath, which followed the right bank of the Mandakini River, was totally washed away by disastrous floods in 2013 that killed thousands.

I return to Harsil from Gangotri the same day, spend the night and move on toward Kedarnath. This time I stop longer at Uttarkashi

Gangotri, Near the Headwaters of the River Ganga

Honoring Ancestors





A new path is being constructed on modern lines along the left bank, with all kinds of facilities along the way. It is operational already, more than half of it paved with stone slabs and concrete, but longer by a mile or more and much steeper. Many pilgrims are disheartened to realize the trek to the temple can take a full eight hours.

More than ten private helicopter companies ply the route between Kedarnath and Phata, offering a five-minute flight and a spectacular view for a one-way fare of about US\$55. The demand for this service, used now by perhaps a quarter of pilgrims, has risen since the trek has become more difficult.

Things feel different as I get down at the helipad in Kedarnath. It is not just the crowd of pilgrims, but the spirit with which they walk, chanting "Jai Baba Kedar!" Somebody once told me you can feel the presence of Siva in Kedarnath. That is certainly true today!

There is no other temple like Kedarnath, literally "The Powerful Lord." The spiritual presence of the Himalayas makes it so special. Perhaps this is the reason Lord Siva chose it as a favored place. The stone temple stands against the massive glaciers and high snow peaks of Kedarnath range. Lucky pilgrims see these natural wonders in all their grandeur when the weather is clear, as it was for me today.



The area is much changed now, five years after torrential rains unleashed a massive flood from a glacial lake a thousand feet above the temple. Water swept through the town at 25 mph—that's 36 feet per second. Within minutes the flood was over, leaving the town destroyed and bodies everywhere. Downstream there was even greater damage and death. But Kedarnath Temple itself was untouched, protected by a huge boulder (now an object of worship) which lodged behind it, splitting the flood waters to both sides. Rebuilding efforts have proceeded nonstop since 2013.

The main entrance to the temple is called

the Mahadwar. The first section of the huge building is the Sabha Mandap, where a brass Nandi sits on the stone floor. The statues of Veerabhadra, Bhurangi, the Pandavas (said to have come here) and Lakshmi Narayan adorn this hall. The walls and intricately carved massive pillars are all black and shiny, coated with soot, oil and ghee over the years.

The middle section of the temple is Him-giri, where murtis of Ma Bhagwati, Ganesha and His consorts, Riddhi (Prosperity) and Siddhi (Spirituality), are housed. In the third section, the sanctum sanctorum, is Siva as a natural rock Sivalingam, the main object of worship here. Everyone looked overwhelmed and tears of joy, contentment and attainment flowed down the cheeks of many. Surely, it is difficult to contain one's emotions in a place like Kedarnath, for Siva lives here in person, many believe. Here, unlike most temples, one can touch the Sivalingam.

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Siva's place: (clockwise from above left) A picker in the famed apple-growing area of Bhagirathi River valley; pilgrims with their offering plates approach Kedarnath Temple; Kedarnath town from above; well-bundled pilgrims take ponies up to Kedarnath; Rudraprayag, confluence of the Mandakini and Alaknanda tributaries of the Ganga



The Grand Route to Kedarnath Temple





Braving the chilly wind on the cold floor in the courtyard, many pilgrims perform family rituals before entering the temple. But the balmy sun and the divine view of the Kedarnath peak do not last long. With the arrival of colder winds and gathering clouds, pilgrims start to disperse—some to the helipad, most to hike back down to the roadhead.

Kedarnath township is a busy construction site, with masons, carpenters and laborers working day and night to return it to its pristine glory. Buildings, bridges, roads and embankments are all under construction simultaneously, all day and night, year around.

I take the opportunity to climb up to the Bhairav Temple. From here, one has a commanding view of the town against the backdrop of the valley, with the Kedarnath peak towering above the northern horizon. But the extravagant display of divinity and nature is short-lived: in a minute, the entire valley is engulfed with clouds and fog so thick that visibility is reduced to a few meters. Sudden rain and sleet force me to turn back, seeking a safe shortcut down to the hotel.

The weather has grounded the helicopters, and I retreat to the town's single hotel, the Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam, where I meet N. Subba Rao of Bangalore and his group. He has traveled widely in mountains, including Kailash and Mansarovar in Tibet, and



always wished to undertake the Char Dham pilgrimage. "We cannot explain how we feel here, for it is too special and personal to be explained. I get energy from mountains. I am more calm and patient after coming here."

Lalita Sivaswami from the group appreciates the discipline and orderly running of the yatra on Kedarnath circuit. "Prices are fixed and the *panchayat*, the local body looking after the yatra arrangement and convenience of pilgrims, very kindly ascertains and suggests what one should hire—a porter, pony or a palki—considering the age and health

of the various pilgrims. I came here for Char Dham, not for mountains. If Bhagwan calls me, I will come back for the yatra again."

Praddyuman, a young boy in the group, is here for the love of mountains; for him, the pilgrimage is a bonus.

The night's cold is unbearable, and the construction noises keep me awake until midnight. More pilgrims arrive in the morning, having taken a bus from Haridwar, at \$35 each. They had been forced to stop the trek up about a mile short of Kedarnath the previous afternoon. They had been able to hire expensive bedding, but had slept without supper. Dhoman Kushwaha, the group's leader, says the darshan of Ma Yamuna and Ganga have compensated for that. Jayashree Thakur expresses concern for the palki carriers; one had fallen while carrying a pilgrim and injured himself. "Our ministers should

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Getting there is half the experience:

(counter clockwise from above left) Pilgrim Babu Ram Sahni, 88, walking the Char Dham; looking down on the Alaknanda on the way to Joshimath (footpath in the foreground, highway in the background); view from across the Alaknanda toward Badrinath temple; the rare Himalayan blue monal, a type of pheasant



come here, walking, and see under what conditions men work in this difficult terrain." Her niece, Deepa Trivedi, feels the presence of Siva here. "Siva saves you from ordeals. He saved us yesterday and helped us reach here. You feel purity here."

Most who fly in by helicopter return the same way, but I opt to hike back down to Gaurikund. There are tea shops, rest shelters and other arrangements for pilgrims at short intervals. Traffic is controlled, and the porters, ponywallas and palkis are organized and polite. Initially there are almost no signs of the 2013 floods, but as the valley becomes narrower and the track runs closer to the river, we can see large landslides and washed-out embankments left by the disastrous floods. Parts of the old track on the right bank are still visible, but surely beyond hope of repair. It took me three and a half hours to reach Gaurikund, which by that time was almost deserted, the next group of pilgrims having either airlifted to Kedarnath or begun their trek up.

Off to Badrinath

I return to Guptkashi for the night and then leave in the morning for Badrinath, the last temple of the Char Dham. The shortest route is to take the forest road to Gopeshwar. On the way is the small town of Okhimath



which houses the Omkareshwar Temple, winter seat of Kedarnath. The road from here passes through some of the most spectacular alpine forests of the Himalayas, and the area of Chopta is aptly called the "cradle of the Himalayan flora and fauna." These forests are home to bears, leopards, the rare Himalayan Thar (a relative of the mountain goat), the bharal or Himalayan blue sheep and that most exotic of mountain birds, the spectacularly iridescent blue monal, which I was lucky to have photographed on an earlier trek in this region.

Just before reaching Chopta, one can see the old Char Dham pilgrims' track and a now-abandoned dharmasala for sadhus which was active up to twenty years ago. Many Char Dham pilgrims opt for the one-hour trek from Chopta town through

picturesque alpine meadows dotted with rhododendrons and firs to reach Tungnath Temple, the highest of the Siva temples.

Another Siva temple, apparently contemporary with Kedarnath, is located in Gopeshwar, near the Alaknanda River. In the courtyard stands a giant trident inscribed in a language yet to be deciphered, along with many other murtis.

Two hours away is Joshimath, where Adi Shankaracharya is said to have attained enlightenment under the giant mulberry tree. The Narsingh Temple here is called the winter seat of Badrinath, but the main murti of Lord Vishnu remains there throughout the year. Only the seat of Shankaracharya is sent down in winter. Two other murtis—Uddhav, a friend of Krishna's, and Kubera, God of Wealth—are sent down to the village of Pandukeshwar, about 20 km closer to Badrinath.

We soon approach the tree line and then arrive at the small plateau upon which Badrinath sits with the majestic Neelkanth Mountain behind it. This temple, one of the most prominent for Vaishnava Hindus, is at least a thousand years old. It is said that a fully carved statue of Lord Vishnu, who is worshiped here as Badrinarayan, was discovered by Shankaracharya in the ninth century at Narad Kund and relocated to this site. The temple is unique in that it has a painted

Traversing the Rugged Himalayas



Lord Vishnu's Mountain Home on the Alaknanda





facade and is covered from all sides. Its resemblance to a Buddhist shrine leads some to believe it was once a Buddhist temple; but to me, the architecture of the temple is typically Hindu. As mentioned earlier, many medieval temples and statues in North India have Buddhist influence on them—probably because of their close proximity to Tibetan artisans. It was closer and easier to hire labor from across the border than to bring people from the plains of India, especially since there was no road access to Badrinath before 1965.

The pillars of the temple are massive and intricately decorated. The main statue, inside the central sanctum, is that of Lord Vishnu in standing position holding His conch and chakra in two of His four hands. Also housed here are murtis of Uddhav, Kubera, Narada, Lakshmi, Garuda, Navdurga and others.

The town, loaded with pilgrim facilities, pulses with life and religious fervor. The wish to perform *tarpan*, offerings of water from a sacred river to the ancestors, is the chief cause for visiting Badrinath. I happen to be here during the fortnight of *pitrapaksha*, the time to honor ancestors, which falls in late September each year. The bathing ghats are packed with groups of pilgrims performing *tarpan*. Priests from all areas of India are helping perform the rituals for those coming from their regions.



Before any ritual, pilgrims take a bath in Taptkund, the sulphur springs below the temple. After the bath, many pilgrims observe the ritual of *pindaan* by the river before entering the temple, while some directly perform their *puja* inside the temple. The daily rituals inside the four temples begin early in the morning and last till late evening, when *arati* is performed.

Ishwar Prasad Namboodri, the young and energetic Rawal of Badrinath, has the vision of a modern planner. He is concerned about cleanliness, health, sanitation and safety of pilgrims. At the same time, he is skeptical about the hasty way many pilgrims perform rituals. He laments the use of plastic plates and plastic flowers, feeling we should make our offerings on plates made of leaves and adorn our Gods with natural flowers.

For many, the pilgrimage is a spiritual attainment not easily described in words. Sandeep Badham, a businessman from Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh, is here in a group of four families. They had come on Char Dham Yatra in 2013, and just escaped the Kedarnath flood. "It was the sheer blessings of the Gods that saved our lives. We returned home without *darshan*, so here we are once again. This time we have performed all the rituals at all four shrines. I have gotten everything I ever aspired for. What I have received could

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Lord Vishnu's place: (counterclockwise from above) Ishwar Prasad Namboodri, Rawal of Badrinath Temple; making offerings of *pindaan* to ancestors on the river banks; performing *homa* after the river worship; devotees climb the temple steps with their offerings



not be bought anywhere. I hope the next generation of my family follows in my footsteps."

My own pilgrimage to Char Dham ends with that inspiring interview. The 300-km return trip through Rishikesh is completed in just a day, and I am back home.

Closing Badrinath for the Winter

A few weeks after my return home, I find these Himalayan temples are not quite finished with me: the opportunity arises to attend the closing of Badrinath Temple for the winter. This is a spectacular and exciting event, made even more so by the presence of Swami Avdheshanand, head of Juna Akhara, and the multifaceted Swami Ramdev, two of the most popular swamis in India, who came unannounced to join the worship out of their love of the God here (see page 13 for their kind words about HINDUISM TODAY).

The Char Dham temples have the tradition of six months of *nar puja*, worship by humans, and six months of *Narayan puja*, worship by the Gods. This likely started because weather constraints made the higher reaches of Uttarakhand inaccessible in winter.

On my way to Badrinath, I have the good fortune in Joshimath to meet Pandit Jagdamba Prasad Sati, chief priest of Badrinath for 30 years. He explains that preparations for the closing begin at Vijaya Dasami, the



end of the Navaratri festival—October 19 in 2018. It is also at that time the precise date for the closing of the temple is determined. The closing dates for Yamunotri and Gangotri temples are specific auspicious days of the Hindu calendar. Gangotri, for example, closes on Deepavali. For Badrinath, however, the temple closes on a day in November most

favorable for the horoscope of the country.

In the old days, the Tholing monastery in Tibet would make a woolen jacket for the Lord and prepare sufficient yak ghee with special herbs for the shrine's lamp to burn for six months. When the temple opened again, people from both Tibet and China would come to worship. They are said to have been experts in reading the face of the murti and divining the future of their people. Now these preparations are done by the Bhotia tribe of Mana, the furthestmost Indian village of Badrinath valley, who had close relations with the people across the border in Tibet before the Chinese aggression of 1962.

I arrived on November 19, the day before the closing. The temple is decorated beyond recognition with marigolds on every side.

The courtyard is packed with pilgrims, all covered with heavy woolens and busy enjoying the beauty of the valley, totally devoid of greenery, as most of it has dried out with the onslaught of winter frost and the first snow, which fell a few days earlier.

There are only a few hotels and ashrams in operation now, and pilgrims have a tough time finding lodging. As evening approaches, the temperature is just four degrees Celsius. Roads wear a deserted look, with all restaurants and shops closed. The only activity is near the temple. Fortunately there are

Honoring the Gods and the Ancestors





volunteer groups here offering hot food and a wide variety of snacks and sweets.

The severe cold has not dampened the spirit of pilgrims. They stand barefooted in a long queue at the facade of the temple, their numb fingers holding plates of food they will offer inside the house of Lord Vishnu.

The closing ceremony is five days long. The shrine for Ganesha is closed on the first day. On the second, elaborate food offerings are made at the nearby temple of Adi Kedar-eshwar. On the third, the *Vedas* are recited and all religious books closed. On the fourth, the chief priest, Ishwar Prasad Namboodri, dressed as a woman, takes the murti of Lakshmi and places it to the left of Lord Vishnu. All the embellishments and jewelry of Lord Vishnu's murti are removed and packed, and He becomes Nirakar, the Formless God.

On the fifth day, the pilgrims—5,237 by official count—start gathering at the temple before sunrise, many using the sulfur springs for relief from the cold. Puja worship begins at 4:30am. Midway through the morning, Swami Avdheshanand and Baba Ramdev take everyone by surprise with their arrival.

At 1:30pm, Ishwar Prasad Namboodri removes all floral decorations from the murti and dresses it in the woollen coat stitched by the women of Mana. In front of the temple, some of the crowd dance in ecstasy, shouting

"Jai Badri Vishal." Music is provided by a bagpipe band of the Indian Army's Garhwal Scouts, permanently stationed at Joshimath.

Finally, all eyes focus on the temple entrance. The chief executive officer of the temple, B. D. Singh, escorts Ishwar Prasad Namboodri as he walks backward down the steps holding the statue of Uddhava on his head. This and several other murtis will be sent down to Pandukeshwar and Joshimath for the winter. The ritual is over in just a few minutes, and the temple doors are closed. People bow their heads in gratitude to the Gods for blessing the world with everything.

It's time to leave. A rush of people, cars, and taxis fill the road. Army vehicles offer to drop people off at Joshimath. Only a handful of sadhus and army people remain in Badrinath for the winter.

Many pilgrims come here every year for the closing. Vinod Paruthi of Dehra Dun has been here 15 years in a row. He gets emotional talking about the closing ceremony. "It overwhelms me, each time I watch it. What a divine sight it is. How can you experience something like this if you remain at home?" Yes, I thought, that is why we pilgrimage: to have the experiences one cannot have at home.

The memories of the pilgrimage stay long in our heads and hearts, undistracted by ups and downs of daily life to which we soon

return. What makes us different now? The divine landscape, the darshan of the supreme, in one form or the other, or the echoing of chants like "Jai Baba Kedar" in our ears? Or is it everything that comes our way during the holy travel: the chill of the air, the gurgling noise of those torrents, that shiver down the spine, the vibrance of the sanctum, all so special and lasting. The ancestor worship takes us beyond time and space, to the company of those departed souls. It is like walking hand in hand with the most loved family members who are no more with us now. That special feeling of contentment and accomplishment is something we can't buy. We are blessed each time we take up something like the holy pilgrimage of Char Dham, our personal meeting with the Gods.

Becoming the formless God: (clockwise from right) Swamis Ramdev (left) and Avdheshanand (center) enliven the event with their unexpected presence; devotees capture the final moments of the closing on dozens of mobile phones; the high point of the day when the head priest (center, under the white flowers) walks backward out of the temple; some devotees have "Badrinath" and "Radhe" stamped on their faces with sandalwood paste



DEV RAJ AGARWAL

Closing Badrinath for the Winter



DEV RAJ AGARWAL



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WORLD

Reclaiming India's Civilizational Glory

Delhi's Conference on Soft Power explored the country's potential for global cultural and spiritual influence, apart from military might and economic vigor

BY DIMPLE KAUL, DELHI

DELHI'S ELEGANT TAJ MAHAL HOTEL was the scene of India's first Conference on Soft Power, presented December 17 to 19, 2018, by the India Foundation's Center for Soft Power. Collaborating in producing the event were the Indic Academy, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, with academic support from Nalanda University in Rajgir and the Center on Public Diplomacy of the University of Southern California.

The Center for Soft Power undertakes research to map the various elements of India's cultural influence, including ayurveda, cinema, cuisine, design, handicrafts, sports, literature, music, performing arts, spirituality, tourism, museums, visual arts and yoga. As shared by Ram Madhav, director of the India Foundation, the aim is to train people who represent India in other countries to effectively propagate and leverage India's soft

power, including through collaboration with India's embassies worldwide.

The conference comprised 63 speakers from 16 countries and an unusually astute audience of 300 delegates. The speakers included academicians, practitioners, experts, artists, policy makers and diplomats. The well-run event was broadcast live and is available in its entirety on YouTube (bit.ly/softpower-delhi).

The conference came at a moment when awareness of India's soft power across various domains needs to be raised, especially among common citizens. There is much that we in India might take for granted—spirituality, pluralism, humanism, worship of nature, sustainability. These principles are not the norm elsewhere. India is respected worldwide for its wisdom, and Indians must become aware of this and take pride in it. Toward this end, the Center is planning a series of smaller conferences across the world.

In the opening session Dr. Vinay Prabhakar Sahasrabudde, president of India Coun-

cil for Cultural Religions and member of the Rajya Sabha, emphasized that soft power is about mind space and not geographical territory. "Soft power is like charisma—not that of a person, but of a country, community or culture." He said India's soft power could provide a way to "a frictionless world of peace, harmony and coexistence."

Next, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, vice president of India, provided a concise explanation of the conference theme: "Soft power has been defined as the ability of nations to shape the preferences and influence the behavior of other nations through appeal and attraction as opposed to coercion. It consists of three major categories—a nation's culture, its political values and its foreign policy. It includes the ability to affect others through persuasion, agenda framing and positive attraction using culture, values, inherent knowledge, spirituality, wisdom and foreign policy. India has, from time immemorial, been one of the foremost cultural forces



Scrutinizing soft power: (left to right) H.E. Venkaiah Naidu, Vice-President of India, addresses the opening session; directors, advisors and staff of the conference organizers, India Foundation

in the world. It was known as *Vishwaguru* [universal teacher], as India provided cultural, spiritual and intellectual leadership. Soft power represents one of the newest frameworks through which India can understand and leverage its role in the international order. From yoga to spirituality to Bollywood; Bharatnatyam to Buddhism; cuisine to tourism, India has immense potential to use its soft power for expanding its global outreach."

The second day's morning panel on the soft power of cuisine was unexpectedly engaging. Manjit Singh Gill, president of the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations, explained the ayurvedic roots of India's culinary traditions, highlighting how our food has evolved on the pillars of wellness and sustainability and how its inherent knowledge could be applied to other cuisines to similarly improve their healthfulness and sustainability.

The keynote address for the following session on public diplomacy was given by Syed Akbaruddin, India's permanent representative to the United Nations. The popular diplomat highlighted the strength of India's soft power—sung and unsung, acknowl-

edged and unacknowledged—beginning with Hansa Mehta, who got the language of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights changed from "all men are created equal" to "all human beings are created equal." Others spoke to the soft-power impact of the various festivals of India conducted abroad, educational scholarships for foreigners, technical collaboration, humanitarian assistance to countries in need and even India's UN peace-keeping missions.

In the session on museums, Deepika Ahlawat, Museum Curator and Art Consultant from the UK, pointed out how most museums, with their collections of plunder from "natives," are essentially remnants of colonial power. Consequently, their narrative only validates native culture, traditions and practices as seen through a colonial worldview. For example, she said, those in the UK know about China not from the Chinese but through the colonial lens. This holds true for India, too, and that is a problem. There have even been attempts to paint as wrong the repatriation to India of bronzes stolen centuries ago by the French.

The performing arts session, with representatives from the US, UK and Netherlands, revealed the deep appreciation our artists receive from audiences worldwide and the warm welcome they are extended while on foreign shores. Audience members pondered why this is not replicated on a larger scale, both within the country and abroad. Mem-

bers of the related panel on art, craft and design discussed how practitioners in those fields bring versatility and diversity to an increasingly globalized, mono-cultural world.

The session on yoga brought multiple unique flavors to the stage. Nouf Marwaai of Saudi Arabia told her story of personal grit and determination in teaching yoga in a restrictive environment, as part of a gradual transformation of their society's treatment of women. Gopi Kallayil, "chief evangelist" of Google marketing in the US, told how he established yoga classes on the Google campuses, and even recently introduced bhajan chanting in class. Some audience members wondered if this would be allowed in Indian corporations without someone invoking "secularism" to put down a religious tradition. Suhag Shukla, executive director of the Hindu American Foundation, cautioned the audience against the appropriation and dilution of yoga, especially the multifaceted efforts to separate yoga from India's religious traditions and Hinduism in particular.

Bharat Bala, the talented and popular Indian film director, producer and screenwriter of *Vande Mataram* fame, gave a moving presentation on the soft power of cinema in which he showcased the beauty of India and her people through inspiring human-interest stories. Bala's palpable love for his country and his appreciation for his heritage left the audience emotionally overwhelmed, marveling at the myriad layers of his work.



Conference scenes: (left to right) Evening dance performance by Radha Kalpa Dane Company; Sudarshan Ramabadrar, conference organizer and administrative head of India Foundation's Center for Soft Power; the attentive, well informed audience; Chef Gill during his engaging presentation on food; delegate asks a question following a presentation



Particularly remarkable was a poignant short video on Haldar Nag's poetry in the Kosi-li language. The applause was thunderous when Bala mentioned he is planning to make a thousand such films in regional languages, aimed at everyone, millennials included.

Concluding the evening, and leaving the audience delighted and spellbound, was a dance recital portraying the divine feminine by Rukmini Vijayakumar of Raadha Kalpa Dance Company.

Attendance stayed high right to the end, demonstrating the quality of the conference. The third and last day started with the session on ayurveda and the insightful and humor-laced speech by Dr. Vasant Lad of the ayurvedic Institute in the US. The Bali-based Dr. Abhishek Joshi explained how ayurveda is getting established in Bali. He also described his work with the local people to upgrade the traditional Balinese medicine through application of the principles of ayurveda. Rajiv Vasudeva, founder and CEO of AyurVAID Hospitals in India, emphasized the need to create a clear, uniform narrative of ayurveda in India. [See sidebar for more on the concept of "narrative."] Dr. Ramkumar Kutty concurred, saying it is important that traditional Indian practitioners own the system's narrative, lest it morph into something away from its roots.

The panel on education included veterans from the field such as Sunaina Singh, Vice-chancellor of Nalanda University; Tatiana Shaumyan, Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow; Shaunaka Rishi Das, Oxford Center for Hindu Studies, UK; Dr. Subhash Kak, Oklahoma State University, USA; Dr. Ramdas Lamb, Department of Religion, University of Hawaii, USA; and Come Carpentier

De Gourdon, World Affairs Journal, France.

Sunaina Singh emphasized that Indian soft power is intrinsically embedded in our education. She cited this as one of the reasons for the leadership of global tech giants by Indians. Shaunaka Rishi Das pointed out that you can study Hinduism in London but not in Delhi, because of the "intellectually colonial context" one finds in India.

Ramdas Lamb described the courses he teaches, explaining that when introducing Indic faiths he provides context to appreciate India better. He pointed out that in the West Buddhism is taught by Buddhists, Islam by Muslims, Judaism by Jews, Christianity by Christians—yet Hinduism is rarely taught by Hindus.

In the session on tourism, Anuradha Goyal pointed out that all the themes covered in the conference essentially fell under the umbrella of tourism. She mentioned how the practice of *yatra*, religious pilgrimage, connects all of India, ensuring that people from one part of the country would get to visit the other parts. Manish Sinha, founder of Unhotel, India, stated that the Unhotel chain offers experiences enabling non-Indians, especially visiting students, to reimagine India absent the clichés they have learned earlier.

In the education session, Dr. David Frawley noted that the soft power of India's spiritual traditions is generated by their experiential nature. Dena Merriam of the Global Peace Initiative of Women received applause when she affirmed that she is a Hindu and has no problem with the H word. Likewise, German-born author and resident of India Maria Wirth came across as an unapologetic Hindu who would like fellow Hindus to be unabashed in their pride for their faith, one that

propagates connectedness and consciousness.

The conference concluded with a discussion on the soft power of language and literature, chaired by Makarand Paranjape of the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies in Shimla. He lamented the lack of critical editions or translations of many major Indic texts. Paul Palmaroza, Director of Sanskrit at St. James school in London, explained how their children are taught Sanskrit from an early grade. The audience was enchanted with a video snippet of his British students chanting shlokas before the Queen.

Chirapat Prapandvidya, Professor of Sanskrit Studies, Silpakorn University, Thailand, spoke about the connect between the culture of India and Thailand, primarily due to the influence of Buddhism. He surprised many by mentioning in passing that India had played a key role in Thailand being the only South Asian country not colonized in the 19th century.

US author Robert Arnett emphasized—as did Vice President Naidu—that for millennia India has been the guardian of divine truth for all of humanity. He asked Indians of the 21st century to shoulder the same responsibility and guide the spiritually bankrupt Western civilization.

Oscar Pujol, an Indologist from Spain, shared his view that hard power does not survive without soft power. He gave the collapse of Soviet Union as an example of hard power withering for lack of soft power. Hard power, he postulated, gives results in the short term, but not in the long run.

Paramacharya Sadasivanathaswami, editor of HINDUISM TODAY, spoke about the work the magazine has been doing to raise awareness about Hindu traditions, sensibilities and culture across the globe. He emphasized the need for exploring the soft power of Hindu temples and the community and worshipfulness they nurture. These amazing expressions of Hindu belief and practice drive pilgrimage and tourism, bringing seekers from

around the world.

The majestic splendor of a Hindu temple fosters a oneness with the Divine that must be experienced to be believed, and India should leverage this latent potential. The government and other organizations should showcase more than the Taj Mahal as a symbol of Incredible India.

Paramacharya said, "We have thousands of years of sacred spaces in the form of temples which can offer spiritual refuge to the world disenchanted with the faiths that brook no

questioning and seeking and demand absolute adherence to a book. With more than one thousand Hindu temples in America, and hundreds in Europe, we already have vibrant regional ambassadors of Indian knowledge and goodwill across the Western world."

The question is, are we willing to tap this hidden power? Just because we are a so-called secular country, we need not shy away from our country's heritage, which is intrinsically Hindu. It is time that we talk earnestly about our temples and acknowledge their

strategic place in the constellation of soft powers. It is time that Indians accept, embrace and revel in the soft power of having inherited the longest extant civilization in the world.

The conference concluded with those inspiring thoughts. Business cards and email addresses were exchanged and plans made for future small conferences, starting with Singapore in January, 2019, under the auspices of the India Foundation's Center for Soft Power.

Who Owns the Narrative?

BY THE EDITORS OF
HINDUISM TODAY

One speaker stood out to us from the rest: Jonathan McClory of London-based Portland Communications. The company is essentially a high-end public relations firm which, among other tasks, yearly publishes a "Soft Power 30 Report" ranking the top 30 countries of the world in soft power. Mr. McClory's problem was quite evident, and he addressed it immediately in his speech: Why isn't India in those top 30? According to Portland's research, India ranked 42, while 19 European countries ranked in the top 30. These included Norway (13), Finland (15), and Ireland (19)—each with barely five million people and hardly soft power gladiators.

We can't say he had a particularly good explanation for these implausible results. Whatever the list was measuring, it wasn't

what many attendees, after two days of speeches from experts on the topic, understood as "soft power." What clearly was an exercise of soft power, however, was Portland's claiming the prerogative to issue such a list, and thereby seeking to own the global narrative on soft power.

As our readers may recognize, a parallel situation emerged in the "California textbook" fracas regarding the teaching of the history of India and the Hindu religion: who has the authority to define the historical narrative to be followed? Should it be the supposedly neutral parties in academia—those who follow Marxist interpretations of history and Freudian interpretations of religion? Or might it be equally qualified scholars who reject these interpretations and wish to present the subjects in a manner recognizable to citizens of India and to Hindus?

Prof. Arvind Sharma of Mc-

Gill University in Canada addressed this question in a different context at the recent World Hindu Congress in Chicago: "Who are the people who are telling us what we are or should be at the moment?" He identified three constituencies: Western Indologists and their "Indian acolytes," liberals, by which he means Indians who believe the best way forward for India is to adopt the culture, laws and attitudes of the West (that's the colonized mind Lord Macaulay strove so hard to foster); and Marxists, alive and strong in India and working daily to exacerbate divisions within Indian society.

Dominant in California were Western Indologists who demanded the word *India* be replaced with *South Asia* and *religion of the Vedas* be used instead of *Hinduism*. They even stated such a religion "arguably does not exist" today—this

despite the term *Hindu* being on the Indian census forms, and used in both law and everyday parlance with no confusion.

How does all this relate to the current discussion on India's soft power? First, India must follow China's example and develop its own top historians and political scientists to replace Western Indologists and academics as the recognized experts on India.

Second, until and unless India can seize control of the narrative of its history and present-day soft power, it should assure that Western institutions wanting to dictate that narrative are kept at arm's length, as they cannot be expected to have India's best interests at heart.

India's new Center for Soft Power could create and promote its own, more meaningful, ranking of the world's soft powers, based on sound scholarship and methodology. Otherwise, the narrative of India's soft power will skew to what the West wants it to be, excluding in the process any soft powers that might hinder Western interests.



Artist Maniam Selven depicts the rasas. Joy is at the center, surrounded (left to right) by love, sorrow, anger, courage, fear, disgust, wonder and peace.

layer of bliss. Within this resides a divine spark of consciousness that is called self. The self is not touched by any event, nor by emotions. It enjoys watching the drama of life but remains completely neutral and does not interfere in anything. Therefore, it is also called the witness consciousness. Body can be compared with a kingdom. Ego is the ruling king. Mind is the crown prince who roams around and gathers information. Intellect is the king's adviser. And self is God.

The Nine Rasas

Rasas, human emotions, can affect and be affected by the four outer koshas. However, the self, which resides in the fifth kosha, anandamaya, is never affected by the rasas. The Sanskrit word *rasa* has many meanings, including emotion, mood and feeling. Tradition defines nine basic rasas: joy (*hasya*), fear (*bhayanaka*), anger (*raudra*), love (*shringar*), courage (*vira*), sadness (*karuna*), amazement (*adbhuta*), disgust (*vibhatsya*) and calmness (*shanti*). All people experience these emotions.

At an early age, babies smile and laugh when they feel joy. After six months, when mind and ego have unfolded, fear arises. Children who feel insecure may also get angry. At the onset of puberty, the rasa of love begins; it is the predominant rasa of teenagers. During puberty, we want to be a hero. In adolescence we may feel sadness if the prince (or princess) of our dreams still has not come.

Rasas affect both our body chemistry and our mind. Our body chemistry changes, based on the emotion that is perceived by our mind. For example, fear causes our body to respond with "emergency" adrenaline. Fear also changes the smell of our bodies and the expression on our faces.

We find the nine rasas in literature, theater and dance. Dancers use their entire bodies to enact various rasas. Musicians strive to generate the right mood to uplift, calm, excite or sadden the audience. Writers and poets play with the rasas in stories about romance, tragedy and extraordinary matters. We leave the theater smiling or gloomy according to the main rasa of the drama. Just as life without rasas is incomplete, literature or film without rasas in proper proportion is deficient.

Throughout history, one particular rasa tends to dominate for a time, and then another becomes popular. During hard times, people turn to God for help, and love of God becomes prevalent. When kings started ruling, songs about beauty, love, courage and chivalry became popular. In ancient Greece, tragedy and comedy appeared. In the modern age, television and the Internet produce abundant stories of anger and violence, reflecting the contempt, disgust, fear and anger that have become pervasive in modern society.

In the pages ahead we explore the nine rasas in detail.

EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

The Rasas

Nine Human Emotions From India's Traditional Arts and Literature

BY WIL GERAETS (WITH SIDEBARS BY LAKSHMI CHANDRASHEKAR SUBRAMANIAN)

The main text of this article is based on the teachings of the author's guru, Harish Johari (1934-1999)

IN ANCIENT VEDIC TIMES, YOGIS INVESTIGATED human nature, developing a model of five concentric layers called *koshas*, corresponding to body, energy, mind, ego/intellect and self. Human emotions, called *rasas*, arise in the third and fourth koshas—the mind (*manomaya kosha*) and the ego and intellect (*vijnanamaya kosha*).

The outermost layer in the Vedic model is the *anna-maya kosha*, the physical body, consisting of more than a hundred trillion cells that cooperate like the people in a country. Three weeks after conception, the nervous system starts developing. Nerves connect brain and spine with sensory organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin) and organs of action (legs, hands, vocal cords, anus, genitals).

The second layer is the energy field, *pranamaya kosha*, which links body and mind and connects body chemistry with the emotions. The body's cells are kept alive by this energy field. The third layer, mind—*manomaya kosha*—lies inside energy. Mind uses the brain, but it is not a product of brain. Mind interacts with body, perceiving the outside world through the sense organs. It processes incoming

signals and passes them to the next level of consciousness, ego and intellect. This is illustrated by organisms like sponges and jellyfish, which have no brain but still perceive danger, food and a mate. Mind also perceives the inner world of emotions. Mind is versatile, encompassing fantasy, imagination and empathy. Though very useful, it is difficult to control.

The fourth layer, *vijnanamaya kosha*, is a combination of ego and intellect. Intellect receives sensory impressions from mind and evaluates each situation. Intellect provides ego with information along with value judgments—whether something is familiar or new, harmless or dangerous, right or wrong. Ego also makes decisions. Intellect thinks objectively, whereas mind and ego think subjectively. Willpower is the strength of ego.

Suppose mind notices something. Intellect may tell ego that under the circumstances it is not necessary to pay much attention. But ego may decide to explore it anyway; then mind and intellect have to comply. It is ego that decides what to do. When we are involved in a project and become concentrated, our mind, intellect and ego work together to make the project a success and we forget all other things.

The fifth and innermost layer, *anandamaya kosha*, is the



SHUTTERSTOCK

The Power of Emotion

Rasas are an essential part of life. They define us. Some people laugh and tell jokes all the time. Such people experience all the rasas, but joy predominates. Some people are mostly sad; they cry a lot, feel weak and want somebody to help them. Others feel strong and courageous from day to day, meeting life's challenges bravely. Still others always complain, never feeling satisfied.

Most, however, do not live with a single, predominant mood. Rasas are a bit like the weather in Belgium: one moment the sun is shining, and an hour later it's raining with gusts of wind. Disgust is especially erratic; out of the blue we may find something offensive, or be dissatisfied with ourself. This shifting of moods, prompted by events, is necessary. If we didn't have problems and frustrations, we would be deprived of opportunities for spiritual growth, and life would be less meaningful.

Each mood has a counterpart in body chemistry. Calmness is supported by melatonin from the pineal gland. Anger is connected to the adrenal glands. As long as our body chemistry is balanced, we feel strong and courageous; but when body chemistry is disturbed, we easily fall into fear, anger, sadness, disgust, pessimism (lack of courage) and loneliness (disgust plus fear).

Rasas are often sparked by life events, but the fuel for a fire comes from our ego. Body chemistry causes mind to focus on a word and go

in a particular direction, traveling through moods. As long as there is no gain for ego, then ego does not engage. But, when ego takes an interest, it sends intellect to search for arguments for mind to stay stuck in a certain mood. For example, when we lose someone dear, grief may overpower us, but sadness does not linger unless ego is interested in feeling sad. In the long term, if ego stalls us in a negative mood such as fear, anger and sadness, this can lead to disease; whereas joy, courage and amazement promote good health.

Some fortunate people express their feelings freely. They do not keep problems inside. They release or transmute the energy and then are clear again. Others cannot express feelings directly because of social demands, lack of confidants, or a sense of helplessness. Emotions that are not expressed may develop into a mood that persists for a long time. Expressing our feelings does not mean we should enact anger and fear immediately or without reserve. Rather, we should learn to express emotions in appropriate ways. Right expression requires controlling the emotion rather than letting the emotion control us. Sometimes we have to find ways to redirect the power of difficult emotions. Physical activity and creativity can provide outlets, and proper communication with those we trust brings understanding and releases feelings without doing harm.

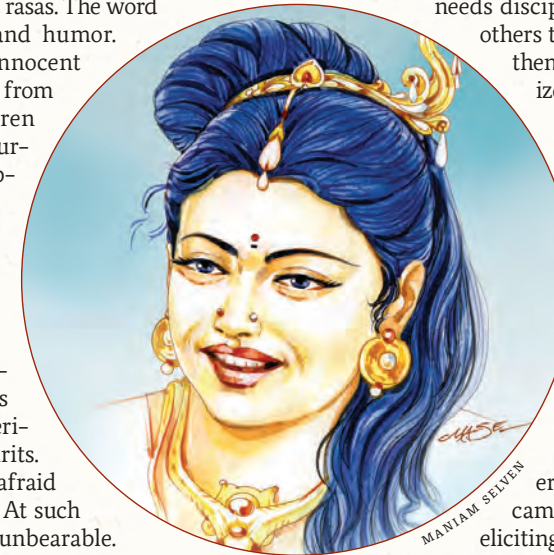
Understanding our moods is important to understanding our behavior. It will benefit us to try to recognize them, paying attention to when they come, how long they stay, and how intense they are. When we get caught by a mood and ego gets involved in it, we typi-

Joy: Happiness, laughter, humor

Hasya is one of the most pleasant rasas. The word *hasya* means joy, laughter and humor. Hasya is the joy we see in innocent people. Pure hasya springs up from within for no apparent reason. Children laugh simply because they feel good. During the journey to adulthood, joy is inhibited as carefree children change into serious adults. This is because ego and intellect generate self-consciousness, which prevents one from simply feeling happy. In this way, joy becomes less spontaneous, more restrained by mind.

Joy is natural and healthy. It aids digestion and rejuvenates the body. It makes us feel light. When the atmosphere is serious, a little humor brightens people's spirits. However, someone who is feeling sad, afraid or angry is rarely in the mood to laugh. At such times, laughter can be disgusting and unbearable. Introducing humor at the wrong time can lead to conflict and misunderstanding.

Pure humor is mostly an innocent mind game. But when ego and intellect get involved, malice may slip in, as in political cartoons. Adults may laugh at the cost of others rather than just for the sake of laughter. When humor belittles people or puts them down, it is destructive. Humor then becomes satire or sarcasm (*vyangya*), which is a sub-rasa of hasya. Sarcasm criticizes others in a harsh way with a veiled message. It invokes laughter but hurts the targeted person and may create problems. The wise well know that the use of humor



needs discipline and care. We should not make fun of others to get a laugh; instead we might act to make them laugh at us. Done well, humor can neutralize conflict and contention.

People need entertainment, and sources of laughter are a main provider. Humor contributes to the amusement of circus acts. Playing a fool, like clowns do, is one of the most effective ways to make people laugh. Some clowns and comedians are true artists at eliciting enjoyment and humor without the bite of satire.

Master Comedians

Master comedians hardly need anything to create a funny situation. Charlie Chaplin used pure humor and satire in his repertoire. Mostly he played a tramp who overcame life's problems with dignity, while also eliciting empathy from his audience; but in the 1940 film *The Great Dictator*, he "innocently" satirized Adolf Hitler. Buster Keaton, on the other hand, never played a joke on anyone. Rather he made fun at his own expense. He evoked laughter and amazement (*adbhut rasa*) with his characters' courageous determination (*veer rasa*) to overcome apparently impossible physical challenges, always remaining calm (*shanti rasa*). Mind's imaginative qualities were responsible for conceiving the death-defying physical feats he performed. But Keaton's humor was thoughtful and took meaning from the characters he played more than from any specific thing they did.

cally say, "I am sad," "I am angry" or "I am happy"—identifying ourself with the emotion. Instead, we should try to keep a little distance from the emotion. If we say, "I feel" angry or sad or happy, this identifies the emotion as something different from ourselves, something we simply happen to be aware of in the current moment. It helps to recognize that we are not our body, our mind, our ego, our intellect or our mood. Rather, we are the self that is witnessing the theater of experience. Inner strength, which belongs to the rasa of courage, plays an important role in all the rasas as a mighty weapon against negative emotions. Closely related to self-confidence and self-esteem, this strength helps us control awareness, keeping it out of fear, anger, sadness and disgust. Cultivating inner strength requires some form of discipline, but we should be disciplined in a loving way, strict but not rigid.

Each Life a Role

The universe is an ocean of energy with many droplets. Each drop may be an object, an incarnated being, or some other entity. If a purely energetic entity wants to taste mango, it will need a tongue to taste with, and so it has to incarnate. Each life we choose is a theater play. We appear on the stage, play our role, and then return to the dressing room, lay down our stage costume and leave the theater.

After death, the gross physical body decays. What remains is the *sukshma sharira*, the subtle body, consisting of prana, mind, ego, intellect and self. When we desire to be a musician, we take birth again, learn to play music, carry around our guitar and live our musi-

cal life. Throughout each life we learn and improve. Our subtle body incarnates over and over again until all desires have been fulfilled and we merge with cosmic consciousness. Then all separateness dissolves, including the individual self. We have to live many lives before we arrive at our final destination, but there is no hurry; we will all get there. Understanding who we are and how we are will help us to travel our journey healthier, happier and more inspired. In this regard, understanding the rasas is a useful piece of luggage.

About the Author

Wil Geraets was born into a Catholic family in the Netherlands. In his teens, he became interested in philosophy. In 1974 he began studying physics. After four years, he met his guru, Harish Johari, who had a major impact on his life, elucidating various concepts of Hindu philosophy. He was surprised to find parallels with quantum physics, where "impossible" events become unlikely yet possible. Wil became a scientific researcher, and earned a PhD degree in 1994. In 2011 he compiled and edited *The Wisdom Teachings of Harish Johari on the Mahabharata*, and in 2017 he contributed to the book *Awakening the Chakras*.





SHUTTERSTOCK

Love: Affection, romance, devotion

The Sanskrit word *shringara* means love, romance, decoration, beauty, beautiful, attractive and aesthetic sense. Shringar includes various kinds of love, including romantic love, the love between siblings and love for a pet. Devotional love (bhakti) and parental love (vatsalya) are almost rasas in themselves.

Songs about the childhood of Krishna and Rama tell us that little Krishna was playful and sometimes naughty, whereas Rama was more serious. By seeing Krishna and Rama as children, we think of God every time we see a child, and that increases our devotional love.

At the onset of puberty everybody is visited by shringara. It is the predominant rasa during adolescence. Teenagers go through great changes in body chemistry. They want more attention, more love, more care. They feel something is missing. Some feel uneasy; others feel depressed. For the fortunate, loves matures and fills life with affection.

Shringara basically is emotional and mental, but when we fall in love, our body becomes overwhelmed as well. Humans have no clear mating season as do animals. Sensual feelings may come at any time, and they can be enhanced by hormones, as happens with women just before ovulation.

Intellect does not play a big role in matters of love. Often in life we ask the intellect to keep quiet and not disturb us. This may cause us to make decisions without sound intellectual understanding. In matters of love this is frequently the case.

When we see an attractive person and ego does not allow flirtation, then mind can only take small glances. On the other hand, when ego is interested, fantasy feeds the flirtation. Mind can emphasize the beloved's beauty so much that nobody else in the world looks as beautiful. To create this effect, mind makes many small changes in the perceived appearance of the person. Later, when the effect has

faded, mind sees the person more realistically.

If we see our beloved as an object of desire and the body smell of our dear one excites us, then our love is more physical. On the other hand, when the beauty of our beloved appears divine and his or her eyes intoxicate us, making us forget about ourselves, then our love becomes spiritual. Shringara rasa can sustain the feelings of love for many years, even more than a lifetime. In India when partners are profoundly pleased with each other, they may promise to marry again in their next life. If one dies earlier, he or she will postpone taking a new birth so that the two can meet again.

Love and Other Rasas

Anger and disgust destroy the body chemistry associated with shringara. In their presence, love vanishes. In contrast, joy and amazement combine well with shringara. They help to create an inspiring atmosphere.

Sadness has a dual relationship with shringara. Sadness (especially its sense of compassion) and love are combined in bhakti, but otherwise sadness spoils love. For example, if one remains unhappy month after month, his or her partner may get discouraged and abandon the relationship.

Fear does not induce love, but love induces fear. A little fear is not harmful; it is necessary to prevent becoming a flirt. But it can become too much. Love can make us full of fear. Only people who are crazy in love are fearless. The biggest fear in love is that we will lose our beloved. Even when the beloved is with us and does not intend to leave, we still may fret about being left alone like a motherless baby. Fear may also arise when we think about the welfare of our near-and-dear ones and about our ability to keep them secure and happy.

Pleasing our partner is not the only priority in life. Though couples don't have to fight, it is healthy and normal for partners to occasionally have differing opinions. If we avoid speaking the truth for fear of losing our partner—if we suppress our feelings, constantly afraid of expressing our opinion—that fear is more dangerous to the relationship than any difference of viewpoint. In love, sacrifice of ego is necessary. We all know of or may have experienced sacrifices made for the sake of love. Such sacrifices usually grow out of parental love, romantic love or devotional love.

Devotional Love

Shringara includes the love for God (bhakti). Love for our partner becomes spiritual when it is directed towards God. Mirabai was a great bhakta poetess who was in love with Krishna. Her still-popular devotional love songs are about her beloved. She longs to be with Him. She is jealous of Krishna's flute because it is touching His lips and receiving His breath, and she cannot be so near. Her resulting grief illustrates how bhakti combines love and sadness.



MANIAM SELVEN

Rasa in India's Performing Arts

BY LAKSHMI CHANDRASHEKAR SUBRAMANIAN

In the context of performance art, especially in texts such as the *Natya Shastra* (composed by Sage Bharata between 200bce and 200ce) rasa is an aesthetic emotion evoked and developed by a particular performance. This aesthetic emotion often gains corporeal embodiment in the physical gestures of the audience, as B.N. Goswamy states. He describes in detail the shaking of the head, from slow nodding to more passionate head jerking, and other bodily movements of the audience that the performance evokes. In later texts, we see the idea of rasa presented with a more explicitly religious connotation, comparing it to ultimate reality. In these instances, rasa becomes a tool for experiencing and finally uniting with the Divine. ¶The *Natya Shastra*, written by Sage Bharata, is widely regarded as an authoritative text on the Indian performing art forms. Although the word *rasa* was first mentioned in the *Vedas*, only in the *Natya Shastra* was it defined and applied to aesthetic perception in the performing arts. Bharata outlined the concept of rasa to demonstrate how a performance must create the experience of delight in an audience. The eight rasas described by Bharata, who attributed them to Lord Brahma, are shringara (the erotic), hasya (the comic), karuna (the pathetic), raudra (the furious), vira (the heroic), bhayanaka (the terrible), bhibatsa (the odious), and adbhuta (the marvelous). Bharata later added a ninth rasa, and this was shanta (the quiescent). Despite the ultimate experience of "rasa" being one, Bharata divides it into separate varieties, as it is through the medium of one of these eight or nine rasas that the holistic aesthetic experience of "immersing oneself in it to the exclusion of all else" takes place in the audience.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Sadness: Sorrow, heartbreak, sympathy

The Sanskrit word *karuna* means sadness, sorrow, pity, misery and compassion. The compassion element derives from the empathy we feel when others are suffering.

Small children are rarely sad. They may cry because of hunger, a bee sting or a wet diaper, but that is a distress call rather than sadness. Older children and adolescents get sad when their need for attention and recognition is not fulfilled. Failure or perceived failure triggers sadness. Success relieves sadness, but only briefly. For young adults, sadness retreats when larger goals are met, such as finding one's partner or a sought-after job.

Sadness often peaks during mid-life, when people realize their youth is fading. Some may start a new relationship to prove they are still young. Others accept things as they are and seek new meaning by reaching out for rewarding activities, such as helping younger generations.

A good thing about sadness is that it focuses us on the cause of our sadness. When a family member dies, we visit the crematorium to take their leave. The sadness that we feel centers our mind. When the body is put in the fire, we realize that one day we will die also. Awareness of our mortality creates a certain level of indifference toward worldly pleasures and gratification of the senses. We see that ultimately only a few things in life really matter. Less important things don't attract us as much. That recognition is non-attachment (*vairagya*). Such an experience may motivate us to start living on bare

necessities, to share more, which makes us better human beings and is a major step towards God. But when we leave the crematorium and pick up our everyday life again, *vairagya* mostly drops away and we continue living as before.

Misery can be difficult to comprehend. Some things are really not the way we think they should be. We see people who are doing wrong yet seem to prosper, and others who behave well and have to suffer. Without the concepts of karma and reincarnation, such apparent injustices are difficult to understand and accept.

Compassion

Karuna also means compassion for all creatures. That includes all people who ever hurt us. We should not attempt to punish them or even have negative thoughts about them. Rather, we should pray to God to give them proper understanding and kindness.

In the event that we are forced to defend ourselves, we should oppose our enemies with respect. For example, as my guru noted, when a Hindu rejoices because 20 Muslims died in a Hindu-Muslim riot, such lack of pity is wrong. Unfortunately, many of us are selective with our compassion. We limit it to particular people who are close to us or who are like us.

Karuna, compassion, is often used as a tool for religious, political and commercial purposes. We may be shown pictures of suffering children to solicit donations, or urged to enter a lottery because some

of the money will go to charity. To promote policy, politicians call on our compassion to help certain groups of citizens.

When it is not purely selfless, *karuna* has an aspect of give and take, *quid pro quo*. Most people who help others expect some form of return. Human nature is like that; we tend to operate like businessmen. We may respond to a request for charity in order to save on our income tax. When we help somebody, we feel we should get something in return—if not a return favor, then at least gratitude and respect. True giving has none of this.

In spiritual life, we should not measure things in terms of profit and loss. If we worship God, it is for our own satisfaction; it does not mean we are doing God a favor and that He should do something in return. It is our human nature to expect rewards for good behavior, but that expectation creates problems for us, because if we get sufficiently frustrated, we may begin to feel that there is no divine justice and lose faith in God.

Overcoming Sadness

For most of us, sadness comes and goes, usually in response to outside events. When we feel sad, good people often try to comfort us. They help us overcome our sorrow. Such help is a blessing; but because sad people typically get more attention than those who laugh, some people may act sad to attract attention.

A change of place, atmosphere or attention can help mitigate sadness, if only temporarily. If a friend enters the room, we may push our sadness aside for a few minutes to see what's up. When we are on our own again, sadness quickly returns because it is still in our body chemistry. Sometimes a joke can cheer a person up. People of weak constitution, whether due to malnutrition, illness or other causes, naturally are low on enthusiasm and especially prone to sadness. Sometimes music or poetry helps. A little walk in a forest, near a river, lake or mountain may improve our mood. When a person feels sad because of the death of somebody close to them, ego may start searching for someone or something to help. People who are grief-stricken like to be in the company of saints, because saints are calm; they transform sadness into non-attachment.

Our attitude matters. When our partner dies and we think our suffering will never end, sorrow is prolonged. However, if we have confidence that we will find ways to continue living, suffering will be curtailed. We can engage intellect to start inventorying possibilities for change and relief. As the mind considers each, such exploration leaves less time and energy for sadness.

We think we are time-bound creatures. We think we take birth and later die with only a small span of life between. In fact, we are eternal consciousness, without beginning or end. Our bodies are clothes that we discard when they become worn. Once bare, we put on a new set. Accordingly, we should identify less with our body and instead consider it a tool that we can use to accomplish the task for which we have taken birth. If we have this attitude towards our physical life and body, we will not be overcome by sadness.



Performers and Their Audience

BY LAKSHMI CHANDRASHEKAR SUBRAMANIAN

It is important to note the difference between “*rasa*” and “*bhava*,” where the latter is more of an emotional state that precedes *rasa*. B.N. Goswamy cites Bharata's aphorism, “*Bhava*, the durable emotional state, is the flower, and *rasa* is the fruit thereof.” Another explanation is that the *bhava* is what the actor embodies, and there is a corresponding *rasa* that emerges and is “tasted” by the audience, provided the audience is competent and ready to receive it. Thus Bharata lists in the *Natya Shastra* nine *bhavas* or dominant emotions, which correspond to the nine *rasas*. How does the concept of *rasa* pertain to the the performers and audience in Bharata's exposition? According to some interpreters of *Natya Shastra*, such as Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao, the performer is discouraged from immersing in *rasa*, as that might distract him or her from fulfilling the role of the inducer of *rasa* for the audience. He makes this suggestion though there is no explicit reference in the *Natya Shastra* that *rasa* should not be experienced by performers. Other scholars, such as 11th-century Kashmiri Saiva philosopher Abhinavagupta, explicitly deny that anyone other than the audience can experience *rasa*. Abhinavagupta argues that performers cannot experience *rasa* even if they wanted to, as in order to experience it they need to be in the shoes of the viewer. As such, the *rasa* experience belongs exclusively to the audience, and the actor or performer is merely a *patra* (vessel), a carrier and enabler of the experience.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Anger: Irritation, stress, rage

Anger, raudra, resides in everybody. It is the most common rasa, yet the most unwanted. Few there are who are completely anger-free. And many are angry all the time. Anger, like fear (bhayanaka), thrives on insecurity, which is humanity's basic problem. Anger is principally a reaction to feelings of insecurity triggered by frustration, criticism or threat. Strong persons do not anger quickly, because they inwardly trust themselves to manage challenging situations. Individuals who lack that confidence anger more quickly due to their greater insecurity. They fear they cannot handle difficult situations. As such, anger is a sign of weakness.

Anger often arises from a hurt ego. It emerges when our talents are not recognized or our expectations are not met. For example, when one person is favored over another, the neglected person may get angry because of feeling humiliated, unappreciated or ignored. If it were up to our minds, we would not stay angry for more than fifteen minutes, because mind is so fluid by nature. But if our ego takes the situation seriously and gets involved, our anger is more prolonged.

The least harmful form of anger is the one that is expressed when the cause is proximate. It flashes and quickly subsides, as when someone cuts in line at the theater. Anger that endures, festers and turns into resentment is the worst. It lives within us and it grows, causing mental, emotional and physical problems. Long-lasting anger mixed with disgust (vibhatsya) is hate. It causes us to focus on the negative qualities of others and ignore their good qualities.

One raudra story tells of a person who was cut in a fight. He

decided to keep the wound disturbed and not let it heal until he had taken revenge. Similarly, anger can be prolonged and kept alive by letting intellect analyze how we got insulted and by allowing mind to relive the affront. Such stoked anger often develops into a grudge, which is a form of mental illness. Extreme examples of grudges being held are families that continue blood feuds for generations, or entire communities who never forgive injuries and injustices and thus perpetuate conflict.

Managing Anger

Anger cannot be completely avoided, but it can be converted and re-directed to constructive purpose. It can be used as a source of energy directed to our work, to some other creative enterprise resulting in productive output, or to a piece of art. Anger has fueled people to help the world by fighting injustice. When Gandhi travelled through South Africa, he became enraged when a British official had him thrown off a train. That indignation grew in him, but he directed it toward effective change in law and society. As a consequence, one day the British were thrown out of India.

Anger boosts the ego; the angrier we are, the more we say "I" and "me," rather than "you" and "we." Our intellect gets shut off, and we forget about right and wrong. When we are caught by anger, we may overact, even displaying our outrage like a stage performance. At such moments, it is to our benefit to realize that we have been caught by our emotion and to create a little distance from our feelings. Watching for anger helps us recognize it immediately, so that we can miti-

gate the potential damage it can cause. To do that, we have to remain awake, be alert, and avoid laziness and dullness, including that caused by substances such as recreational drugs.

Anger powerfully affects our body chemistry. It creates heat, dryness and acidity. Our breathing becomes fast and shallow and our voice turns loud and harsh. Our body chemistry then affects and feeds our anger, and the cycle intensifies. If we sense we are getting angry, we should check our breathing and slow it down if necessary. We may chew a pod of cardamom, take a walk, drink some water, or wash our face, hands and feet.

Anger is destructive. When kept inside, repressed, it is self-destructive, slowly consuming us. Outward expressions of anger are common, but in many cases they are unacceptable. For example, when we get angry with our boss, we cannot express that anger freely or we may jeopardize our position. We have to remain respectful. For the moment, we might escape to the rest room and wash our face. If we then get busy with something else, after a few minutes our body chemistry changes, lessening the risk of a hurtful outburst. For the longer term, we should find ways to express the pain or injustice behind the anger in a controlled manner, either to the boss or to some helpful person, such as a therapist or trusted friend.

When we do have an opportunity to let the offending person know that we have a problem, if that person ignores us and continues the wrongful behavior, we may conclude that the wrongdoer deserves punishment. But we don't have to deliver the punishment ourselves. In due time, somebody will teach that person the needed lesson. That is the law of natural justice: wrongful deeds always earn bad karma. Faith in karma's natural justice can help people who have been abused as children. Their anger can be cured only if they learn to forgive. This may seem impossible; but with help of good energies from within, support from others and an understanding of karma, it can be done.

Insecurity makes us feel weak, which triggers fear, which in turn produces anger. We can do several things to prevent or reduce episodes of anger from occurring. We may reduce our intake of sugar and fat, get proper physical exercise, like a daily half-hour walk, and practice nonviolence. We can help others, which reduces their insecurity. These practices increase our own well-being and self-confidence, which is the key to mastering our anger. When we cultivate our inner strength by maintaining such disciplines, we reduce our feelings of insecurity, fear and anger, and we increase our self-confidence and self-esteem. Gaining inner strength gives us power over our anger instead of its having power over us.



MANIAM SELVEN

The Ideal Audience

BY LAKSHMI CHANDRASHEKAR SUBRAMANIAN

Abhinavagupta refined and detailed the characteristics of a "rasika," the receiver of the rasa—in other words, an ideal audience. He does so by sharing a couple of similes. As scholars Masson and Patwardhan write, "Abhinava repeats the fine simile of the *Natya Shastra*, that the reader is like dry wood, and poetry like fire. He adds a simile of his own: good poetry is like a clean cloth dipped into pure water: the cloth quickly absorbs the water." This suggests that the audience is expected to be like sponges that soak in the content that the poem or performer provides. That is the only way they can fully experience rasa. "Abhinava...reserves his greatest praise for moments in the drama when the spectator is able to enter so deeply into the imaginative magic created by the verses that he transcends his own personality." This serves as a prime example of how the aesthetic experience has entered the mystical realm. ¶ Abhinavagupta elaborates on *sahridaya*, meaning "with-the-heart," which alludes to the audience having a heart connection with a particular experience. Patwardhan and Masson explain *sahridaya*: "Those people who are capable of identifying with the subject matter, since the mirror of their hearts has been polished through constant recitation and study of poetry, and who sympathetically respond in their own hearts, are known as sensitive readers." Thus the quality of rasa experienced by the audience depends greatly on the rasika's knowledge of rasa, and the openness and willingness of heart with which he or she receives the experience. B.N. Goswamy also comments, "The durable emotional state [bhava] that is subtly brought into being by or through a work of art is one thing; its transmutation into a rasa is dependent upon the energy (utsaha), the inner ability, the singleness of heart of the rasika." This suggests that despite being exposed to the same piece of art or music, various audience members might react differently to the stimulus. This is due to the difference in the type of rasika each person is. I would venture on to say that according to some Hindu schools of thought, not only would the audience's current and past experiences and cultural expectations play a role in their receiving and experiencing rasa, but the vasanas (karmic imprints) which the person is born with would also determine the quality of aesthetic experience evoked by the bhava in the performance.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Disgust: Aversion, dissatisfaction, depression

The Sanskrit word *vibhatsya* means disgust, aversion, annoyance and dissatisfaction. The feeling of disgust comes from and causes a body environment that is uncomfortable. As a result, we feel emotionally uncomfortable as well. Disgusted people often use distasteful language; but more often their dissatisfaction and annoyance remain in thought form. Prolonged disgust is self-destructive. Disgust can be caused by others, but we can also feel aversion with ourselves. When we loathe and degrade ourselves, we undermine our power and obscure our divine nature.

A common trigger for *vibhatsya* for many people is not being paid properly for their work. As a result, they have problems sustaining their families. They feel hurt and dissatisfied because their work is not valued. In other circumstances, we just feel as if something is wrong or missing. Our relationships and our surroundings seem meaningless. That is a form of self-disgust. When anger and fear mix in, we may feel guilt, shame or even despair. Nothing seems to satisfy us completely or for long. When we acquire a car, a job, a house and a family, we may be content for some years. But then we start looking for something more. And if ego gets involved, dissatisfaction intensifies.

Dissatisfaction with our life may lead to depression, melancholy and despair. The body is out of balance, the mind is filled with disgust and the ego is helpless. Intellect is dull and cannot evaluate situations properly. We lose courage and self-confidence. We complain about our problems, and anger crops up. We feel victimized and wallow in self-pity. When people try to help, often their energy is drained by our unresolvable difficulties and they become disgusted with us.



MANIAM SEIVEN

Restoring the Balance

Suffering is not entirely meaningless. It increases our understanding of fellow sufferers and motivates us to improve our life. We are reminded to restore our inner balance. When we do so, we feel accepted and accepting, which dissipates dissatisfaction. One way to restore balance is to fast, even for a day or a meal. Relaxation techniques, socializing and engaging in activities like walking, cooking, sight-seeing and using a computer are also helpful. The company of people is especially helpful. Listening to our favorite music is uplifting. We can play music that changes body chemistry and promotes sleep.

Disgust is a state in which the internal environment of the body is not comfortable. Therefore, we don't feel comfortable with things outside. We should take good foods, especially alkaline, astringent and bitter foods that support the liver and the body chemistry. Eat so as to avoid constipation. Alcohol and recreational drugs should be eschewed.

Modern society overloads our minds with stimuli and choices, causing stress and confusion. When we are not centered, we feel confused and cannot understand things properly. But if we are centered, we pay proper attention and will not feel disgusted so easily. If mind is not under control, it will dwell on negative thinking and remain a victim of moods and problems. The best way to overcome disgust is to develop mental discipline. Willpower, self-confidence and inner strength are closely related; if we increase one, they all increase.

Wonder: Delight, curiosity, mystery

The *adbhuta* rasa encompasses all the meanings of the Sanskrit word *adbhuta*: amazement, wonder, awe. Our world contains far more than seven wonders; indeed, it abounds with them. Our body itself is full of wonders. From each morsel of food we eat, a little bit of the nutrition is used to repair damaged tissues. From the remainder, some proteins build new cells, and carbohydrates are converted into glucose and combusted in our 5 kw engine to produce energy for our thoughts and actions. How amazingly effective and sophisticated!

It is a miracle that a baby can be conceived and grow inside its mother's body. Because birth happens every day, it seems commonplace; nevertheless, it really is a mystery. Current knowledge about DNA explains only a few aspects of fetal growth.

What happens after death is another great enigma. One minute a person is alive and communicating; the next minute he is gone. All the organs are still there, but where the being has gone is a mystery. Many patients who were declared clinically dead have come back to life and described how they left their body, had various experiences, and then returned to their body to continue their lives. It is no wonder that the riddle of afterlife has been the subject of so much thought and study throughout the centuries.

Many examples exist to illustrate how miracles have been performed through strong determination and strength of character. These miracles confront our intellect with its ignorance. In India, each year after Holi there is a celebration in Barsana where people walk on fire. In the old days, few people did this, and it was

considered a miracle. Nowadays, we can take a seminar and learn to walk on fire ourselves. So, the miracle may lie in our ability to learn the technique. Regardless, the accomplishment produces awe.

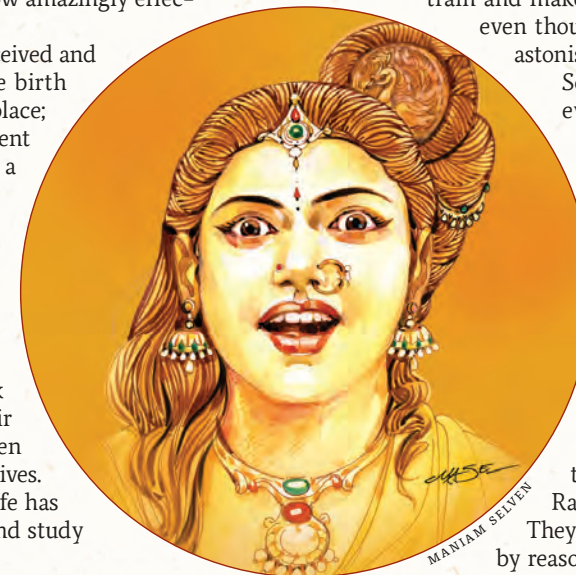
Stories create wonder through the use of superhuman or supernatural elements or sudden changes in the storyline. Amazement and uncertainty are used to keep suspense alive and hold our attention. When the magician David Copperfield puts a cloth over an entire train and makes it disappear, that is *adbhuta*, amazing, even though we know it is a trick. We love being astonished.

Some of us long to witness a miraculous event. We even call for a miracle in desperate times, and sometimes we get one. Most often, however, miracles come in disguise: somebody you were longing to see suddenly comes by to say hello.

If we witness something really supernatural, our ego becomes small and humble. If ego accepts the event as a miracle, then intellect gets a time out. However, if ego demands an explanation, intellect will have to find a way to explain what it doesn't understand.

Today people tend to believe only in things they can perceive with their senses. Rationalists believe in the power of reason. They think that everything can be understood by reason. They try to show that miracles do not exist, and they expose fake miracles as mere tricks.

However, that does not mean no real miracles exist. Every now and then a true miracle does happen. Some babas still perform miracles. Maybe they do it to curtail the ego of modern people and to convince us that not everything can be explained by reason.



MANIAM SEIVEN



SHUTTERSTOCK



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Fear: Terror, anxiety, insecurity

Bhayanaka (fear and insecurity) is the basic problem of humankind. It is with us in the waking state and the dream state. Only in deep sleep, unconsciousness and samadhi, when there is no ego, can there be no fear.

Fear starts early in life. No frightening mask can scare a baby younger than six months, because infants have no fear. At about six months children start to develop a sense of self-identity and a separateness from their mother. At this point of development even a little distance from the mother causes fearful insecurity, which is expressed by crying.

That fear remains with us for the rest of our life. When we grow up and start a family, fear increases. Seeking to avoid insecurity, we buy life insurance, insure our house and install alarm systems. By age forty-five or so, we start saving money for our latter years. Saving is always prudent, but is often fear-based. By the time we have grandchildren, we anticipate countless dangers. We may fret about what will happen to our family after our death. The more we have to lose, the more we fear.

My spiritual master, Harish Johari, taught that the purpose of our life is to become as fearless as we were in the first few months of our life. Living simply, meeting only our basic needs, is the right way to live and will move us toward our goal of becoming fearless.

The mind is restless. It wanders around producing fantasies. Some

fantasies may be pleasing to ego, some not. Mind also has the habit of exaggeration. It may zoom in on a detail and magnify it. Negative suggestions from outside may produce frightful fantasies. This happens especially if our body chemistry is impure or if we have destructive habits, such as negative thinking.

Daring people are not intimidated by death, and will risk their life to live more intensely. Reinhold Messner, who climbed Mt. Everest alone without oxygen, confided that he had many fears while preparing to climb, imagining all kinds of things that could go wrong. On the mountain, where it is necessary to control the mind and stay alert, fear kept him alert to real dangers. Fear can be a friend or an enemy.

Overcoming Fear

Strong faith can reduce fear. Provided we have faith in saints, their blessings may help us overcome fear. Buddha and many Hindu saints raise their right hand with the palm facing outward. The gesture, called abhaya mudra, which means "Have no fear," carries the power to make us feel secure.

Various other rasas can reduce the experience of fear. Being madly in love induces fearlessness. Making jokes about our fears helps, because humor often reveals that our fears are unfounded. Anger will often erase conscious feelings of fear, but anger only masks fear; it does not remove it.

Ladies generally have more fear of physical threats than men, because they have less physical strength. If they learn martial arts, they can defend themselves and be less afraid of physical danger. We should work on ourself to develop inner strength, because inner strength reduces fear. As mentioned in the discussion of the disgust rasa, any kind of mental or physical discipline, such as speech fasting, food fasting or other control over our body, enhances inner strength. Inner strength, self-confidence and self-esteem are interrelated. By strengthening one of them, we strengthen them all.

Fearful and Fearless Dying

We know we live only for a short time and then we die. Most people fear the end of life. This gives rise to many other fears, such as fear for the unknown, fear of spiders, fear of exclusion and so on. People who feel lonely are even more prone to fear. When death is approaching, many combinations of fear and pain are possible.

Death comes at the end of our life. But the fear of death can inhabit large portions of life, hanging around from the first day we realize that our body is mortal. As such, fear of death is farther reaching than death itself.

By behaving gently and helping people, we follow the law of dharma and fulfill our life. That pleases Yama, who is the lord of dharma and the lord of death. At the end of life, a fulfilled person is likely to fear death less; whereas those with unfulfilled desires and uncompleted objectives find it more difficult to leave.

Fear stems from ignorance of our true identity, not understanding that all is one. Our true nature is eternal consciousness rather than body, mind, ego and intellect. Ego is the illusion that we exist as separate beings. All pain and suffering in life is due to our attachment to that illusion. We are afraid of death because we mistake illusion for reality. Although ego is necessary to allow us to live as individuals, ultimately, our separateness is illusion. Everything is connected; nothing is really separate.

Normally, mind is too erratic to think about death for more than a few minutes. Even if death is near, mind may think of seeing family or friends. This mental wandering provides a diversion from the fear of death. In India, it is a tradition during one's final days for people to read aloud from scripture or stories from Krishna's life. These stories tell the dying person in a gentle way that this world is less real than God, and that leaving the body is just like changing clothes. Such stories help the person withdraw and leave peacefully. People who have devoted themselves to God tend to die tranquilly. They think to themselves, "The time of my imprisonment is almost over. Soon I will be free again."

Death can be a relief, especially for people who have been ill for years and have endured much pain. Saints like Ramana Maharshi, Ramakrishna, Sivananda and Vivekananda contracted life-threatening diseases. Although their bodies suffered, they did not feel helpless or depressed, because they did not identify with their body or their ego. Such elevated souls define death more as liberation than extinction. Knowing the deeper truths of life and living in awareness of their true, immortal identity, they died in peace.



MANIAM SEIVEN

Bhava and Rasa

FROM THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HINDUISM, INDIA HERITAGE RESEARCH FOUNDATION

There are some basic instinctive and enduring passions in human beings which endure life-long but remain in a dormant state except when aroused and stimulated. These are: love, disgust, fear, sorrow, anger, amazement, humor and enthusiasm. These eight *sthayibhavas* are recognized by Bharata Muni. Later aestheticians have added to this list indifference as the ninth, and some others affection (for children) and love of God (bhakti). Aroused and excited by some stimulant and helped by other elements, each one of these instinctive passions generates a corresponding rasa. For example, on seeing something extraordinarily surprising, the sthayibhava (enduring passion) of vismaya (amazement) generates adbhuta rasa (relish, full of wonder); or, on seeing someone in pain and crying, the enduring passion of shloka (sorrow) generates karuna rasa (pathos), of course with the help of other elements also. The following table shows each sthayibhava and its corresponding rasa.

Sthayibhava (passion)	Rasa (relish)
Rati (conjugal love)	Sringara (amatory romance)
Hasa (humor)	Hasya (laughter)
Shoka (sorrow)	Karuna (pathos, pathetic)
Krodha (anger)	Raudra (wrathful)
Utsha (enthusiasm)	Vira (brave)
Bhaya (fear)	Bhayanaka (horrible)
Jugupsa (repugnance)	Bibhatsa (loathsome)
Vismaya (amazement)	Adbhuta (wonderful)
Nirveda (indifference)	Shanta (calm)
Vatsalata (love for children)	Vatsalya (parental affection)
Bhagavadanuraga (love of God)	Bhakti (devotion)



SHUTTERSTOCK

Peace: Calmness, contentment, bliss

The Sanskrit word *shanti* means peace, calmness of mind, happiness and bliss. The shanti rasa is inner calmness. Shanti is the only rasa that pacifies mind, ego and intellect. Yet, peace is easily disturbed by the other rasas, because they activate mind, ego and intellect. During the day, our senses constantly receive signals that require reaction. This keeps us continually agitated. As an experiment, sit down in a quiet room. Hear the sounds around you, notice the thoughts inside, but don't hold on to any. Let them come and let them go. Breathe slowly and pause a little before inhaling. As long as sounds disturb you and thoughts keep you distracted, you know that your calmness is incomplete.

Only during deep sleep and meditation do our mind, ego and intellect cease their activity. Finally there is true calmness. It is this part of sleep that revitalizes our body and makes us wake up fresh. Reducing external activity during the day will increase our well-being. We will have more focus, less anger, less fear, less disgust and less sadness. The more calmness we foster in our life, the happier we will be. Few people are truly calm, not disturbed by anything. Even when times are exhausting and troublesome, they don't feel agitated. Such peace can only be obtained by working with oneself. It is a goal of a yogi's life to remain centered no matter what the outer circumstances may be.

Fostering Calmness

Calmness can be achieved in several ways, but none is easy. Fasting supports peacefulness, as does eating fresh, wholesome food, and reducing our sensual desires. To promote inner peace, we need to keep a balance between our needs and our desires. Needs are few, but desires are unlimited.

Pursuit of our life's purpose can also bring a sense of well-being and peace. If we don't know the purpose of our life, we can observe what makes us feel really good inside. That may tell us how we can live our purpose and find long-lasting satisfaction. If you devote yourself to a particular task and work hard for it, the fulfilment of that task brings some peace. If your children grow up properly and

get settled in a right way, you feel that the purpose of having a family has been fulfilled. That satisfaction brings contentment. Promoting the well-being of others and of the world we live in is another way to increase serenity. Give people the support they need to grow; help the helpless, financially, physically or mentally. If we help others to live with less fear and more security, we acquire peace.

Resist the forces that are destroying nature. Do something for the environment, and take action for the common welfare. Plant trees, conserve resources, support efforts to keep our planet healthy.

In meditation, fear, anger and disgust vanish, if only for a few moments. The outside world still exists, but it retreats to the background. This experience can be prolonged by practice. A good meditation can bring in its wake hours of serene emotions which bring us closer to our true nature, which is to live in bliss, to be happy and inspired. Peace means reduced internal activity, stopping the incessant mental dialogue.

The most difficult yet most effective method of acquiring calmness is to take the first steps on the path to enlightenment by following the code of right conduct, which Hindu scriptures describe with a set of behavioral rules known as yamas and niyamas. They pertain to contentment, honesty, modesty, study, kindness, charity, courage, nonviolence, cleanliness, moderation in sex, and belief in God. Living according to these injunctions brings calmness and is a proper, even necessary, foundation for further spiritual development. Yogis and yoginis have withdrawn from worldly desires. They do not become entranced with the objects around them. Some objects may be appealing to them, but they do not feel a need to acquire anything. They remain content and secure. They can experience complete calmness during waking consciousness, because they have learned to suspend the activity of mind, ego and intellect at will. In samadhi—deep meditation—body is slowed and mind, ego and intellect are suspended. Yet, there is awareness and bliss—bliss of the self, our divine spark. This is the highest form of inner calmness attainable.



MANIAM SELVEN

Courage: Bravery, strength, confidence

Vira rasa includes courage, chivalry, strength, devotion and determination. Vira helps us protect ourself and those we love. Courage allows us to try something new, to accept challenges, and to make sacrifices for others. When people risk their lives to save another, they demonstrate extreme bravery and often devotion.

Young people frequently believe they can do anything. They feel they can challenge a tiger, a mountain, or a particular way of thinking. Such courage can be helpful, but can also make one overconfident and prone to underestimate risks. People who use vira to its best benefit inform courage with intelligence.

Self-esteem is part of the strength aspect of vira, but when confidence becomes arrogance it can lead to a contemptuous attitude. Arrogance and contempt contain elements of disgust, the vibhatsya rasa, which is self-destructive.

Vira rasa becomes stronger when we do not talk about it. Boasting about an ability or power drains energy. Accordingly, athletes who focus on the glory of winning and artists who constantly hold exhibitions to receive applause run the risk of becoming egotistical and undermining their talent. It is better to save our courage, strength and determination for manifesting our goal. Real heroes express themselves in their works rather than their words.

Victory over a mighty opponent gives more satisfaction than victory over somebody who easily gives up. Similarly, overcoming a difficult challenge is more satisfying than accomplishing something easy. In vira rasa, we strive to be the best. If we are outperformed, we want another chance to prove ourself. It is a reality of vira rasa that we are forever proving our talents.

Competition has always been and always will be. But the modern world has taken it to extremes. Vira often manifests through the base, selfish, instinctive nature. People displaying balanced vira have become rare. Real sportsmen enjoy the play and are not boastful when they win or discouraged when they lose.

Courage is often associated with war, but what that means has changed over time. Various ancient scriptures describe rules of conduct for battle, because without moral standards, warfare degrades into animal ferocity, which was unacceptable to Hindu society. Warriors grew strong physically and mentally through martial arts. They lived up to their word, and they were prepared to sacrifice their lives for justice. They fought one on one with an opponent of similar caliber, and the opponent was allowed to try to save his skin. Civilians were never attacked, and hostilities were suspended at night. A warrior who violated the code of conduct displayed disrespect for his opponent and lost his dignity.

Over time, the positive use of vira rasa in war was largely lost. Obtaining victory became more important than morality. Anything was allowed in pursuit of victory, including foul means such as poisoning wells with cadavers, killing civilians and other crimes. In modern warfare, people can be destroyed from a distance by an invisible attacker.

Just press a button and a missile is launched. Vira has disappeared. If soldiers kill without honor, they undermine their own strength and earn bad karma.

The law of dharma says we should always be conscious about right and wrong. Both our cause and our means should be right. Maintaining high moral values requires strength but also provides strength.



MANIAM SELVEN



SHUTTERSTOCK



Why Do Christian Missionaries Dislike Modi And the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh?

Madhu Kishwar's personal account and compelling editorial on the devastating effects of evangelism in India and the complex politics involved

BY MADHU PURNIMA KISHWAR, NEW DELHI

AS SOMEONE WHO STUDIED IN A CONVENT school, I grew up believing Christians were sincerely committed to the spread of education and healthcare. However, I resented the subtle indoctrination inflicted on us by converting the "Moral Science" class into a Bible study class. There was no mention of Hindu faith traditions, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Vedas* or the *Ramayana*. The majority of Hindu or Sikh students were made to say the Lord's Prayer before morning assembly and before each class, and another Christian prayer after each class with due reverence, including crossing our hearts after each prayer.

Anyone who topped the class in monthly or weekly tests got beautiful Vatican-produced pictures of Lord Jesus, Mother Mary, the Holy Trinity and a whole range of Christian saints. Since I routinely topped my class, I owned the largest collection of holy pictures in the entire school.

It is noteworthy that Hindu and Sikh parents never objected to this daily dose of Christianization and systematic attempt to inculcate "love of Jesus" in our impressionable minds. For the record, no pressure was ever exerted on us to "convert" because the school authorities knew that trying the conversion game with middle and upper-middle-class/caste families was bound to backfire. However, the same order of nuns ran special schools in Punjab villages and in urban shantytowns targeting children of the poor and "lower castes." These schools had been established mainly for the purpose of getting converts and "harvesting souls" for the Church. But in those innocent days, nobody seemed to mind or care, leave alone sense any sinister agenda.

The Blindness of Hindu Liberalism

Despite the horrors of colonial rule and the religion-based Partition, most Hindus still believed in Gandhi's *sarva dharma sam bhav*, "all religions lead to the same destination," and that if Christians gave good



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education to the deprived classes, they were performing *samaj sewa* (social service). Nobody paid much heed to the fact that for Christians and Islamists, their entire strategy of conversion was based on defaming and demonizing Hindu faith traditions, because

that is a core mandate of Abrahamic religions, for whom dharma, as Hindus understand it, has no value, and their open agenda is to crush the dharmic civilization of India.

Even as a schoolgirl, what bugged me most was that we were punished for speaking in mother tongues, Hindi or Punjabi. I kept defying the ban, because even at that age I found it offensive to my national pride, though I understood its far-reaching implications only much later. It is through one's mother tongue or native language that we stay rooted in our culture and early impressions. By forcing us to become monolingual and English-dependent, we were being systematically deracinated. English inevitably brings with it disdain for Indic cultures and faith traditions and harbors the tendency to view the world through lenses of the imperial West, which is deeply rooted in Christian ethos. Sadly, this enslavement to English was made state policy under Nehruvian influence. Not surprisingly, elite schools founded and run by the brown sahibs of India are following the same pattern of intellectual enslavement set in motion by missionary schools.

No surprise, then, that a vast majority of India's English-educated elite act as the intellectual warriors for Christian missions. They defend the right of evangelical organizations to convert Hindus to Christianity even while they use questionable means and rabid hate-Hindu propaganda to bring in converts. But they go ballistic when Hindu organizations try winning back Christian converts to their original faith. Abusing and demonizing Hindu faith traditions is treated as proof of "liberalism" and defended as "freedom of expression," but even modest questions raised against the means and methods adopted by evangelical groups and consequences of large-scale conversions to Christianity is treated as proof of a person being a obscurantist "Hindutvavadi"—with Hindutva (its plain meaning is "essence of Hindu faith") being projected as synonymous with fascism.



Kancha Ilaiah: A converted Dalit Christian evangelical who became famous for his anti-Hinduism, anti-Modi talks at American universities and the United Nations

The Tide Changes in the West

In the initial years of *Manushi*, the human rights, women's rights journal I founded in 1978-79, I naively believed that the Church-led "Liberation Theologists" were leading movements in defence of human rights in India. But I was disabused of this notion when I found that when *Manushi* started defending Indic faith traditions from malicious attacks, Christian organizations—including those wearing the secular mask—began to not only distance themselves from *Manushi* but also started to work against it.

It is not a coincidence that during that very phase, Kancha Ilaiah came to be feted and celebrated by church leaders and organizations and catapulted into international fame after he converted to Christianity and wrote a rather pompous, malicious hate tract against Hinduism titled *Why I Am Not a Hindu*. It is based on willful distortions and clearly written for the purpose of ingratiating himself with rabid evangelicals. Before Ilaiah wrote this, he was neither an avant-garde academic nor a celebrated public intellectual. As soon as he published his hate tract, he was touted by Christian organizations as a leading global intellectual and radical reformer of the "decadent Hindu society."

Since Christian organizations carry a lot of influence in Western universities, Ilaiah became a professional globetrotter, lecturing at the most prestigious universities in the West. Overnight he became a star speaker at high-profile international conferences, including at the United Nations. His views on India and

Hinduism came to be treated as gospel truth. If a person of his intellectual mediocrity had said good things about Hinduism, he would not have been invited as a speaker even by a small-town Rotary Club. But abusing India and Hinduism brought him handsome monetary rewards and celebrity stature.

Ilaiah's article disowning Hinduism is likely to have been inspired by my controversial article "Why I Do Not Call Myself a Feminist," in which I explained how followers of all "isms," including Indian feminists, ape the means and methods of Christian missionaries out to harvest souls and treat those who don't adopt their ideology as sub-human species who need to be saved from ignorance and perdition. That sealed my fate with Christian organizations and foreign universities that once sought me out. I began to get blacklisted, even though mine was far from a hate tract. Moral of the story: while I faced severe punishment for distancing myself from copycat feminism and all proselytizing ideologies, Ilaiah became a global celebrity as a reward for his Hindu bashing and open conversion to Christianity.

Modi's Demonic Image

I personally woke up to the seriousness of the danger posed by Christian missionaries during my study of Narendra Modi's tenure as Gujarat chief minister. As I explained in my book *Modi, Muslims and Media (MMM)*, I undertook that study only because I wanted to check out for myself whether the evil deeds attributed to Modi

and the demonic image painted of him by the Congress-Left combine, in cohorts with select foreign-funded nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), bore any resemblance to chief minister Modi and the impact his model of governance had on the ground. Since he was being accused of a genocidal bent of mind towards "religious minorities," I made Muslim and Christian communities the focus of my study.

It all started with an hour-long phone conversation I had with V. V. Augustine, a Malayali Christian based in Thiruvananthapuram. Here are major excerpts:

"Contrary to the propaganda that Modi is supposed to be anti-minority, my experience is that Modi is a very minority-friendly person. When I was member of the Minorities Commission, the Christian community of Vapi district in Gujarat brought a serious issue to my notice. For the last 40 years, they had been trying to get a piece of land for a cemetery. They had even approached the central government; and they were willing to pay for the land. But the administration kept dragging the matter on for decades. On approaching Modi, within no time the land was identified on the outskirts of the town and the Christian community was gifted one-and-a-half acres of land by the state government, free of charge."

"I have interacted with him on numerous issues since then. During the 2006 Shabari Kumbh Mela, there was fear Christians would be attacked. But Modi issued firm instructions to the police commissioner of the area. The mela passed off peacefully. Not surprisingly, most Christians vote for Modi. They have never complained against his regime."

"In 2004, in Vadodara, a Muslim had killed a Hindu over a business issue and Hindus retaliated. They were not even on talking terms. I successfully conducted peace meetings. But they could not have succeeded without Modi's support. People who spread the canard that Modi is against minorities are reflecting their own political biases. My experience is entirely different."

"Now, even Muslims realize that Modi is good for them, because a riot-free Gujarat and a resurgent economy with new opportunities have provided them avenues of upward mobility. Who has given full rights to the minorities? It is the Hindu majority! Who wrote the Constitution? Mostly Hindus! We must appreciate Hindus for this and give them their due credit."



COURTESY REUTERS

This glowing tribute came as a very pleasant surprise for me, because for years one had heard John Dayal, Teesta Setalvad, Aakar Patel, Father Cedric Prakash (a Jesuit) and other Christian activists talk of Narendra Modi as though he was the devil incarnate out to cleanse Christians and Muslims from the state of Gujarat. Cedric Prakash in particular had been at the forefront of the international campaign against Modi to get him blacklisted “as a mass murderer” and denied a visa to America and European countries. To quote from one of his mythical interviews about Gujarat at the Berkeley Centre for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, December 2, 2010: “The people that follow Hindutva are fascists; they are the equivalent from (sic) the American context of the Ku Klux Klan, and they draw inspiration from the apartheid of South Africa and Nazi ideology. The basic ideology asks for one nation, one language and one people.” What is worse, Cedric Prakash along with Islamist groups had lobbied with the US Commission for Religious Freedom to get India blacklisted as a country that crushes religious minorities—notably Christians and Muslims.

The Truth Behind the “Victimhood”

I decided to go personally to the Christian pockets of Gujarat. I met with half a dozen pastors. Since they knew I had Augustine’s briefing of the real events, they could not

complain about what Modi actually did or failed to do. Father Francis Macwan, one of the senior pastors of a missionary school on Ahwa Road had told me that their school and their mission had received all possible help from the Modi government. When I asked him to provide concrete examples of help, he described how the district administration had been instructed to provide as many free school textbooks, children’s notebooks, stationery, school bags and uniforms as demanded by missionary schools, even though the state government is not obliged to provide such support to private, church-run institutions, especially considering that the mission schools set up in tribal areas have the express mandate to win over converts to Christianity.

Thus, when any state government provides free books and other educational materials to mission schools, it is in a way furthering their conversion agenda, since free education and related benefits are one of the primary incentives offered by the Church to tribals and other poor communities. And yet the Modi government, as perhaps several other state governments in India, provides this as a goodwill gesture towards the Christian community.

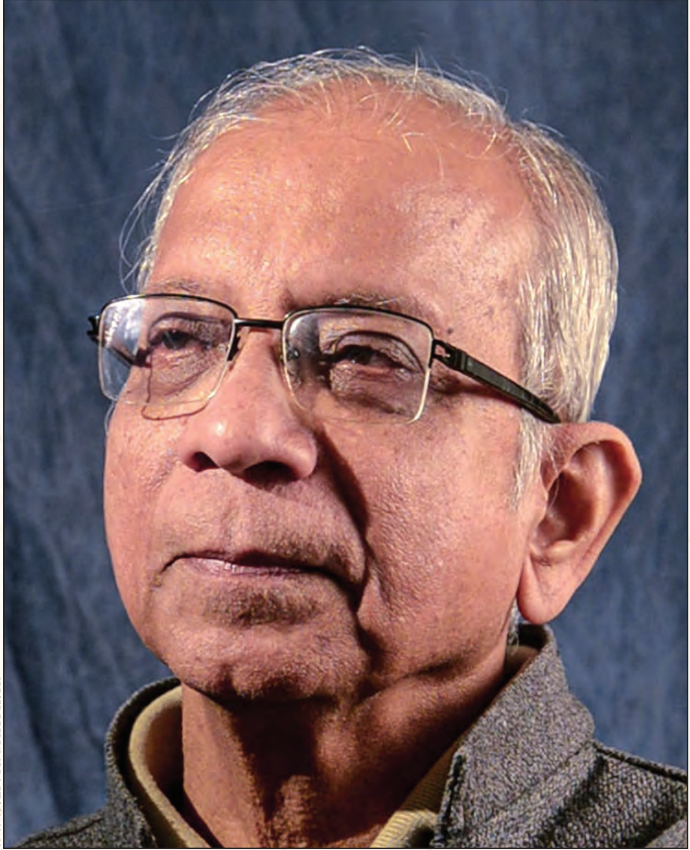
Despite the support of Modi’s administration, Father Jose Dali from Kerala, who has lived in Gujarat for 36 years, attributed their success in getting graveyard land to the

Modi and the law: (left) Modi addressing the UN. As Chief Minister of Gujarat he upheld the conversion laws; (right) Father Cedric Prakash, a Jesuit human right activist who wants the laws to change. He speaks at US universities and runs an international campaign against the current pro-Hindu Indian government.

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“power of the Lord”—yet another miracle of Christ. They also tried to convince me that the Modi government discriminated with regard to development programs.

Thereafter, they complained that the *sarpanch* (government official) of that area had refused to sanction a power connection for the graveyard. Since burials don’t take place at night, I was a bit surprised that they needed a power connection for the open ground. Even so, I decided to check whether this charge had any substance. I met both the current and the previous government official of Paldi Village *panchayat* (village council). Both were categorical that the pastors had never applied for a power connection so there was no question of refusal. I called the most voluble among the pastors from the *sarpanch*’s house and put my mobile phone on speaker mode. Now, the pastor, who had claimed that he had personally gone and applied for the power connection, came up with



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Seeking conversion by any means: (left) Father Jose Dali (right) Father Francis Fernandes

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a lame story that a long while ago he had gone very early morning to the house of the *sarpanch* (not the *panchayat* office) and since the *sarpanch* was not at home, he left the application with an unknown person who opened the door. I asked him whether he had followed up on the matter. The answer was, “No, we didn’t follow up since we knew they would not sanction the connection.”

This was a clear case of building a victimhood narrative out of a situation where the Modi government had gone out of its way to help the Christian community in more ways than one. And the resistance has only exacerbated instead of abating.

Christians Want Unlimited Freedom to “Harvest Souls”

The innate hostility towards the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and Modi actually came from a deeper place—resentment for thwarting their agenda. The BJP and the Rashtriya Swayam Sangh (RSS) in general, and Narendra Modi in particular become objects of hate and are perceived as threats not because they want to smash churches and attack or kill Christians or shut down schools. They are hated because, unlike the Congress and Communist parties, the RSS is not willing to go out of its way to assist Christian missionaries in harvesting souls. Modi became the *bête noire* of the Christian community despite being very liberal in yielding to the reasonable demands of Christian organizations and seeking a relationship of cooperation with them and not confrontation. In the first year of his tenure, his government passed a law entitled Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003. As per this law, anyone who wants to

change his/her religion has to first report to the civil authority, namely the deputy commissioner of the district.

This provision is meant to prevent conversions through fraud. Even though seven states in India already had such a law, the Gujarat law came to rankle the Christian community all over India because Modi took its enforcement somewhat more seriously, whereas almost all Congress governments either turned a blind eye to conversions—whether fair or foul—or actively assisted in the planting of churches in areas favored by Christians through free land grants and other overt and covert forms of assistance.

For the Christian missions in India, “freedom of religion,” promised as a constitutional right, means essentially one thing—unchecked right to convert people to Christianity. But Modi made them face the law of reporting conversions.

Reasons for the animosity came out through the pastors’ own narrative—the real issue bothering them was the government policy over conversions. To quote Jose Dali: “Actually, what the government feels about conversion and what we believe are different. Conversion will take place within the heart. We are not converting anybody. Those who are truly believing and personally accepting Christ as their savior and after confessing by themselves publicly, we will accept them. Baptism is not a sign of the conversion. Baptism is a part of the faith. Those who are converted will be baptized as per the Bible, Gospel of Matthew.”

Father Francis Fernandes added: “Conversion and baptism are not the same. The pastor is explaining is there is a change of heart in a person. The change of heart is when the person is ready and the person says, I want to join this way of life. Then only we initiate him in the field. He is saying ‘yes’ and we are acknowledging that ‘yes;’ that is baptism.

By seeing the way of life, by seeing the faith of the people around, by seeing that Jesus is there, God is there, then this person comes and says, I want to receive baptism. It is not that we are going and forcing people.” He justified Father Cedric Prakash’s virulent opposition to the Modi government on the grounds that “We are not free in our own country, in our own state. Why are our constitutional rights being curtailed? I have the freedom to believe in any God as per the Constitution and after my confession, any time I can follow the principles of the faith.” In other words, the government not allowing support to conversions made them feel India is not a free country.

Their “rights are curtailed” for a very good reason. In my own case study of Bishrampur village in Sasaram district of Bihar, published in *Swarajya* in February 2018, I have described the blackmail tactics, including violence on children, used by Christian bigots to force children from poor families to adopt Christianity.

Mother Mary in a Gujarati-Style Sari

Meanwhile, the Church has tried to adopt Hindu nomenclature, rituals and vocabulary for Christian myths and church rituals, to make Christianity appear less alien. As elsewhere, so also in the Vapi church, the statue of Mother Mary was dressed in a Gujarati-style sari. Father Francis Fernandes explained they have named her “Our Lady of Velankanni” after a place in Tamil Nadu where Mother Mary allegedly appeared to several persons in her bodily form. That place has become a Christian “pilgrimage center.” Such miracle mongering is a standard technique of evangelicals to attract converts. Adopting local Hindu names, rituals, aarti and bhajans are also part of the strategy to make Christianity appear rooted in the soil of India instead of being an alien, imported religion.



Harvesting souls in a war on Hinduism: (left) Missionary "Fred" with his new flock; (above) Anish Kumar was beaten so mercilessly with a wooden stick that his legs were swollen at missionary school; He had committed the sin of going for prayers at the temple of Goddess Tara Chandi to thank the Deity for the new motorcycle his family had been able to purchase.

The lack of hostility of the Hindu population toward Christian institutions is evident from the fact that out of 1,800 students in Father Mathew's school, the vast majority are Hindu. Only one percent of children are avowedly Christian, and only ten percent are tribals. However, they run a separate residential school only for tribal children, where there is a heavy dose of evangelical brainwashing to convert them to Christianity.

The Hindu parents and their youngers seem oblivious to the situation. I also saw for myself how the local Hindu population, especially the youngsters, routinely visited the big church compound in Vapi for relaxing in its vast garden and often went and prayed inside because they found the atmosphere peaceful. For some youngsters, it has become the most convenient dating place, because Vapi has many such pleasant gardens with beautiful shaded trees.

For the benefit of "secular Hindus," the pastors describe their evangelical agenda in highly sanitized terms: "We propagate the love of Jesus Christ, we propagate the gospel, and we are teaching everyone to become a good human being so we propagate Jesus Christ and his love. We never try to convert anybody. Message of Christ is the message of love. It is a very open message."

Restraining Church Enchroachment

Another charge made by these pastors was that there are restrictions on building churches. To quote Father Francis Fernandes: "This is our freedom curtailment. As an active member of the Christian faith, we are not free in our own country to call our own place of worship which is called internation-

ally a church." At the same meeting, Father Mathew told me, "In South Gujarat alone, there are hundreds of Christian institutions."

Several IAS officers, including those working as district collectors, confirmed that there is no blanket ban on building churches. But the problem arises when evangelicals want to plant a church in the middle of a Hindu settlement where there are no Christians, or position it right next to an important Hindu temple. That is invariably resisted by local communities. But evangelicals have become used to the administration riding roughshod over local sentiments under pressure from Christian missions to give them endless special concessions they claim as a "minority." They succeed often because they have monetary clout as well as political backing to get the government to do their bidding. The fact that under the Modi government they could not bulldoze the administration with unreasonable demands was provocation enough to join not only with the conversion-friendly Congress party, but even rank Islamists, in running an international campaign to present him as devil incarnate.

Jose Dali belongs to a Protestant group called Brethren Assemblies, which is spread all over the world. In response to his litany of complaints, I asked him if he had presented the complaints to the district collector. His response was a giveaway: "We don't want to make allegations. If there is some problem, we won't go to the police station or outside. We believe that maybe God's plan will work things out." But that didn't prevent them from taking their imaginary complaints against Narendra Modi to the US Senate, the European Union and various UN platforms.

How do they justify the virulent campaign to get the US and European governments to deny Modi a visa for a whole decade? To quote Father Francis Fernandes: "Maybe when our Indian Penal Code or Indian court is not giving you proper justice, you appeal to the international level. That is how Cedric Prakash must have gone to that extent. When my children are not fed in my own house, they will go out to beg, borrow and eat. So that is what is happening. If they have taken this step, that means something is wrong with my own house."

Father Francis Macwan, the most reasonable and straightforward of all the pastors I met, from the Jesuit order, summed up the nature of the conflict candidly: "Father Cedric Prakash is a social scientist and an activist. His view is different from ours because we are staying in the midst of people. So my experience is different. Cedric is also in touch with Protestant groups, who go for conversion and faith formation. I have a very positive experience in working in Gujarat under Modi. We Catholics are not directly aggressive in conversions. But for Protestants, the main activity is conversion. So their experience is different." It is noteworthy that he could speak his mind, though very diffidently, mainly because I chanced to meet him alone while all others met me as a group.

Support from California

However, the Joshua Project, of which all these Protestant missions are a part, is funded by multi-million dollar Frontier Ventures, in Pasadena, California. It makes no secret of the communities it has targeted for conversion. This is what it says about communities that are the soft targets in the tribal-dominated Dang district:



Brainwashing: (above,) Catholic nun with schoolgirls in Kanyakumari; (far right) Catholics regularly feature Mother Mary in a sari, an example of unprincipled inculturation. Kanchan, (right) a Class VIII student who spoke at length about the religious indoctrination students are routinely subjected to at the Gospel Echoing Missionary Society (GEMS). She described how they are brainwashed into believing that only Christianity could take them to heaven. The priests allegedly also forbid these children from attending weddings of their relatives because those involve Hindu rituals.



"Almost all of the Central Bhil practice ethnic religions that have been highly influenced by Hinduism. Shiva is considered the supreme god. Ancestor worship (praying to deceased ancestors) is also quite popular. Shamans (priests) are also called upon to offer sacrifices to the many gods and mud idols.

"In spite of their traditional beliefs, there have been interesting manifestations of god's spirit among the upper caste Bhagat gurus. They now worship light and 'the word,' singing prophecies of the future, such as the coming sinless incarnation. At the turn of the century, one guru warned his disciples that there would be a great famine, after which they should look for teachers from the north and west who would teach them the true way of salvation from a book, free of cost. They would teach about the true god, and about a sinless incarnation, who was born of a virgin. The guru also said that they should worship this sinless, invisible God, turn away from stones and idols, and live blameless lives. A famine occurred in 1899-1900, soon after the guru's death."

The Joshua Project thus admits that the Bhils are steeped in Hindu faith and that their agenda is to wean them away from at-

tachment to their "false gods" and adopt the "true god," but they also admit to using devious strategies, including natural calamities, as a way of making inroads among the unsuspecting tribals.

During British times, churches of various denominations came to occupy the best and the most premium tracts of real estate in every state of India. But even after Independence, the Indian State has been generous in patronizing missionary activities, making available countless stretches of prime land as virtual gifts, or at best charging a token amount. In that sense, the combined real estate of various churches in India may well place them among the biggest landowners in the country. The growth in planting of churches has also proceeded at frenetic pace in recent decades, especially after the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) came to power and Sonia Gandhi became the all-powerful authority figure at the Centre as well as for state governments under the rule of the Congress and/or its allies. To quote Dr. Ralph F. Wilson, writing on the website of the Joyful Heart Renewal Ministries:

"The truly exciting thing is that the per-



centage of Christians has increased substantially from 2.5 per cent a decade ago to about 5.8 per cent today. That represents a huge increase in the growth rate. Something is happening!

"Mycologist and church growth expert C. Peter Wagner has been receiving reports that the percentage may actually be 25 percent Christian—at least in parts of this large country—most of the growth coming in the past 10 to 15 years. And the growth may not all be in traditional churches. A substantial part may come from Jesus-follower groups within the Hindu culture.

"In this huge and very diverse country, it's difficult to get accurate statistics regarding religion, but anecdotal stories indicate exciting changes. According to Christianity Today, Operation Mobilisation, one of India's largest missionary groups, has grown to include 3,000 congregations in India, up from 300 in less than a decade. A hospital-based ministry in North India has seen 8,000 baptisms over the past five years after a decade of only a handful.

"Everybody knows about the massive



scale of growth among Dalits,’ says Operation World’s Jason Mandryk. Somewhere between 70 percent and 90 percent of Christians in India are Dalits, low-caste groups, so that many higher-caste Hindus view Christianity as a low-class religion, worthy of contempt.

“Now we see signs of growth in the middle castes and among the under-35s,’ Mandryk says. ‘There’s a new dynamic for the urban, educated generation....’ Wagner writes, ‘It is becoming more and more common for whole villages or other people groups to all decide to follow Jesus Christ together at one time.’ There are reports of both new churches and traditional denominational churches seeing signs and wonders in the spirit.”

Church organizations also manage to secure a big chunk of corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds as well as grants from various central government ministries and departments and state governments for their activities.

As described in my article on Bihar, it is not as if tribals and Dalits are desperate to convert. In most instances, missionaries use fairly dubious means to bring people into the Christian fold. Missionaries are also not just content with Hindus accepting Jesus as their savior. An essential requirement is that they begin hating their original faith, disown their ancestral culture and break off ties with relatives who refuse to convert.

Modi Empowers the Tribals

During Modi’s regime in Gujarat, the district administration had been advised to keep a close watch over conversions, not because Modi hated Christians but because the virulent hate campaigns against Hinduism and the indigenous faith traditions of tribal communities often led to clashes between Christian and non-Christian tribals, leading to law-and-order problems in areas targeted by evangelicals.

Missionaries also seemed resentful of the fact that the Modi government took on the task of improving road connectivity and provision of civic infrastructure to backward regions, including tribal pockets, on a war footing. With high-quality, all-weather roads reaching the remotest regions, along with 24/7 power supply, internet and mobile phone connectivity, safe drinking water, functional primary health centers, systemic improvements in state-run schools and one of the best ambulance services in the country just a phone call away—the space for missionary work began shrinking.

Christian missions and evangelical activists thrive only so long as communities remain poor, illiterate and deprived of means of social

The charts below from the Joshua Project are part of their efforts to survey and target a vulnerable Hindu Community, the Nats.

Population 456,000	Main Language Hindi
Largest Religion Hinduism (99.97%)	Christian 0.00%
Evangelical 0.00%	Progress



Subgroups of the Nat Community — 35 (10 largest shown)

Subgroup Name	Population	Subgroup Name	Population
Brijbansi	18,000	Rathor	17,000
Guai	10,000	Kalabaz	4,800
Kabutra	3,500	Karnataka	3,500
Jogila	2,600	Mirdha	2,200
Mirdha	2,200	Sapera	2,000

JOSHUA PROJECT.NET

The numbers used to prey on India: this is only a subset of statistics that Joshua Project maintains on this one Hindu group of nearly half a million tribals. They list 1,277,866,000 Indians by state, caste and language and project an “Evangelical Annual Growth Rate at 3.9%.” Their “Prayer Points” include: “Ask the Holy Spirit to raise up harvesters from within the Church Planting Movement that will be sent out to other unreached people groups until there is no place left in India where Christ is not preached, known, loved and worshiped. Pray that the problems Nat experience will lead them to Jesus Christ.”

and economic advancement. Congress, during its long tenures as the ruling party, had not only left the field free for conversions by its callous neglect of tribal areas but also by facilitating the activities of the church. But the Modi government made a special effort to mainstream neglected tribal communities. This appeared as a palpable threat to the evangelicals.

During Modi’s tenure as chief minister, Hindu groups felt emboldened to report to the administration all those meetings where tribals were invited for baptism even while the pastors described those meetings as community gatherings, not conversion melas. But they gave the game away by repeatedly asserting that the Modi government was tampering with the freedom of religion of tribal communities to accept Jesus as their lord and savior. The logic is bizarre. Tribals are most comfortable continuing with their ancestral belief system. It is the evangelicals who tamper with their religious freedom by pressuring them to convert—that too through hate propaganda against the native faiths.

The Modi government merely kept a vigil over conversion activities. And yet these pas-

tors termed it as a crackdown on Christianity, even though they were free to practice their religion and run Christian schools and hospitals. This is how they tried covering up their real agenda: “The xyz gathering we planned was only meant for baptism, not conversion. If people come to us after an inner awakening of the love of Jesus, how can we turn them away? We don’t ask them to convert; it is they who came to embrace Christ. So how can they charge us with conversions?”

They had no answer when I asked how they could say “baptism” was not conversion and whether as per law, they provided the list of those seeking baptism to the district administration. If seeking baptism was a genuine individual choice, why hide it from the deputy commissioner?

Fomenting Divisiveness

Their methods of conversion had always been questionable and wherever strong, they too did not hesitate to use outright violence and vandalism against their opponents. Moreover, their very ideology of treating non-Christian faiths as satanic amounts to a declaration of war against Indic faiths. They use all manner of subterfuge to con-



vince people that Jesus alone can save them and that by rejecting Jesus they would be inviting permanent perdition and roast in hell fires for all eternity. I have experienced first-hand how Christianized tribal girls from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, etc., are taught by church leaders that they should refuse to participate in Hindu rituals while working and living with Hindu families.

They are indoctrinated into believing that if they participate in the traditional pujas of their ancestral faith organized by their own close relatives, demonic forces would overpower them and they would be stricken with fatal diseases. Their exclusionist ideology leads to breaking up not just village and community solidarity (as they do everywhere they plant their churches) but also tearing asunder families. This had led to plenty of strife among tribals, because most of those who gravitated towards Christianity did so to avail of educational opportunities and not to disown their culture and family bonds.

The missionaries have worked with zeal to drive a wedge between Hindu society and various groups erroneously designated as “tribals” simply because they were forest dwellers and therefore remained outside the varna vyavastha. The core belief system of groups designated as tribals consists of ancestor worship and nature worship. Hence they are termed animists. But both these are

core beliefs of Hindu faith traditions as well, even while rituals involving these two beliefs might differ from one group to another. The big chink in the tribal armor exploited by missionaries is that they don’t have a written history or literary tradition, because most of their languages did not have well-developed scripts. Missionaries have used that vulnerability to invent a whole new history for them on the lines of the Aryan-Dravidian divide theory used with success in the South.

Global Campaign to Defame Hinduism and India

During my long interviews with Narendra Modi in 2013, he provided me valuable insights into the games being played by missionaries in crafting a narrative of victimhood in order to defame India globally and put the Indian government and political leaders on the defensive, so that they dare not challenge even the patently illegal and subversive activities of missionaries.

It is ironic that liberal, educated people in India go ballistic and hyperventilate their outrage towards *ghar wapsi* (“back-to-home” re-conversion programs and rituals by Hindu organizations which facilitate conversion of Muslims and Christian back to Hinduism) but take a very benign stand when successive Popes openly proclaim their wish to “witness a great harvest of faith” in India.

Training in the USA to battle for souls: the Joshua Project is one mission of the Frontier Ventures, whose multi-million dollar William Carey International University (left above) is training an army of missionaries (left below) teaching strategies to tackle India. It has the least number of Christians of all countries and is a Frontier target.

Imagine the left liberal outrage in India if a Hindu leader expressed something close to what Pope Paul Francis declared in 15 March 2013 while addressing the College of Cardinals:

“Let us never yield to pessimism, to that bitterness that the devil offers us every day; let us not yield to pessimism or discouragement: let us be quite certain that the Holy Spirit bestows upon the Church, with his powerful breath, the courage to persevere and also to seek new methods of evangelization, so as to bring the Gospel to the uttermost ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8). Christian truth is attractive and persuasive because it responds to the profound need of human life, proclaiming convincingly that Christ is the one Savior of the whole man and of all men. This proclamation remains as valid today as it was at the origin of Christianity, when the first great missionary expansion of the Gospel took place.”

It is time that Hindus wake up to the fact that Abrahamic religions—both Islam and Christianity—do not believe in peaceful coexistence. For them “religious freedom” promised in the Indian constitution means the freedom to wipe out non-Christians from the surface of this Earth.

The noble and inclusive worldview intrinsic to uniquely Hindu worldview that proclaims Sarva Dharma Sambhav has become a death trap for our civilization because Christianity (and Islam) is not rooted in Dharma, which is the founding rock of our civilization. They wish to destroy this worldview to ensure supremacy of Christianity.

The Nehruvian elite that assumed power after Independence prevented us from not only studying Indic faith traditions but also kept us ignorant about the real agenda of Christianity and Islam. Therefore, we have let them run riot in India and even given them state patronage, including land grants and government plus corporate funds to wage war against Hindus. This can only be remedied by serious study of our own heritage and the value system of those out to destroy it so that we can take preemptive measures.

Madhu Kishwar’s Blog:
bit.ly/why-modi; bit.ly/joshuamission
Examples of Christian Strategies:
www.frontierventures.org
joshuaproject.net



DANCE

Tribute to a Preeminent Teacher

In Canada, Priyamvada Sankar is passing along the heritage of Bharatanatyam dance tied to a deep appreciation for Hinduism and its incomparable culture

BY NANDINI RAMANI, CANADA

PRIYAMVADA SANKAR IS THE FIRST disciple of the late T. Balasaraswati, the legendary Bharatanatyam exponent with whom she studied at India's Madras Music Academy. Priyamvada is one of the most respected and adored scholars and teachers of this ancient South Indian classical dance, remaining true to the traditional style of the Balasaraswati School. Residing in the West for the past 52 years, currently in Canada, she is revered as a living legend by many lovers of traditional culture and arts.

Priyamvada's guru, T. Balasaraswati, was a foremost follower of the famous Thanjavur dance tradition, admired for her strict adherence to its disciplines. The heights of that tradition's purity were expressed in her own essential movements and form. Her performance of *nritya*, "pure dance," was a special feature of her art. She was also known as the "Queen of Abhinaya," interpretative dance. She thrilled audiences with limitless, unique offerings of exquisite abhinaya. Through Bharatanatyam she gave her audiences

beautiful, visual representations of music in form. Balasaraswati's birth centenary is being celebrated from 2018 to 2019 in India and the US. For a 30-minute documentary about Balasaraswati see: bit.ly/balasaraswati.

During eighteen years of rigorous daily training, Balasaraswati passed this precious art form to Priyamvada, who successfully preserved and propagated the tradition through her performances and instruction in North America.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Bharatanatyam was in renaissance in India. In this golden period, Priyamvada was a shining star. She has performed innumerable concerts at the Madras Music Academy and many other illustrious institutions all over India. In 1962, she led the first Indian cultural delegation to Nepal. At just twelve years of age she became one of the earliest Bharatanatyam artists to be given honors by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India.

Priyamvada's life and mission have been energized by Bharatanatyam, Carnatic music and other aspects of India's cultural heritage. She is a recipient of the Canadian Award for

A life of dance: (clockwise from above) Group picture of Priyamvada (center with red sari and glasses) with many of her current students; Priyamvada during a 1968 performance; Balasaraswati and Priyamvada preparing for a performance in India during the early 60s; Priyamvada next to Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru; Priyamvada Sankar is honoured with Medal of the Quebec National Assembly.

Multiculturalism and the Order of Merit from her city. But most importantly, Priyamvada is loved by her students, who have learned from her the intrinsic values of art and life—all recognized and acclaimed as part of the precious heritage of India, and more specifically of Hinduism.

Priyamvada is also a respected Sanskrit scholar. Under the keen tutelage of her father, Dr. V. Raghavan, a world-renowned Sanskritist and Indologist, she specialized in authoritative treatises such as the *Natya Shastra*, a pioneering text on the performing arts.

Priyamvada has lectured widely in schools,



colleges and universities on the multi-dimensional facets of Hinduism, art and culture, making a great impact in the past several decades across the Canadian cultural mosaic. As a member of the Inter-Faith Council, whose mission is to seek new and unique ways to educate communities about diverse faiths and traditions, she has been deeply involved and dedicated to the promotion of communal harmony and unity.

Today, along with her husband, children and grandchildren, Priyamvada has blended herself into the life streams of modern, multicultural Canada. This distinguished senior citizen still works tirelessly to promote, propagate and preserve the great treasures of Hindu culture and Indian aesthetics.

Over the past five decades she has given benefit performances in support of special causes, produced the educational documentary film "A Dance the Gods Yearn to Witness" (see a brief clip at bit.ly/priyamvada-clip) and passed on her passion for Bharatanatyam and Indian traditions to her multicultural students.

Let us celebrate this woman of substance, a "one-woman mission" striving to promote the Balasaraswati tradition in North America. May this devoted performing artist be an example for us all as a perfect role model for the future generations. Priyamvada is an adorable teacher and an exemplary homemaker who has lived a life of impeccable, noble endeavors.





Exploring India's Miniature Painting Tradition

Our Chandigarh artist reveals the tremendous teamwork and discipline needed to create the miniatures that have enchanted the world for centuries

BY BAANI SUKHON

INDIAN MINIATURE PAINTINGS ARE A study in perfection. Each work, on a small canvas or other painting surface, is rich in composition, vibrantly colorful, and depicts a story to the fullest. The paintings typically feature lush landscapes, graceful forms and stylized figures.

This is an art genre that entails intricate brushwork, great expertise in craftsmanship and the mastery of many different techniques. As such, one painting will represent the work of specialists in several fields—not only what we usually consider as “art” (composition, color and so forth) but also the cre-

ation of the painting surface itself and the many natural pigments, as well as each of the many steps between the initial sketch and the finished masterpiece.

These paintings originated not as independent pieces but rather as narratives or illustrations for manuscripts or books. The tradition bloomed primarily as a means to reveal the Divine. It gained momentum with the revival of Vaishnavism and the growth of the Bhakti Movement in the 18th century. Devotional literature like *Gita Govinda*, *Bhagvat Purana* and *Surasagara* became the source of inspiration for the Indian artists. Even the paintings commissioned by the Hindu

princely courts were an act of respecting the sacred scripts and religious epics.

Diverse Styles and Themes

Under the patronage of the Rajputana princely states, ateliers in each kingdom developed their own distinctive style. Diverse schools of painting evolved, including Kangra, Bundi, Jaipur, Mewar and Marwar. The themes predominantly used in that era were mostly mythological stories, ragas (musical notes), religious texts, poetic literature, folklore and royal lifestyle, accompanied by explanatory text.

Numerous celebrated themes, transcend-

Classic artistry: (left) Rama, Sita and Lakshmana at the hermitage of Bharadvaja, from a Ramayana series; (right) This important portrait, called Bani Thani (literally, “the decked-out lady”) is known as the Indian Mona Lisa. It epitomizes the unique features followed by the indigenous style, high forehead, arched eyebrows, lotus-like elongated eyes and pointed chin. Queen Bani Thani was a known singer and poetess from Kishangarh. She and her royal lover/king both died in the 1760s.

ing time, have been a special favorite for artists throughout the history of Indian art. For instance, the *Bhagvat Purana* series uses mythology as its subject. Based on a key Vaishnava scripture of the same name, these miniatures present Vaishnavism's view of the cosmic order. The creative paintings showcase moral stories (mostly of Lord Vishnu) for a deeper understanding of dharma, bhakti and moksha.

The paintings in the Ragamala (“Garland of Ragas”) series are visual depictions of various Indian musical notes. They illustrate the different moods of the ragas, also suggesting the season and time of the day when each raga is meant to be sung. Each set of paintings is dedicated to a different Hindu God, and these are sung during the six seasons of the year.

The popular Gita Govinda series, based on the devotional song of the same name composed by the Sanskrit poet Jayadeva, illustrates Radha's love for Krishna, a humble cattle-grazing cowherd. It visually portrays

the concept that a divine love for God is the only means of salvation.

Other series include the legendary Surasagara, based on the poems of saint Surdas; the Ramayana series, depicting the adventures and battles of Rama; the Dasavatara series, based on the ten avatars of Vishnu; and the Sat Sai series, a pictorial rendition of the verses composed by the poet Bihari Lal.

Brush, the Primary Tool

An artist's brush set is widely varied in thickness and purpose. Separate brushes are used for each color, to maintain purity and vividness. Traditionally, the fine brush that achieves the intricate details, outline and coloring of miniature paintings is made of just a few strands of hair (or only one!) from the tail of a squirrel, affixed to a bird's quill. The end of the brush is not meant to be straight and pointed; the finest brush will have a slight curve at the end, converging to a single point that makes it more versatile for achieving the

precise movements and uniform curves visualized by the artist.

The Painting Surface

The most common surface used for miniatures is paper; however, silk, marble and even ivory also serve. The process remains the same for all base materials, except that silk is starched to add stiffness and smoothness.

Handmade papers used for miniature paintings are traditionally made from rice stalk or bamboo. Multiple layers of sheets are combined and then coated with a layer of asbestos or white chalk powder. This coating guarantees a thick enamel-like surface, ready to be used for painting.

Handmade Natural Pigments

After the painting surface has been prepared, specialists start making the color pigments. Only natural elements are used: minerals, vegetables, precious stones, organic inks and dyes, conch shells, pure gold, silver, zinc, lead



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Idyllic: (top left) *Radha and Krishna in the grove. Kangra, 18th century, gouache on paper;* (right) *painters' natural pigments.*

and more.

Preparing a pigment from a hard mineral is a three-step process. The stone is first ground by hand with mortar and pestle to produce a fine powder. This is filtered in a series of washes to remove any additives and impurities that would decrease the pigment's luster. The pigment must then be bound—the most crucial step. Binding adds fluidity, makes the pigment water soluble and stabilizes it. The binding medium is gum Arabic, the crystallized sap of the babul tree (*Vachellia nilotica*). The pigments are mixed with water and this gum for months to achieve a smooth, evenly spreadable paste. Even a small lump in the pigment would leave a patch that would ruin the painting.

The most extensively used colors are black, obtained from soot; white, derived from lead or chalk; blue, from lapis lazuli; red from lac, an insect secretion; and green from plants and leaves. The dazzlingly luminous yellow used by Indian artists is ingeniously derived from the urine of a cow who is fed a diet of only mango leaves and water. This diet colors the urine bright yellow. The urine is then dried into a foul-smelling hard cake to which water is added as needed.

Complex Methodology

The process that produces one of these elegant miniatures involves many steps, each performed by its own specialist.

The initial sketch is a rough outline made by the master (see page 53). The canvas' border, which may be as much as three to four inches wide, is also marked at this stage.

In the second step, a thin white wash is applied. The artist traces the first sketch, but this time the outline is incredibly precise and fine. Now the artwork is burnished—placed face down on a smooth, hard surface and polished briskly but gently from the back with an egg-shaped crystal or agate to produce a smooth, hard, glossy surface. Layers of liquid colors are then applied one at a time, for smooth shading, and a final outline is added. At this stage there is no room for error.

A second round of burnishing now embeds the pigments deep into the paper and gives an overall union to the color pigments.

In the last stage, any embossing, ornamentation and other enhancements are added. Pin-pricks are created with a blunt needle for inlaying gems. White drops made of conch shells are added as pearls. Real gold is painted over selected ornaments.

For transparencies, often used for women's clothes, color washes are used. This involves applying a thin layer of stronger color over the base color. After each stage of the painting is completed by the specialists, all toiling together in a shared workshop, it returns to the master artist for the finishing touches. The completed painting goes to other artisans for trimming and mounting.

Contemporary miniaturists still follow the ancient methods, preserving the authenticity of the style. However, artists today have more creative freedom; they are no longer bound to the commissions of imperial patrons in terms of size and subject.

Today's artists have recognized organizations like Paramparik Karigar (paramparikkarigar.com) and Maukaa Art Foundation (maukaa.org) helping them gain international exposure. With renowned miniaturists like Ramesh Sharma (rameshpaintings.com), Ramu Ramdev (ramuramdev.com) and Vijay Sharma (Padma Shri awardee) creating waves internationally, the art form is gradually gaining recognition. It is no longer considered mere imitation of past artworks. This rich art form is being passed on to future aspiring artists through regular workshops in museums and certified courses in notable institutes like Himanshu Art Institute (himanshuartinstitute.co.in) and Pencil and Chai (pencilandchai.com).

Historical Trivia and Facts

The main purpose of the border is to protect the painting from the wear and tear of handling. In the old days, paintings were not displayed on walls; rather they were passed from hand to hand so that each viewer could

inspect the work. Fingers would touch only the wide border and not the actual painting.

Brushes made of a single squirrel hair are the artist's most prized possessions. In the hands of a master craftsman, this tool can produce precise outlines and extremely intricate detail.

The iconic painting "Bani Thani," branded as "India's Mona Lisa" by art historians worldwide, epitomizes the unique features of the indigenous style, with the high forehead, arched eyebrows, elongated eyes and pointed chin. Bani Thani was a known singer and poetess from Kishangarh (see page 65).

Traditionally, an apprentice's training spans eight years. The first technique taught by the master is posture. There are strict rules regarding the distance of the paper from the eyes, the angle of the arm and the manner in which the brush was held. Since the painters sit on the floor and use a slanted desk, mastering good posture is essential.

Some of these workshops still exist. To see miniatures being made for sale, visit www.exoticindia.com. Relatively few modern-day artists are being trained in these exacting disciplines. This sad state of affairs may change, however.

The demand by art collectors for classical Indian miniature painting has peaked significantly over the last few decades. Top auction houses like Christies, Sothebys and Bonhams have presented rare collections of Indian miniatures, ranging from the 16th to 19th centuries. Just last year, Christie's London witnessed a painting from the famed "Ragamala Series" go under the hammer for an impressive sale price of \$266,000, more than doubling pre-sale expectations.



BAANI SEKHON is a post graduate in fine arts with more than eighteen years in the creative industry. She works as art director, curator, writer, designer, illustrator and fine artist.



DINODIA: STEFANO PATERNA

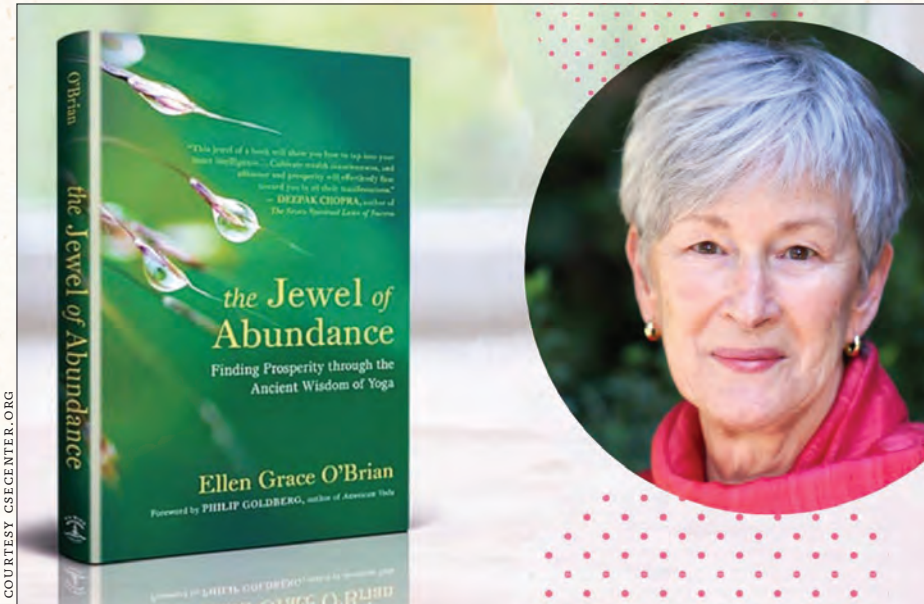
(above) *Using the delicate squirrel-hair brush, an Indian artist steadies his hand to achieve the delicacy of stroke needed;* (below left) *preparing the paper medium in a workshop in Udaipur;* (below right) *the master creates the rough pencil sketch that will guide his apprentices to fill the canvas (19th century Kangra illustration of Rama in the hills).*



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BOOKS

What Ancient Wisdom Teaches Us About a Truly Abundant Life

Ellen Grace O'Brian returns to the roots of yoga to craft a do-it-yourself manual on prosperity

BY TARA KATIR, WASHINGTON

PIONEERING INTERNATIONAL YOGA teacher Paramahansa Yogananda arrived in Boston, Massachusetts in September 1920 following divine instructions directing him to begin his work in the West. His nascent teachings began at the International Congress of Religious Liberals, where he spoke on "The Science of Religion." That same year he founded the Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) to disseminate the ancient Hindu philosophy of yoga. His teachings emphasized the underlying unity of the world's religions; he initiated serious students in the profound practices of Kriya Yoga.

Even after the guru's departure from this world, the teachings of SRF continued to expand in the United States and around the globe. Devotees were inspired to create many centers that have sustained the tradition. One such center was particularly significant for Ellen Grace O'Brian, as it was established by her guru, Roy Eugene Davis. From his inspiration, she founded the Center for Spiritual Enlightenment in San Jose, California, a meditation center that "helps people learn to live from the inside out with practices and insights for developing life-transforming skills and cultivate a spiritually awakened,

fulfilled life."

Poet, writer and spiritual director, Yogacharya O'Brian has written several books to inspire seekers in the ancient yoga practices. Most recently published is *The Jewel Of Abundance; Finding Prosperity through the Ancient Wisdom of Yoga* (Paperback and eBook, 320 pages, \$16.95, ISBN 978-1-60868-1).

This latest book is crafted as a roadmap for abundant living utilizing the four *purusharthas*—dharma, artha, kama and moksha, while focusing primarily on artha. "The aim of artha is to prosper in every way—to develop the consciousness and the skills to attract whatever is needed to fulfill our dharma, or higher purpose. In this context, prosperity is understood as a spiritual goal—not for its own sake, but for the sake of the soul. It provides the means to live fully and freely.

"When prosperity is equated with material wealth attained for its own sake, the word *prosperity* loses its deep meaning. True prosperity is experienced in a spiritual context. Because this truth is frequently missed, the words *prosperity* and *wealth* are often narrowly defined or understood at the level of material accomplishment alone. But as you work through the teachings of this book with me, you'll see that these words can

rightly be applied and understood in the right way as spiritual goals. And that makes all the difference."

Yogacharya divides her book into five sections: Higher Purpose; 1) Set the Foundation Upon Your Heart; 2) Insight: Road Map for Abundant Living; 3) A Skillful Way: How to Realize Fulfillment; 4) Clarity: Overcome Obstacles and Thrive; 5) Generosity: Live the Prosperous Life. Each section is filled with spiritual examples to engage and inspire readers to seek and express noble spiritual goals in their life.

One simple, yet sophisticated practice she encourages us to cultivate is to have a grateful and generous heart. "A grateful heart is a magnet that draws to us what is harmonious and good. This idea is reflected in a playful adage: not, 'We see things as they are,' but, 'We see things as we are.'" Yogacharya admonishes us to be thankful, for "gratitude stretches us to be bigger, to expand our consciousness, to open our hearts and our minds more fully. When we begin the practice of cultivating gratitude, we often notice that it's generally easier to feel grateful for what we like, for what we want or find pleasant. It's more difficult to experience gratitude when what comes our way is unwanted."

The essence of Yogacharya's advice on how to achieve artha falls near the end of her book: "The real nature of abundance is realizing that the universe is self-complete and we are one with it. It is full; lacking nothing. Life will bring forth whatever is needed for its purposes. When we let go of clinging to any idea of lack and instead turn our gaze toward the all-sufficiency of Spirit, we can see that. We experience our own wholeness, fullness and abundance."

Yogacharya O'Brian was ordained by Roy Eugene Davis, a direct disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda, and has been teaching Kriya Yoga philosophy for three decades. She is the recipient of the 2015 Mahatma Gandhi Award for the Promotion of Religious Pluralism and Founder. Living in California with her husband, she is president of Carry the Vision, a community nonviolence educational project bringing meditation instruction to staff and school children, the prison population and others in society. She served on the Board of Directors of the Parliament of World's Religions and is Vice Chair Emeritus of the Parliament Board.

The Jewel of Abundance makes for pleasurable reading, especially due to the author's linguistic gifts. It's full of inspiring quotes from great souls expertly woven into her compelling message of love, gratitude, surrender and how we can establish a spiritual foundation for our life. I found the glossary of Sanskrit words and endnotes delineating source materials useful. I believe you will enjoy this lovely book.

Hindu Heritage Endowment

What Do You Need to Know About Revocable Living Trusts?

Hindu Heritage Endowment (HHE) encourages all families to have complete estate plans. It will make a world of difference for your family, and can also help you make a significant and lasting contribution to one or several worthy causes of your choice.

Nowadays, a full estate plan includes having a will, a revocable living trust, power of attorney for property management and an advance health care directive. "Dying intestate" is the legal phrase used to describe an adult passing away with no estate plan, a condition that sets up family and friends for confusion, dissension, delay and conflict at a time of great stress. Many adults die intestate. According to a recent survey by legal publishers LexisNexis Martindale-Hubbell, 58% of American adults don't have a will, much less a complete estate plan.

At death, a will becomes a set of legally binding instructions that govern the distribution of your assets. Some people mistakenly think that a will avoids probate. On the contrary, a will is a ticket to probate court; but probate has the advantage of making sure your assets get distributed as your will directs. It has the disadvantage of being expensive, time-consuming and public. So, are you doing yourself and your heirs a disservice if all you have is a will?

A revocable living trust does avoid probate, but what exactly is it? Think of it as a mini-corporation that holds title to your most important possessions: your home, your investment portfolio and your cash reserves. Though you still have complete control over these possessions, you no longer hold them in your name. They are held by your revocable living trust. And just as a corporation does not go through probate when the CEO dies, your living trust avoids probate after your lifetime. Your successor trustee simply steps in and follows the rules and instructions of the trust.

Living trusts are useful during life as well. If, for example, you become unable to manage your real estate or finances through illness or accident, your successor trustee can take charge. There's no costly and embarrassing public conservatorship hearing. Revocable living trusts do have some disadvantages. They are more detailed than most wills, and so the cost of writing them is usually more than a will. Also, you must remember to transfer assets to your trust. If you do not, your living trust will remain an elaborate but empty shell, like a safe deposit box with nothing in it.

A living trust needs to be managed and its assets distributed according to its terms. Your successor trustee is supposed to take care of these important and sometimes complex tasks promptly, so choose your trustee with care. A well-managed living trust is a solace to your family and a boon to good causes. Naming one of the funds with Hindu Heritage Endowment as a beneficiary of a living trust for a percentage of your estate, a specific amount, or a specific property can usually result in a timely distribution at minimum cost. You can use your living trust to create a future endowment fund in your name or the name of a loved one. Like the gardens that surround a temple, your living trust will produce blossoms for a thousand years in the form of harvested income from your fund's principal.



HINDU HERITAGE ENDOWMENT

KAUAI'S HINDU MONASTERY, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA

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OCTOBER TO DECEMBER ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment		K. Vasanthakumari	99.00	Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01
Anonymous	282.85	Codarren Valaydon Velvindron	299.00	Nuckiren Pyeneeandee	28.10
Roshan Harilela	375.00	Aishwarya Visvanathan	299.00	Gayatri Rajan	75.00
Gayatri Rajan	75.00	Ravi Yendluri	299.00	Aran Sambandar	108.00
Chamundi Sabanathan	78.75	Total	7,795.31	Niranjn Sandesara	100.00
Hitesvara Saravan	63.00			Hitesvara Saravan	21.00
Jai Sivakumara	324.00	Gurudeva's Trilogy Distribution Fund		Adi Srikantha	51.00
Keith Wallach	54.00	Jon Langford	22.00	Nancy Walder	250.00
Other Donations	70,000.00	Vel Mahalingum	16.90	Total	23,109.42
Total	71,252.60	Total	38.90		
Iraivan Temple Endowment		Kadavul Nataraja Ardra		Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund	
Ram & Kalpana Batni	25.00	Abhishekam Endowment		Benevity	170.00
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	100.00	Gowri Nadason	84.85	Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00
Anonymous	43.00	Kanesanathan & Kanta Devi Sabapathipillai		Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	1.41
Amey Surendra Gangal	33.00		55.00	Roshan Harilela	450.00
Srinivas Kota	3,000.00	Parimala Selvaraj	93.00	Anonymous	100.00
Sasidharan Nair	51.00	Anonymous	232.27	Pandit & Gemma Lathi	5,001.00
Kannappan Sekkappan	500.00	Total	465.12	Chamundi Sabanathan	78.75
Muthu & Nandini Senthilkumar	51.00			Rodney & Ilene Standen	30.00
Sheela Venkatakrishnan	21.00	Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund		Total	5,881.16
Other Donations	124,713.00	Shyamadeva Dandapani	36.00	Hindu Education Endowment	
Total	128,537.00	Kulagan Moonesawmy	8.45	Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund	100.00
		Gowri Nadason	84.85	Balan Aravind	25.00
Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund		Ram Ramamoorthy	300.00	Total	125.00
Chandrasegaran Arnasalon	218.95	Aran Sambandar	108.00		
Thirujnanam Arnassalon	11.26	Vayudeva Varadan	36.00	Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund	
Sundari Devam	251.00	Anonymous	216.72	Mano Navaratnarajah	225.00
Narayen Kauppayamootoo	28.26	Other Donations	4,800.00	Gassa Patten	1,213.00
Anil Kumar	27.00	Total	5,590.02	Total	1,438.00
Ashwini Maureemootoo	19.71	Nadesan Family Lord Muruga Shum Fund		Spiritual Park of Mauritius Endowment	
Saroja Maureemootoo	22.56	Sadhunathan Nadesan	501.00	Anil Kumar	27.00
Jogendra Moorooogen	2.82			Positive Discipline Endowment	
Vidyadevi Moorooogen	2.82	Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam		Vinaya Alahan	66.00
Goindamah Moothoosawmy	14.11	Anonymous	324.00		
Shanmugam Muthukumar	48.16	Aran Sendan	108.00	Tirumular Sannidhi Preservation Fund	
Bhavani Nataraj	208.00	Muthu & Nandini Senthilkumar	100.00	Shyamadeva Dandapani	24.00
Rai Nuckchadee	14.11	Total	532.00	Srinivas R. Madaboosi	200.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	49.98			Total	224.00
Manishankar Sagum	11.26	Kauai Aadheenam Renovation		Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund	
Suresh Shankarakrishnan	-251.00	Endowment		Sathyainkara Balendra	40.00
Lavanyadeva Sivananda	73.19	Dharma Premakumar	300.00		
Kedarnathan Subramanian	111.00	Sri Subramuniya Ashram		Murugan Temple of North	
K. Vasanthakumari	251.00	Scholarship Fund		America Pillaiyar Shrine Fund	
Total	1,114.19	Anonymous	324.00	Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00
Hinduism Today Lifetime		Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund		Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	15.00
Subscription Fund		Anil Ananda Badhwar	30.00	Total	165.00
Chandrasegaran Arnasalon	119.72	Jeyasingam Nivethan	600.00		
Hemakheshaa Naatha Batumallah	18.00	Aran Sendan	108.00	Thank You Bodhinatha Fund	
Mekaladeva Batumallah	18.00	Total	738.00	Anil Ananda Badhwar	20.00
Dvijen & Bharti Bhatt	299.00	Kumbhalavalai Ganesha		Gunasegaran Chitravelloo	99.00
Gunavadee Caremben	28.27	Temple Endowment		Shyamadeva Dandapani	108.00
Somasoundarum Caremben	28.27	Mano Navaratnarajah	75.00	Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai	324.00
Sukanta Caremben	28.27	Nuckiren Pyeneeandee	28.10	Brintha Devi	15.55
Geeta Citygirl	299.00	Total	103.10	Amey Surendra Gangal	11.00
Manisha Dabak	299.00	Hinduism Today Production Fund		Debashis Ghosh	300.00
Nandu Dalvi	700.00	Community Foundation Of Greater Mem-		Timur Izmaylov	24.00
Sundari Devam	499.00	phis	108.00	Anonymous	10,664.00
Madhu & Valli Grandhi	299.00	Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund	500.00	Gaurav Malhotra	251.00
Tarakini Gunasegaran	205.45	Niraj Bhatt	151.00	Kulagan Moonesawmy	55.96
Juhivaasana Koothan	11.28	Ron & Jennifer Burke	150.00	Sadhunathan Nadesan	101.00
Nageswara Kurukkal	299.00	Subhash Kumar Choudhary	400.00	Mano Navaratnarajah	150.00
Anonymous	19.71	Prabhakar C Ghosh	90.00	Nuckiren Pyeneeandee	28.10
Bhaveshan Moorghen	8.45	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	1.41	Kishore & Suhasini Racherla	153.00
Shanda Kumaran Moorghen	8.45	Madan L. Goel	1,000.00	Sumathi Raja	450.00
Udeyadeva Moorghen	8.45	Hiranya Gowda	1,001.00	Chamundi Sabanathan	1,008.00
Shanmugam Muthukumar	37.02	Ramana Jandhyala	108.00	Aran Sambandar	162.00
Sasidharan Nair	299.00	Carole Kahn	108.00	Hitesvara Saravan	102.00
Sheela Nath	299.00	Rajagopal Krishnan	20.00	Aran Sendan	108.00
Mali Pradhaban	299.00	Bhagawandas Lathi	15,000.00	Deva Seyon	108.00
Hemant Rastogi	299.00	Anonymous	1,071.00	Hridaya Sivalingam	10.00
Jyothi Sarma	501.00	Raj & Deepa Maturi	1,000.00	Vignesh Sukumaran	108.00
Rajesh & Vinutha Sathiamurthy	299.00	Murli Melwani	1,500.00	Soma Sundaram	50.00
Dilip Sen	299.00	Kulagan Moonesawmy	16.90	Anba Dayananden Valayten	10.99
Sunil V Seth	299.00	Silvarajoo Muniandy	101.00	Vayudeva Varadan	42.00
Sai Singh	120.00	Nori Muster	100.00	Sahunthala Vinothachandran	1,008.00
Komaldeva Sivananda	243.97			Michael Wasylkiw	648.00
Kedarnathan Subramanian	309.00			Total	16,119.60
Zarana Trivedi	299.00				
Malathi Vaidyanathan	499.00				

OCTOBER TO DECEMBER ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Udayan Care Endowment Fund		Sivakumar Saravan	700.00	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	1.41
Ramana Jandhyala	108.00	Anonymous	184.00	Rajendra Giri	151.00
		Total	1,035.00	Srinivas R. Madaboosi	150.00
Sri Chandra Madhab Debnath Endowment		Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home		Saroja Devi Manickam	20.00
Ishani Chowdhury	54.00	of Sittandy Endowment		Natraj Narayanswami	44.00
Shyamal Chandra Debnath	50.00	Anonymous	1,286.13	Krishanth Rajasooriyar	60.00
Total	104.00	N. Balasubramanian	5,000.00	Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00
Murugan Temple Yalpanam Festival Fund		Ambasuthan Jananayagam	6,000.00	Arunasalam Vathavooran	75.00
Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00	Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01	Total	1,261.88
		Muthu & Nandini Senthilkumar	100.00	Jaffna Kannathiddy Kali	
Manitha Neyam Trust Fund		Dharmalingam Siddhan	25.00	Kovil Endowment	
Nutanaya Sivaceyon	10.00	Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00	Anonymous	81.27
		Kevina Soobramanien	28.30		
Tiptur Shiva Temple & Youth Hostel Fund		Poobarlene Soobramanien	28.22	Pakistan Hindu Empowerment Fund	
Krishanth Rajasooriyar	30.00	Total	12,667.66	Anil Kumar	27.00
		Siva Poomi School Trust		Muthu & Nandini Senthilkumar	50.00
Taos Hanuman Fund		Ishani Chowdhury	54.00	Michael Zimmermann	5.00
Anonymous	81.27			Total	82.00
Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund		Bharatiya Ekta Mandir of		Murugamoorthi Thirukkovil Endowment	
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00	Arizona Endowment		N. Balasubramanian	10,000.00
		Riorita Tkatchenko	100.00	Raj Padman Padmalingam	25,000.00
Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund		India Hindu Tribals Endowment		Total	35,000.00
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	100.00	Narasingrao Pampati	1,000.00	Panchangam Endowment Fund	
		Murugan Temple of North		Venkatakrishnan Balaji	10.00
Swami Vipulananta Children's		America Puja Fund		Digital Dharma Endowment	
Home Endowment		Vayudeva Varadan	36.00	Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund	500.00
Canaganayagam Kugendra	60.00			Anonymous	390.85
Hindu Literature Fund		India Hindu Temple Cleaning Fund		Hiranya Gowda	1,001.00
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Anonymous	108.00	Total	320.31		
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Total	148.00	Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	30.00	Mrunal Patel	3,003.00
Himalayan Academy Book Dist. Fund		Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples		Total Contributions	\$323,101.66
Shyamadeva Dandapani	36.00	(Kovil Maadu) Endowment		Funds at Market Value, Dec 31, 2018	
Nrusimhayya Manda	30.00	Partha Ayalasomayajula	401.00	Grand Total	\$15,512,808.21
Total	66.00	Dharam & Madhu Bahl	54.00		
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Rajendra Giri	151.00				

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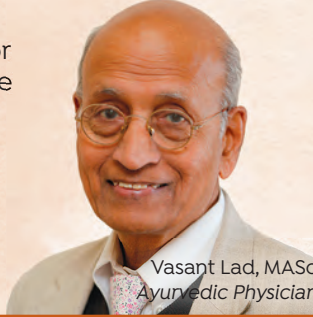
  

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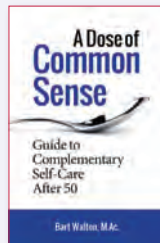
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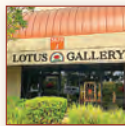
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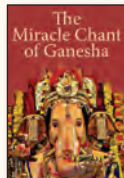
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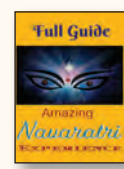
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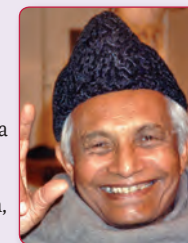
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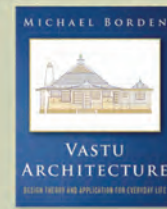
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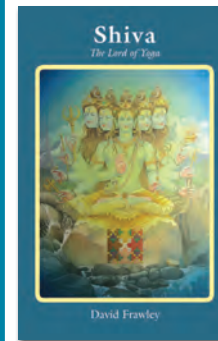
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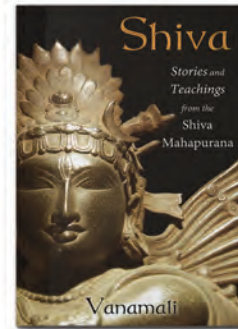


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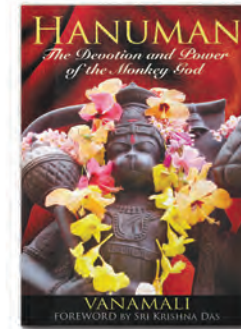
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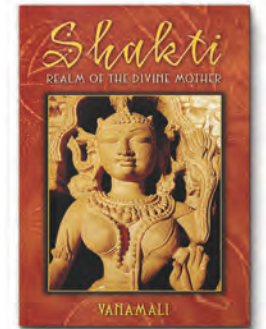
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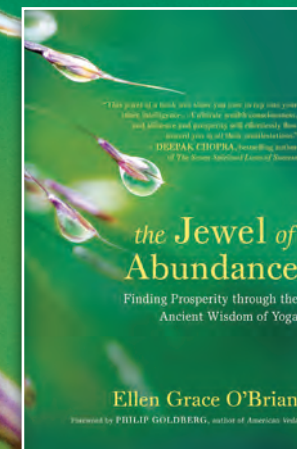


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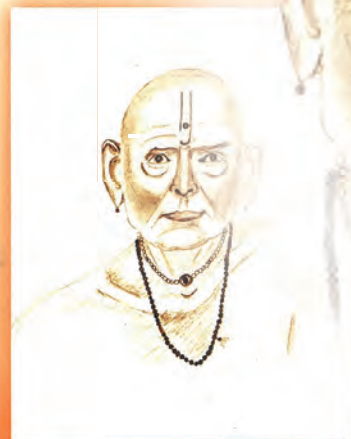
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Of all Thy
Manifestations,
I miss Thine most:
Though out of sight,
Thou art
My inner light.

My deeper thoughts,
With Thee I share;
My heart beat,
I leave it in Thy care.

Of all Thy temples,
Batu Caves has been
My guiding light
Through the days
Of my night.

In Thy gaze,
I stand.

Of all Thy
Creations
Throughout my life's
Shifting sands,
I like to sit
By the morning mountains
Crimson, imbibing
An earthly lesson:
I am in Thee;
But Thou art not
in me.

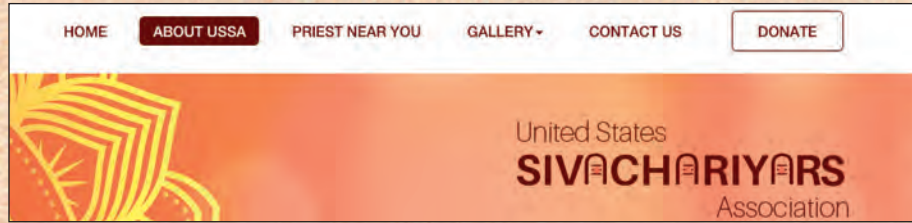
My Solar Logos
by Dr. Arjunan Subramaniam
July 4-7, 2018, Desa Parkcity, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

DIGITAL DHARMA

TEMPLE PRIESTS

The Saiva Priesthood Establishes a USA Community on the Web

www.hinduismtoday.com



THERE ARE TWO GREAT BODIES OF revealed Saivite Hindu scripture. The *Vedas* detail worship of God through *yagna*, the fire ceremony, and give us the philosophy of Vedanta. The *Saiva Agamas* detail worship of God via His manifestation through the *murti*, *vigraha* or sculpture, and explain how a Hindu temple enables communication among beings in the three worlds, or planes of existence.

The masters of *Saiva Agama* are the Siva-charyar priests. Of them, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami said, "According to *Agamas*, they were created by Siva to be Siva's priests. Thus ordained by birth, with a tradition going back probably to the beginning of

time, they are a very rare breed of people."

For century after century in India, these unsung heroes have worked hard, sometimes twelve or fourteen hours a day, performing the daily temple rituals, the special pujas and kumbhabhishekams for new temples and old. They never fail in their duty to Siva, whether people come to the temple or not.

Before the Muslim invasions, Sivacharyars could be found from Kanya Kumari to Kashmir; now most are in Tamil Nadu. But since the 1970s they have spread around the world, coming to perform the intricate rites of temple consecrations and often staying on to conduct the daily temple worship.

The Sivacharyars recount, "The idea of



President and Cofounder of USSA:
Kumar Gurukkal, presently working at the Hindu Temple of Greater Tulsa, Oklahoma

starting the United States Shivacharya Sangam of America (USSA) occurred to Pillaiyarpatti Shivashri Pichai Sivacharyar when he had come to grace the occasion of the Kumbhabhishekam of the Murugan Temple of North America. It was started with the blessings of Sarva Sadhakam Sivashri Thangam Bhattar and Manikkam Bhattar. Since then, it has been formally registered in the United States and has been functioning effectively with the support of Tiruppur Nallamuthu Sivacharyar, the first to come to the US (in 1973), Madurai Thangam Bhattar, and other Sivacharyars."

That was 46 years ago. Now a website, ussivacharyars.org, in Tamil and English, has been set up to find a way to help these priest, who are often not well paid by the temples. In a brief interview, Kumar Gurukkal outlined the goals of the website: 1) tie the priests together so that, despite their low income, they can get financial help with medical issues, the cost of higher education of their US-born children, or for financial support for a wedding; 2) provide a resource for the Sivacharya children born in the US to learn the basics of the chants and rituals; 3) help devotees find a priest for home blessings, weddings and other samskaras or even assistance in planning a new temple.

Click the home page link to find "Priest Near You." USSA has 46 priests registered at this time. They hope to involve and assist the country's 100 more Sivacharya families who are now employed in non-priestly fields.



அமெரிக்க வாழ் சிவாச்சாரியார் சங்கம் உங்களை அன்புடன் வரவேற்கிறது

சிவகமர்கள் சிவாலயங்களில் பூஜை செய்யும் ஆச்சார்யர்களை சிவாச்சார்யர், ஆதிசைவர், சிவத்தேவர், சிவஸ்ரீவரர், தேவிகர், தட்சிணர், குருக்கள் என்று பலபெயர்கள் வழங்குகின்றன

இவர்கள் சிவாலயங்களில் பூஜை செய்வதற்காக சிவபெருமானால் எழுந்தருளியெய்திப்பட்டு கொளவிக்கர,காயப்பர்,பாரதவாஜர்,கொளதம்,அகஸ்தியர் ஆகிய ரிஷிகளின் வழித்தோன்றல்கள் ஆவர். இவர்கள் ஆதிசைவ வம்சத்தில் பிறந்து முறையாக உபநயனம், ஸமயநிர்வாண, சிவாச்சார்யாபிஷேக,மாதத் தீக்கலகமும் குருவின் மூலமாக பெற்று வேத ஆகம மந்திர மந்திர குந்தா க்ரியா மாலம்மா மீனாக்ஷர சம்பந்தப்பாதி குருவாதி ஆத்மார்த்த பார்த்த பூஜைகளில் நிபுண ஹந்திய காமப்பார்த்த செய்பவரே மிவாச்சார்யர் எனப்படும்.

