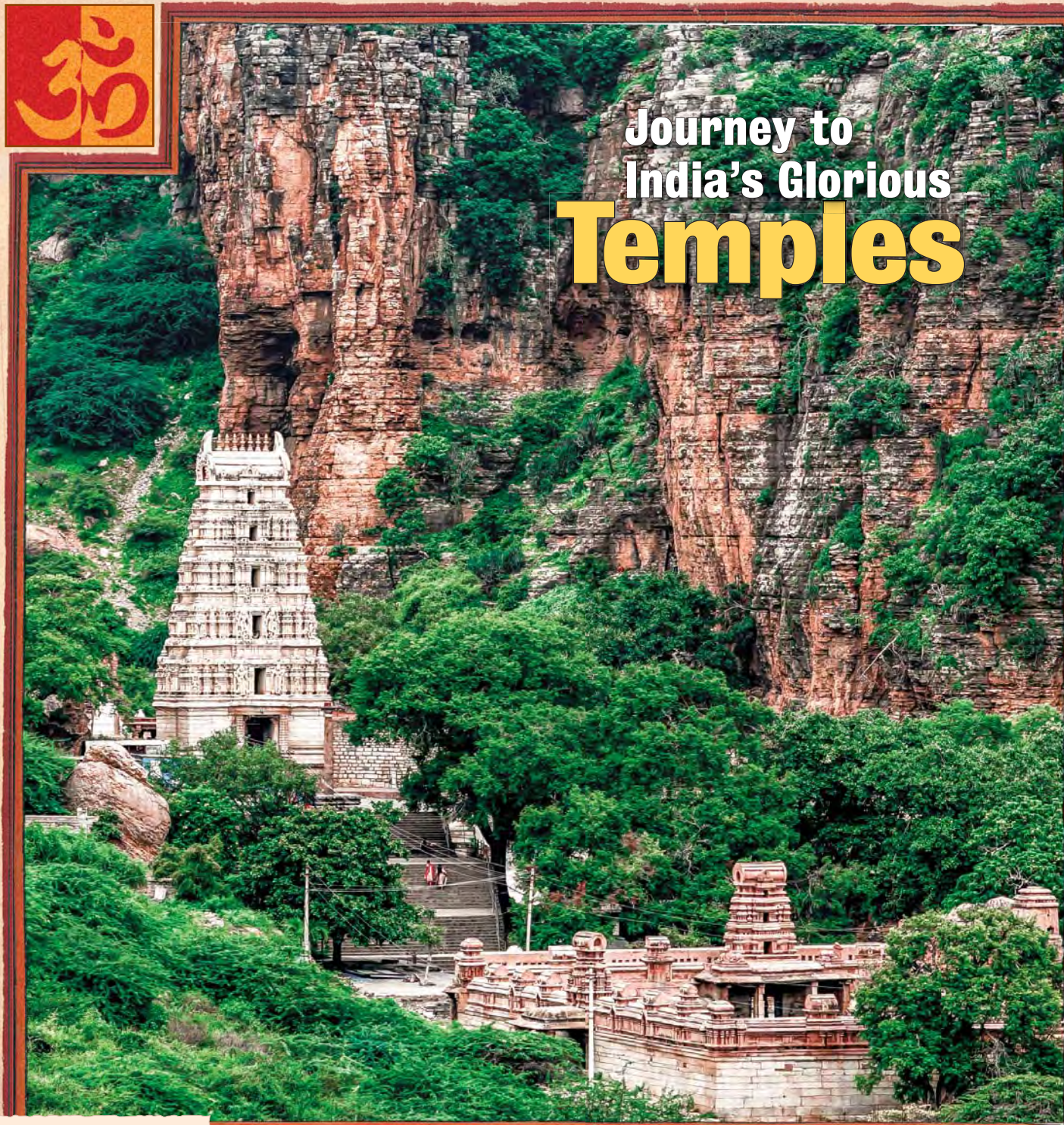


HINDUISM TODAY

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



Journey to India's Glorious Temples



ARAVIND GOPAL

HINDUISM TODAY



(Cover) A view of the famed Sri Yaganti Uma Maheswara Siva Temple; (above) Dr. Smita Naram of the Ayushakti Clinic in Mumbai performs pulse diagnosis to ascertain subtle details of a patient's health (page 18)

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Praying to the Lord of Yoga At Malaysia's Batu Caves

Join us for a pictorial feast of one of the most breathtaking celebrations of Thai Pusam outside Mother India. ... Page 30

Photo: Swaths of devotees carry milk pots into the massive cavern to be offered to Lord Murugan. Each year the Thai Pusam celebration here draws nearly one million pilgrims.



GLOBAL DHARMA

INDIA

Ancient Burials Found

IN JULY, THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL Survey of India announced it found two chariots and eight well-preserved skeletons at Sinauli, an excavation site of the ancient Harappan civilization. Sinauli, in Uttar Pradesh, has previously revealed other findings, such as skeletons and pottery—but never something so large as a chariot.

ASI director Sanjay Manjul reports, “The team found three of the skeletons placed in pedestal coffins, and recovered remains of the two chariots, including wheels, axles and poles, leading to speculation that those buried in the chambers may have been royalty.” Swords with copper-covered hilts, shields,

daggers, a helmet, beads and combs were also recovered.

According to Manjul, the remains may be from the later Harappan period, during the Copper-Bronze age. “The artifacts probably belong to a period between 2000–1800 bce. It can help us determine how those people lived. It may help re-evaluate how we understand the late Harappan culture. It is a significant development in the Ganga-Yamuna doab [land between the two rivers],” Manjul told *ThePrint*.

Manjul said the coffins in the burial pits were decorated with copper-plated figures with horns and leafy crowns—another indication that those



buried in them may have been royalty. The sides of the coffins were decorated with floral motifs. “This discovery is not only important in the context of India, but the world,” proclaimed Manjul.

History revealed: (above) “The chariot wheels rotated on a fixed axle linked by a draft pole to the yoke of a pair of animals,” explained Manjul, of the Institute of Archaeology in Delhi; (right) one of the skeletal structures found at the site.



USA

10,000 Attend Youth Meet

THE BAPS NORTH AMERICAN Youth Convention (NAYC18) in Atlanta, Georgia, saw over 10,000 youth attending in three sessions over a ten-day period: July 1–4, students grades 3 to 8; July 4–7, high schoolers; and July 7 to 10, college students—all came from across the United States and Canada. It took over 800 volunteers several years to create this massive event, with the overall theme being moksha, ultimate liberation from rebirth.

To express a sense of purpose, sincere effort in life, prayer, introspection and respect for the world around us, the convention planners provided entire group-interactive pujas with lotus aratis, skits that reflect everyday situations, interspersed with talks given by BAPS swamis. One of the amazing interactive experiences for the kids portion from July 1–4 was to wear a wrist band that lit up with the color of the character speaking on stage. In breaking the 4th

wall, as the technique is known in theater, the children got the chance to become the main character and go through the same feelings, challenges, emotions and solutions.

The youth were then split up into smaller groups of 8–10 in order to have a chance to talk with a senior team leader about the topics expressed on stage.

North American Youth Conventions continue to be a pillar for BAPS North America’s youth activities as they address the important challenges faced on a daily basis by young Hindu Americans.

Connecting with youth: (top left) A group of devotees perform a stage play about the different life dynamics that American youth are faced with; (bottom left) members of an interactive audience hold an electronic lotus flower and join in during a group arati



MALAYSIA

Hindus Protest Temple Plan

HINDUS IN MALAYSIA ARE CHALLENGING a May, 2018, proposal to place oversight of Hindu temples under a national Hindu Endowment Board appointed by the government. In a May 28 press release, the Malaysia Hindu Sangam stated that the proposed board “is not the solution to the issue faced by the temples.” Earlier, according to the press release, the Sangam had called a meeting with the Hindu Advisory Board, prominent Hindu organizations and temples to discuss the proposed endowment board.

According to the Malaysia Department of Statistics, Muslims make up 61% of the population,

Buddhists 19.8%, followed by Christians at 9.2% and Hindus 6.3%. The Sangam press release asks, “When there is no government intervention in any other religion or places of worship, why the Hindu religion, which is the smallest group, alone subjected to control?”

Dissatisfaction with the management of Batu Caves Murugan temple has, according to the press release, led to this call for the government to take over all temples. The Sangam’s national president, Datuk Rs. Mohan Shan, ends the press release by proclaiming, “It is our fundamental right to manage our places of worship!”



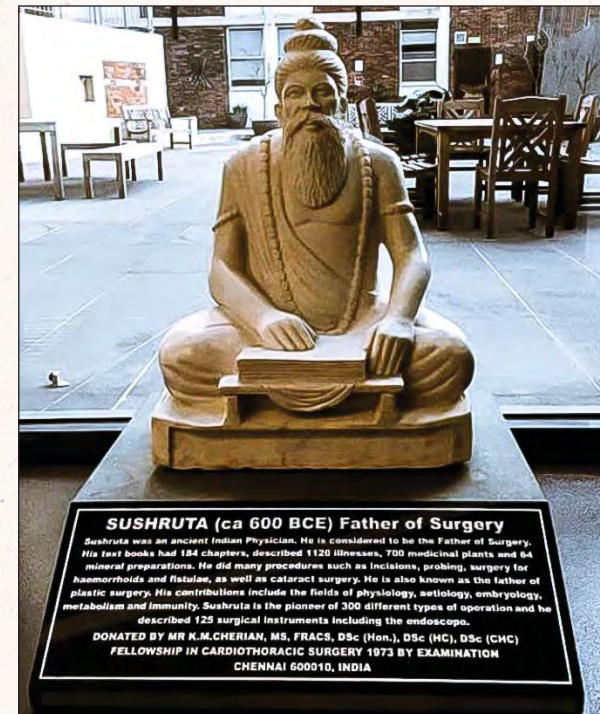
Batu Caves: Malaysia’s best-known temple would come under government control if the proposal is implemented

AUSTRALIA

Honoring History

@VIRENDERSEHWAG, AUSTRALIA

IN JUNE, 2018, A STATUE DEDICATED TO THE ANCIENT INDIAN physician-surgeon Sushruta was put on display in Melbourne’s Royal Australia College of Surgeons. Sushruta is the first documented surgeon in the world. He is considered the father of surgery and a pioneer of plastic surgery.



For the father of surgery: The statue of Sushruta was donated to the college by one of its alumni, Dr. K.M. Cherian, who performed India’s first successful coronary artery bypass surgery in 1975



ENVIRONMENT

Saving Forests

FOR THE PAST TWENTY YEARS, the Sri Lankan paper company Maximus has developed an unusual and environmentally friendly paper manufacturing process, thanks to organic waste produced by elephants.

These gentle giants are herbivores, large consumers of fruits and plants. They ingest up to 550lbs of food per day and produce more than 110lbs of droppings daily. Elephants do not digest the cellulose contained in plants, so their organic waste is rich in cellulose fibers—necessary for the manufacturing of paper.

Elephant droppings are collected, dried, washed and finally tinted without chemical

Rethinking paper: The variety is endless in this small, local Sri Lankan company.

pigments. From this the company creates natural, odorless paper, which is transformed into products sold in 30 countries around the world.

Starting as a small family business with seven workers, Maximus now employs 150 people in three locations, mostly in rural Sri Lankan areas. “Our intention was to develop a project that combines job creation for the local population, wildlife protection and elephant conservation,” reads the company’s website. A portion of Maximus’s sales goes to the Millennium Elephant Foundation, which is affiliated with the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA).

ENGLAND

Hindu School to Close its Doors

THE ONLY INDEPENDENT HINDU school in Europe, the Swaminarayan Independent Day School in Neasden, London, will close its doors by mid 2020, the Akshar Educational Trust announced in June, 2018. Trustees and governors of the faith school for ages 2 to 18 informed the community of the closing with a “heavy heart,” citing multiple reasons revolving around reduced enrollment and insufficient funds to properly renovate the aging building. An informed source said needed improvements would exceed \$30 million.

Jitu Patel, chairman of the trust, explained in a statement, “Over the past few years, student numbers have been falling—from a peak of 515 in 2012 to 377 expected in September 2018. This downward trend is expected to continue. We recognise that the location of the school is not ideal, since the catchment area of the majority of its students is some distance away.”

He went on to say, “The trustees are duty-bound to act in a prudent financial manner and, in this respect, have projected future income against expenditure. When the financial situation is examined in detail, it is beyond doubt that a continuation of the school would lead to substantial losses which would, in all likelihood, continue indefinitely. Such a continuation



is simply not sustainable in the long term, and it would be wrong to give a false hope or promise that it is feasible to continue to run the school in this manner.”

Addressing the disapproval of parents and students, Patel added, “We do recognise that emotions have been running high as the parents have had to face this difficult situation. We sincerely regret the sadness that this has caused to pupils, parents and staff alike.”

The statement said the Department for Education is in talks with Avanti Trust, which runs state-funded Hindu schools, to open a new school elsewhere in the borough.

In a separate statement released by Akshar Trust, many sources are cited to explain the growing difficulty UK schools are facing, including teacher recruitment and retention, and increased regulatory requirements for teachers and schools—with a focus toward faith schools.

The Akshar Educational Trust was established as an educational charity over 25 years ago with the blessings of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It is separate from Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), which is a religious charity.

The day school, which opened in 1992 as the first of its kind in Europe, has 260 boys and 234 girls enrolled. A parent of a year 10 student reflected, “The parents and students of the school have always felt as one family with the teachers and each other, and the school is renowned for its excellent results year after year.”

On July 18, the issue was raised on the floor of England’s parliament by Virendra Sharma, who stated critically, “Education is not meant for profit, and any organization that fails to share that sentiment is not fit to run an educational institution. I sincerely hope that after this event, organizations such as

Two years’ notice: *The Swaminarayan Independent Day School building*

the Akshar Educational Trust will prioritize the impact of its decisions on families over monetary considerations. The Akshar Educational Trust has stated that the reason for closing the school relates to regulations introduced by the Government, though I must express my disappointment in the revelation that money may have been a driving factor in the decision.”

In response to Sharma’s query as to whether government funding might be available, the Minister for School Standards, Nick Gibb, replied in the negative. “Every year, a number of independent schools close. Other schools open their doors in broadly the same numbers, but the profile of the sector tends to change over time in response to a number of factors, including market pressures.”

that spent ten days trapped in a cave used meditation for survival. Ekapol Chanthawong, the 25-year-old coach, who was with the boys, is a former Buddhist monk. He spent a decade living as a monk and is a practitioner of meditation. It is that skill that has been credited with keeping the boys calm during the ordeal. In fact, when the British divers discovered them after ten days, the group was meditating.

Global Dharma news provided by

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

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



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IN MY OPINION

Ishta Devata Darshan

How the outer love of your personal God can lead you deeper within your own self

BY STEVE BRIGGS

I was resting soundly in tirumala Hills when the cottage doorbell awakened me at 2 am. Hitching up my dhoti, I headed for the abode of Sri Venkateshwara, India’s most venerated place of pilgrimage. After happily signing a form saying, “I believe in Lord Venkateshwara,” I was escorted to the entrance of

the temple’s inner sanctum where all eyes were focused on a pair of heavy brass doors. Two dozen pilgrims had come to witness the ritual called *suprabhatam*, the waking of the Lord.

Reeded horns, goat-skin drums and resonant bells reverberated off the walls of the fabled South Indian temple as the doors swung open. Ghee lamps and swirling incense mingled with the scent of camphor. One by one, devotees stepped over the threshold, entering a narrow corridor leading to a heavy stone vault. An imposing figure stood at the far end of the passage. As I approached the colossal murti, faint feelings of piety grew into riveting thrills of energy. Balaji’s commanding ten-foot black granite form stood directly in front of me, His right hand opened in a gesture of blessing. Atop His head rested a crown ablaze with diamonds and a ten-centimeter emerald. Like children at the feet of a mighty monarch, we stood in awe of our king. Seated at Balaji’s feet, we watched priests drape huge, colorful garlands over His broad shoulders while a team of pandits chanted Vishnu Sahasranama. With each of the 108 sacred names, a priest offered rose petals at Balaji’s feet. I felt simultaneously drawn into the form in front of me and into myself.

For most in the Hindu tradition, the Ishta Devata, one’s chosen Deity, epitomizes their most cherished spiritual bond. It’s quite natural to find a personal God more appealing than the Advaitic concept of a non-dualistic Absolute that never assumes individuality, remaining forever devoid of attributes. But Divinity in the form of a God, such as Balaji, is able to have personal relationships with every aspect of itself, including its devotees.

A Himalayan yogi once offered me a



method for getting closer to my Ishta Devata. He called it merging, and described a meditation of breathing awareness into the heart, and feeling ourselves becoming one with our Ishta Devata. Mantra recitation is another time-tested practice. My Himalayan yogi friend told me that if we are fortunate enough

to understand the connection between our mantra and our Ishta, it is our God’s grace. If not, then our God is keeping it a secret.

It is not necessary to be told the true nature of one’s mantra. It is self-revealing. The mantra and its associated Deity are identical. If one’s mantra is a form of Krishna, then Krishna will reveal Himself in due time and grant spiritual insight. From that moment on, the devotee will love his or her God, secretly, in the inner sanctum of the heart. When we finally come face to face with the one we’ve been calling, and enter into a personal relationship with our Ishta, we are nearing the goal. In the end, it’s the grace of God that matters most.

When we close our eyes to meditate, we are with our personal God, much like having Balaji’s darshan in His inner sanctum. The nature of the mantra is such that it summons the bearer of the name. That is why our spiritual teachers often encourage us to repeat our mantra throughout the day, and even at night.

Bhagavan dwells deep within each of us, residing in our hearts as pure and innocent love. Meditate on your mantra in your heart, remembering that repeating our Ishta Devata’s name is the highest dharma in life. With practice, one day the inner sanctum of the heart will become like Lord Venkateshwara’s abode atop the Tirumala Hills. Then we will have realized that the purpose of a pilgrimage, whether outer or inner, is union with our Ishta Devata.

STEVE BRIGGS, as a teenager, met his guru at a meditation retreat in the Swiss Alps. With a MBA and a Ph.D. in Vedic Studies Steve authored The Tale of the Himalayan Yogis. See: stevebriggsauthor.com

BRIEFLY...

HOURS AFTER PRIME MINISTER

Narendra Modi questioned the rule prohibiting photography at protected monuments, the Archaeological Survey of India, in July, 2018, lifted the ban on photography within the premises of all but three centrally

protected monuments/sites. The three in which photography would not be permitted are Ajanta Caves, Leh Palace and the Taj Mahal at Agra.

RESCUED ON JULY 10, 2018, THE 12-member Thai soccer team

Finding Peace & Contentment

Worried? Burdened? Frustrated? Here are some amazingly effective techniques that can bring shanti into your life

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

IN MAURITIUS, OUR SPIRITUAL PARK—along with the country's many temples, large and small—fulfills the inner purpose of inspiring visitors to uplift themselves and experience some of the peace, shanti, that is within each of us, that is our soul nature, that is our very essence.

My Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, was boldly direct. Of peace, he declared: "For peace in the world, stop the war in the home." This was his message to 1,200 delegates at the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders at the United Nations in August of 2000. While Gurudeva recognized the importance of governmental peacemaking, he placed even greater emphasis on the role of the individual. He stressed, at the United Nations and elsewhere, that each individual who becomes more peaceful inside himself or herself creates a more peaceful planet and moves us a tiny step closer to world peace—one person, one home, one community at a time.

Even though we may manage to find peace, shanti, when we go to a temple, it can be difficult to maintain that sense of peace and contentment when facing the duties and challenges of our daily life. Perhaps we hold on to it for a day or two, but then it is gone.

Gurudeva gives clear advice in this regard: "Maintaining joy and serenity in life means being content with your surroundings, be they meager or lavish. Be content with your money, be it a small amount or a large amount. Be content with your health.... Be content with your friends. Be loyal to those who are your long-time, trusted companions. Basically, contentment, santosha, is freedom from desire gained by re-directing the forces of desire and making a beautiful life within what one already has in life."

Here are some examples to illustrate maintaining peace and contentment. First example: A man is passed over at work for a promotion that he thought was a certainty. His first reaction is to feel discouraged and sad, but after a few days he pulls himself out of his mood by the decision to accept his current employment circumstances and be happy within them, while continuing to strive for progress in his career.

Second example: A wife feels the family's apartment is too small and complains gently to her husband, expressing her discontent. Later in the day while playing with her young daughter, her mood changes into gratitude for her child and husband, and the feeling of discontent for the size of their apartment diminishes.

Third example: An attorney has spent his day doing difficult research on a technical legal issue. He finds his intellect over-stimulated as a result, and he feels agitated. On the way home he stops at a park and takes a walk, relaxing and enjoying nature's heal-



ing beauty. This quiets his intellect, and he returns home in a peaceful mood.

Fourth example: A teenage boy lies to his mother about where he went one afternoon. Afterwards, he finds that his mind is agitated. Disturbed by his guilt, he tells his mother the truth and soon finds himself peaceful again on the inside.

Let's look now at some specific suggestions on what we can do to experience the peaceful state of

mind called contentment. The most basic requirement for maintaining contentment is avoiding adharmic or unvirtuous actions, such as dishonesty and lying, which will keep the mind and emotions stirred up and prevent us from being peaceful. A related strategy is not allowing ourselves to let disagreements turn into arguments. Disagreements are natural, but they need to be handled in an intelligent and harmonious way. Always being willing to compromise is a key to keeping difficult discussions from turning into arguments.

One of the major causes of family arguments is holding the faulty attitude that the home is the proper place to let off steam. The husband is frustrated with his boss, but can't confront his boss about it. The daughter is upset with her teacher, who unfairly picks on her, embarrassing her in front of her classmates. Each family member may bring such frustrations home at the end of the day and takes them out on others. This generates discord, frequent arguments and keeps the family disturbed. The home ceases to be a protective refuge.

Gurudeva has a brilliant insight about the home. He says that we need to consider the home a sanctuary for the entire family and never look at it as a place where we can let off steam or vent our frustrations emotionally. He stresses that it must have an even higher standard of professional behavior than school or the workplace. In such a haven, parents interrelate in a cultured, religious way, without disharmony or argument. Children are respectful, parents are loving, and all are inwardly at peace.

One might ask, if we cannot let off steam at home, where, then, can we? Leaving work or school in an emotional state, we can stop at a temple before going home or take a walk through a beautiful place, such as a park or botanical garden, or walk along the beach and let the beauty of nature quiet our mind. Another place to let off steam is a fitness center where we can swim, run and bicycle away our stress. When we reach home, we will be calm and ready to enjoy the family and not disturb it.

Those who are at home all day, such as a housewife raising a young child, can also become stressed. The same remedies apply. Leave the



home for a while and visit a temple, a beautiful place or a gym. Getting out of the house on a regular basis for stress-reducing activities is important.

Gurudeva suggests that certain kinds of stress can best be released at the temple. The temple is the special place where we can let our emotions pour out to the Deity. Whatever we feel, we can express to God and the Gods and relieve ourselves of that burden without burdening other people. This may result in crying a lot, but that is acceptable at a temple.

Another way to lose contentment is through getting caught up in cycles of desire. In our modern world we constantly encounter advertisements implying that we will be happier if we buy some new product. Fancy cars, faster computers, high-tech mobile phones, fashionable clothes—all promise the elusive state of mind called happiness. Of course, new possessions do give a sense of elation, but that emotion is short-lived and we soon return to the same state of mind we were in before we bought the new possession.

The key is to rise above this cycle of unhappiness, desire, acquisition, happiness and unhappiness again. To overcome desire's powerful impulses, hold the perspective: "I am grateful for and content with what I currently have. I am acquiring this product not because it will make me happier but because my family will benefit in a meaningful way by having it."

Being content with what you have, however, does not mean you should not seek to progress in life. It doesn't mean you should not use your willpower to fulfill your plans. Rather, it means you should not become upset while you are striving toward your goals, nor frustrated if you do not get everything that you want.

Gurudeva proclaimed, "Life is meant to be lived joyously." Holding this buoyant attitude helps us avoid falling into the misconception that if we are serious about making spiritual progress and being regu-

Equipose: A man is deeply content, living in the now and aware of God's presence in his life

lar in our sadhanas we must hold tightly to a somber attitude toward life. We can be strict with ourselves but joyous at the same time. Of course, if we are struggling with major difficulties, this perspective may temporarily be lost. However, Gurudeva's affirmation reminds us of the need to work with ourselves to regain a joyful perspective as quickly as possible.

A potent metaphysical tool that Gurudeva offers in *Merging with Siva* is living in the eternity of the moment. It produces the feeling that one has no future to worry about and no past to regret. Worrying about the future is a frequent cause of discontent. Gurudeva teaches us to live in the now.

He discovered a useful technique when he was just seven years old. His father was driving him in a 1934 motor sled, heading home to Fallen Leaf Lake in a snowstorm. When they got stuck, he found himself worrying that he would be late and miss his favorite weekly radio program, "Captain Midnight." The boy saw his awareness go off to the future and brought it back by telling himself, "I'm all right, right now. It hasn't happened yet." Each time this worry came up in his mind, he repeated, "I'm all right, right now." Through this process, he learned to control his awareness and vanquish his worries about what might or might not happen.

Gurudeva urges seekers to practice being in the eternal now by asking the question, "Am I not all right, right now, right this instant?" and answering, "I'm all right, right now." You can perform this simple exercise whenever you find awareness wandering into the future and worrying about what might happen. Keep asking and answering until you strongly feel positive, secure and content.



LETTERS

To Love or to Loathe Life

Death. That subject of your recent in-depth article, "10 Reasons Not to Fear Death," July/Aug/Sept, 2018, fascinates all. However, I reacted with concern to some sections. Please indulge my response:

The article's fourth reason, titled "Death Is Liberation," is a standard Indian philosophical belief. Yet, my objection is the inclusion of Socrates here. Plato, in his *Phaedo*, describes Socrates' final moments, after having chosen to drink poisonous hemlock rather than live in prison. It is debatable whether his instruction to Crito to give Asclepios a rooster was, really a denouncement of Life as a disease, and an endorsement of Death as its cure! Some argue that Socrates mourned not the loss of his life, but the end of the dialectic process (the Socratic method of debate). He chastises his supporters for mourning his approaching death, urging them instead to mourn the loss of the dialectic—the debate—the ongoing philosophical conversation.

If we interpret Socrates' statement as meaning living is a sickness, then we should certainly judge him a buffoon! Do we Hindus really view life as a terminal disease?

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Feminist Hindu

I found the article "In Defense of the Full-Time Homemaker," Jul/Aug/Sept, 2018, problematic and full of contradictions. I absolutely agree that homemaking and raising children is under-appreciated and undervalued in today's society. But the article couches this argument in gender stereotypes and Hindu conservatism, while ignoring the fact that due to harsh economic realities, many low-income and poor families cannot "choose" homemaking. The perspective of the author—as someone who gave up a corporate career to be a homemaker—is not the reality for most struggling families around the globe. In most modern economies, the sheer economics of having a family means that this "ideal" is out of reach for low-income or single-parent families.

As a feminist Hindu, it's important to me that we question Hinduism's underlying patriarchy and the presence of misogyny in smriti and, yes, even in shruti. This article was the first time I have ever encountered the idea of fundamentally different dharma for men and women. On reflection, it is not surprising that we can find ancient texts that codify and lay out these gendered ideas that are built on patriarchy and on codified cultural practices at the time. But sthri dharma

goes against everything I have been taught as a Hindu in my family and by my guru.

So, no, I will not be passing that on to my two sons. They will be raised knowing that boys and girls have the same duties: to do right action with right intention, to live by ahimsa, to see God in all, to pursue the four purusharthas: dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. We don't need to rely on gender roles and differences to talk about dharma.

KALPANA KRISHNAMURTHY
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It's such a privilege to go through this amazing article that brings up a relevant scenario of our society. Somehow, the world is sidelining the idea of nurturing the smallest unit of any society, that is, *home*. So I agree with the author that taking care of a family is not about reproduction only, it demands so much courage to give up your ambitions and dreams in order to nurture a few lives and to create rock-solid foundations for a more promising future. In a nutshell, it is my conviction that morally and mentally strong people make a happy and contented society, and this begins at a grassroots level, with the HOME-MAKER!

SWAPNIL SHARMA
QUATRE BORNES, MAURITIUS

After having read the article "In Defense of the Full-Time Homemaker," I feel that the author has really emphasized the fact that the job of a full-time homemaker is not at all inferior to the careers of other women, but that it is equally as challenging. Without demeaning career-oriented women in any way, this article generally outlines the significance and importance of a homemaker.

I can easily relate to every bit of this article, having been a homemaker myself for the past eight years. The thought of being a homemaker was triggered by the fact that both my husband and I were working long hours, spending hardly any time with our children and, therefore, missing out on their early childhood days. Seeing them grow into fine young teenagers today, I can proudly say that I made the right choice to become a full-time homemaker.

SMITA MATABUDUL
PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

The decision to pause my career for my boys and my husband was not only fulfilling, but reassuring and satisfying. Though I'm very eager to climb that corporate ladder again, I know that until my children are grown up, being there for them, giving them homemade

food, teaching them our family cultures, traditions and values, loving them and spending that precious time with my boys counts the most. Well done to the author, who has managed to reinforce the importance of the homemaker—the Shakti of the home.

JAYA CHOWTEE
LONDON, UK

Tiruvannamalai Story

I am delighted to see my article on Ramana Maharshi, extracted from my book *Hail Arunachala*, in the Special Feature story in the July/August/September, 2018, issue of HINDUISM TODAY. I hope the readers find it interesting.

B. PALANIRAJ
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Truth Is One

I always enjoy the Quotes & Quips section of your magazine. However, I was really inspired by the quote of Dnyaneshwar, "The enjoyer and the enjoyed, the seer and the seen, are merged in the non-dual, which is indivisible," July/August/September, 2018.

Immediately came to mind the non-dual aspect of Brahman, as explained in the following verse of *Bhagavad Gita*: "The oblation is Brahman, the clarified butter is Brahman, offered by Brahman in the fire of Brahman; unto Brahman verily he goes who cognizes Brahman alone in his action" (Verse 4.24). This Nonduality is also in line with an Upanishadic verse, "All this is Brahman" ("Sarvam Khalvidam Brahman").

What I found most intriguing, however, was that the numbers in the verse 4.24, if reduced according to the rules of numerology, namely, $4+2+4=10=1$, would indicate to us that there is only one Brahman (Truth), reinforcing what *Rig Veda* teaches us: that "Truth is One; the sages have described It in numerous ways" ("Ekam Sat; Vipra Bahudha Vadanti").

PRADEEP SRIVASTAVA
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Dharma Speaks

It's great that you are doing a piece on *Dharma Speaks*. The initial reason for starting the channel was to rebut the outrageous claims of Dr. Zakir Naik. As time went on, I was urged to put out more videos, and gradually the channel grew. Initially I was hesitant to put myself forward due to potential controversy over some of the topics covered (the interfaith comparisons).

Over the last month or two, I have had a

change of opinion on this. As a result, in the next month I will be filming a short introduction to who I am, my motivation for doing this, etc. This should be released before July.

My inspiration for this channel (and everything else I do) is my master, Paramahansa Vishwananda. I am a practising Vaishnava (a branch of the Sri Sampradaya). I regularly give talks and do an element of teaching in the main ashram near Frankfurt. I have recently just released a book, *Avatars of the Master*, with Hay House publishers. This opens up the wisdom of the avatar stories of Lord Vishnu. It's out in India and Europe, and will soon be out in North America.

My aim for the channel is to present Sanatana Dharma in a way that is novel and fresh. My wish is to empower Hindus, so they are able to dialogue confidently with members of other faiths or, indeed, no faith. I am also keen that Hindus do not shy away from ritual and ancient tradition, and to do this I feel we need to reframe the whole debate of how we see life and approach Truth. Once this is done, I am confident Hindus and others will be able to recognize a powerful and intensely rational thread to everything we do. The ancient truths of the masters and shastras are eternal, but I can sense a need to update the narrative around them to appeal to the cultural conditioning of people.

MAYURAN SENTHILNATHAN
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Gratitude from the Mainland

Namaste, I have been gratefully receiving HINDUISM TODAY since it was a newspaper. I love this magazine and have been a subscriber for others, and contribute yearly. It has been delivered beautifully for many years. Your articles these last few years are just magnificent, too many to list here—you all are top-notch! Thank you every month for years of great articles.

NANCY WALDER, CALIFORNIA, US
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Daily Reminders

I have been enjoying for some time your Hindu Press International (HPI). Thank you for your good service! Today, I was really appreciating the quote by Satchidananda Swami. This is good inspiration.

DR. SAMEER ANJALI, NEW YORK, US
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From Facebook

This is an excellent way of keeping up the national integrity of Hinduism and disseminating the immensely valuable treasure of spiritual tradition and heritage of India.

ARINDAM BHATTACHARYA

✓ In the July/August/September, 2018, issue of HINDUISM TODAY, the editors misquoted a video from the YouTube channel of Dharma Speaks, specifically the narrative about caste. To quote Mayuran of Dharma

Speaks, "The statement (in the article) that says 'the British introduced caste' is not entirely accurate. The video I made makes it clear that varna existed since the very beginning, but what the British did was fix and align the jati groups. In doing so, they exacerbated caste differences and hierarchies."

Quoting from the video:

"The word caste is a foreign imposition, and is a blanket term that is used to describe two distinct ideas: that of varna and jati. ...The British colonial rule, however, further cemented and exacerbated the now caste system. The census that was carried out by them forcibly fixed the different groups in line with the varna system. Despite many jatis no longer fitting into the ancient varna setup, individuals and groups were labelled and allocated a specific status by their rulers. The hierarchical constraints became set in stone, which further divided a nation and helped the British control the masses."

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

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

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

When Hinduism Shares What it Knows

How your gift creates a world with more hope in it

When we at HINDUISM TODAY envision a similar future for the magazine as for Hinduism itself, where both are prospering, well known, respected, appreciated and broadly welcomed to weave their magic.

As regards the world's future, humans today tend to polarize as optimistic, pessimistic, somewhere in between or confused. But we believe the crux of the matter is simple. We'll all be all right when Hindus, like-minded people and Hindu-inspired entities enter dynamically into the conversation and share their salutary perspectives. Today's Hindu renaissance is but a bare beginning of what the future holds, we are convinced—provided enough of us do our part.

In this unfolding story, we foresee our humble magazine continuing to be a major influence globally.

Next year the monastic staff will be cele-

brating their fortieth anniversary of continuous publishing, having sailed smoothly from newspaper to glossy magazine, and now to a slew of digital versions and apps. "And we are just getting started!" we hear from the apprentices, while the publisher and editors plan the next powerful forty years. Everything is poised and ready to go.

All HINDUISM TODAY needs now is long-term financial security.

To this end, the Hinduism Today Production Fund was established, an endowment to eventually guarantee a long and unbroken continuity for the magazine, regardless of any worldly ups or downs. It is counted on to provide current and future editors the wherewithal to keep on creating a top-notch magazine, worthy of its precious subject matter.

We invite you to be part of this endeavor, to donate to the Production Fund and include



"Over the next 50 years, the demand for Hinduism's wisdom will explode and our magazine needs to be there, fully endowed, fully functional, to respond." — Publisher

it in your estate plan, thus to prepare a grand future for your children and grandchildren, a world with lots and lots of hope in it—and a grand world for you, too, when your turn comes to live in it once more. Our timeless wisdom says, "You cannot give anything but that it comes back to you in greater measure."

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Contact us at: 1-888-464-1008

or hhe@hindu.org

QUOTES & QUIPS

If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others.

Sri Sarada Devi (1853–1920), renowned mystic, wife of Sri Ramakrishna

Hinduism is often said to be a religion of millions of Gods, and it is indeed a religion of diversity. But it is essential to understand that underlying all is the belief in the unity in one great God: the Absolute, often known as Brahman. **Stephen Huyler**, art historian, cultural anthropologist, curator

We catch a glimpse of the great river of science which never ceases to flow in India. For India has carried and scattered the data of intellectual progress for the whole world, ever since the pre-Buddhist period when she produced the Sankhya philosophy and the atomic theory; the fifth century, when her mathematics and astronomy find their blossom in Arya Bhatta; the seventh when Brahmagupta uses his highly developed Algebra and makes astronomical observations; the twelfth, brilliant with the glory of

Bhaskaracharya, and his famous daughter, down to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries themselves with Ram Chandra the mathematician and Jagdish Chandra Bose the physicist. **Kakuzo Okakura** (1862–1913), Japanese philosopher

The beautiful tree of education was cut down by you British. Therefore today India is far more illiterate than it was 100 years ago. **Mahatma Gandhi**, speaking at a 1931 roundtable conference

The philosophy of life for the individual soul is to march from good to better by conscious effort. **Rajagopalachari** (1878–1972), former Chief Minister of Madras Presidency

When the perfectly designed image [of Divinity] is systematically installed, He occupies the concerned image. By His

gracious presence in that image, He gives concrete and visible expressions to all of His transcendental and imperceptible qualities. *Pancharatra Text, Satvata Samhita 6.22*

What in your life is calling you, when all the noise is silenced, the meetings adjourned, the lists laid aside, and the wild iris blooms by itself in the dark forest, what still pulls on your soul? **Rumi**

What should the yogi have to fear? Trees, plants, and all that is inside and outside, is He Himself. **Guru Nanak** (1487–1539), founder of Sikhism

We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made. **Albert Einstein**

Hinduism believes in the omnipresence of the Supreme God in every individual. There is no “f all.” **Joseph Campbell** (1904–1987), American writer, professor and expert in comparative religion

My guru explained that fire can be seen by the beings in the inner worlds. He also stated that fire and prayer simultaneously bring forth the inner world. **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami**, publisher of *Hinduism Today*

It's our relationship with God, the Gods and the Goddesses that establishes our relationship with men, women and children. Culture comes from being sensitive to other people's feelings as we are sensitive within the temple to the feelings of the Gods and the vibration emanating from the inner sanctum. Without religion in one's life and the practice of that religion in the home shrine, in the temple, and pilgrimage once a year to a far-off place, culture quickly fails and the competitive culture comes into play. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927–2001), founder of HINDUISM TODAY



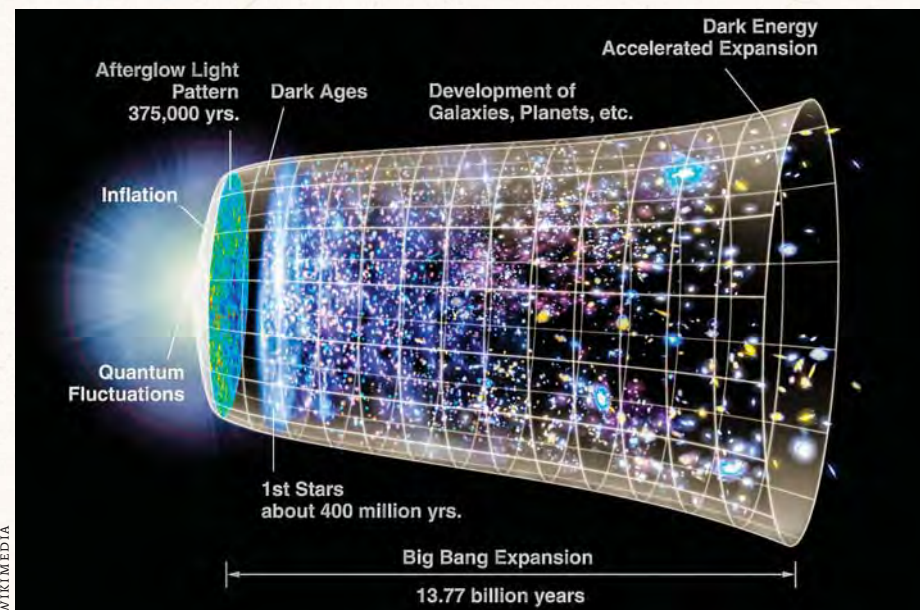
“Some not so good news about those cattle that escaped yesterday. They are at the Indian Embassy seeking asylum.”

DID YOU KNOW?

Who Knew How Old Our Universe Is?

BACK IN THE 17TH CENTURY, EUROPEAN theologians (and even scientist Sir Isaac Newton) believed the date of creation to be 4,000 bce. By the 18th century, this had been increased to a few million. The modern number—13.8 billion years—was only pinned down in 1965 with the discovery of microwave cosmic background radiation.

However they did it, Hindu rishis had in ancient days already dated the universe in billions and even trillions of years, a fact recognized by astrophysicist Carl Sagan in his 1980 hit TV series *Cosmos*. Standing barefoot in front of the Thanjavur Siva Temple in Tamil Nadu, he said, “As far as I know, India is the only ancient religious tradition on the Earth which talks about the right time scale. In the West, people have the sense that what is natural is for the universe



to be a few thousand years old, and that it is billions of years is mind-reeling, and no one can understand it. The Hindu concept is very clear. Here is a great world culture which has always talked about billions of years.”

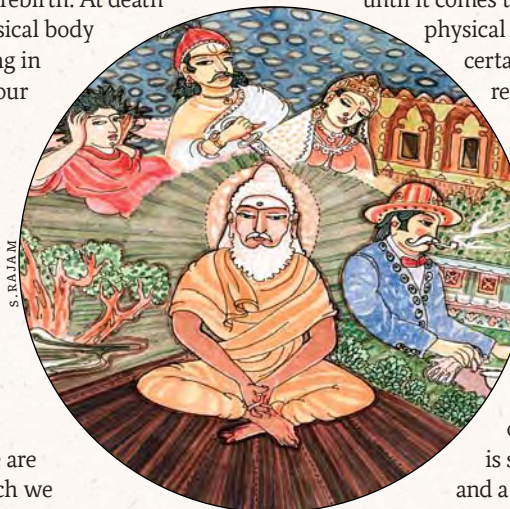
Hindus did indeed talk about billions and

even greater time spans, all in the context of a cycle of creation, preservation and dissolution over the lifetime of the God Brahma. He is said to live a hundred years, one day of which is said to be 8.6 billion years—a cumulative lifespan of 314 trillion years!

BASICS

What Is the Process of Reincarnation?

REINCARNATION, PUNARJANMA, IS the natural process of birth, death and rebirth. At death we drop off the physical body and continue evolving in the inner worlds in our subtle bodies, until we again enter into birth. Through the ages, reincarnation has been the great consoling element within Hinduism, eliminating the fear of death, explaining why one person is born a genius and another an idiot. We are not the body in which we live but the immortal soul which inhabits many bodies in its evolutionary journey through samsara. After death, we



continue to exist in unseen worlds, enjoying or suffering the harvest of earthly deeds until it comes time for yet another physical birth. Because certain karmas can be resolved only in the physical world, we must enter another physical body to continue our evolution. After soaring into the causal plane, we enter a new womb. Subsequently the old manomaya kosa is slowly sloughed off and a new one created. The actions set in motion in previous lives form the tendencies and conditions of the next. Reincarnation ceases

when karma is resolved, God is realized and moksha attained.

The *Vedas* say, “After death, the soul goes to the next world bearing in mind the subtle impressions of its deeds, and after reaping their harvest returns again to this world of action. Thus, he who has desires continues subject to rebirth.”

From Satguru Sivaya Subramuniya's *Dancing with Siva, Sloka 33.*

.....
From birth to birth: Our individual soul is a body of light which does not die, but takes one body and then another in a succession of births, a process known as reincarnation. Here the soul is depicted as a stream of light flowing through five of its many lives: a peasant, a soldier, a princess, a businessman and a jnani who has attained enlightenment and will never again be born on Earth.



Innersearch Sri Lanka 2019

The journey begins in Colombo on March 14



Vanakkam and Namaste!

Himalayan Academy—publishers of HINDUISM TODAY and Hindu Press International—have announced the two-week 2019 Sri Lanka Innersearch Travel/Study Program. Led by Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, Guru Mahasannidhanam of Kauai Aadheenam in Hawaii, fifty participants will begin their journey in Colombo on March 14th 2019, and complete it on the 29th. This will be the 26th Innersearch program since the first was held in 1967 by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami.

There will be days of classes and visits to the temples and holy places associated with the Gurus of our Parampara, including the great Nallur Murugan Temple of Jaffna, the Keerimalai Sivan Temple, the ashram of Satguru Yogaswami and more.

Along the way we will enjoy the island nation's stunning beauty. During the last four days, the group will settle into a seaside resort on the Eastern coast with emphasis on discovering the island's culture and sharing classes on spiritual practice and Saiva Siddhanta philosophy with Satguru and the swamis traveling with him. Join us!

for more information go to:
bit.ly/SriLankaInnersearch



HIMALAYAN ACADEMY

Enrollment Fees

Adult: US\$3,900
Youth (8-17): \$2,900
Child (2-7 years): \$2,100

FROM THE AGAMAS

The Sacrosanct Vyoma Vyapine Mantra

A condensed translation from the *Agamas* revealing the holy names of Siva and extolling the eternal, pure qualities of God's Supreme Reality

The following is a lucid translation of Vyoma Vyapine, a long mantra often chanted by priests during temple puja. This mantra is found in chapter ten of the Raurava Agama.

OM. Uniquely denoting a pure plane which is transcendent and indestructible.

Vyoma vyāpine. Vyoma is the supreme space. Because of its pervasive nature and immeasurable vastness, it is called vyoma.

Vyomarūpāya. Being associated with forms without losing all-pervasive nature for the benefit of the worlds, He is called Vyomaruṇa.

Sarvavyāpine. The Supreme Lord, identical with all-pervasive space, is called Sarvavyāpi.

Śivāya. Salutations to Siva, who is the guru, who is eternally free from desire (raga) and the aspects related to embodiment.

Anantāya. Because of His immeasurable greatness and His quality of being eternally unborn, this Lord is well praised as Ananta.

Anāthāya. Being eternally associated with everlasting existence and being the Absolute Lord of all Deities, devas, asuras and other beings, Paramesvara is eulogized as Anatha.

Anāśritāya. As there is no equal to His being the final and ultimate resort, He is considered to be Anasrita.

Dhruvāya. Dhruva is unchangeable constancy. One of the important characteristics of being Sadasiva is to remain constant, forever absorbing every thing into Himself at the time of final and total dissolution known as Mahapralaya.

Śaśvatāya. The absolute authority in issuing instructions and guidance lies with Him because of His unexcelled eminence and spontaneous compassion.

Yogapīṭha samsthitāya. Lord Siva constantly remains established in the yoga of *sivasadbhava*—the unique system of yoga exclusively belonging to Siva, centered on being eternally free from anava, karma and maya.

Nityayogine. Being ever-relevant and superior to all other systems of yoga, He is called Nityayogi by the experts in the essential nature of tattvas, or categories of existence.

Dhyānāhārāya. Seated on the yoga pedestal with uninterrupted contemplation, Siva is adored as Dhyanaṇa.

Aum namaḥ śivāya, sarvaprabhava. On this ground, Lord Siva, who is always in a state of calmness, is identified with Aum and na-mah (where *na* denotes the dispelling activity and *ma* denotes uncertainty, doubt or disorder).

Śivāya. He is always blissful, compassionate and auspicious, irrespective of form or formlessness. He is known as Siva.

Īśānamūrdhāya. Siva is designed with five great Brahma mantras [Isana, Tatpurusha, Aghora, Vamadeva and Sadyojata]. Therefore, He is fittingly praised as Isana Murdha.

Tatpurusha vaktrāya. Being free of maya's affects, He reveals the supreme knowledge in the form of *Vedas* and *Agamas*. With this mantra He fills up the entire range of the worlds.

Aghora hrdayāya. Aghora means the one who is disposed to fight against evils and disorders. Aghoram means the state



Pervading supreme space: The introduction to this chapter states, "Such impeccable meaning streamed forth from the self-luminous and ever-pure face of the Lord of all Deities, like flashes of lightning."

of undisturbed tranquility, and by this strand it denotes the complete awareness of all existing things.

Vāmadeva guhyāya. The meaning of this mantra is to secretly manage transmigration and remain concealed in all the worlds, objects and beings.

Sadyojāta mūrtaye. Sadya means one who grants the state of well-being instantly. He himself remains uncreated, Ajata.

Om namo namaḥ. Imperishable form.

Guhyāti guhyāya. He is called Guhyati-guhyaya by virtue of His power of concealment and secrecy.

Goptre. By guarding siddhis, spiritual powers, He is called Goptre.

Nidhanāya. The One who performs the roll of destruction.

(To Be Continued...)

DR. S. P. SABHARATNAM SIVACHARYAR, of the Adisaiva priest lineage, is an expert in ancient Tamil and Sanskrit, specializing in the *Vedas*, *Agamas* and *Silpa Shastras*. This excerpt is from his translation of the *Raurava Agama*.



(left) Dr. Smita Naram in her Mumbai headquarters; (above right) Dhanvantari, God of Ayurveda, emerges from the Ocean of Milk with the pot of Amrita, elixir of immortality; sign at the entrance to Ayushakti's main Mumbai clinic



SPECIAL FEATURE

Applying Ancient Principles To Our Modern Maladies

AYURVEDA, "LIFE SCIENCE," IS INDIA'S ANCIENT medical system, referenced in many old texts and dealt with extensively in scriptures attached to the *Atharva Veda*. It has informed modern medicine, particularly in the areas of surgery and vaccinations, but is today eclipsed even in India by a reliance on the allopathic approach. Yet ayurveda is gaining considerable credibility in tackling the multitude of lifestyle diseases people suffer from today—diseases whose causes can be found

in diet, mode of living and environmental pollution. In the forefront of ayurveda's resurgence are skilled vaidyas (practitioners), mostly in India, who are tackling these new diseases with a combination of insightful diagnosis based on pulse reading and the use of a multitude of traditional herbs. Among the foremost of these innovative medical traditionalists is the charismatic Dr. Smita Naram, whose Ayushakti clinic in Mumbai we explore in this detailed report by our Delhi correspondent and test subject.

BY RAJIV MALIK, MUMBAI

FOR MANY CENTURIES OUR MOTHERS and grandmothers in India had ready home remedies, no further away than the garden or the kitchen spice shelf, for the common illnesses. When I was a child, my parents told me that good health meant striking a balance between the three physiological components of the body described in ayurveda: *vata*, wind; *pitta*, heat; and *kapha*, mucus. Today, in the face of intractable diseases brought on by our modern lifestyle and diet, ayurveda is getting a serious second look and enjoying growing popularity in India. This is seen in the ministry, now called AYUSH, that the Indian government formed in 1995 to promote ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and homeopathy—all somewhat condescendingly labeled “alternative medicines” in the West. It is seen in the great success of Baba Ramdas’ Patanjali line of medicines as well as the growth of ayurvedic clinics and spas across India and, to some extent, in Europe and the Americas as well.

Our interest for this article is not the five-star hotels and resorts that offer programs for relaxation and rejuvenation; rather it is the clinics intended to diagnose and treat chronic illness. We looked into several of these in Kerala, a state known for both five-star programs and well-respected clinics. Ultimately, we settled upon the well-known Ayushakti clinic in Mumbai, in large part because several of our readers recommended it after tak-

ing treatments there themselves.

Dr. Smita Naram, the head of the clinic, was already familiar with HINDUISM TODAY and willingly agreed to admit myself and my wife, Renu, for three weeks of treatment at one of the 32 clinics they have in Mumbai and Delhi. In addition to these facilities, they have or plan to have 60 alliance partners trained by them who practice in Europe, UK, US, Australia and New Zealand. Dr. Naram herself travels to other countries, for example, holding clinics in the US in Sept/Oct, 2018.

During our course of treatment, I was granted access to Dr. Naram and the clinic’s other doctors and therapists. I was also given a tour of the Mumbai plant where most of their herbal medicines are produced. The arrangement was a bit unusual: as a patient, I should really have been relaxing and focusing on absorbing the treatments. But I was also in reporter mode, attending to interviews and photo shoots in the midst of everything else. But the staff were all good-natured about it, tolerant of the occasional inconvenience I caused and happy to share their knowledge and insights.

Our report covers the personal treatments for Renu and myself as a real-life example of ayurveda’s approach to illness, in the process explaining the various modalities employed for both diagnosis and treatment. By far the most informative part of our stay was an hour-long interview with Dr. Naram, a modern-day incarnation of Sushruta, the 6th-century-bce founder of ayurveda. It is

her grand vision to create a large network of clinics that apply ayurveda’s fundamentals to the diseases and afflictions that accompany our modern life. We begin our report with her interview.

Dr. Naram, Ayushakti’s Guiding Light

About a week into our stay, I interviewed Smita in her 15th-floor office in the Synergy Business Park building in Goregaon East, just a few kilometers from the clinic we stayed at.

Renu and I found her a spiritually elevated person with a magnetic personality, obviously in excellent health herself. In a freewheeling interview covering her life in detail, dreams, vision and mission related to Ayushakti, Dr. Naram shared that she has personally examined the pulse of over 300,000 patients in the past 30 years. She claims that through the pulse examination she can scan the whole body of the patient in less than a minute. Wanting to extend the benefits of pulse reading and ayurveda to millions of people and realizing she could not do so alone, she decided to build a team of ayurvedic practitioners to help her achieve

.....
Clinic Life: (below, left to right) Dr. Smita Naram reading the pulse of *Hinduism Today* correspondent Rajiv Malik while his wife Renu looks on; the clinic’s busy outpatient department; the well-appointed clinic is located in a busy but green Mumbai neighborhood

What Is—and Isn’t—Panchakarma

THE traditional listing of *panchakarma*, literally, “five actions,” is *vaman* (induced vomiting), *virechan* (purgation with laxatives), *basti* (enemas with oils and herbs), *nasya* (cleansing via the nose) and *raktamoshan* (blood-letting). The objective of each is directly removing the doshas (*vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*) from the body. This is the traditional definition, the one generally used in India.

A set of *purvakarma*, “prior actions,” are usually done in preparation for the panchakarma treatments. Sometimes these are confused with panchakarma, partly because they may take more time to perform. Some *purvakarmas* begin even before leaving home, such as taking ghee and triphala daily, and eliminating non-vegetarian food, fried food, sweets, etc., all according to the ayurvedic doctor’s advance instructions.

Once the patient is at the clinic, more *purvakarmas* continue over several days. These most commonly involve application of oil by various techniques including massage (*snehana*) followed by the use of a steam box or steam bath (*swedana*). The objective of these prior treatments is to pull the toxic doshas into the digestive tract for elimination from the body through the panchakarma treatments. Oil massage and steam therapies may be done apart from panchakarma to address specific issues. For this reason also, some people get the mistaken impression they are part of panchakarma.

Panchakarma is usually followed by *rasayana*, rejuvenation therapy, both at the clinic and at home, which involve various techniques

including herbal medications. Likely the most critical for lasting results is faithfully following the doctor’s recommendations for adjustments in attitude, diet and exercise.

In the West especially, one finds considerable variation in panchakarma. To begin with, induced vomiting and bloodletting can often only be done with approved medical supervision. (Before we dismiss bloodletting as the very definition of outdated medical practice, we should know that it has been shown to have unexpected benefits. For example, men who give regular blood donations show a reduced incidence of heart attack.)

Some Western practitioners without the necessary facilities for induced vomiting or enema have clients do those at home and only give oil massage and steam therapy in their clinics. This further strengthens the impression that these are elements of panchakarma. Likewise, *shirodhara*, the dripping of warm oil on the forehead—a favorite stock photo of ayurvedic medicine—is not part of panchakarma.

According to Dr. David Frawley of the American Institute of Vedic Studies, “Because of the complications and time involved, we find more scaled-down panchakarma therapies offered, particularly in the West. Some of these can be far from the traditional practice. That is why it is often best for people to go to India for a full panchakarma treatment. They should set aside at least two weeks, if not a month, for the therapy, and prepare for it in advance with the right dietary and herbal support practices before they leave for India.”



Which Five? Art used to illustrate panchakarma uses the right names, but incorrectly shows shirodhara, oil dripping, in the large photo and a knee treatment called dhara for the basti photo

Keeping Check on the Pulse of Mumbai



her goal of touching and transforming the lives of millions over the next 30 years.

Her husband and business partner, Dr. Pankaj Naram, was not comfortable with this plan to train other vaidyas as expert pulse readers on a huge scale. However, she was so steadfast with her mission to touch one billion lives through a team of vaidyas that they mutually agreed that she should assume full control of Ayushakti. She hired Chiranjeev Shrivastava, a marketing expert, as CEO; and since then, she told us, the company has made tremendous progress and never looked back.

Four generations in Dr. Naram's family have been ayurvedic doctors. She learned the value of ayurveda early in life when she suffered severe stomach pain and was advised she had appendicitis and needed surgery. Her uncle prescribed a simple ayurvedic concoction which cured her. She completed formal ayurveda study in 1981. Then, she and her husband learned advanced pulse reading under the guidance of Ramdas

Babaji, a 120-year-old ayurveda master. Dr. Naram also obtained a degree in pharmacology and has set up two plants for producing ayurvedic medicines with her own formulations. Her particular lineage within ayurveda



traces back to Amogh Patra, who taught at Nalanda University, which was destroyed by Muslim armies in 1200ce. This lineage emphasizes detoxification of the body, followed by rejuvenative medicines.

According to Dr. Naram, faulty lifestyle

and improper diet are behind many diseases today. She joked that Ayushakti will keep doing a roaring business as long as there are sellers and buyers of junk food in such large numbers worldwide.

"Ayushakti is frequented by people who need to cure a serious disease," she said. "People do think of Kerala in the context of ayurveda, but there it has been popularized as a tourist activity for relaxation. We ourselves started a branch for the purpose of relaxation in the Bandra area of Mumbai, which is patronized by film stars and those belonging to high society. But most of our clinics are outpatient ones, where people come during the day for detoxification sessions."

Ayushakti specializes in pain management, diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, arthritis, obesity, liver disease, irritable bowel syndrome, thyroid, rheumatoid arthritis, autoimmune disease and other ailments, including cancer. Dr. Naram explained that various theories, including the overuse

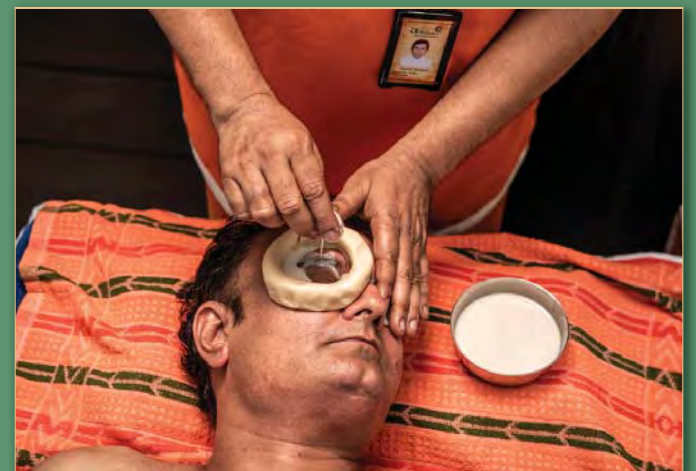
of antibiotics, are presented to explain the increase of autoimmune diseases in the last 20 years. She described how autoimmune diseases can be dealt with through ayurveda, sometimes in conjunction with allopathic medicines.

She made it clear she is not opposed to allopathic medicines, but believes the majority of ailments we face can be cured with the help of the type of ayurvedic home remedies given in her book, *Your Health In Your Hands*. But most people don't try these herbal remedies and resort

Moving the toxins: (opposite page, top to bottom) the extremely relaxing shirodhara oil drip reduces blood pressure; pind swed massage with heated herb packets; (this page, clockwise from top) heart dhara treats cardiac and stress issues; netra basti for the eyes; another form of netra basti; nasaya for sinus, cold, eyesight; kidney dhara with medicated oils



The Diverse Therapies of the Ayurvedic Healing System



to allopathic drugs, many of which have negative side effects.

No doubt, she agreed, we need allopathic treatment if we have an accident or if we have severe asthma and suffer an attack. But if we take ayurvedic treatment for three to six months, she explained, we may not face any asthma-related problems for years, because ayurveda has rooted out the cause.

Ayurveda, she told us, was originally systematized by Charaka Muni in the *Charaka Samhita*, dated between 1500 and 2000 bce. While many diseases mentioned in that text are not common today, there are chapters dealing with cough, arthritis and skin disease. Comparatively little is said about stress and mental disorders—prevalent problems today—though there is a full chapter on psychosomatic disease and how to deal with it. For each disease, the cause is discussed at length and cures are recommended.

"Today," Dr. Naram pointed out, "we are exposed to environmental pollution in a very big way. We also consume fertilizers and pesticides through our food. The result, my husband and I observed 30 years ago, is that people have a very high level of pita or heat in the body."

The clinic works with patients in six ways: diet, intake of herbs, detoxification, kitchen remedies and marma points (related to acupuncture points). They also encourage meditation, faith in God and seeking the company of realized gurus.

We asked specifically about autism, which is causing so much grief in the West. "It is difficult to understand from the point of



view of allopathy what causes autism. Based on pulse reading, I have observed that when the immune system is attacked, the nervous system gets inflamed and the impulses of the brain do not pass on to the senses. Intelligence is there, but there is an inability to express. We feel that taking high levels of medication during pregnancy can be a cause, as can smoking, drinking and consumption of tamasic food—meat and food that is highly

processed or fermented, frozen or canned. Westerners take to such a diet in a big way. Now nonresident Indians do also, and their children are suffering from autism."

Dr. Naram's focus is on the future: "I love interacting with patients, but I am no longer taking on new patients. Instead, I focus on training doctors and expanding our network of clinics. The doctors who graduate from ayurvedic colleges have academic knowledge but no clinical experience. Allopathy is more systematic in providing practical training. Training new doctors in *nadi parikshan*, pulse reading, is akin to teaching one to swim. No matter how much one reads or is told, one cannot just jump into a pool and swim. In the same way, doctors working with mentors slowly develop their own insights by experience. Through pulse reading, we can scan the body and ascertain a person's medical history. We can sense a disease the person may be suffering from or is likely to suffer from in the future. Blood and other laboratory tests may be done to confirm our findings. It is the pulse reading that reveals the root cause and how to fix it."

"For some people we just suggest dietary and lifestyle changes; others are so deeply immersed in their illness that they required deep detoxification. Still others have no disease as such, but want to feel good and live in a healthy manner. Indians are more aware than Westerners, I have observed, of the need to take preventive measures. I myself go through the entire process of detoxification every two years. Otherwise, I would not have the high level of energy to do so much work."

Asked about her daily routine, she explained, "I'm up at 7am and to bed by 11pm. In the evening, as soon as I step into my house, my office is closed. Work is closed. My son and I spend a wonderful time with each other talking about our day and the difficulties we faced. Once I am home, I am a woman. I am a wife and a mother. It is essential to be like that."

We concluded the interview, impressed with Dr. Naram and her vision. Let us now back up a bit to how we came to be at the Ayushakti clinic.

Treatment

HINDUISM TODAY is aware of several ayurvedic clinics in India that have achieved renown for their successful treatment programs, Ayushakti among them. A three-week detoxification plan was booked for myself and my wife at a cost of US\$3,650. We soon received a 19-page document, *Panchakarma at Ayushakti*, detailing the advance preparations we should make (mostly to eat lightly), what to expect during the three weeks and what to do upon our return.

First the booklet defines the *panchakarma*, literally, five actions, which form the basis of treatment by reducing *ama*, toxins, in the

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Adjusting dosha: (counter-clockwise from above) *shirobasti* helps with headaches and hypertension; our correspondent gets steamed; marma point therapy; fresh food and spices, key to preparing the right diet; Chef Manoj Ramesh Keni even trains patients in better cooking, essential to lasting cures

body (see page 21 sidebar). It then describes various specialized treatments given to assist in the reduction of *ama*. These include *abhyanga*, full-body oil massage by two therapists working in sync; *swedana*, sitting in a steam cabinet; *pind swed*, a form of massage with heated herbs; and various applications of oil, including *shirodhara*, in which warm oil is poured continuously on the forehead for half an hour.

One's diet is strictly controlled throughout the stay at the clinic. The chef at the in-house restaurant is informed of what each patient should be eating and cooks accordingly. One is strongly encouraged to control one's diet upon return home, avoiding wheat, meat, heavy milk products, fried food, sweets, etc., in favor of mung and vegetable soups and stews, khichadi, rice, fruits, etc. The booklet stresses that by following the directions given before joining the program, you will have started preparing your body, mind and emotions to release as many toxins, blocks and impurities as possible—toxins that have been accumulating in your system over the years. Further, unless the body is made open, soft and flexible by the treatments and remedies during the preparation phase, it is impossible to release and expel the toxins without harming one's system. I have undergone many medical treatments and some small surgeries in my 60 years of life, but no doctor ever gave me such comprehensive directions on diet and lifestyle.

Hoping we had prepared well enough, we flew to Mumbai on May 2, checked in at Ayushakti and had dinner at the clinic's

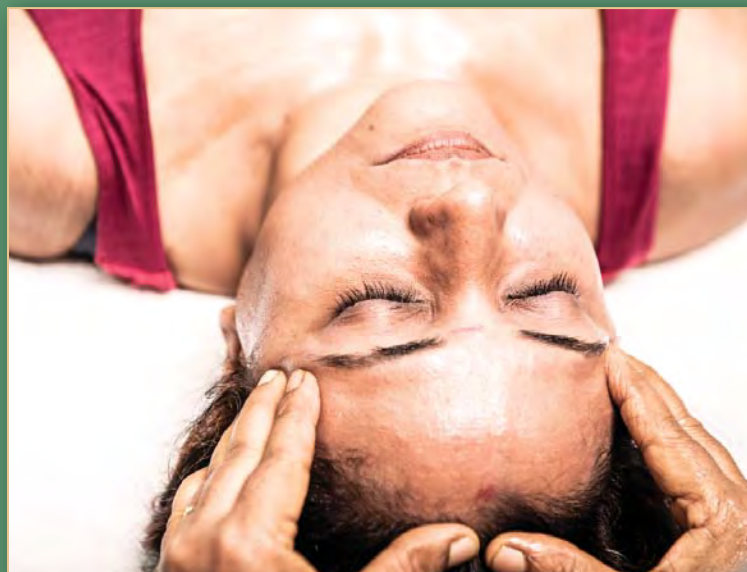
Swadshakti restaurant, which we learned is famous for its authentic ayurvedic cuisine.

The clinic occupies a four-story building surrounded by trees in the Malad area of North Mumbai. A large hall in the basement is used for yoga classes and training sessions; the outpatient clinic is on the first floor. We stayed on the third floor, which has six rooms for in-house patients. The rooms are air-conditioned—a necessity at this off-season time of year, when it is quite hot and humid in Mumbai.

In the morning, we met with Dr. Rajshree Mehta, one of the clinic's senior physicians, and Dr. Deepti Dalvi, who assists her. They took our detailed history, blood pressure, weight, etc., and did a preliminary pulse reading. I had been suffering from an unstable stomach, asthmatic cough, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and chronic back and shoulder pain—most all a result of my admittedly sedentary lifestyle. My wife Renu had experienced irregular menstruation for the last four years as part of menopause and, during the visit, excessive bleeding problems—a condition which concerned the doctors. She was also experiencing depression, low blood pressure and several other maladies. Both of us were regularly taking medications for some of these conditions.

While the outpatient department normally gets 50 to 100 patients a day, today it overflowed with people coming to see Dr. Naram, who visits this clinic just few times each month. When our turn comes, she welcomed us warmly and expressed her high regard for HINDUISM TODAY, which she reads

Relaxing Treatments and Tasty Food a Key Part of Therapy



regularly. Before reading my pulse, she asked me to remove my spectacles (which somehow interfere with the reading). She told me my pitta is very high, and correctly listed many small health issues I face. Finally she noted that I suffered low back problems 16 or 17 years ago with the L4-L5 discs (something I had not mentioned). She warned that it could flare up again.

I offered up my sedentary lifestyle and advancing age as reasons for my ailments. She countered, with a smile, that she is age 55, fit enough to dance an hour a day to keep in shape and that I should not blame my age for my health problems! She added that I am managing fairly well on account of a vegetarian diet and being engaged in the religious work of HINDUISM TODAY magazine.

Renu's turn was next. She described her ailments to Dr. Naram. After examining her pulse, Dr. Naram asked if Renu had been examined for uterine fibroids or ovarian cysts. She added that Renu had undergone stomach surgery some time back—something Renu herself could not remember until I reminded her of the operation, which took place 25 years ago. Dr. Naram expressed concern that Renu could face severe arthritis in the future.

Between the detection of my back issues and Renu's forgotten stomach surgery, we were impressed indeed with pulse diagnosis. Following Dr. Naram's recommendation, Renu had an ultrasound done which revealed

fibroids and cysts—both common causes of excessive bleeding during menopause. We felt assured that we were in the right place and under the wings of a great and gifted physician. Dr. Naram then directed her team



We were each given many pills to take twice daily—15 in my case, 19 in Renu's. These were Ayushakti products, variously formulated for digestion, blood circulation, cough, increased immunity, calmness of mind and

reduction of vata (wind) and pita (heat). Several provided to Renu were to address her bleeding. Our two doctors continuously monitored and adjusted our treatment regime throughout the period. All the while, I conducted interviews with the doctors, therapists, other staff and patients, which we I will now recount before summarizing our stay.

Staff Interviews

Chiranjeev Srivastava, CEO of Ayushakti. Srivastava, age 38, came to Ayushakti at the invitation of Dr. Naram when she had only six clinics. His previous employer

was Ogilvy, the famed advertising firm who created the "Incredible India" ad campaign. Srivastava had no background in ayurveda, but was a quick study; he is now a devoted proponent. He readily identified Ayushakti's

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The team: (clockwise from above) the women's therapist team; the men's; Ashok Chavan, manager of the Ayushakti Phalgar plant; this machine can turn out hundreds of thousands of pills in a day; Ayushakti CEO Chiranjeev Srivastava; Jag Prakash and his wife Lata came from Mauritius for treatment of his Parkinson's disease

strong point, its holistic approach. Most people, he explained, are focused on traditional home remedies and popular ayurvedic medicines, but remain unaware of the importance of diet and the effectiveness of the panchakarma treatment.

The marketing challenge, as Srivastava analyzed it, is that people today will not take 28 days to go through a standard panchakarma program. "My logic," he stated, "said that if my thirst is completely satisfied by drinking one glass of water, then perhaps by drinking one-quarter it will be partially satisfied, and half a glass will satisfy some more and so on." This is how they came up with their Detox programs: Smart Detox for seven days, Dynamic for 15, Power for 22 and Super for a month, costing respectively US\$100, \$260, \$440 and \$580. This is working well for them. As people experience results with the short programs, they set aside the time for a longer one and get even better results. Ayushakti is also developing programs for specific ailments, including arthritis and asthma.

Speaking like the great promoter that he is, Srivastava extolled panchakarma: "It is an ancient procedure; it's not something recently invented. It is one of the greatest gifts to mankind because it works wonders for people. To market it you have to make people understand this is the best thing for them. Once they experience it and get results, then the growth is organic because it generates referrals, which are very important in the healthcare industry." He undergoes a few

weeks of detoxification himself every year to maintain high energy and stamina throughout the year.

Ayushakti now has 21 clinics in Mumbai, each with about 1,000 square feet of space with four outpatient examining rooms and



who are not yet vegetarians. They encounter diabetics who refuse to give up rice, which has the same impact on them as sugar. "One method," he explained, "is to tell them, 'fine, eat half a cup of rice, but then you must walk for half an hour.' The patient realizes that if

they cannot walk for half an hour, then better not eat rice. We have to understand that we are not only dealing with bodies but with the mindset of patients. Every medical doctor is supposed to be a good psychologist also."

"I believe in the value of the Detox programs; that's why I do it every year. Sometimes I come to the clinic, and sometimes I have the therapist come to my home. I'm also a hardcore fitness freak and spend time at the gym."

"I am a believer in *Bhagavad Gita* and Lord Ganesha. I start every meeting with 'Om Shri Ganeshaya

three therapy rooms. They are exploring a franchise model that he feels could add 200 clinics running on the Ayushakti principles over the next three to four years.

Definitely there are challenges in getting people fully engaged in the program. In particular, I told him, I was not comfortable with the basti treatment. He agreed that basti is difficult for some patients to accept, especially men. But, he said, "It cleans the system in a much faster way than what can be done through giving medicines orally. Initially, people have reservations, but eventually they understand the benefits."

Changing a patient's diet is another challenge, and they work slowly with people

Namaha.' Lord Ganesha is the remover of obstacles, and it is He who provides me guidance and vision. My father used to say, 'If something happens as per your heart's wish, it is fine; if it does not happen, still it is fine because it is God's wish being fulfilled.' I believe that if I have a pure intention in my heart to extend help to people, He will give me the wisdom and courage to do so." He admitted that not all Ayushakti's doctors are necessarily so spiritual, "but I find they, too, use God's name in greeting me."

Dr. Hemang Parekh is Ayushakti's chief medical officer, in charge of 40 doctors and the attendant staff of some 500 people across all their clinics. He graduated in 1995 with a

The Clinic's Patients and Supporting Staff



degree in ayurveda from Jamnagar University in Gujarat, considered one of the best in the world for the study of ayurveda. He joined Ayushakti in 2003, impressed by their pulse-reading skills and overall treatment of patients. In most of the medical world, he stated, doctors spend their time dealing with reports—blood tests, CT scans, sonograms, etc. But at Ayushakti the focus is on the person—and not just their body, but their mind and emotions as well. He lamented the fact that most people pay little attention to their health until they fall sick.

Each new doctor is put through a six-month training program and attends periodic seminars, one of which we witnessed during our stay. Therapists are put through a two-month course and must pass an exam upon completion. "Our CEO, Chiranjeev Shrivastava, has brought to Ayushakti the idea of detoxification. Whereas panchakarma is like getting your whole body serviced, detoxification is focused on specific body conditions and problems; it is results oriented. Every month about 2,000 people in India go through one of our detox programs."

He concluded, "Ayurveda is well connected with spirituality. Before starting, we perform prayers so we can help people with their health problems. When we pick an herb, we pray to the plant. It is a very religious process. The spirit of spirituality is there in all our ayurveda practitioners and therapists."

Therapists **Sonu Narayan Patel** and **Smita Shivaji Desai** are the heads, respectively, of the men's and women's panchakarma wings of Ayushakti. Every patient, they explained, wants to know how long it will take to recover from their problems. Women especially, Smita said, are anxious in this re-

gard. The staff's standard response is to focus on correcting one's lifestyle, getting enough sleep every night, eating properly, keeping a positive mental outlook, and following their doctor's advice and directions. "The biggest difference from other clinics," one said, "is that we treat the patients as part of our family and become close to them." Each therapist is expected to be able to communicate in English.

One specialty of the clinic, they explained, is marma treatment, 107 points of the body that respond to pressure and/or massage and are the historical basis for the Chinese system of acupuncture. Marma therapy is especially useful for frozen shoulder, back pain and cervical problems. It was useful in Renu's case to reduce excessive heat in the body. In other cases it is used to reduce blood pressure.

Dr. Rajshree Mehta, who guided most of our care, has been with Ayushakti for 27 years. She mentioned that many people who come to the clinic suffering from chronic disease do so as a last resort, when nothing else works. Most new patients already know something about ayurveda, but they don't follow even the simplest of guidelines, such as to eat only when hungry. People feed themselves, hungry or not, because their life is "moving in tandem with the needle of the clock." When we eat without being hungry, she explained, we are unable to digest the food properly, and this creates toxins in the body.

"It is part of our culture at Ayushakti to pray to God before we treat patients," Rajshree informed us. "I first come and pray in the small shrine in my examination room. I pray to Lord Dhanvantri [the God of Healing].

Ashok Chavan, who has been with Ayushakti for about 12 years, is manager of the company's Palghar plant. During our tour, he told us it is about 12,000 square feet, has 32 employees and produces 159 types of tablets from a multitude of ingredients, including 300 herbs. In a single day they can produce more than 100,000 tablets. Many of the formulations were developed personally by Dr. Smita Naram, who visits the plant regularly. Some products they sell in stores, others are available only through their own pharmacies.

There are multiple checks to avoid heavy metals, which have come under scrutiny recently in ayurvedic medicines. The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) maintains offices in India, which is the second largest supplier of pharmaceuticals and biologics to the US—and, somewhat surprisingly to me, the seventh largest supplier of food. Chavan tells us FDA inspectors have come twice to the Palghar plant, and both times it has passed.

Patient Interviews

We spoke with a number of clinic patients, both outpatients and those who, like us, were staying at the clinic. They were overall quite pleased with the treatment, but few allowed us to take their photos or quote them about

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Wrap-up: (below) the large pharmacy attached at the Ayushakti Malad clinic; (opposite top) Dr. Smita Naram addresses a seminar for doctors held at the clinic; (opposite below) Dr. Rajshree Mehta, who guided most of their care, sits with Renu and *Hinduism Today* correspondent Rajiv Malik

their medical issues. Several with serious health problems had come to Ayushakti after all other medical options had failed for them. A few experienced miraculous recoveries, but most face a long, drawn-out process. Several video testimonials can be seen on the Ayushakti website: ayushakti.com/natural-arthritis-treatment.php

Sheila Seth, 56, a school administrator, was on the third day of a seven-day outpatient detox program for diabetes. When she started, she could not even lift her hand on account of the swelling and pain. By the third day she was already experiencing reduction in both. "I feel I should have come here much earlier. For me the results delivered in three days are no less than a miracle."

Jag Prakash of Mauritius was staying full-time at the clinic. He was near the end of three weeks of treatment for Parkinson's disease, caused not by old age, but by an accident five years ago. Extensive allopathic treatment in Mauritius had not improved his condition. As he could not communicate well with others, he had started to withdraw socially.

Prakash shared with me, "When I came here, my whole body would shake terribly. Now it is in control to a great extent, 50 to 60% improvement. They want me to stay three more weeks, but I am homesick for my grandchildren and want to go back to Mauritius. I will take the medicines given here for one year and then review my situation."

Prakash's wife, **Lata**, had come mostly to assist her husband, but was also getting treated for back pain and migraine head-

aches. She told us she is now "70% better, no longer suffering from headache, back pain reduced and a frozen shoulder problem also much better." She said the doctors said if her husband would stay three more weeks, he could return with little shaking or trembling.



Conclusion

Almost every patient we spoke with at Ayushakti appreciated the way they were treated and given personal attention by the vaidyas. Most had received a pulse exam by Dr. Smita Naram and were happy with the diagnosis and recommended treatment. We did encounter some with serious health problems whose results did not meet their expectations. However, they realized that since they had come to Ayushakti as a last resort, only after exhausting all other options, it was perhaps unreasonable to expect miracles. When we raised this issue with the clinic

doctors, they said in some cases recovery is indeed miraculous—Jag Prakash, for example, finally found some relief from his Parkinson's after all allopathic methods proved ineffective. But in cases that have developed major complications, recovery can be slow.

Both Renu and I definitely improved on all fronts from the treatment. The most dramatic change form me was that my blood pressure returned to normal in the second week, which allowed me to stop taking the allopathic medicine I have used for years. Just through the treatments and ayurvedic herbal medicine, which has no side effects, the blood pressure stayed normal. Renu's bleeding meant some therapies could not be given or not given as fully as normal. But that issue was resolved during the treatments. She lost weight, and the pain in her knees was greatly reduced. The biggest change for both of us was in our diet. We have dropped both wheat and sugar in favor of in-

creased use of mung beans, fruits and vegetables. As a result, we feel healthier and more energetic.

After receiving treatment at Ayushakti and interacting with Dr. Smita Naram, I can definitely say that she is a master pulse reader, and has her finger on the pulse of ayurveda itself. Whether or not she achieves her life's mission of treating a billion people, she is almost certainly one of those who is successfully adapting the ancient wisdom of ayurveda to our modern maladies in a manner that even mainstream allopathic medicine will ultimately have to acknowledge. 🍵

Pharmacy and Satisfied Patients





MALAYSIA

Thaipusam at Batu Caves

A richly illustrated glimpse into the spiritual journey made by a million devotees each year to one of the world's most iconic celebrations of Lord Murugan

THE WORSHIP OF LORD MURUGAN, GOD of war and victory, has dual origins, both in Tamil folk traditions and the northern Sanskritic traditions. Over time the worship of Skanda/Murugan developed with incredible complexity, reaching millions of worshipers in South India from all social backgrounds.

Like other festivals honoring Lord Murugan, Thaipusam is celebrated not only in India and Sri Lanka but also in the Hindu diaspora—in Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, South Africa, Fiji and other Hindu Tamil communities. Each of these communities evolved in unique sociopolitical contexts, so their cultures are varied, but common elements are found in Murugan festivals worldwide.

Many of India's major Murugan pilgrimage sites are linked to episodes from His legendary quest. The temple at Palani, long associated with systems of healing, is where Murugan is believed to have defeated the asura Idumban, conquered His inner passions and realized the Truth within. Several festivals, major and minor, are held there

annually; Panguni Uttiram and Thaipusam attract hundreds of thousands of pilgrims. Tiruchendur, a major Murugan temple located on the seashore in the Tirunelveli District in the Bay of Bengal, is the mythical site of Murugan's final battle with Surapadman. There the kavadi worship occurs at the festival of Chittrai Paruvum, held during the Tamil month of Chittrai (April-May). At Thiruparankundram, near Madurai, where Murugan is believed to have married Devayanai, the Vaikasi Vishakam festival is held in the Tamil month of Vaikasi (May-June).

Malaysia's Hindu traditions and rituals have been greatly influenced by the waves of Indian migration which occurred during and after the British colonization of the area. In these newly formed communities Hinduism evolved in the absence of two key forces which played major roles in shaping Hinduism in South India: the prominent centers of religious learning and an influential brahmin caste.

Instead, the Agamic culture was brought to Malaysia by the Chettiar and Jaffna Tamil communities, who constructed major temples in the main cities of British Malaya. At

the same time, popular village Hinduism was brought by those who arrived as indentured workers, and whose personal and community practices differed according to their place of origin. In the many plantation temples and roadside shrines, as well in most of the major temples, Lord Murugan, in His multiple forms, was a strong presence. With this widespread worship of Murugan, the Thaipusam festival has grown to become one of the most important yearly Hindu holy days in Malaysia.

Murugan's Hilltop Abode

Built in the heart of a great limestone cavern cut into a hill in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, the Batu Caves temple complex is a unique sight, while, in a way, resembling Murugan's pilgrimage sites in South India. Wilderness rules the area; monkeys and birds populate the steep walls enclosing the majestic caverns.

In 1891, K. Thambasamy, leader of the Kuala Lumpur Hindu community, was inspired by the Vel shape of the entrance to Batu Caves. He established a shrine for Lord Murugan within the main chamber,



and placed a Vel—the spear-like symbol of Murugan—within it, prompting other Hindus to visit the site and offer worship. The British District Officer in Kuala Lumpur initially banned the worship, but his orders were successfully contested in court. This victory over the colonial authorities was regarded by many devotees as a sign of Murugan's presence in the cave. The following year, in 1892, Thaipusam was celebrated there for the first time.

Over time, the modest shrine became a major pilgrimage site, transformed into a grand temple complex complete with a museum and commercial spaces. A central stairway with 272 steps leads up to the Temple Cave. Towering beside the stairway stands a majestic, 140-foot-tall statue of Murugan, the largest in the world.

While religious life at Batu Caves is continuous, with daily prayers and a steady stream of devotees and visitors, Thaipusam is indisputably the dominant festival of the year, annually drawing around one million people.

For this special event, Lord Murugan's power center is moved from His main temple—Sri Maha Mariamman in central Kuala Lumpur—to this iconic Batu Caves outpost. The God is conveyed in a silver chariot with His two consorts, Valli and Devayani, attended by priests and followed by officials, musicians and thousands of Hindus from all social backgrounds. For the 2018 Thaipusam, a golden chariot was added to the procession, transporting the murti of Lord Vinayaga (Ganesha), Murugan's sibling, who also has a temple at Batu Caves. The chariot was built specially for the Vinayaga Chaturthi festival last year at a cost of RM5 million (US\$1.27 million). "The golden chariot will be taken in the procession to enable the Hindu community in the city to see it, because public donations were received to make it," declared Tan Sri R.



Arriving at the cave: (clockwise from far left) Hindu devotees carry kavadis during their Thaipusam pilgrimage. Images of Lord Murugan in different aspects abound, decorating most of the kavadi, which are also adorned with the peacock feathers of Mayil, Murugan's vahana; Murali, age 44, from Kuala Lumpur, wears nail sandals as he carries his kavadi; Manpreet, 26, a restaurant manager from Singapore, carries an Idumban kavadi. Six years ago he made a vow, asking for guidance for his proper path in life, for career, health, prosperity, protection and blessings for his family. He has since carried kavadi every year at Batu Caves, and he intends to fulfill this yearly journey to honor Lord Murugan for the rest of his life; a pilgrim carrying a paal kavadi (a milk pot) helps a woman and her child up the crowded stairs. An atmosphere of peace and tolerance is dominant, with people joined together to honor Lord Murugan.



Nadarajah, chairman of Sri Maha Mariamman Temple.

During the 18-hour journey from the center of Kuala Lumpur to Batu Caves, the procession stops at several Hindu temples, where offerings are made to the two Gods. Once at Batu Caves, the murtis of Murugan and His consorts are installed at the Sri Subramaniam Temple, while the holy Vel is transported up to the shrine in the main cave. As the God is installed in His lofty abode, the temple flag is raised and Thaipusam officially begins. For the next 24 hours, devotees arrive in droves to carry kavadi, fulfilling vows to beseech the blessings of Murugan.

Kavadi bearing at Thaipusam

The power and presence of Murugan at Batu Caves can be felt throughout the three-day event. Thousands of devotees bear various types of kavadi to the main shrine inside the caves. Participants are often overtaken by trance, a divine state known as *arul vaku* (trance of grace), as the energies of the Deity flow through them. Entranced penitents appear to have transcendent powers, enabling them to pierce their flesh with hooks, spears and vels without feeling pain, and many without bleeding. The experience of the pilgrimage and the encounter of the God is shared with family and friends.

Kavadi worship at Thaipusam is rooted in Murugan's legendary renunciation as Lord Dandayudhapani, and in the story of Idumban, who is transformed by his encounter with Lord Murugan while the former was carrying two hills from the north to the South of India. Kavadi is a popular form of worship in South India, especially in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and the Malaysian kavadi traditions closely resemble those of India.

Many devotees carry kavadi as a vow several years in a row or periodically throughout their lives, appealing to the divine power of Lord Murugan for help in solving personal or family problems. Blessings sought for good health, prosperity, success in occupation, studies, having a baby or resolving family conflicts. Often devotees start to bear offerings for Lord Murugan from their teenage years—in the beginning to fulfill specific vows, but over the years as an integral part of their spiritual practice.

Puravindra, a trade business owner, has carried kavadi for the last 12 years. "I have been devoted to Lord Murugan since I was a child. I was fascinated by the unique way devotees show their love for Lord Murugan, especially on Thaipusam. It started as a vow for studies at the age of 16, the first time I carried a kavadi. Over the years, I have been carrying many different types of kavadi, including piercings on the body. The earlier vows were for specific wishes, then it went on to evolve into pure love and devotion to-



wards Lord Murugan."

Pilgrims begin preparing for their journey a few weeks before Thaipusam, going on a fast and generally disconnecting from everyday life, seeking inner peace and balance in preparation for their pilgrimage. Murali, who has participated in the pilgrimage with his family since childhood, tells me: "I do fasting for 48 days, taking one vegetarian meal per day. The fasting also includes doing no harm to any living thing. Daily prayers are a key component during this time. I believe fasting helps us concentrate on our objective, which is to carry the kavadi successfully at the end of the fasting period. In my case, my family, initially my mother and now my wife, fast along with me."

These weeks of fasting, in which devotees have endured privations, purified and balanced their

Bringing offerings: (far left, top to bottom) A Hindu devotee carries a Mayil kavadi, heavily decorated with flowers and peacock feathers. At its center is a small altar of Lord Murugan. The entire metal contraption, weighing nearly 180 pounds, is borne on the shoulders and attached to the pilgrim's skin by thin chains with hooks; a Malaysian Royal Police officer guards the Golden Chariot, transporting the murti of Lord Vinayagar, as devotees approach in worship. Built specifically for the Vinayagar Chaturthi festival in 2017 at a cost of US\$1.27 million, the Golden Chariot made a special appearance during the 2018 Thaipusam; two pilgrims greet each other during the celebrations. More than one million pilgrims attend the festival each year, most of them returning year after year to honor Lord Murugan. (clockwise from top-left) Children have their heads shaved in a purification ritual undertaken by many prior to their journey; father and son carry paal kavadi as offerings to Lord Murugan. Upon reaching the altar in the main cave, the milk is poured over the murti by the temple priests; a votary waits for his spear to be removed at the end of his sadhana. He is encouraged during the last moments of his journey by his family, who chant around him "Vel Vel Vetrivel," honoring the power of the Vel, the spear which Murugan used to defeat the demon armies; a devotee takes a ritual bath after having his head shaved, prior to his Thaipusam ventures.



ALL PHOTOS: ALEXANDRA RADU

inner selves, have prepared them for their encounter with the Divine. Accompanied by family and friends, kavadi bearers take a *pa-dayatra* (pilgrimage by foot) of several kilometers, to the banks of a nearby river and up the 272 steps to the altar in the main cavern, bearing offerings to Lord Murugan, thus fulfilling personal vows.

Upon arriving at the Batu Caves, the pilgrims hold final preparation rituals on the riverbank. They have their head shaved and take a purifying bath. "We do puja before carrying the kavadi. In this ritual we offer food and fruits, and pray to the kavadi itself before carrying it," explains Puravindra.

Then, guided by their spiritual mentors, votaries often enter a trance, in which Lord Murugan connects with them, lending vigor to help them fulfill their penance. Once the trance is established, vels or hooks are inserted in the skin of the devotee. Finally, the kavadi is fitted and the devotees depart amid the singing of bhajans.

On their way to the shrine inside the main

cave, pilgrims often stop to perform the *kavadi attam*, a dance mimicking the swaying movements of Idumban, who mythically carried the Sivagiri and Sakthigiri hills to South India as his kavadi. The energetic movements of the dance to bhajan rhythms, the bearing of kavadi that can weigh up to 200 pounds, and the wearing of vels and hooks through the skin all reinforce the feeling that the devotees are in a direct connection to Murugan.

On their journey, the votaries are closely followed and guided. "It's not possible to complete this pilgrimage without the support of close family and friends. The very first part is learning from them about the strict rules of fasting prior to the pilgrimage, the dos and don'ts. They participate in the prayers held at home prior to the pilgrimage. Most of my friends and family also observe a vegetarian diet, keeping them feeling pure. To them, my journey is their journey, too. I'm blessed to play a small role in bringing my family and friends closer to Lord Muruga," explains Puravindra.

As devotees reach the cave shrine, their offerings are delivered to Lord Murugan. The ritual milk pots carried by devotees are poured over the Deity. Fruits and flowers are also offered. Each devotee is released from their trance by a temple priest who applies holy ash on the forehead of the votary while chanting mantras.

Emerging from their trance, devotees suddenly realize how exhausted they are from bearing the kavadi. Some devotees actually collapse and are slowly brought to a normal state by loved ones.

While the pilgrimage at Thaipusam impacts the devotees physically and psychologically, for many the effects are long lasting and deeply impactful to the spiritual shaping of their lives. Murali narrates from his life: "I started at age 12, and for the last 32 years I have carried different types of kavadi. I began with the *paal kudam* (milk-pot) kavadi. Then I had a peacock kavadi. Then for years I carried small paal kudams on hooks on my back while wearing nail shoes. Finally,



I decided it was time for Idumban kavadi, as my age is catching up with me, and I would like to continue this practice for the rest of my life. My parents and my family have always been my strongest motivation in carrying kavadi, along with the blessings of Lord Muruga."

Conclusion

Murugan's annual visit to Batu Caves on Thaipusam is a period of high spiritual energy which infuses the temple, caves and surroundings with His grace. People from all social strata undertake the pilgrimage, put themselves in the hands of a greater power and in the process succeed in conquering their ego, anger, lust, greed or hatred. The entire Malaysian Hindu community is brought together in honoring Lord Murugan.

Bearing kavadi for Murugan: (opposite; clockwise from left-most photo) The 140-foot statue of Lord Murugan stands next to the entrance to the Batu Caves temple. A constant flow of pilgrims climb the 272 stairs leading to the entrance during the celebrations; a girl blesses pilgrims with flower petals as she is carried on kavadi; a Hindu priest performs prayers during the event. (above: clockwise from top left) A young man carrying a large Mayil kavadi performs a final dance in the center of the main cave before completing his penance. He is encouraged and watched over by loved ones, who have supported him throughout his ordeal; a devotee glances up the steps towards Murugan's main shrine; a young Hindu devotee walks under colorful lights while carrying his small kavadi; a pilgrim carrying a kavadi dances to bhajan rhythms. Kavadi attam, a dance symbolizing the swaying movements of Idumban as he carried two hills to the South of India, is performed many times during a devotee's pilgrimage.

GURUDEVA'S SPIRITUAL TOOLBOX



Advice to help friends and family get through 21 common challenges of life

DRAWN FROM THE TEACHINGS OF SATGURU SIVAYA SUBRAMUNIYASWAMI

SHUTTERSTOCK

- Burdened down by the past?
- Worried about the future?
- Having trouble meditating?
- Angry all the time?
- No time for spiritual practice?
- Experiencing uncontrollable fear?
- Can't connect with God & the Gods?
- Discouraged by your karma?
- Can't seem to get things done?
- Do you often ask, "Why me?"
- Feeling vulnerable to psychic forces?
- Not well? Wanting to be healthy?
- Wishing you were happier?
- Can't tolerate certain people?
- Reacting all the time?
- In your final days of life?
- In conflict with your spouse?
- Can't control the kids?
- Parents divorcing? Feeling bitter?
- Suffering under money problems?
- Sad that a loved one is dying?

Artist's depiction of a man entering a maze, symbolizing the not-easily-navigated paths that we must traverse. Spiritual keys, such as those in this Insight, can guide us through life's labyrinth. The micro photography on the following pages provide us an example of how something, even a deadly virus, can look entirely different and perhaps beautiful, as our perception and point of reference change. This is true of life's problems.

One of the terms my Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, uses to describe Hindu practices is *tools*. In fact, on the European Innersearch in 2001 he stated, "I have given you all the tools, and it is up to you whether you use them or not." What Gurudeva was stressing is that contained within his core teachings—in his trilogy of *Dancing, Living and Merging with Siva*—we have a complete collection of tools and techniques to help us progress on the spiritual path. These tools were unfolded by Gurudeva over his fifty-two years of ministry, which began in 1949. He emphasized that there is no need for more tools, more techniques—the important thing is to put into use the ones we already have and not fall into a continual search for new tools and techniques. Worry and unhappiness are two examples of everyday situations that can be solved by using one of Gurudeva's tools. We know of individuals who worry more about the future because of rising global terrorism, economic uncertainty and climate change. Gurudeva's remedy for worry is to ask the question, "Am I not all right, right now, right this instant?" And to then answer, "I'm all right, right now." Keep asking and answering until you strongly feel positive, self-assured and secure. For relieving unhappiness, the time-tested tool is to make others happy. When we focus more on helping others, our happiness increases automatically.

There is not one among our readers who has not confronted most, if not all, of these topics, if not personally then through family, friends and associates. The counsel here is direct and simple, and thus lends itself to sharing with others who may be faced with life's challenges. If you know someone who could use wise counsel, and out-of-the-box solutions to challenges, cut and paste the relevant tool and send it along to them with your blessings for a trouble-free life. Who knows, you may help someone get through a difficult passage and then have to endure the good karma of your efforts.

The source of this Educational Insight is Gurudeva's *Toolbox for a Spiritual Life*, created by the monks of Kauai Aadheenam as the 2005 Mahasamadhi souvenir honoring his legacy of teachings. The entire un-edited toolbox can be downloaded here: bit.ly/GurudevaToolbox. Those seeking his complete insights on any of these topics are encouraged to explore the Master Course Trilogy which is online here: bit.ly/MCTrilogy.

SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

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Burdened by the past?

1 We must live in the now to follow the path to enlightenment. In the lower realms of the mind, where time and space seem very real, we are worried about the past or concerned about the future. These two intermingle and limit conscious awareness. Living in the past or the future obstructs us in this way: the past, by reliving old experiences—mainly the negative ones, for they are vividly remembered—clouds our vision of the future. Living in the future overactivates the intellect, the emotion and the desires. The future is little more than another

form of mental fantasy. Past and future are equally unreal and a hindrance to spiritual unfoldment.

A person functioning in the now is in control of his own mind. He is naturally happier, more successful. He is performing every task with his fullest attention, and the rewards are to be seen equally in the quality of his work and the radiance of his face. He cannot be bored with anything he does, however simple or mundane. Everything is interesting, challenging, fulfilling. A person living fully in the now is a content person.

If we look at the past and we look at the future as both a series of dreams, and the only thing that we are concerned with is our immediate reactions and what we carry with us now, we see that the past is there to test us and the future is there to challenge us. We cannot change the past, but we can change how we react to what has happened to us in the past.

Let us not worry about the past ever again. Do not even think about the past. Face everything that comes up in the light of the present, not in the darkness of the past.

❖ Don't dwell on negative past happenings in thought or speech.

Lovingly seek resolution of past misdeeds.

Remember that all that happened to you, even the difficult things, is for a divine purpose and was created by you through the laws of karma.

Write down anything from your past that concerns you and burn the paper.

Worried about the future?

2 Gain the perspective first that it is a wonderful world, that there is nothing wrong in the world at all. Then ask yourself this question: "Am I not all right, right now, right this instant?" And answer, "I'm all right, right now." Declare that. Then a minute later in another now ask again, "Am I all right, right now?" Just keep asking this one question for the rest of your life, and you will always feel positive, self-assured and fine. This attitude eliminates fear, worry and doubt. I started doing this at the age

of seven, and still today I am convinced that I am all right, right now!

By realizing that you are all right this instant, that light of your soul has a chance to shine through the surrounding layers of the mind just a little, enough to calm your future. For your future is made in the present, in the eternal now. The mystic doesn't go into the future and live emotionally experiences that may or may not happen to him. The mystic remains in the present, right now, using the catalog of the experiences of the

❖ Make clear plans for a positive future. Write them down in detail. Review and update them each year.

❖ Train yourself to live in the now, and when the mind drifts into worries about the future, bring it back to the moment.

If the mind starts to worry, say to yourself, "I'm all right, right now." Keep affirming this, and worry will dissipate.

past as a planning book for his future.

Every time you abide in the luxury of worry—and the luxury of worry is one luxury you cannot afford—say to yourself, "I'm all right, right now," and forget about where you are going, forget about where you have been and just be where you are, where your physical body is, in its immediate surroundings. Be free from the past; abide in the present; detach yourself from the future; and live in the eternal now. It is our past that colors and conditions, actually creates, the future. We purge the past in the present, and we fashion the future in the present.

Having trouble meditating?

3 With the spine erect and head balanced at the top of the spine, we are positive, dynamic. Thoughts race through the mind substance, and we are aware of many, many thoughts. Therefore, the next step is to transmute the energies from the intellectual area of the mind so that we move our awareness into an area of the mind which does not think but conceives, looks at the thinking area.

The force of the intellectual area of the mind is controlled and transmuted through the power of a regulated breath. A begin-

ning pranayama is a method of breathing nine counts as we inhale, holding one; nine counts as we exhale, holding one count. This will quickly allow you to become aware of an area of the mind that does not think but is intensely alive, peaceful, blissful, conceives the totality of a concept rather than thinking out the various parts. ...Sushumna, the power of the spine, is felt dynamically, and we are then ready to begin meditation. Meditate on awareness as an individual entity flowing through all areas of the mind, as the free citizen of the

world travels through each country, each city, not attaching himself anywhere.

When we first start trying to meditate, awareness is flowing through many areas of the mind. It's like a little ping-pong ball, bouncing around. We must call upon our willpower and learn to hold awareness at attention, focused upon only one thing. We must realize that meditation is the disciplined art of tuning into the deepest and most subtle spiritual energies. It's not a fad. It's not a novelty. It's not something you do because your next-door neighbor does. It is sacred, the most sacred thing you can do on this planet, and it must be approached with great depth and sincerity.

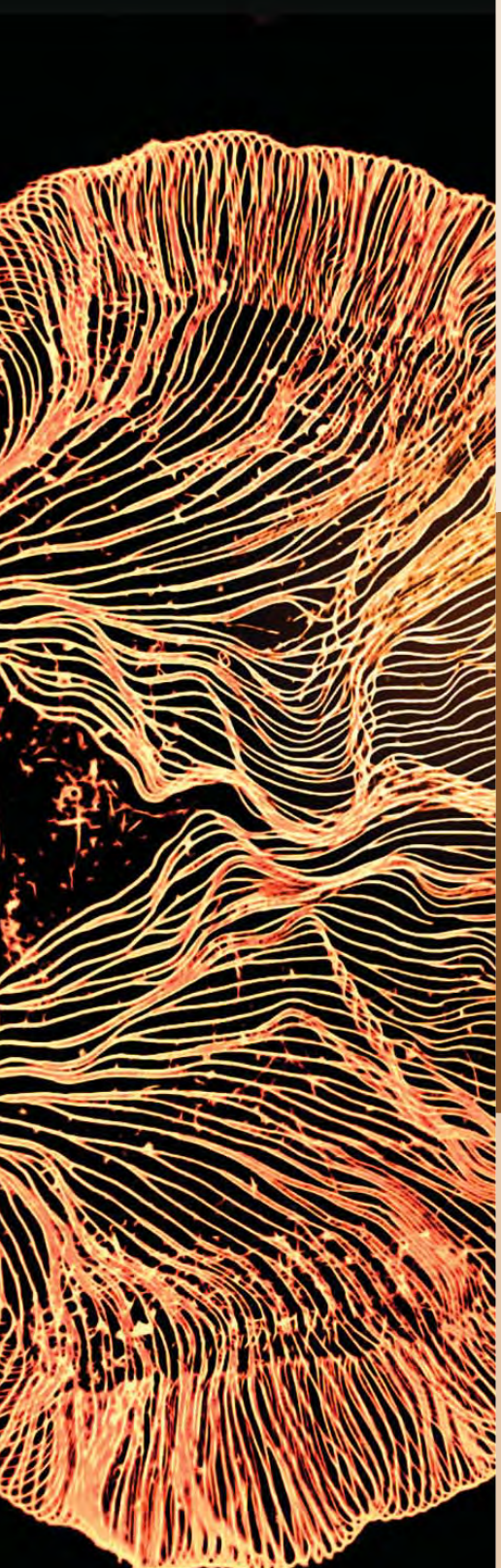
❖ Sit up straight, stand up straight, never slump or hold your head down.

Practice simple pranayama, breath control, to harness the mind's forces.

Eat pure and fresh foods, avoiding processed products.

Bathe before your daily meditation session, which ideally is in the hours before dawn.

Human HeLa epithelial cell



Angry all the time?

4 Anger, I have observed, is the most difficult fault for people to overcome, because it comes in so many different forms: pouting, long silences, shouting, yelling, swearing and more. Those who remain prone to anger should not do raja yoga or any form of intensive mantra, japa, or pranayama amplification of the energies into higher chakras—lest that collective energy plummet into the corresponding lower chakras and be vented through fear, anger and jealousy. My satguru instructed, “Do good to all. God is there within you. Don’t kill. Don’t harbor anger.”

There are eight rungs of anger on the “violence ladder:” 1) sneaky anger; 2) the cold shoulder; 3) blaming and shaming; 4) swearing, screaming and yelling; 5) demands and threats; 6) chasing and holding; 7) partly controlled violence, and 8) blind rage. Some people are just angry all the time because they live in the lower nature, constantly engaged in mental criticism and arguments.

Anger makes a person cunning in his thinking, and of course the predominant underlying quality of anger is fear. He is always afraid of something. It is generally

something that may happen or is going to happen. He is always in conflict with someone. These are the motivating forces of the conscious mind: anger and fear. Most people live in the conscious mind unconsciously.

Anger can eventually be controlled by putting a sum of money—five dollars, for example—in a jar each time one becomes angry and then donating that money to an orphanage. It soon gets too expensive to get angry. However, for devotees who are wealthy, that doesn’t work. For them, I’ve found the penance of fasting for the next meal after they get angry works.

- ❖ Put \$5 in a jar each time you get angry, giving it to a charity when the jar is full.
- ❖ If anger arises, skip the next meal to impress your mind.
- ❖ For 31 days in a row, place a flower in front of a photo of someone who hurt or abused you, forgiving them.

Seek penance from your satguru for deep-seated resentments and sufferings that keep anger alive in your nervous system.

No time for spiritual practice?

5 Often seekers who become associated with Hindu sadhana (spiritual effort) go to extremes and proceed with great vigor in an effort to attain results immediately. Sitting two or three hours a day, they wear themselves out and then stop. Here’s a formula for beginners: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, twenty minutes to a half an hour of sadhana at the same time every day; Saturday and Sunday, no sadhana.

Generally people start meditating and do fairly well in the beginning, for their

great desire to unfold spiritually propels them within themselves. But when the subconscious mind begins to upheave its layers—as it naturally must for the unfoldment process to continue beyond an elementary stage—meditators become afraid to look at the subconscious patterns of their seemingly not-so-perfect past. To avoid facing themselves, they stop meditating, and the subconscious subsides. The once-meditating seeker returns more fully to the conscious mind and becomes distracted again in order to forget “all those terrible

- ❖ Find a time each day that works for you, and faithfully perform your spiritual exercises at that same time. Good daily habits are a powerful force.

Don’t be extreme in your striving. Steady progress is the goal. Expect the process to take years, not months.

Cultivate friends who support your spiritual goals and share satsang with them regularly.

things.” At the time, the remembered past seemed to be terrible because the impressions were strong, magnified by sensitivities awakened through meditation.

For many years thereafter the one-time meditator can be heard to say, “I’d like to meditate, and I do sometimes, but I don’t have time, really, to meditate.” What he is actually saying is, “Most of my time is used up distracting myself so that I won’t have to meditate anymore and won’t have to face my bothersome subconscious. On the path to enlightenment, you have to face everything that has gone into the subconscious, not only in this life, but what has been registered in past lives.

Experiencing uncontrollable fear?

6 What’s the biggest barrier? Fear. Afraid of our secret thoughts, afraid of our secret feelings. What’s the biggest escape from fear? Go to the center, where energy exists, the energy that moves the life through the body. The simplest way is move your spine back and forth. Feel the power that moves that spine back and forth. Feel that energy going out through the physical body. Open your eyes and look at the world again, and you will see it bright and shiny. You’re two-thirds in and one-third out in awareness. You’re balanced. “Be renewed

by a change of your mind.” Be renewed by releasing awareness from one area of the vast universe of the mind, drawing it back into its source and releasing it again, sending it to another of the vast areas of the mind. Through experience we mature out of fear into fearlessness, out of anger into love, out of conflict into peace, out of darkness into light and union in God. Don’t be afraid of experience, and don’t be afraid to go through your karma. Go through it with courage.

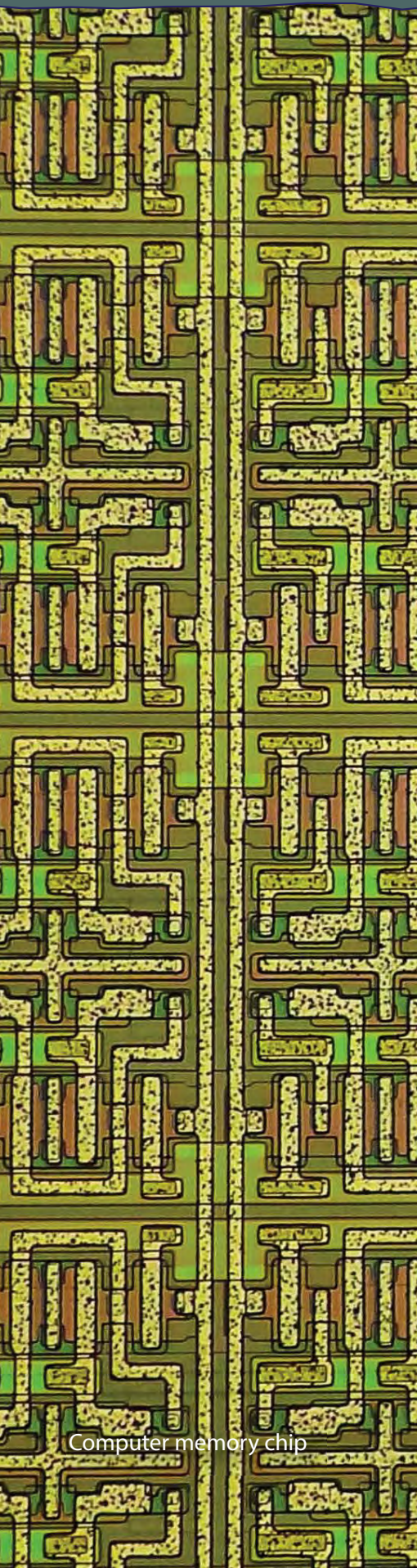
In Saivism we become strong, we be-

come fearless, through our worship of Siva. Members of the Saiva Samayam, the Saivite religion, do not fear death, for they know about rebirth. Members of the Saiva Samayam do not fear an eternal hell; there is no eternal hell. Members of the Saiva Samayam do not fear their ministers, their priests, swamis or gurus. Members of the Saiva Samayam do not fear God. The lack of fear, therefore, makes you strong. Those who fear God anger easily. They fear their elders. They fear their government. They fear impending disaster, and they fear disease. God is just one item on the long list of things that they fear. They are not on the path of spiritual unfoldment. Only when someone begins to love God is he on the path of spiritual unfoldment.

- ❖ Flood your aura with love and light whenever fear is present.
- ❖ Overcome fear of death by convincing yourself you are an immortal soul.
- ❖ Affirm: “I am not my body, mind or emotions. They are but shells of the infinite energy that flows through them all. I am this energy. I am its source.”

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Computer memory chip

Can't connect with God & the Gods?

7 On this Earth plane the Gods have a special home, and that is the holy temple. It is in the sanctified temple, where regular and proper *pūja* is being performed in a pure way, that the Gods most easily manifest. You can go to a Hindu temple with your mind filled up with worries, you can be in a state of jealousy and anger, and leave the temple wondering what you were disturbed about, completely free from the mental burdens and feeling secure. So great are the divine psychiatrists, the Gods of our religion, who live in the Third World, who come from the Third World to this world

where our priests perform the *pūjas* and invoke their presence over the stone image. ... The Deities do come in their subtle bodies of light. They hover in and above the stone image and bless the people. If you are psychic and your third eye is open, you can see the God there and have His personal *darśana*.

In the beginning stages of worship, a Hindu soul may have to wrestle with disbelief in the Gods. He may wonder whether they really exist, especially if his own intuition is obscured by assimilation of Western, existentialist beliefs and attitudes. Yet, he senses their existence, and this sens-

ing brings him back to the temple. He is looking for proof, immersed in the process of coming to know the Gods for himself. He is heartened and assured by hundreds of saints and rishis who have fathomed and found close and enduring relationships with the Gods, and who then extolled their greatness in pages of scripture and chronicle. If you want to get acquainted with the Gods, first get to know Lord Ganesha. Take a picture and look at it. Put a picture of Lord Ganesha in your car or in your kitchen. Get acquainted through sight. Then come to know Him through sound by chanting His names and hymns. ... Religion is the connection between the three worlds, and temple worship is how you can get your personal connection with the inner worlds.

❖ Create a shrine in your home and make simple offerings to God each day.

Practice seeing God's light and energy all around you, shining out from the eyes of everyone you meet.

Discouraged by your karma?

8 The wise never blame God, for they know misfortune to be the return of man's self-created karmas, difficult but necessary experiences for his spiritual evolution. Whenever we are injured or hurt, we understand that our suffering is but the fulfillment of a karma we once initiated, for which our injurer is but the instrument who, when his karma cycles around, will be the injured. If you take responsibility for all that happens to you, then you will have the power to deal with your karma through the grace of Lord Siva. He will give you

the intelligence to deal with it as you worship Him in the Siva temple, contact Him within as the Life of your life and find Him in meditation. ... The sages say, "Bear your karma cheerfully." 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 ignorance created by an inability to face my karma. I came here to spiritually unfold, to accept

❖ Accept all your experiences, good and otherwise, as the result of your own karmas in this and past lives.

Avoid blaming others and instead take responsibility for all that happens to you.

Express gratitude for all that you have in life. Be thankful for the simple blessings that fill each day.

the karmas of this and all my past lives and to deal with them and handle them in a proper and a wonderful way." Then a sense of strength will come up within you, a sense of independence and peace. Mental arguments will stop. Arrogance will vanish.... The best attitude to hold when you first recognize the existence of karma is to realize that, true, it is a joy or a burden, and to stand straight, carrying that joy or that burden well balanced, seeking at all times not to add to it. Carry your karma cheerfully. Then begin the tedious task of unwinding these multitudinous patterns through performing daily sadhana.

Can't seem to get things done?

9 When the subconscious mind becomes overloaded in recording all that goes into it from the conscious mind, we experience frustration, anxiety, nervousness, insecurity and neuroses. These are some of the subconscious ailments that are so widespread in the world today.

There comes a time in man's life when he has to put an end to it all. He sits down. He begins to breathe, to ponder and be aware of only one pleasant thing. As he does this, he becomes

dynamic and his will becomes strong. As his breath becomes more and more regulated, his body becomes quiet and the one great faculty of the soul becomes predominant—observation, the first faculty of the unfoldment of the soul.

Everyone has willpower. It is inherent to the makeup of the physical-astral-mental-emotional body. The center of willpower is the manipura chakra, located at the solar plexus. Unlike other energies, the more willpower we use, the more willpower we have to use. Actually,

by exerting our willpower, we store up new energy within the manipura chakra. This happens when we work a little harder than we think we can, do a little more than we think we can do. By putting forth that extra effort, we build up a great willpower that we will always have with us, even in our next life, the next and the next. Willpower is free for the using, actually.

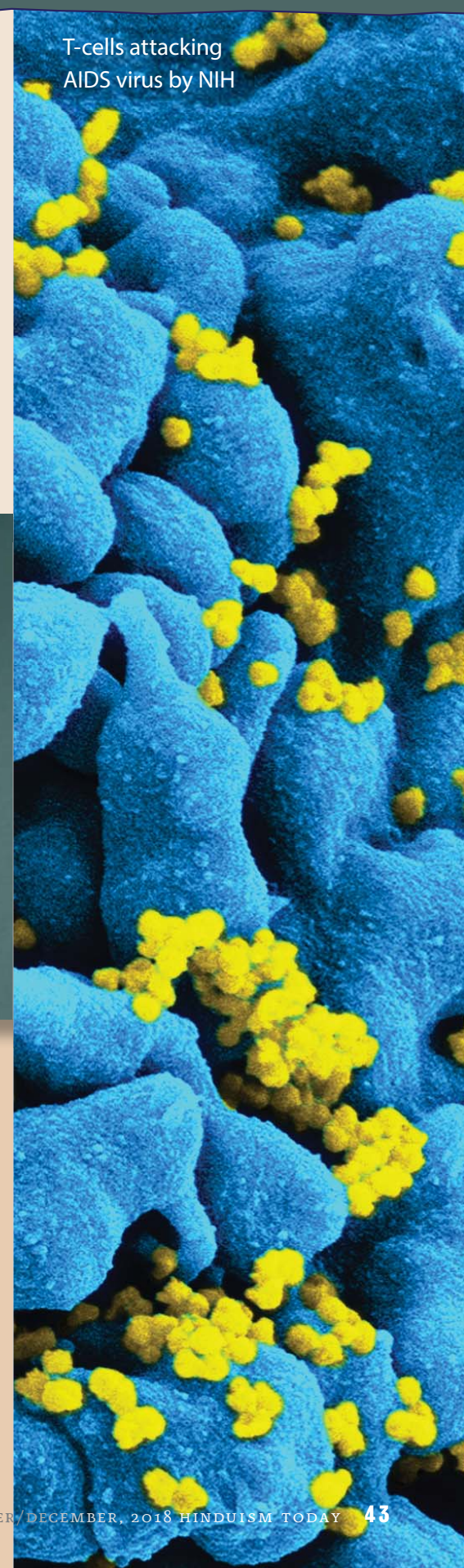
Therefore, the more you use your individual willpower in your religious service, in your business life, your personal life, your home life, your temple life, in fulfilling all the yamas and niyamas, the more willpower you have. It is an accumulative, ever-growing bank account.

❖ Teach yourself to complete each task you begin, no matter how simple.

❖ At the end of each day, just before sleep, close your eyes and go through all the events of the day, one by one.

Do each small task you undertake well, better than expected. Do this regularly for a few months or a few years and you will add to your bank account of confidence and decisiveness.

T-cells attacking AIDS virus by NIH



Do you often ask, “Why me?”

10 Do you often ask: “Why should this happen to me?” “What did I do to deserve this?” The experience was created and born of your own strength. Any lesser experience would have meant little better than nothing to you because no lesson would have been derived from it.... Each experience that we have is a good experience, because it molds us. It shapes us, just like an artist would mold a piece of clay. From an ugly hunk of clay can emerge a divine being, molded by the artist. In that same way, the experiences of life, even those that boomerang back

on us and those we think are terrible, mold us. But they only mold us quickly and benefit us tremendously if we hold our perspective as the inner man, the timeless man, the immortal being. Only in this way can this happen. That’s the attitude, the thoughts we must have, as we go along on the path of enlightenment....

There is a divine purpose even in the existence of suffering in the world. Suffering cannot be totally avoided. It is a natural part of human life and the impetus for much spiritual growth for the soul. Knowing this, the wise accept suffering

from any source, be it hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, famine, wars, disease or inexplicable tragedies. Just as the intense fire of the furnace purifies gold, so does suffering purify the soul to resplendence. So also does suffering offer us the important realization that true happiness and freedom cannot be found in the world, for earthly joy is inextricably bound to sorrow, and worldly freedom to bondage. Having learned this, devotees seek a satguru who teaches them to understand suffering, and brings them into the intentional hardships of sadhana and tapas leading to liberation from the cycles of experience in the realm of duality.

❖ *Trust what the sages say, that every experience has a useful purpose and will enhance your life in the course of time.*

You cannot always control what happens to you, but you can control your reactions.

When bad things happen, turn them around by responding with positive intelligence and creativity.

Work to strengthen your powers of acceptance.

Feeling vulnerable to psychic forces?

11 The auric circle is an energy shell around the aura itself. It acts as a shelter or shield against all forms of psychic influences directed consciously or unconsciously against the individual. Unlike charging the aura with pranic energy through breathing, the auric circle is quickly and easily formed by making a mental image of an egg completely surrounding your aura. The shell should be visualized as a great oval of translucent white light with an opening at the top the size of your head. It is egg-shaped

or oval because it fringes the aura as the shell encases an egg. It should be visualized about three to four feet in depth at the widest point, tapering to about two feet at the head and feet. Once you have built up the protective shell around your aura, then it needs only to be renewed from time to time. You can easily do so by extending both arms out in front of you, waist high. Then press the palms of your hands together and visualize energy flowing from your solar plexus into your hands. Once the flow of prana

❖ *Keep your home and clothing fresh and clean.*

Avoid lower astral places, entertainments and games.

Chant “Aum” softly or silently when you feel vulnerable to astral influences or entities.

Listen to the mystical inner sound, the high-eee, to strengthen your psychic protection.

is established, slowly part your hands while feeling the prana emanating from your fingertips. This prana remains in the outer shell of your aura. Move your arms out to the side and then completely around to the back of your body until the fingers and palms touch again. All the time you are doing this, keep sending the prana out into the shell of your aura from your fingertips. In short, this protective, translucent white shell is a spiritual shield which filters out those influences which would be harmful or upsetting to you. Before beginning your prayers or meditations, you should always strengthen this protective shield.

Not well? Wanting to be healthy?

12 Many wonder about physical pain, how to keep reminded that we are a spiritual being when we have a period of our life going through physical pain, illness and unhappiness. Well, we must remember one basic thing. We are not our physical body, not our emotions, not our minds nor our intellect. We are the beautiful soul that is shrouded by external mind, or covered up by emotions. We live in a physical body, live in an astral body. The real you is living inside, whatever your

physical body is going through, whatever the emotions you are going through or whatever your intellect is dealing with.

Siva’s devotees know wellness is balance. If the imbalance called illness occurs, they apply self-healing, then resort as needed to such arts as ayurveda, acupuncture, chiropractic, allopathy, pranic healing or massage. Siva’s devotees do not indulge in inordinate concerns about food, undue physical worries or extensive personal health studies other than ayurveda. They avoid extreme diets,

except under medical supervision.

According to ayurveda, not eating too much is the greatest thing you can do for health if you want a long life, ease in meditation and a balanced, happy mind. That is why, for thousands of years, yogis, sadhus and meditators have eaten moderately. There is almost nothing, apart from smoking and drugs, that hurts the body more than excessive eating, and excessive eating has to be defined in both the amount of food and the quality of food. If you are regularly eating rich, processed, dead foods, then you are not following mitahara, which is moderateness in appetites.

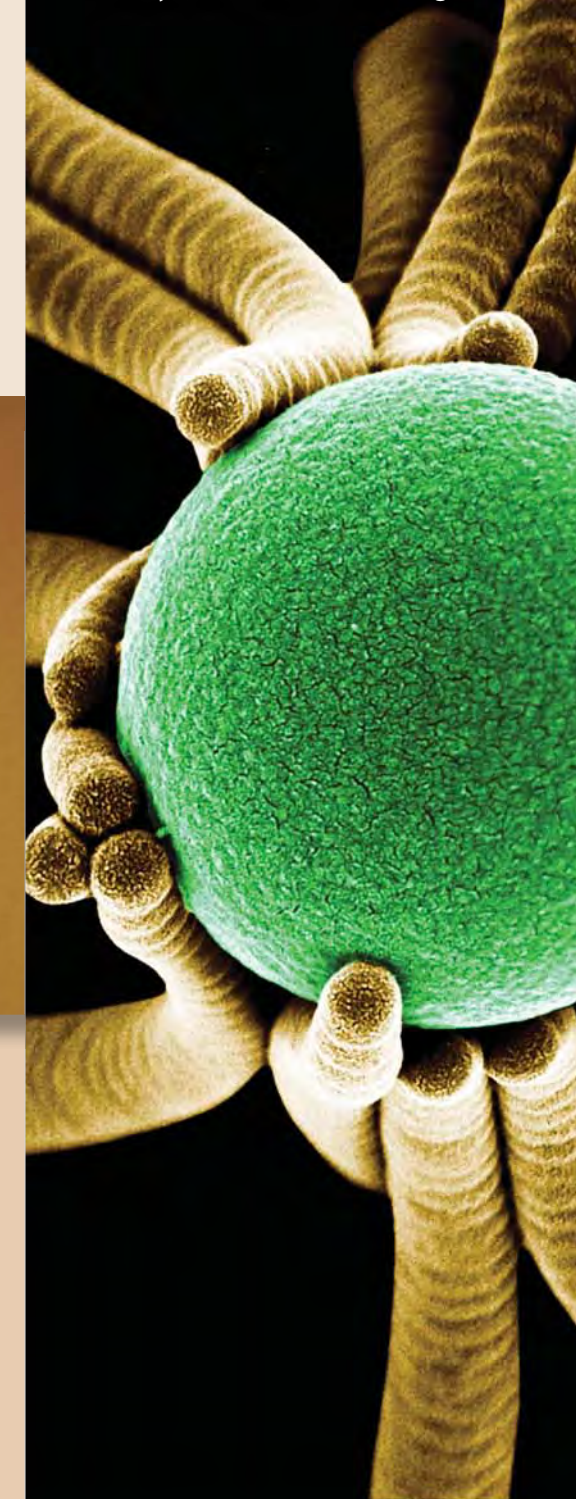
❖ *Don’t dwell on physical ailments overmuch. Most resolve themselves naturally.*

❖ *Follow an ayurvedic diet and lifestyle.*

❖ *Exercise daily, even if it is only short walks in the neighborhood or garden.*

Learn ways of self-healing and apply them promptly, striving to not let illnesses become chronic.

Epoxy fibers (each 1/500 the diameter of a human hair, wrapped on a green sphere. By Sung Hoon Kang, Boaz Pokroy and Joanna Aizenberg



Wishing you were happier?

13 Look in the mirror. You have created your face through your many thoughts that have accumulated through this lifetime. Ask yourself, "Am I happy, or am I looking for others to make me happy?" Allow yourself to be kind; allow yourself to express the qualities, the beautiful qualities, of your soul. Your happiness then will come from within yourself, along with a deep contentment and inner peace and joy. Only a moment of thinking kindly about someone, and making a plan that will enable you to help your fellow man, even just a little bit, will awaken from

your soul that deep, inner satisfaction, that depth of security you are really seeking. On the other hand, if you allow your mind to dwell in the realm of critical thinking, in the realm of gossiping, without the thought of helping others, you will feel insecure, unhappy. Nothing that could happen will bring you an inner satisfaction. You will be constantly desirous of acquiring, and that which you do acquire will not be satisfying to you. Why? Because there will be no love in your heart. If you find yourself in that state of mind, turn the energies around and find the quietness within you through

being kind, being generous, being helpful. The doing brings its own reward. Only in the accomplishment of being big enough to understand the experiences of life that others go through, being tall enough to overlook the many, many things that you could take issue with and perhaps retaliate for, only in acquiring that depth which comes from your soul, can you truly find inner happiness and peace. Go out into the world this week and let your light shine through your kind thoughts, but let each thought manifest itself in a physical deed of doing something for someone else. Lift their burdens just a little bit and, unknowingly perhaps, you may lift something that is burdening your mind.

❖ Express appreciation for others, be specific, tell them why you value them.

Look around you. Find people who need help and help them, even in little ways.

Actively seek the company of friends when you are sad or feel alienated.

Can't tolerate certain people?

14 Things that you cannot face in yourself you will hate when you see them in someone else. To counteract this, your universal love, the platform for Self Realization, must be awakened into the emotions of the instinctive mind and filter out into the conscious mind. So, as you are meditating and the various aspects of your subconscious come up, face them positively, reprogram them beautifully, and they will settle back into simply a memory pattern, resolved and incapable of disturbing you again. If you see something

in someone else you do not like and it is affecting you emotionally, sit down and face it within your own subconscious mind. The sore spot is located there. If you feel someone is doing something that you do not think he should be doing, and this really gets on your nerves, just know that under the right circumstances you may do the same thing, because the tendency to react to it is there in your subconscious. Get into yourself and reprogram that area of your subconscious with good, positive affirmations. Firm up your lifestyle, be more strict

❖ Look at your own faults and work to improve them rather than focusing on the faults of others.

❖ Cultivate patience, accepting people for who they are.

❖ If you see something in someone else you do not like and it is affecting you emotionally, sit down and face it within your own subconscious mind. The sore spot is located there.

with yourself, use your willpower and think positively. Do not allow a weak link in a chain of habit patterns to bar your spiritual unfoldment even for a moment. Sometimes we detect the weak link in our own chain by looking into the lives of other people. For the meditating person, there should not be a single human being whose actions, habits, opinions or conduct lies beyond your ability to love and understand. ...With understanding, a great thing happens—your life becomes even, balanced and sublime. The ups and downs within yourself level out, and you find yourself the same in every circumstance, find yourself big enough to overcome and small enough to understand.

Reacting all the time?

15 Many people live in a constant state of overlapping reactions. They try to find peace of mind on the outside, externally. Reactions are caused by what we have placed in the subconscious mind that we have not fully understood. Reactions are packed away in the subconscious mind, influencing our everyday life, attracting our successes and failures to us. If you do not understand your reaction to something, wait until it subsides emotionally, so you will not be upset, then try to understand it by writing about it in

a quiet moment. Then burn the paper in an inauspicious fire, such as in a garbage can. This vasana daha tantric process releases or detaches the emotion from the memory. This means that the memory of the experience no longer harbors the emotion that was previously attached to it and vibrating twenty-four hours a day. You will still have the memory, but without a reaction or emotional charge attached to it. Sit down and think. Look at your life. Look at the tendencies within your nature which created your habit patterns and which formed your

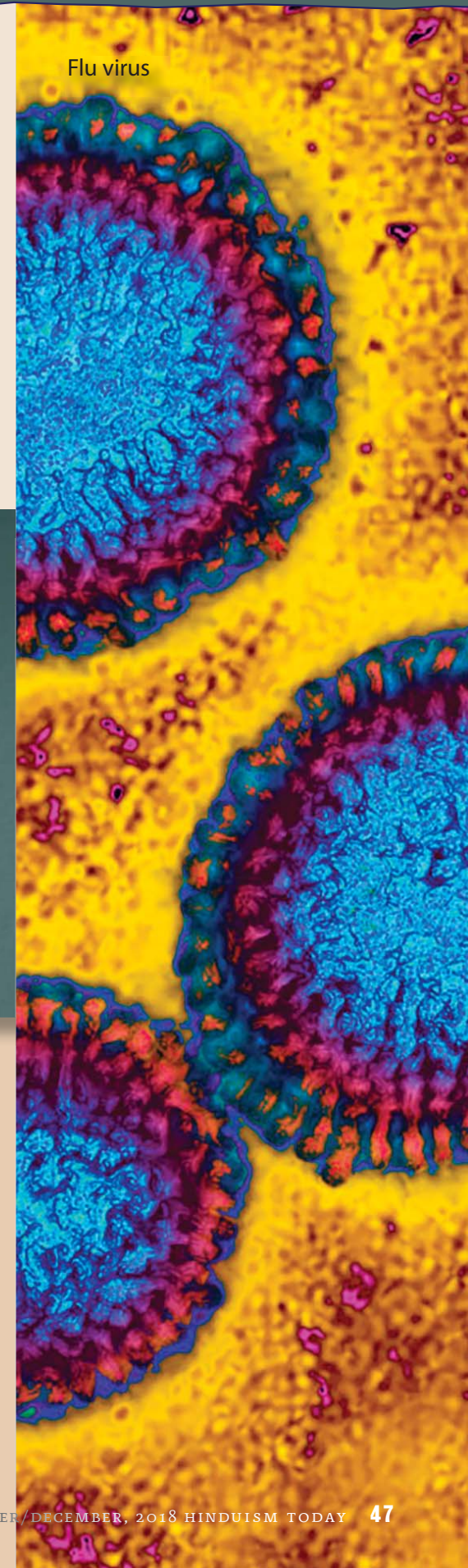
subconscious mind and gave it the foundation for many more of the same old situations. The tendencies will be greater in each succeeding situation unless you apply the brakes of understanding. If you sit down and realize the law of cause and effect and live according to the basic laws of life, you will overcome the reactions within you. You will be able to overcome old reactions by understanding them. Discriminate as to each move you make, each word you say, and decide whether there will be a reaction. If you can see ahead that you will not react, proceed. Dictate to yourself, face yourself, face your mistakes and don't make them again.

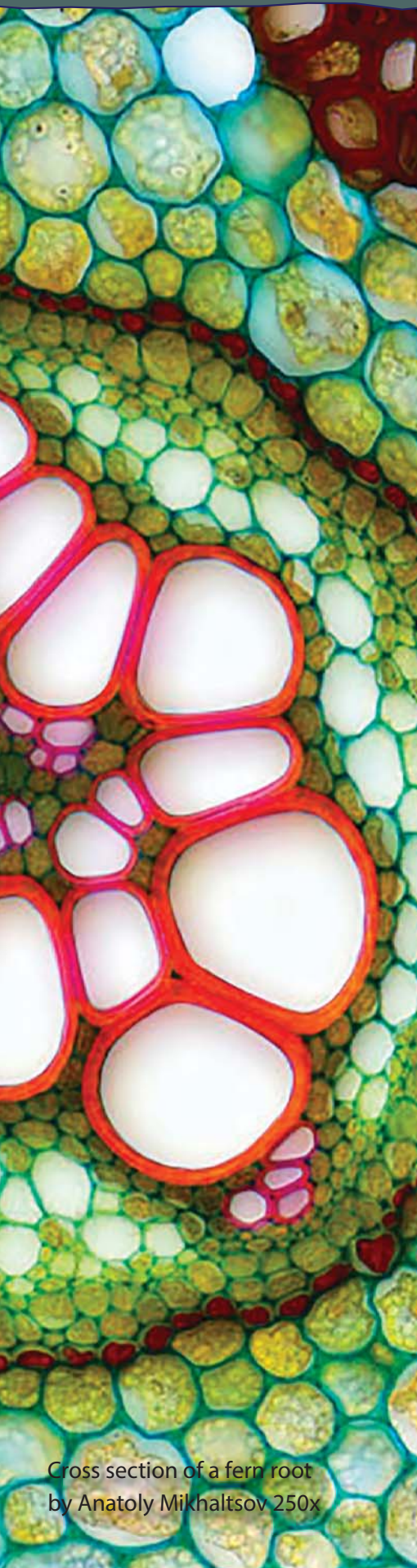
❖ Take a moment to reflect on the negative impact of reactions in your life and resolve to minimize them.

Watch the mind think. In this way you will be detached enough to control your reactions.

❖ When reactions do come, control the breath, for awareness rides on the breath.

Flu virus





Cross section of a fern root
by Anatoly Mikhaltsov 250x

In your final days of life?

16 Death, like birth, has been repeated so many times that it is no mystery to the soul. The only problem comes with conflicting beliefs, which produce fear and anxiety about death. This temporary ignorance soon subsides when the failing forces of the physical body reach a certain level. At this point, the superconscious intelligence, the soul itself, is there. We can compare this to restless sleep and deep sleep.

When one knows he is going to depart the physical body, he should first let everybody know that he knows and give

relatives security by explaining to them that soon they won't be seeing him in a physical body anymore.... After everything is settled, all personal possessions disposed of, then he begins meditation and awaits the fruitful hour, trying to exit through the highest chakra of the attainment of this life. Each chakra is a door through which we can depart. The dying should always remember that the place where one will reincarnate is the place that he is thinking about prior to death. So, choose your desires wisely. The last thoughts just before death are the

most powerful thoughts in creating the next life. One must also realize that if he and others are aware that he will soon depart, others in the inner worlds also realize he will soon be making his transition and are busy making adjustments and preparations for his arrival.

In preparation for death, one can soften the karmas of future births by making amends with others, settling scores, doing everything to tie up loose ends, seeking the forgiveness of those harmed, to get the mental-emotional matters of this life all worked out.

❖ Tell loved ones you will soon be passing on; make amends and seek forgiveness.

Be the executor of your own will; divest yourself of all belongings, wealth and property.

If in a hospital, return home to make your transition in a peaceful place among loved ones.

Meditate, perform japa and sing religious songs.

In conflict with your spouse?

17 Within each family, the man is predominantly in the pingala force. The woman is predominantly in the ida force. Should the woman become aggressively intellectual and the man become passively physical, then forces in the home are disturbed. The two bicker and argue. Couples never get married with the intent of breaking up. Never. The pranic forces do it. You put two magnets together one way and they attract one another. Turn one around, and they repel each other. The same force

that brought the people together, when it is not handled right, makes them pull apart and hate each other. They can't see eye to eye. Then to make up, they go out to dinner to talk it over—in another frustrating, asuric situation, as far out in the world as they can get—to try to make up. When that doesn't help, they come home still frustrated. If they went to the nearby temple and worshiped the family Deity together, that would help. They would return home in a different state of mind and discover that their vibration had

❖ Allow your spouse to experience life's natural ups and downs without criticizing him or her.

❖ When disharmony occurs, settle the matter before going to sleep.

❖ Go to the temple, ideally together, so the Deity's grace may calm your nerve systems and awaken understanding.

changed. Why does it help to go to the temple? Because the God is in the temple, the Deity is there to adjust the forces of the inner nerve system, to actually change the forces of mind and emotion.

If a disharmonious situation comes up between husband and wife, they must resolve it before they go to bed, even if they must stay up all night into the light of day. Sleep puts the problem to rest over a period of two or three nights, and it will eventually fade into the memory patterns of forgetfulness over a longer period of time. Having sex does not solve the problem.... Sex and sleep are not solutions to marital disputes.

Can't control the kids?

18 There is an old saying: "If you can't beat them, join them," and this is wise in certain respects. We are thinking of the young adults who will not follow the traditional family patterns of their well-raised Hindu parents. Admittedly, they can be made to fear their parents and be forced to obey for a time. The problem with such an approach is that it usually ends up with the sons or daughters losing respect for them and leaving home as soon as they are able. Often parents take the authoritarian

approach, not realizing there are alternatives, well-proven techniques of a more positive discipline. In actual practice, it is more useful to work with children little by little as they grow and mature.

My advice to parents has always been to stay close to their children, but at the same time give them some space to grow and mature in today's world. Today's world is not all that bad. But children must be taught how to live in it—what to be wary of, whom to trust, whom to befriend and marry, how to proceed in

business, social life, education, career upscaling, religious life and on into the raising of their own family. So, keep the communication lines open.

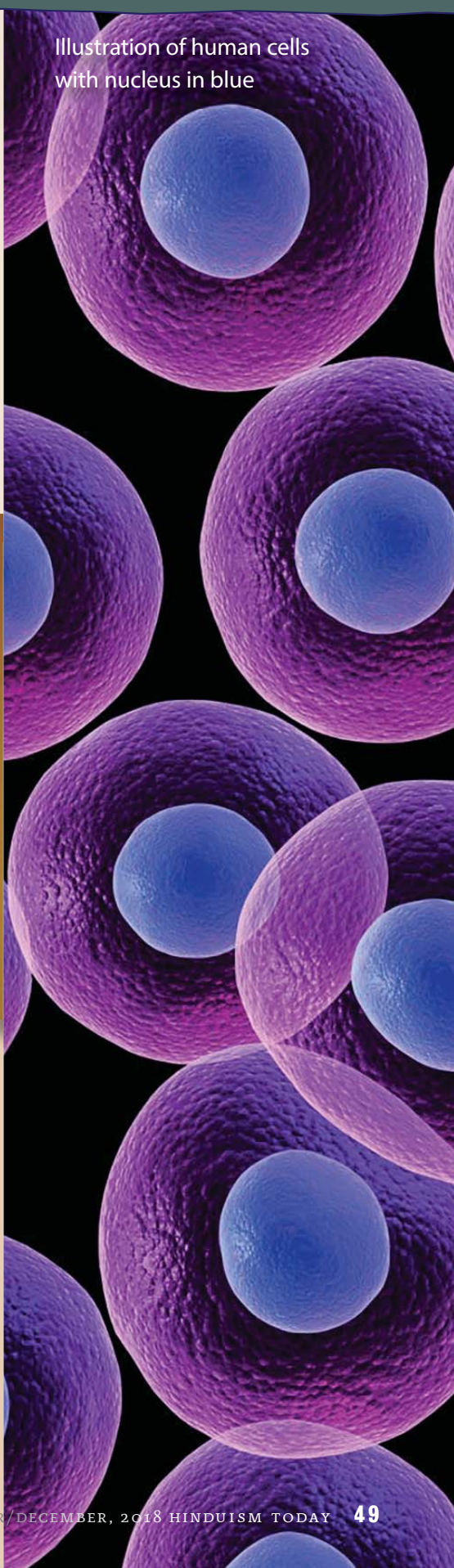
True, today's world has its challenges, its temptations and definite drawbacks, but it is today's world and the world of tomorrow. We can't ignore that fact. So, be wise and pass your deeply profound Hindu culture and wisdom along to the children so they can make proper decisions for themselves. This is what they will do anyway, make their own decisions, so they might as well be trained early on how to do it right. Who better to teach them this than their own parents?

❖ Accept that they were born to fulfill their karmas, not yours, and be OK with their choices, even when they differ from your own.

❖ Never govern youth through fear. Never spank, threaten, or hit them, nor use harsh words, neglect or abuse them.

❖ Be firm but kind. Children respond well to correction, discipline, talking and being treated like the intelligent beings that they are.

Illustration of human cells
with nucleus in blue



Parents divorcing? Feeling bitter?

19 It's not easy experiencing the separation and divorce of one's mom and dad, at any age—six, sixteen or thirty-one. There is a feeling of emptiness; something is lost, never to be regained. The feelings and thoughts of blame grow, they do not diminish, as the years go by. But look at it this way. Any marriage, yours maybe, needs a loving, strong support group that wants to help the young couple, or the older couple, work out their problems rather than avoid them through separation and finally divorce.... Don't blame your mother and father. If

blame is to be cast, blame all those people that surrounded your family who were not alert enough, good souls that they may be, to help diffuse the tension between your parents. Obviously, the support group has failed their marriage. You must admit that failure, lest it drag you down to its own depth. Be part of the solution. Don't perpetuate the problem. Don't make them feel guilty. For your own peace of mind, transfer the blame, the hurt feelings, the pain and resentment over to the relatives, the community and national value system. Become an agent of goodwill. Have kind

words to say about dad to mom and kind words to say about mom to dad. Resist the impulse to criticize one to the other and cause an even greater separation within the family. They are not to blame. Society is. If you take sides, you are creating bad karma, kukarma, for yourself, to be faced later. So treat each one the same. Don't make deals, don't deceive them or keep secrets from them, lest you psychically alienate yourself from the home. Maybe, just maybe, you can help them to understand and reconcile their differences if you follow this advice. You, their child, may be their very best hope.

❖ *Love your mother and your father. Keep them as one in your mind. Don't separate them in your mind. Don't take sides.*

Know that you, their child, are potentially the most effective marriage counselor and the family's binding force.

Rise above the accepted standards of the nonculture of today, which advise divorce to solve marital problems.

Suffering under money problems?

20 I was asked, "Is borrowing money to finance one's business in accord with the yama of non-stealing?" There are several kinds of debt that are disallowed by this yama. One is spending beyond your means and accumulating bills you can't pay. We are reminded of *Tirukural* verse 478, which says that the way to avoid poverty is to spend within your means: "A small income is no cause for failure, provided expenditures do not exceed it." Entering into debt is a modern convenience and a modern temptation. But

this convenience must be honored within the time allotted. If you need some material possession, and if it will do only good for yourself, your family and your friends, use the power of affirmation and see how quickly your need is manifested through one external channel or another.... Then practice this affirmation: "I will always have sufficient money to meet all my needs." Repeat it once. Now stop affirming. Remain quiet, know, visualize and then feel how it is to be open to a sufficient flow of money to meet your every need. Get that feeling! It

❖ *Treat all your money as God's money and be a wise steward of it. In doing this, you acknowledge that everything, all of life's bounty and abundance, comes from God.*

Find ways to be frugal. Spending less is easier than earning more.

Live by the adage, "Waste not, want not."

is a secure feeling, not a flamboyant, reckless feeling, not a feeling that now you can go out and have a good time. No, this is a quiet, secure feeling, born of being in a judicious state of mind. ... Now resolve to hold yourself open to ways and means by which you will have money to meet your every need for yourself and for your family. Be open to ways in which you can better budget the money you now have. Today you will begin handling the funds you have more judiciously, and soon you will begin attracting abundance from unexpected creative sources. Be open to new ideas, new people, new opportunities, expectant and ready to handle the wealth you have proclaimed as yours.

Sad that a loved one is dying?

21 If a person knows he is terminally ill, that knowledge is a blessing, for he can prepare. He should not hesitate to tell his relatives he is going to die, and that is a wonderful blessing for them, as they can prepare for his great departure. Now all know he has finally arrived at the end of his prarabdha karmas and is going to fly. In turn, family and friends should release him, be happy—he is going to be happy with no physical body—for they know they will be as close to him in his astral and

soul body as they were in his physical body. They will visit him every night when they sleep, in the inner worlds, and learn many things from him as to how to prepare for their own great departure, be it sudden or prolonged. Don't cry; you will make him unhappy. You should be happy for him, because he is going to be happy. It is not a sad occasion. For Hindus, death is a most exalted state, an incredible moment that you spend your whole life preparing for. Birth is the unhappy occasion. Death should

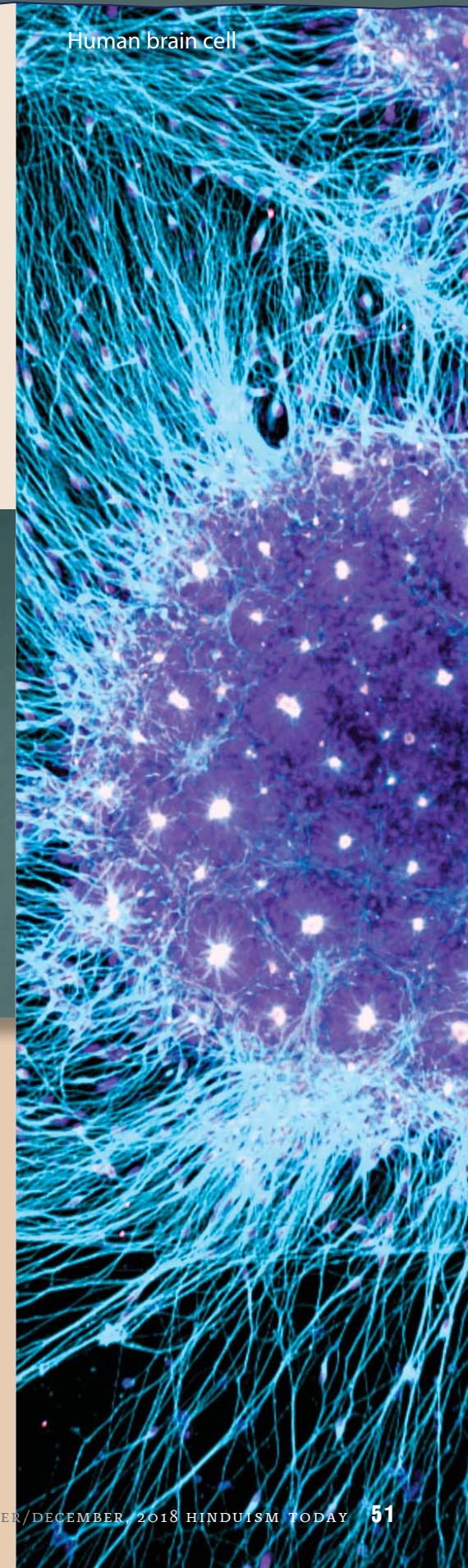
be a big party. ... The sadness at death comes from Western attitudes. Western thought has to be reversed. Here a child comes into birth. It is sad, because he was all right before he was born. Now his prarabdha karmas are going to start to explode. He has to deal with his past, which he did not have to deal with in the Devaloka. He has a chance to make new karmas. The time of birth is the grave time. When he dies, that means that section of the jyotisha is finished and he can go and have a great rest and be with intelligent people. It is great inside there and difficult out here.

❖ *Be open and prepared to talk and make amends, forgive old tensions and conflicts, tie up loose ends, thus helping the person feel complete and free to release this world joyfully.*

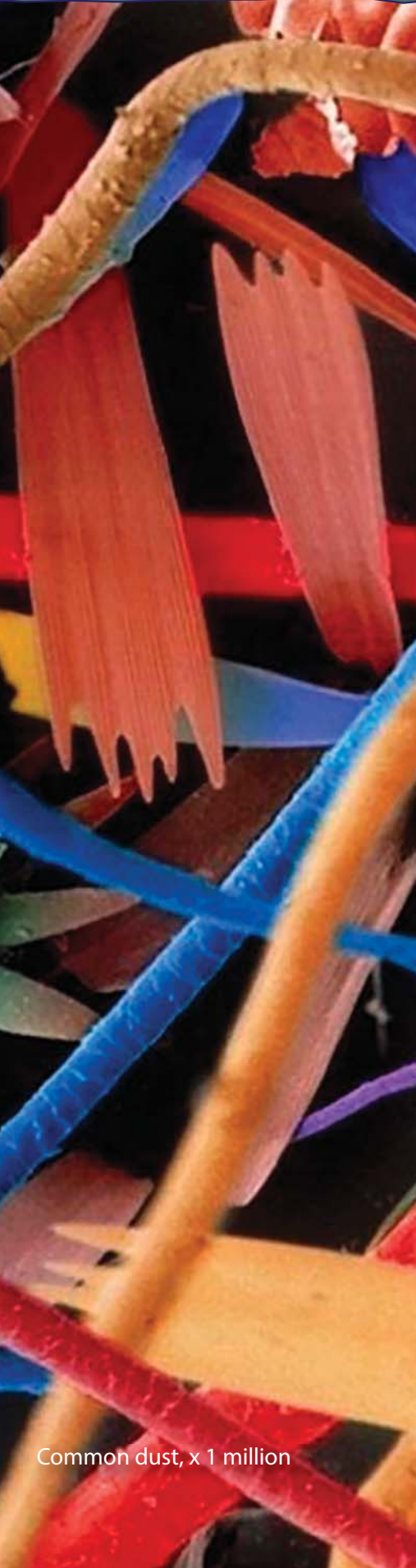
❖ *Spend time with the dying person, singing religious songs and reading from scripture. Be a loving witness to their passage.*

❖ *When someone dies, take an attitude of joy based on your knowledge of the law of karma and samsara.*

Human brain cell



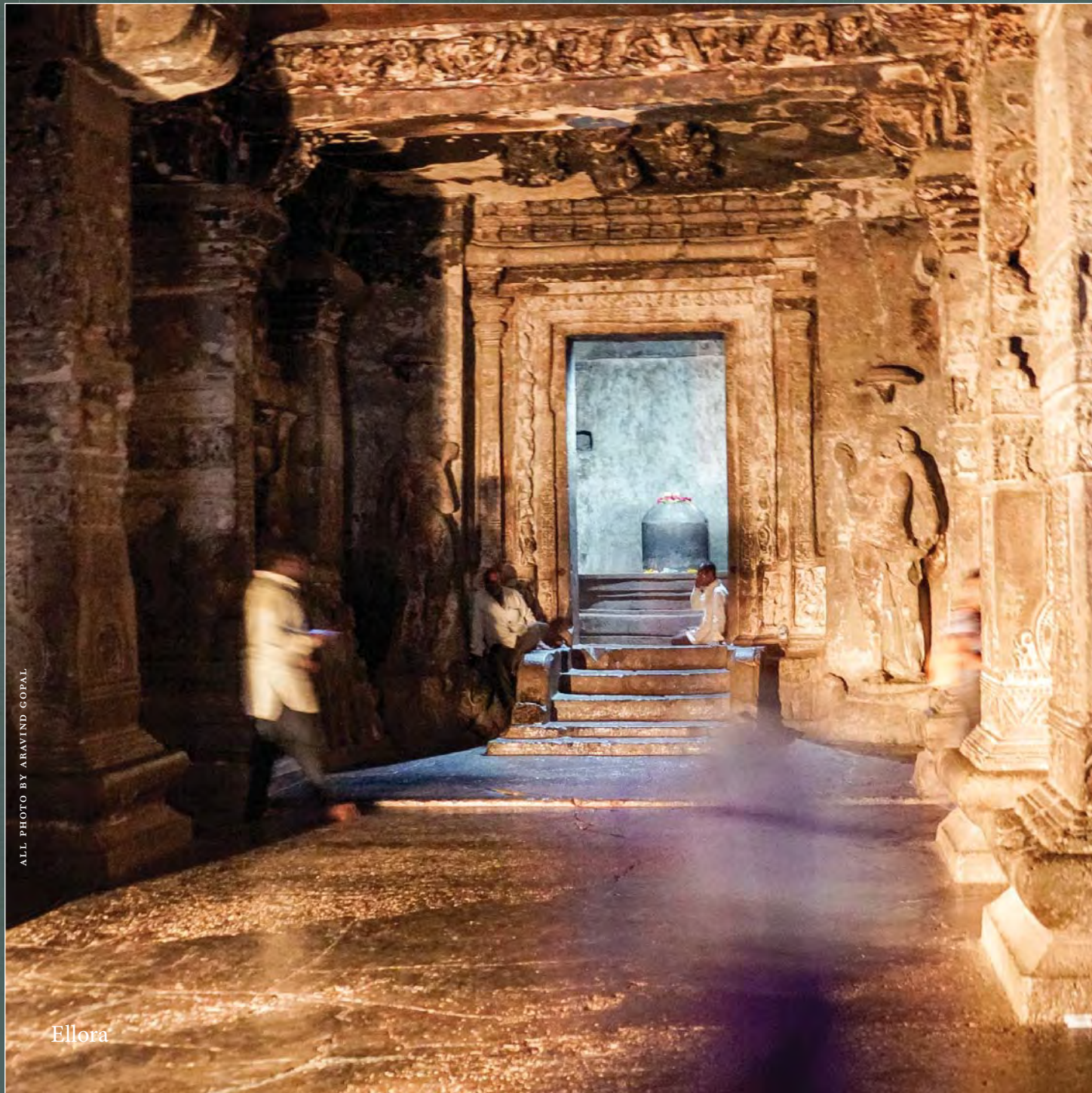
Common dust, x 1 million



My Trek to Siva's Magical Abodes

Join the author on a tour of ancient Siva temples, from the magnificent shrines of Andhra to the amazing rock caves of Ellora

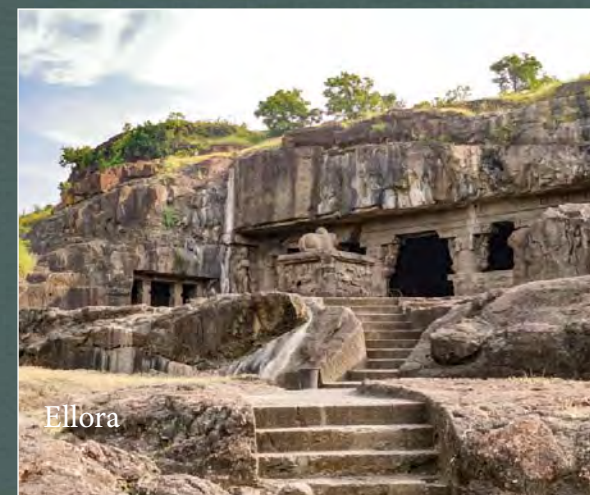
BY ARAVIND GOPAL, KERALA, INDIA



Ellora



Ellora



Ellora

THE QUEST FOR THE GLORIOUS PAST OF INDIAN HERITAGE inspired me to pilgrimage from southern Kerala to some of the most ancient temples on the Indian subcontinent. These are amazing architectural edifices, almost all dedicated to Lord Siva, built in the early centuries of the current era. Wishing to go north, I skipped Tamil Nadu, where grand temples are so numerous that it would require a separate trip. That state is home to four of the 36 UNESCO heritage sites in India, and three of these are ancient Siva temples of unique architecture and craftsmanship, developed during the famous dynasties, such as Chola and Pandya. With the time available, I chose a pilgrimage to visit some of Siva's homes en route to Varanasi. I traveled along the eastern coast of India to eastern Uttar Pradesh in the lap of the Himalayas, then west to the Indian Ocean and south back home to Kerala. The journey gave me a sense that most of the rulers of the princely kingdoms and the empires and their subjects were devotees of Lord Siva. The craftsmanship, dedication and fortitude required to build these huge temples with such immensity and excellence is astounding. Moreover, each temple has unique features excelling one over the other.

Many are recognized as monuments of national importance, protected by the Indian government through the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). ASI officials told HINDUISM TODAY that architectural wonders still exist unscathed in thousands of temples across the country. Alongside them are often sculptures and structures that were damaged or completely destroyed by invaders. With just seventy years since independence, restoration work has only started. Preserving and protecting these sites requires huge sums of money. "Funds crunch is a major problem affecting the conservation and renovation works at several sites," I was told.

We can only present here a small fraction of what was captured by my camera and notes. But hopefully this article will inspire you with a new sense of the re-awakening of Hindu India to help build a platform for its preservation and a living continuity for Hindus of the future.

All photos here and many more were captured through Aravind Gopal's camera. See the digital edition of this magazine, which includes a slideshow of all his images.



I. Lepakshi, 2. Yaganti

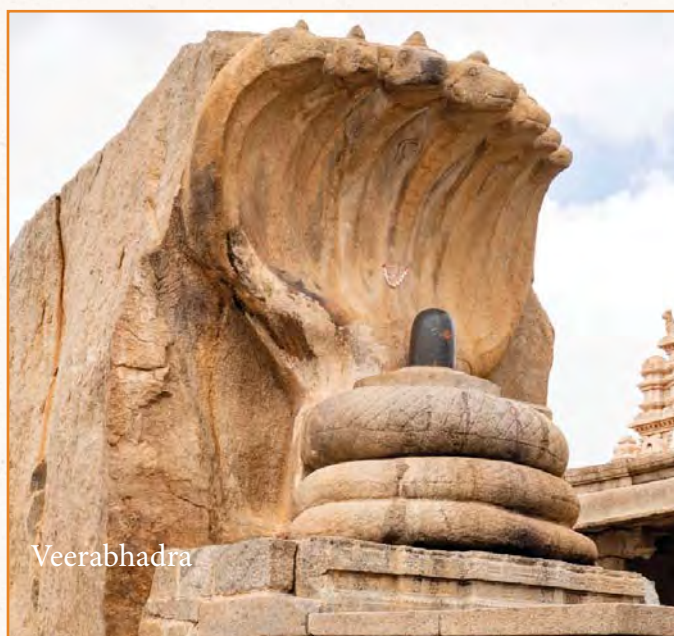
THE MAJESTIC 16TH-CENTURY VEERABHADRA SWAMY TEMPLE in the remote village of Lepakshi, in the Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh, heralds the commitment to religion, architecture and art of its builder, the Vijayanagara emperor Achyuta Deva Raya. The village's rare pieces of craftsmanship include a great Nandi (mount of Lord Shiva) near the village entrance, carved from a single piece of granite and almost 15 feet tall; a thrice-coiled, seven-hooded serpent forming a sheltering canopy over a black granite Sivalinga known as Nagalinga, and a hanging pillar inside the temple.

The whole stone temple is built over a rock. A real wonder in the mukha mandapam is the hanging pillar. I watched as our guide, Mr Reghukumar, whipped out a sheet of newspaper and passed it slowly under the large granite pillar from one end to the other. To the amazement of all, the paper emerged smoothly from the other side, demonstrating that the pillar is hanging, not resting on the floor!

North of Lepakshi, in a narrow valley between two hills, stands imposingly the Uma Maheswara Temple of Yaganti. Here the Sivalingam has both Uma and Maheswara carved into it. Legend has it that Lord Shiva gifted this unique Sivalingam to the devotees at the request of Sage Agastya. And thus arose the Uma Maheswara temple, which was constructed/renovated in the 15th century by King Harihara Bukka Raya of the Sangama Dynasty of the Vijayanagara Empire.

The Nandi in this temple has an amazing property in that it grows about 1 inch in 20 years. Mr Raghavendra Sharma, a priest, told HINDUISM TODAY this fact has been verified and acknowledged by the Archaeological Survey of India.

Massive devotion: (above) a huge Nandi, whose eyes are forever fixed on the Nagalinga (below); (next page, top left) The famed Uma Maheswara Temple (our cover shot), nestled between hills; (bottom left) a Nandi said to be growing; (right) the hanging pillar at Lepakshi



The Primary Temples Visited

The numbers below correspond with the numbers in the text headlines and the numbers on the map of India.

Andhra Pradesh: 1. Veerabhadra Swamy Temple, Lepakshi; 2. Sri Uma Maheswara Temple, Yaganti; 3. Mahanandiswara Swamy Temple, Mahanandi; 4. Mallikarjuna Jyotirlinga Temple, Srisailem

Telangana: 5. Chaya Someswara Swamy Temple, Panagal; 6. Thousand Pillar Temple (Rudreshwara Swamy Temple), Hanamankonda; 7. Ramappa (Ramalingeswara Swamy) Temple, Palampet

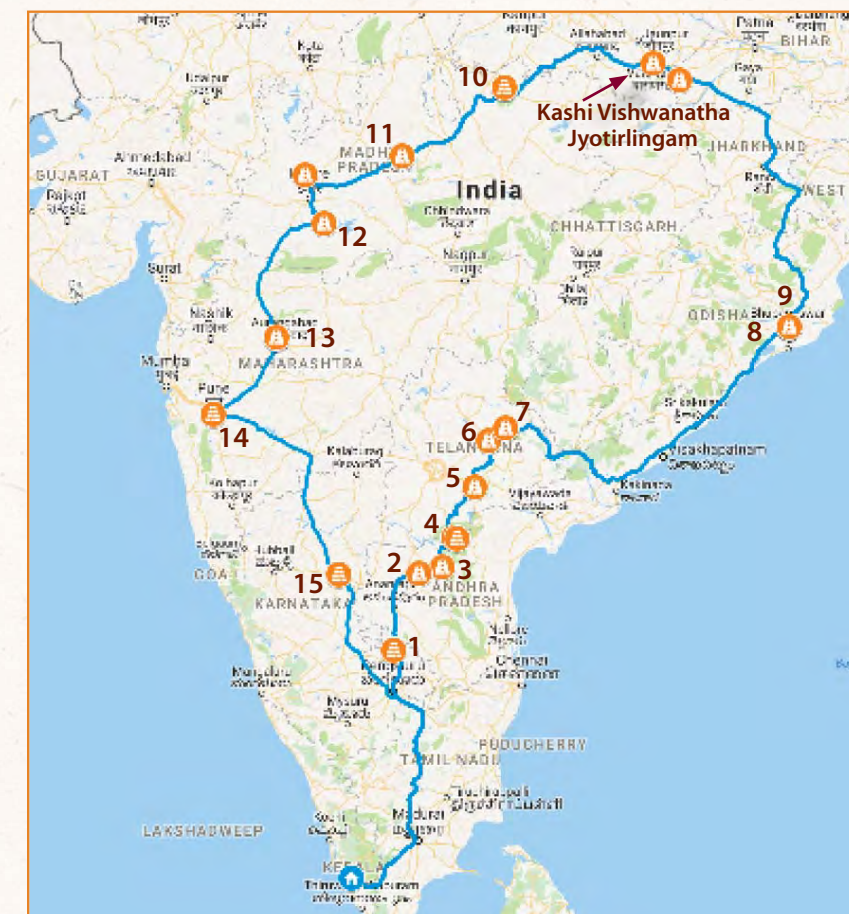
Odisha: 8. Lingaraj Temple, Ekamra Kshetra (Bhubaneswar); 9. Parasurameshwara Temple, Bhubaneswar

Uttar Pradesh: Kashi Vishwanath Jyotirlinga Temple, Varanasi

Madhya Pradesh: 10. Khandariya Mahadeva Temple, Khajuraho; 11. Udayagiri Caves, Vidisha; 12. Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga Temple

Maharashtra: 13. Ellora Caves, Ellora; Grishneshwar Jyotirlinga Temple, Ellora; 14. Pataleswar Temple, Pune

Karnataka: 15. Sri Virupaksha Temple, Hampi





Mahanandi



3. Mahanandi, 4. Srisailam, 5. Chaya Someswara

ABOUT 40 MILES EAST OF YAGANTI IS THE MAHANANDISWARA Swamy Temple, believed to be at least 1,500 years old. Of the nine shrines dedicated to Nandi in the Nandyal area—all within a ten-mile radius of Mahanandi village—the Mahanandiswara Swamy Temple is the most famous.

Uniquely, a stream of water emanates from beneath the Swayambhu Sivalingam in the sanctum sanctorum. According to priest Mr. Manikanta Sharma, this water is crystal clear, has healing qualities, and flows constantly all year round. Devotees are allowed to touch the water and may even touch the Sivalingam, unlike in most South Indian temples. The water flows into a holy tank and irrigates 2,000 acres of fertile land surrounding the village, where paddy, fruits and vegetables are cultivated.

We next proceed to Srisailam, high in the Nallamala Hills, to visit one of the 12 Jyotirlinga temples, the famed Mallikarjuna Jyotirlinga or Sri Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple. Mallikarjuna means pure, pious or white (Arjuna) like jasmine (mallika). There are

sacred ghats on the river Krishna just east of the temple.

Srisailam, the most famous Siva temple in Andhra Pradesh, is associated with many saints, including Adisankara, Siddha Nagarjuna, Allama Prabhu, and Sivasarani Akka Mahadevi. It is believed that Adisankara composed the famous “Shivananda Lahari” hymn here. The legends of the temple extend from epics to puranas; historical references date back to the inscriptions of the Satavahana dynasty (100bce–200ce). No photos are allowed inside this temple.

On to Telangana state! The Chaya Someswara Temple in Panagal was built by Udiaya Aditya Chola Maharaj during the Kanduru Chola rule in the 11th century. This tri-sanctorum temple occupies a one-acre compound. Mysteriously, it has a central pillared hall and three sanctum sanctorums on the east, west and north of the hall. The main shrine of Lord Siva on the west, facing east, contains a constant shadow in the form of a single pillar from dawn to dusk. The Sivalinga is never visible in natural light. Hence the name. *Chaya* means shadow and *Someswar* is Lord of Moon (Siva).

Srisailam



Unique blessings: (clockwise from top) Mahanandiswara Swamy Temple; pillars of Chaya Someswar Temple; three vimanams of Chaya Someswar; entryway to the Mallikarjuna Jyotirlinga Temple in Srisailam—a place of worship from prehistoric times, renovated by Reddi kings in 1398ce; an exterior shot of Srisailam

Srisailam



Chaya Someshwara



Chaya Someshwara





Lingaraj

6. Rudreshwara, 7. Ramappa, 8. Lingaraj

RUDRESHWARA SWAMY TEMPLE, WITH ITS 1,000 PILLARS, WAS built in 850ce by Prataparudra I of the Kakatiya Dynasty. This stunning example of Chalukya and Kakatiya art is an active temple, under ASI control and renovation, with pujas held every day. Priests are appointed by the Telangana government's Endowments Department.

Our last stop in Telangana is the Ramalingeswara Swamy, or Ramappa temple, at Palampet built in 1213ce by Recherla Rudra, a general of Kakatiya king Ganapati Deva. The temple has a marvelously carved and decorated black marble Sivalinga. The main structure of the temple, like the wall surrounding the compound, is reddish sandstone. The wall of the shrine and certain sculptures are black basalt. The mesmerizing carvings are "masterpieces of Kakatiya

art, detailed carving, sensuous postures and elongated bodies and heads," says Mr. Pradeepkumar, a journalist. Considered the brightest star in the network of medieval temples in the Deccan region, Ramappa was completed in about 40 years. A trustee of Kakatiya Heritage Trust (KHT) said he is confident that "Ramappa temple will be given the World Heritage status, as it fulfills a majority of the parameters set by UNESCO."

The next leg of our journey, north to Odisha, crosses almost 600 miles of vivid geography, including plateaus, the eastern ghats, Chilka lake and many rivers. Finally, we arrive at the holy seashore city of Ekamra Kshetra (Bhubaneswar), the ancient capital of the Kalinga kingdom, referenced in the great epic *Mahabharata*. The current city of Bhubaneswar consists of the newly planned township on the



Ramappa



Ramappa

Wondrous architecture: (clockwise) Lingaraj Temple, with its magnificent 180-foot-tall shikhara; at the Ramappa Temple, black basalt carvings inset in red sandstone; the 1,000 pillars of Rudreshwara, under renovation by ASI; incredibly ornate pillars of Ramappa Temple; pilgrims find peace and go within at Ramappa

northern side and the ancient temple town on the southern side.

Here we find the mighty Lingaraj Temple, originally known as Lord Tribhuvaneshwar, meaning Lord of the three worlds (Bhuloka, Antarloka and Sivaloka). Situated on about five acres of land guarded by high laterite walls, the temple is built of sandstone and laterite and has a huge curvilinear tower, or shikhara, about 180 feet tall. The height of the grand, beautifully carved tower is accentuated by deeply incised vertical lines. The entire temple is an example and benchmark of fully evolved Kalinga architecture.

Entry to the temple (restricted to Hindus) is through a majestic main gate in the eastern wall. Photography is not allowed inside. Upon reaching the huge sanctum sanctorum, we see that the visible portion of the Swayambhu (naturally occurring) Sivalinga is a granite block about eight feet in diameter but only eight inches in height!

The origin of Lingaraj Temple's Swayambhu Sivalinga and the initial worship there cannot be traced in history, but early Sanskrit texts record the existence of a stone temple here as early as the 7th century ce. Fragments of this earlier structure seem apparent in the present building.

Legend has it that the Swayambhu Sivalinga of Lord Lingaraj was seen initially under a big mango tree, and that Lord Lingaraj created the huge sacred pond on the northern side of the temple, which is now a 20-acre, 23-foot-deep water tank built of laterite blocks in the 7-8th century and known as Bindu Sagar (Ocean Drop).



Rudreshwara



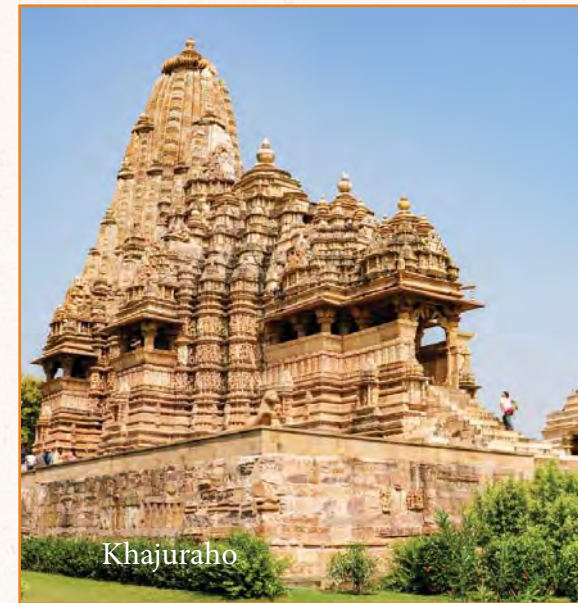
Ramappa



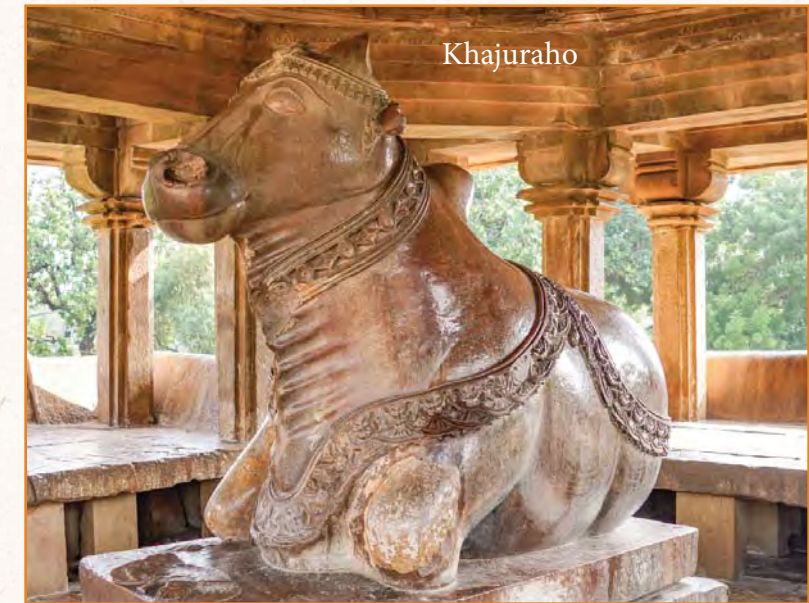
Parasurameshwara



Khajuraho



Khajuraho



Khajuraho

9. Parasurameshwara, 10. Khajuraho, 11. Udayagiri, 12. Omkareshwar

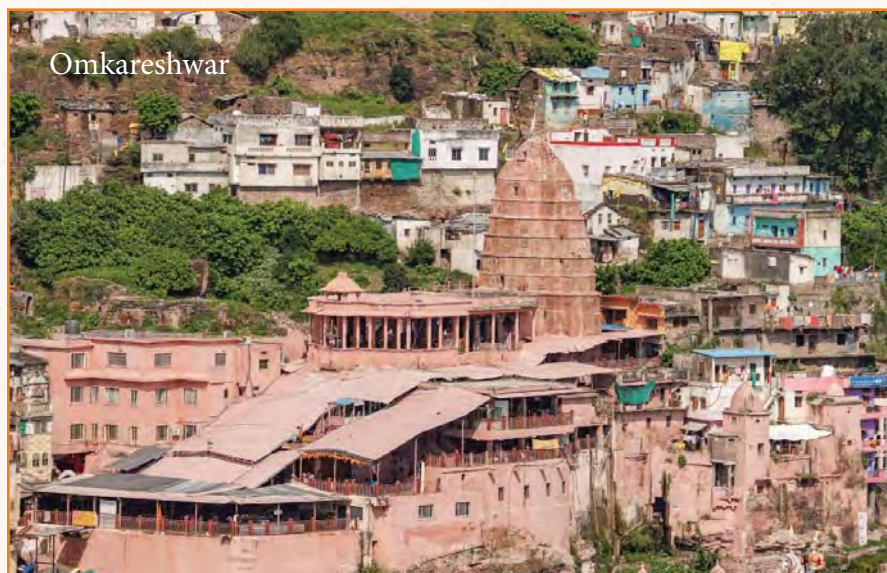
ON THE NORTH GHAT OF BINDU SAGAR, FIVE SMALL TEMPLES—Astasambhu, Uttareswar, Parasurameshwara, Mukteswar and Siddheshwar—have a grand view of the shikhara of Lord Lingaraj. Astasambhu is a temple housing eight Sivalingams; the name also refers to a collection of eight small shrines here. Parasurameswara Temple, built in the 7th century, has marvelous carvings. Most notable are the engraved sculptures of Sage Lakulisa, founder of Pasupata Saivism, testifying to the powerful presence of that great sect in the ancient Kalinga region. The small Mukteswar Temple is a fine example of Odisha architecture; the waters of the nearby Marichi Kund pond are believed to cure infertility in women.

We head north from Odisha to Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, to fulfill a long-cherished dream of having darshan of Kashi Vishwanath. Situated on the western bank of the Ganga, India's holiest river, Varanasi (previously known as Benares) is one of oldest surviving cities of the world and a cultural capital of India. In the heart of this city stands the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in full majesty, enshrining the

Jyotirlinga of Siva as Vishweshwara or Vishwanatha—the Lord of the Universe. No photos are allowed in the temple, so I leave Varanasi with a sense of sacredness that can be had only by going there.

Heading homeward now, west and south through Madhya Pradesh, we come to Khajuraho. Entire books have been published about this UNESCO World Heritage Site. The largest, loftiest and most beautiful monument here is the mighty Khandariya Mahadeva Temple, with approximately 900 statues that showcase the excellent craftsmanship of the artisans. This temple has become famous for its erotic sculptures; but despite their notoriety, these account for only ten percent of all sculptures.

The famous caves at Udayagiri, on the Betwa river bank near the eastern edge of the Malwa plateau region of Madhya Pradesh, are among the world's most ancient examples of rock architecture. The 20 caves here were created during the Gupta Empire between 380 and 415ce. Trekking on, we have darshan of Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga Temple, situated on an island in the Narmada River.



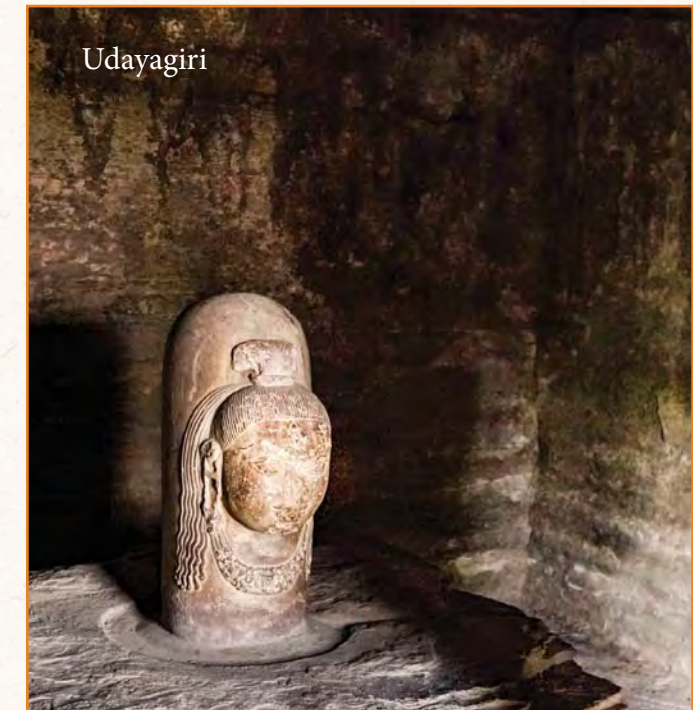
Omkareshwar



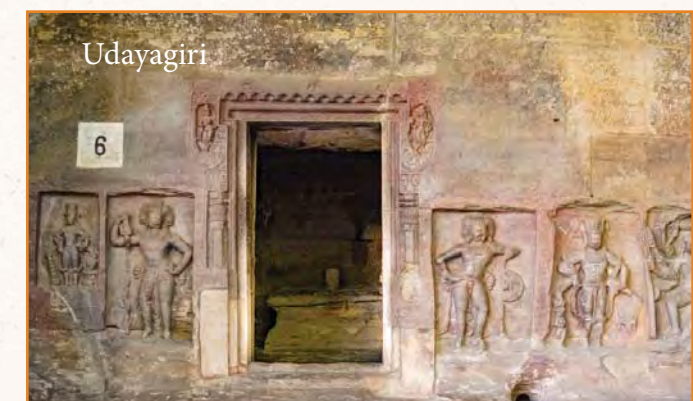
Udayagiri



Parasurameshwara



Udayagiri



Udayagiri

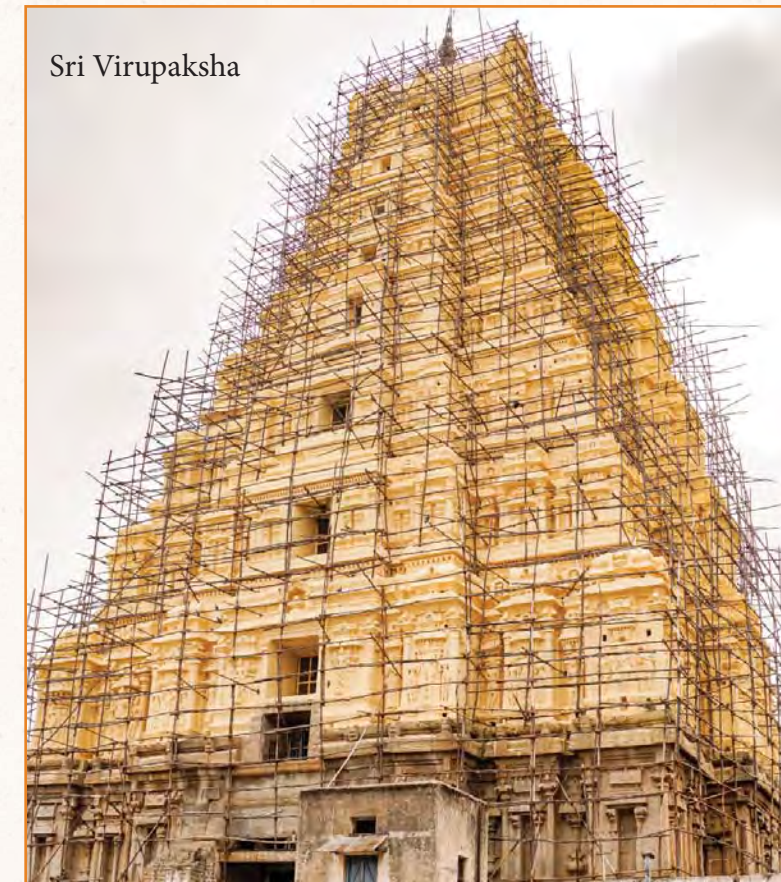
A taste of antiquity: (clockwise from top left) Parasurameshwara Temple, seventh century; the Sadasiva Lingam in the old Brahma temple at Khajuraho; the magnificent Khajuraho Khandariya Mahadeva Temple; the beautiful Nandi at Khajuraho's Vishwanathan Temple; a Siva Lingam in the caves of Udayagiri, which were created about 1,600 years ago; doorway into caves of Udayagiri; Sage Lakulisa, often mistaken for the Buddha, at Parasurameshwara; more Sivalingams at Udayagiri; Omkareshwar Temple and dense residential surroundings



Pataleshwar



Hampi



Sri Virupaksha

13. Ellora, 14. Pataleshwar, 15. Hampi

CROSSING THE NARMADA RIVER AND TRAVEL SOUTH INTO THE interior of Maharashtra we see another wonder of ancient engineering, Ellora Caves (photos on pages 36–37). A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this is one of the largest rock-cut monastery/temple cave complexes in the world, featuring Buddhist, Hindu and Jain monuments and artwork dating back over 1,400 years. Viewing this uninterrupted sequence of monuments created from 600 to 1,000 CE brings the civilization of ancient India to life. Cave 16 is the majestic Kailasanatha Temple, the largest single monolithic rock excavation in the world. An ASI sign reads, “The Kailasa is a great monolithic rock-cut temple isolated from the surrounding rock, excavated from top to bottom and scooped out from outside to inside. It is said that ten generations worked for it and took more than 200 years for its completion.” The engraved sculptures of Sage Lakulisa show the influence here of Pasupata Saivism.

After Ellora, we visit Pune’s Pataleshwar Cave Temple, an 8th-century rock-cut temple. Due to the city’s expansion, it is now situated downtown, on Jangli Maharaj Road. The temple, made of basalt rock, is dedicated to the God Siva. Worship continues here, and the Sivalinga is anointed with ghee and yogurt. Over 1,300 years old, this is the oldest monument in Pune.

From Pune, we trek 343 miles to our last destination, Sri Virupaksha Temple in Hampi, Karnataka, on the banks of the river Tungabhadra. Hampi, now a UNESCO Heritage Site under Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), was the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire. It was India’s richest, and the world’s second-largest, medieval-era city. Hampi’s highly developed society was spread over 4,000 hectares in the Tungabhadra basin, with many temples, palaces, bazaars, residential areas, water supply technologies and networked channels. The main pilgrimage center here is the Sri Virupaksha Temple, which withstood the test of time and is now being renovated by the ASI. The temple has been an active center of worship without interruption from the Chalukya period, in the 7th century CE.

Siva’s land of old: (clockwise from above) pillared hall of Pataleshwar Temple cave; Kadalekalu Ganesha, almost 15 feet tall, in His shrine at Hampi; Sri Virupaksha Temple vimanam under renovation; various destroyed artifacts and temples; a solid stone chariot, one of the many magnificent works found at Hampi

From Hampi I returned to Kerala with a new vision of Lord Siva, inspired to know that we have in India living continuity of His worship for at least sixteen centuries—indeed, from time immemorial. With only 70 years since Independence, Hindus have much to do to regain our treasures. Yet I am encouraged to have witnessed a renaissance of worship and reawakening to our glorious temple heritage.



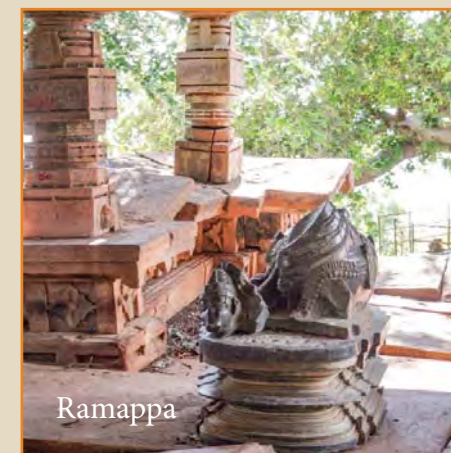
Hampi

A Legacy of Devastation

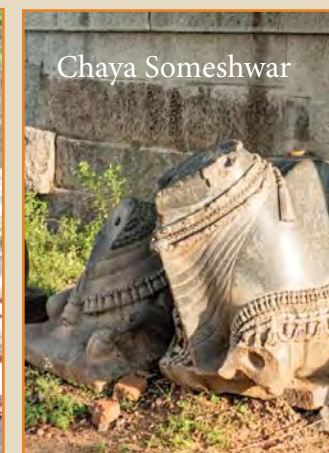
WEATHER AND THE PASSAGE OF TIME HAVE made their mark on India’s ancient monuments. But sadly, much greater damage and destruction was done by conquerors, invaders and other foreigners. From the Vedic age, the evolution of humanity reached the classic age during the Gupta period. However, the persistently brutal and savage attacks from Islamic rulers arrested this evolutionary growth for centuries.

The invader dynasties, especially the Mughals of the Delhi sultanate, showed extreme fanaticism. Their iconoclastic attacks plundered the kingdoms, destroyed and desecrated universities, thousands of temples, and ancient treasures of architecture and art. Some temples were converted into mosques and petty tombs. The Muslim rule (8th to 19th century) submerged the Indian subcontinent, especially the northern regions, under anarchy, violence, plunder, war crimes, anti-woman activities and holocausts. Unconquered areas of South India and Odisha retained most of their magnificent ancient Hindu temples.

The list of damaged sites is too long to include here. The irreparable damage done to these artistic wonders is unpardonable. For example, the fanatic Deccan Muslim confederacy pillaged Vijayanagar at Hampi for six months. The remains of this great city were scattered over hundreds of acres, speaking volumes about the savagery inflicted on India by her invaders.



Ramappa



Chaya Someswar



Mundeshwari



DANCE

A Shining Peruvian Bharatanatyam Dancer

Ananga Manjari Malatesta Gonzalez, born in South America with a Hindu heart, reaches the world stage to share her passion for Indian spiritual culture

BY LAVINA MELWANI, NEW YORK

HER MOTHER IS PERUVIAN AND HER father is Italian, but Ananga's heart is Indian to the core. This young Peruvian has lived in many countries and imbibed their cultures, but her soul is Hindu and her passion is Indian classical dance. She particularly loves Bharatanatyam, which she started studying at the age of four, along with classical ballet, tango and flamenco.

Thousands of miles from India, Ananga, now a university student, has become an accomplished Bharatanatyam dancer. She has performed in many South American countries, Malaysia and India. Now she teaches many young Peruvians at her dance school, Gopesvara Arts.

For this love of dance, she has both her

parents to thank. Her father is an artiste who had studied trumpet and piano and had traveled to Europe and India. Her mother was born in Lima, Peru, and was always a dancer, learning ballet, as well as Western classical flute, at the conservatory. Both parents converted to Hinduism before their daughter's birth; so Ananga, born in Cochabamba, Bolivia, is a born Hindu. Later they moved to Columbia and finally to Peru.

Hinduism was very much a part of their life from the beginning, with a home shrine, bhajans and the glow of the dipam. This was not common in Peru. She says, "More than Hinduism, being vegetarian was strange to everyone in the school. I was a born vegetarian. South America is a meat eaters' culture, so trying to explain why I am vegetarian was

always a topic in any conversation I had. Peru has a variety of vegetables, fruits and cereals, which makes it easier for a vegetarian. At the same time, my schoolmates were fascinated by the Indian culture, which made it easy for me to make friends who understand my way of life and respect it."

Ananga's earliest memories of dance are learning from her mother. "My mother was very attached to discipline, so I had a teacher both in and out of class, which made me progress faster." When she was just four, Ananga's mother wanted her to learn a spiritual art form, so in Colombia she located an academy named Four Elements that taught basic theory. Not wanting to send her daughter alone to the class, her mother took the class with her and became completely

captivated. Ananga's father bought them CDs in Sanskrit and as many books as they could find online.

"At that time in Peru we had no teacher, and there was no YouTube or Facebook," recalls Ananga. "Mother used to study every day, and she even translated to Spanish a small Natyashastra book, *Abhinaya Darpana*. She started teaching dance in 2001 for one student, then eight. She worked hard and would be in the dance room five hours a day. I finally left regular school to be home schooled, so dance became a major part of my day."

Ananga and her mother were avid devotees of Bharatanatyam. When she was 13, she and her mother went to Montreal, Canada, on a scholarship given by Dr. Mamata Niyogi-Nakra. In 2012, Guru Shankar Kandasamy, head of the Bharatanatyam department at Temple of Fine Arts in Malaysia, came to Peru. He trained 17 students, which culminated in a performance that Ananga says she will never forget: "It was the first time we performed with an Indian guru." She performed her first major repertoire, "Marga Anjali," under the guidance of Kandasamy, and was bestowed the title of Yogyata Patra.

How important is dance to Ananga's spiritual quest? "Dance is Natya Yoga, and for me it is a very vital part of my spirituality. We learn about traditions, language, *Vedas*. It's one way of praying and remembering God; it keeps me interested in the lives of poets and saints and reminds me that we are not this body. For me dance is the way I express myself and feel connected with the Divine."

Since 2001 Ananga and her mother have run a dance school in Peru, called Gopesvara Dance. They recently converted this to a non-profit organization, Gopesvara Arts.

As Ananga points out, "This took time, because in Peru the public connected Indian dance with Bollywood. They did not understand the deeper significance of Bharatanatyam. So to explain to them, we performed in many poor places, big and small theaters. Sharing our traditions, we found stories from our *Vedas* and philosophy are very attractive for Peruvians. Of course, adding the make-up and jewelry makes it even more attractive!"

Local Indians have helped Ananga and her mother spread Indian classical dance. Ananga has special regard for Geetu Chugani, "who has been helping us for more than seven years and has been like a mother to me. She

has also helped students who couldn't afford classes, organizing programs, receiving artistes and supporting many other activities we have, and offering emotional support in our journey."

Ananga says her father was her first big supporter. He encouraged them to hold festivals and share Carnatic music, shouldering

all the expenses. She says, "We say God's blessings come through people. Father is a blessing for me, my family, and Indian arts in Peru."

Ananga and the Peruvian community have had strong allies in the Indian High Commission, where the Ambassador Sandeep Chakravorty (now the Consul General in



JAVIER CAMOA

Ananga Manjari brings Hindu Gods to life in Peru: (left) posing as Lord Vishnu; (right) in a spectacular pose as the Lord of Dance, Lord Shiva, in a *Shankaka Sigiri* piece, at the *Los Incas Theater*, Lima, Peru



PRIN RODRIGUEZ



New York) took an active role in bringing Indian culture to the local population. In fact, his own daughter Nandini was Ananga's student. By inviting many prominent dance teachers to Peru, he made the Indian Embassy a fertile place for arts and culture. Recalls Ananga: "He has been one of the best promoters of Indian classical dance in Peru and Bolivia. He opened a cultural center in the embassy and helped us by conducting performances and inviting prestigious dancers like Guru Shankar Kandasamy, Dr. Janaki Rangarajan, Sarita Mishra (Odissi) and Dr. Bipul Kumar (santoor player)."

Recently things came full circle when Ananga came to New York and performed at the Indian Consulate along with her student Nandini, amazing audiences with how the beauty of Bharatanatyam had flowered in Peru.

Spirituality is a big part of Bharatanatyam. While explaining the poems

and philosophy, Ananga tries to convey the emotional connections to her students who may not be Hindu: "We try to find connections with their own culture and tradition. To teach principles and meditation helps students a lot, not only in dance, but in general—and that is our happiness!"

Indeed, it is all about sharing. Says Ananga, "To trust each other and give respect is most important. I think our community becomes stronger when we aren't judging where we come from, what is our tradition, economy or spiritual beliefs. As a teacher, I consider it my responsibility to think how to help them understand Bharatanatyam with respect to their lives and beliefs."

Ananga, currently a university student, says, "I try to begin my day with prayers and puja. This helps me to focus and be at ease with a changing campus schedule. But dance practice and teaching is always a part of me."

She has learned from some noted dance gurus—Padma Bhushan Sonal Mansingh, Janaki Rangarajan and Indira Kadambi, as



PRIN RODRIGUEZ

well as her own guru. She says, "They are all artistes who passionately love what they do—sadhana is their life. When they perform, you see a happy soul dedicating everything on stage! I am always fascinated by their passion, strong minds and character."

She adds, "The first time I went to India, for me it was like a dream. To see the artists was like meeting a superstar, and to experience such a vast ocean of Bharatanatyam! My experience with them has been

Storytelling through Bharatanatyam:

(left top) girl waiting for her beloved; (left bottom) 2015, Kuala Lumpur, after her second margam (repertoire/performance) Ananga received the title "Nritya Jhota" ("Light of Dance") from her Malaysian guru, Shankar Kandasamy; (above) posing as Garuda, Lord Vishnu's vehicle

amazing—sometimes I wish I had two brains so I won't forget even a word they have said. I only pray I can have the strength and charisma they have, and realize their words in this life."

Ananga has been bestowed honors for her dance excellence, but it has been a long hard journey. "When I started dance with my mother, we struggled a lot, not just to get the knowledge but to get everything needed for Bharatanatyam, like jewelry, music and costumes—and even to understand the meanings! We used to send the lyrics to India and get them translated word by word."

All this has made Ananga a strong dancer and a devotee who knows the value of dance. She is so determined to share her knowledge with people who want to learn that she gives scholarships to those who cannot afford to pay: "People always tell us to charge and make money, but we don't have the soul to

do it. Bharatanatyam is a spiritual dance; how can we make a profit from it and make people who want to learn go through the same struggle as we did?"

She adds, "I have traveled many times to teach and perform, only asking organizers to cover my ticket and accommodation. I know what it means to have the passion to learn and not have the chance to do it because of lack of money or being far from a teacher. Being far from India or Malaysia is always a challenge, but Mother is always trying to help me, and of course I love to dance, so I pray what I'm practicing is correct, trying to get the blessings of God."

LAVINA MELWANI is a New York based journalist for several international publications. She blogs at "Lassi with Lavina."

Follow her @lavinamelwani

Our 2018 Hindu of the Year

Sivasri Thangam Bhattar, 91, was the first of the Madurai Temple priests to serve Hindus overseas

To describe the unusual life history of this year's recipient of the Hindu Renaissance Award as our "Hindu of the Year," we offer three testimonies of Sivasri Thangam Bhattar's exemplary life of service to God and devotees given by three admirers: a fellow priest, a distinguished academic, and a longtime member of the Texas Meenakshi temple.

Shanmukha Sivacharyar, priest at the Sri Kaalikaambal Temple, Chennai: "Sivasri Thangam Bhattar hails from an Adisaiva family who have dedicated their whole lives for the worship of Lord Somasundareswara and Goddess Meenakshi at Madurai, India.

"Sri Chandrasekara Bhattar, fondly called Thangam Bhattar, was one of the dedicated priests who left his family in India during the mid 1970s and wholly sacrificed his life by serving in a country alien to him, America. In 1982 he began his service at Sri Meenakshi temple, Houston, Texas. After several years Sri Manicka Sundara Bhattar also joined this team of dynamic priests extending their humble and dedicated service to the devotees along with the vibrant prayers to the Gods and Goddesses of the temple.

"Bhattar and his wife are an example of the priest couple's showering love and affection on all people they meet. At the first consecration ceremony of Sri Meenakshi Temple in Texas my father, Sambhamurthy Sivacharyar, was the officiating acharya along with Bhattar. I have fondly called him Thangam Mama from a young age. I remember him as always happy, selfless, content, helpful, dedicated and having a pleasing personality. I have not seen him speak much, but the few words he uttered with a gentle smile always made me feel the grace of Lord Somasundareswara and Goddess Meenakshi.

"Even in his elderly period of life, he remains active and preaches the love of Lord Siva through his dedicated service. His immaculate nature is what the younger generation of priests should imbibe, to serve the Lord and His children. He is a person whom I always love to see. May his service continue for the benefit of the world."

Chris Fuller, professor emeritus, Department of Anthropology, London School of Economics, excerpted from his book, The



Honoring Priests: Thangam Bhattar receives an award and is honored at the 2018 Maha Raja Gopuram Kumbhabhishekam for the Ganapati Temple of Arizona

Renewal of the Priesthood: Modernity and Traditionalism in a South Indian Temple: "In 1976, Thangam Bhattar, then in his late forties, who had briefly visited Malaysia three years earlier, became the first Meenakshi Temple priest to work overseas when he went to a Singapore temple for a few months. In 1982–83, Thangam worked in Pearland, Texas, for nearly a year when its Meenakshi Temple was first opened, and he was then replaced by his younger brother Rajarathna;

2018 HINDU RENAISSANCE AWARD
Presented by the editors of HINDUISM TODAY to the Hindu of the Year, Sivasri Thangam Bhattar, for his life-long dedication to the Adi Saiva tradition and pioneering emigration, first to Singapore and Malaysia, then permanently to America to inaugurate and serve in one of the country's first Hindu temples, the Sri Meenakshi Temple of Pearland, Texas, and later the Hindu Temple of New Orleans.



WHERE THE WORLD'S ONE BILLION HINDUS LIVE
Hindus are one-sixth of the human family. While India is home to 93% of the world's one billion Hindus, nearly 70 million are scattered widely across the globe.

Thangam also returned for over a year in 1986–88, when the temple was extended in size, but Rajarathna stayed on permanently in Pearland until retirement. Thangam and Rajarathna both acquired green cards in the mid-1980s. Back in 1976, though, nobody in Madurai would have predicted that Thangam, Rajarathna, and then Manikkasundara would work in Texas, and that the latter's graduation from an Agamic school would be so important for his career in Madurai and his eventual move to America.

"Indeed, although it may be a very small element in the history of latter-day globalization, the emergence of 'traditional' education in Sanskrit scripture as a valuable asset in the United States is a striking sign of how the world changed during the twentieth century's last quarter, for it was not only unpredictable in the mid-1970s, it was virtually unimaginable.

"A significant minority of priests, following in Thangam Bhattar's footsteps, have been working abroad as well, and this has been made possible by the growing prosperity and strengthening ethnic identity among overseas Hindu communities, whether in older regions of settlement such as Malaysia and Singapore or newer ones such as Britain and especially the United States, where the NRI population has rapidly expanded."

Dr. Bala N. Aiyer, temple member, Sri Meenakshi Temple, Pearland, Texas: "In the summer of 1982, our chief priest Sri Thanga Bhattar came from Madurai to perform the main rituals of kumbhabhishekam and puja for the inauguration. On June 21, 1982, Air India flight 403 from Chennai to Mumbai crashed while landing in a heavy rainstorm and fell at the beach, partly in the ocean. Seventeen passengers and crew lost their lives, but miraculously, Sri Thanga Bhattar, Sri S. Narayanan, and few others who were coming to Houston for the temple event survived unscathed. Bhattar had checked in two suitcases as his luggage, one with his personal effects and other with materials and clothes for the Prathishta rituals at the temple. When he walked along the wing and stepped down to the knee-deep ocean water, he noted something hitting his leg and found that it was the suitcase containing the temple puja materials. Most of these items were specially sent by Madurai Meenakshi-Sundareswarar Devasthanam for use in our kumbhabhishekam ceremonies. In the middle of all the restrictions due to police investigations for the accident, he was permitted to carry this one box and catch the next flight. He reached Houston without much delay to participate in the inauguration puja rituals for kumbhabhishekam."

IDENTITY

Be Proud to Call Yourself Hindutva!

Don't be intimidated by the media. Stand up for the greatness of "Hindu-ness."

BY MARIA WIRTH

IS BEING A HINDU OK AND IS HINDUTVA NOT OK AND even dangerous? Many Hindus seem wary to be associated with *Hindutva*, in spite of the fact that *Hindutva* simply means Hindu-ness or being Hindu. They tend to accept the view which mainstream media has peddled for long: "Hindutva is intolerant and stands for the communal agenda of an extreme right Hindu party that wants to force uniform Hinduism on this vast country, which is fully against the true Hindu ethos."

Is this true? The Supreme Court ruling of 1995 declares it as not true: "Hindutva is indicative more of the way of life of the Indian people. ...Considering Hindutva as hostile, inimical, or intolerant of other faiths, or as communal proceeds from an improper appreciation of its true meaning.

From personal experience, I also came to the conclusion that Hindutva is not communal and dangerous. For many years I lived in "spiritual India" without having any idea how important the terms "secular" and "communal" were. The people I met valued India's great Vedic heritage. They gave me tips on which texts to read, which sants to meet, which mantras to learn, etc., and I wrote about all this for German magazines. I thought that all Indians were proud of their ancestors, who had stunningly deep insights into what is true and who left a huge legacy of precious texts unparalleled in the world.

However, when I settled in a "normal" environment—away from ashrams—and connected with the English-speaking middle class, I was shocked that several of my new friends with Hindu names were ridiculing Hinduism without knowing anything about it. They had not even read the *Bhagavad-Gita*, but claimed that Hinduism is the most depraved of all religions and is responsible for the ills India is facing. The caste system and *Manusmriti* were quoted as proof.

My new acquaintances had expected me to join them in denouncing "violent" Hinduism, which I could not do as I knew too much, not only from reading, but also from doing sadhana. They declared that I had read the wrong books and asked me to read the right books, which would give me the correct understanding. They obviously had no doubt that their own view was correct.

My neighbor, a self-declared communist, occasionally introduced me to his friends as "the local RSS pracharak." It was half in jest, but more than half intended to be demeaning. My reaction at the time: "If RSS is in tune with my views, then it must be good."

Standing up for Hindu Dharma identified me as belonging to the 'Hindutva brigade' that is shunned by political correctness. My fault was that I said Hindu Dharma is the best option for any society. I did not make a baseless claim, as Christianity and Islam do and which goes mostly unchallenged. I explained that Hindu Dharma is inclusive and not divisive, whereas Christianity and Islam divide humanity into those who supposedly have the "true faith" and those who are wrong and will pay for it eternally in hell, if not already on earth.

Of course, my stand is not communal or dangerous. Hindu Dharma is indeed not only inclusive, but also most beneficial for



the individual and for society and needs to gain strength at the expense of Christianity and Islam, which are exclusive and therefore harmful. And yes, politicians, too, need to base their lives on Hindu Dharma if they want to be efficient in serving the society. Propagating blind belief has no place in politics, but following Dharma is in the interest of all.

Hindu Dharma was never based on unreasonable dogmas and has never needed blasphemy laws to keep its followers in check. It is helpful to society, as it imparts profound wisdom and gives guidelines for an ideal life that acknowledges the invisible, conscious Essence in this visible

universe. It allows freedom of thought. As a result, many parallel streams, with different ways to connect to this essence, have emerged over time and have coexisted harmoniously.

Humanity needs to win over the madness that the Supreme Being loves only those humans beings who believe in a certain book, and condemns all others to eternal hellfire. But how to make them see sense?

Recently some staunch "secular" Indians, like Shashi Tharoor, declared themselves openly as Hindus. It's a good sign, but they have something wrong: They believe that being Hindu means that anything goes—believe in a God or not, be vegetarian or not, go to temples or not. It even seems to imply: be truthful or not. They portray Hindu Dharma as having no fundamentals.

That's wrong. Hindu Dharma does have fundamentals, but they are benign and helpful. Being Hindu means to know and value the profound insights of the rishis and follow their recommendations in one's life. These insights may not be obvious to the senses, like the claim that everything, including nature, is permeated by the one consciousness (Brahman), but can be realized as true. Similarly, it is not obvious that Earth revolves around the Sun, but it can be proven. Being Hindu does not require blind belief.

Being Hindu also means having the welfare of all at heart, including animals and nature, because each part is intimately connected with the Whole. Especially the cow is revered, and the rishis gave good reasons why it must not be killed.

Being Hindu means following one's conscience and using one's intelligence well. It means diving into oneself, trying to connect with one's Essence. It means trusting one's own Self, Atman, and doing the right thing at the right time.

Being Hindu means being wise—not deluded or gullible or foolish. This wisdom about the truth of this universe and about how to live life in the best possible way was discovered and preserved in India. Yet its tenets are universal and valid for all humanity.

Isn't it time for our interconnected world to realize this and benefit from it?

MARIA WIRTH, 68, a freelance writer, has lived in India for the past 33 years. mariaiwirh12@gmail.com, mariaiwirthblog.wordpress.com

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Living in the Moment

Letting go of the past and learning to forgive, accept and love are the keys for a fulfilling life

BY SADHVI AMBA

During our reporting on Tiruvannamalai, we met Sadhvi Amba at Kailash Ashram, where she was staying while her own ashram, Antakarna Dhyana Nilayam, was being completed. She is a disciple of Bhagwan Nityananda of Ganeshpuri (1897-1961), whom she first saw in visions as a child growing up in Chennai.



HELP PEOPLE WHO COME TO ME BY CHANGING THEIR perception of their problems. I don't give a solution, I help them look at the problem as a solution. I help them change the perception to see the same thing differently. First I teach them in depth about the law of karma and the law of nature and make them understand very clearly how these two are connected. I make them understand about past birth and rebirth. Once this is understood, it is very easy to make them change their perception of their problems. They need not blame themselves or others for all the shortcomings and the sorrow once they understand the law of karma.

There is no need to blame. You have to resolve it positively, face the problem beautifully. You don't have to have any emotion to face it. Emotion comes out of ignorance; so once the ignorance vanishes, then there is no emotion attached to it, there is no sorrow, there is no sadness, there is no pain. It is just a situation; that is all. And right understanding always comes with a solution.

It is all how we look at life and how we color it. Similarly, you can paint whatever you want on a canvas, but the canvas is not actually affected by what you draw. The moment you start looking at the canvas—the canvas is the consciousness—nothing gets affected. The consciousness is still the same. It is like watching a movie on a screen, whether the movie is good or bad, the screen is not affected. The screen remains the same.

In every birth we make our own movies; but we make mistakes when we make them. Then we are inspired to improvise and improve it. Every birth is an improvisation of the previous birth. When our desires are not fulfilled, then again we come back. We fulfill that particular desire but we forget to show gratitude for the good things that we already have. So then we create another movie, another birth. But again there is a shortcoming in this, which brings another birth, and this just goes on and on. It is like a serial.

To get the aspiration to transform, you have to understand that what we are seeing is not real. There is something more real within. That should be the first knowledge. Then how to experience, how to believe and how to understand that we are that and not this. With that real interest, the right guru and proper knowledge, if you do this *giri pradhakshini* (cicumabulation) around the Arunachala Hill, then sit and spend time in self-introspection and self-inquiry, then one hundred percent you will see some transformation here.

In Hinduism, charity is something very important. We should learn to give. What is it that you have to give? Externally, we have

to give. Internally, we have to let go of the past. That is also giving; that charity should happen within. Let go, leave it. It's all right. Whatever is past has no meaning now. It happened and it's over. Why do we have to go back to that painful moment which we have finally come across? We have gone beyond that now—that is not even existing. Why do you want to hold onto it? It is dead, right? So what is dead, we either burn or bury—we don't live with it, right? That is past. Anything good or bad or whatever we call it, whatever situation, it has no meaning once that moment is over. But we all have the habit of holding on to that. That is the wall or obstacle, actually. The most threatening wall is the past, the wall of the past. Once we know how to demolish it, give it away, let go of it, that charity first we should learn to do within—then only any charity outside that we do has any meaning.

Once you let go of the past, learn to live in the moment and start forgiving your own mistakes, it's easy to forgive others' mistakes also. Because we comfortably do lots of wrong things. We lie, right? And we do many things that we don't like in others, yet we are comfortable about it when we are doing it. So why is it difficult

to forgive someone else who is doing that? When you say someone is an angry person but you are fine with your own anger, why can't you be fine with the other person's anger? First understand yourself, acknowledge the shortcomings that are already present in you. Then it's very easy to forgive others. Similarly, loving others—you always like to be loved, right? So why can't you first give it to someone? Because only what goes around comes around. Only what you give someone else will come back to you, in some form or other. If you want love, show love. If you want to be accepted, you must first accept someone. And if you want to be forgiven, you first forgive. So, that charity should come from within. Do that first, then automatically it is very easy.

Love has to be unconditional, so that there is no emotion. Love is not an emotion. Happiness is not an emotion. Happiness is a state of being. Similarly, unconditional love is what we are. The consciousness is nothing but love, right? That is why we say *Anbe Shivam*. In Tamil, *anbu* means love, unconditional love. *Anbe Shivam* means "Siva is love." Siva is nothing but consciousness, so consciousness is love. *Anbe Shivam* means love is God, so love is Siva, God is Siva, Siva is love.

I always say if you practice three things you can attain mukti, you can attain moksha: unconditional love, unconditional forgiveness and unconditional acceptance. If you can practice these three things every single day of your life, then there is no enmity, there is no hatred and there is only eternal happiness. I have been following that practice, and I have always been like that.

In today's age and time, Bhagavan Nityananda always insisted on not seeing differences in creation itself—not just no caste, no creed or nationality or anything. He wanted everyone to look at all the jivas, the embodied souls, as one. He believed in that. He practiced that. He has taught me inwardly also to practice that, to not see any differences in anybody, to unconditionally love everyone, unconditionally accept everyone and unconditionally forgive everyone, including our own self. It is very simple, but very intense also.

Hindu Heritage Endowment

PLANNED GIVING TO HHE CHARITIES

What is planned giving? A planned gift can be any kind of gift, large or small, and can be for any purpose. While gifts of cash are the largest source of charitable gifts, planned gifts are typically not outright cash gifts. Rather, they are sizeable asset gifts, such as life insurance, real estate, stocks and bonds or mutual funds to be used in the future. Charitable remainder trusts, gift annuities and other gift-planning arrangements are regularly funded using assets other than cash. Another definition of planned giving is the process of making a charitable gift of estate assets to one or more nonprofit organizations, such as Hindu Heritage Endowment.

The most common example of a planned gift is through a will. A revocable Living Trust resembles a will, and setting it up is more involved, but it may have advantages for some people. Another example is a charitable remainder trust. During the life of a person, he or another person receives an income from the trust and then the remaining assets would go to one or more charities. In 2005 the Iraivan Hindu Temple Fund, HHE fund #2, received over US\$1.3 million from a charitable remainder trust.

Life insurance policies provide the means by which a donor can make a large charitable gift at a modest out-of-pocket cost. There are three ways to give through life insurance: (1) the charity is the beneficiary of the policy; (2) the charity is the owner and beneficiary of the policy; and (3) the life insurance policy is a replacement for donated assets. Several HHE endowments are beneficiaries of life insurance policies.

A popular deferred gift is the charitable gift annuity, which is a lifetime contract between the donor and the charity. It is relatively simple to understand and establish. The donor can also name someone else as the annuitant to receive the annuity payments. The donor gives a gift, \$50,000 for example, and receives a set amount of money every year for the rest of his or her life.

Some planned gifts, such as a charitable gift annuity, are irrevocable. Others, such as will bequests, can be revoked. Depending on the country of the donor, an irrevocable gift can generate an immediate income tax charitable deduction, whereas revocable gifts do not. A planned gift requires careful thought on the part of the donor, considering his or her overall estate plan. Legal documents, created with the help of planned giving professionals, are often required. Planned gifts are usually arranged now and fulfilled later. There are numerous professional advisors in the charitable gift-planning field: certified financial planners; estate planning attorneys; life insurance professionals; certified public accountants and trust officers.

In the USA, the Partnership for Philanthropic Planning is the primary association linking planned giving officers and allied professionals, with more than 108 planned giving councils representing 10,000 members. For the council nearest you call 317-269-6274 or visit www.pppnet.org. In Canada the Canadian Association of Gift Planners represents 1,100+ gift planners throughout the country. Their website is www.cagp-acpdp.org.

The Charities Aid Foundation in the UK is committed to helping donors give in a tax-efficient and easy way. Visit their website at www.cafonline.org/individual/ and download their guide to savvy charitable giving. CAF also has offices in Canada, India, Australia, Bulgaria, Russia, Southern Africa and the USA.

New to planned giving and want to learn more? Please visit HHE's planned giving link at www.plannedgiving.hheonline.org. Here you can read all about providing the security you seek from your investments while eventually providing much-needed gifts to one or more of the 75 HHE endowments and their charities.

To download an Estate Planning Tool Kit visit www.hheonline.org/tool-kit.shtml



APRIL TO JUNE ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS			
Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment			
Anonymous	US\$284.79	Ranga Swami	100.00
Roshan Harilela	375.00	Venugopal V. Vadapalli	299.00
Srinivas R. Madaboosi	150.00	Raj Verma	299.00
Gayatri Rajan	75.00	Srujana & Madhukar Yedulapuram	299.00
Chamundi Sabanathan	78.75	Sarvani Yellayi	299.00
Hitesvara Saravan	85.00	Total	6,506.13
Pathmini Saravanapavan	200.00	Gurudeva's Trilogy Distribution Fund	
Jai Sivakumara	324.00	Vel Mahalingum	17.41
Keith Wallach	54.00	Manogaran Mardemootoo	30.30
Other Donations	40,000.00	Total	47.71
Total	41,626.54	Kadavul Nataraja Andra Abhishekam Endowment	
Iraivan Temple Endowment		Gowri Nadason	135.87
Frank Burkhardt	10.00	Parimala Selvaraj	93.00
Amey Surendra Gangal	33.00	Bala Sivaceyon	10.00
Gajanan Nataraj	20.00	Anonymous	27.09
Neela Oza	75.00	Total	265.96
Anonymous	33.00	Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund	
Keith Wallach	54.00	Shyamadeva Dandapani	36.00
Other Donations	75,432.00	Devajyothi Kondapi	324.00
Total	75,657.00	Kulagan Moonesawmy	17.41
Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund		Gowri Nadason	135.87
Thirujnanam Arnassalon	11.35	Rajeswary Ramamoorthy	225.00
Radhakrishnamurthy Bhandaru	116.00	Aran Sambandar	102.00
Rameshkumar Chellappan	51.00	Poobarlene Soobramanien	14.11
Anonymous	446.12	Vayudeva Varadan	54.00
Nuckchadee Geeanduth	29.26	Anonymous	108.36
Juhivaasana Koothan	2.82	Other Donations	4,800.00
Anil Kumar	27.00	Total	5,816.75
Ashwini Maureemootoo	12.12	Iyarappan Temple Trust	
Saroja Maureemootoo	11.70	Krishanth Rajasooriyar	45.00
Jogendra Moorooogen	2.84	Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam	
Vidyadevi Moorooogen	2.84	Anonymous	424.00
Shanmugam Muthukumar	28.80	Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment	
Archana Nagarajan	85.00	Pram & Mina Broker	108.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	49.98	Sri Subramuniya Ashram Scholarship Fund	
Tejasinha Sivalingam	50.00	Anonymous	324.00
Lavanyadeva Sivananda	75.00	Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund	
Nagarjuna & Padma Yerra	175.00	Nuckiren Pyeneeeandee	15.15
Total	1,149.83	Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment	
Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund		Mano Navaratnarajah	75.00
Anonymous	299.00	Nuckiren Pyeneeeandee	29.26
Sivagamasundari Balasingam	299.00	Jai Sivakumara	500.00
Hemakheshaa Naatha Batumallah	15.00	Total	604.26
Mekaladeva Batumallah	15.00	Hinduism Today Production Fund	
Sridhar Beeram	299.00	Anonymous	1,063.00
Niam Bhargava Datta	598.00	Ron & Jennifer Burke	150.00
Jimmy D'Halla	299.00	Thom Drinkwater	50.00
Neeraj & Alpana Grover	299.00	Prabhakar C Ghosh	90.00
Shruti Kaura	299.00	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	8.71
Sravanthi Konduri	299.00	Prabhakar G. Joshi	25.00
Hlitesh Merchant	299.00	Kulagan Moonesawmy	8.71
Bhaveshan Moorghen	8.71	Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01
Shanda Kumaran Moorghen	8.71	Nuckiren Pyeneeeandee	29.26
Udeyadeva Moorghen	8.71	Gayatri Rajan	75.00
Janani V Nathan	299.00	Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund	
Bindu Patel	299.00	Benevity	381.00
Srinivasan Prativadi	299.00	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	4.36
Vineet Sharma	299.00	Rajendra Giri	151.00
Sai Singh	120.00	Roshan Harilela	375.00
Komaldeva Sivananda	250.00	Chamundi Sabanathan	78.75
Tom Stanley	299.00	Rodney & Ilene Standen	30.00
Lakshmi Chandrashekar		Total	1,020.11
Subramanian	299.00	Suntheram Family Trust Fund	
		Ramachandran Suntheram	1,500.00
		Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund	
		Mano Navaratnarajah	225.00
		Gassa Patten	900.00
		Jai Sivakumara	1,000.00
		Total	2,125.00
		Spiritual Park of Mauritius Endowment	
		Anil Kumar	36.00
		Positive Discipline Endowment	
		Aetna Foundation Inc	61.56
		Vinaya Alahan	66.00
		Total	127.56
		Tirumular Sannidhi Preservation Fund	
		Shyamadeva Dandapani	36.00
		Srinivas R. Madaboosi	300.00
		Total	336.00
		Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund	
		Sathyainkara Balendra	20.00
		Hindu Heritage Endowment Administrative Fund	
		Shekhar & Gauri Ambe	101.00
		Murugan Temple of North America Pillaiyar Shrine Fund	
		Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00
		Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	15.00
		Total	165.00
		Thank You Bodhinatha Fund	
		Anonymous	1,810.92
		Anil Ananda Badhwar	10.00
		Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai	324.00
		Debashis Ghosh	300.00
		Timur Izmaylov	15.00
		Vasaant Krishnan	130.00
		Toshadevi Nataraj	100.00
		Mano Navaratnarajah	150.00
		Kishore & Suhasini Racherla	153.00
		Sumathi Raja	450.00
		Chamundi Sabanathan	108.00
		Aran Sambandar	162.00
		Ramai Santhirapala	108.00
		Hridaya Sivalingam	15.00
		Ganga Sivanathan	375.00
		Adi Srikantha	108.00
		Vignesh Sukumaran	216.00
		Anba Dayananden Valayten	11.32
		Vayudeva Varadan	63.00
		Michael Wasylikiw	648.00

APRIL TO JUNE ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS			
Total	5,257.24	Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund	
Sri Chandra Madhab Debnath Endowment		Anonymous	33.00
Shyamal Chandra Debnath	50.00	Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment	
Murugan Temple Yalpanam Festival Fund		Anonymous	801.07
Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00	Jennifer Burke	40.00
Manitha Neyam Trust Fund		Marlene Carter	162.00
Bala Sivaceyon	10.00	Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01
Nutanaya Sivaceyon	30.00	Puvaneswary Roberts	184.00
Total	40.00	Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00
Taos Hanuman Fund		Poobarlene Soobramanien	28.40
Anonymous	27.09	Total	1,415.48
Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund		Kodiswara Satguru Malaysia Travel Fund	
Anonymous	100.00	Siva Jothiswary Selvanathan	50.00
Swami Vipulananta Children's Home Endowment		Kodiswara Selvanathan	50.00
Canaganayagam Kugendra	60.00	Total	100.00
Hindu Literature Fund		India Hindu Tribals Endowment	
Kannan Venguswamy	51.00	Rajendra Giri	302.00
John & Abha Wiersba	153.00	Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund	
Total	204.00	Vayudeva Varadan	54.00
Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund		India Hindu Temple Cleaning Fund	
Rajagopal Krishnan	60.00	Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	4.36
Himalayan Academy Book Distribution Fund		Kulagan Moonesawmy	17.41
Shyamadeva Dandapani	36.00	Total	21.77
Nrusimhayya Manda	30.00	Anantha Ladies Home Endowment	
Total	66.00	Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	30.00
		Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples (Kovil Maadu) Endowment	
		Anonymous	181.97
		Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	8.71
		Dheeraj Handa	11.00
		Jaffna Kannathiddy Kali Kovil Endowment	
		Anonymous	27.09
		Pakistan Hindu Empowerment Fund	
		Anil Kumar	27.00
		Panchangam Endowment Fund	
		Ravi Paluri	20.00
		Sidharth Sankar	10.00
		Vijay Srinivasan	1.00
		Total	31.00
		Digital Dharma Endowment	
		Anonymous	501.51
		Jai Sivakumara	1,000.00
		Total	1,501.51
		Insurance Premiums	
		Mrunal Patel	3,003.00
		Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment	
		Other Donations	600.00
		Total Contributions	\$153,960.55
		Funds at Market Value, June 30, 2018	
		Grand Total	\$16,296,593.50

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

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WHAT IS THE SHAKTI INITIATIVE?

The Shakti Initiative is an online clearinghouse showcasing Hindu teachings about and by women, the contributions of Hindu women throughout history, and the role both women and men play in bringing to fruition solutions that are grounded in Hindu teachings to address critical contemporary issues.

VISIT WWW.SHAKTIINITIATIVE.COM TO LEARN MORE AND
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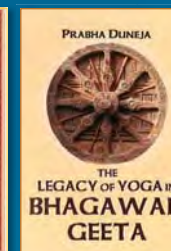
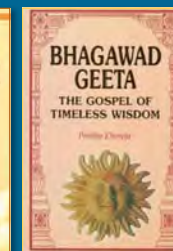
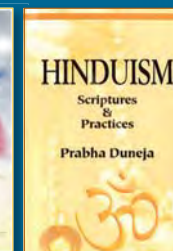
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Visit our website and share in the wealth of spiritual resources that Prabha Duneja has gathered and elucidated over a lifetime. She lectures widely and her writings are used in college and university classrooms. She is recognized for the depth of her personal devotion and her ability to shed light into Hinduism's spirit, philosophy and mysteries of mind and body, mantra, yoga and meditation. Many testify that her insights and articulations have transformed their lives.

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Vedic Friends Association (VFA)

Who We Are

We are a group of spiritual leaders and professionals in the field of modern science and technology. Apart from our professional and spiritual interests, we are deeply involved in the pursuit and preservation of ancient Vedic knowledge. The Vedic Friends Association (VFA) is an expanding, global network of progressive people helping each other understand, practice and promote the Universal Truths found in Vedic Dharma. It is an international body of people who have embraced the Vedic culture or deeply respect the Vedic vision and way of life including, its systems of yoga, meditation, pranayama, languages and literature, Ayurveda, astrology, vegetarianism, forms of worship and spiritual knowledge.

VFA's Mission

"Our mission is to share, preserve and protect the ultimate truth and universal Dharma (Eternal Truth)."

Our Goals and Objectives

- To bring together and unite people from all around the world who practice or want to know more about the Vedic path.
- To see that every human is my friend is a point that can develop into a truly peaceful world.
- To especially involve and support Western Hindus and help spread an accurate understanding of Vedic culture and its traditions, and its individual and social benefits.
- To develop and have cultural programs or conferences that people can attend to enhance their understanding and participation in the Vedic tradition.
- To help create unifying Dharmic (truthful) social family with respect among all religions.

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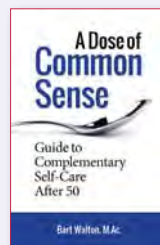
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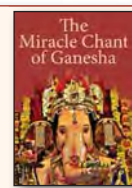
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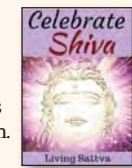
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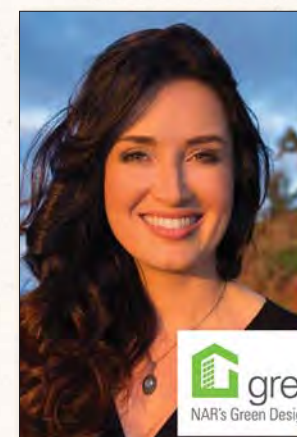


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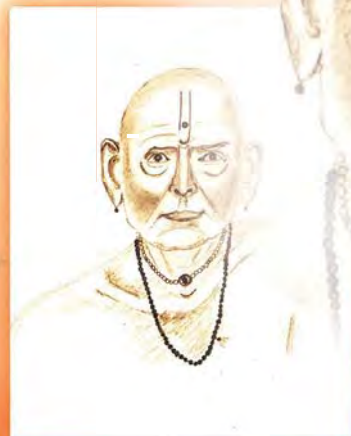
In a play of
Light and shadows,
In the Kulen Mountains,
The King's devotion
Flows pure and
Unending.

Embedded
In the rushing waters
A thousand lingas ancient,
Thy singular signature,
Receive ablution
Eternal
Under canopy
After canopy
After canopy.

I came.
I saw.
I was conquered.

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WE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE completion of the YouTube series *History of Hindu India*, based on the eponymous book by the editors of HINDUISM TODAY magazine and the late Dr. Shiva Bajpai, Professor Emeritus of History, California State University Northridge. This series provides an authentic presentation of the history of India and Hinduism for use in middle and high school classes and Hindu temple study groups, as well as general presentations on the Hindu religion and history. The movies are presented directly from India, with cultural and historic settings. The explanations are concise and simple enough for a younger audience.

1 Hindu History Part 1, which has almost 3 million hits on YouTube, covers Indian history from the Indus-Saraswati civilization up to the Gupta period, 300 ce. This segment explains the Hindu concept of God, the key concepts of karma, dharma, ahimsa and reincarnation, the practice of temple worship, major saints and the main Hindu scriptures.

2 Part 2 opens with magnificent footage of the famed Kailasanatha Temple in Maharashtra, then presents the political history of India at a time when the country was home to a third of the world's population. It explores the Gupta Empire, the Hunan invasions, the visits of Buddhist monks Faxian and Xuanzang, the initial incursions of Arab Muslim armies in the 8th century, and the rise of the great Chola kingdom of South India. This period also witnessed the beginning of the Bhakti Movement and the construction of thousands of famous Hindu temples, nearly all still active today. This segment describes city and village life, arranged marriage, jati and the joint family structure.

3 Part 3 covers Indian history from 1100 to 1850 ce. From the Arab Muslim invasions to British rule, it was a time of great difficulty for India's people. This segment recounts the extensive foreign invasions, the plunder of the great Siva temple at Somnath, the establishment of the Mughal Empire by the 16th century in most of India, its subsequent decline by the mid-18th century and the gradual control of India by the British. Presented here are saints of the powerful Bhakti Movement, including Ramananda

and Kabir; an overview of the Sikh religion, from its founding in the 16th century by Guru Nanak to formation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in the 18th century. There is a brief introduction to Indian music and its basic concepts of tala (rhythm), raga (scale) and improvisation.

4 The fourth movie in the series covers Indian history from 1850—when the British Crown took over direct control of India from the East India Company—to Independence in 1947. Britain's extreme economic exploitation of the subcontinent resulted in frequent famine and deprivation across the once wealthy land. A determined and mostly nonviolent freedom movement, led by MK Gandhi and other prominent politicians, finally won independence from Britain. Then the country was partitioned into modern India and Muslim Pakistan. The film includes details about Gandhi's Satyagraha campaigns and a short real-life-footage interview of this great soul. This segment introduces two great saints—Tiruvalluvar, author of the ancient but timeless ethical masterpiece *Tirukural*, and the 19th-century Swami Vivekananda, exploring their backgrounds, achievements and memorials.

5 The fifth and concluding documentary covers Indian history from 1947 to the present day. Opening with Nehru's famed "Tryst with Destiny" speech on August 15, 1947, it describes the formation of the new government and its post-war independence challenges, development of the constitution and of parliament, Pakistan's invasion of Kashmir, the horrors of partition, with real-life footage, formation of states along linguistic lines, and efforts to uplift the lower classes. This segment discusses the religions of India, religious strife and its causes, and the Hindu tradition of pilgrimage, using Rameswaram as an example. Also presented are India's ancient traditional medicine, ayurveda; hatha yoga's worldwide popularity, Bollywood cinema and the ever-popular Indian cuisine.

All this and more contributes to an exceptionally wide-ranging coverage of the history of Hindu India. For more information and for class lesson plans based on the book, visit hinduismtoday.com/education.

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