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HINDUISM TODAY ❖ VRINDAVAN ❖ SIX DARSHANAS ❖ THE REAL MARIGOLD HOTEL ❖ OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 2016

ARUN K MISHRA

(Cover) Children dress as Radha and Krishna, part of a raas leela group. Such enactments of the Lord's pastimes are popular in Vrindavan and Mathura; (above) pilgrims at the 2016 Ujjain Kumbha Mela gather in the evening at the ghats to take a dip in the holy Kshipra River.

October/November/December, 2016 • The Hindu Year Durmukhi, 5117

Bodhinatha Veylanswami

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Hinduism's Six Classical Schools

Our Insight section explores in-depth the Shadarshanas, six of India's ancient philosophical streams

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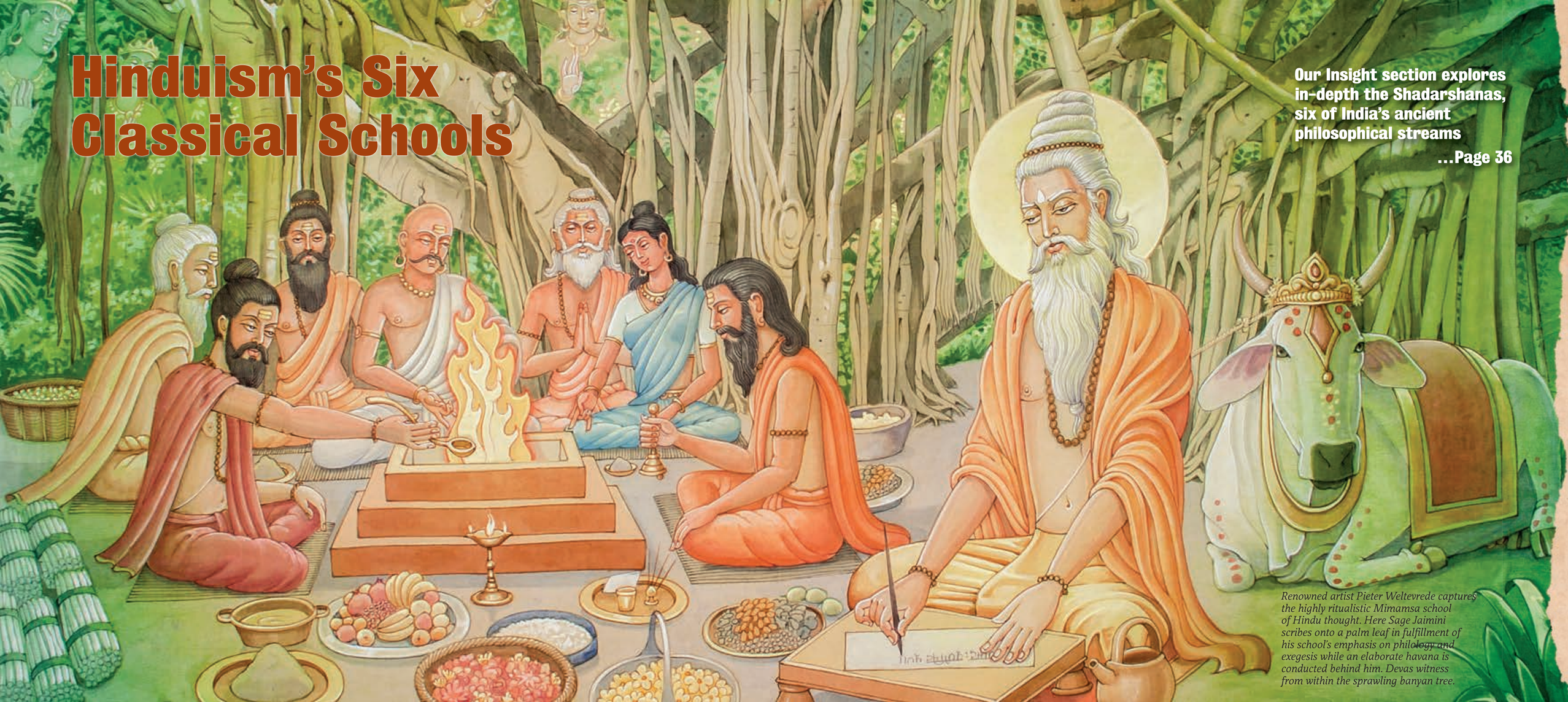

Renowned artist Pieter Weltevrede captures the highly ritualistic Mimamsa school of Hindu thought. Here Sage Jaimini scribes onto a palm leaf in fulfillment of his school's emphasis on philology and exegesis while an elaborate havana is conducted behind him. Devas witness from within the sprawling banyan tree.

PIETER WELTEVREDE

GLOBAL DHARMA

DIET

Plant-Based Diet Works its Wonders in Beef-Eating Texas

KNOWN FOR A LONG-HELD tradition of cowboys, cattle ranching and meat-eating, Texas is not easily thought of as being fertile ground for an innovative medical movement which calls for banning the beef.

Staton Awtrey is a cardiac surgeon at Midland Memorial Hospital located in the heart of oil and cattle country in West Texas. He's now prescribing to his cardiac patients a plant-based diet consisting of vegetables, fruits and legumes, but no animal products or junk food. He himself follows just such a program and has seen dramatic improvements to his heath.

He shared testimony of the diet's efficacy in the life of a married couple with whom he worked. "The husband of this couple had suffered from GERD (Gastroesophageal reflux disease, or acid reflux). He was morbidly obese, hypertensive, pre-diabetic, suffering from sleep apnea and migraine headaches. This couple used food as medicine. The result: all of his biometrics stabilized. He had been on four hypertensive meds and is now down to two, hoping to soon be off of all. He's lost 60 pounds and no longer has GERD. He hasn't had a migraine headache for 18 months, and is no longer pre-diabetic. His whole being is tremendously improved from nothing more than changing what he eats."

Awtrey is part of The Plantrician Project, a network of medical professionals dedicated to plant-based food education.

Plants over pills: *Awtrey says treating disease by healthy changes in diet is entering mainstream medicine in a major way*

Devotion prevails: *Musicians play inside Palani Andawer Temple, recently rebuilt after being destroyed in the 2004 tsunami*

INDONESIA

Banda Aceh's Hindu Temple

HUNDREDS OF HINDUS PILgrimaged from neighboring provinces in March to celebrate Panguni Uthiram with the small local Tamil community at Banda Aceh's sole Hindu temple. The town, located at the northern tip of Indonesia, was devastated by the 2004 tsunami. Most Hindus left after the disaster; the remaining hundred managed to rebuild the temple in 2012 with the help of contributions from Hindus in India and Malaysia.

While Banda Aceh is the only province in Indonesia to be under Sharia law, Hindus are free to offer worship both in private and public. Local Muslim Acehnese even shared in the festive mood, snapping selfies during the main procession.

Celebrations for Panguni Uthiram, the annual festival honoring the marriage of Lord Murugan to Goddess Deivayanai, included pujas in the temple, Deity processions with breaking of coconuts, and various forms of penance, such as carrying kavadi, piercing the cheeks with spears and dancing on swords.

EUROPE

Celebrating Diwali in Spain

LAST NOVEMBER, THE SPANISH city of Benalmádena hosted its first official observance of Diwali. The area is home to 500 of Spain's roughly 30,000 Hindus. The celebrations were focused in the town of Arroyo de la Miel at the Templo Hindú, which has served the local Hindu population since 2001.

Local political figures such as Benalmádena's Mayor Víctor Navas and the Municipal Mayor José Ortiz showed support by participating in the ceremonies.

Lighting up the streets: *Local Hindus displayed their "Feliz Diwali" sign for the first time during last year's festivities*

TOP TO BOTTOM: PLANTRICIANPROJECT.ORG; JP/HOTLI SIMANJUNTAK; ANDALUCIAINFORMACION.ES

SOCIETY

In India, Caste Is Not Limited To Hindus

EVERY MAJOR RELIGION PRACticed in India has its own expression of a caste system with individual classes, according to a 2005 survey done by the Indian government's National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). The NSSO is the largest organization in India conducting regular socio-economic surveys.

A government report based on the NSSO data provides a detailed population estimate of SRCs (Socio-Religious Communities) in all major Indian religions. Caste affiliation is shown in terms of SCs/STs (Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes) and self-reported identification of OBCs (Other Backward Classes) within each religion. Such data is not available from the Indian Census and other surveys.

Among the Hindus, 43% reported OBC status in 2004-05, up from about 38% in 1999-2000. The figures for SCs/STs showed little change, remaining slightly over 31%.

The report notes that the sample size was inadequate to properly separate out the SCs/STs category for Muslims.

Table 1.2: Distribution of Population of each Religion by Caste Categories

All India-2004-05

Religion/Caste	SCs	STs	OBCs	Others	All
Hindu	22.2	9.1	42.8	26.0	100
Muslim	0.8	0.5	39.2	59.5	100
Christians	9.0	32.8	24.8	33.3	100
Sikhs	30.7	0.9	22.4	46.1	100
Jains	0.0	2.6	3.0	94.3	100
Buddhists	89.5	7.4	0.4	2.7	100
Zoroastrians	0.0	15.9	13.7	70.4	100
Others	2.6	82.5	6.2	8.7	100
Total	**19.7**	**8.5**	**41.1**	**30.8**	**100**

Source: Distribution obtained from merged sample of Schedule 1 and Schedule 10 of NSSO 61st Round Survey

Above: *This table shows data from 2004-05. The previous survey was done in 1999-2000*

On a call: *Pandit Narayan Shastri (front) of Shubhpuja.com performs religious rites via Skype for a client living abroad*

TECHNOLOGY

Taking Punditry Online

IN THE NEW DELHI SUBURB OF Noida, one temple has set up high-definition cameras and hard drives to record pujas for out-of-town devotees.

Behind this innovation is Saumya Vardhan, the creator of ShubhPuja.com. She returned to India from London to start her new business in 2013. They offer 150 different pujas, as well as consultation in astrology, numerology and Vastu through certified professionals. The company employs five priests, all with advanced degrees from Hindu religious institutions.

Each month, they conduct hundreds of pujas and consultations, mainly for clients in India but also for those in the US, Europe and the rest of Asia.

"People want to keep traditions alive but no one has time to keep up, especially if you are far away from home," Vardhan said.

STUDENT LIFE

American Hindu Students Cope with Bigotry in School

THIS PAST MAY, THE HINDU American Foundation released its 2016 "Bullying in American Schools" report. It includes testimonies and data revealing how Hindu American students have been singled out, bullied and ostracized by their peers, largely due to school curricula that reinforce negative and inaccurate stereotypes.

A survey was conducted of 335 Hindu middle and high school students ranging from sixth to twelve grade from five US states over a six-week period in late summer/early fall of 2015. The students were not randomly selected, so this is not a statistical survey, but the answers were still revealing.

Questions ranged from what is taught about Hinduism in class, to the ways in which kids are ridiculed because of their religion, by fellow students and even teachers, to what sort of measures are taken by the school to address these problems, and what sort of takeaway the students had about Hinduism from their experience in school. Half of those surveyed had experienced social isolation for being Hindu. About a third said they were bullied for simply being Hindu, and one out of eight said their teachers made sarcastic remarks in class about Hinduism while teaching about it. Five percent of participants reported that school staff tried to convert them away from Hinduism. Though the polling was small, the results show a glaring need to improve school environments in regard to bullying.

Offer love and support: *Bullied kids often feel they have no one to turn to. Download the full report at: bit.ly/HAFBullying*

TOP TO BOTTOM: NATIONAL SAMPLE SURVEY OFFICE OF INDIA; LATIMES.COM; SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

ENVIRONMENT

Cleaning Goddess Prithivi

In 2011, a Hindu coalition of volunteers known as Sadhana formed in New York City. Their goal is to implement the ideals of Hinduism in the fields of social justice and environmentalism. Among their efforts, Project Prithvi "seeks to mobilize Hindus, especially youth, to live the principle of ahimsa by caring for the environment."

Volunteers clean local beaches of festival materials left by Hindus, including broken icons, Deity clothing, plastic garlands and puja thalis. Sadhana leaders have also visited Hindu temples to speak with priests and their devotees about adapting family traditions to modern environmental standards. Members seek to show how to make religious practice compatible with environmental awareness, for example, insisting that while submersion of murtis is important, worshipers need not leave them behind.

The effort has not been without resistance. "It's hard to tell someone not to do something they've been doing for decades," said Aminta Kilawan, one of Sadhana's founders and a local attorney who is legislative counsel for the New York City Council. During one weekly gathering, the group bagged 40 large sacks of trash in just three hours, with more abandoned puja items still on the shore.

Nonetheless, officials have witnessed a notable reduction in the amount of waste left behind by worshipers. "In New York, I've seen it go from something that is taboo to something that is acknowledged and talked about," said Sunita Viswanath, a founder of Sadhana who was honored by the White House last year for her faith-based environmental service.

Seva with a smile: *(left to right) Sunita Viswanath; Aminta Kilawan on far left with Project Prithvi volunteers after retrieving littered puja items*

Monk with a mission: *Xianfan, shown above with the robot, comments, "Xian'er helps provide meaning to people in a fast-changing, technology-dominated society."*

CHINA

Robot Monk Spreads Dharma

Outside Beijing, the Longquan Buddhist temple needed a new way to spread its teachings. Xianfan, a resident temple monk, conceived of a robot to do just that. He imagined a 60 cm tall, stylized version of a monk holding a tablet. He can answer 20 questions on dharma and hold a conversation with a pupil, all while moving about on his wheels. Like Hinduism, Buddhism is compatible with science, Xianfan says.

Xian'er, set to be unveiled in October, 2016, was developed by a technology company and artificial intelligence experts from the nation's top universities. Visitors say they connect with Xian'er and are inspired by him to learn more. With social reforms and the advent of social media, religion has been making a slow comeback in a country whose government is officially atheist.

BRIEFLY...

PRIESTS AND TEMPLE STAFF IN Telangana, India, called off a three-day income strike in June, 2015. The government agreed to raise the grant to each temple from US$39.27 per month to $94.25, of which $70.69 would be paid to priests and $23.56 to conduct basic rituals.

ACTIVISTS IN TIRUVANNAMALAI are protesting the move to widen the *girivalam* (circumambulation) path around Arunachala. Work began on a ditch for a 12-km drainage line along the proposed foot path. Sadhus, pilgrims and environmentalists are among the opposition. A human chain was formed around Sonagiri Forest in defiance of the proposal to remove trees as part of the project. Omgaranandha, a Puducherry-based pontiff, openly expressed his disapproval of removing any trees.

GOMUTRA IS A NATURAL PESTICIDE and is effectively being used in Sikkim, India's first fully organic state. Gomutra, cow urine, is now being employed by farmers who shunned chemical weed killers, synthetic fertilizers and genetically modified seeds for more than a decade.

THE SPANISH HINDU FEDERATION was established in June 2016 as a means of unifying Hindu groups in Spain, specifically for the goal of being recognized by the Spanish government as having the legal status of "deeply rooted." Such acknowledgement would guarantee the right to freedom of worship and include Hinduism in government training criteria on religious diversity.

GODDESS GANGA'S SACRED WATERS are now available for purchase within India's post offices and able to be shipped out to any place in the world. So far, the demand has outweighed the supply. For US22¢ or US33¢ customers can obtain a 200 or 500 milliliter bottle, respectively.

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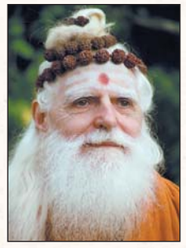

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IN MY OPINION

How Hindus Can Spell "Success"

Rather than winning spelling bees, our Hindu youth can be guided to learn about their heritage

BY ADITYA TYAGI

For several consecutive years, a Hindu American contestant of Indian origin has won the National Spelling Bee in the United States. Preparing for this competition is undoubtedly no small task. Contestants study for hours each day over several years. The champion, who must be 14 or younger, receives $40,000 in cash along with other prizes. The second- and third-place winners also receive large sums, and other contestants win prizes as well. The social and media coverage from these victories reinforces positive stereotypes of a hard working "model minority" group committed to academic excellence and professional success. So what's wrong with this picture?

The Indian Hindu community in the United States are relative newcomers. As with any new immigrant group, their children face challenges of assimilating into their new country and culture while maintaining an Indian and Hindu identity at home. Unfortunately, many parents have been ill-equipped to help them do so. Hindu children have been taunted about their religion with notions rooted in false stereotypes, and have been made to feel ashamed of their Hindu identity. In school curriculum nationwide, textbooks inaccurately portray Hinduism as a religion of oppression, superstition and blind ritual, thus furthering their embarrassment.

Due to these and other negative experiences, the Hindu collective identity is not as strong as it could be, with perceptions of Hinduism in the mainstream commonly negative or wholly inaccurate. Other minority groups have been quite successful in advancing their interests in the United States. The Jewish community, for instance, has achieved disproportionate success across the board. So how can Hindus more effectively advance their own interests as others have? For the short term, the Hindu community must realize that it is absolutely worth it to take Hinduism and its collective identity more seriously. As the United States becomes more religiously diverse, being proud of one's religious identity and boldly asserting it is seen as a strength. Many Indian Hindus have not understood this and are reluctant to even admit they are Hindu. This shame and embarrassment is no longer necessary. Societal attitudes towards Hindus are becoming more positive and we need to take advantage of it by being unapologetically proud of who we are.

For the long term, Hindu parents need to stop over emphasizing things such as spelling bees, which do little to inculcate Hindu values, identity and culture in their children. Instead—just as there are circuits to prepare children to compete in spelling bees and other subjects—parents should develop circuits to train youth in Hinduism. There is certainly no shortage of topics for Hinduism competitions, which would be a much better use of time than spelling bees. Youth could study the *Vedas,* yoga, tantra, ayurveda, the *Mahabharata,* the *Ramayana,* the *Puranas,* Sanskrit, Vedanta and more.

If we can give youth a reason to do their own research about their religion—in this case, by offering prizes at Hindu-based competitions—it would benefit them immensely. In school, they will be better prepared to explain Hinduism to their teachers and classmates with confidence. As adults, they will be well-informed and able to represent the Hindu community in a variety of settings, protecting it against bias, prejudice and other distortions. Additionally, with a solid basis for their opinions, they will be able to participate in geopolitical discourse involving Hindus around the world. This is how Hindu Americans should spell success!

Aditya Tyagi, 39, *was born in India and came to the US at a young age. He has a BS in Computer Engineering and a JD. He now lives in Illinois, US, and enjoys music, reading and all things related to Hinduism.* aditya_tyagi@yahoo.com

PUBLISHER'S DESK

Making Dharma Your Own

Understanding and applying to your daily life five dimensions of Hinduism's complex principle of virtue, duty, ambition and livelihood

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

DHARMA IS A COMPLEX AND COMPREHENSIVE term with many meanings, including religion, divine law, law of being, way of righteousness, ethics, duty, responsibility, virtue, justice, goodness and truth. In its most general sense *dharma* is that which sustains the orderly fulfillment of an inherent nature or destiny. It comes from the Sanskrit root *dhr,* "to sustain; carry, hold." Thus we can say that *dharma* is that which sustains the cosmos, human society and each member of society. Relating to the individual soul, it is the mode of conduct most conducive to spiritual advancement, the right and righteous path. As the meaning of dharma is so broad, I find it best not to translate it into English but rather use the word *dharma* itself, which works since the term, like so many Sanskrit words, is gradually being absorbed into the English language.

A book traditionally studied at a young age in Tamil schools is Saint Auvaiyar's ancient work *Atti Chudi.* It consists of 109 one-line verses that, while teaching the alphabet, provide guidelines on right living. The first verse is on dharma. It says: *"Aram (dharma) seya virumbu,"* or "Desire to fulfill dharma." This shows the long-standing importance of dharma in Hindu education. And it sounds so simple! However, dharma has so many subtleties that many youth find it challenging to relate to the concept. In response, we explore here five aspects of the term and their application in life.

1) Right Living Begins with Ganesha: The first and core meaning of *dharma* is living virtuously and fulfilling duty. It includes all the noble behaviors that we know are right and good. One learns to be selfless by thinking of others first, being respectful of parents, elders and swamis, following divine law, especially ahimsa, which is mental, emotional and physical noninjury to all beings. My guru, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, taught that the worship of Lord Ganesha puts one naturally on the path of virtuous living. "Ganesha sits on the psychic lotus of the muladhara chakra, the ganglia of nerves at the base of the spine within everyone. This chakra governs time, matter and memory. As the spiritual aspirant is lifted up from fear and confusion into conscious awareness of right thought, right speech and right action, the muladhara chakra becomes activated.... But the seeker loses one thing. He loses his free, instinctive willfulness. It is lost forever. Yet it is not a great loss. Man's own personal willfulness, his animalistic free will, is a feeble and insignificant force when compared to Lord Ganesha's divine will. When beholden to God Ganesha and inwardly awakened enough to be attuned to His will, it is then quite natural that the instinctive will bows down. Personal likes and dislikes vanish. Limited faculties of reason and analysis are overpowered and subdued by a greater will, a cosmic will, the will of dharma."

2) Two Paths, Two Dharmas: Recently I gave a presentation at a weekend retreat of the Hindu Students' Association. One of many written questions submitted to me in advance showed a common misunderstanding. "We talk about detachment from maya, but for most of us our career and living is centered around worldly subjects and concerns. How can we reconcile this fact with our larger desire to separate from the material world?" In their pursuit of dharma, these youth were struggling with the Upanishadic concept of self-abnegation, thinking that it applies to all Hindus, thinking they should be more detached from worldliness. I pointed out that it is vital to understand that in Hinduism there are two distinct paths: that of the householder, called *grihastha dharma,* and that of the renunciate, *sannyasa dharma.* Self-abnegation and detachment from maya belong to the renunciate path, not the householder path. This distinction of two paths is our second aspect of dharma.

To quickly cognize the differences between the two, take a look at the ancient ethical masterpiece *Tirukural* by Tiruvalluvar. In Part One, entitled "Virtue" or "Dharma" *(aram),* Section Two is "The Way of the Householder," and Section Three is "The Way of the Renunciate." Scanning the chapter titles immediately reveals the deep distinctions. Chapters in the householder section include: Wife, Children, Love, Hospitality, Gratitude, Possession of Self-Control and Avoidance of Covetousness. The final three chapters focus on giving to others so generously as to achieve renown in the community. Chapters in the renunciate life section include Austerity, The Impermanence of All Things, Renunciation, Knowledge of Truth and Eradication of Desire. Without even reading the actual verses, it is clear that detaching from the materialistic world is a goal for those on the renunciate path but not those on the householder path.

For Hindu monks, the *Tirukural* stresses renunciation of wealth. For the householder, becoming wealthy is encouraged—with the goal of generously sharing one's abundance with others. A contemporary example of the latter is a person Hindu youth and young adults readily relate to—Mark Zuckerberg, cofounder and CEO of Facebook. Mark celebrated the birth of his daughter in December, 2015, by pledging to give away 99 percent of his Facebook shares. Money from the shares, currently valued at US$45 billion, will go to projects and charities that advance human potential and promote equality.

3) Which Stage of Life? Our third aspect of dharma is *ashrama dharma*—the natural expression and maturing of the body, mind and emotions through four progressive stages. This idea was developed millennia ago and detailed in scriptures known as *Dharma Shastras* to highlight the fact that our dharma, or duty, changes and evolves as we mature from youth, to adulthood, senior years and old age. My guru considered that in modern times each ashrama is a 24-year period, applying equally to men and women, as follows:

- BRAHMACHARYA: student, birth to age 24, learning, pursuing secular and religious studies
- GRIHASTHA: householder, age 24 to 48, raising a family, fulfilling a career or profession, serving the community
- VANAPRASTHA: elder advisor, age 48 to 72, offering one's experience to help others
- SANNYASA: retiree, age 72 onward, withdrawing from society and devoting more time to religious practices

4) Four Positive Goals: Our fourth key to dharma is to understand it as one of the four goals of life. The Sanskrit term is *purushartha,* which literally means "human wealth." These are four pursuits in which people may legitimately engage. Also called *chaturvarga,* "fourfold good," they form a cornerstone of Hindu ethics: 1) *dharma,* or duty and piety; 2) *artha,* wealth; 3) *kama,* love and enjoyment; and 4) *moksha,* enlightenment and liberation from rebirth. It is vital to note that while dharma is a goal in its own right, it is also the guiding principle of the other three goals, as it defines the proper way to pursue wealth, pleasure and moksha. Do we acquire wealth in a virtuous and honest way? Are spouses faithful to one another? Dharma—virtue and piety—is the steady guide for artha and kama, and ultimately leading the soul to moksha.

5) Your Occupation: A fifth aspect of dharma relates to one's profession. In Sanskrit it is called *varna dharma.* As we read in *Dancing with Siva*: "Varna dharma defines the individual's obligations and responsibilities within the nation, society, community, class, occupational subgroup and family." In some professions the principles, or dharma, that guide it are defined in formal declarations. For example, Western medical doctors take the Hippocractic Oath, which includes this promise: "I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures which are required, avoiding those twin traps of over-treatment and therapeutic nihilism." Lawyers take an oath, one version of which states, "I will employ, for the purpose of maintaining the causes confided to me, such means only as are consistent with truth and honor..." Other professions, such as certified public accountants, have a written code that members are expected to follow. The hundreds of occupations without formal oaths or codes have traditional expectations which constitute an informal understanding of their dharmic ideas. The idea is that when individuals fulfill their respective varna dharma, the whole of society functions smoothly. Pondering this fifth dimension of dharma keeps us reminded of the ethics, goals and guidelines of our occupation.

By meditating on and understanding these five aspects of dharma, youth and adults can unfold a much better sense of dharma's place in their life and thus strive in an informed way to fulfill the first verse of *Atti Chudi:* "Desire to fulfill dharma."

SHUTTERSTOCK

How dharma flows: *(top to bottom) A mother applies a tilaka to her daughter's forehead as a sign of purity; a group of family men seek guidance and blessings from a swami; this family exemplify three of life's stages; this youth has discovered happiness in the pursuit of life's dharmic goals; two paramedics apply their professional training in a moment of emergency*

LETTERS

A Higher Standard

Excellent April/May/June, 2016, issue of HINDUISM TODAY. In my ten years of membership, I have found this issue the most impressive. The article by Shri Rajiv Malik on "The Sacred City of Haridwar" is beautifully written, with wonderful photographs and with facts not known to many people, even those from Haridwar. The concise excerpt from "The Secrets of Indian Gastronomy," with rare facts and figures, gave us a lot of insights in our daily meals. I have explained the gist to a number of our senior clubs, to benefit them from day to day.

I was overwhelmed with the "Sanskrit-Tamil Harmony" article with Acharya Vamadeva Shastri's inscription. The last article, "Masterful Carvers of Rajasthan," was unbelievable. To find such art in India was new information for me. While kudos goes to this publication, I shall highly appreciate if this standard is kept up in future issues!

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Informing Readers

We are happy to see the latest magazine with Sant Kabir Ji (July/August/September, 2016). You have done great work for the international community and young generation who was not very much familiar with this great saint. This *seva* benefits the present as well as future generations. I am happy to see our name and reference in this magazine.

DR. RAJANI KANT
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The Battle for Sanskrit

Regarding the vociferous attempt by some Tamil speakers to distance themselves (and others) from the Sanskrit language, it must be remembered that "divide and conquer" has been a classic strategy of aggressors from time immemorial. Classic, because it has proven so very effective.

I don't know how this hubbub got started, but I suspect the idea was first put forth by non-Hindus with the intent of weakening our great religion by creating an artificial separation among its members. Unfortunately, human beings—however well-meaning—have always been susceptible to such tactics, energetically taking up the false banner of separation.

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Shirdi Sai on the Rise

The latest issue of HINDUISM TODAY has an excellent coverage on the life of beloved Sai Baba of Shirdi. The article rightfully mentions that Shirdi Sai Baba's popularity is on the rise. We have seen over the years in California, the acceptance and installation of his statutes in a number of local temples attracting Sai devotees. Many newer temples of Sai Baba have also sprung up in California and in different parts of United States. Sekhar Boddupalli aptly pointed out that 1977 Bollywood film "Shirdi Ke Sai Baba," with popular actors of yesteryear, was instrumental in popularizing the life and miracles of Sai Baba.

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Rama's Bank

The article, "Banking on Lord Rama" in the April/May/June, 2016, issue is very interesting. I know many people that just like to write God's name continuously. This article will be very useful to them.

My question for HINDUISM TODAY is: what is the source of income for the organizers/workers of the Bank? How do they survive? Who covers the cost for the ever-expanding storage facility?

PRABHAKAR JOSHI
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✓*From the author of the article:*

✎ *The Bank is under the control of Sri Maniram Ki Chhavani Trust. It is a trust registered under the law of the land and gets donations from religious and philanthropic Hindus whose contribution not only helps run the bank but also serves the requirement of sadhu samaaj who can reside at the chhavani during their stay in Ayodhyaji free of cost.*

✎ *The organizers/workers provide selfless service for which they aren't paid anything but their complete requirement is taken care of by the Trust.*

✎ *The Valmiki Temple where the office is located is a huge complex and it has rooms which are comparable with the strong room of a bank where these Ramanama are stored. Visitors and pilgrims can visit this room. There is also a basement in the temple where the Ramanama are stacked in racks neatly tied with red cloths. One important piece of information I could collect is though rat infestation is rampant in and around the place where these Ramanama are stored, they do not cause any damage to the Ramanama. Nor are these infested by white-worm.*

Sari, Not Sorry

The article "Sartorial Statement" from the last issue was an interesting read. I applaud Tanya Rawal for focusing on the positive aspects of Indian culture, especially saris. It's ironic that while most Indian women in India are choosing Western outfits while discarding saris, many Indian American women are embracing them. I always found saris to be very colorful, feminine and graceful. I know many Indian American women who look forward to attending weddings and formal parties where they can wear saris. On the contrary, I have learned that in India, saris are out of fashion and only older women and maid servants wear them. What a shame!

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Accessible to All

Recently, it has occurred to me how important it is that all Hindu temples and religious establishments maintain premium access and services for those with disabilities. As many temples here in the United States, perhaps similarly elsewhere, are non-profit organizations exempt from taxes to varying degrees and committed to serving the public, for the sake of hospitality these temples should ensure that they are doing their due diligence in meeting and far exceeding the regulations established by the Americans with Disabilities Act, and similar laws in other jurisdictions. While I am not professionally adept at critiquing the preparedness of institutions, and nor am I disabled, I have visited several temples in which a concern of equal access and opportunity has arisen.

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Kali Article

Just wanted to thank you and the staff in Kauai for the excellent job you did with my Kali material. The layout is beautiful. Just great! Love how you even worked in the color photos.

SUSAN LOYD
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"It's Not in Books, You Fool"

Thank you for the wonderful article on dance and the spiritual path in the July/Aug/Sep, 2016 issue. A real reminder that Hinduism is an experiential religion, and that all experience, seemingly 'good' or 'bad' is actually good when one holds a refined perspective. I enjoyed the analogy that one does not become a good dancer by reading about dance; practice, persistence and perseverance are required—that is putting into motion the theory one has read.

A dancer will encounter challenges and mistakes in the quest to become a great dancer, or as it was conveyed beautifully in the article, opportunities to learn and exert willpower to surmount seeming imperfections. So great is our religion that finds joy in every circumstance. In reading HINDUISM TODAY, our mystical teachings become alive with pragmatic wisdom which is applicable to life today in a cosmopolitan city as it was in times of yore. This article provided much inspiration to keep moving forward, keep learning and keep striving to perfect our nature.

Nandri for such a positive reminder to hold the notion we are divine beings on the path of experience.

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Thank You

Thanks for the in-depth news about the Hindu philosophy and culture.

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or visit: **www.hinduismtoday.com/letters**

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

The Inner Reason Hindus Prosper and Shine Everywhere

How a family of first-, second- and third-generation Hindu Americans reclaimed their faith

"Wherever in the world Hindus live, they seem to prosper," observes noted Florida surgeon Dr. Suresh Rajamanickam. "They are statistically the wealthiest, enjoy the best lifestyles, and are often acclaimed for success in their field, be it IT, medicine, academia, science, whatever."

"This comes naturally to them, I am convinced, as result of their shared Hindu background. Whether they acknowledge it or not, deep inside, it is there, inducing a positive outlook, a sense of confidence, self-worth and a feeling of all's-well-with-the-world. These are the bases of creativity and success.

"But I know from personal experience that it's easy to float, out there, and deny our background even when we enjoy the benefits—there are a lot of forces in the world today working for that denial, especially among young people. It's often easier for a Western person to take an interest in Hinduism than for a born Hindu.

"I was in that position myself for a long time," admits Suresh who, in 1968, at the tender age of two, landed in Manhattan from India with his parents. At that time there were virtually no Indians in the USA. "My childhood was quite a challenge, and I Americanized as fast as I could."

He eventually did well in his studies, succeeded and, typically enough, rose to the top of his field, where he finds himself today. Still, despite parental proddings, he did not particularly value his spiritual heritage—until recently.

"The worldwide trend of openness to all things Hindu, especially on the part of millennials, began to affect me. And I was deeply intrigued by so many earthshaking scientific breakthroughs that are perfectly in line with our ancient teachings. My thinking began to change. Then I discovered HINDUISM TODAY magazine, and it all came together wonderfully.

The Rajamanickam family visits Hinduism Today headquarters in Hawaii: *(left to right) Dr. Rajamanickam's daughter Uma; sister Sumathi; son Krish; Kumarnathaswami; Sadasivanathaswami; father Malayandi; Dr. Suresh; wife Nisha; Brahmanathaswami; mother Bakia.*

"Here it all was: my heritage, who I am, where I come from, and what all this is about. Here were my answers in more precise detail, clarity and inspiration than I ever dreamed of. 'This is what we all need,' I thought. I bought the complete collection of issues going all the way back to 1996—and, while maintaining my busy career, spent months devouring every article of every issue, imbibing gem after gem of our marvelous faith. I could not stop. I was reconnecting. Everything for my family and me has since bloomed. We now have a shrine room where we perform daily sadhana, whose undeniable benefits we enjoy through the rest of the day.

"Hinduism gives vision and courage; it takes your cares away and gives equanimity in the face of the world's concerns and fears. This invaluable benefit makes Hinduism and the carrier of its message, HINDUISM TODAY, urgently needed, today and tomorrow. In the more than 37 years of its existence, no other journal like it has appeared. Therefore I expect none will appear in the next 100 years, either. It is up to us make sure it continues and prospers on into that far future."

To that end, Suresh and his family have donated generously to the Hinduism Today Production Fund and plan to include it in their estate plan. "It is our dharma, we who have had the good fortune to tap into this wellspring of positiveness, to give back—and pay it forward, too, for our contemporaries, for the children, the grandchildren, and for ourselves, too, a better world to enjoy when we come back in a future life.

"We Hindus are wealthier than average; and we do give to charities—so let us be sure to include HINDUISM TODAY and its Production Fund among them in our estate plans, as well as in our current giving."

Read about the Production Fund at www.hheonline.org/productionfund.

Ask for our *Planned Giving Toolkit* by contacting one of our monastic staff at 1-888-464-1008 or hhe@hindu.org.

QUOTES & QUIPS

Spirituality is neither the privilege of the poor nor the luxury of the rich. It is the choice of the wise man.

Swami Chinmayananda (1916–1993), *founder of Chinmaya Mission*

Wearing orange robes, carrying a walking stick or water pot, talking of Vedanta and arguing about it with everyone—these things do not make one a swami! **Swami Nityananda** (?–1961), *satguru of Swami Muktananda*

First step—selfless action. Second step—tranquility. Third step—remaining in *nishdai*, or service to humanity, according to your will. **Yogaswami** (1872–1964), *Sri Lankan sage*

Things are as they should be. **Swami Chidananda Saraswati** (1916–2008), *former president of the Divine Life Society*

When his mind has become serene, by the practice of meditation, he sees the Self through the self, and rests in the Self, rejoicing. *The Bhagavad Gita, 6.24*

A "Dial-a-Prayer" app has been released for atheists. You call it up, it rings and rings, but nobody answers.

What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god! **William Shakespeare** (1554–1616), *poet, playwright and actor*

True teaching is not an accumulation of knowledge; it is an awakening of consciousness which goes through successive stages. *Egyptian adage*

Learn to get in touch with the silence within yourself and know that everything in life has purpose. There are no mistakes, no coincidences, all events are blessings given to us to learn from. **Elisabeth Kubler-Ross** (1926–2004), *Swiss-American psychiatrist, pioneer in near-death studies*

DID YOU KNOW?

The Hindu Pushup

Hindus have an abundance of bragging rights. We can say our holy ones of yore gave contributions to the rest of the world in fields such as yoga, math, science, poetry, astronomy and astrology. Now you can add one more to the list: the Hindu pushup or *dand*. We have our own pushup variation and it's considered one of the best full-body exercises you can do for health and fitness. The "Hindu pushup" is a staple drill in the training routines of East Indian, Iranian, Turkish, Chinese and Japanese wrestlers. The variation is "Hindu" because like yoga, it originated in India, where, today in the *akharas*—wrestling schools—the exercise is still performed.

The Indian wrestler known as "the Great Gama" helped make the exercise famous in the 1900s by performing thousands of repetitions in front of witnesses. From that point on, Hindu pushups were considered the secret training tool of Asian combat sports.

In 1911, sports journalist T.M. Alexander promoted the Great Gama and Hindu pushups in *Health & Strength* magazine: "You will be quite surprised to hear that when last year I went to see Gama performing this exercise I began to count, and saw that he went on doing over 2,000 *dands* within three hours."

While yogis use yoga to prepare the body for meditation, Indian wrestlers use the Hindu pushup to prepare the body for competition. Exactly where the Hindu pushup and other ancient eastern calisthenics originated we don't know. Some pandits and Vedic scholars say there is a Veda explaining how to attain a high fitness standard. More research on the subject is needed.

RAJESHMSHARMA.BLOGSPOT.COM

Ancient athletics: *Rajesh Sharma (athlete in photo), shows the Hindu pushup is comprised of two yoga positions. It starts with the downward dog asana and transitions into the naga asana while never putting one's weight on the ground. Watch Rajesh's video at bit.ly/hindupushup.*

ANNOUNCEMENT: The regular meeting of the Clairvoyant Society will not take place this month, due to unforeseen circumstances.

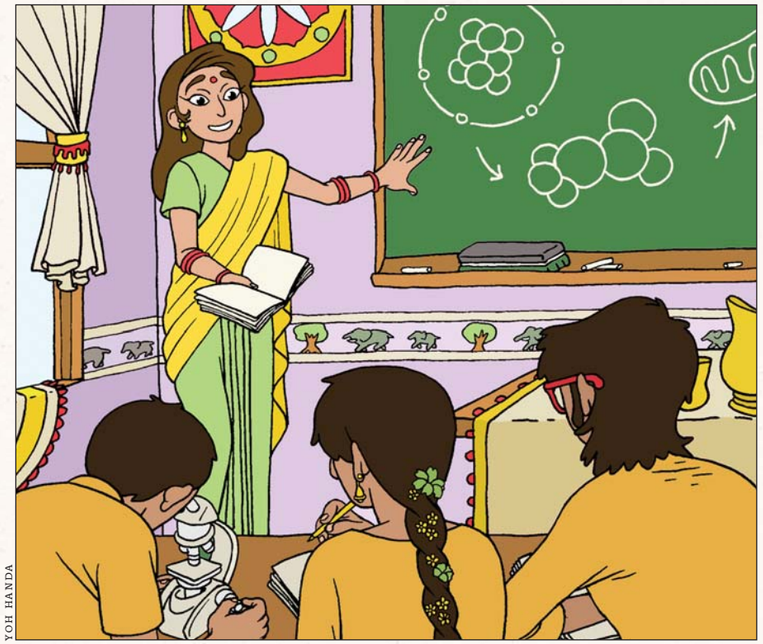
All knowledge that the world has ever received comes from the mind. The infinite library of the universe is in our own mind. **Swami Vivekananda,** (1863–1902)

One who is established in a comfortable posture while concentrating on the inner Self naturally becomes immersed in the heart's ocean of bliss. *Siva Sutras 3.16*

The creatures that inhabit this earth, be they human beings or animals, are here to contribute to the beauty and prosperity of the world. **Dalai Lama**

Realizing the Self is up to you. You have the ability. **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami,** *editor of* Hinduism Today

There are only two things you can really depend on: one is the changeableness of life, and the other is the unchanging Self within you. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927–2001), *founder of* Hinduism Today



YOH HANDA

"Did teacher really just tell us not to trust atoms because they make up everything?"

BASICS

Guiding Children

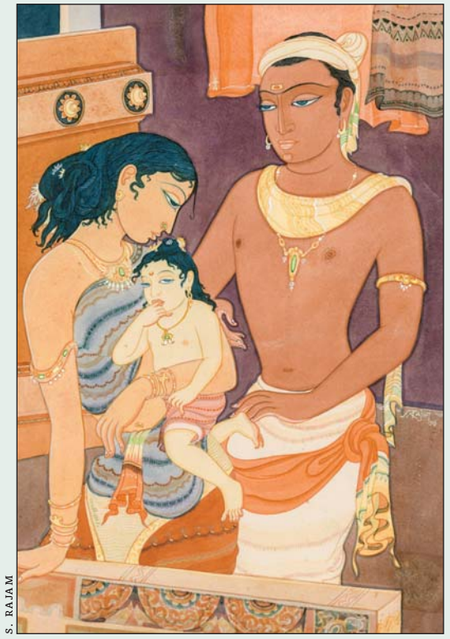
The fundamental duty of parents is to provide food, shelter and clothing and to keep their children safe and healthy. The secondary duty is to bestow education, including instruction in morality and religious life. Assuring the health and well-being of their offspring is the most essential duty of parents to their children, never to be neglected. Parents should be most diligent in guiding their children toward virtue, protecting them from all bad company and influences, being strict yet never harsh or mean, allowing them prudent freedom in which to grow.

Children are constantly learning, and that learning must be guided carefully by the parents. The young's education, recreation and companions must be supervised. They should be taught the scriptures of their lineage. They should be encouraged to study hard, and challenged to excel and fulfill their natural talents. They should be praised and rewarded for their accomplishments. Children need and seek guidance, and only the parents can truly provide it. A child's faults, if not corrected, will be carried into adult life. Still, care should be taken to not be overly restrictive either.

Children should never be struck, beaten, abused or ruled through a sense of fear. Children, be they young or old, have a karma and a dharma of their own. Their parents have a debt to pay them; and they have a debt to return later in life.

The *Vedas* plead, "O friend of men, protect my children. O adorable one, protect my cattle. O sword of flame, protect my nourishment."

From Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami's *Dancing with Siva*, Sloka 83



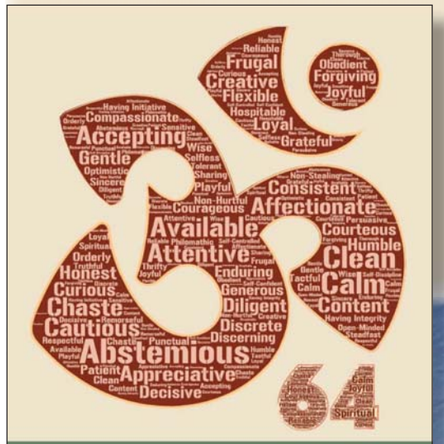
S. RAJAM

Tools for Transformation

A Character Building Workbook

64 Character Qualities to Help Build, Transform and Improve Life

By Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami



As a tool to help children and adults build, transform and improve their character, Satguru has developed a list of sixty-four character qualities and presented them in this workbook. A sample two-page spread is shown below.

50. Self-Confident

Read here—bit.ly/self-confident50—how young Anand acquires self-confidence through mastering woodworking and other skills with the help of his father, empowering him to face the most difficult challenges as he goes through life.

Self-confidence means trusting in one's abilities and skills. I practice it by remembering my past successes when embarking on a new project. The opposite is self-doubt.

Comparing the actions of one who is self-confident to one who is self-doubting		
Situation	**Self-Confidence**	**Self-Doubt**
You get an unexpected offer to start a promising new business, and…	remembering past successes, bravely accept the challenge.	are assailed by self-doubt and tell the principals you have enough happening in your life.
When the guru gives you a new spiritual assignment that seems impossible, you…	rely on your conviction that we are each a divine being and set out to succeed.	fear you are not as strong as he seems to think and decide to ignore his instructions.
One day you wake up with a great idea that will change your life forever, so you…	use affirmations to enhance your confidence and set out on the new journey into the future.	conclude this is just another wild idea for which you have neither the knowledge or the skills, and do nothing.

Gurudeva explained: "All you can do in living your life every day is to make today just a little bit better than yesterday was. You will then have confidence in yourself, so that tomorrow will be all right, too, and you won't fear the tomorrows."

"In order to be confident within yourself, have no fear. In order to have no fear, say to yourself, 'I am all right, right now.' This will quickly bring you into the here-and-now consciousness."

"Someone who meditates has confidence in all departments of life. You can build that confidence. If you sit down to meditate, meditate! Don't get sidetracked on anything else, no matter how attractive it may be."

ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, if when starting a new project, you don't feel confident, use the affirmation "I can, I will, I am able to accomplish what I plan."

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF SELF-CONFIDENCE: _____

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FROM THE AGAMAS

Lord Siva's Body Composed of Mantras

Part two of a discussion about Siva's body and its cosmic actions

The following is a translation from the Mrugendra Agama, *chapter 3, section 8–15. This chapter ends a two-part series on the nature of the Supreme Lord, Siva, and His body consisting of Sakti's power. The author reveals why and how Siva is both with body and without. This Agama finishes explaining how Pancha Brahma relates to each part of Siva's body.*

SINCE THERE ARE NO BODY-CREATING SEEDS (SUCH AS ANAVA, karma and others) for the Supreme Lord, His body is not like our own. It is of the nature of Shakti only, constituted of five mantras so as to be instrumentally useful in performing the five cosmic functions. These five constituent mantras correspond to the head and other parts of Siva's body. The five mantras are: *Isana, Tatpurusha, Aghora, Vama* and *Sadyojata*.

Due to the nature of bestowing grace upon all, Siva's existence and function in the higher plane of pure *adhva* (pure realm of maya) is comparable to the head-portion of a body. Thus, Isana mantra is considered to constitute the head of Lord Siva.

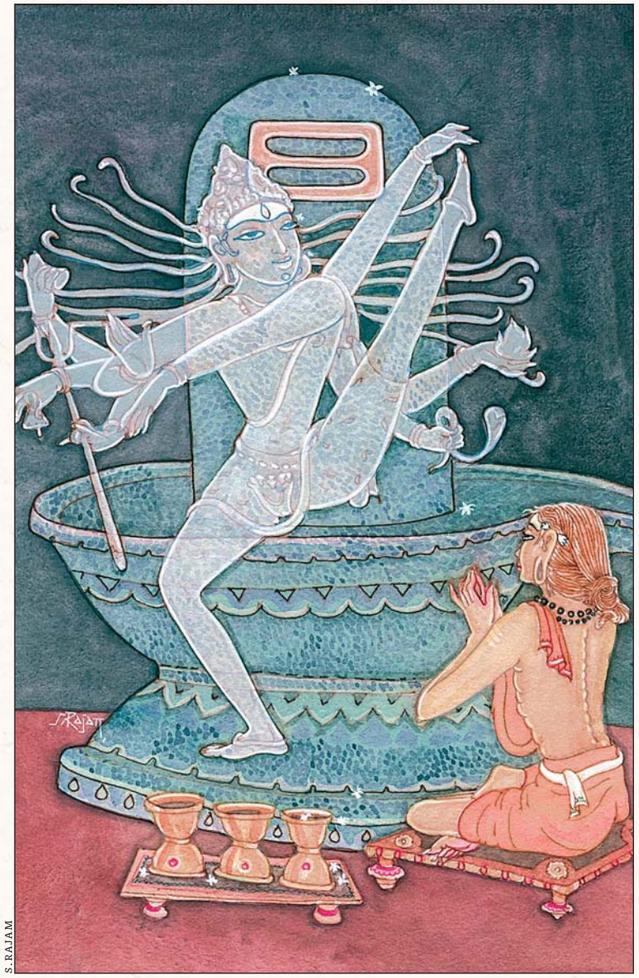
Tatpurusha mantra is considered to constitute the face of Lord Siva, because His body exists as the activating and energizing source in the bodies of higher souls (*devas*) and of other beings. It manifests and illumines the knowledge of said beings; it dispels the fear related to the continuing transmigration; and it protects all souls.

The word *hridaya* is synonymous with consciousness; and Siva's consciousness is absolute pureness and tranquility. Being free from the state of dreadfulness, *aghora,* the mantra adopts the form *Aghora Hridaya*. Since the energy Parigraha Shakti, otherwise known as Adhikara Sakti, is related to impure maya and is considered dreadful, the form of Siva is figuratively said to be frightful.

As the three goals of *dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth)* and *kama (enjoyment)* are of inferior nature when compared to moksha (the state of liberation), they are collectively known as *vama*. That effulgence of Siva which enables souls to experience dharma, artha and kama according to their karmic fruits becomes known as Vamadeva. By its own nature *guhya* (meaning "not exposed to vision"), it remains very subtle and secret. The Vamadeva mantra is thus considered to constitute the hidden part of Lord Siva's form, Vamadeva Guhya.

By its mere will, the *Sadya* mantra creates bodies for souls instantaneously, and it creates the mantric forms suitable for yogic contemplation. Because of this power, and because of its quickness of action (sadya), the mantra assumes the form Sadyojata Murta. Siva is called *Murtin*—possessor of form—not because He assumes forms, but because of this mantra.

In reality, there is no body for Lord Siva, since all the actions to be carried out by the body are all fulfilled by His Shakti itself. The form as constituted by Shakti is said to be body only in the secondary sense. Even though this power is one only, the enlightened sages maintain that Shakti is associated with different states, such as vama, and others, in view of the varied actions concerned with the pure path, the Shuddha Maya.



Siva as the soul and the creator: *As the jnani accomplishes his goal in meditation, Siva is seen as form in the formless image. For Lord Siva whose form is constituted in a way with the five mantras, Shakti—who is with invincible power which could never be obstructed—serves as the instrumental force. Through this instrumental force, Siva always performs the five cosmic functions.*

DR. S. P. SABHARATHNAM SIVACHARYAR, of the Adi Saiva priest lineage, is an expert in ancient Tamil and Sanskrit, specializing in the *Vedas, Agamas* and *Shilpa Shastras*. This excerpt is from his recent translation of the *Mrugendra Agama*.

Mural at Prem Mandir depicting the nightly raas leela at Nidhivan where Krishna, shown with Radha in the center, appears in many forms to dance with all the gopis

PHOTOSOFIA.COM/ARUN MISHRA

Braj Bhoomi: Krishna's Land

Vrindavan is the land of Lord Krishna's childhood leelas, which still take place nightly in the town's sacred tulsi groves. In this article, Part One of our visit to Braj Bhoomi, we'll tour the temples and meet the swamis, scholars, priests and the Bhagwat katha vachaks—those who daily tell the stories of Krishna's pastimes to all who draw near.

By Rajiv Malik, New Delhi

Vrindavan, the childhood abode of Lord Krishna, is a popular pilgrimage destination located in a bend in the Yamuna River in Braj Bhoomi. Vrindavan's name comes from *vrinda* (tulsi) and *vana* (forest), since tulsi trees once covered the area. Just seven miles north of Krishna's birthplace, it is a two-hour drive from Delhi. Here occurred many of Krishna's boyhood *leelas* or pastimes, most famously the *raas leela*, or dance, with Radha and the gopis. Even now their dance is believed to take place every night in Nidhivan Kunj and Seva Kunj, the two small groves of tulsi trees that remain in this now heavily developed area.

Photographer Arun Mishra and I spent nearly two weeks in April retracing the steps and reliving the adventures of the young Krishna. Much of our time was spent in Vrindavan, the focus of this first installment of our report. In the next issue we will describe Mathura, Nandgaon, Barsana and a few other significant places in Braj Bhoomi.

We were fortunate to encounter upon our arrival our good friend Swami Gopal Sharan Devacharya, head of the charming Sri Golok Dham in Delhi and Vrindavan and honored as Hinduism Today's Hindu of the Year, 2009. Entrusted to prominent saint Swami Lalita Sharan Devacharya at the tender age of four, Swamiji has a close association with the holy city. He lived here before going to Varanasi for higher education and returns periodically to, as he told us, "recharge my batteries in the place where I did my sadhana and tapas." He also oversees the ashram here, which is their main publishing center and where they have 24 brahmacharis engaged in Sanskrit study. Swamiji facilitated our meetings with many of the city's saints.

Swami explained to us that Vrindavan is not just a physical place but a spiritual realm imbued with the presence of Lord Krishna Himself. Swami's lineage, the Nimbarka Sampradaya, dates its presence here back some 5,000 years, to shortly after the lifetime of Krishna. Other major teaching lineages have become associated with the place since that time, he explained, including those of Ramanuja, Vishnuswami (in the line of Sant Namdev), the Ramanandis and the Gaudiyas.

The Bengali saint Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486–1534), founder of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, was primarily responsible for Vrindavan's present-day renown. He sent a team of his disciples, known as the Six Goswamis, here to mystically rediscover the sites of the leelas of Krishna with Radha and the gopis as told in the *Bhagavata Purana*. Vrindavan had a few temples at that time, but the area was mostly tulsi trees. The Goswamis, sannyasin monks, designated certain families to carry on the tradition, and the Goswami families still care for Vrindavan temples today.

Some say Vrindavan was unknown before the Goswamis' arrival, but it is only a few miles from Mathura, which dates back thousands of years and is mentioned in the *Ramayana*. A major city by the 6th century bce, Mathura underwent catastrophic destruction beginning with the attack of Mahmud of Ghazni in 1018, then the Sultanate of Delhi and finally Aurangzeb. In each attack the temple marking Krishna's birthplace was destroyed, then later rebuilt by the devotees.

Vrindavan remained heavily forested until 250 years ago, when local rulers initiated intense development—a process continued today by apartment complex entrepreneurs. Many of the old temples from that time are in a state of neglect. New temples have arisen in the last half century, altering the spiritual landscape. The Sri Krishna-Balaram Mandir, opened by ISKCON in 1975, was popular with visitors until eclipsed in 2012 by Prem Mandir, built by Shri Kripalu Maharaj on a 54-acre site on the edge of town. Even this

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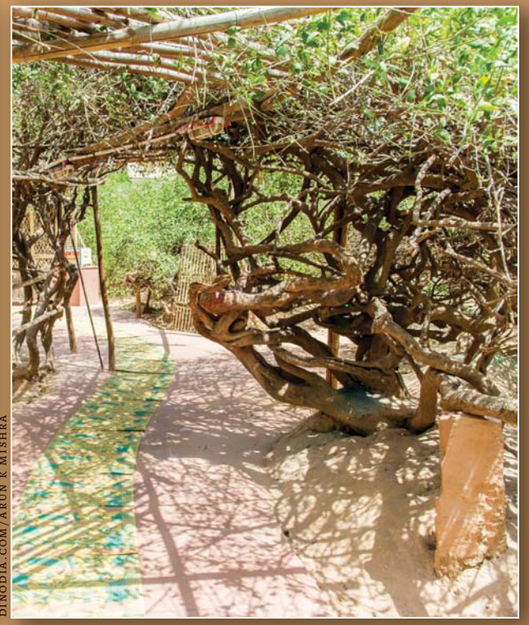

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Haridwar: *(counter-clockwise from below left) Banke Bihari shrine, Nidhivana Kunj; the tangled tulsi trees of Nidhivana; map of Braj Bhoomi and its 157-mile circumambulation route; Vrindavan lies in a bend in the Yamuna River; Radha and Krishna at the Radha Golokbihari ji temple in the Shri Golok Dham Ashram, Gaushala Nagar, Vrindavan*

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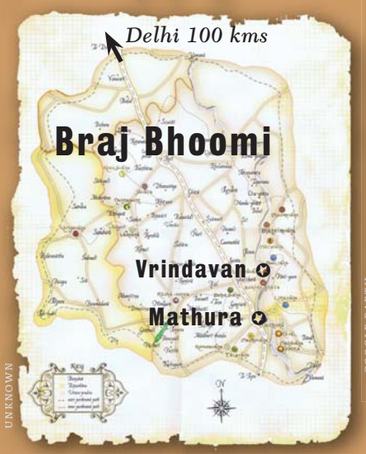

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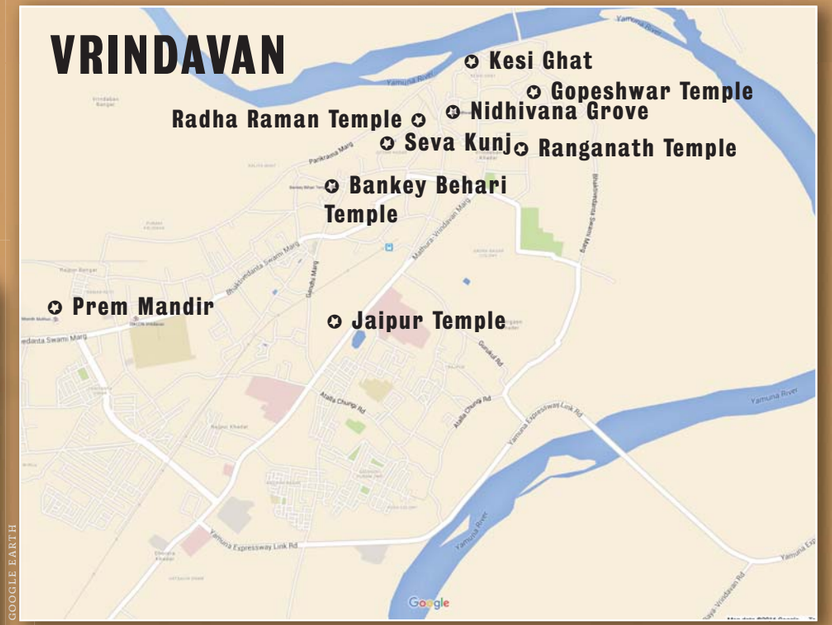

GOOGLE EARTH

may be overtaken by the ambitious Vrindavan Chandroday Mandir, which plans to include a 700-foot-high skyscraper in the midst of a huge spiritual park.

With a modern highway linking it to Delhi, Vrindavan sees a daily influx of nearly 100,000 people, a number equal to its own population. Weekends see even more, often just for the day. Brijwasis, as the locals are called, lament that many of these visitors are more interested in a picnic than a true pilgrimage. Between the development and the visitors, the town is something of an environmental mess, compounded by the now highly polluted and dewatered Yamuna River (thanks to Delhi upstream) which nearly encircles it. Government agencies and local environmentalists alike are working to solve both issues.

The Sacred Groves

Swami Gopal Sharan advises, "One can realize the significance of Vrindavan Dham by merely entering its area. The earth and dust of this place are sacred. If you go to any ancient temple in the evening, you will find bhajans and kirtans being performed. The spirit of devotion here has to be experienced to be understood."

I tasted Vrindavan's spiritual power on my first visit to **Nidhivan Kunj**, one of the two remaining tulsi groves, site of the eternal evening raas leela of Krishna, Radha and the gopis. Treading the paths of Nidhivan, where Krishna and Radha walk every day, is magical. The day is hot, the paths scorching our feet, but we and the other devotees pay this no mind; each is thrilled to be connected to the earth and dust which daily come in contact with the lotus feet of Radha Rani and Thakur Ji. The tulsi trees grow twisted and bent over towards the earth. I feel transported back to ancient times when thousands of gopis performed the maha raas leela with Krishna and Radha. But then I realize there is no need to go into the past to experience the eternal leelas of Krishna, as they continue even now. I can hear His decorated flute playing tunes of love. I hear the sounds of anklets and the tinkling bangles of Raja Rani Ji and the eight *sakhis*, Her closest friends among the gopis.

Shri Swami Gopal Sharan *shares a moment with a friend in his ashram's modern gaushala*

I am brought back to this mortal world by the loud voice of a guide who is relating the stories connected with Nidhivan. For many it is difficult to believe that the raas leela takes place here every night, but great realized souls have said it is so. The priests of Nidhivan's Ranga Mahal Temple here say that every evening before they close the temple, they make up the bed for Radha and Krishna to rest after the raas leela. They leave various items including a fresh sari, a cosmetic kit, laddus, betel leaves and neem twigs for cleaning the teeth, then lock the temple. In the morning when the doors are unlocked, the bed has been slept in and the various items have been used. We heard accounts of this daily miracle many times during our stay, a testament to the intimate closeness of Radha and Krishna that can be experienced here.

Nidhivan is also famous for the appearance of the *shri vigrah* (physical image) of Bankey Bihari Ji (Krishna) in the hands of His ardent devotee, famous classical music exponent and guru Swami Haridas Ji, whose samadhi (burial crypt) is also located here. A small temple named Prakatya Sthal is dedicated to the appearance of Bihari Ji, but the shri vigrah of Haridas is now worshiped in the nearby Bankey Bihari Temple, built for that purpose in 1864. Nidhivan also has a small temple to Radha Rani in which She is playing Krishna's flute that She is said to have stolen to tease Him.

Busy worship: *(below, left to right) Seva Kunj, one of the two forested areas left in Vrindavan; the town's popular sweets market; entrance to Bankey Bihari temple*

After the evening arati, all entrances to Nidhivan are closed, to be reopened for the morning worship. Even the monkeys leave. After nightfall, Radha and Krishna's raas leela begins. It is believed that anyone staying in Nidhivan overnight would be found dead or insane in the morning—a threat more effective than a "No Trespassing" sign.

Walking barefooted in Nidhivan and remembering all the folklore and stories of the raas leela, I feel truly blessed, intoxicated with the divine nectar of love which Radha Ji symbolizes and embodies.

Also famous is the other forested grove remaining in Vrindavan—**Seva Kunj**, associated with the saint Harivansh Ji Maharaj. Here, too, it is said Lord Krishna, Radha and the gopis perform raas leela every night. Unlike Nidhivan, the paths are covered with iron grills, keeping the monkeys at bay who might otherwise steal one's glasses, mobile or purse, apparently just to torment their fellow simians, though sometimes they accept a bribe such as a banana to return their booty. The parikrama walkway encircling the grove has neatly engraved slokas from the *Yamuna Ashthak* and *Radha Sudha Nidhi* in praise of Radha Rani and Krishna. In this grove, too, humans and monkeys alike move out by evening, before the raas leela, lest they not survive the night. The Radha Ashtami festival is celebrated here with great fanfare. There are also evening bhajans with famed singers.

In the center of Seva Kunj is the Nikunj temple, famed for its enshrined picture of Lord Krishna massaging the feet of His beloved Radha Ji. A Muslim devotee of Lord Krishna known as Bhakt Raskhan composed a poem about how he searched the Braj area for Krishna and finally found Him in Seva Kunj massaging the feet of Radha Rani, a sign of His reverence for womanhood. The temple has many paintings of Radha and Krishna performing different leelas, in various moods, all according to the Radha Vallabh tradition.

My wife Renu full of joy visiting Seva Kunj and seeing the creator of the world Thakur Ji massaging the feet of His beloved. Other women in our group also exchange the same kind of glances with their life partners after hearing the wonderful story of love of Radha and Krishna, told by the temple priest.

The Temples

From the sacred groves we set out to visit Vrindavan's temples, starting with the most famous, **Bankey Bihari**. Many pilgrims make this their first destination here, only visiting other temples afterwards. On weekends, in barely controlled chaos, hundreds of thousands struggle for a glimpse of Radha and Krishna brought into existence as a single form by the tapas of Saint Haridas and worshiped here instead of Nidhivan since 1864. On our second visit, coming with Swami Gopal Sharan, we are allowed within a few feet of the Shri Vigrah, displayed in what is called *ful bangla*, "house of flowers." Thousands of people, hands raised, chanted "Bolo Bankey Bihari Lal Ki Jai."

A unique feature of darshan here is that every few minutes a curtain is pulled in front of the Deity. The eyes of the enshrined form of Krishna are believed to be so powerful that anyone who gazed into them directly would fall madly in love with the God and never leave the temple. Apparently this had actually happened, and the practice of pulling the curtain was initiated as a remedy. In another unique feature of this temple, the Deity is only woken around 9am, in consideration of Krishna's night of raas leela which leaves Him tired and in need of extra rest.

In the few hours it takes to reach Bankey Bihari Temple through the narrow lanes of Vrindavan and the crush of devotees, one encounters the town's cultural heritage, food and lifestyle. Those going for darshan are full of longing for the Lord, and those returning are completely blissful and oblivious to the activities around them. But as soon as they come out of that state, they encounter

Seva Kunj, where Krishna Massaged Radha's Feet

Local Sweets and the Famed Bankey Bihari Temple

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the renowned food and drinks of Vrindavan—jalebis with hot milk, lassi, ras malai, kachouris and scores of other delicacies. By far the most sought-after sweet is *brej ka peda*, made of roasted dry milk, sugar, ghee and cardamom. A popular offering for the Deity, peda is bought here in huge quantity for friends and relatives who would be tremendously disappointed and even scold anyone returning from Vrindavan empty handed. Swami Shri Sacchidananda Saraswati of Ananda Vrindavan Ashram, among others, complained to us people spend more time in these sweet shops than in the temples!

Radha Raman Temple was founded around 1542 by Gopala Bhatta Gosvami, one of the original Six Goswamis sent here by Chaitanya. We are fortunate to visit it twice, as our guide, Vrindavan Anjali Syal, is a disciple of Shri Shri Vats Goswami, whose family has served this temple since its founding. On each visit the atmosphere is festive with elaborate rituals, complemented by bhajans and performance of Bhagwat katha. The Deity image here appeared spontaneously among a collection of saligrama shilas (a fossilized seashell considered a symbol of Lord Vishnu) which had been discovered by Gopala Bhatta Goswami in Nepal. The Deity is quite expressive and is said to like having His picture taken. The temple's popular website, radharaman.org, displays frequently updated pictures, from which devotees can discern the Deity's moods. In this temple Radha is represented only by a crown to the side of the main Deity. We are told this is because among the saligramas of Gopala Bhatta, only the image of Krishna appeared spontaneously.

The unusual **Gopeshwar Mahadev** Siva temple, popular with visitors and local devotees alike, is based on a story that Lord Siva and Parvati came to attend the raas leela of Krishna and Radha. Parvati gained entrance, but Siva was denied because the only man allowed in the raas leela was Krishna. Assisted by the gopis, Siva dressed as one of them and gained entrance. Krishna discovered the deception when Siva burst into His Tandava dance, but forgave Him and named Him Gopeshwar. The Deity here is worshiped as a Sivalingam in the morning and then dressed as a gopi in the evening and worshiped as Gopeshwar Mahadeva.

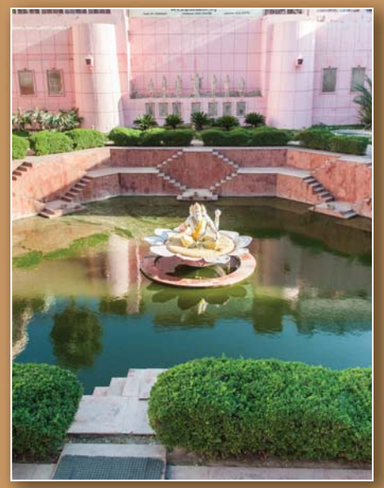
Sri Ranganath (or **Rangji**) Temple is the largest South Indian style temple of Vrindavan and indeed in all North India. It has a traditional South Indian gopuram entry tower and is surrounded by high walls. It is one of the few temples in India that follows a mix of North and South Indian traditions, with rituals performed according to *Vedas* as well as the *Pancharatra Agamas*. The temple was conceived by Sri Rangadeshik Swamiji and built in 1851 by his devotees, a wealthy Seth family of Mathura. It is dedicated to Andal, the famed 8th-century South Indian Vaishnava saint who composed Thiruppavai, songs centered around her love for Krishna and His home in Vrindavan. She sings of longing for Him, fasting for Him, and wanting to marry Him, a prayer which was eventually answered. Thus one sees Lord Krishna in this temple as a bridegroom with a walking stick in His hand—the custom in a South Indian marriage. Andal is to His right in the shrine and Garuda, His mount, on His left.

Sri Rangacharya Ji Maharaj, president of the temple trust, tells us they maintain a Sanskrit and Vedanta pathashala which has graduated thousands of students in its 100-year history. We meet a young lady here from Nepal, Pratibha Prajali, 17, who is studying to become a Bhagwat katha vachak and plans then return to Kathmandu. This temple also maintains a gaushala with 50 cows to provide milk for the worship.

The **Jaipur Temple**, opened in 1917 after thirty years of work and one of Vrindavan's most opulent and grandiose old temples, has met a peculiar fate, having been cursed at the time of its inauguration. It was built by Sawai Madho Singh II, the Maharaja of Jaipur, of finely carved sandstone and enshrines Radha Madhav, Hans Bhagwan and Anand Vihari (all forms of Krishna). To facilitate the movement of the huge stones required,

Recreating Krishna's pastimes: *(clockwise from right) raas leela performance; this monkey snatched a pilgrim's glasses and, even though offered a banana as a bribe, eventually threw them in a drain from which they were not recovered; entrance to the Radha Raman temple—the white apartment building is the home of some of the Goswami families who serve at the temple; Brahma Kund, where legend has it that Siva transformed Himself into a gopi; temple of Priya Kant Ju, with posters of its founder, Devki Nandan Thakur Ji Maharaj*

Priya Kant Temple. . .



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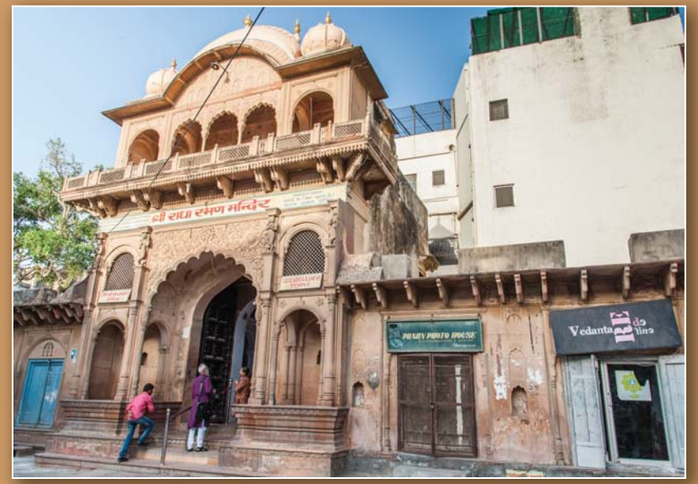
Brahma Kund, Raas Leela Performers, Radha Raman Temple and one Mischievous Monkey



the maharaja financed a rail line connecting Mathura to Vrindavan. The pujas are done according to the Nimbarka Sampradaya. Today it is managed by the government of Rajasthan, while it appears to us that many of the other temples here are owned and managed by the priests.

The temple is nearly deserted during our evening visit, a time when other temples are packed. The chief priest, Roop Narayan Sharma, explains that when the temple was inaugurated, local priests were not engaged. Instead, priests were brought in from Kashi (Varanasi) for the ceremonies. Upset at being ignored, and envious of the rich rewards showered on the Kashi priests, the local priests cursed the temple to never be wealthy. Sharma said that even though newly built temples are attracting many devotees, "this temple gets neither devotees nor donations."

In stark contrast is **Prem Mandir**, opened in 2010 and already hugely popular with the pilgrims—one million people visit each month. Though its late founder, Jagadguru Kripaul Ji Maharaj, attracted controversy during his lifetime, this has not impeded the temple's success. When we arrive in the evening, the road to it is packed with cars. The entire temple is illuminated with constantly changing lights, as is a nearby dancing water fountain. Huge tableaux depicting Krishna's pastimes are spread throughout the spacious and well-kept 12-acre grounds.

Entering the temple, the 40-foot wide circumambulation route has engraved pillars, lattice windows and large display panels depicted the pastimes of Lord Krishna. Passing between the marble pillars with peacocks and other motifs, we enter the main hall with the murtis of Radha and Krishna. There are elegant arches between the pillars, and a huge dome overhead with a 20-foot chandelier. Everything here is extraordinary and eye-catching, comparable in intricacy only to the much larger BAPS Swaminarayan's Akshardham temples. According to Prem Mandir's spokesman, Swami Ajay Tripathi, the temple took 1,000 artisans 12 years to complete.

Vrindavan has 5,000 or more temples, we are told. Describing just the most significant would require many more pages. There is the **Shah Ji** Temple, built in the Italian style around 1860 by two Shah brothers from a wealthy family of jewelers in Lucknow. It is notable for its Byzantine-style twisted portico pillars, the dazzling Darbar Hall of Chota Radha Raman, its wall and ceiling oil paintings and Belgian chandeliers. The **Jamai Thakur** or Tarash Temple to Lord Krishna, located in a huge landscaped compound not far from the Yamuna, is mainly frequented by devotees from Bengal. The **Sri Katyayani Peeth**, said to be one of the 51 Shakti Temples of India, though only built in 1923, was overflowing with devotees when we visited during the Navaratri festival. The *Bhagavata Purana* mentions a temple by this name as a place where women would pray for good husbands. The **Radha Damodar** temple is one of the seven holy temples discovered by the Six Goswamis. Built in its present form in the 1550s, it houses the samadhis of several of the Goswamis, including Rupa Goswami and Jiva Goswami. In recent times it is closely connected to Sri Prabhupada, founder of ISKCON, who came to live here in 1959 after taking sannyas.

Most sacred cities are centered around a single major temple—nearby Mathura around Krishna Janmabhoomi, Varanasi around Kasi Vishwanath and Madurai around the Meenakshi Temple. Vrindavan is different. Shrivats Goswami, senior priest of Radha Raman temple, explains, "There was a time when Govind Dev Mandir was very popular, and the Bihari temple not. Gradually the Govind Dev devotees shifted to the Radha Vallabh temple, which in turn slowed down when Bihari came in the limelight. In the 1970s came ISKCON, which reduced Bihari in a big way. And now all temples are impacted by Prem Mandir, which is attracting the largest number of devotees."

Worshiping the Yamuna

Ganga Arati, the evening worship of the sacred river first performed in Haridwar in

Town temples: *(clockwise from right) Prem Mandir, currently Vrindavan's most popular temple; devotees shout "Radhe, Radhe" as they enter the Jaipur Temple; Pratibha Prajali of Nepal (at left) with a fellow student at the Rangji temple's school, both studying to become Bhagwat katha vachaks; the gopuram entrance to the South Indian style Sri Ranganath Temple; Google Earth shot of the expansive Ranganath temple grounds, located in the middle of what is now a congested part of Vrindavan*

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Big Temples of the 19th, 20th and 21st Centuries

1916, has been adapted here to the worship of the Yamuna at Kesi Ghat by Baba Ganga Das and his team. While most of the ghats built by ancient kings along the river are in ruins today, Kesi Ghat has been well maintained. The format is similar to that followed in Haridwar, Rishikesh and Varanasi: ceremonial worship and offerings to the river followed by the waving of huge lamps as the sun is setting, all accompanied by spirited bhajans and, here, the chanting of "Radhe, Radhe." It was at this ghat we encountered a particularly peeved monkey who snatched my wife's shoes and tore them to shreds. The locals constantly warn visitors about these lightening quick creatures who live here by the thousands.

The Storytellers

Vrindavan has two great and closely related traditions of storytelling: Bhagwat katha and raas leela. We consulted major exponents of both. Pushpang Goswami, 28, is a Bhagwat katha vachak and priest in the lineage of Goswamis responsible for the Radha Raman temple. As a katha vachak, his main occupation is recounting the life and leelas of Krishna as detailed in the *Bhagavata Purana*. He tells us Vrindavan is the center for the katha vachaks: "About Vrindavan it is said that if you are standing at any crossing of roads, you just pick up a stone, close your eyes and throw it at any house nearby and you will find a Bhagwat katha vachak in that house. Vrindavan is famous the world over for producing priests, saints and thousands of Bhagwat katha vachaks."

The Vidvat Parishad is a body of eminent Bhagwat katha vachaks in Vrindavan who meet as needed to discuss various issues, including the meaning of certain shlokas. Pushpang stated, "The grace and purity of Bhagwat is maintained not by the glamorous katha vachaks who appear on TV, but by the real scholars of Vrindavan who keep the ancient tradition alive."

The *Bhagavata Purana*, comprising 18,000 verses, can be covered in a summary fashion in seven hours a day for seven days of katha, as the retelling is called. A full explanation would require a month. "Listening is essential for imbibing and learning," Pushpang explains. "Listening makes you think, and if you listen to Krishna's name many times, then Krishna will finally settle down in your heart." He objects to the recent injection of music into the narration, feeling it interferes with a proper understanding of the scripture's verses, which have their own innate rhythm and music. Satya Narayana Dasa, director of the Jiva Institute of Vedic Studies in Vrindavan echoed the same complaint: "Some of these Bhagwat kathas are just entertainment. They speak for ten minutes, then sing, then speak, then sing. People come from Delhi to Vrindavan for a spiritual picnic, and this is their entertainment." Katha performances are on YouTube in Hindi and even English.

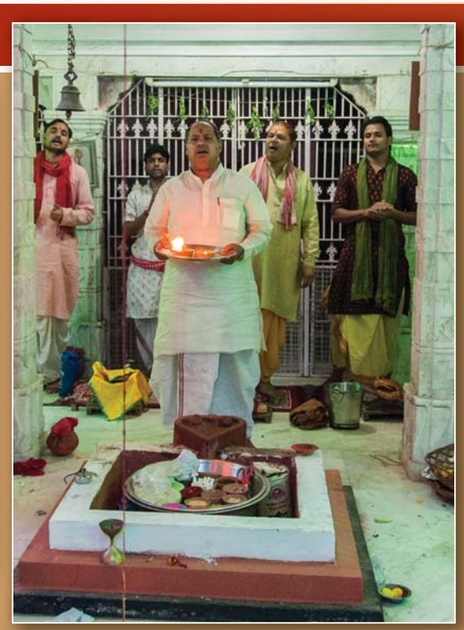
The raas leela performers convey the same stories as the Bhagwat katha but focus on conveying the emotion of Krishna's pastimes through dance and music rather than the spoken word. About five hundred years ago, we were told, raas leela was developed by Swami Sri Uddhavaghamanda Devacharya of the Nimbarka tradition. It was intended to connect man with the Divine more easily than by listening to long hours of the Bhagwat kathas, especially for those who did not understand the Braj language of the area. The concept of acting out the parts is said to have been blessed by Krishna Himself when He appeared after the first performance and placed His own crown on the head of the lead actor. After that, whoever wears Krishna's crown is Krishna Himself to the audience.

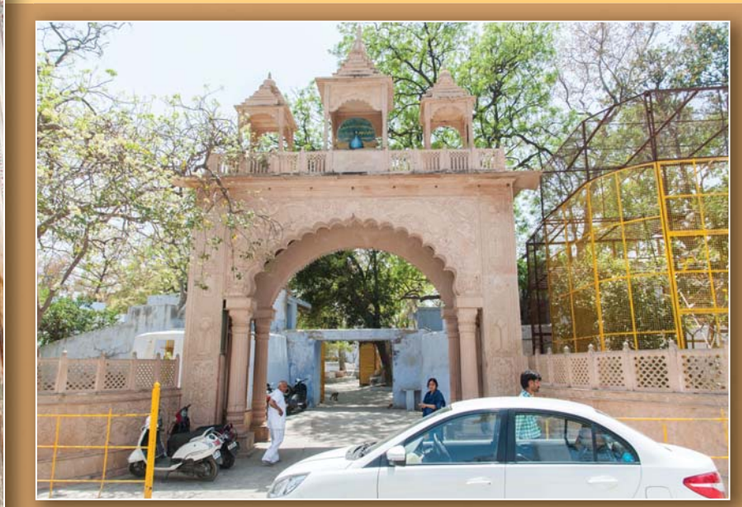
Acharya Fateh Krishna Ji Maharaj, an eminent raas leela expert, explains that these dance troupes were formed to be treated as movable representations of the temple Deities. Eight saints of Braj developed rules for raas leela which are followed today by the traditional troupes. The music is dhrupad and dhamal style. Acharya laments that the development of television and movies has resulted in raas leela being performed for entertainment, with no deep meaning.

"The concept of *raas* is derived from the Vedic concept of *raso via sah*, in which the different feelings of human beings are portrayed," Acharya explained. "If raas is performed and there is a character of Lord Krishna in it, then in reality the God is present in that raas leela. That is what is experienced by the realized ones and the knowledgeable audience every time a raas leela is performed anywhere."

The many forms of worship: *(clockwise from right) evening arati worship at the Yamuna River's Kesi Ghat, with Hinduism Today's correspondent Rajiv Malik (wearing a yellow scarf) and wife Renu on steps behind lamp; entrance to Tatiya Sthan; Jaipur Temple's central sanctum; evening worship at the Shri Katyayani Peeth; the Italian-style Shah ji Temple, opened in 1860*

Worship at the Temples, Forests and River Bank





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He said there are 30 to 40 raas leela troupes in the Braj area today. Young men and boys play all the parts. As with the Bhagwat kathas, there are many troupes who claim to be from Vrindavan but are not. He himself joined the troupe of his maternal uncle when just eight years old; he was trained in music, dance and the scriptures and performed sadhana and penance.

The performances are expensive to put on, and Acharya worries about the financial viability of the tradition. "Be that as it may," he said, "it is God's own leela and we leave it to Thukur Ji Himself how He would like it to continue in the future. I appeal to the Hindus of the world to help us preserve the tradition, for this is how the common people can understand the message of Bhagwat in a simple manner."

Home of Saints

Everyone tells us that to experience the true Vrindavan, we must visit **Tatiya Sthan**. Indeed, to enter the ashram compound is to step into the Vrindavan of 500 years ago. Its current guru is Mahant Swami Radha Bihari Das Ji. He and 15 to 20 of his 150 Vrindavan disciples live here in small cottages on several acres of land with no electricity, no cooking gas, no mobiles and, beyond a point, no cameras. They have 17 more properties in Vrindavan where the other close disciples live, plus a large ashram in Mathura. The place is linked to Swami Hardas, the saint who caused the image of Bankey Behari Ji to manifest in Nidhivan. Hardas was a great musician and guru of the famed Tansen, one of the "nine jewels" of the court of Emperor Akbar. Hardas claimed he learned the meaning of love and divine music from the birds, flowers and trees of Vrindavan. Originally this place just had a small cottage with walls and partitions made of bamboo—*tatiya* in the local Braj language—hence the name Tatiya Sthan, the "bamboo place." The ground is all sand, as on a beach, with many trees and other plants and a substantial population of monkeys.

We are fortunate to be granted an audience with Mahant Swami Radha Bihari Das. He was most affectionate toward us and explained that they carry on the tradition of Swami Haridas through samaj gayan, a form of collective singing of bhajans. He spoke to us in the local Braj language, which is similar to Hindi. Complying with the rules of the place, we do not record him. He says the lifestyle of Tatiya Sthan is itself their message for humanity, that by remaining connected to nature we can solve many of the problems the world faces today. He invites us to the evening samaj gayan.

This turns out to be another life-transforming experience. The whole place reverberates with high energy as a group of sand-covered young men are immersed in singing and playing musical instruments in the dhrupad and dhamal style. The temple here has only statues and paintings of Radha, Krishna, Swami Haridas and his main disciples. The devotees perform no pujas, but worship through the samaj gayan to please the Deities. It is an extraordinary evening, enhanced by the gentle wind which blows the sand of Vrindavan all over us, the very sand on which Lord Krishna, Radha and the saints walked. Mridul Kant Shastri, a popular Bhagavatcharya here, said, "Just by spending an hour at Tatiya Sthan I have seen big atheists become believers." Perhaps the same can be said of all Vrindavan, such is the magic of the place.

Looking Ahead to Part Two

I hope I've conveyed something of the spirit of Vrindavan as the place of the eternal leelas of Radha and Lord Krishna. Love resides in every dust particle of the city; "Radhe, Radhe" is on the lips of every living being.

In our next issue, the second and concluding part of this report will cover some social and business aspects of Vrindavan, including the town's widow population, efforts at environmental restoration and a visit to those who create the Deity clothes used by the temples. But mostly we will venture outside Vrindavan to nearby sacred leela sites of Braj Bhoomi, including Barsana Dham, famed for its colorful Holi festival and home today to great saints. We will visit Goverdhan Hill, which Krishna held on his finger tip for seven days and seven nights to protect the people from incessant rains thrown down by Indra. Most importantly, we will visit Mathura and Shri Krishna Janmasthan, a temple built on the site where the Lord was born in a prison. So, look forward to next issue!

People and places: *(clockwise from top right) Dr. B.K. Nangia; Yamuna river pilings abandoned and scheduled for removal after vociferous religious objections to a planned bridge; flower sellers outside Bankey Behari temple; a devotee carrying a child Krishna which she will take home and care for as if her own child*

One Insider's Viewpoint

VRINDAVAN NATIVE DR. B.K. NANGIA RUNS Shri Harinam Press, which produces books related to the Gaudiya Sampradaya. The press was founded by his father, who settled in Vrindavan after fleeing Dera Ghazi Khan, Pakistan, during Partition. Nangia holds a doctorate in the philosophy of Jiva Goswami, one of the senior followers of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. We found him an articulate observer of the local area and recount some of his insights below.

"There was a time when to introduce Vrindavan we had to say it is located in Mathura district, but today Vrindavan has an independent identity stronger even than that of Mathura. This is the plus point of commercialization. But from the angle of worship, we need to remember that the name means 'van of vrinda,' or forest of tulsi plants. It used to be a lush green forest with no pollution. Now it has huge streets and buildings which have destroyed its original form. On the other hand, the plus point of development is that the people here have become more prosperous due to the increased flow of pilgrims. In the early days, 100,000 might come in a month; now that many or more come every day. The number of residents here for business and commercial purposes now outnumbers those who want the original form preserved. They want all the facilities and glamor of a normal Indian city. Today, there is not a single cinema here, liquor cannot be sold and the entire area is vegetarian. Even an egg cannot be served in a hotel.

"There are two categories of visitors. The first is those whose chief aim is an outing and picnic. Such people will visit the modern temples, have some local chat and lassi and leave. The second category spend more time, visit some of the most ancient temples and ashrams and meet saints as well. Earlier the ISKCON temple was extremely popular and around 60 percent of pilgrims would visit it. Now 60 percent will visit Prem Mandir, 20 percent ISKCON and 20 percent Bankey Bihari. Prem Mandir is attracting so many people because the temple is extremely beautiful, neat and clean. Their system of darshan at the main shrine is also very good. It is in contrast to the chaos at Bankey Bihari, which should be better managed.

"The heart of Vrindavan is this Loi Bazaar area where Seva Kunj as well as our printing business are located. The Yamuna encircles this land on three sides. This is the ancient Vrindavan. This small area should be declared as a preserved and restricted area. There should be no more construction, and even the entry of vehicles should be restricted. Nothing like a mall should be allowed. Those who are here just for business and have no religious angle should shift out of this area, and there they can have all the modern amenities. This will preserve the original form of Vrindavan. Unfortunately, I think the population of people who strongly want the original form of Vrindavan to be maintained is just fifteen percent or so.

"I would say that the role of local residents in destroying the original form of Vrindavan is just 10 percent. The visitors are responsible for the other 90 percent. They take a selfish approach, throw garbage here and there and park their cars wrongly. They have no sense they are in the abode of God.

"There is no need to build or donate to new temples. There are already temples here that do not have the means to do the proper offerings to Thakur Ji. It would be better to support such temples by adopting them. The big and popular temples here must treat all the devotees as guests in the spirit that the 'guest is God,' and provide the basic amenities to them, such as clean water, proper toilet facilities and parking."

Vrindavan Scenes—Devotion, Sweets and an Ill-Fated Bridge Project

ALL PHOTOS: DINODIA.COM/ARUN K MISHRA

DEV RAJ AGARWAL

FESTIVALS

The 2016 Ujjain Kumbha Mela: A Gallery

Photographer Arun Mishra captures the spirit of the Mela

BETWEEN APRIL 22 AND MAY 21 OF 2016, nearly 75 million people made their way to the ancient Indian city of Ujjain to take part in this year's Kumbha Mela. Ujjain, located on the banks of the Kshipra River in the western region of Madhya Pradesh, is one of the most sacred cities in India. Its Mela is one of four that are held during each 12-year period. The other three take place at Haridwar, Prayag (Allahabad) and Nasik.

Millions of devotees from all around India and the world attend these massive events, including thousands of renunciates, sadhus and other holy people. Present at each Kumbha Mela are the various akharas—India's traditional monastic schools, seven of which are said to have been founded by Adi Shankaracharya in the 8th century. Many devotees make the pilgrimage just to interact with these renunciates.

The big event at the Kumbha Mela is the main bathing day, the *Shahi Snan*. It commences with a grand parade to the river banks by the sadhus for their *snan* (sacred bath). After the sadhus have bathed, the general population enter the river for their holy dip. This event, held on full moon day, is the largest of several official bathing days throughout the month.

This year's Shahi Snan was unique; it was the first time that the saints and Naga ascetics of the 13 Saivite and Vaishnavite Akharas agreed to take the bath simultaneously, instead of vying for first place as in past years. In this way they affirmed the ideal of peaceful coexistence between philosophical views.

The all-female Juna Sannyasini Akhara, though allocated its own facilities for participation in the 2013 Kumbha Mela in Allahabad, was not permitted at the 2016 Ujjain Mela. However, this Mela saw the initiation of over 400 women monks in the Naga order.

Also this year, the transgender community was allotted five acres of land to host the Kinnar Akhara. Formed in October of 2015, the Kinnar Akhara is a religious school of transgenders that now has branches in over two dozen states. The unexpected inclusion of a transgender akhara met with some objections from other akharas. However, the Kinnar Akhara's positive reception by attending pilgrims testified to their overall acceptance, as did their treatment as holy people; they enjoyed the full respect afforded to any Hindu sadhu. Not allowed to take part in the main parade with the other akharas, the Kinnar Akhara held its own parade to the river for their sacred dip.

In total, this year's event was spread over 9,000 acres and was the result of four years of planning by the Madhya Pradesh government, which allocated US$500 million for it. Additional funds were provided by the Central Government and other agencies. Nearly 100 roads and 14 bridges were constructed in and around Ujjain to accommodate the high volumes of pilgrims, resulting in a nice upgrade to Ujjain's infrastructure.

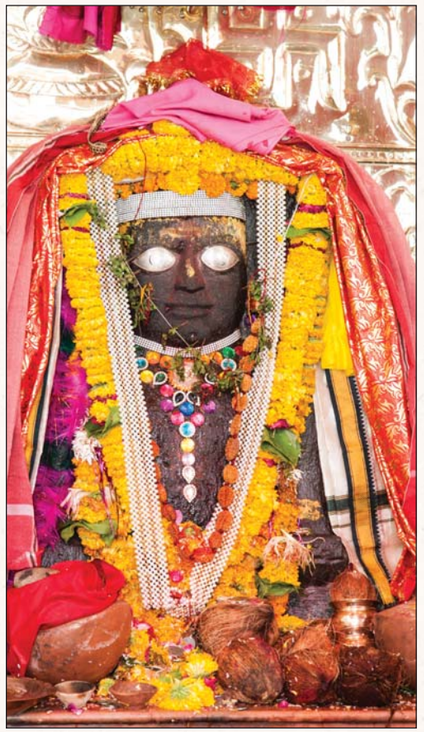
Early in the event a lightning strike took the lives of six people and injured another 40. But otherwise—aside from a leaky sewage system—most pilgrims had a positive experiences. In response to some reports of poor facilities, photographer Rishika Baruah stated in an article at thequint.com, "I spent an evening at the Kumbh on the eve of the Shahi Snan, when the footfall was supposedly one of the highest. Contrary to popular public perception, it's not all that bad. The ghats of the Kshipra were clean, the water was being oxygenated and the area to take a dip was well marked. There were plenty of clean mobile toilets and changing enclosures. The parking areas were easily accessible by hand-pulled carts or e-rickshaws for those who did not wish to walk, and there was plenty of accommodation within the Kumbh enclosures."

Sacred celebrations: *(far left) devotees perform Kshipra arati at Ram Ghat in the evening (clockwise from below) Newly initiated naga sadhus sit together after their initiation; a pilgrim holding a diya lamp honors the Kshipra River; one of thousands of naga sadhus going for Shahi Snan; Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, head of the Kinnar Akhara, bathes in the Kshipra along with other members of the Akhara, while holding a statue of Goddess Devi over her head*

ALL PHOTOS: ARUN MISHRA

A day at the Mela: *(clockwise from left) A young naga sadhu bathes in the river Kshipra during the shahi snan; Swami Rajendra Dasji performs a havana; each of the akharas serve food every day to pilgrims at the Kumbha Mela; women perform a ritual for the well-being of their families before taking a bath in the river; devotees perform an evening arati at the river*

ALL PHOTOS: ARUN MISHRA



Worship at the river's edge: *(clockwise from above) During the day of the Shahi Snan devotees flock to the Ram Ghat for their sacred bath; a naga sadhu blows a conch shell in celebration during the main bathing day; a statue of Sri Chitragupta, the God said to be assigned with the task of keeping complete records of actions of human beings on the earth*

EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

Six Streams Of Hindu Philosophy

Ṣaḍdarśana, Celebrating Diversity in the Quest for Supreme Knowledge

By Mahamahopadhyaya Swami Bhadreshdas
(Disciple of Guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj)

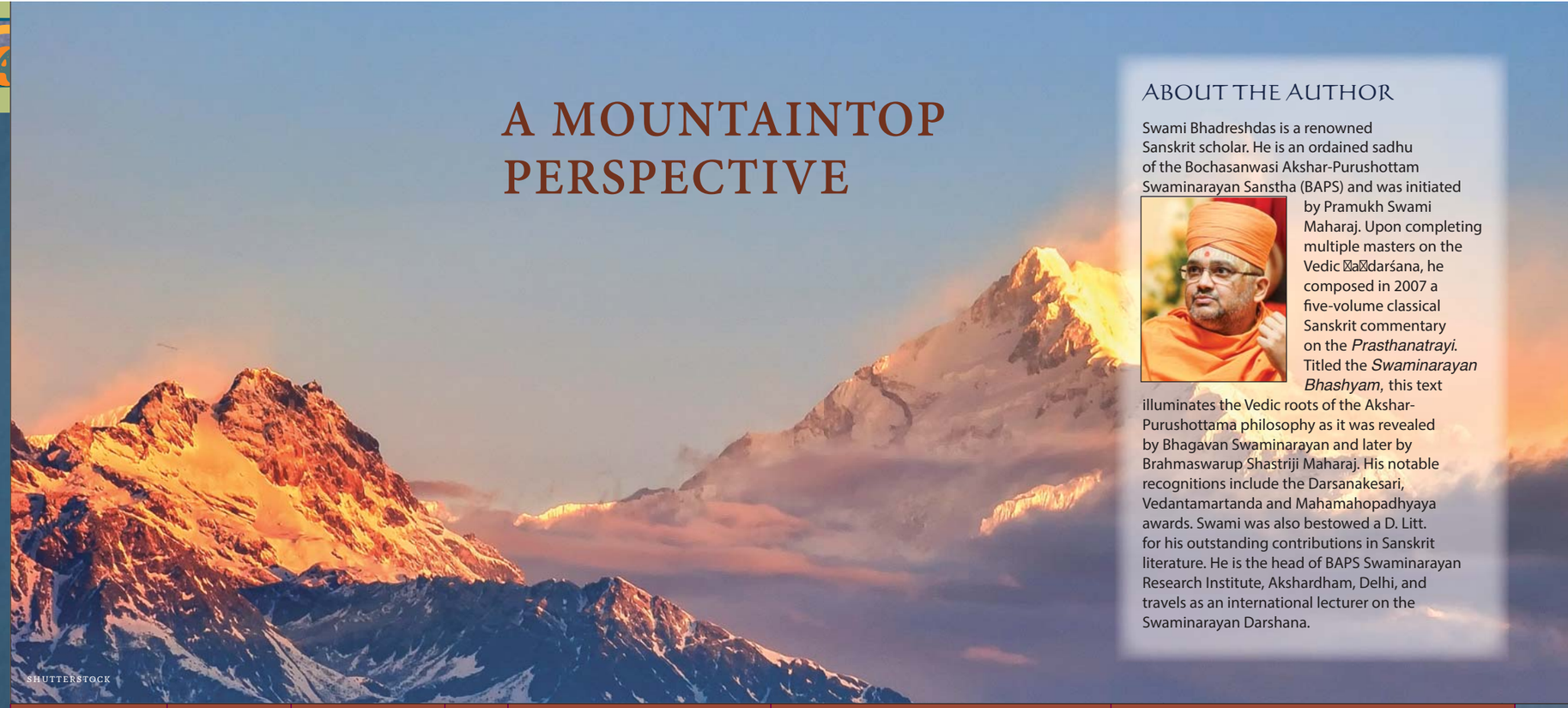
This article is a celebration of fearless diversity. The world has never failed to be fascinated by the vastness and depth of the Indian experience—whether it be its endearing and timeless culture, vibrant and expressive festivals, ornate ritual performances, articulate languages, or even its luscious cuisines. Mark Twain, in a celebrated passage, attempts to give us a taste of its magnetism. He describes India as "The land that all men desire to see and having seen once, even by a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for the shows of the rest of the globe combined." Romain Rolland, a French scholar, echoes, "If there is one place on the face of Earth where all the dreams of living men have found a home, from the very earliest days when man began to dream of existence, it is India." It is a land where the heart finds solace and dreams find realization.

What makes the Indian experience so enchanting is its capacity to embrace diversity. It has always encouraged the freedom to think, to dream and to express—all values that are sought by modern scholarship. Surprisingly, these aspirations are not to be envisioned as dreams of the future, but rather to be recalled from past histories. Ever since antiquity, the celebration of diverse thought has found home in India, a land that exemplified what it means to be truly diverse. The setting that promoted this incessant contemplation, and the subsequent dialogue that proceeded it, gave birth to one of the most priceless contributions of India: the Vedic *ṣaḍdarśana*—the six schools of philosophy based on the *Vedas*.

Darśana is the art of seeing. To see is ordinary. Everyone sees, but when a rishi sees, it makes a difference. He reflects on what is seen, questions it, examines it and is also compassionate to observe it from different perspectives. He has the power to challenge faith with reasoning and to establish the need for faith in reason. In this way, by seeing, a rishi knocks at the doors of truth. Indeed, the *ṣaḍdarśanas* are miracles of remarkable sight.

Pieter Weltevrede's art depicts a Vedic sage representing the founders of the seminal schools of philosophy. He is seated on the cosmic cobra with six heads, each representing a distinct school of thought. From the Īśa Upaniṣad's *Pūrṇamada mantra, represented by an infinite sea of knowledge and being, arise six powerful rivers of knowledge, each sharing the same source but flowing off in different directions.*

A MOUNTAINTOP PERSPECTIVE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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Swami Bhadreshdas is a renowned Sanskrit scholar. He is an ordained sadhu of the Bochasanwasi Akshar-Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) and was initiated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Upon completing multiple masters on the Vedic □a□darśana, he composed in 2007 a five-volume classical Sanskrit commentary on the *Prasthanatrayi*. Titled the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam*, this text illuminates the Vedic roots of the Akshar-Purushottama philosophy as it was revealed by Bhagavan Swaminarayan and later by Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj. His notable recognitions include the Darsanakesari, Vedantamartanda and Mahamahopadhyaya awards. Swami was also bestowed a D. Litt. for his outstanding contributions in Sanskrit literature. He is the head of BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute, Akshardham, Delhi, and travels as an international lecturer on the Swaminarayan Darshana.

The term *darśana* stems from the Sanskrit verbal root *dṛś* meaning "to view." In Sanskrit, terms that are used to express the act of seeing are also used in a more cognitive sense of attaining knowledge. As such, *darśana* means the attainment of knowledge, experience *(anubhūti)* or system of belief. Within the Indian paradigm, numerous schools of thought arose that offered different perspectives for understanding the world. It was by their gifts of knowledge and experience that these various schools of thought eventually became referred to as *darśana*.

The Darśanic Lens: The formation of the *darśanas* transformed the Indian experience. The ideas they presented encouraged one to view the familiar and the ordinary through a broader, more encompassing, philosophical and theological paradigm. Since the teachings of the *darśanas* were ultimately outgrowths of Vedic thought, their creation, although characterized by distinct principles, resulted in a diverse, yet structured understanding of Vedic injunction and revelation. In so arising, they provided perspectives that both enlightened and inspired. The effect was universal. The *darśanas* presented philosophical ideas that had significant bearing on one's experience of the phenomenological world; they taught one how and to what significance to view the world we live in. They taught what it means to live a meaningful life and how to make life more meaningful. As such, their creation molded the Indian experience through a *darśanic* lens.

The Darśanic Way of Life: A study of the Vedic *ṣaḍdarśana* has the power to change the way we view and live life. They emerged from honest investigations of everyday, common concerns and strived to provide everlasting solutions for them. Attaining enduring bliss and freedom from misery are universal aspirations; they are desires independent of age, nationality, race and even religious preference. The *ṣaḍdarśana* presented thoughts that brought a sense of maturity to intellectual endeavor, and ultimately meaning to life. They demonstrated how it was not only possible, but also instructive, to live among diversity. They taught discernment when joining the visible with the invisible, and declared that there was a life before and will be a life after the present. By exploring these principles, the *darśanas* wove conceptual metaphysics and epistemology into everyday living.

Six Streams of Wisdom: The six *darśanas* we will become familiar with in this work are: Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta.[1] They are collectively called the *ṣaḍdarśana*. These six *darśanas* often appear as pairs: Sāṅkhya is paired with Yoga, Nyāya with Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāṃsā with Vedānta. Although each *darśana* is distinct from the others, they are grouped in this way because the pairs share many similar beliefs.

Similar Yet Distinct: All of the *ṣaḍdarśanas* share several similar concerns. Each acknowledges four endeavors of life: the attainment of righteousness *(dharma)*, material attainment *(artha)*, the fulfillment of desire *(kāma)*, and the attainment of liberation *(mokṣa)*. Among these endeavors, all six *darśanas* place great significance on liberation *(mokṣa)* and express a general dissatisfaction with the mere fulfillment of material desire or corporal gratification. This comes as no surprise, as they all believe in the existence of the self *(ātman)* as distinct from the body and in its continued existence after death.

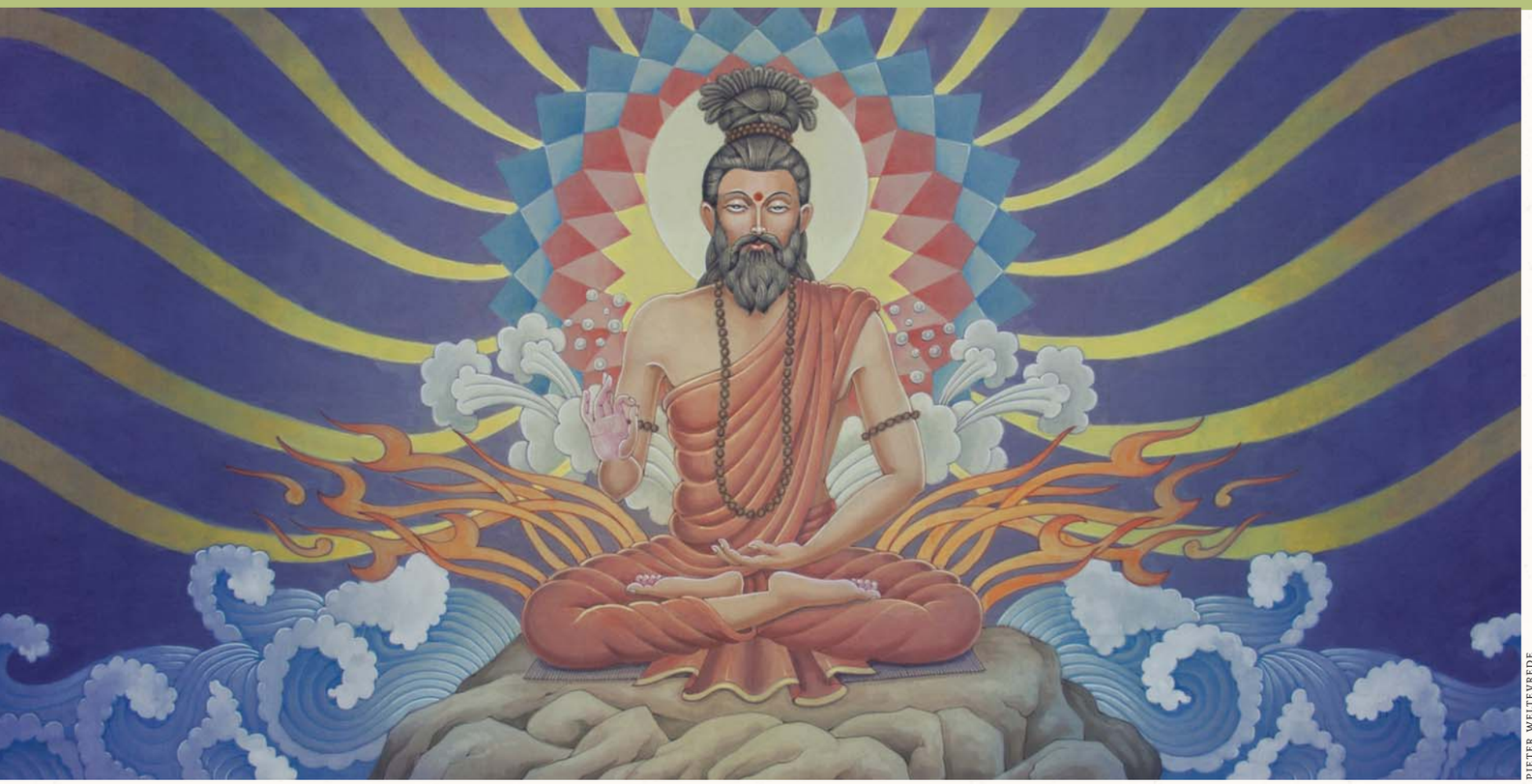
Regarding knowledge, each *darśana* presents a systematic epistemological framework for its acquisition—be it faith in sacred texts or divine instruction, continued reflection on the relationship between the self, the world, and (where applicable) Īśvara or Paramātman. The *ṣaḍdarśanas* also concede that ignorance is the cause of bondage, misery and suffering, and that endeavor *(sādhanā)* is necessary for attaining liberation.

In addition to this emphasis on reflection, a close relationship between ritual performance and philosophical or theological thought and a belief in both spiritual and worldly consequences of action are found in the schools.

Despite these similarities, each *darśana* has a distinct epistemic, philosophical and theological understanding. This work offers a brief overview of each *darśana's* contributions by presenting its characteristic fundamental principles, epistemology and notion and means for attaining liberation. We will also explore each *darśana's* principle contributors and textual works. By doing so, this work seeks to provide insight into the fundamentals of darśanic thought and experience.

[1] The Mīmāṃsā Darśana is also known as Pūrvamīmāṃsā, whereas the Vedānta Darśana is also called Uttaramīmāṃsā.

Dar□ana	Progenitor	Belief in □□vara/ Param□tman		About the Self (□tman)	Valid Means of Knowing (Pram□□a)	Unique Contributions
Sāṅkhya The School of Complete Knowledge	Maharṣi Kapilamuni	Yes/No		*Puruṣa* is the *ātman* (self). It is sentient, eternal, immutable and neither a cause nor an effect of anything.	perception *(pratyakṣa-pramāṇa)* inference *(anumāna-pramāṇa)* verbal testimony *(śabda-pramāṇa)*	* The principle of *satkāryavāda*, the pre-existence of creation * A precise enumeration of entities
Yoga The School of Contemplation	Maharṣi Patañjali	Yes/No		The *ātman* is bound because of the unsteadiness of *chitta*	perception *(pratyakṣa-pramāṇa)* inference *(anumāna-pramāṇa)* verbal testimony *(śabda-pramāṇa)*	* To embark on the path of yoga, Patañjali advocates an eight-fold path known as *aṣṭāṅgayoga* * Significance of practice (*abhyāsa*) and detachment (*vairāgya*)
Nyāya The School of Logic	Maharṣi Gautama	Yes		The *ātman* is of two types: the self (*jīvātman*) and Īśvara/Paramātman	perception *(pratyakṣa-pramāṇa)* inference *(anumāna-pramāṇa)* verbal testimony *(śabda-pramāṇa)* comparison *(upamāna-pramāṇa)*	* The existence of non-existence (*abhāva*) * Deep contemplation on the nature of inference
Vaiśeṣika The School of Particularity	Maharṣi Kaṇāda	Yes		The *ātman* is of two types: the self (*jīvātman*) and Īśvara/Paramātman	perception *(pratyakṣa-pramāṇa)* inference *(anumāna-pramāṇa)*	* *Paramāṇukāraṇavāda*: the notion of atoms or particles as building blocks of creation * *Asatkāryavāda*: the principle that created substances do not previously exist
Mīmāṃsā The School of Vedic Rituals	Maharṣi Jaiminī	Yes/No		The *ātman* is real, sentient, eternal and bound by *karma*.	perception *(pratyakṣa-pramāṇa)* inference *(anumāna-pramāṇa)* verbal testimony *(śabda-pramāṇa)* comparison *(upamāna-pramāṇa)* postulation *(arthāpatti-pramāṇa)* non-perception *(anupalabdhi -pramāṇa)*	* Creation of a universal hermeneutical theory * Deep contemplation on ritual performances such as the *yajña*
Vedānta The School of Brahmavidyā	Maharṣi Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa	Yes		The *ātman* is sentient and eternal. Schools of Vedānta offer various conceptions of the nature of *ātman*.	Although all schools of Vedānta accept: perception *(pratyakṣa-pramāṇa)* inference *(anumāna-pramāṇa)* verbal testimony *(śabda-pramāṇa)*, some of them are known to accept the others.	* Investigation on the nature of Brahman * A greater significance of verbal testimony (*śabda-pramāṇa*) * The need of a *guru* for acquiring the knowledge of Brahman



PIETER WELTEVREDE

Sage Kapila sits on the earth, with water, fire, air and ether on either side. Eighteen rays represent the other tattvas, *or entities of* prakṛti. *He introduced the* gunas, *the three qualities of* sattva, rajas *and* tamas, *shown here as the yellow, red and blue triangular halos. His right hand is in* chin mudra, *the insignia of knowledge.*

SĀṄKHYA DARŚANA: THE SCHOOL OF COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE

Sāṅkhya is one of the oldest of the *ṣaḍdarśana*. Origins of some of its beliefs are often traced to the *Vedas*. It has also been discussed in philosophical texts such as the *Bhagavadgītā* and *purāṇa* texts like the *Bhāgavata*. Kapilamuni is the founder of this school. His teachings are compiled in an aphoristic text named the *Sāṅkhyasūtras*, also called the *Sāṅkhyapravachanasūtra*[1], which consists of six chapters[2]. The *Sāṅkhyasūtras* are referenced in Vijñānabhikṣu's 16th century text *Sāṅkhyapravachanabhāṣya*[3]. However, instead of Kapila's *Sāṅkhyasūtras*, *ācāryas* have historically preferred to cite the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, a 72-verse text written by Īśvarakṛṣṇa.[4] It is considered the earliest authoritative text on classical Sāṅkhya.[5] Several commentaries have been written on it, including the *Mātharavṛtti,* Gauḍapāda's *Gauḍavādabhāṣya,* and Vāchaspati Miśra's *Sāṅkhyatattvakaumudī*,[6] all suggesting the text's significance.

A Darśana of Complete Knowledge: The name *Sāṅkhya* is derived in two ways: By joining *sam* (सम्), meaning "complete" with *khyā* (ख्या) meaning "knowledge," the word *Sāṅkhya* is formed to mean "complete knowledge."[7] Sāṅkhya views the world as divided into two distinct entities: the sentient (*puruṣa*) and insentient (*prakṛti*). For Sāṅkhya, complete knowledge consists of understanding the difference (*vivekajñāna*) between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. The title of the *darśana* originates from this emphasis on attaining this complete knowledge. Alternatively, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Matsyapurāṇa* offer that the term *Sāṅkhya* originates from the word *saṅkhyā*, meaning "number."[8] Since the Sāṅkhya Darśana presents a precise enumeration of the entities that make up the world,[9] it is also identified as the school of enumeration.

Prakṛti, the Material Cause of Creation: *Prakṛti* means "that which exceedingly does."[10] As such, it is used to refer to the material cause *(upādānakāraṇa*[11]*)* of creation. It is real, insentient, eternal and imperceptible. It is accepted as being constituted of three qualities: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.[12] *Satva* is light and bright, *rajas* is exciting and mobile, and *tamas* is heavy and enveloping.[13] They mutually suppress, support, produce and exist, but do not appear alone.[14] In Sanskrit, *guṇa* expresses two meanings: "for others" or "secondary," and "strands." *Sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are identified as *guṇa* because they benefit others by their role in producing variety in creation;[15] their significance is only secondary to a *puruṣa's;* and, like a rope,[16] they bind the *puruṣa* to the circle of birth and death *(saṃsāra).*

The Separate Puruṣa: *Puruṣa* is the self *(ātman)*. It is sentient, eternal, immutable and neither a cause or effect of anything. *Puruṣa* is understood as being without parts and all-pervasive. It does not perform any action. It can be analogized with the Moon, whose reflection in turbulent water makes it seem as if it is moving, when in fact it is not. Sāṅkhya claims that there are many such *puruṣas.* It reasons that since beings are born and die at different times and locations, engage in different actions throughout their life, and experience pleasure and misery differently, there cannot be just one *puruṣa*, but must be many.

Creation from the Sentient and Insentient: According to Sāṅkhya, *prakṛti* is with action but insentient; whereas *puruṣa* is sentient but without action. As a result, neither can cause creation alone. Sāṅkhya, therefore, explains that the world is created by the union of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. This mutual dependence is explained using the analogy of a crippled man leading a blind one.[17] One needs eyes to see; whereas the other needs legs to move forward.

At the time of dissolution, *prakṛti* is in a state of equilibrium *(sāmyāvasthā)*, with the three *guṇas* equally balanced. However, in the presence of *puruṣa*, this equilibrium becomes disrupted and results in creation.

***Satkāryavāda,* Pre-existence of Creation:** Within its creation narrative, the Sāṅkhya Darśana also accepts the principle of *satkāryavāda*—the pre-existence of creation. It believes that the created resides in an unmanifest form in its material cause.[18] For Sāṅkhya, an effect is merely a manifestation of what already existed in its cause. It believes that no new substance ever comes into existence. Rather, that which already existed becomes manifest. For instance, in the case of a clay pot, it is believed to have existed in an unmanifest form in the clay from which it was made. Creation and dissolution are understood as merely appearance *(āvirbhāva)* and disappearance *(tirobhāva)* of that which already existed.

Īśvara: There has been great debate regarding the role of Īśvara in Sāṅkhya. Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṅkhyakārikā* remains silent on the matter. Because of this, some believe that Sāṅkhya does not advocate the existence of Īśvara. Others, however, argue that silence does not demonstrate refusal and do not agree with the above inference. Despite this, however, in his *Sāṅkhyapravachanabhāṣya*, Vijñānabhikṣu, who wrote extensively on the Vedānta, Sāṅkhya and Yoga *darśanas*, strongly establishes that Sāṅkhya advocates the existence of Īśvara.[19] Descriptions of Sāṅkhya as *seśvara* ("with Īśvara") from *purāṇa* texts like the *Bhāgavata,* historical texts like the *Mahābhārata,* philosophical texts like the *Bhagavadgītā*,[20] and Bhagavān Svāmināŕāyaṇa's description of Sāṅkhya as a means for understanding Paramātman[21] also justify the position that the *darśana* is *seśvara*.

Epistemology: The study of knowledge can be roughly divided into investigations of the following four elements: the subject of knowledge *(prameya*), the knower *(pramātā*), the means of knowledge *(pramāṇa*) and knowledge itself *(pramā*). Among these, *darśanic* epistemology greatly focuses on investigations of *pramāṇa.*

With regards to *pramāṇa*, the Sāṅkhya Darśana accepts three means of knowledge: *pratyakṣa-pramāṇa*, *anumāna-pramāṇa* and *śabda-pramāṇa*. *Pratyakṣa-pramāṇa* utilizes the senses as a means for acquiring knowledge. *Anumāna-pramāṇa* utilizes logical inference. The final, *śabda-pramāṇa*, identifies the speech or words of one who is authoritative and truthful *(āptavaktā)* as a means to knowledge.[22]

Liberation: Sāṅkhya believes that liberation is the permanent elimination of misery *(duḥkha*). On this subject, Īśvarakṛṣṇa clearly states that bondage and liberation are not states of the *puruṣa;* but of *prakṛti.*[23] Despite this, the bondage of *prakṛti* that is believed as *puruṣa's* is caused by a lack of discernment, or *vivekajñāna*: an understanding of the nature and form of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* as distinct.

When a *puruṣa* is liberated, Sāṅkhya describes *prakṛti* as becoming silent. Īśvarakṛṣṇa explains this using an analogy: just as a performer becomes quiet after displaying her form on stage, *prakṛti* becomes dormant having revealed its true nature to the *puruṣa.*[24]

Liberation Before and After Death: The Sāṅkhya Darśana describes two types of liberation: *jīvanamukti* and *videhamukti*. In the state of *jīvanamukti*, one experiences liberation while still being alive. In this state, one is not bound by *karma* even when performing action. To explain the continued life of the liberated, the analogy of a potter's wheel that continues to move for some time, despite the absence of the potter's applied force, is often offered.[25] The attainment of everlasting liberation after death is known as *videhamukti*. Upon attaining liberation, bondage never reoccurs.

We can thus summarize that the Sāṅkhya Darśana is a school of dualism, pluralism and realism.

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Footnotes

1 (Īśvarakṛṣṇa 5)
2 (Banerji 315) (Hiriyanna 269)
3 (Radhakrishnan 256)
4 (Hiriyanna 269) (Chatterjee and Datta 291–2) (Ishwarkrishna 226)
5 (Hiriyanna 269) (Chatterjee and Datta 291–2)
6 (Larson 147) (King 64)
7 (Bhaṭṭācārya 1269)
8 (Īśvarakṛṣṇa 4) (Brahmadarnadāsa 4) (Taponiṣṭha 51) (Mahābhārata. 12.294.41-42) (Matsyapurāṇa. 3-29)
9 (Sharma 4)
10 प्रकरोति करोति कार्यमुत्पादयति इति प्रकृतिः।
11 There are two types of causes. The *upādānakāraṇa* (the material cause) is the substance from which something is made. For instance, since a clay pot is made from clay, that substance is considered an *upādānakāraṇa*. The *nimittakāraṇa* (instrumental cause) is the means by which something is made. In the pot example, the potter, the potter's wheel and the rope that was used to spin the wheel are all considered the *nimittakāraṇa*.
12 (Īśvarakṛṣṇa 16)
13 (Sāṅkhyakārikā 13) (Īśvarakṛṣṇa 13)
14 (Sāṅkhyakārikā 12) (Īśvarakṛṣṇa 14)
15 (Vāchaspati Miśra's Sāṅkhyatattvakaumudī 12) (Miśra 219)
16 (Vijñānabhikṣu's Sāṅkhyapravachanabhāṣya 1.61) (Vijñānabhikṣu 29)
17 (Īśvarakṛṣṇa 23)
18 (Sāṅkhyakārikā 9) (Īśvarakṛṣṇa 10)
19 (Vijñānabhikṣu)
20 (Vyāsa 78–102)
21 (Svāminārāyaṇa 327, 624)
22 (Īśvarakṛṣṇa 5)
23 (Īśvarakṛṣṇa 57)
24 (Īśvarakṛṣṇa 52)
25 (Īśvarakṛṣṇa 60)

PIETER WELTEVREDE

Yogī Patañjali meditates in padmāsana *beneath the holy banyan tree (Ficus bengalensis), with its roots woven deeply into the earth. Its eight limbs, representing the eight stages of yoga, reach for the sky. The illustration reminds us that a yogī must be grounded to soar from within. A five-headed serpent, symbolizing the* kuṇḍalinī *power, surrounds him.*

YOGA DARŚANA: THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPLATION

Do you ever fear; are you harassed by incessantly changing thoughts? Do you feel like a victim of anger? You cannot concentrate and feel as if you are smoldering with jealousy and strife. Are you tired, disgruntled and stressed? More importantly, do you wish to free yourself from all of this? If so, the Yoga Darśana will provide much to learn from, including the necessary tools to live a peaceful life.

Most readers will know, to some extent, about the Yoga Darśana. Many view yoga as a solution to the modern concern for health and fitness, and a means for overcoming the anxiety of modern-day living. However, the essential philosophy behind yogic practice lies in something beyond.

Yoga has been put into practice ever since Vedic times. It is also mentioned in the *Purāṇas,* the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Mahābhārata*. Despite its previous historic practice, Patañjali molded yoga into a systematic school of thought by creating the *Yogasūtras*. Its text consists of 196 aphorisms distributed amongst four chapters *(pāda):*[1]

The first chapter, titled Samādhipāda, defines *yoga, samādhi* and other relevant terms. The second chapter, called Sādhanāpāda, focuses on the practice of yoga. Chapter three, named Vibhūtipāda, narrates the various fruits of yogic endeavor, while the final chapter, Kaivalyapāda, describes liberation and the means for its attainment.

Patañjali's *Yogasūtras* were followed by the creation of significant expository texts on the philosophical and theological tenants of the Yoga Darśana. Among them, Veda Vyāsa's *Vyāsabhāṣya,* Vāchaspati Miśra's *Tattvavaiśāradī* and Vijñānabhikṣu's *Yogavārtika* and *Yogasārasaṃgraha* are well known.

Companionship with Sāṅkhya: The Yoga Darśana is a companion of Sāṅkhya in that it accepts much of the metaphysics, epistemology and soteriology of Sāṅkhya. Despite their similarities, Sāṅkhya places greater emphasis on deliberation, while the Yoga Darśana focuses on spiritual endeavor *(sādhanā).* As such, it is not incorrect to say that Yoga is a practical application of the tenants of Sāṅkhya. This companionship is clearly substantiated by the *Bhagavadgītā*, "Children (the unknowledgeable) state that Sāṅkhya and Yoga are distinct, not the wise."[2]

***Yoga,* Restraining the Mind:** *Yoga* is derived from the Sanskrit verb *yuj,* meaning "intense absorption" or "contemplation" *(samādhi),* control *(saṃyamana),* or "association" *(sambandha).* Hence, Patañjali defines *yoga* as the restraint of the function or movement of the *chitta* (*cittavṛttinirodha*)[3] Here *chitta* refers to an inner faculty: the faculty by which we think, desire, decide and conduct such cognitive tasks. Physical and mental discomforts, such as stress, anxiety and illness, which we experience in our everyday lives, are the consequences of the *chitta's* (mind's) unsteadiness. Yoga explains that the *puruṣa* acts, enjoys and suffers through the functions of this *chitta*. These functions create latent inclinations which, in turn, give rise to others; in this way the cycle of *saṃsāra* revolves.

The practice of yoga is the act of establishing control over the *chitta*. The *ātman* is bound because of the unsteadiness of the *chitta,* which is often compared to a fluttering flag. Obtaining this control is not easy. The *Bhagavadgītā* explains that controlling the mind is as difficult as trying to grasp the wind.[4] For this reason Patañjali exceedingly focuses his attention on understanding the *chitta*. He discusses the *chitta*'s five different transformations *(vṛtti)* as: correct knowledge *(pramāṇa),* false knowledge *(viparyaya),* verbal knowledge about something that is non-existent *(vikalpa),* deep sleep *(nidrā)* and recollection *(smṛti).*[5] Whether it is our flowing thoughts, emotional surges, or any other internal proceedings, they are included in one of these five.

The *darśana* also describes five hindrances (*kleśa*): ignorance (*avidyā*), erroneous identification of the self with the intellect (*asmitā*), attachment (*rāga*), aversion (*dveṣa*) and fear of death (*abhiniveśa*).[6] Yoga provides a means for restraining the mind when it is confronted by these hindrances.

The Three Stages of a Yogin: Yoga presents the following three categories of yogic aspirants: *yogarūḍha, yuñjāna* and *ārurukṣu.* The highest category is that of the *yogarūḍha.* Through great yogic endeavor *(sādhanā)* in their past lives, the *yogarūḍha* have attained great heights of yoga. Those who have progressed significantly toward the yogic aim, but are still attaining the heights of yoga are called *yuñjāna.* The lowest category of yogic endeavor is that of the *ārurukṣu.* These aspirants are beginning on the path of yoga and have yet to engage in yogic endeavor.

The Eight Parts of Yoga: Patañjali advocates eight steps of yoga known as *aṣṭāṅgayoga.* It consists of the following:

1) *Yama*, moral imperatives, is the introductory step. It involves the practice of nonviolence *(ahiṃsā),* truthfulness *(satya),* avoiding theft *(asteya)*, abstinence *(brahmacharya)* and avoiding avarice *(aparigraha).*[7]

2) *Niyama,* moral conduct, consists of attaining purity of the mind, body and speech *(śaucha)*, contentment *(santoṣa)*, austerity *(tapas),* study of sacred texts *(svādhyāya)* and an engrossed contemplation of Paramātman (*Īśvarapraṇidhāna)*.[8]

3) *Āsana*, position, involves assuming a steady, comfortable posture.[9]

4) *Prāṇāyāma,* control of breath, is to restrain inhaling and exhaling.[10] Patañjali does not describe in detail the various types of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* in his *Yogasūtras*, but instead places greater emphasis on other yogic endeavors.

5) *Pratyahāra* is the withdrawal of the senses from the outer world.[11]

6) *Dhāraṇā*, concentration, consists of binding the *chitta* to a particular location or subject.[12]

7) *Dhyāna,* meditation, is the uninterrupted stream of concentration on the object of *dhāraṇā.*[13]

8) *Samādhi,* perfect concentration, or contemplation, is the final stage of *aṣṭāṅgayoga.* It is a state of perfect focus in which only the object of concentration shines forth, while the self is understood as absent.[14]

Having described the eight parts of yoga in this way, Maharṣi Patañjali placed greater emphasis on the last three parts of yoga, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi,* which mark the various stages of concentration. Within *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, these three are understood as more internal[15] than the first five parts. By *dhāraṇā,* the roving mind is tied first to an object in order that it may become steady. In *dhyāna,* concentration of the object performed in *dhāraṇā* is continued, and in *samādhi* concentration becomes extremely intense, causing one to become submerged in absolute peace.

Abhyāsa and Vairāgya: Two universal problems hinder success: the lack of practice and attachment to things that deviate from the goal. To all of us, the Yoga Darśana presents two unique teachings that are beneficial for success in all fields of life: practice *(abhyāsa)* and detachment *(vairāgya)*. *Abhyāsa* is continuous practice over an extended period of time, carried out in a respectful and thoughtful manner,[16] and *vairāgya* is the act of subjugating the desire for objects that obstruct the goal. Through *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya,* a practitioner attains yoga.

The Fruit, Complete Liberation: The primary objective of yoga is to attain complete liberation. Through the practice of yoga, impurity is overcome and discriminative knowledge *(vivekajñāna)* is obtained. By this, ignorance is destroyed and misery comes to an end.

Īśvara in Yoga: Unlike the Sāṅkhya Darśana, Patañjali clearly discusses Īśvara in the *Yogasūtras*. He identifies Īśvara as a particular *puruṣa* who is unaffected by afflictions, *karma*, the fruits of *karma* and the resulting latent impressions.[17] He also acknowledges Īśvara as the subject of profound meditation.[18] Despite this, because of the *sūtras'* conceptualization of Īśvara as a *puruṣa* and its mention of Īśvara as an alternative subject of profound meditation, many have found scope for debating Īśvara's existence and significance in yoga.

However, from the theistic descriptions of the *darśana* found in the *Mahābhārata*, *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Bhāgavata,* it seems only appropriate to say that not only is Yoga *seśvara*, but also that its ultimate goal is not just to concentrate on the self, but to attain *samādhi* in Paramātman. Bhagavān Svāmināràyaṇa also advocates the same while explaining the Yoga Darśana. He states, "The principle of the Yoga scriptures is as follows: 'The functioning *(vṛtti)* of the mind should be first stabilized through practice *(abhyāsa)*, and then it should be attached to Paramātman.'"[19]

In this way, the Yoga Darśana offers a comprehensive philosophical understanding along with a detailed description of the means for its realization. This is why Yoga continues, even today, to leave a lasting impression on our hearts.

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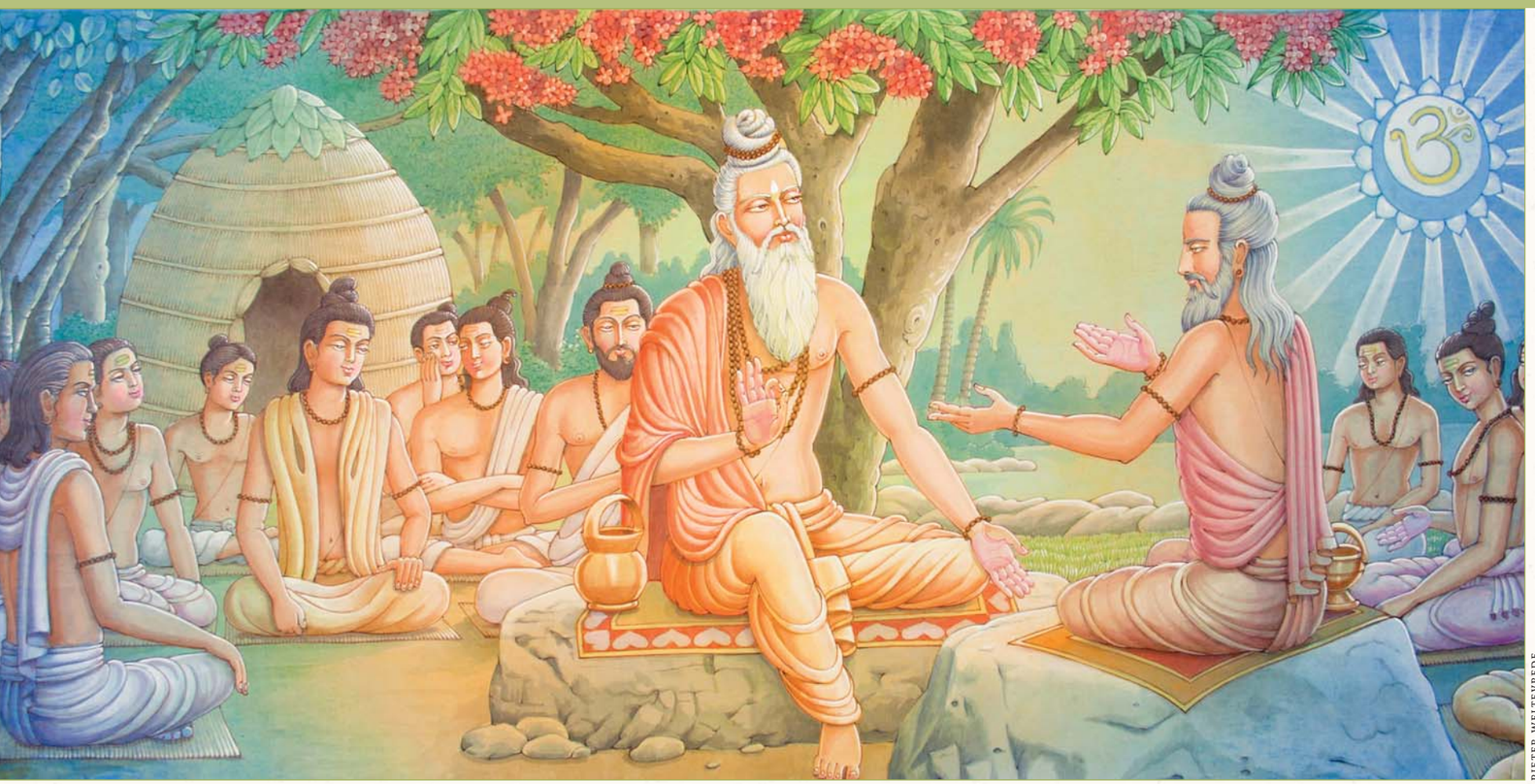
Footnotes

1 (Patañjali, The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali xiii)
2 (Bhagavadgītā 5.4) (Vyāsa 94)
3 (Yogasūtra 1.2) (Patañjali, Pātañjalayogasūtrāṇi 4)
4 (Bhagavadgītā 6.34) (Vyāsa 114)
5 (Yogasūtra 1.6) (Pātañjalayogasūtrāṇi 10)
6 (Yogasūtra 2.3) (59)
7 (Yogasūtra 2.30) (102)
8 (Yogasūtra 2.32) (104)
9 (Yogasūtra 2.46) (110)
10 (Yogasūtra 2.49) (112)
11 (Yogasūtra 2.54) (116)
12 (Yogasūtra 3.1) (118)
13 (Yogasūtra 3.2) (119)
14 (Yogasūtra 3.3) (119)
15 (Yogasūtra 3.7) (121)
16 (Yogasūtra 1.13-4) (17–8)
17 (Yogasūtra 1.24) (25–6)
18 (Yogasūtra 1.23) (25)
19 (Svāmināràyaṇa 375)



PIETER WELTEVREDE

Maharṣi Gautama sits under the sacred Ashoka tree (Saraca indica) with disciples in front of his thatched forest kutir. *He is debating deep philosophical topics with an opponent and has his followers listening and learning. In the sky shines a symbolic sun, whose rays represent the 16 categories to be known for attaining liberation.*

NYĀYA DARŚANA: THE SCHOOL OF LOGIC

If you like reasoning, you will enjoy reading the *Nyāyaśāstra*. The Nyāya Darśana is known for its precise descriptions, meticulous definitions and systematization of reasoned thought. Rishi Gautama's creation of the *Nyāyasūtras*,[1] an aphoristic text spanning five chapters, resulted in the systematic representation of the principles of the Nyāya Darśana.

Rishi Gautama is also known as Akṣapāda, hence the Nyaya Darśana is alternatively called Akṣapāda Darśana. The *darśana's* analysis of the nature and source of knowledge and its validity identifies it as also *ānvīkṣikī-vidyā*, meaning "the study of investigation." The school's followers are aptly identified as *tārkikas* or *naiyāyikas* because of the *darśana's* great emphasis on logic and reasoning *(tarka)*.

After Gautama, these followers of the Nyāya tradition gave extensive elaborations on many of his metaphysical and epistemological principles. Among these commentaries and expositions, Vātsyāyana's extensive commentary on the *Nyāyasūtras*, Udyotakara's creation of the *Nyāyavārtika*, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's *Nyāyamañjarī* and Vāchaspatimiśra's *Nyāyavārtikatātparyaṭīkā* are distinguished.

Sixteen Categories to be Known: Gautama, in his *Nyāyasūtras,* enumerates sixteen categories whose knowledge is emphasized for understanding the world and attaining liberation. He lists them as: 1) valid means of knowledge *(pramāṇa),* 2) objects of knowledge *(prameya),* 3) doubt *(śaṃśaya),* 4) purpose *(prayojana),* 5) example *(dṛṣṭānta),* 6) conclusion *(siddhānta),* 7) parts of an argument *(avayava)*, 8) hypothetical reasoning *(tarka)*, 9) doubtless settlement *(nirṇaya)*, 10) constructive discussion *(vāda)*, 11) wrangling *(jalpa),* 12) caviling *(vitaṇḍā)*, 13) fallacious reason *(hetvābhāsa)*, 14) the use of equivocation *(chala)*, 15) objection by the use of similarity and distinction *(jāti)* and 16) inadequacies of argument *(nigrahasthāna)*.[2]

From this categorization, it becomes clear that Nyāya, in addition to emphasizing a contemplation of entities, also places great significance on the nature and methods of reasoning and dialogue. This emphasis becomes even more evident in its extensive expositions on conducting formal debates. The *darśana's* elaborations on knowledge, the process of argumentation, the fallacy of arguments and the characteristics of sound arguments provide the necessary tools for understanding, explicating and even evaluating the *darśanic* dialogue.

The Existence of Non-Existence: Can non-existence exist? Nyāya's and also Vaiśeṣika's acceptance of non-existence *(abhāva)* as an independent object is particularly interesting. Both *darśanas* categorize non-existence as four types: prior non-existence *(prāgabhāva)*, posterior non-existence *(pradvaṃsābhāva)*, absolute non-existence *(atyantābhāva)* and mutual non-existence *(anyonyābhāva)*.[3] In terms of, for example, a pot, prior non-existence is the non-existence of the pot before it was created. Posterior non-existence is its non-existence after it is destroyed. Absolute non-existence is its non-existence in all times and at all places; and mutual non-existence is the rejection of the identity between two things, such as the pot and, for instance, a piece of cloth.[4] Although some have followed by accepting non-existence as an independent object, others have rejected it and offered substantial arguments against it.

Epistemology: The Nyāya Darśana accepts four means for acquiring knowledge: perception *(pratyakṣa-pramāṇa)*, inference *(anumāna-pramāṇa)*, verbal testimony *(śabda-pramāṇa)* and comparison *(upamāna-pramāṇa)*.[5] Of these, the *darśana's* introduction of comparison is noteworthy. *Upamāna-pramāṇa* is the ability to obtain knowledge about something by its similarity to something else.[6] It is described by the following example. Suppose a man who has never seen a *gavaya (Bos frontalis früher)*,[7] upon entering a forest, is informed by a forester that a *gavaya* is similar to a cow. When he encounters a creature that looks like a cow but is not, he recalls the statement of the forester and comes to know that it is a *gavaya*. The means by which the knowledge of a *gavaya* is obtained in this case is called *upamāna-pramāṇa*.

Although many other *darśanas* have criticized *upamāna* as a distinct means of knowledge, some Mīmāṃsakas and Vedāntins later accepted it as such.

From Smoke to Fire: Of the four means of knowledge, the amount of contemplation Nyāya performed in inference is rarely seen in any of the other *darśana*. Gautama defines *inference (anumāna)* as "knowledge which is preceded by perception." Inference is the act of establishing through reason. For instance, in the inference: "There is fire on that mountain, since there is smoke on it, like in a kitchen," the knowledge of fire that exists on the mountain is established indirectly through seeing smoke. The following major components make up this inference:

- what is to be established *(sādhya):* i.e., fire
- where it is to be established *(pakṣa):* i.e., on the mountain
- by which it is to be established *(hetu):* i.e., smoke
- an example used in inference *(udāharaṇa):* i.e., a kitchen

The Nyāya Darśana uses inference in this way to acquire knowledge.

Five Steps of Establishment: Nyāya distinguishes two types of inferences: those that are for oneself *(svārtha)* and those that are for others *(parārtha)*. When inference is intentioned for convincing others, Nyāya emphasizes a particular system by which arguments are to be presented. This system helps to effortlessly direct the mind of the listener to think reasonably. The presented argument takes the form of the following five specific types of propositions set forth in the proceeding order:

- thesis *(pratijñā):* the statement that is to be examined
- reason *(hetu):* the reason by which the statement is established
- illustration *(udāharaṇa):* an example applicable to the statement and reason
- comparison *(upanayana):* application of the first three elements
- conclusion *(nigamana):* confirmation of the examined statement

The inference given above can be expressed in this sequence as follows: "That mountain is on fire" is the thesis; "Because there is smoke" is the reason; "Like in a kitchen" is the illustration; the application of the above three to establish the conclusion is the comparison; and the confirmation that "The mountain is on fire" is the conclusion.

Because of such particular analysis and its universal application, Nyāya Darśana's exposition on inference, its commentaries and independent texts on each of the aspects of inference are not only well studied, but also explicated in texts produced by scholars even today.

Īśvara: Nyāya is a rational defender of theism. Within Gautama's *Nyāyasūtras,* we find clear references to the existence of Īśvara. He accepts Īśvara as omniscient, flawless and the cause of the world. He argues that in order to understand the relationship between *karma* and its fruits, it is necessary to accept the existence of an omniscient Īśvara. To establish the existence of Īśvara, the Nyāya Darśana presents a great number of different arguments. For instance, Udayanāchārya, a prominent tenth-century scholar of Nyāya, discusses principle arguments against the existence of Īśvara, refutes them and, in return, presents several justifications for the existence of Īśvara in his *Nyāyakusumāñjali*. In this way, *Naiyāyikas* (followers of Nyāya*)* are an example of a synthesis of faith in Vedic principles with an adeptness in strong reasoning.

The Permanent Cessation of Misery: In the Nyāya Darśana, liberation is the permanent cessation of all types of misery.[8] Gautama presents a sequence by which liberation is attained. He explains that first ignorance (*ajñāna)* is destroyed. Thereafter, faults (*doṣa)* are eliminated, followed by the end of activity (*pravṛtti)*. Because of this, rebirth (*janma)* never occurs; leading finally, to everlasting freedom from misery (*duḥkha)*.[9] Here, liberation is not about achieving, but rather releasing.

Birth of Neo-Nyāya: The early scholars of Nyāya emphasized the expositions of the *darśana's* philosophical principles. However, as time passed and debates arose with other *darśanas*, each became skilled at presenting and defending their own principles. This eventually resulted in the development of a robust methodology for not only constructing rational formulations, but also conducting and evaluating dialogues. As a consequence, Neo-Nyāya took birth. It was a new form of the Nyāya Darśana that focused its investigations predominantly on the nature of knowledge, its analysis and means of acquisition and systematization of the inter-darśanic dialogue.

Among the scholars of Neo-Nyāya, Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya, the author of the famous *Tattvachintāmani*, was a prominent founder of the tradition. Well-known commentaries on his work include Raghunātha Śiromaṇi's *Dīdhiti* and Mathurānātha's *Māthuri*.

By utilizing reasoning for the right purposes, providing precise methods of characterization, and structuralizing and fostering both inter-*darśanic* and intra-*darśanic* dialogue, without tainting the freedom of expression, the Nyāya Darśana gifted the world with many intellectual achievements.

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Footnotes

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3 (Bhaṭṭa 5)
4 (Bhaṭṭa 76–8)
5 (Nyāyasūtra 1.1.3) (Basu and Gautama 2)
6 (Nyāyasūtra 1.1.6) (3)
7 A gavaya is a particular species of ox.
8 (Nyāyasūtra 1.1.22) (Basu and Gautama 7)
9 (Nyāyasūtra 1.1.2) (2)

PIETER WELTEVREDE

Sage Kaṇāda sits beneath the sacred Parijata (Nyctanthes arbortritis) tree, with his texts on naturalism and atomism. His school postulates nine realities, symbolized by the nine particles swirling around him. His stress on understanding nature is indicated by the wide ocean behind and cosmic bodies in the sky above. Mahākāla, great time, reigns just above him.

VAIŚEṢIKA DARŚANA: THE SCHOOL OF PARTICULARITY

The *darśanas* of India are seen to concentrate their attention from the astronomical to the subatomic and at other times from the subtle to the cosmological. They have touched on both spectrums: investigating the most extensive and also exploring the most elemental of substances. As a result, it is not an oversight to state that thoughts on the subatomic are not exclusive to modern science. Ever since antiquity the Indian mind has ventured into the realm of atoms. The Vaiśeṣika Darśana stands as a testament of this journey. Sages trod a path from the atom to its subatomic parts. They described creation as the consequence of particles coming together and defined destruction as the result of their separation. In this light, the Vaiśeṣika Darśana anticipated the modern world's understanding of reality.

The Vaiśeṣika Darśana's name originates from its notion of particularity *(viśeṣa)*. Udayanāchārya presents an etymology in his *Kiraṇāvalī*. He explains that the school is recognized as Vaiśeṣika because it offers a narration of *viśeṣa* or distinct entities.

Although this *darśana's* principles can be traced back to antiquity, Rishi Kaṇāda presented their systematic formulation in the *Vaiśeṣikasūtras,* a text containing 370 aphorisms spread over ten chapters. The creation of this text eventually resulted in the Vaiśeṣika principles taking on the form of a *darśana*.

This form was later molded by many who followed. Among them, Praśastapāda is noteworthy for his creation of the *Padārthadharmasaṅgraha,* an expository text that later inspired the creation of many extensive commentaries. Other works including, Śrīdhara's *Nyāyakandalī*, Udayanāchārya's *Kiraṇāvalī*, Śrīvatsa's (also known as Vallabhāchārya) *Nyāyalīlāvatī* and Vyomaśivāchārya's *Vyomavatīṭīkā* are also well known in the *darśana*. Although these texts were predominantly dedicated to explicating and establishing Vaiśeṣika's principles, much later attempts were also made by many, including Viśvanātha Pañchānana, the author of *Nyāyasiddhāntamuktāvalī*, and Annaṃ Bhaṭṭa, the creator of *Tarkasaṃgraha*, to consolidate both Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika into one comprehensive *darśana*.

Darśanic Definition of Vedic Dharma: Kaṇāda makes it very clear from the beginning of his *Vaiśeṣikasūtras* that the purpose of Vaiśeṣika is to investigate *dharma*.[1] The aphorisms then continue by defining *dharma* as not any particular faith system, but rather the means to prosperity and liberation.[2] How is *dharma* to be attained? The *darśana* answers that one must seek guidance of the *Vedas* in order to realize *dharma*.[3] The aphorisms suggest that since the *Vedas* explain the nature of the entities of the world, an investigation of *dharma* is nothing other than to comprehend the nature of these entities. It is in this sense that, to the Vaiśeṣika, the *dhārmika* are understood to be "the learned."

The World of Six: Kaṇāda commenced an investigation of *dharma* by partitioning the world into six different entities *(padārthas):*[4] substance *(dravya)*, quality *(guṇa)*, action *(karma)*, generality *(sāmānya)*, particularity *(viśeṣa)* and inherence *(samavāya)*. He then characterized them in the following way:

Substance is that in which qualities and action reside. Vaiśeṣika quantifies nine such substances: earth *(pṛthivī)*, water *(āpa)*, fire *(tejas)*, wind *(vāyu)*, ether *(ākāśa)*, time *(kāla)*, direction *(dik)*, the self *(ātman)* and the mind *(mana)*.[5]

Quality is that which resides in substance. There are twenty-four different types of qualities including color, taste, smell, touch, number, measurement and separateness.[6]

Action is movement. This movement resides in substance. It is divided into five types, each of which describes a particular direction in which movement takes place.[7]

Generality stands for generic property. For instance, there are many humans; but each has the same, what one would call, humanness that identifies them as humans. This humanness is an example of generality; it is believed to be singular, since there are not two types of humanness.

Particularity is that which distinguishes. In Vaiśeṣika, it is used to distinguish one particle *(paramāṇu)* from another.

Inherence is the relationship between two entities, one of whose existence cannot be without the other. The relationship between cane syrup and sweetness is one of *samavāya*. The type of relationship between an object and its parts is also known as *samavāya*.

Vaiśeṣika offers that, without understanding these six and their natures, it is difficult to comprehend the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world, and subsequently the nature of *dharma*.

Divided to the Undivided: In addition to the above categorization, one of the more notable contributions of both the Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya *darśanas* was their notion of atoms or particles as building blocks of creation *(paramāṇukāraṇavāda)*. They demonstrated the existence of particles based on an inference from the experienced division of visible objects. Followers of Vaiśeṣika argued that although objects can be divided into parts, there must be a limit to which such division can occur. They identified this limit with the particle *(paramāṇu)*: the smallest substance that cannot be further divided. They argued, that without accepting indivisibility, a fallacy of infinite regression would arise.

Vaiśeṣika also reasoned that, without acknowledging the particle as indivisible, something as large as a mountain would become the same size as a mustard seed. They reasoned that since the size of a created substance is dependent on the size of its parts and both the mountain and mustard seed would be equally made of an infinite number of infinitely small substances,[8] they would both become identical in size. As a result, they concluded, there must be a limit to which substance can be divided. Based on this conclusion, they argued that the particle can neither be created nor destroyed. Creation and destruction of a substance, they claimed, requires it to be divisible. Thus, from the indivisibility of an particle, they also concluded that the particle is eternal.

Particles, the Building Blocks: Like Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika identifies four substances as having particles: earth *(pṛthivī)*, water *(jala)*, light *(tejas)* and wind *(vāyu)*. It believes there are an infinite number of such particles and that they come together to create the objects we perceive. It also emphasizes that when these particles come together to create substances, the created substance is not just a collection of particles, but an altogether newly created substance. For example, when a clay pot is created, a new substance, different from the collection of its particles, is created. This newly created substance is can an *avayavin*—that which has parts.

The Created Never Existed Before: The significance of this belief lies in both the Naiyāyika and Vaiśeṣika's acceptance of *asatkāryavāda*: the belief that a created substance did not previously exist. As we saw earlier, the Sāṅkhya Darśana believed in *satkāryavāda*: that the created resides in an unmanifest form in its material cause. *Asatkāryavāda* is just the opposite. According to it, an effect does not reside in any form in its cause, but rather is newly created. A pot created from clay did not already exist in the clay, but is distinct from the clay.

Two-Fold Ātman: Similar to Nyāya, the Vaiśeṣika Darśana also believes the *ātman* to be a substance that is eternal, many, all-pervasive *(vibhu)* and the knower. Here, *ātman* refers to both the *jīvātman* (the self) and Paramātman. Although both are considered *ātman*, the *darśana* offers many differences between the two. It believes that there are many *jīvātman,* each of which is joined with a distinct mind by which it experiences, among other things, pleasure *(sukha)* and misery *(duḥkha)*. Desire *(icchā)*, aversion *(dvesha)*, effort *(prayatna)*, righteousness *(dharma)*, unrighteousness *(adharma)* and the faculty of impression *(saṃskāra)* are also all believed to be qualities of this *jīvātman*. The Vaiśeṣika *jīvātman* is also not all-knowing; nor is its knowledge eternal.

Vaiśeṣika describes creation from elemental particles, which are themselves inactive. As a result, an independent cause is required to instigate its first movement. Vaiśeṣika offers Paramātman as this initial cause. Unlike the *jīvātman*, there is also only one Paramātman. This Paramātman is omniscient, and his knowledge is considered to be eternal. Because of these and other differences, Paramātman and the *jīvātman* are recognized as distinct.

Epistemology: Unlike Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika categorizes only two means of knowledge: perception *(pratyakṣa-pramāṇa)* and inference *(anumāna-pramāṇa)*. Although, they define both as similar to the Naiyāyikas, verbal testimony *(śabda-pramāṇa)* is understood to be subsumed in inference, since the truthfulness of the spoken or written word is dependent on an inference of the truthfulness or authority of its speaker or writer. Similarly, comparison *(upamāna-pramāṇa)* is believed to be incorporated in verbal testimony or inference.

Although Vaiśeṣika's principles are to some extent different from Nyāya's, the two are greatly comparable and complementary. Hence later scholars have categorized these *darśanas* as similar and often combined their teachings in collective texts, such as *Tarkasaṃgraha* and *Nyāyasiddhāntamuktāvalī*.

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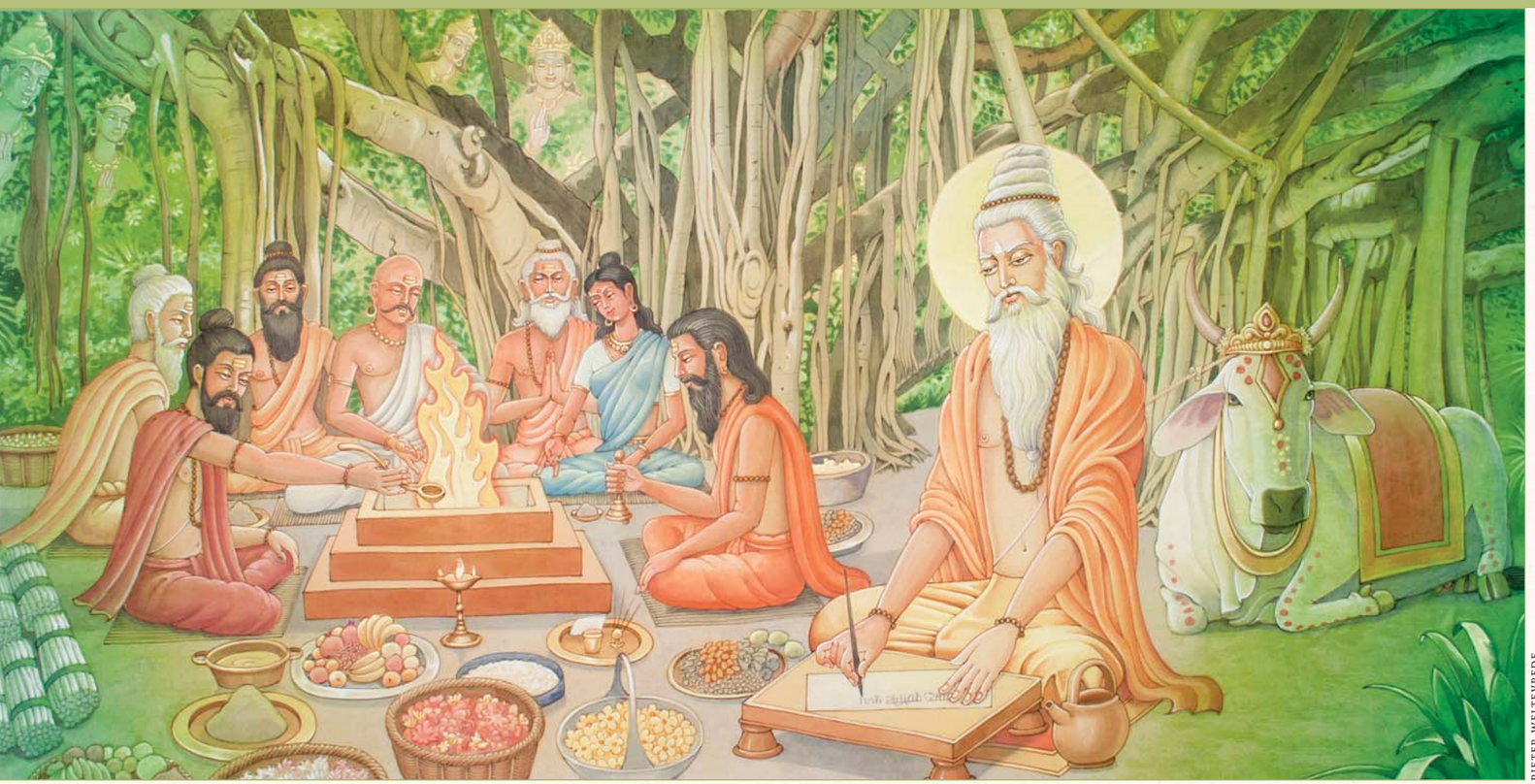

PIETER WELTEVREDE

Sage Jaiminī scribes onto a palm leaf his school's principles on philology and exegesis. Here, the yājmana *couple, the* purohitā *and* yājñikas *conduct a* homa *with offerings of sandalwood, herbs, fruits, ghee, incense and flowers. Enhanced by the decorated zebu cow, their ritual has the power to move the forces of the universe. The* devas *have gathered within the temple-like tree to bless and observe.*

PŪRVAMĪMĀṂSĀ DARŚANA: THE SCHOOL OF VEDIC RITUALS

Although the previous *darśanas* are rooted in the *Vedas*, we now commence a study of two schools that have direct relationship with the *Vedas*. *Mīmāṃsā* means "deep reflection" or "inquiry." Reflection is at the heart of India's ancient intellectual wealth, figuring prominently in the *Vedas*. As such, reflection is as ancient as the *Vedas* themselves. The *Vedas* offer an inquiry into the visible and invisible, the external and internal, and from the individual to the infinite. This constant inquiry gave birth to two Vedic *darśanas:* Pūrvamīmāṃsā (Mīmāṃsā) and Uttaramīmāṃsā (Vedānta). *Purva,* meaning "prior," indicates a concern with the earlier portions of the *Vedas,* whereas *uttara,* or "later," refers to the later portion, the *Upanishads.* This is the last pair of the Vedic *ṣaḍdarśana*.

Mīmāṃsāsūtras, a Text of Vedic Rituals: The *Vedas* are the soul of Hinduism. Without their authority, Hindu traditions could no longer survive. Criticisms of the Veda instigated the need to methodically establish its clarity and demonstrate the authenticity of Vedic thought. Jaiminī took it upon himself to systematically shape the Mīmāṃsā Darśana by creating the *Mīmāṃsāsūtras*. Spanning twelve chapters and divided into sixty sections, the text considers roughly a thousand different topics, making it the largest collection of philosophical aphorisms of the *ṣaḍdarśana*. The text principally occupies itself in providing expositions on topics pertaining to interpretation and performance of Vedic rituals.

Unlike the aphoristic texts of the previous *darśanas,* the *Pūrvamīmāṃsā sūtras* (as well as the *Uttaramīmāṃsā sūtras)* are not independent texts, but based on the *śrutis* of the *Vedas*. Therefore, without some understanding the *Vedas*, one cannot come to terms with the aphorisms of these texts; and without a basic understanding of these aphorisms, it is nearly impossible to comprehend the *Vedas*. In this way, these aphoristic texts and the *Vedas* are dependent upon one another.

Darśanic Developments: Mīmāṃsā's desire to understand the nature of *dharma* is presented in the declaration at the beginning of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtras:* "Now commences an investigation of *dharma*."[1] Here, it defines *dharma* as Vedic directive.[2] Mīmāṃsā investigates its cause[3] and establishes it in the words of the *Vedas*.[4]

In characterizing this Vedic *dharma*, the Pūrvamīmāṃsā Darśana was later divided into three major schools of thought: Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's Bhāṭṭamata, Prabhākara Miśra's Gurumata, and Murāri Miśra's Murārimata. Of these three, much of the work that followed focused on the expositions of Kumārila and Gurumata. Maṇḍana Miśra, Vāchaspati Miśra and Pārthasārathi Miśra are well known for their contributions under the Kumārila school; while Śālikanātha, Bhavanātha and Nandiśvara were leading contributors to the teachings of Gurumata.

A Universal Hermeneutical Theory: Hermeneutics is the study of interpretation. The interpretation of Vedic *śrutis* is the primary focus of Mīmāṃsā's epistemic investigations. Therefore, despite enumerating six distinct means of knowledge, the Mīmāṃsā Darśana places great emphasis on verbal testimony *(śabda-pramāṇa).*

Mīmāṃsā's primary focus on interpreting Vedic *śrutis* generated a great need for developing an appropriate method of interpretation. As the fruits of much investigation, Mīmāṃsā developed many robust norms to guide and evaluate the act of interpretation. Among others, they presented the following criteria: (1) Commencement *(upakrama):* the presentation of the principle topic of discussion at the beginning of the text under consideration. (2) Conclusion *(upasaṃhāra):* the presentation of this topic at the end of the text. (3) Reiteration *(abhyāsa):* repetition of the topic throughout the text. (4) Uniqueness *(apurvatā):* the topic as being unknown by some other source, and hence uniquely found in the present discussion. (5) Fruit *(phala):* the intent or purpose of the topic. (6) Eulogy *(arthavāda):* praise or criticism intended to encourage. (7) Demonstration *(upapatti):* establishment of the main topic through various arguments.

The particularity and practicality of this system resulted in Mīmāṃsā's Vedic interpretations becoming more robust. Because of this, even other *darśanas* that did not accept the philosophical principles of Mīmāṃsā utilized these methods for interpreting their own respective texts.

Fundamental Principles: Mīmāṃsā believes in the reality of the external world, the *ātman* and *karma*. It also accepts reincarnation, *svarga* and *naraka* (the heavenly and hellish realms) and liberation.

In addition, Mīmāṃsā offers the *Vedas* to be of supreme authority, infallible, and its words as eternal.[5] Having explicitly stated the position of those who oppose the *Vedas*, proponents of the *darśana* respond to these criticisms and establish the *Vedas* as both eternal and infallible. In offering such responses, they also refute the seeming inconsistencies of the Vedic *śrutis*, harmonize them with one another, and ultimately offer philosophical justifications for the beliefs of its underlying ritualism.

A School of Reflection on Action (Karma-Mīmāṃsā): It is impossible to live without action. Life itself is nothing but a synonym for collective action (*karma*). Hence, throughout the ages, we have yearned to know what we should do and how and when we should act. These questions have continued to bewilder us. The Mīmāṃsā Darśana offers a means for satisfying our inquiry. In this *darśana*, *karma*, as it is joined with the individual and all of creation, is contemplated. Mīmāṃsā uniquely enjoins rights and duty as two necessary aspects of action.

Because of Mīmāṃsā's emphasis on ritualism, not only is this *darśana* identified as Karma-Mīmāṃsā, but its aphoristic text is also referred to as the *Karmasūtras*. To understand Mīmāṃsā's ritualism, it is necessary to come to terms with its notion of *karma*.

The *darśana* presents the following five different types of *karma*:

(1) Obligatory Actions *(nityakarma):* those actions that one is to perform periodically. These include bathing, *sandhyāvandanā*, and the fire ritual *(agnihotra)*. (2) Obligatory Actions for Specific Occasions *(naimittikakarma):* These actions include those performed at birth, rites of passage, and other *saṃskāras*. (3) Optional Actions *(kāmyakarma):* those actions performed for the fulfilment of some desire; for instance, the *putreṣṭiyāga,* a sacrifice performed for obtaining a child. (4) Prohibited Actions *(niṣiddhakarma):* actions, such as theft and other crimes. (5) Expiatory Actions *(prāyaścittakarma):* actions undertaken to reduce the effect of performed prohibited actions. *Chāndrāyaṇa* and other austerities are considered expiatory actions.

These *karmas* are also alternatively divided into the following three types: (1) Accumulated Actions *(sañcita-karma):* the accumulated actions of one's previous lives. (2) Ripened Actions *(prārabdha-karma):* among the *sañchita-karma*, those actions whose results are destined to come to fruition in the present life. (3) Present Action (*kriyamāṇa-karma):* the actions that one is undergoing at the present moment.

To the Mīmāṃsaka, the significance of *karma* lies its association with liberation and eventual identification with *dharma*. *Nitya* and *naimittika* Vedic *karmas* benefit in attaining liberation. The later Mīmāṃsakas, such Āyadeva and Laugākṣibhāskara, emphasize that when these *karmas* are offered to Paramātman they result in liberation. In one way, this significance appears to resemble the narration of *karmayoga* presented in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

Yajña, an Act of Sacrifice: Among these different *karmas*, Mīmāṃsā gives great significance to *yajña,* the act of sacrifice. Based on Vedic narrations, Mīmāṃsā offers narration on a number of different types of *yajña*, each described in great detail. These *yajña* are considered to be fulfilled only with the successful completion of the many ritual performances that constitute it. The details of these ritual sacrifices explicitly describe the intent with which they are to be performed; the specific order in which its constituent rituals are to be performed; what *mantras* are to be recited; at what time, location, and under what circumstances, by whom and for whom they are to be performed; what austerities are to be undertaken by those enjoined in the sacrifice; and the fruits of successful completion. All of these are described in great detail by Mīmāṃsā. Placing *dhārmika* actions such as *yajña* on the pedestal of inquiry and reflection is one of the most notable contributions of Mīmāṃsā.

Apūrva, a Necessary Connection: The Mīmāṃsā concept of *apūrva* is the necessary connection between action and its fruits. It is also referred to as *adṛṣṭha*, or "that which is unseen." The Mīmāṃsaka reasons that at the completion of an act, the act itself ceases to exist, yet its fruits come to bear after some time; hence, some association that conjoins future fruits with past ceased action needs to exist. Mīmāṃsā conceives of *apūrva* as fulfilling this need. Whether it is *apūrva* itself or Paramātman who offers the fruits of action, is the subject of great debate within the *darśana*. Many later Mīmāṃsakas acknowledge a theistic intervention in the ascription of fruits.

Mīmāṃsā accepts the *Vedas* to be supremely authoritative. It also harbors great faith in Vedic *dharma* and the principle of *karma* and its fruits; and through reason and logic it establishes the claims of that very same faith. Hence, although Mīmāṃsā may not solely depend upon reason, it does not represent a blind dependence on unexamined and unsupported authority.

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PIETER WELTEVREDE

Sage Bādarāyaṇa sits in a grove of holy rudrāksha trees, Eleocarpus ganitrus, writing the seminal Brahmasūtras. *Behind him are gathered the* ācāryas *of some of the subsequent and philosophically distinct Vedānta schools: (left to right) Chaitanya, Śaṅkara, Niṃbārka, Madhva, Rāmānanuja and Vallabāchārya.*

VEDĀNTA DARŚANA: THE SCHOOL OF BRAHMAVIDYĀ

The Vedānta Darśana (also known as Uttaramīmāṃsā) is one of the most prominent and currently the most practiced school of the *ṣaḍdarśana.* The title *Vedānta* appropriately characterizes this *darśana* in the following three ways: (1) *Vedānta* is a Sanskrit compound constructed from joining *Veda* with *anta*. The term *Veda* refers to the *Vedas*. Each Veda has the following four parts: *Saṃhitā, Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka* and the *Upaniṣad.* Among these, the *Upaniṣads* are referred to as the end part of the *Vedas*. Hence, *Vedānta* refers to the knowledge of the *Upaniṣads:* the end *(anta)* of the *Vedas*. (2) In addition, *anta* also means "concluding essence." The essence of the *Vedas* is included in its *Upaniṣads*. Hence, *Vedānta* also refers to the concluding essence of the *Vedas*. The name of the *darśana* indicates that its principles rest on the teachings of the *Upanishads.* (3) When understood as a *darśana, Vedānta* also refers to the *Brahmasūtras,* the primary aphoristic text of the *darśana*. Just as the Mīmāṃsā's aphoristic text is based on Vedic ritual expositions, Vedānta's *Brahmasūtras* are based on the *Upaniṣads*.

Although the principles of Vedānta originate from Vedic literature, a systematic representation of its teachings is attributed to Maharṣi Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa. His creation of the *Brahmasūtras* established Vedānta as a *darśana* of Vedic philosophy. Since other *āchāryas* within the *darśana* based their respective philosophies on the expositions of this text, Vyāsa is also referred to as the *ādi-āchārya* of Vedānta.

Prasthānatrayī, a Trinity of Texts: *Prasthāna* means "a *śāstra* that establishes principles," and *trayī* indicates "the quantity three." There are three sacred texts held as authoritative by the Vedānta Darśana: The *Upaniṣads,* the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* and the *Brahmasūtras* (also known as the *Vedāntasūtras).* Because these three sacred texts establish the principles of Vedānta, they are collectively identified as the *Prasthānatrayī.*

Of these, the *Upaniṣads* are a form of *śruti*[1], hence referred to as *śrutiprasthāna);* the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* is a form of *smṛti*[2], and thus identified as the *smṛtiprasthāna;* and the *Brahmasūtras* are a form of *tarka,* or logic, hence identified as *tarka-prasthāna.*

Brahmasūtras, an Investigation of Brahman: The *Brahmasūtras* are partitioned into four chapters *(adhyāya),* with each further divided into four sections *(pāda)*. The chapters of the text focus on the following topics: (1) Meaning Ascription *(Samanvaya-adhyāya):* the first chapter, through logical analysis, elaborates the meaning of the *śrutis* in which *ānandamaya*, *ākāśa*, *prāṇa*, *akṣara*, *dahara*, *sat* and others appear. In doing so it describes Brahman as, among other things, the sustainer of all, all-pervasive, and the all-doer. (2) Refutation of Objections *(Virodhapratikṣepa-adhyāya):* the second chapter discusses various objections to the mentioned nature of Brahman and refutes those objections. (3) Description of Endeavor *(Sādhanā-adhyāya):* This chapter elaborates the various spiritual endeavors for attaining liberation. (4) The Fruits of *Brahmavidyā* (*Phala-adhyāya):* The final chapter describes liberation, the liberated, their divine powers and the divine abode.

Just as the Mīmāṃsā aphoristic text was identified as the *Karmasūtras,* the *Vedāntasūtras,* by its dedicated investigation on the nature of Brahman, is also aptly named the *Brahmasūtras.* The text's enquiry into the nature of Brahman is rooted in Upaniṣhadic revelation. Among the meanings of the term *Upaniṣad,* it is known to mean "That by which *brahmavidyā* (knowledge of Brahman*)* is known and attained." The *Upaniṣads* themselves define *brahmavidyā* by clearly stating, "*Brahmavidyā* is that by which the knowledge of *akṣara* and *puruṣa* is obtained."

Since the *Brahmasūtras* are based on the *Upaniṣads* and *smṛti* texts, it comes as no surprise that a call to investigate this *brahmavidyā* is expressed in the very first aphorism of the *Brahmasūtras:* "Therefore, now commences a desire to know Brahman."[3] It is also notable that here, at the outset, the *Brahmasūtras,* unlike the aphoristic texts of the other *darśanas*, undoubtedly makes itself known as theistic.

Fundamental Principles: Vedānta offers Brahman as the material cause (*upādānakāraṇa)* and instrumental cause (*nimittakāraṇa)* of the world, and as its all-doer. Vedānta also acknowledges the existence of an eternal and sentient *ātman* that is bound by *karma,* and as a result endures rebirth. The *darśana* identifies *brahmavidyā* as the means for attaining never-ending liberation of this *ātman* from the cycle of birth and death.

Vedānta's metaphysical elaborations present descriptions of the *ātman*[4] as the *jīvātman*[5] and as the governors *(īśvaras)*[6] of different realms *(lokas)*. It also offers a detailed narration of the cause of bondage of these *ātman*. In addition, it explains the means for their liberation,[7] the liberated,[8] the divine abode[9] of the liberated, the path[10] toward this abode, and the supreme entity, Paramātman,[11] who forever resides within it.

The Power of Words: The Vedānta Darśana recognizes the power of the scriptural word. Among the different accepted means of knowledge, it clearly establishes verbal testimony *(śabda-pramāṇa)* as foremost. Although the Naiyāyikas accepted the authority of verbal testimony, they relied predominately on inference when establishing the existence of Īśvara. In Vedānta, however, despite being aware of the Naiyāyikas' efforts, the *darśana* emphasizes verbal testimony over that of pure inference. It seems that the reason for this prominence is its understanding of the instability and unpredictability of logic. Vyāsa himself clarifies in the *Brahmasūtras*, "Because reasoning has no sure basis…"[12] One sees this emphasis on verbal testimony even in the beginning of the *Brahmasūtras.* Upon first proclaiming Brahman as the topic of discussion in the first aphorism, the text continues by describing that Brahman as the creator of the world. The next aphorism explicitly declares that it will demonstrate the nature of this Brahman through *śāstra.*

Guru in Vedāntic Hermeneutics: *Guru-kṛpā* is the heart of the Vedānta Darśana. Having established the significance of verbal testimony, Vedānta also emphasizes the importance of *guru* in its hermeneutics (theory of interpretation). Without understanding the significance of the *guru* in Vedānta, a study of Vedānta would be incomplete. It irrefutably states that it is not possible to experience the meaning of the *śāstras* without surrendering to a *gurudeva*. To demonstrate this, Vedānta appeals to the authority of the *śrutis* and *smṛtis*. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* explains, "To obtain that knowledge one must surrender oneself, with offerings in hand, only to that *guru* who has realized the essence of scriptures, who is Brahman, and steady in Parabrahman."[13] The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* describes such a *guru* as the *jñānin* (knowledgeable) and *tattvadarśin* (the seer of reality). "To master *brahmavidyā,*" the *Gītā* continues, "one must please him by bowing to him *(praṇipātena)*, asking him meaningful questions *(paripraśnena)* and serving him *(sevayā)*."[14] By the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad,* Vedānta makes clear the sentiments one needs to have for such a *guru* in order to realize the true meanings of the *śāstras:* "One should have the same devotion for the *guru* as one has for Parabrahman."[15] Here it advises to view the *guru* as Nārāyaṇasvarūpa (the form of Parabrahman). From this, it seems only appropriate that followers of Vedānta identify the *guru* as "Gurudeva" or "Guruhari." Perhaps it is because of this *guru-śiṣya* (disciple) tradition that the Vedānta Darśana is of great significance even today. In this way, Vedāntic hermeneutics achieves completeness only by accepting the *guru*.

Sub-Darśanas of Vedānta: Many schools of Vedānta *(saṃpradāyas)* later emerged from the teachings of *Prasthānatrayī*. Within the Indian philosophical tradition, it became customary for these *saṃpradāyas* to establish their philosophical positions in relation to these three texts. Although these *saṃpradāyas* are positioned within the Vedānta Darśana, they themselves became identified with the title *darśana*. Among them, the most notable are Śaṅkara's Advaita-darśana, Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita-darśana, Madhva's Dvaita-darśana, Niṃbārka's Dvaitādvaita-darśana, Vallabha's Śuddhādvaita-darśana, Chaitanyamahāprabhu's Achintyabhedābheda-darśana, and Svāmināràyaṇa's Akṣarabrahma-Parabrahma-darśana[16] (also known as the Akṣara-Puraṣottama-siddhānta). Each school is nurtured by a unique interpretation of the *Prasthānatrayī* presented in extensive commentaries.

By discussing, among other things, Brahman as the cause of the world, the form of the *ātman*, liberation and its means, and the unavoidable need of a *guru* to understand sacred texts, the Vedānta Darśana gifts the world with a unique school of philosophy.

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Footnotes

1 *Śruti* refers to Vedic mantras.

2 *Smṛti* refers to that which recalls the principles of the *śruti*s.

3 (Brahmasūtra 1.1.1) (Vedavyāsa 1)

4 (Brahmasūtra 2.3.18) (171)

5 (Brahmasūtra 2.3.18-40) (171–185)

6 (Brahmasūtra 4.1.1-4.3.4) (336–363)

7 (Brahmasūtra 3.3.14-24) (264–270)

8 (Brahmasūtra 4.4.5-7) (373–4)

9 (Brahmasūtra 1.4.1, 1.4.6, 4.3.3) (78, 82, 363)

10 (Brahmasūtra 4.3.1-5) (361–4) (78, 84)

11 (Brahmasūtra 1.4.1, 1.4.6)

12 (Brahmasūtra 2.1.11) (108)

13 "तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाऽभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्म निष्ठम् ।" ("tadvijñānārthaṃ sa gurumevāśbhigacchet samitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṃ brahma niṣṭham ।") (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12) (Śāstrī 17)

14 "तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥" ("tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā । upadekṣyanti te jñānaṃ jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ ॥" (Śrīmadbhagavadgītā 4.34) (Vyāsa 89)

15 "यस्य देवे परा भक्तिर्यथा देवे तथा गुरौ । तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥" ("yasya deve parā bhaktiryathā deve tathā gurau । tasyaite kathitā hyarthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ ॥") (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad) (Śāstrī 141)

16 (Sadhu 172-90)

CLASSIC ANALOGIES OF THE SIX DARŚANAS

ART BY AMALA CHANDRASEKARAN

MĪMĀṂSĀ

By dedicating oblation to Paramātman, the *devas* offer worship to Him. Through association with Paramātman, the *devas* offer worship to Paramātman. *(Ṛgveda* 1.164.50)

YOGA

Joined in yoga, the conquered mind of a yogi is like an unwavering flame: ever still in a place without wind. *(Bhagavadgītā* 6.19)

NYĀYA

Just as an unperceived fire is inferred by perceived smoke, given the right reason, the unobserved becomes known. *(Gautamasūtrabhāṣyam* 2.1.46)

VEDĀNTA

The *guru* is the bow, the Self is the arrow and Brahman is the target. *(Muṇḍakopaniṣat* 2.2.4)

VAIŚEṢIKA

It is *viśeṣa* that distinguishes one *paramāṇu* (atom) from another. Two *paramāṇu* are distinct from one another because of *viśeṣa*. *(Tarkasaṅgraha)*

SĀṄKHYA

Creation spurs from the union of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. Together they move like the lame guiding the blind. *(Sāṃkhyakārikā* 21)

ART

Bringing India to America

Stephen Huyler shares the story of his life's mission and a new California art exhibit

By Stephen Huyler

Hinduism used to baffle me, as it does most Americans. But now it feels like an old, familiar friend whom I deeply enjoy introducing to others. Wherever I go, I am confronted by comments and attitudes that portray Western ignorance about India. Misperceptions litter our public and social media and conversations everywhere. I've spent most of my life trying to correct misconceptions and thus alter those attitudes. Consequently, I was thrilled when eminent Indian art scholar Dr. Pratapaditya Pal and Susan Tai I asked me to help put together an exhibition at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA) exploring the commonalities and differences of three indigenous religions of India—Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. I was grateful for the opportunity to resume my work in this field.

HELENE HUYLER

Youthful Pacific Cultural Center

Santa Barbara is a small but influential city on the top edge of southern California, less than two hours north of greater Los Angeles. Susan Tai, SBMA's Elizabeth Atkins Curator of Asian Art says, "This initiative to exhibit sacred Indian art featuring our permanent collection and regional loans was aimed to educate the public." As a university town with several small colleges and a University of California campus, Santa Barbara is a vibrant center of youthful culture. With global communication and transmission of ideas increasingly in digital format, especially among youth, it is ever more essential to provide tactile examples of vital world cultures. "Puja and Piety: Hindu, Jain and Buddhist Art from the Indian Subcontinent" is a successful and valuable contribution that helps to build awareness of diversity by providing insights into currently active South Asian religions anchored in ancient sacred traditions. My own work has long attempted to achieve similar goals. Here is my story:

My Early Encounters with Hinduism

During each of the past forty-five years, I have had the good fortune of spending several months in India conducting a cross-cultural survey of the nation's traditional arts and rituals. I have lived in hundreds of Hindu homes throughout the country and been a guest for meals in thousands of others, and I have witnessed and participated in innumerable Hindu rituals. These experiences have transformed me. Raised by a strongly Christian family with typical American ethnocentric attitudes, it took me years to break through my own misconceptions about what I was experiencing in India. What was this culture that so deeply impressed me? I recognized from the beginning the diametric opposition between most Western interpretations of India and its reality. The roots of these misperceptions lie in our Abrahamic religious worldviews. Most Westerners just cannot open their minds to fully comprehend the multilateral realities that infuse the very way of life in India. We are dependent on our historical mandate that there is only one true authority, one proper means of government, one correct system of justice, and one absolute right—and that all else is either inferior or absolutely wrong. In consequence, most of us cannot comprehend a vast culture that accepts each individual's right to his or her own perception of these basic truths.

Focus on devotion: *(clockwise from opposite page) Susan Tai, Elizabeth Atkins Curator of Asian art, with Stephen Huyler; exhibition organizers Susan Tai and Dr. Pratapaditya Pal; Stephen Huyler elucidates India's art for a group of guests; museum displays*

COURTESY SBMA

COURTESY SBMA

COURTESY SBMA

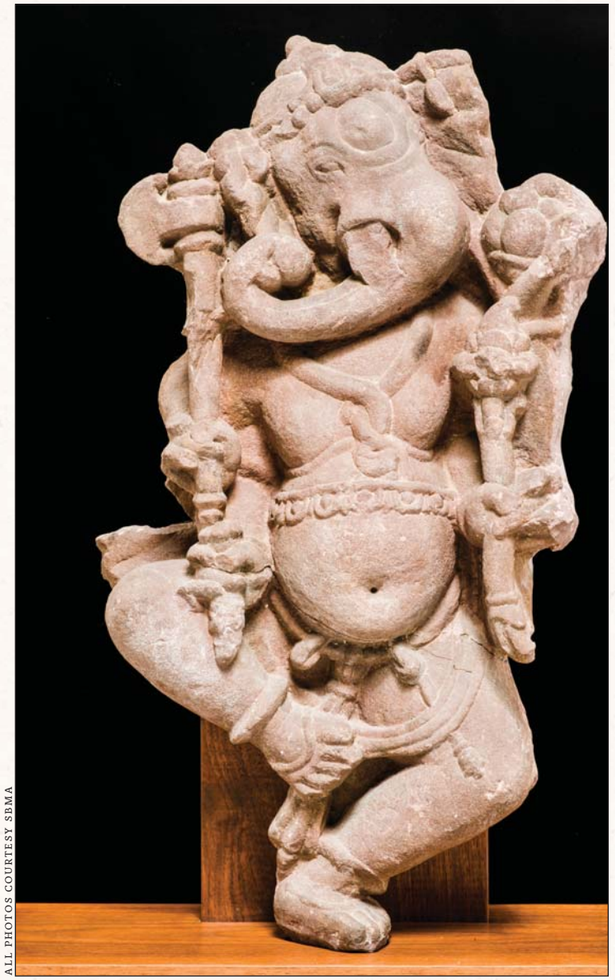
Despite India's phenomenal diversity of beliefs, my rich experiences during my almost half-century of travel in India have taught me that all Hindus share certain underlying common values and identity; all Hindus are united through an undeniable and pervasive sense of ethics that governs each action and perception. These ethics are the guidelines that unify and have unified the religion throughout millennia.

I have experienced an enormous learning curve. During my first year in India I was just twenty years old. I had always wanted to be a writer and to explore the world's cultures. India gave me a focus and an incomparable wealth of material with which to work. As I read the materials then in print, I realized that much scholarship in my field was based upon a shallow or, at best, uneven understanding of Indian culture. Foreign researchers and travelers would spend a few months in the country and then publish their impressions, convinced that their brief but life-changing experiences had given them the authority to propound and publish theories as if they were gospel. Often the results are erroneous or misleading or have simply perpetuated generalizations that do little to correct earlier misconceptions. Determined not to fall into that trap myself, I continued my in-depth field research in India for ten years before I felt qualified to write my first article, and thirteen years before I wrote my first book.

From Scholar to Public Presenter

I have since authored six more books, based on surveys and interviews of thousands of individuals in regions the length and breadth of India. My university degrees are in Indian history, art history and archaeology, but I consider myself a cultural anthropologist. Scholarship about India has greatly improved in the past forty-five years, and I continue to grow and learn along with it.

In 1993 I was asked by the Smithsonian Institute to co-curate an exhibition on practical Hinduism. For three years I worked closely with Sarah Ridley in the education department of the Smithsonian's Freer and Sackler Museum in Washington, DC, to find ways to effectively, accurately and respectfully convey concepts of Hindu devotion. I was well aware of the Hindu objection to the typical Western practice of displaying their sacred objects solely as works of art, devoid



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Devotional creations of India: *(from left to right) a stone Dancing Ganesha from Uttar Pradesh, 11th century; Krishna as seen by Arjuna in His cosmic form, Rajasthan or Gujarat, 19th century; Mewari painting of Mirabai carrying lamps, Rajasthan, dated 1838; paintings and wall hangings installed in SBMA gallery; 12th century granite Dakshinamurti from Tamil Nadu*

of the elements with which they are generally adorned in worship. Therefore, I agreed to the museum's request only if they would allow us to display Hindu murtis (images of Deities) in proper context—dressed and garlanded as they were originally intended to be seen. The result was *Puja: Expressions of Hindu Devotion*. Intended to run for just six months, this show was extended to four years (1996–2000) due to its enormous popularity.

Writing the text for that exhibition and the subsequent book associated with it (*Meeting God: Elements of Hindu Devotion*, Yale University Press, 1999) taught me immeasurable lessons about Hinduism. Determined to jettison my own lingering Western misconceptions, I insisted that my Hindu friends help me redefine Hindu beliefs and rituals that had long been misunderstood or disregarded in the West. The local Hindu community enthusiastically supported the exhibition. Their comments affirmed that the murtis enshrined in the show were displayed with compassion, respect and honor and that the signage successfully conveyed the enlivened awareness of and relationship with the Divine in Hindu pujas. When the show finally closed, the Smithsonian declared it one of the most popular exhibitions they had ever had in any of their museums.

Taking Hinduism Across America

The success of the *Puja* show assured me that the American public wanted to know more about sacred India. It seemed important to travel, taking the show beyond its initial confines. The objects in the Freer and Sackler were not allowed to travel, so I created a second exhibition based upon the same concept. I titled it *Meeting God: Elements of Devotion in India*, to tie in with my book of a similar title. It is difficult and costly to transport invaluable sacred sculptures around the States, so I instead photographed (with permission) images in Indian shrines and temples. I then purchased in India portable shrines of varying sizes in which I placed large backlit photographs of dressed and adorned murtis. In the foreground were secondary murtis and the accouterments of worship—arati, deepa, incense burners, flowers and offerings. Large framed photographs of household and community pujas, processions and festivals surrounded these shrines. Although the majority of shrines and photographs depicted Hindu rituals, I expanded the concept to include some examples of the worship of Jains and Sikhs.

Ironically, the show first opened under another name, *Touching Fire*, at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, because local authorities were concerned that Texan

Christian fundamentalists would boycott any exhibition of non-Christian culture using the name *God*. Nevertheless it was a big success and traveled from there in 2001 to an enormous *Meeting God* exhibition at New York City's American Museum of Natural History. This grandfather of American museums gave me carte blanche to choose any objects from their archives to complement my collection of shrines and photographs. My intention was to recreate the sense of sacred Hindu sanctuary right there in the heart of Manhattan. I found wonderful pieces in their extensive vaults. I worked for three years with a huge and excellent staff, assisted by pujaris and devotees of several of the area's active Hindu temples, to create a truly remarkable show that included a life-size sacred banyan tree whose roots were wrapped around ancient stone Malayali Naga images. The show was very well publicized, with expectations of a huge attendance and the promise of it traveling to at least five more American museums.

Disaster Changes the Mission

Meeting God opened in New York on September 8, 2001. Just three days later the World Trade Center was attacked and destroyed, and the museum immediately shut down for a month. The show re-opened later, though, for a very successful six months. The *New York Times* published a prominent review stating that *Meeting God* served as a healing sanctuary for the many shocked and distraught New Yorkers who placed offerings of flowers, fruits and cash in all the shrines every day. Nevertheless, the attacks tainted the entire impetus to take the show to other museums, as Americans became increasingly myopic and distrustful of all Asians. The exhibition closed forever in 2002, and the previously popular book began to be left on the warehouse shelves unsold.

After focusing for ten years on interpreting Hinduism for the Western public, I had to reinvent myself. I returned to my previous endeavors, documenting and conveying the art and identity of Indian women. I wrote two more books, curated a large museum exhibition in San Diego and created an award-winning documentary film on the subject. In 2009 I even went on a lecture tour of India to promote my book *Daughters of India*. As a tall, pale American male, I imagined audiences of potentially hostile Indian feminists, but I was quickly able to persuade them that I am a knowledgeable feminist myself.

A Call from California—Santa Barbara

After more than a decade's hiatus, it was heartwarming to be requested by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA) to again be involved with the organization of an exhibition about sacred India. I was pleased that Dr. Pal particularly asked me to infuse examples of the passion and sanctity of daily Hindu devotion into the chapter on Hinduism I wrote for the catalog. As I worked with the art that Dr. Pal had carefully chosen for the show, I grew to love the many pieces that are rarely shown in museums, in particular the magnificent Hindu woodcarvings and a superb collection of Jain devotional art that usually reside in the Southern California home of lenders Dr. Narendra and Rita Parson. I worked closely with Susan Tai, the museum's curator of Asian Art, to find the best ways to group the objects so that images and concepts could flow one into another.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY SBMA

STEPHEN HUYLER

Mrs. Tai's superb arrangement of the final displays entices viewers into learning more about these three religions' commonalities as well as their uniquely different ways of approaching the Divine. At her encouragement I created an introductory video for the exhibition, drawn from live footage that I was given the rare permission to film in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist households, roadside shrines and temples throughout India.

A local Santa Barbara chiropractor, Dr. Schuyler DuBourdieu, commented to me after he had seen the show, "I now understand so much more about these three indigenous Indian religions. I was drawn into experiencing darshan, having a true sense of communion with God, through many of these sculptures and paintings. I understood more fully that just as there are multiple ways of viewing and reaching out to the Divine, this exhibition allows me the grace to respond to that which draws me, that speaks directly to me—while other objects may resonate more clearly to someone else. It really is an exploration of the one and the many and of the universal truths that underlie innumerable different approaches."

This successful show has been another important step in my life's work of trying to bring to the American public a deeper awareness and appreciation of Hinduism and Indian concepts and values.

Stephen Huyler's books would enrich any home or library. To order, search for "Huyler" on the different publishers' sites listed under each book here:

www.stephenhuyler.com/books

A Dynamic Museum that Brings Art into Our Lives

SUSAN SHIN-TSU TAI, THE ELIZABETH Atkins Curator of Asian Art at SBMA, explains on the acknowledgements page of the Puja and Piety catalog, "Seventy-five years ago the founders of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art envisioned a museum of world art. Since 1941, its inaugural year, SBMA exhibited, acquired and was lent works of Asian art from China, Japan, Korea, Thailand and Cambodia. Art from the Indian subcontinent, however, was conspicuously absent. In the decades that followed, the trustees of the Museum made a concerted effort to present a wide range of Asian art exhibitions and sought expertise to acquire major works of Asian art to enrich the collection. The landmark exhibition at UCLA in 1968, Art of the Indian Subcontinent from Los Angeles Collections, organized by J. Leroy Davidson, UCLA professor and department chair of art history, provided SBMA the opportunity to acquire two 11th-century stone sculptures that once graced a Vishnu temple in northern India.

"These sculptures, Avatars of Vishnu: Buddha and Balarama, today remain two of the finest masterpieces in the Museum's collection. One year later, the arrival of Dr. Pratapaditya Pal to head the Indian and Southeast Asian art department at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art further inspired interest in Indian art in Southern California. SBMA's trustees were quick to seek out his advice, and in 1970 the SBMA acquired a fine 13th-century bronze sculpture, Dancing Krishna, from South India. Thus began an ongoing relationship between Dr. Pal and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art," explains Mrs. Tai.

"In 2008, two large gifts from the Pal family and Stephen Huyler transformed SBMA's South Asian collection and set this exhibition into motion. We are indebted to Dr. Pal not only for his family donation but also for his unstinting advice over the years that made possible the continuing expansion of this collection area in the Museum, even for a small museum with limited resources. Particular thanks also go to Stephen Huyler, who generously made trips to the Museum this past summer to offer advice and expertise in the installation, and to Debashish Banerji, who in addition to his contribution in this catalog also wrote the educational deities charts, didactic texts and labels for the exhibition."

The *Puja and Piety* exhibit is considered unique in presenting pieces from a long period of history. Instead of a collection from a particular historical period, this exhibit was organized around the theme of worship. Indian art aficionados may want to get the beautiful catalog, which includes information on all three religions. Order online from the University of California Press site. Go here: www.ucpress.edu and search under books for "Puja and Piety."

Outreach to the next generation: *(clockwise from top left) The front doors of SBMA see an estimated 150,000 visitors a year; at the community space outside the museum, children make masks of Ganesha and other Gods and Goddesses; young people and their parents interact with the playful artists' interpretation of a shrine to the elephant-headed Hindu Deity, Ganesha; mother and daughter stand before a sandstone carving of Goddess Lakshmi, Madhya Pradesh, 8th–9th century; Stephen Huyler explains to a little girl Krishna and the gopis depicted on a 19th-century temple hanging from Rajasthan*

Award-Winning Cultural Power

Though a small museum by some standards, SBMA's collection of 27,000 works of art spans 5,000 years of human creativity and, according to their website, "includes classical antiquities rivaled in the West only by the J. Paul Getty Museum."

Charity Navigator, the nation's largest and most frequently utilized evaluator of charities, has awarded a four-star rating to SBMA and ranks it second among all US art museums (second only to the Metropolitan Museum of Art) and fourth among all US arts, cultural and humanity organizations. Charity Navigator's rating show potential donors how efficiently a charity can be expected to use their support. "We are pleased to be recognized for the hard work of our staff and volunteer groups," notes Larry Feinberg, SBMA's Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Director. "As we continue to friend-raise and fundraise, we can point to this as a demonstration to current and prospective donors that their contributions are used carefully and responsibly and their money will be applied very effectively with real results in the community."

Outreach to the Community

SBMA's mission is declared as "integrating art into the lives of people." In addition to working in the museum itself, the staff—60 full-time and approximately 25 part-time—coordinate educational events related to exhibit themes across Santa Barbara County. For example, during the opening of the *Puja and Piety* exhibit, guests, were invited to write down a problem or task they needed help to overcome, place them at a small shrine to Ganesha and in return they received an image of Ganesha.

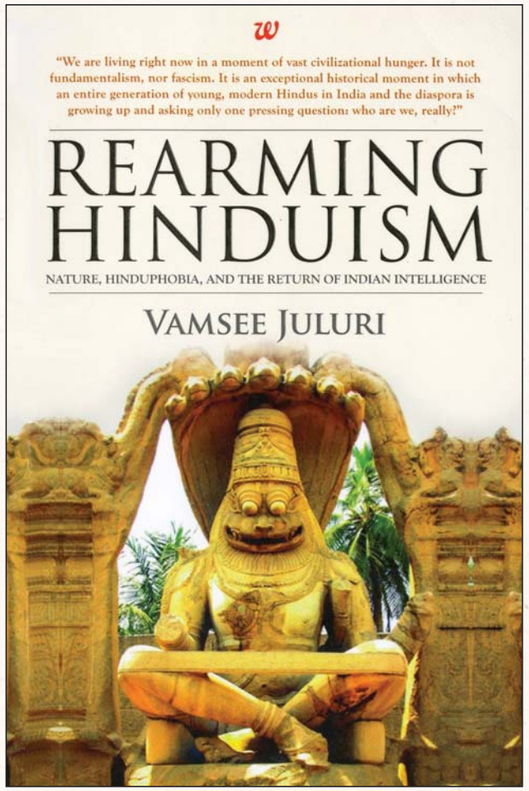
Its website explains, "The Museum provides education programs to over 40,000 people in Santa Barbara County each year, free transportation for school groups and after-school activities, and free California State Standard based education programs for Santa Barbara School district students in grades K–12. In addition, the Museum regularly organizes and hosts lectures, symposia, film series, music events and focused gallery tours for the Museum's major exhibitions. Many of these programs involve collaborations with community organizations, schools and teachers, colleges and universities, as well as selected artists." (See: www.sbma.net)

BOOK EXCERPTS

Boldly Proclaim Core Hindu Values to Make a Better World

Vamsee Juluri exhorts us to confront the dangers of Hinduphobia by bravely positioning Hindu wisdom as the teacher for humanity's future

ONLY THE TIMELESS WISDOM of Hinduism, says Vamsee Juluri in his book *Rearming Hinduism*, can bring peace and harmony to this war-torn world. Yet academia and the mass media have jointly espoused a Hinduphobic view. By definition, *phobia* means "an extreme or irrational fear of or aversion to something." In a modern context, *Hinduphobia* refers to the penchant of certain scholars, writers, editors and media producers to focus on negative constructs of Hinduism: what they deem to be culturally strange, backward, oppressive, a perpetration of social injustice through the caste system, religious nationalism, right wing extremism and even fascism. To those who were born into or have come to the Sanatana Dharma through family traditions, rich temple culture, art, scriptures, guru lineages and yoga, this view seems unthinkably ignorant of Hinduism's true nature, yet it exists. Juluri believes that Hinduphobia is a very real problem for the future of Hinduism that we must all take seriously.



The back cover explains, "*Rearming Hinduism* is a handbook for intellectual resistance. Vamsee Juluri shows us that what the Hinduphobic worldview denies virulently is not only the truth and elegance of Hindu thought, but the very integrity and sanctity of the natural world itself. This must be recognized, exposed and countered with the truth wherever it appears. *Rearming Hinduism* links Hinduphobia and its hubris to a predatory and self-destructive Western culture that perhaps only a renewed Hindu sensibility can effectively oppose."

Acharya Vamadeva Shastri writes, "Juluri's book is arguably the best study available on the challenges to Hindu dharma in the media age, and richly deserves a wide examination in order to correct prevailing deep-seated misconceptions about Hinduism."

Juluri believes a renewed understanding and integration of the wisdom of Sanatana Dharma can rearm Hindus not only for the defense of our faith but for the work of healing the planet. His expectations are high—even imagining a future in which Hinduism is regarded as humanity's world leader, making Hinduism the World Teacher for all of humanity. In his preface the author writes: "Hinduism is a resource, most of all, for living intelligently. It is a form of culture, an expression of sensibility, a way of harmonizing science, philosophy and ethics in a people's every thought, word and deed. You can call it a religion, a way of life, or a civilization; you can call it what you will. But no word will suffice. A billion people on this earth still call God by the same names that people did thousands of years ago. What exists on this earth unchanged for that long? Your culture's existence is a triumph of survival."

But Juluri counsels against complacency: "Will your Hinduism still remain when your children grow up or when their children come? We have scientists and CEOs everywhere. We are considered a model minority in foreign countries. We build temples, enjoy our yoga and our wisdom being discovered by everyone. We feel triumphant that someone who respects Hindu sentiments has won the election in India.

"But what we don't quite realize is this: there will be, and there already is, an intellectual and political backlash. Rebuilding Hindu civilization is something that everyone of us must be doing, one personal, meaningful vision of Hinduism at a time. It has to be done, because even our Gods and Goddesses, even our past glories, real and imagined, and most of all, even our success and pride, cannot guarantee the survival of Hinduism if we do not intellectually confront the existential challenge threatening Hinduism today.

"We Hindus stand accused of being the Nazi-like conquerors of India. Hindus stand accused of being fundamentalists. Hindus are accused of being everything we are not. What we face today is extremely devious and dangerous. The attack comes from not only those who openly differ from us on religious grounds, but through a very ingenious device: they say they are not against Hinduism, but only against Hindu extremism. Virtually every book, article and argument made by the world's supposedly leading important and celebrated intellectuals today says the same thing: in the name of criticizing Hindu extremism, they savage the entirety of our religion. If they are not challenged, intellectually and culturally, soon our names, Gods, Goddesses, festivals, sacred scriptures, everything that makes us who we are, will be defined by them as something that it is not.

"If the things that they write about Hindus as truth were written about women, blacks, gays, Muslims or any other community today, they would be laughed out of their offices for their bizarre 18th-century racism. But the ignorance against Hinduism is not a joke. It has consequences."

The Ideologies of Anti-Hindus

In the first part of his book Juluri exposes and refutes what he calls the Academic Maya Sabha (which could be translated as the Congress of Academic Illusion) and four key myths that non-Hindu Western intellectuals propound about the religion. He has a chapter for each myth: The Myth of an 'Alternative History,' the Myth of Aryan Origins, the Myth of Vedic Violence and the Myth of Hindu History Without a Hindu View of God. He writes, "I focus on Wendy Doniger's controversial *The Hindus: An Alternative History* as an example of Hinduphobic historiography, because this book, more than any other, now defines current thinking in academic and media circles about Hinduism."

He continues, "The challenge that Hinduism faces today comes not from governments or armies, but from two institutions, modern academia and the mass media. Hardly one hundred years old, yet the ideas in each have become tremendously influential around the world. So influential, pervasive and normative, that unless we learn how to question them, and how they tell the story about the world, we will forget who we really were altogether.

"There are three things going in the discourse about Hinduism today. The first trend, the one with the most urgency and authority, comes from the left-secular academic position that narrates alternative histories and promises subaltern recuperations. This is the position published exclusively by the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*, the liberal beacons and in elite circles in India, too."

A second trend is that any Hindu reacting to the absurdity of the Western portrayal of their culture is treated as a straw man by critics. Any and all advocacy or defense of Hinduism or attempts to change the discourse by Hindus who seek simply to 'find a rational, meaningful story about themselves in the modern, global world' are characterized as 'Hindu nationalism, extremism, fascism or fundamentalism.'"

The third and almost invisible trend makes academics study a movie like *Slumdog Millionaire* with all its caricatured Hollywood hoax Hindu jargon about fate, its Hindu villians oppressing poor little Muslim boys and describe it as enforcing Hinduism on us. Believe it or not. That is how blind academia is today to its most pernicious prejudice. This, simply is Hinduphobia. Our goal in this book is to name it, expose and demolish it."

> "We are not a religion of dead Gods, but living ones. With each generation, our Gods and Goddesses live anew."

A Hindu View of God

In the second half of his book Juluri passionately advocates several Hindu paradigms that he feels relate directly to humanity's modern condition. "We are not a religion of dead Gods, but living ones. With each generation, our Gods and Goddesses live anew, seen perhaps in the limited mirrors of the idioms and meanings that each *desa* (region) and *kala* (time period) give us, but undiminished still in the hope and exultation they embody for us, that *sanatana* (eternality) of love. Our turn to the past must be about that, the duty we have to teach our children not just facts and figures, but the eyes to see beauty in this world, the heart to know gratitude and kindness and most of all the hands to build it all anew, ever more."

The chapter "Tvameva: You Alone" describes the Hindu sense of origins and the voice of our Vedic scriptures. "Hinduism's view of God is rooted not just in the texts and philosophies that come later in history, but in the love that all lives know. Our eternities are protoplasmic, Our origins are in life. We cannot presume to know it, that one thing from which all has come, so we just call it Mother. We don't reject science, and we can accept a physical view of our cosmic origins too. But in the beginning, modern Hindus are fond of saying, the Sanatana Dharma was everywhere, then all the other faiths and religions emerged out of it. What if the sensibilities that inform Hinduism go back even further than that? What if the Sanatana Dharma really was the primeval and universal way of knowing the world? Sanatana Dharma, for me, began whenever a living being held its young with love and affection in this great earth."

Drawing from the heritage of the Vedic *Upanishads,* he writes, "Brahman, the One that is Everything. One thing that seems like many things. Everything is Everything. To think it is one thing, to feel it is one thing. To know it is, above all, to also be it. Hinduism is sensibility, not doctrine. It is what we feel and not what the experts say it's about."

The chapter "Cousins and Friends" speaks of the immediacy and closeness with which Hindus relate to God and Gods. "Our Gods are our investment in the greatest meanings we can give to our existence and to our struggles as human beings." Juluri talks about the animal manifestations of Lord Vishnu and, unexpectedly, opens up the huge issue of Homo sapiens' relationship to other animals and our diet. "We humans do not have to kill to eat anymore, unlike the eagle or the tiger. Yet, we still do. And we humans kill each other, too, massively. How can we ever learn not to do so? Only the great love will teach us. We are speaking a language of the heart that goes back to a time when human beings did not see themselves as different from the animal world."

The closing chapter, "Teacher," proposes that it was the interface between the violence of foreign colonialism and Hinduism in India that has given rise to a new era. "The history that created the present is only this: foreigners steeped in violence collided into Hinduism five hundred years ago and the first truly world civilization was born. We might have been conquered, but we were never defeated. We retreated strategically for a few generations so that Sanatana Dharma could learn the customs of this modern world. Now that we have learned, we will teach again. We asked who we are. Krishna answered. 'Jagat Guru, World Teacher.'"

Vamsee Krishna Juluri is an author and professor of media studies at the University of San Francisco. Born in Hyderabad, India, in 1969, he studied journalism in New Delhi and received a PhD in Communication from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. His books include The Mythologist: A Novel *and* The Guru Within. *His writings have appeared in* The San Francisco Chronicle, Foreign Affairs, The Times of India, The Huffington Post, Patheos, *and* The Hindu.

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FILM

The Real-Life Marigold Hotel in Jaipur

An innovative documentary by the BBC introduces eight Western celebrities to the possibilities, adventures and misadventures of retirement in India

By Ramai Santhirapala, London

The population in the west is blossoming as the post-wartime baby-boom generation are reaching their prime. Looking forward to retirement—having fulfilled family and professional dharma—is a blissful time. But in the West, the wisdom years bring challenges: the family unit may be fragmented and pension funds insufficient. Additionally, the Western pace of life can cloud the voice of the soul, which may be searching for answers at this time of life. As a result, some Westerners are looking to India as a place to spend their precious retirement years.

Westerners' money reaches farther in India, and the amenities of daily living can be provided with ease—two prudent considerations in retirement planning. Moreover, India has a long-standing tradition of respecting elders; indeed, they are generally cared for in the loving arms of close family. With its majority-Hindu population and abundance of the oldest and holiest of temples, religion permeates life in India. It is no secret that India offers a profound spiritual journey, perfect for those contemplating the purpose of life and its myriad experiences.

Can one's well-earned retirement be more fulfilling in the mystical East? This is the question English writer Deborah Moogach asks in her unassuming novel *These Foolish Things,* which inspired the 2012 Golden Globe and BAFTA-awarded "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" movie. The novel and movie are constructed around narrative accounts by retired British ladies and gentlemen who move to India to start life anew, facing joys and challenges in an unfamiliar culture.

The BBC's Creative Experiment

This concept so captured the imagination of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) that it commissioned a series entitled "The Real Marigold Hotel." In this experimental project, eight real-life celebrities of senior citizenship made the 4,000-mile journey from the United Kingdom to India to experience retirement in the holy land. David Vallance, series editor for "The Real Marigold Hotel," explains, "the idea of retiring in a country completely different to our own is a fascinating one. Not only are you adapting to the next stage of life, but you have a totally new culture to explore."

The celebrities who courageously stepped forward for this endeavor represent varied entertainment backgrounds. Several have received sovereign knighthoods for their service to the Order of the British Empire (OBE). Some had never met one another before, but now they will live together, eat together and pray together while exploring India's many intricacies.

Each of these souls already had a personal connection with this wonderful motherland. Jan Leeming, 74, a former TV presenter and newsreader, shared, "My reason for signing up was that my father was born and brought up in South India. The Real Marigold Hotel was a golden opportunity." For Patti Boulaye, OBE, 61, a Nigerian-born singer, actress and Ambassador for Peace, her motivation was to continue her spiritual journey: "The path to enlightenment is a difficult one, but at the end of it one finds humility, spirituality and peace. I was inspired to learn about it from its roots in India." Joining this journey were Miriam Margolyes, OBE (74), well known for her role as Professor Sprout in the "Harry Potter" movie series; Wayne Sleep, OBE (67), Patron of the British Ballet Organisation and Vice-President of the Royal Academy of Dance; TV chef Rosemary Shrager (65); comedian and TV presenter Roy Walker (74); famed darts player Bobby George (70); and actor Sylvester McCoy (72), renowned for his roles as "Doctor Who" and in "The Hobbit."

Home away from home: *(left) Female cast at the Khatu Haveli in Jaipur*

Life Anew 4,000 Miles East

"The Real Marigold Hotel" series begins at London's Heathrow Airport, where participants share their excitement—and, yes, trepidation—about the journey that lies ahead. Bobby George reports, "This is a lifelong ambition for me. I said to my wife 20 years ago, 'Let's go to India!'" Mariam Margolyes humbly speaks of the unfolding nature of this journey: "When you go to India, you come face to face with yourself." Together the eight explorers journey to Jaipur, the largest city in Rajasthan.

They are warmly welcomed by the owners of their new home, a communal haveli, and greeted with namastes, garlands and kumkum blessings. This is their first insight into family unity and hospitality, as the owners live in the haveli, too. It has been their ancestral home for 160 years. Remarkable, too, is the cost of living, as they find a luxury room will cost only $25/day, far below the costs of urban living in the UK.

Aware that India has many faces, the celebrities are keen to get out and start exploring. They conclude that in India joy and happiness exist in all, irrespective of material wealth, as religion and spirituality permeate every aspect of life. Some of our travelers are at home with this overt expression of spirituality, while others find it challenging: This is the first time they have ever been urged to stop thinking, stop doing and simply live in the moment. For these high-achieving Westerners, this is a new concept!

Going Within

Their journey to inner calm begins with the hatha yoga practice early each morning at the haveli. Their instructor, Atul, explains that his specific brand of yoga is designed for senior citizens. Exercising in the early hours of the morn is a new experience for some, but most are soon commenting on the feeling of inner joy engendered by the ancient science and want to continue beyond their allocated hour.

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Indian odyssey: *(above) Charmed by the ubiquitous urban cow in the streets of Jaipur; (below) Touring the Taj Mahal in Agra*

Their resultant contemplative mood prompts discussions on the immense willpower needed to control the mind in yogic and meditative practices. Jan Leeming confides, "I've tried to practice yoga and meditation, but I just find my mind won't sit still and I simply cannot focus." Rosemary Shrager, who at age 65 has just opened new businesses, seeks further depth to her meditative endeavours by enlisting the help of a guru at the nearby Om Ashram. She is advised that meditation starts when the mind stops. It is here she finds inner calm amidst the mental activity: "That is the stillest I have been in an awful long time." Wayne Sleep, who speaks openly of a recent healthcare episode which heightened his search within, reflects, "I am in India to find something. I do not know what that is or if I can meditate." Earnestly he tries, and after his first encounter at Om Ashram he confesses, "Meditation has been the most significant point (of the visit to Jaipur) for me. I felt completely relaxed."

Off to the Temples

Bhakti, devotion, is core in the lives of Hindus, and India's great temples emanate a wonderfully uplifting vibration to pilgrims and tourists alike. This was exemplified during a visit to Amer Fort, the jewel of Jaipur. At a temple dedicated to Lord Hanuman, the participants see devotees bathing in sacred waters and witness swamis devoutly performing rituals. Wayne Sleep comments on the swamis, "They seem so peaceful."

It is here they first come across one of their guides, Raju, a 27-year-old determined to educate himself for the betterment of his family. As they explore the temple surrounded by mischievous monkeys who make haste with their offerings, Raju explains the karmic benefits of feeding animals.

He invites the visitors to his home, where they are warmly welcomed into the family. Over a chappati-and-curry meal, Raju explains how caste discrimination has limited his employment opportunities. His stark story, contrasted with the warmth of the family reception, triggers introspection among the Britishers. Jan Leeming was struck by the cultural contrasts: "Meeting Raju and his family was lovely. I have met more people in one afternoon who want to take me into their family than I have met where I live in ten years." There is an acceptance that succcessfully living in India requires an adjustment to local culture, including the observance by many of the caste system. Bobby George reflects, "If you have a talent and you can do good, why should you be on the bottom rail. I think that is wrong, personally."

Understanding that just as elsewhere in the world, wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, and keen to see all facets of life in India, the travelers accept an invitation to meet royalty. They visit Maharaj Jai Singh and Maharani Vidya Rani at the opulent Rambagh Palace. The hospitality shown by the royal couple softens the hearts of the celebrities. Mariam Marygoles later observes, "Though the disparity between rich and poor is shocking, I find the royal family very generous."

In expression of their gratitude, the famous senior citizens open their haveli home to all for a warm and welcoming evening of dinner and entertainment, attempting to return in kind the hospitable and soulful reception they have been accorded by the locals of Jaipur, which has so deeply touched their hearts. TV Chef Rosemary Shrager prepares a delicious repast, and the others entertain their guests with the talents that have made each of them so famous. Wayne Sleep reveals, "I am learning from the locals the feeling of happiness and serenity. It is all part of a spiritual awakening."

Their visit to India falls during one of India's most widely celebrated Hindu festivals, Ganesha Chathurti. In Jaipur this holiest of days to Lord Ganesha is celebrated with a vibrant street parade that includes singing and dancing. Intrigued and excited, the travelers are taken through the colorful streets right into the heart of the parade to watch the elephants and horses pass by, guided by joyful devotees. Jan Leeming, who has never ridden a horse before, bravely chooses to enjoy the parade from horseback. She later bubbles, "This is the most fabulous evening I have had in over a decade. It is making me think I want to spend more time in India." Others climb the steps of nearby buildings to watch the parade pass below. "People would look up and wave. Everyone was happy, peaceful and spiritual," Patti Boulaye recalls. The morning after Ganesha Chathurti, in a contemplative moment, Wayne Sleep muses, "This is a wonderful time to consider life, death and being well in oneself." His words are full of unintended significance, as they will depart soon for Varanasi, slightly over 500 miles by car.

> "I am learning from the locals the feeling of happiness and serenity. It is all part of a spiritual awakening."
>
> —Wayne Sleep

Jaipur marketplace: *(left to right) 'Doctor Who' and 'The Hobbit' actor Sylvester McCoy (72); famed darts player Bobby George (70); Vice-President of the Royal Academy of Dance Wayne Sleep, OBE (67); TV chef Rosemary Shrager (65); Harry Potter actress Miriam Margolyes, OBE (74); TV presenter and newsreader Jan Leeming (74); comedian and TV presenter Roy Walker (74); singer, actress and Ambassador for Peace Patti Boulaye, OBE (61)*

COURTESY OF BBC/TWOFOUR

It is said a pilgrimage begins at the moment of its contemplation. This seems the case for our senior celebrities. Miriam Margolyes asserts, "I am fascinated by Indian religion and will not flinch from a spiritual adventure."

At Varanasi, on the banks of the holy river Ganga, some 30,000 bodies are cremated every year by loving families who wish their departed one to achieve moksha. The auspiciousness of dying in Varanasi is explained to the Westerners as they watch bodies covered in simple cloths pass along the narrow streets of Varanasi. Jan Leeming finds the experience overwhelming, having lost her mother and father in recent months, while for others it opens thoughtful discussions on death and dying. Rosemary Shrager observes, "I think there is something peaceful about being cremated near a river." Miriam Margolyes confesses, "Death is something one has to face. Am I frightened? Yes, it terrifies me! I hope I will be calm and graceful when the time comes."

The spirit of the group has now taken a somber turn. Death remains somewhat of a taboo subject in the West, though in the East it is exalted as an auspicious transition. Jan Leeming and Patti Boulaye choose not to join in a visit to an ashram for the dying, a private space to be with close family. Patti explains, "The final moments are very private and I do not wish to disrespect this onward journey."

Everyone's spirits are raised by the vibrant evening arati on the banks of the river, an offering to Mother Ganga, and one can see the joy return to their faces. One by one they have the opportunity to light a candle and offer it to the holy Ganga with a prayer for those close to them who have departed. Watching hundreds of tiny candles float down the river in the evening is a truly memorable sight, and Roy Walker is deeply enamoured by this ceremonial release of the candle onto the holy river. He shares that he lights a candle for his late wife at every opportunity.

India weaves her mystical magic on each of the celebrities as their spiritual journeys unfold. For some this represents a few small, hesitant steps forward; for others it strengthens existing beliefs and practices. It is inspiring to hear spirituality spoken of so openly, especially as most comment that they have not found a way to connect with their spiritual nature. Enamored with India's mysticism, the senior stars consider the practical aspects of a move to the culturally contrasted East.

COURTESY OF BBC/TWOFOUR

COURTESY PATTI BOULAYE

Cultural exchange: *(above) Jan Leeming with marble mosaic; (below) Patti Boulaye meets Lela, the local pachyderm*

Practical Stumbling Blocks

Central to a retired life in India is the community one builds during the early years of transition. Our travelers are profoundly impressed by the strong family unity and the openness with which the locals of Jaipur—unacquainted with their careers—have welcomed them. Miriam Margolyes comments, "Within the family there is great love, and that is nice to see. I do not have a big family; it is just my partner and I." Jan Leeming adds a heartfelt reflection, "I am feeling more of an integration with the people of India than anyone else. I speak two words of Hindi, but I feel very much at home." Jan explores living in a haveli with a family, which is a common option for expatriates in Jaipur, and she speaks of the contrast to life back home where one may not know one's neighbors. "Living behind closed doors," she calls it.

Concluding that societal amalgamation is less of an issue, thoughts turn to health care in India. Each participant explores the situation in detail. All are delighted with the provision of excellent health care at a fraction of the cost of the UK private system.

Deeply impressed by his experiences in India, Bobby George leads the group to meet with a real estate agent, who informs them that a luxury three-bedroom property can be bought for $120,000, which is roughly equivalent to a purchase deposit in parts of London. Having viewed a property, Bobby and others enter serious discussions about buying here. At this point, however, the agent informs them the government does not allow non-Indian residents to buy property, though they may rent. Adding to this disappointment, the Britishers learn that obtaining temporary visas is a challenging process. Few are inspired to deal with this kind of stumbling block.

Final Reflections

These practical setbacks do not dampen the group's spirit. Each reflects that their time in India has proved a fruitful personal journey. Most are keen to return to India, at least for a holiday. Jan Leeming considers short-term stays during India's winter months. Mariam Margolyes goes further: "I can never have enough of India. I long to return." Roy Walker is touched by the locals: "The hospitality, humility and friendliness of the people are to die for. I was humbled." Rosemary Shrager finds peace here: "I found the spiritual side of India extremely moving. I found myself being very drawn to that life, one of calmness and acceptance." Her comment seems to sum up the feelings of most, as they leave India after participating for three weeks in this novel and courageous project.

India's magical grace has kindled a light in each of these good souls. Irrespective of where they spend their retirement years, this spiritual journey and cultural immersion have enriched them all and served to inform more than three million viewers of the possible and the impossible. "The Real Marigold Hotel" aired in January and February of 2016 and is currently available through BBC iPlayer or here: bit.ly/MarigoldHotel2

Ramai Santhirapala *is an anesthesiologist and patient care advocate living in London with her family*

INTERVIEW

The Marigold Team Tells their Tale

After the BBC documentary aired in the UK, Ramai Santhirapala interviewed series editor David Vallance and participants Jan Leeming and Patti Boulaye

David, how did you choose the participants? We were looking for a cast with bags of character and charisma, each with different life experiences to bring to the table. We found the diversity worked brilliantly—bonds that were unlikely in "the real world" were formed and we aimed for the viewers to find something relatable or inspiring in the cast members. The fantastic thing about producing shows like this is how much you learn about people. The cast were funny and heart-warming, honest and vivacious. What I took away was how important it is to embrace life to the full in your later years and how much more you still have to learn and to give.

What most touched the cast? Many were touched by the way that religion is a part of the natural everyday life in India. The participants were also really touched by the warm welcome received in India. They were equally welcomed into a palace as a slum —with both places being equally generous places in different ways.

What do you think we can learn from spirituality in India? Many Indian citizens take time to clear their minds, enjoying arts like yoga as a key part of time. Here in the UK we tend to always be on the go. It became clear there is much value in finding the time to remain in touch with yourself and to empty your mind of the constant dialogue that forms part of most people's lives in the West.

What advice would you offer to our readers about the pros and cons of retiring in India? India is colorful, hot, hectic, and can really feed the soul. If you enjoy this environment you can really thrive. It's a fantastic place to explore and spend some time. A couple of our cast explored retirement in the last episode, looking at how it could work practically. The visa situation and property laws do make things tricky but we met many people who had made it work.

Jan, what inspired you to participate? My reason for signing up was that my father was born and brought up in Southern India and only left a few years before Partition. The Atkins family had been in India since the time of Clive of India around 1750. Although I could afford a holiday in India, I wouldn't want to go on my own. So Marigold was a golden opportunity.

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What were your preconceptions of India? I didn't really have any preconceptions. I was quite open in my approach. What hit me with a force was the gentleness of the people, respect for the elderly, the color and the noise and the organised chaos on the roads. Our driver said that to drive in Jaipur you needed the three G's—Good Brakes, Good Horn and Good Luck.

Does spirituality play a part in your day-to-day life? I have a fascination with Eastern religion and India is rich in its diversity. There are so many Hindu Gods you can hardly count them—in fact there's a claim that there is one for every day of the year. Whether that is true or not, there are certainly many and predominant among them appears to be the Monkey God. I simply do not have the erudition to even attempt to précis the explanation of Hinduism so yet again, if you are interested, look it up on Wikipedia. It is fascinating and claims that the Hindu religion is the oldest in the world.

What did you learn about yourself during the experience? I learned that I simply could not live communally. I am gregarious and like company but having been single for over a decade. I also quite like my own space and found having to live with seven "strangers" rather trying. I know I am curious and eager to learn about other cultures and India offered a unique experience.

Can you identify an experience or event in India that had a profound impact on you? While filming in India I was talking to a lovely English woman who rents an apartment in the haveli of an Indian Princess. At the end of the interview I happened to say that we'd been working so hard we'd not had time to shop and I very much wanted to buy a saree. The Princess/landlady left the room and returned carrying a pink saree which she gave to me as a gift. A beautiful gift from a stranger. I was very touched.

Can you share a special moment? We were fortunate enough to be in Jaipur at the time of the Ganesh Festival. In the early evening we were taken to the Temple of Ganesh where we went to pray. We walked barefoot and I covered my head as a mark of respect. After the temple we went to the Gates of the Pink City to await the parade of elephants, camels and horses. While we were walking alongside the procession, a groom indicated that I could mount one of the horses. I have never ridden in my life but the pace was so sedate that I wasn't going to miss the opportunity. It is something I will remember forever. I don't know if the crowd thought I was someone special but they were all holding up their hands to touch mine and holding up their babies to me. I felt incredibly honoured, humbled, and close to tears. What a wonderful experience.

Are there any aspects of Hinduism that you identify with or have trouble comprehending? I am not what you would call a religious person but I do have belief in a power beyond us and more and more I am beginning to believe in karma —what goes around comes around. Trouble comprehending? We all have to die and cremation is becoming the predominant choice in the West, but we do it a trifle more discreetly. I find it bad enough leaving the crematorium, seeing the curtains close, and knowing what comes next and that, unfortunately, has been a regular experience in recent months with my father, mother, stepmother and many friends dying. So I guess that hindered my understanding of why Hindus are so blatant about death.

What about yoga and meditation? I've tried to practice yoga and meditation, but I just find my mind won't sit still and I simply cannot focus. A few of us were sent to a laughter yoga club and that was fun. It is based on yoga but you only have to concentrate on laughing which, when done correctly, can exercise every part of your body. And what a fun exercise that is to execute.

Is it feasible for Brits to retire in India? We are all living so much longer and for many of us the pensions don't stretch that far , so, retiring to a warm climate where the medical service is excellent and the pound goes five times as far is a very attractive proposition. It would be delightful to spend a few months of our winter in India—but it is not as easy as it seems. It wasn't until I read an interview with Bobbie—the darts player—that I realised you can't just go and live there. If you wish to buy, you must have an Indian partner. If you want to stay for a period, you have to get a special visa—not easy. Let's face it—in India there are over a billion people and even if you can afford to pay for your health, I'm sure the Indian middle classes won't want to see their private hospitals full of bed-blocking Brits! Another problem is the extreme heat and humidity. Who would want to be in such a beautiful, colorful country but spend most of one's time in an air conditioned building. I think I shall have to content myself with the occasional holiday in India.

Patti, what inspired you to participate? I wanted to go on a spiritual journey and reconnect with the value of respect and consideration for others. If people actually understood the fact that they are part of the universe and that everything they do affects somebody else, they might act differently. When I got to India, it was wonderful. It was like going home. I liked the respect, and the unity of the extended family.

RAMAI SANTHIRAPALA

Did you have any preconceptions? No, I didn't have any preconceptions. I went with an open mind. Whatever I get, I get. Whatever I see, I see. I'm glad I didn't go with any preconceptions because what I saw were people who practice and live their religion and spirituality. You could see it in the joy of the people irrespective of seeming material prosperity. We stopped at a Lord Hanuman temple, and there was a woman who was a cleaner standing at the entrance in a beautiful saree. She was regal, absolutely regal. She had an inner strength that radiated out.

Does spirituality play a part in your day-to-day life? I have never doubted the existence of God. My mother described me, "You have the faith of a child. It does not go to the left, it does not go to the right. It is absolutely solid." India strengthened my spirituality, because it's good to know that there are millions of people who share this spirituality. I can actually see it and feel it. When I got back to the UK, it actually made me want to go out there and talk to people about their spirituality. It gave me the confidence to do that. Karma, I believe in. Reincarnation, I believe in. Hindus have different words to describe these concepts but I believe in them. When I went to India and I realized I really like that Hinduism is all encompassing. It actually welcomes my thought that we are all God's children on different paths to Him. Sometimes it is challenging to keep hold of your spirituality in life back home. In India I find that they manage to keep a strong bond with their spiritual nature.

Was there any special moment? We visited the home shrine of the family we were living with and I watched the puja. That was profound, like a temple at home. I am Catholic and there were similarities. There is the bell, like the Catholic Church, there is the incense, like the Catholic Church, and I quietly thought the worship of God does not change. Watching the brahmins performing puja at Varanasi was magical. There were three young men in perfect synchrony. The movement, and I know something about choreographed dance, was exceptional.

How would you compare your Nigerian upbringing and Indian culture? Women are held in great reverence in Nigerian culture. When the woman looses her place, society goes to pieces. I had a very orthodox upbringing based on virtues and values, and this is similar in India. I was taught to respect everyone, and listen to elders. It was wonderful to see this respect still holds a place in India. Family unity is important in Nigeria, and it was beautiful to see large extended families sharing experiences together in India. In India, you find out who they are before you find out what they do. Similarly, in Nigeria you encounter humility even in those who head large organisations.

How did early morning yoga go for you? That was the first time I did yoga. I had learnt meditation prior to this trip. I could have done yoga for a long time as I really enjoyed it. Unfortunately, we only had the yoga teacher for an hour. Once I'm settled back home, I'm going to look for a good yoga teacher, somebody who knows the spiritual basis of yoga.

What would you tell readers about retiring in India? I think the first thing to do is to understand the culture and language. Don't go trying to change a culture that has been long established over many thousands of years, because that is arrogant and disrespectful. Understand the respect for spirituality and be considerate, then yes, you can retire to India. The real stars of the show were the beautiful Indian women. The way they walk, they way they go about their business—so graceful. I think if you are going to retire to India, try and think beautifully, try and act beautifully, try and speak beautifully because India is filled with beautiful people. I am not talking of the physical sense but the beauty that comes from the soul.

Say a few words about your Ambassador for Peace role. My drive on that is to bridge the gap. I think dialogue, ecumenism comes from training the next generation to be accepting of all cultures. Most of our interfaith problems originate from fear of the unknown, fear of another culture. Hinduism teaches religious tolerance and is a leader in ecumenical actions.

Real gold: *Counterclockwise from opposite page: David Vallance; Jan Lemming; Patti Boulaye (left) with author Ramai Santhirapala*

PHOTO: HINDUISM TODAY

CULTURE

How Common Are Fake Rudrakshas?

Addressing concerns about Hinduism's most celebrated prayer bead

HINDUISM TODAY'S CORRESPONDENT Rajiv Malik recently went on a short venture to collect rudrakshas from an array of local vendors in order to have them tested for authenticity. He purchased rudrakshas from various puja shops west of New Delhi and more from shops in Varanasi. For rudrakshas with fewer faces Rajiv paid around US$15, and more for those with higher face counts, for example $52 for a 11-faced rudraksha. He selected 19 beads of various face counts and qualities and brought them to the Indraprastha Gemological Laboratory (IGL) in New Delhi for testing. IGL tests not only rudrakshas, but diamonds and other gems as well.

The rudraksha *(Elaeocarpus ganitrus)* has long been held sacred throughout India. The term is variously translated as "Siva's teardrops," or "Eye of Rudra [Siva]" and refers to the third eye. According to legend, rudrakshas are Siva's teardrops which fell to the Earth as He witnessed humanity's self-created suffering. In another, they are tears of joy that He wept while emerging from meditation. The seeds thus represent the Lord's compassionate blessings.

A rudraksha has segments, like those of a walnut or an orange, called faces. Most have five faces, neatly corresponding to Siva's five powers of creation, preservation, dissolution, concealing grace and revealing grace. Those with more or fewer faces are rarer and hence more expensive. Being so common, a standard five-faced rudraksha costs very little. But beads with rare configurations, such 21 or more faces, can sell for thousands of dollars. Vendors abound, and unfortunately not every rudraksha sold is authentic. But the problem of fake beads is not as extensive as we had been led to believe.

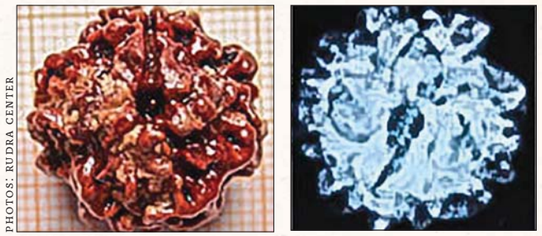
Of the 19 seeds that we purchased and tested had tested at IGL, not a single one was flagged as fake. These included from three single-faced seeds, to one each of 2-faced to 11-faced seeds. This is good news for the average rudraksha purchaser, as it is at least anecdotal evidence that fake rudrakshas are less than common. We should note, however, that we did not test the most expensive seeds. Anyone seeking to spend thousands of dollars on a seed with a high face count, especially online, should consider buying only certified specimens.

When it comes down to it, faking seeds is not that easy. One method is to alter the apparent number of faces by carving additional lines into a regular rudraksha, creating more faces, or filling in lines to create fewer faces. Some fakes are carved from different woods or even plaster, and fakes with many faces—such as 21 or more—may be carved from betel nuts. This would likely not be economical but for the rarest forms.

We learned of various tests determining authenticity. The most infallible is to cut the seed open, but that destroys your rudraksha. Another common suggestion is the water test: It is thought that the average real rudraksha will sink, while other woods used in replicas will float. But is not always the case. A rudraksha picked while immature may rise to the surface. And apparently some rudraksha forgers add lead their beads.

A third test rumored to work is the copper coin test. The idea is that when a real rudraksha is placed between two copper coins or plates, the seed will rotate, or rotate in a certain direction. However when most any rounded object is put between two coins, it will at least move. Thus, there is little science to this test

There are two reliable nondestructive techniques which IGL uses. The first is to examine the seed with a microscope, watching for alterations, such as glue or carving strokes. The second is to x-ray the seed. Each segment of a rudraksha contains a seed compartment. If the number of seed compartments shown by x-ray does not match the number of outward faces, it's likely there has been tampering. If there are no compartments at all, then it is a complete fake.


PHOTOS: RUDRA CENTER

Genuine or forged?: *(top) An eight-faced rudraksha certified as real by IGL; (right) a faked single-face rudraksha; (far right) an x-ray reveals that the forged rudraksha has five seed compartments*

Hindu Heritage Endowment

How a Marital Bypass Trust May Save Thousands in Taxes

Dhaval and Radha's attorney warned them to protect their $5 million estate with a marital bypass trust. "What's a marital bypass trust?" Radha asked during their first visit to his office.

"It's the same as a credit shelter trust or an A-B Trust." "Yes, but what is it and what does it do?"

"Look at Dhaval," the attorney said, gesturing toward her husband. "Imagine him carrying a sack marked '$2 million' over his shoulder. Dhaval dies. Not only he passes from this life, but so does that $2 million, unless you have a marital bypass trust."

"But I thought on the death of the first spouse the surviving spouse got everything," Dhaval said. "That's true," the attorney answered. "And if the surviving spouse is a US citizen, he or she gets everything free of federal estate tax. But that $2 million is not $2 million in cash or property; it's a $2 million exclusion from estate tax."

"But why do we need estate tax protection if everything passes to the surviving spouse tax-free?" Radha asked, wondering now why all this was so complicated.

"Because the day of reckoning has only been postponed, not eliminated," the attorney explained.

"On the death of the second spouse, the estate becomes vulnerable to estate tax. Without a marital bypass trust, you will have lost one-half of the estate tax protection you have as a married couple."

"So what should we do?" Dhaval asked. He had begun to tally in his mind the tax on $2 million of their estate that could be transferred tax-free.

"Here's what I propose," the attorney offered, looking up from his yellow legal pad where he had roughed out the $800,000-plus tax savings a marital bypass trust would provide. "I'll write your estate plan so that the surviving spouse may either take the entire estate directly or choose to place part of the estate into a marital bypass trust. The choice will be yours, and you can make it depending on the size of your estate at that time and the current laws."

"Since I have coronary artery disease, the bypass trust will be well named," Dhaval quipped. "Yes," the attorney mumbled with a weak smile.

"Puns aside, the bypass trust will eventually pass to your children, but in the meantime the trust assets are invested exclusively for the surviving spouse who receives all the income and can invade principal if his or her health, education or welfare is at stake."

Leaning toward the couple for emphasis, he added: "The fact that the surviving spouse does not directly own what's in the marital bypass trust preserves the decedent's $2 million exclusion from estate tax, or whatever that exclusion is at time of death."

"But what if the trust grows beyond exclusion amount?" Dhaval asked. "It doesn't matter. The full amount in the trust, whatever it ends up being, is completely protected."

Leaving the attorney's office, Dhaval and Radha felt slightly woozy. Why, they wondered, did so much of their children's inheritance depend on such obscure points of law? Still, it was helpful to have such sophisticated options.

April to June Endowment Contributions

Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment

Benevity Matching Gifts	US$200.00
Anonymous	118.20
Roshan Harilela	375.00
Gayatri Rajan	75.00
Chamundi Sabanathan	75.00
Aran Sambandar	108.00
Pathmini Saravanapavan	100.00
Other Donations	30,000.00
Total	31,051.20

Iraivan Temple Endowment

Benevity Matching Gifts	300.00
Shekhar & Gauri Ambe	101.00
Frank Burkhardt	20.00
Anonymous	1,167.50
Rama Pemmaraju Rao	108.00
Adi Srikantha	54.00
Other Donations	30,000.00
Total	31,750.50

Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund

Uma & Ram Challa	1,296.00
Juhivaasana Koothan	8.42
Anil Kumar	36.00
Bhagawandas Lathi	51.00
Ashwini Maureemootoo	11.12
Saroja Maureemootoo	16.82
Anonymous	61.12
Toshadevi Nataraj	80.00
Vamsee Pamula	1,116.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	49.98
Hemavalli Sivalingam	4.49
Nesa Kumar Subramaniam	251.00
Soma Sundaram	11.00
Morven Thielamay	127.00
Senthil Velusamy	101.00
Total	3,220.95

Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund

Sandeep Gupta	299.00
Suresh Hathiwala	299.00
Matthew McDermott	240.00
Shrikant & Harsha Mehta	299.00
Bhaveshan Moorghen	25.35
Shanda Kumaran Moorghen	25.35
Udeyadeva Moorghen	25.35
Kuruganti Gopal Murti	499.00
Bijamati Pareatumbee	40.00
Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam	499.00
Purany Ponniah	202.00
Arasen Pillay Samoo	216.90
A. Sathasivam	299.00
Sai Singh	120.00
Devaladevi Sivaceyon	158.81
Nesa Kumar Subramaniam	499.00
Total	3,746.76

Gurudeva's Trilogy Distribution Fund

Valeriy Gorbatsevich	30.00
Manogaran Mardemootoo	84.51
Toshadevi Nataraj	175.00
Total	289.51

Kadavul Nataraja Ardra Abhishekam Endowment

Aravindraj Chandrasekaran	9.00
Devajyothi Kondapi	1,498.00
Umasankaran Mohambourame	117.36
Gowri Nadason	132.95
Parimala Selvaraj	93.00
Bala Sivaceyon	20.00
Total	1,870.31

Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund

Shyamadeva Dandapani	33.00
Kulagan Moonesawmy	16.82
Gowri Nadason	132.94
Toshadevi Nataraj	60.00
Rajeswary Ramamoorthy	150.00
G.V. Sarojini	10.00
Vayudeva Varadan	54.00
Other Donations	4,800.00
Total	5,256.76

Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam

Anonymous	374.00

Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment

Bhavani Param	101.00

Sri Subramuniya Ashram Scholarship Fund

Anonymous	324.00

Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund

Anonymous	350.00

Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment

Mano Navaratnarajah	75.00

Hinduism Today Production Fund

Ron & Jennifer Burke	150.00
Anonymous	45.00
Prabhakar C Ghosh	90.00
Hiranya Gowda	93.00
Rajiv Kaushal	72.00
Murli Melwani	2,500.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01
Gayatri Rajan	75.00
Aran Sambandar	108.00
Thilaka Sunder	5,000.00
Total	8,183.01

Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund

Benevity Matching Gifts	100.00
Roshan Harilela	375.00
Mahendra & Rohini Jagirdar	250.00
Kartikatipan Ramachandran	50.00
Chamundi Sabanathan	75.00
Rodney & Ilene Standen	30.00
Total	380.00

Hindu Education Endowment

Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund	100.00

Hindu Press International Endowment Fund

Hiranya Gowda	63.00

Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund

Mano Navaratnarajah	225.00
Gassa Patten	900.00
Total	1,125.00

Spiritual Park of Mauritius Endowment

Anil Kumar	27.00

Positive Discipline Endowment

Vinaya Alahan	11.00

Tirumular Sannidhi Preservation Fund

Shyamadeva Dandapani	33.00
Srinivas R. Madaboosi	100.00
Total	133.00

Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund

Anonymous	50.00

Hindu Heritage Endowment Administrative Fund

Anonymous	20.00
Tamnash Gupta	112.32
Bala Sivaceyon	140.00
Devaladevi Sivaceyon	75.00
Total	347.32

Kauai Aadheenam Religious Art and Artifacts Fund

Rajadeva Alahan	153.00

Murugan Temple of North America Pillaiyar Shrine Fund

Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00
Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	15.00
Total	155.00

Thank You Bodhinatha Fund

Anil Ananda Badhwar	168.60
Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai	324.00
Debashis Ghosh	300.00
Anonymous	682.96
Gregg Lien	108.00
Malaysia Mission	234.07
Silvarajoo Muniandy	101.00
Mano Navaratnarajah	150.00
Annie & Mark Ruiz	51.00
Aran Sambandar	162.00
Hitesvara Saravan	108.00
Tejasinha Sivalingam	12.00
Devi Tandavan	51.00
Anba Dayananden Valayten	10.93
Vayudeva Varadan	63.00
Michael Wasylkiw	648.00
Total	3,174.56

Saivite Hindu Scriptural Fund for the Visually Impaired

Rajendra Giri	110.00

Sri Chandra Madhab Debnath Endowment

Shyamal Chandra Debnath	150.00

Murugan Temple Yalpanam Festival Fund

Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00

Manitha Neyam Trust Fund

Anonymous	50.00
Prabha Jaya Krishna	150.00
Bala Sivaceyon	30.00
Nutanaya Sivaceyon	40.00
Total	270.00

Kerala Temple Trust

Kizhake Ramachandran	100.00

April to June Endowment Contributions

Kapaleeshwara Temple Orphanage

Rajendra Giri	110.00

Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund

Rajendra Giri	110.00
Praneel Chandra Gosai	202.00
Total	312.00

Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund

Rahul Chethikattil	75.00

Karnataka Temple Development Fund

Hiranya Gowda	3,000.00

Sri Ganesha Hindu Temple of Utah Endowment Fund

Adi Srikantha	54.00

Swami Vipulananta Children's Home Endowment

Anonymous	50.00
Canaganayagam Kugendra	60.00
Total	110.00

Hindu Literature Fund

John & Abha Wiersba	153.00

Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund

Hiranya Gowda	153.00
Rajagopal Krishnan	80.00
Total	233.00

Himalayan Academy Book Distribution Fund

Anonymous	50.00
Shyamadeva Dandapani	33.00
Total	83.00

Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment

Anonymous	1066.20
Marlene Carter	162.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01
Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00
Soma Sundaram	10.00
Total	1,438.21

Siva Poomi School Trust

Anonymous	50.00

Kodiswara Satguru Malaysia Travel Fund

Siva Jothiswary Selvanathan	100.00

Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund

Vayudeva Varadan	54.00

Rani Jothiswarar Memorial Fund

Kodiswara Selvanathan	100.00

India Hindu Temple Cleaning Fund

Hiranya Gowda	99.00
Manogaran Mardemootoo	28.17
Kulagan Moonesawmy	11.19
Toshadevi Nataraj	60.00
Tristan Ramirez	50.00
Sundar Subramaniam	5.63
Michael Zimmermann	5.00
Total	258.99

Anantha Ladies Home Endowment

Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	30.00

Hindu American Foundation Endowment

Anonymous	200.00
Toshadevi Nataraj	30.00
Mark Stevens	50.00
Total	280.00

Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples (Kovil Maadu) Endowment

Anonymous	24.98
Natraj Narayanswami	33.00
Toshadevi Nataraj	30.00
Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00
Arunasalam Vathavooran	100.00
Total	337.98

Jaffna Kannathiddy Kali Kovil Endowment

Anonymous	50.00

Pakistan Hindu Empowerment Fund

Anil Kumar	36.00

Digital Dharma Endowment

Anonymous	237.28
Anand Rajaram	51.00
Total	288.28

Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment

Other Donations	600.00

Insurance Premium

Mrunal Patel	3,003.00

Total Contributions	$104,108.34

Funds at Market Value, June 30, 2016

Grand Total	$13,486,182.52

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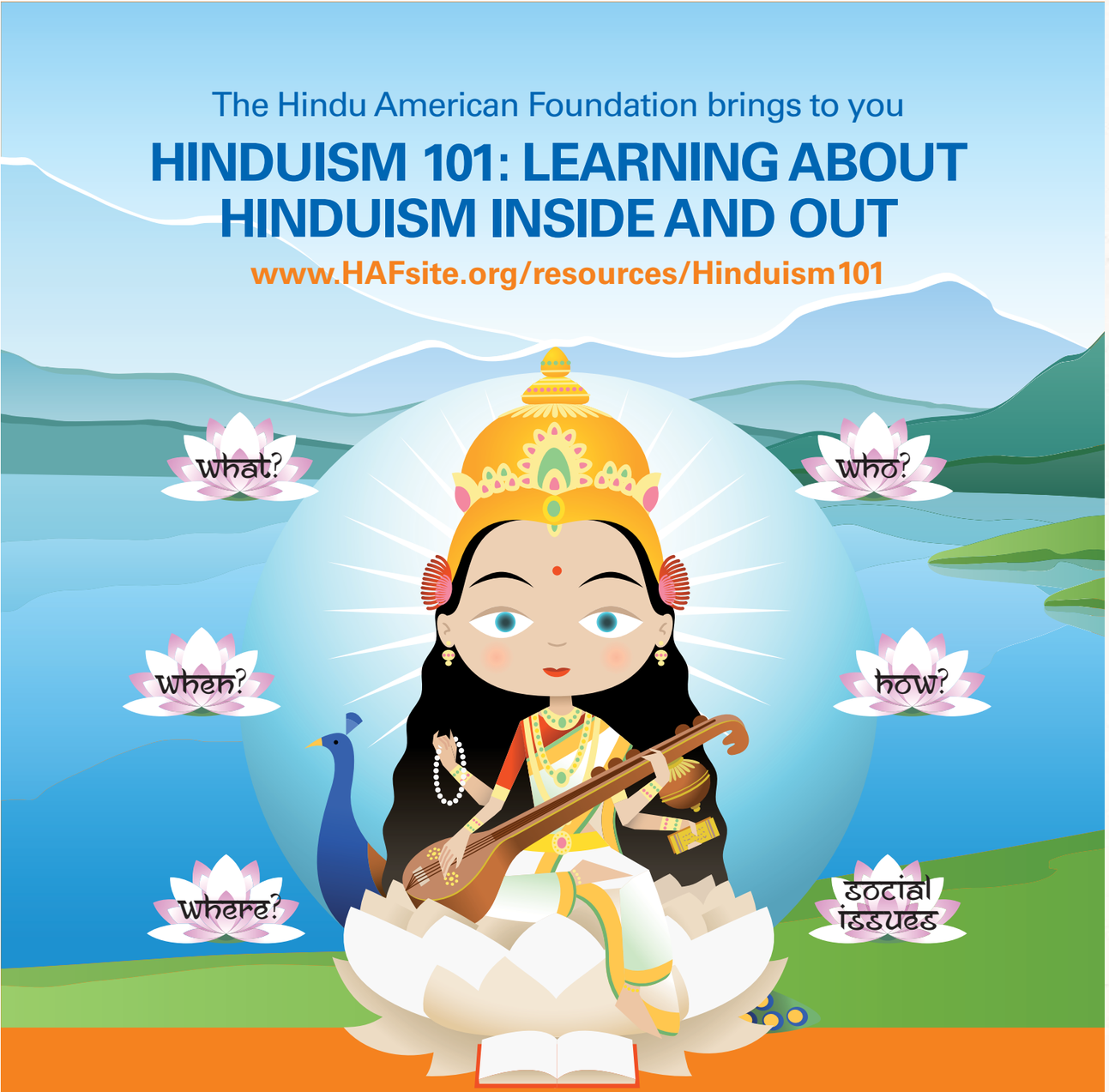

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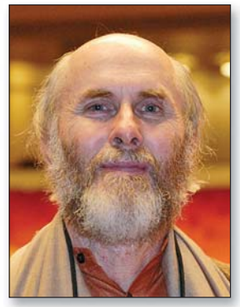

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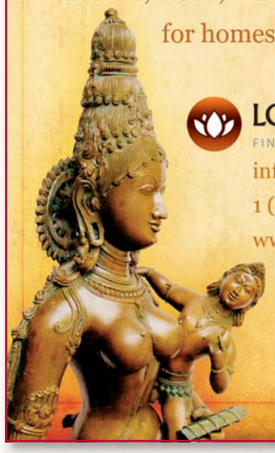

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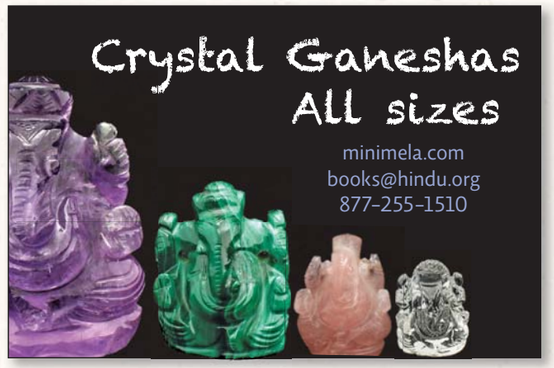

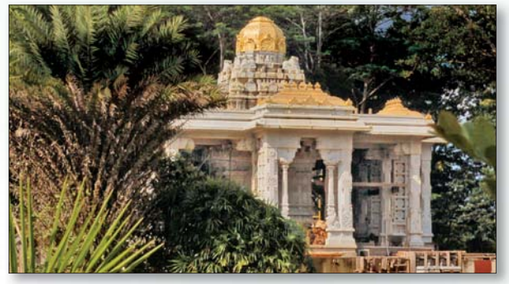

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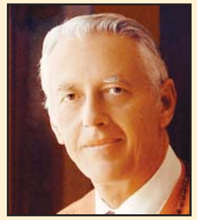

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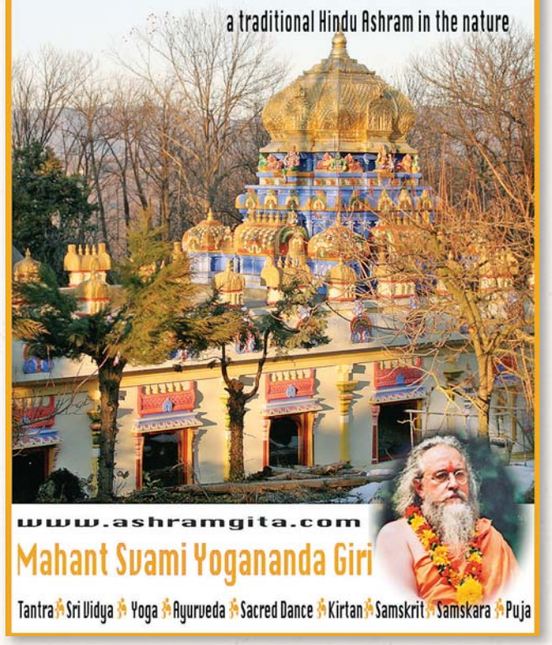

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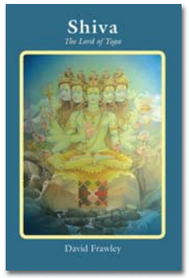

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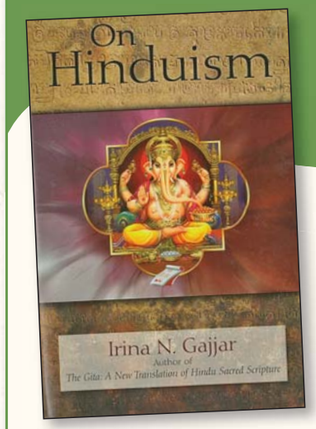

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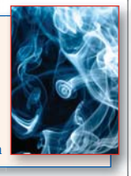

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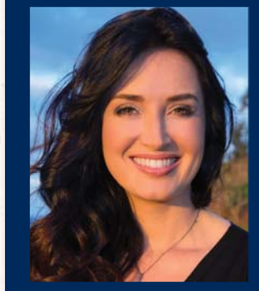

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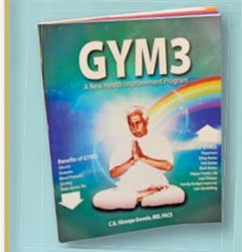

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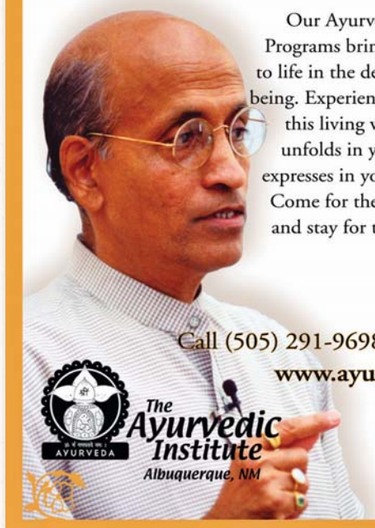

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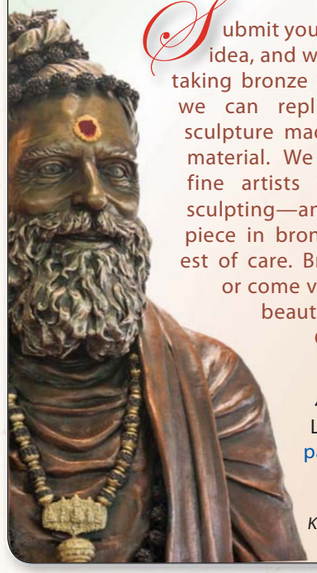

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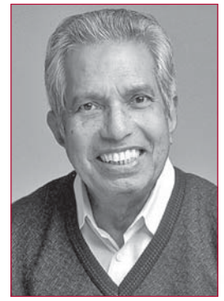

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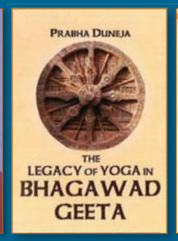

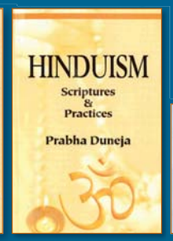

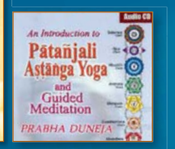

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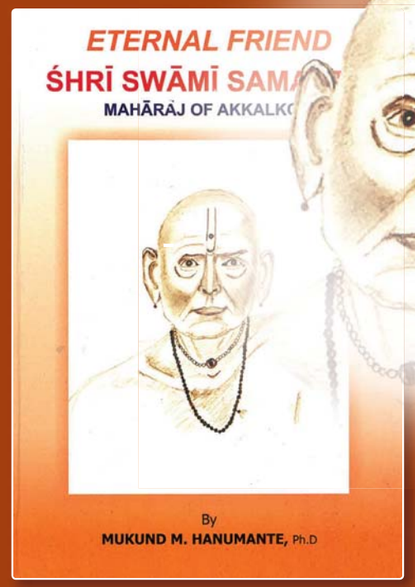

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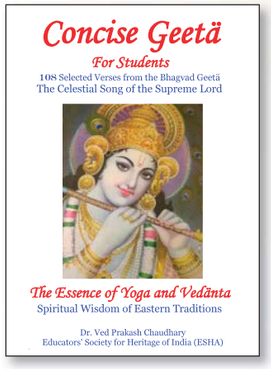

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Para Brahman.
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I seek Thee.

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I have seen Thee in daylight,
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How shall I map the fervor?
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No longer.

My Lord of Light, Para Brahman, by Dr. Arjunan Subramaniam
Monday, 1 November, 2016, 2:45–3:15pm • Solaris, Mont' Kiara, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia
The Author visited Para Brahman, Jogjakarta, Indonesia, with 40 pilgrims of the Malaysian Yoga Society (MYS) and Malaysian Association of Yoga Instructors (MAYI) on 24 December, 2015

DIGITAL DHARMA

HISTORY

Explore Ancient India at Harappa.com

www.hinduismtoday.com

FOUNDED IN 1995 BY OMAR Khan, an Indus enthusiast in San Francisco, harappa.com is a treasure trove of resources on the ancient Indus Civilization (3500–1700 bce). The site features slideshows, essays and articles by leading scholars from India, Pakistan, Europe and America, covering the basic facts and the latest research about the civilization.

The Indus Valley Civilization extended from what today is northeast Afghanistan to Pakistan and northwest India. "The earliest cities became integrated into an extensive urban culture around 4,600 years ago and came to dominate the region for at least 700 years, from 2600 to 1900 bce. It was only in the 1920s that the buried cities and villages of the Indus Valley were recognized by archaeologists as representing an undiscovered civilization... The peoples who built and ruled these cities belong to what archaeologists refer to as the Harappan Culture or Indus Civilization." (Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, introducing "Around Indus," one of 20 slideshows on the site.)

The ancient Indus Civilization script has never been deciphered, and many questions about the people who created this highly complex culture remain unanswered. However, archaeological studies at dozens of sites have provided insight into many aspects of their society. The pace of discoveries has never been quicker than today, and the number of investigators never larger.

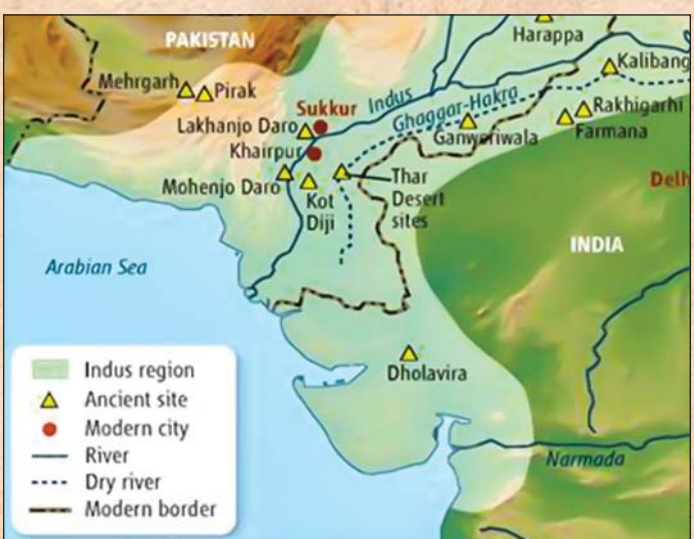
Over 600 slides from the joint Pakistani-American Harappan Archaeological Research Project (HARP) appear here, including a 90-slide "Introduction to the Ancient Indus Civilization." "An Introduction to Mohenjo Daro," among the best-known Indus sites, located in Sindh, southern Pakistan, is accompanied by 103 images.

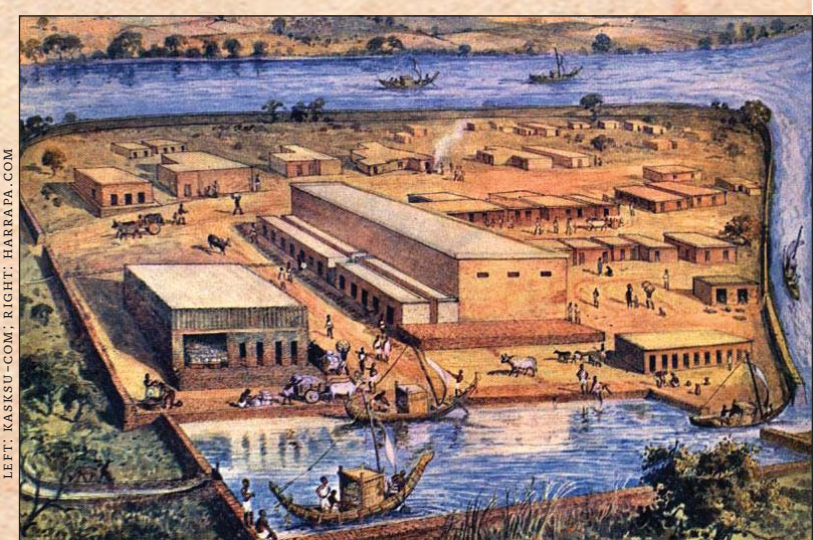
To keep viewers coming back often, a blog offers something new nearly every day. A few recent examples: • The Origins of Curry in the Indus Civilization; • Impressions of Indus Life around a Well; • Ancient Indus Passports? • The Mohenjo-Daro Cart; • The World's Earliest Known Ploughed Field; • New Evidence Pushes the Origins of Indus Settlements to the 7th millennium.

The blog entry from June 11, 2016, called "The Best Indus Recreations," really brings the civilization to life. One impressive example is the painting below, "A reimagining of life in Lothal 4,000 years ago."

A visual goldmine: *(above) A sampling from the slideshow section; (below, left) a map showing the extent of the civilization, reaching from southeastern Iran to northwest India; (below, right) the ancient Indus port of Lothal in Gujarat, as envisaged by an Archaeological Survey of India artist*

With polls/quizzes, essays, books and video resources, the website provides a wealth of learning opportunities for educators and students. Harrapa.com is so content rich, anyone visiting the site knowing nothing about ancient India can leave feeling informed and up-to-date on the constant discoveries being published by Omar and today's avid researchers on a civilization thought to have been home to five million people.





LEFT: KASKSU-COM; RIGHT: HARRAPA.COM