

HINDUISM

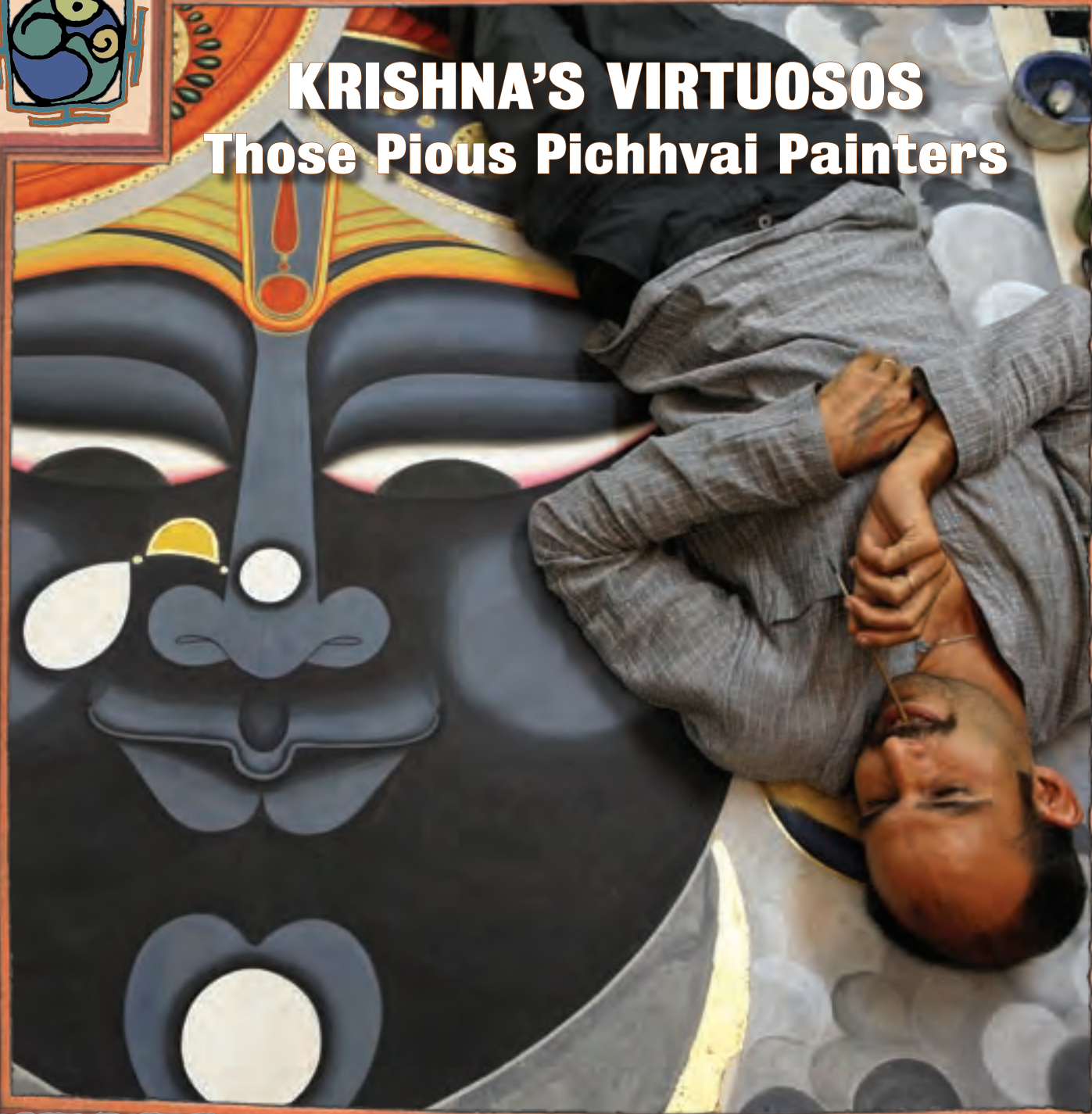
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Affirming Sanatana Dharma and Recording the Modern History of a Billion-Strong Global Religion in Renaissance



KRISHNA'S VIRTUOSOS Those Pious Picchvai Painters



THOMAS KELLY



COVER: Dinesh Soni and his immense image of Krishna as Shri Nathji on a canvas pasted to the smooth marble floor; (above) Sri Pramukh Swami Maharaj with the temple spires that now adorn the domes of his new BAPS Toronto *mandir*

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SARVAJIT, THE ALL-CONQUERING YEAR

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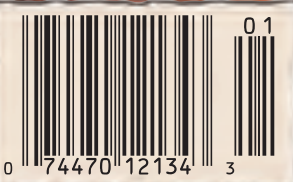
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Krishna arrives at Vrindavan with His Cows

ART BY BAGHUNADAN SHARMA; BACKGROUND PHOTO, SHUTTERSTOCK, PAM BLACKSTONE



Masterful
Picchvai painters
immortalize scenes
of their beloved
Nathji... page 18



PHOTOS BY THOMAS KELLY

Welcome

TO HINDUISM TODAY'S DIGITAL EDITION!

I am pleased to welcome you to the free digital edition of Hinduism Today magazine. It is the fulfillment of a vision held by my Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, founder of Hinduism Today, to bring the magazine's profound Hindu teachings to the widest possible audience. The text of each issue has long been available on the Web, right back to 1979, but without the photographs and art. Now you have here the entire contents of the printed edition, with all photos and art. Plus, it is interactive—every link is live; click and you go to a web page. You can participate in the magazine in a number of ways, accessed through buttons on the right. And you can help support this free edition in two ways: make an online contribution (even a small one); patronize our specialized advertisers. Explore the resources here, enjoy our latest edition and e-mail us if you are inspired.

Bodhinatha Veylanawami

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Sikhs march through Kabul to protest the obstruction of a funeral by Afghan Muslim villagers living near their cremation grounds

AFGHANISTAN

Cremation Under Attack

DURING THE 1996-2001 TALIBAN REGIME, MUSLIMS TOOK land away from the Hindu-Sikh community near their cremation grounds outside of Kabul. Last September, local villagers tried to prevent a cremation there, issuing death threats against Sikhs who were preparing for a funeral at a temple in the south of the city. In response, 100 men marched into the city with the coffin, first to the presidential palace and then to the United Nations compound. Police escorted them back to the temple. "The villagers who grabbed our land now say we can't perform our ceremonies. They say we should stop cremating our dead here," said Diah Singh Anjan. "The police came and detained six of them, and we performed our ceremony."



Trinidad's most famed temple vandalized

TRINIDAD

Hindus Hit by Hate Crime

IN AUGUST, 2007, TRINIDAD'S famous Siewdass Sadhu Shiva Mandir, Waterlook, was vandalized by Christians, who reportedly shouted, "We have the blood of Jesus. You are idols." They destroyed the life-sized

murtis of Krishna, Ganesh, Hanuman and Mother Durga and attempted to set the temple on fire. A national Hindu symbol of religious perseverance and freedom, the temple's founder, Siewdass Sadhu, spent 17 years carrying building materials to the off-shore temple site.

Hindus were shaken by the attack.

Satnarayan Maharaj, secretary general of the powerful Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, urged Prime Minister Patrick Manning and the National Security Minister, Senator Martin Joseph "to take positive initiatives to halt any signs of racial or religious eruptions in the nation. What has happened at the temple is an assault on the religious freedom of the people of Trinidad and Tobago."

DIASPORA

UNITED KINGDOM

Amrit Lalji Wins Nose Ring Case

AFTER BEING ASKED TO REMOVE her barely visible nose-stud at work in the VIP lounge of British Airways Terminal One, Amrit Lalji, 40, refused to comply. Even though she told her Eures food service employers that it had religious significance and signified her married status, she was sacked in September, 2007. Taking up her case to be reinstated, the Hindu Council UK (HCUK) issued statements to the media and to the GMB-British General Union, who supported her campaign. Dr. Raj Pandit Sharma, HCUK's executive member for Hindu Ceremonies told the GMB: "For females the piercing of the nose as soon as puberty, or before marriage, is stipulated in Hindu scriptures such as *Sushruta Samhita* (*Chikitsa Sthana*, Chapter 19). In the religious

context, at marriage the bride is considered to be the personification of the Hindu Goddess of Fortune, Lakshmi, this transformation being achieved by the sixteen beautification processes known as *shodash shringar*." Eures quickly recanted, saying her dismissal was an error. Amrit returned to work in October.



Indian village girl transformed with the signs of Lakshmi

USA

US Congress Resolution on India's Dalits

IN JULY, 2007, THE UNITED States House of Representatives passed a resolution on Untouchability in India, (House Concurrent Resolution 139) "Expressing the sense of the Congress that the United States



India in the US looking glass

should address the ongoing problem of untouchability in India." A resolution is a statement of the House which is agreed to by a voice vote of those present. It is not a law, and it carries no legal implications. Resolutions can, however, influence government policy. The resolution details caste abuses in India and offers suggestions to address the problem, citing such statistics as "...official police statistics averaged over the past five years show that 13 Dalits are murdered every week, five Dalits' homes or possessions are burnt every week, six Dalits are kidnapped or abducted every week, three Dalit women are raped every day, 11 Dalits are beaten every day, and a crime is committed against a Dalit every 18 minutes." For full text see: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=hc110-139>

SRI LANKA

Thangamma Honored in Sri Lanka

ON AUGUST 13, 2007, DR. Thangamma Appakutti received the Hindu Renaissance Award from HINDUISM TODAY for five decades of religious leadership. A brilliant speaker and organizer, she has been instrumental in inspiring the Sri Lankan community at home and abroad to maintain their Hindu heritage and identity.



Dr. Thangamma Appakutti receives the Hindu Renaissance Award plaque in front of the Sri Thurgaiamman Temple

Born January 1, 1925, in Jaffna, she has dedicated herself to the development of Saivism and Tamil language. She became the trustee of the Tellipalai Thurgaiamman Temple thirty years ago. The Jaffna Saiva community bestowed the title "Thurga Thuranthari" for her services, which never ceased, even during difficult times of war. She founded and administered the Saiva Tamil Research Library, Sivathamilchelvi Annai Illam (an elderly home), Sri Thurga Devi Annachathiram (a food-giving charity) and the Thurgapuram Women's Home (a girls' orphanage).

The Sri Lankan government Social Service Ministry conferred the title "Kala-suri" on her in 1991 and the Jaffna University conferred her an honorary doctorate in 1998 for her work in education and religion in Jaffna.

In Tamil, *Thangamma* means "golden mother." Indeed, Dr. Thangamma Appakutti lives up to her name.

TRANSITIONS

Sri Chinmoy Passes On

INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED spiritual teacher and ambassador of world peace, Sri Chinmoy, died of a heart attack in the early hours of Thursday morning, October 11, 2007, at his home in the small suburb of Jamaica, Queens, New York. Sri Chinmoy was born on August 27, 1931, in a small village called Shakpura, in Bengal, India. Orphaned at the age of 11, he went with his six brothers and sisters to Aurobindo Ashram in South India, where he spent the next 20 years in intense prayer and meditation. Heeding an inner call, he traveled to the United States where he arrived on April 13, 1964, and began to work at the Indian

Consulate. He consequently made New York City his home, while serving truth-seekers on an international scale. Respected and loved worldwide, Sri Chinmoy manifested his philosophy for world peace through a wide array of activities focused on transcending our human limitations and through his worldwide humanitarian aid services.



Spiritual teacher and interfaith champion passes on at 76



Three decades of service manifests in a new Reunion temple

REUNION

Chinmaya Mission Opens New Temple in Reunion

ON SEPTEMBER 9, 2007, THE CHINMAYA MISSION OF Reunion conducted the *kumbhabhishekam* of its temple dedicated to Sri Vigneshwara and Sri Sundara. It was also the official inauguration of the Mission's new seat of activities at Quartier-Francais, marking the culmination of 32 years presence and service on the French island. Swami Chinmaya first visited in 1977. Swami Pranavananda Saraswati started mission work throughout the island in 1982. Land was acquired in 1996; and 11 years later after much hard work and sacrifice, a new Hindu center is born.



Keynote: Swami Dayananda Saraswati calls for temple education

USA

Mandir Execs Meeting

IN AUGUST, 2007, THE VISHWA Hindu Parishad of America conducted the Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference (HMEC) in Edison, New Jersey. Over 200 representatives from 97 temples and Hindu organizations of US, Canada and the Caribbean converged to collectively deliberate on the evolving social, religious, cultural and

spiritual needs of the 2.2 million strong, confident, diverse and vibrant Hindu-American community.

Delegates unanimously adopted a resolution for consideration by temple boards: 1) to commend the US Congress for allowing a Hindu prayer in the Senate; 2) to work together and with the government to ensure Hindu temples' eligibility to recruit religious workers under the new R1 visa rules, 3) to adopt and promote HINDUISM TODAY's Hindu History Lesson, in the US school system.



Now gone: Offensive statue removed from Edmonton's Shaw Center

CANADA

Edmonton Hindus Prevail

HINDUS IN EDMONTON, Canada, achieved a victory for dharma in getting offensive statues of Ganesha removed from a public square. Here is a first-person report from Canadian Hindu and attorney, Aran Veylan. "Since there was no existing Hindu umbrella group, we invited the presidents and priests of the six Hindu organizations and a few prominent Hindu elders to a meeting on September 8, 2007. A letter was prepared and amended until we had unanimous approval. It was signed by everyone who attended. Between September 9th and 17th, we collected a pe-

tition with more than 700 signatures at the temples.

"The letter was addressed to the mayor. The morning of September 18th, separate packages with the letter, the petition, a photograph of the most offending statue and a copy of of HINDUISM TODAY containing an article on the controversy were personally hand delivered by the Hindu spokesperson named in the letter to the mayor, 12 city councillors as well as the President and CEO, Chairman of the Board and the Communications Manager of the respon-

sible administrative arm—the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC)—and the General Manager of the Shaw Conference Center. "The mayor immediately ordered the statues to be removed. On the 19th it was front page news and on the 20th the story was carried on local and national TV, radio and newspapers.

"We did not criticize the artist in any way. We did not feed the public debate by writing letters to the editor responding to other letters or defending our position. The statues were physically removed on September 22nd."

The EEDC president and CEO wrote: "Please accept our apology for any unintentional offence these sculptures may have created for some members of the Hindu community."

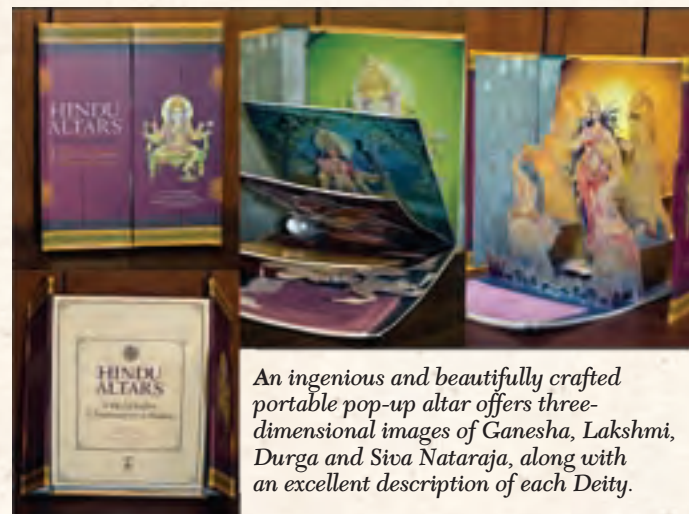
U S A

Hiding the Swastika

BARRACKS SHAPED LIKE A swastika, built in the 1960s at San Diego's naval base, went unnoticed until the advent of Google Earth aerial views. San Diego's Anti-Defamation League objected to the shape and the Navy agreed to comply with landscaping and roof-top camouflage that will cost US taxpayers \$600,000.



Google sees all: swastika-shaped barracks—ignored for 30 years



An ingenious and beautifully crafted portable pop-up altar offers three-dimensional images of Ganesha, Lakshmi, Durga and Siva Nataraja, along with an excellent description of each Deity.

HOLLAND - U S A

Pop-Up Altars

THE EXQUISITE ARTWORK OF Holland's Pieter Wetevrede, disciple of the famed Harish Johari, is inventively presented

through Bruce Foster's latest pop-up gallery—*Hindu Altars*. It is a remarkable example of transnational collaboration, with text by Robert Beer, printed and assembled in Thailand and sold by www.newworldlibrary.com.

BRIEFLY...

THE PROMOTION OF THE WILDLY successful 3D animated kids' movie "Bal Ganesh" has been tied into a marketing campaign channeled through fifty McDonalds Happy Meals outlets across India. Children can get branded Bal Ganesh merchandise and can play with and have their photos taken with a McDonalds' Bal Ganesh mascot. Some Hindus are concerned that a religious

Deity has been co-opted for commercial purposes through a non-vegetarian chain.

IN SEPTEMBER, 2007, A BIHAR state official cited one of his subordinates, Lakshman Mishra, for violating a new dress code issued in August by wearing a red tilak dot on his forehead. Mishra refused to remove it and Anil recommended him for suspension. Mishra says

he has worn the tilak on his forehead at work for 30 years, and it is his religious right to do so. In support of his cause nearly all of his colleagues arrived at work on Friday wearing red marks in protest. Unions threatened mass action.

DELHI'S 1,600-YEAR-OLD IRON pillar yielded vital clues to Indian metallurgist Ramamurthy Balasubramaniam and his former student Gadadhar Sahoo of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), who have developed non-brittle phospho-

rous-iron alloy that is corrosion resistant, even in concrete.

UK CHRISTIAN MINISTERS

Reverends Tim Jones and Simon Farrar declared that yoga is a "sham," a "false philosophy" and "unchristian" when issuing a ban on yoga classes in their churches. The Hindu Council UK is investigating whether their comments violate the 2006 Equality Act, which bars discrimination in providing goods, facilities and services—in this case, renting out church facilities for yoga classes.



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

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



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IN MY OPINION

An Infinity of Possibilities

For too long, we Hindus have let ourselves be convinced that we are worthless and powerless

BY DR. FRANK MORALES

SANATANA DHARMA IS A religion that has faced over 1,000 years of brutal battering and horrendous persecution at the hands of Muslims and Christians. As a direct result, we have a Sanatana Dharma that finds itself only now beginning to arise from the smoldering ashes of this millennium-long holocaust. Hinduism is finally beginning to rid itself of all non-dharmic influences over its philosophy and culture and to reassert itself positively onto the world stage. The horrific remnants of the anti-Hindu holocaust have survived, however, and have manifested in today's Hindus as deeply self-destructive psychological tendencies.

Hindus have been relentlessly forced to hear from our deceitful persecutors the false propaganda that Hinduism is an inferior and unworthy religion, one that only leads to superstition and poverty. Too much of the Hindu world has been psychologically impacted, and strategically paralyzed, by what I call Impossibility-Thinking, the idea that we can accomplish no large task in the name of Sanatana Dharma.

The time of such negative thinking is over! The era of the passive Hindu is over! We need to know that, with Bhagavan's blessings and grace, anything and everything is possible in His service. We need to adopt Possibility-Thinking, and know that there is no barrier, no obstacle, no enemy, and no challenge that we cannot overcome.

Sanatana Dharma is the most personally expansive and psychologically empowering religion on Earth. It is a path that teaches its followers to be fearless, dedicated, focused, strong, assertive, self-controlled, virtuous and self-reliant, and to strive for excellence in all endeavors. However, it is only by embracing the daily practice of dharma that we can begin to access the full potential that we all have lying within. Through steadfast practice of the techniques of yoga, medita-



tion, puja and bhakti, all of which are at the very heart of Hinduism, God has provided us with powerfully effective tools by which we can perfect ourselves and manifest unparalleled excellence in our lives.

Sanatana Dharma is a religion of the possible. It is a tradition that teaches us that anything and everything we can dream is attainable. In Sanatana Dharma, we are radically free to perform any positive task, to reach

out boldly toward any constructive goal, to achieve any dream that our imaginations can reveal. Dharma frees us from the bonds of ignorance and fear that bind us, and gives mighty wings to realize our inner yearning for peace, joy and unlimited freedom.

The scriptures and history of Sanatana Dharma are replete with the examples of thousands of brave men and women who embraced the oceanic potential of Possibility-Thinking. Numerous sages, rishis, yogis, kings and queens and Hindu leaders throughout our history have shown us what can be accomplished when we know that all things are possible and that we can achieve anything in Bhagavan's service. Chanakya had the determination to drive the Greeks out of Hindu India. Shankara used the power of resolute focus to revive Hinduism when it was threatened with extinction. Ramanuja possessed the determined will to revive pure bhakti throughout the length and breadth of Bharat. Shivaji Maharaja had the fearless fortitude necessary to rout the mighty and seemingly invincible Mughul empire and reestablish the Dharma Nation as a viable military-political entity. Vivekananda showed us that Sanatana Dharma is not merely the possession of India, but can be realized as the future pre-eminent world-view of the entire globe.

FRANK MORALES, PH.D. is the founder of the Int'l Sanatana Dharma Society and acharya of the Hindu Temple of Omaha, Nebraska.

How to Improve the World

Three attitudes to help us cope with our planet's conflict-ridden condition and one strategic, long-term way to change it

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI



RECENTLY A GROUP OF DEVOTEES lamented to me about the dreadful condition of the world, asking my opinion about the best perspective those on the spiritual path can hold. It is certainly on everyone's mind, with all the unusual problems we face.

My answer was that there are multiple viewpoints we need to hold. One is that, yes, it is good to try to improve conditions, while keeping expectations reasonable. A second point of view we can remember is that trying to change the world is a little like trying to straighten a dog's tail. It keeps going back the way it was, no matter what you do. The key is to find the right balance between working to improve the world and accepting it as it is, knowing that you can't totally transform it overnight and that change does not come easily.

A third, more philosophical, view to hold is that everything is as it should be. Humanity's plights and predicaments all have a divine purpose. In striving to improve the world, we don't want to feel that things are not supposed to be the way they are. We may wish it were different but, in fact, it is a natural playing out of what has been set in motion in the past. We can, to a limited degree, direct and guide the flow of events and encourage things to play out in a better way, but the forces of past actions still continue to powerfully influence and define the present. Those with spiritual insight know that the world is in a perfect state of evolution at every point in time.

In the months after 9/11 visitors meeting with me in our guru temple here on Kauai would often ask, "What do you think about these terrible events?" Their sense was that conditions had never been worse. Reflecting back on recent history, I responded, "Well, times have been worse. All you have to do is go back to World War II. We were not just fighting terrorists who hijack somebody else's airplane. We were fighting Japan and Germany, two very powerful military bodies, with thousands of planes, who were causing havoc in the world. Over *sixty million* people were killed in that war, mostly civilians. That was a far more serious problem by comparison."

Europe gives us another example. For as long as history tells her story, European countries were fighting one another. But what are they doing today? They are working together as the European Union. They've joined together. Do we foresee Germany attacking England ever again? No. A change in consciousness took place in Europe. That's a good sign, and it's just one example of how the world is changing for the better.

The Roots of Conflict: The fundamental challenge is the tendency to divide the world into "we-they" rather than maintaining the inclusive "we" perspective. In the "we-they" perspective, "they" are different than we are, and we tend to emphasize all of



their unseemly or negative qualities. If we strive to keep everything as a "we" and maintain the principle of inclusiveness, then we minimize that tendency. All groups have the tendency to polarize and split. Even a large family will split into "we-they." It is a natural tendency of humankind to divide into two groups that have problems with one another. "We" consciousness is strengthened by focusing on what is held in common. "We-they" consciousness is strengthened by focusing on differences.

An ultimate "we" consciousness has been experienced by several astronauts when looking at Earth from outer space, seeing mankind's commonality rather than dissimilarity. Sunita Williams' experience during her 195 days on the International Space Station space in 2007 radically altered her perspective of life. From 350 km in orbit, the earth appears a magnificently beautiful whole. She says: "It is hard to imagine people arguing down there, not to mention fighting. It looks so peaceful... so calm down on Earth. From space, there are no borders that you can see. We are lucky to live on such a planet and we should not take it for granted. After my space experience, I am a lot more tolerant of people and opinions, of everything."

How do we solve, or at least minimize, the tendency to divide us? Through persistently teaching the opposite. Our Gurudeva, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, took a simple step by creating large granite signs for the island of Kauai that say, "One Island, Many Peoples, All Kauaians." These were installed by the county at prominent locations to emphasize the unity of all the many peoples of Kauai. He created similar signs for Mauritius to strengthen unity, because in every community there is the tendency to split. In the Kauai community the tendency is to divide according to ethnic background.

Gurudeva was inspiring acceptance and counteracting the force of prejudice. He knew that prejudice toward those who are of a different race, nation or religion can start simply as distrust and then deepen into dislike and deepen further into hatred, which can turn into a compulsion to inflict injury.

Are children born with attitudes of prejudice and hatred? No. They learn such things at home, from their family and friends, and at school from teachers and classmates. Prejudice toward other ethnic groups, religions or nations is even taught in



SHUTTERSTOCK: GLENDA M. POWERS

religious institutions.

The long-term solution, one that will take many decades, is to instill prejudice-free consciousness in future generations. People who are older are set in their ways and unlikely to change. But each new generation starts out with a blank slate. Children can be taught tolerance, acceptance and openness toward those who are different. With each new generation, we have an opportunity to teach positive, unifying beliefs. And one of the biggest changes that can take place in society occurs as members of a new generation mature into positions of influence and power. If they are imbued with unbiased, spiritual attitudes, conditions in the nations they serve in will improve.

This is where opportunity lies, in encouraging parents to raise their children in such a way that they are free of prejudice. And then do it again with the next generation, and then do it again and again. Do that for enough generations and we will change the world in a major way. But it takes time. We can all help in our own spheres of influence—family, friends, work, community—doing our part to instill a prejudice-free consciousness in youth and thus transform attitudes that divide peoples,

All in the family: Parents have the golden opportunity to instill prejudice-free consciousness in their offspring, through their example and words. Children so raised are full of amity and acceptance of others.

neighbors and nations.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. expressed the goal eloquently, "I have a dream that one day my children will be perceived for the content of their character rather than by the color of their skin." That is the point, to see the person, not their ethnicity or their religion and impose negative generalizations on them. Even positive generalizations and preconceived notions should be avoided, as they, too, obscure this genuine interaction. For example, some say the Chinese are industrious. But, in truth, not all Chinese are hard-working, and even thinking in such positive stereotypes prevents you from seeing an individual as he or she is.

There are two cardinal principles that naturally motivate Hindus to be free of prejudice and not fall into the "we-they" consciousness. The first is that every person is a divine soul. Even a terrorist or a criminal is a divine being, though one needing many lives of further evolution. There are no people who are evil intrinsically. Their behavior may be evil, destructive, but everybody is divine on the inside. Therefore, everybody is important. Even the terrorist is important; even the criminal is important. They deserve to be encouraged to come up in consciousness. It is the duty of spiritual people to strive to lift everyone up in consciousness, whether they are for us or against us.

The second Hindu principle that inspires prejudice-free consciousness is that the whole world is a one family: *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*. That is a powerful statement, because everyone understands family. When we say the whole world is family, we mean that we hold the same positive, loving attitude toward everybody that we do toward our own kinfolk. We want them to be happy, do well and prosper. Saying and believing that the whole world is our family confers an attitude that excludes no one.

Underlying these two concepts is the knowledge of reincarnation and karma. Change and evolution occur over many lifetimes. The purpose of human birth is to grow and learn in the great school of earthly experience. Karma, the law of cause and effect, is the great and always just teacher. All souls are on this wondrous journey, whether they know it or not. Gurudeva used to say, "You have to be careful whom you hate, because you might end up being born in that group in your next life." Thus you will see what it's like to be on the other end of your hatred.

Summary: I find it clarifying to hold three complementary attitudes toward the world. First: we do want to try and improve it. Second: we want to remain realistic about how much and how quickly it will change. Third: we strive to accept everything that is as the way it should be, even though it may not be the way we would prefer it to be. It is the way it is because of what has happened in the past. A Buddhist monk put it well, "The world is perfect, with plenty of room for improvement." To gradually make the world a more peaceful place, we can spread the idea of raising children with a prejudice-free consciousness. Less prejudice means less hate; less hate means less violence. While we can't change the world overnight, we can change it over many generations.

LETTERS

Hindu History Lesson

THANK YOU FOR PUBLISHING SUCH AN ATTRACTIVE and informative magazine! I am a teacher at Peachtree Charter Middle School in Atlanta, GA, and I only have the Oct/Nov/Dec, 2007, issue; consequently, I missed the history for sixth graders segment that everyone is raving about (Jul/Aug/Sep, 2007).

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Thai Pusam in Malaysia

THE COVERAGE OF THAI PUSAM IN MALAYSIA (“Malaysia’s Festive Jewel,” Jul/Aug/Sep, 2007) is a very well reported piece of news. The festival where over a million people of all faiths congregate at Batu Caves, Kuala Lumpur, is the largest gathering in Malaysia. Hindus, Sikhs and even Christians, and some from other faiths, make it their annual pilgrimage to worship Lord Murugan and to receive His blessings. Lord Murugan is a powerful God. He blesses everyone who goes to Him for help. Now even Hindus from overseas are coming by to pay their respects to Lord Murugan in His Batu Caves abode. Kavadi bearers are coming from Australia, India, Singapore, Indonesia and even Great Britain. Indeed, Batu Caves Murugan is getting more and more popular. Congratulations to Rajiv Malik and the HINDUISM TODAY team for a great story.

K. THURUVAN
RASAH, SEREMBAN, MALAYSIA

Hinduism Today Digital Edition

I DON’T THINK I CAN FIND THE RIGHT words to express the gratitude, admiration and joy that all this beauty and wisdom is being offered free of charge for the world to uplift ourselves. You are doing a great service. In a world where media offers mostly violence, aggression and anxiety, HINDUISM TODAY Digital Edition (www.hinduismtoday.com/digital) is a clear, open window through which we can see the world in a new—ancient, rather—way: as the harmonious creation of Siva’s Shakti.

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More Than “A Way of Life”

IT BECAME HIP AND FASHIONABLE AMONG some Hindus a few decades ago to say that Hinduism is just a way of life and not a religion. And this has been parroted by many without thinking ever since. Unfortunately, religions that do not wish Hinduism well have used this to its detriment by saying: “So, Hinduism is a way of life. This means you Hindus don’t have a religion. Your religion then can be our religion. Why don’t you

adopt ours as your own? You may keep your way of life.” It is thus important for Hindus to insist that Hinduism is a religion, philosophy and way of life all rolled into one. These three are not mutually exclusive categories. A tradition can be all three at once as in the case of Taoism (Dao-de Jiao as the Chinese call it) in China and Shintoism (Kami-no-michi as the Japanese call it) in Japan. Usually, nationally-based religions tend to be all three at once, as opposed to the missionary religions. Why are some Hindus hesitant to call Hinduism a religion when it has all the elements that characterize a religion? Let’s check each of these characteristics: Deities, piety and worship, scriptures, doctrines, sacred space (sanctified places of worship and pilgrimage), sacred time (feasts and fasts), sacred persons (priests and monastics), liturgy and prayer, sacraments (sanctification of the important stages of life), miracles and mysticism, rituals, code of ethics, contemplative practices, humanism and a concept of salvation. Hinduism has them all. Over and above these is the culture. It is this cultural component that makes Hinduism more than a religion. It also becomes a way of life. One does not exclude the other. Hindus should celebrate their faith as all three (religion, philosophy and way of life) rolled into one as Taoists and Shintoists have done in China and Japan respectively over the centuries.

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Temples in Lahore

I WANT TO SHARE WITH ALL OF YOU THE pathetic condition of Hindu temples in Lahore. Lahore is a historical city and has a sound multi-religious and cultural history. There are lots of temples and gurudwaras in this city, and all non-Muslim religious places are under the custody of the Evacuee Property Trust Board. But there are so many black sheep who sell these temples to the land mafia for commercial interests because they are located in what are now the city’s main commercial areas.

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India’s Great Need

HINDUISM TODAY IS THE ONLY JOURNAL IN the world of its type with the right mix of objectives and use of the modern idiom to educate, inform about and illustrate the greatness of our heritage. The photographs and other production features put the journal in the grade of *National Geographic*. The subjects chosen for presentation and the articles show a high standard of editorial excellence.

The greatest need for all that HINDUISM TODAY seeks to explain and convey is, in my view, in India. The vast Hindu mass in India is little educated in our heritage and, worse, has the least self-esteem. We badly lack the use of the modern idiom. There is not a single journal in the country which offers the right mix of cultural teachings, Hindu viewpoint on contemporary controversies in a scholarly format and information of interest to families, youth and children. Hindu religious journals largely deal with ethics, age-old rituals or exposition of our scriptures in a daunting and discouraging format and language. Hindu society in the country is under sophisticated aggression of massive proportions from proselytizers and evangelists. Badly short-sighted Hindu politicians have fragmented Hindu society so much that there is no Hindu power or influence as such in the country; but there is strong Christian power and Muslim power.

R. VENKATANARAYANAN
NOIDA, UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

Maya-Hindu Connection

I WAS READING AN ARTICLE ENTITLED “My Turn: Maya-Hindu Connection” in the Nov, 1995, issue. I was surprised to see it written, “The Mayan culture flourished in Mesoamerica during the early Christian era, before being completely wiped out by the Spanish conquest,” when, in fact, I lived in a Maya community last year. Statements like this continue to create stereotypes that indigenous peoples are non-existent or below a ruling class. This is incorrect information and poor language to publish.

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Nigerian Hinduism

THE INDIAN COMMUNITY IN NIGERIA brought Hinduism with them, and they are trying to propagate the faith here, but due to insistent slogans by Nigerian Christians the faith is not growing like it is in Ghana. I feel with time the consciousness will certainly grow due to the enlightenment that is present in the world today.

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Caribbean Hindu Radio

IN YOUR OCT/NOV/DEC, 2006, ISSUE (“Briefly”) you stated that SDMS Radio (Trinidad) is the “first radio facility promoting Hinduism in the Caribbean.” I would like to point out that there are at least six other all-Indian radio stations in Trinidad. These stations all carry Hindu religious programming on a daily basis from 4-6 am as well as 7-9 pm most evenings. There are

also Hindu programs at other times as well. Mention must also be made of Akash Vani 106.5, which has Hindu religious programming ninety percent of the day. Therefore, Radio Jagriti (SDMS) is not the first station to promote Hinduism in the Caribbean.

LYNDA-ANN RAMLAL
RIO CLARO, TRINIDAD

Understanding Being a Hindu

I AM AN AVID READER OF THE DAILY MASTER Course lesson (www.himalayanacademy.com/study/mc/). I must thank HINDUISM TODAY for making all ways possible to ensure Hindus everywhere in the world are able to understand and appreciate being a Hindu. Although I do not live in India, my interest in the religion is sparked by publications from HINDUISM TODAY.

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Confronting Domestic Violence

IT IS QUITE SYMBOLIC THAT NAVARATRI happened during Domestic Violence Awareness Month. In his message, New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer revealed the following: “Because domestic violence typically occurs in the ‘sanctity’ of a home, many of us may not realize the extent of the problem. Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior which may include a combination of physical, sexual, economic, emotional and/or psychological abuse by an intimate or family member. It crosses all ethnic, racial, socioeconomic and sexual

orientation lines. Approximately two million women are physically or sexually assaulted or stalked by their partner each year in the United States. About one-third of all female murder victims are killed by their current or former partners. Almost one-half of reported domestic violence assaults result in serious injury. While women account for only 39% of hospital emergency room visits for violence-related injuries, women constitute 84% of the persons treated for injuries inflicted by intimate partners. Approximately one in four college-age women will experience some form of relationship violence. Between 70 and 75 percent of the children of abused mothers are the victims of domestic abuse as well. And, as unsettling as these statistics are, they do not even take into account the millions of children who suffer the trauma of witnessing this abuse in their own homes.”

There were two major Hindu conferences this October. Looking at their agendas, neither dealt with domestic abuse or any social problems. Pandit Rajin Balgobin at his yagna for Navaratri at the Milan Mandir and then at the yagna at the Maha Lakshmi Mandir in New York City, spoke at great length about the issues of domestic violence, respect for women, protecting our children and alcohol abuse, among other social problems. He was rather forthright and it was very heartening to see this young *pujari* fearlessly attacking topics that many Hindus ignore. No one boycotted his yagna, no one sucked their teeth and walked out as he spoke, no one heckled him—he had a packed audience each night.

Domestic violence affects everyone, and we cannot continue to hide our heads in the sand and pretend it does not exist or that by ignoring it the problem will disappear. As we continue to refuse to address this situation, we are only driving away our own. There are so many examples of people in our community who are supposed to give people faith and encourage them to remain within the Hindu fold but drive away them away instead.

As we reflect on the meanings of Navaratri and Deepavali, we should think about the reasons why we were given so many opportunities to honor the Supreme as Devi/Ma/Shakti. My prayer is that every mandir be a place where victims can seek shelter and that there be personnel and funds available to help them. Counseling is also important for both the victims and their abusers. Every *pujari*, acharya and swami must make it their duty to get the necessary training to properly counsel their followers. Let us put the Hindu family first.

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Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of HINDUISM TODAY.
✉ INDICATES LETTERS RECEIVED VIA E-MAIL

How \$1/day Grows Hinduism’s Future

A little is a lot when it comes from the heart

PROF. NARAYANA RAO IS A SCIENTIST on a spiritual mission. He is a world-renowned teacher of engineering electromagnetics who immigrated from India to the US in 1958. He has a dream: that one day his grandchildren may enjoy the same precious Hindu tradition he inherited from his forebearers.

In 2003, Dr. Rao was deeply moved while visiting the home of HINDUISM TODAY, Kauai’s Hindu Monastery in Hawaii. “This is Kailash of the West,” he thought, “and my vision and fondest hopes have meshed with HINDUISM TODAY. It is the medium for the generations!” He had found a worthy vehicle for his dream. To lend support, he gave \$9,132 to the Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of the Hindu Heritage Endowment. He decided on

this exact amount so that earnings would straightaway provide the magazine \$1 a day to meet production expenses. “Only \$1 a day, yes, but forever!” he points out. “And with compounding interest, it will grow endlessly. Little, consistent increments make for great power, power for the long haul. I believe that a little bit done by a great many is what has kept Hinduism intact through the millennia. And the same will propel HINDUISM TODAY, too.”

Please consider donating a humble amount (or a sizeable one, if you prefer) to the Hinduism Today Production Fund. Contact us and ask for the Hinduism Today Production Fund flyer.
www.hinduismtoday.com
www.hheonline.org/ht/plannedgiving/hhe@hindu.org • 808-639-7237



We have a dream, today: (clockwise from top) Mrs. and Prof. Rao offer their donation to publisher Bodhinatha; grandson Vinay holding the magazine; Vinay and his grandfather look from the monastery toward Iraiwan Temple. “Vinay will remember this moment for the rest of his life,” Prof. Rao told the staff.

QUOTES & QUIPS

Put your heart, mind, and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret.

Swami Sivananda (1887-1963), founder of the Divine Life Society

True gurus are available in every religion. They may not be in the ordinary world of strife, for such a world does not want them, nor have they any use for it. Go, therefore, in search of a true master. He is ever available and is only waiting for a symptom of real earnestness in you. If you have true humility and earnestness to see God, he will solve all your doubts and show you God in no time at all. **Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati** (1912-1954), 34th pontiff of the Sarada Peetham

Let positive, strong, helpful thoughts enter into your brains from very childhood. Lay yourselves open to these thoughts, and not to weakening and paralyzing ones. **Swami Vivekananda** (1863-1902)

When a person is always right, there is something wrong. *Anonymous*

Love is the only reality, and it is not a mere sentiment. It is the ultimate truth that lies at the heart of creation. **Rabindranath Tagore** (1861-1941), Indian poet and Nobel laureate

The rainbow is a gift from Him who is in all things. *Hopi Native American proverb*

There are no impediments to meditation. The very thought of such obstacles is the greatest impediment. **Ramana Maharishi** (1879-1950), South Indian mystic

It is not enough to be industrious; so are the ants. What are you industrious about? **Henry David Thoreau** (1817-1862), American author, poet and philosopher

Hinduism is a living organism. One and indivisible at the root, it has grown into a vast tree with innumerable branches—

knowledge is limitless and also limitless is the application of Truth. **Mahatma Gandhi** (1869-1948)

Look at you, you madman! Screaming you are thirsty and dying in a desert, when all around you there is nothing but water! **Saint Kabir** (1440-1518)

The more we are conscious of God's presence in daily life, the more intense is the fullness of the joy we experience. God means infinitely more to our existence than the light of the sun means to the plants and trees. **Swami Omkarananda**, (1930-2000), founder of Omkarananda Ashram, Rishikesh

To have an altar at home alters our life. **Swami Tejomayananda**, spiritual head of Chinmaya Mission

Find God. That is the only purpose in life. **Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa** (1836-1886), Swami Vivekananda's guru

"First tested on humans." Note on the label of the Cain & Able line of natural sham-poos for dogs

I am confident that there truly is such a thing as living again, that the living spring from the dead, and that the souls of the dead continue to exist. **Socrates** (470-399 BCE), Classical Greek philosopher and one of the founders of Western philosophy

A child of five could understand this. Fetch me a child of five! **Groucho Marx** (1890-1977), American comedian

Do you want God to be yours? Then you must first become His! **Dada J.P. Vaswani**, spiritual head of Sadhu Vaswani Mission

Frank and Ernest

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Man has now conquered almost everything in nature except human nature. *Anonymous*

One day three wise, blind elephants were discussing what humans were like. Failing to agree, they decided to determine what humans were like by direct experience. The first blind elephant felt the human and declared, "Humans are flat." The other blind elephants tested and said, "We agree."

G-o-d, d-o-g. both the same. Top and bottom. See God in everything. You must do that! **Satguru Yogaswami** (1872-1964), Sri Lanka's revered contemporary mystic

Only the guru is father, mother and brother. He is also friend, well-wisher and the only wealth. Thus everything should be surrendered to him. The disciple, fully surrendered to the guru, sees him as God, and then becomes God himself. **Chandra Jnana Agama**, 2.68

Truth is a snare: you cannot have it without being caught. You cannot have truth in such a way that you catch it, but only in such a way that it catches you. **Søren Kierkegaard**, (1813-1855), Danish philosopher and theologian

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of your-

self that you truly give. **Khalil Gibran** (1883-1931), Lebanese American mystic, poet and writer

Now, there are, truly, three worlds: the world of men, the world of the fathers, and the world of the Gods. The world of the Gods is verily the best of worlds. **Shukla Yajur Veda**, 1.5.16

Those who live with Siva personally guide their children's spiritual and secular education. They teach and model respect, share what happens each day, have fun together and shower love and hugs upon them. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927-2001), founder of HINDUISM TODAY

DID YOU KNOW?

Abhishekam

BY DR. S.P. SABHARATHNAM

THE HINDU WORSHIPFUL RITUAL called puja is precisely and extensively regulated by the Agamas, ancient scriptures explaining the methods of contacting the Gods. According to the Agamas, when a puja is conducted divine energies are invoked and temporarily reside within the murti (image). During an abhishekam—oblations with liquid offerings—the various substances used interact with the living energies resident in the murti and those energies radiate subtly through the materials offered, moving out into the surrounding region. The poured offering, so enlivened, creates a blessing,

which then affects all devotees present and even beyond, into the neighboring areas and homes.

Each substance has a specific effect as it resonates with the divine shakti of the Deity. Milk brings health to all, while sugarcane juice repels natural calamities. Sandalwood water attracts knowledge and learning; coconut water and rosewater ward off diseases; holy ash, vibhuti, dismisses disharmonious conditions and bestows protection. Panchamritam manifests blessings and auspiciousness to householders, and honey brings growth of the arts—music, dance, painting and drama.

BASICS OF HINDUISM

God and the Gods

HINDUS BELIEVE IN ONE SUPREME Being, the Supreme God, who created an extensive hierarchy of Gods, said to number three hundred and thirty-three million. In the Vedas, The Supreme is called Brahman, who simultaneously exists as absolute, transcendent Parabrahman, as omniscient consciousness or Parashakti and as Parameshvara, the personal Deity. The word Brahman comes from the Sanskrit root Brh, meaning to grow, manifest, expand. Brahman is simultaneously Purusha, the Primal Soul, who is perfection of being, the original soul who creates innumerable individual ones—

including the Gods. Some Gods did not undergo evolution as we know it, but were emanated as mature Mahadevas from God to govern and interpenetrate specific orders of space and time. They are so close to the Supreme that they fulfill their cosmic functions in perfect accord with God's wisdom, intent and action. These Mahadevas are real soul beings, and down through the ages ordinary men and saints alike, in all cultures, have had visions of them. Their decisions and actions are so vast in their implications and complexity that we could never comprehend them with our human faculties and understanding.



Finally, a Fair and Accurate Presentation of Hindu History for Children

A 16-page sixth-grade social studies lesson from the editors of Hinduism Today

Hinduism Today's 16-page Hindu history lesson is both correct and authentic, and definitely better than I have seen in any school textbook. If each Hindu were to learn and remember this narrative, the Hindu community would be better off in this increasingly pluralistic society.

Shiva G. Bajpai, Ph.D Director, Center for Asian Studies, California State University

This lesson corrects many of the errors in the current chapters on Hinduism, presents the religion in a sympathetic light and describes the religion in the way Hindus understand and practice it. The lesson is a commendable attempt that is acceptable to nearly all in our religion.

C.K. Hiranya Gowda, M.D., Former President, Hindu Temple of Nashville, TN, USA

While no document can possibly encompass fully the breadth, complexity and plurality of Hindu practice and belief, the Hindu American Foundation finds that this work compromises little in describing the universal ideals of Hinduism that have emerged from its wondrous diversity.

Hindu American Foundation, USA



Note to Students, Parents and Teachers

This Educational Insight in HINDUISM TODAY magazine's response to the controversy in California over the way Hinduism is taught in public-school history books. It is a 16-page lesson on Hindu history, beliefs and practices for sixth graders written from the Hindu point of view. It is historically sound and acceptable in content and tone to the various denominations of the Hindu community.

The problem with every existing textbook for this grade level is that Hinduism is presented negatively, incompletely and inaccurately. This lesson is patterned after a typical chapter on the Jewish faith in these same books. It deliberately does not follow the specific California standards for

presenting the Hindu religion because we believe them to be deeply flawed and contrary to the State's own general rule that teaching material must: 1) be historically accurate, 2) "instill in each child a sense of pride in his or her heritage" and 3) avoid "adverse reflection" on a religion. It is our intent that this lesson will serve as a model for US textbooks, providing an authentic depiction of the eminent history and traditions of the faith while giving 10-year-old Hindu students justifiable pride in their religion.

In most states teachers are allowed to supplement the textbooks with additional material. This lesson may be offered as a more accurate basis for the classroom study of the origins and development of Hinduism in ancient India.

This is the most comprehensive summary of Hinduism's multi-faceted tradition that I have seen to date. I wholeheartedly and unequivocally recommend its use in all official textbooks for students.

Swami Chidanand Saraswati, Founder & Chairman, India Heritage Research Foundation, Rishikesh

This presentation provides a needed counterbalance to textbooks on Hinduism which are sometimes inaccurate or fail to give a perspective that would be recognizable to most Hindus. Though designed for sixth-graders, I could imagine myself recommending these sections as review material for my college students.

Jeffery D. Long, Ph.D, Chair, Department of Religious Studies, Elizabethtown College, PA, USA

FROM THE VEDAS

The Bliss of the Liberated Soul

Adhyatma Upanishad describes the realization of Oneness with God

ADHYATMA IS THE 24TH OF THE 108 UPANISHADS and is attached to the Krishna Yajur Veda. It includes this explanation of who is a jivanmukti, a person who is free from rebirth, and how to attain this supreme state.

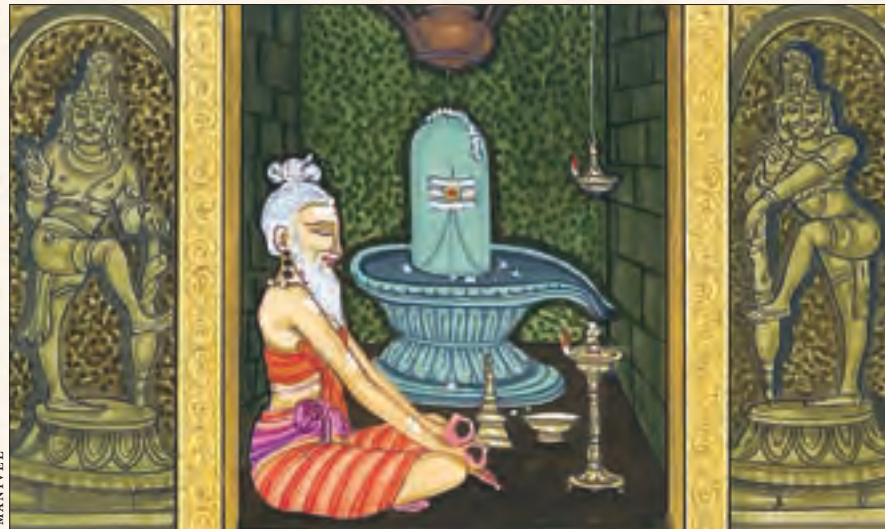
The Unborn One is ever located in the cave of the heart. The earth is His body; though He pervades the earth, it does not know Him. The waters are His body; though He pervades the waters, they do not know Him. *Agni* (fire) is His body; though He pervades *agni*, it does not know Him. *Vayu* (wind) is His body; though He pervades *vayu*, it does not know Him. *Akasha* (ether) is His body; though He pervades *akasha*, it does not know Him. *Buddhi* (wisdom) is His body; though He pervades *buddhi*, it does not know Him. *Ahamkara* (ego) is His body; though He pervades *ahamkara*, it does not know Him. *Chitta* (awareness) is His body; though He pervades *chitta*, it does not know Him. *Mrttyu* (death) is His body; though He pervades *mrttyu*, it does not touch Him. He who is the inner soul of all creatures and the purifier of sins, He is the one divine Lord Narayana.

The wise should, through the practice of deep meditation of Brahman, relinquish the concept of "I" and "mine" in body or senses, which are not the Atma. Having known oneself as the Self, being witness to *buddhi* and its actions, one should ever think "So'ham" ("I am That") and leave behind the idea of separate Atma in others. Shunning the pursuits of the world, the body and the *shastras*, he should set about removing the false attribution of self. When a yogi stays always in his own Atma, his mind then perishes, having known his Atma as the Atma of all through self-experience. Never giving the slightest attention to worldly talk, think of Atma to be the Atma yourself. Then you will become Brahman and be in a blessed state.

O Sage, having dissolved jiva into all-encompassing Atma with the thought of its oneness, like the air of a jar in the universal air, be ever in a state of serenity. Having become That which is all Atmas and self-resplendent, give up both macrocosm and microcosm. Having known "I am that Brahman" in which all the universe appears like in a mirror, become one that has performed all his dharmas, O sinless one. The ever-blissful and the self-effulgent, freed from the grip of *ahamkara*, attains its own eternal state like the glorious moon becoming full as it always was.

With the extinction of actions arises the decay of *vasanas* (sub-conscious inclinations) and from that moksha (liberation). Who attains this is a *jivanmukti*. But carelessness in seeing Brahman in everything and in all places should not in the least be allowed. In a minute, maya envelops even the wise, should they become careless. Ever devoted to samadhi, become a *nirvikalpi*, the changeless one, O sinless! The knot of ignorance is broken completely when one sees his Atma through *nirvikalpa* samadhi.

Having strengthened the conception of Atma and given up the "I" in the body, one should be indifferent to any material thing. From Brahma down to a pillar, all are only unreal. Hence one should see



The Supreme in oneself: As the meditator dives deeper and deeper within, freed from the bonds of the five senses and his own intellect, his very awareness (*chitta*) dissolves into itself. Only God, Parabrahman, remains as the true nature of man

his Atma as existing by itself. How can there be the heterogeneity in the universe made of that One Principle which is immutable, formless and all-pervasive? When there is no difference between the seer, the seen and sight, then the darkness of ignorance and the light of wisdom merge. When *chitta* (awareness) is not, there is nothing.

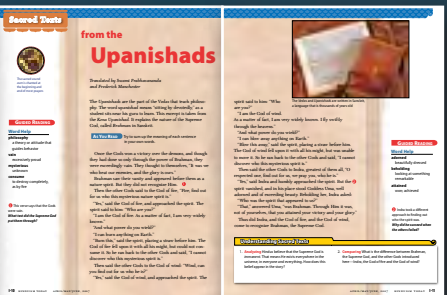
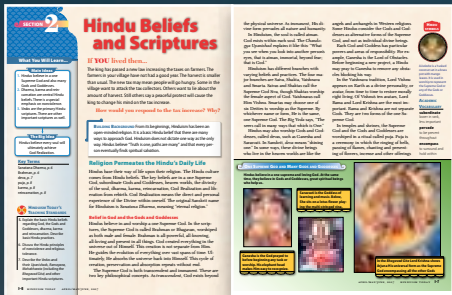
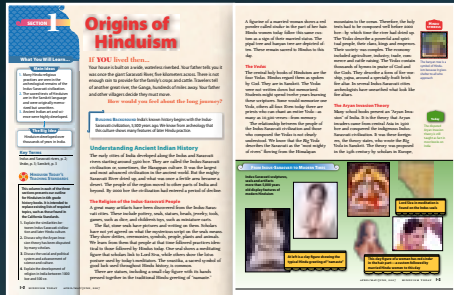
The fruit of *vairagya* (detachment) is spiritual wisdom, which brings then *uparati* (renunciation). *Nivrtti*, the return to One's Self, leads to the highest contentment and bliss beyond all analogy.

By separating maya from *jiva* (the individuated soul) and Atma, one realizes Parabrahman. Understanding this is just hearing. It becomes contemplation when such ideas are quieted. Their meaning is confirmed though concentration of the mind, called samadhi. This samadhi destroys crores of virtuous and sinful karmas which have accumulated during cycles of births.

He is a *jivanmukti* who preserves equanimity of mind, either when revered by the good or reviled by the vicious. He has cognized the nature of Brahman and is not subject to rebirth as before. An ascetic, having known himself, is not at all affected by any of his karmas at any time. He is Atma, all-full, beginningless, endless, immeasurable, unchangeable, replete with Truth, Consciousness and Bliss.

K. NARAYANASVAMI AIYAR published this translation of *Adhyatma Upanishad* (slightly edited here) in 1914 along with the *Adyar Library* as part of his book, *Thirty Minor Upanishads*. The translations had previously appeared in the monthly journal, *The Theosophist*. He collaborated on the work with *Sundara Sastri*.

The *Vedas* are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, *shruti*, of Hinduism, likened to the *Torah* (1,200 BCE), *Bible New Testament* (100 CE), *Koran* (630 CE) or *Zend Avesta* (600 BCE). Four in number, *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva*, the *Vedas* include over 100,000 verses. Oldest portions may date back as far as 6,000 BCE.



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PAINTING BY TRILOCK PRAKASH AND SON

Studio life: Trilock Prakash and his son at work in his studio in Bhilwara. (inset) Traditional Pichwai-style portrait of Lord Krishna as Sri Nathji, painted by Trilock and his son.

TRILOCK PRAKASH SONI

Krishna's Painters

BY DESMOND LAZARO, GOA

THE PICHHVAI PAINTING TRADITION IS intimately connected with the Pushti Marg sect of Vaisnavism and the small temple town of Nathdwara in southern Rajasthan, a site central to the sect's devotional practices. There Lord Krishna is worshiped in His child form as Sri Nathji by thousands of devotees each day.

Pichhvai means "at the back" in Hindi and names the large cloth paintings that hang behind Sri Nathji for the worship. Often several meters in height and length, these are made with the exacting techniques of Indian miniature painting, passed on from father to son and master to apprentice over the last several hundred years.

I am myself a Pichhvai and miniature painter, having apprenticed for over twelve years to the Jaipur Master Banu Ved Pal Sharma. With his blessings, I wrote a book, *Methods, Materials and Symbolism in the Pichhvai Painting Tradition of Rajasthan*, documenting how these magnificent images are made. The book illustrated many of the craft secrets, from pigment preparation to the differing techniques of painting and the inherent symbolism that all the techniques involve. The book was an attempt to preserve the traditional skills and knowledge of my craft, which in recent times has gradually eroded as the social fabric of modern India is stretched beyond recognition.

My book, no doubt, would inform future generations of this divine tradition, but no one would learn to paint Pichhvai from it, nor would it do much to help the struggling artists. I decided then to take a more activist approach, and in 2006 founded the Traditional Arts Trust in New Delhi, a charity that would support Pichhvai and miniature painters and prevent further erosion of this knowledge base. Shri Rajeev Sethi—Chairman of the Asian Heritage Foundation, godfather and friend to many traditional artists—kindly offered to help. He suggested creating an exhibition of newly commissioned Pichhvai paintings in a contemporary style and selected older paintings in traditional style to document the state and potential of the craft. With funding from the Poddar Foundation, a dozen Pichhvai painting studios were selected and art commissioned from each.

In late 2006, I visited these studios, all located in three towns in Rajasthan: Nathdwara, Bhilwara and Udaipur, where the most renowned Pichhvai artists continue to live and work. We decided to commission contemporary paintings rather than the traditional subjects. The reason was to give the artists the chance to innovate, a blank canvas so to speak, and challenge the misconception that they cannot make new and interesting works—stagnation often means neglect rather than a lack of ability.

It is true that the current artistic community ranges from the sincere and dedicated practitioner to the commercial "hack" who produces for the tourist trade, with various categories in between. However, there are those who can be considered authentic in their spiritual, cultural, social and livelihood attainments. They tend to be scattered, isolated families who have managed to practice their craft under enormous social and economic pressure.

Their world is held together by the *sutra* (literally, thread) of the *guru-shishya parampara*—the traditional system of passing on skills and knowledge through oral rather than written means, from one generation to the next, master to pupil, often father to son or uncle to nephew. Each has adapted and transmitted their craft in a unique way, challenging our notions of modernity and offering a glimpse of the *guru-shishya* system in today's India.

My photographer friend, Thomas Kelly, whose work appears frequently in HINDUISM TODAY, suggested the magazine might like to report on Pichhvai and on our efforts to transition the craft into modern times. The suggestion was received by the editors with enthusiasm and in April, 2007, Thomas and I spent a week together visiting, interviewing and photographing the artists and their work. I was in particular checking up on their progress with the commissioned pieces, but wanted also to document their normal work, understand their economic conditions and the state of transference of the art from the current generation to the next.

The photographs accompanying this article include most of the dozen artists commissioned for the exhibition and are both of their commissioned piece in a contemporary style and of other examples produced by their studios, giving a good indication of the wide range of subjects covered in Pichhvai. Our narration, which begins here, focuses on four families who until recently would have remained anonymous: Revashankar Sharma, Lalit and Kapil Sharma, Ramesh and Daivendra Jangir and Badrilal Chitrakala Soni. Their stories show us how a traditional craft comes to terms with the contemporary world and how the *guru-shishya* path prevails.

The Udaipur artists

We started with the busy tourist city of Udaipur, forty-two kilometers south of Nathdwara. It was the 16th century capital of Mewar and is famed for its Lake Palace. I arrive at the house of **Revashankar Sharma** just as the sun is setting. As ever, he comes to greet us with that wonderful smile of his, though even this cannot hide his fragile state of health. For the exhibition, we commissioned him to do a series of drawings. He is unable to work at the Pichhvai scale—

ALL PHOTOS THOMAS KELLY



which means pasting the cloth to the floor or board and working on hand and knees for hours at a stretch. But from him we get a glimpse into the artist's world.

The first two ink-on-paper drawings he shows me, entitled Sanjhi (sunset) and Mor-kuti (peacock dance), are exquisite. He has a deft touch, first with pencil and then over the top with a brush. The hand may be fragile but the line is assured.

The Revashankar family has wielded the brush for a long time. Ghasiram, 1869-1931, one of the most renowned artist of the Pichhvai tradition, is the granduncle. The Pichhvai painters of Nathdwara tradition belong to two brahmin castes, Jangir and Adi Gaur. Ghasiram was the first Jangir to be appointed head of painting for the Nathdwara Temple.

My heart leaps when he brings out Ghasiram's original sketchbook. They are full of extraordinary drawings. Revashankar explains that Ghasiram's forte was drawing from memory rather than direct observation. It is typical of traditional practice, which aims

Krishna and the gopis: (above) *The Dana Leela by Raghunanadan Sharma, where Krishna demands payment of taxes from gopis taking buttermilk to Mathura for sale;* (below) *Raghunanadan, 51, and his two sons, Murlidhar, 25, and Jaeysth, 23*

to know what something is, as well as how it looks. He flips through the pages of the book to illustrate. Each is packed with animals—elephants, tigers, monkeys and horses—all rendered with a simple unbroken line.

The line, he explains, is the key to the craft. "We use a unique brush made from squirrel's hair, whose tufts on the tail—from which the brushes are made—naturally grow to a point, so all the hairs converge at the tip. This allows the artist to move it in any direction and retain an even line." To demonstrate, he takes my notebook and makes two drawings of a horse's head. The first—a Western method—is made of ropey lines that eventually make up the contour of the head. The second, a single line, renders





REVASHANKAR SHARMA

The artist's hands: Revashankar Sharma of Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, is one of the greatest living Pichhvai masters. At left he goes through his sketch book with article author Desmond Lazaro. Such books are created by each artist and passed on to his apprentices. At right Revashankar demonstrates how a horse may be drawn with a series of broken lines in the top sketch, or with the single sure strokes of the bottom sketch; beside the horses' sketch are examples of his masterful miniature drawings and paintings.



ALL PHOTOS THOMAS KELLY

the head in one swift stroke (see photograph above). His point is that in the first the ropery lines "find" the head and in the second there is no finding to be done, the artist knows—from memory—where the contours lie.

As I leave, I am reminded of the old craftsman saying: *hathi, haath aur ghoda*, "elephant, hand and horse." Only a master can draw each freehand. The elephant gives flow of the line, the horse the strength within the line, and through the hand, the sensitivity that is a line.

The following morning I meet **Lalit Prasad Sharma**. He lives not far from Revashankar, closer to the Lake Palace, in a modern suburban house. His house is a work in progress, as consecutive generations add a room here, an extension there, creating an architectural jigsaw puzzle. Lalit's addition is the second floor, complete with his large, well-lit, custom-built studio. The surroundings tell that life has been good, for he is both a Pichhvai painter and a recognized contemporary artist who has managed to transverse the illusory line that divides the two.

Lalit is originally from the Jangir caste of Nathdwara. He can trace his lineage back—painting-by-painting—for more than five generations. His great-great grandfather, Chatarbhuj, painted the Bankiyaji Ka Devara frescos in Sanvar, as well as the Moti Mahal in Nathdwara (ca 1845-78). Great-grandfather Narayanji (1860-1933) made stock-in-trade iconic miniature and Pichhvai paintings in the Nathdwara style. Grandfather Bhuralal is noted for his work

at Jhalawar—near present-day Kota—in the court of Maharaj Rana Bhavani Singh around 1920.

Lalit's father, Ghanashyam (1924-2002) broke with Nathdwara traditions both by teaching at Udaipur College and with his sensitive, European-style watercolors of local people. Lalit continues this inherited penchant for experimentation, a trait reflected in his studio.

The room is divided into two sections—couch, television and DVD player on one side and his workspace on the other. Rows of tidy filing cabinets line the walls, each shackled with untidy books grappling for air, hemming in his workspace, leaving just enough room to reach for that quick reference. On any visit, Lalit inevitably rummages through this lost ark of papers for some painting, drawing or other, which he never quite finds. His charm is that he looks nevertheless.

The walls are no better. They are festooned with paintings, mainly large oil canvases in various states of completion. He is an artist who likes to live with his work. Drawings, prints, miniature paintings and abstract designs cover every inch of wall. The room resonates in a cacophony of images, "things" that draw—and feed—his attention for days, nights, even weeks, before and after the main event—painting.

His painting straddles the two different styles and techniques, Pichhvai on cloth and oil on canvas. He began to experiment early in his career, "After completing my graduation with a master's degree in drawing and

painting from Udaipur College, I worked as a miniaturist, on cloth and paper with natural pigments. I moved to this new medium of canvas and oil paint." Such a move between genres often produces a pastiche, a soulless imitation. Lalit avoids this pitfall by anchoring his oil technique to his traditional training. He renders trees, foliage, architecture and figures in exactly the same manner as he would in a Pichhvai. Only the medium—oil paint—changes.

The challenge presented to him with our commissioned piece for the exhibition was going back to the Pichhvai technique with his contemporary imagery. The result is a massive (nine-foot by six-foot) landscape with a temple placed at the center (see photo, page 23). The symmetrical composition and flat color field are typical of the miniature sensibility and have become a hallmark of his work.

Pigments and processes

I asked Lalit what the difference is for him between oil and canvas and Pichhvai painting. He said that it was one of color. Oil color is very bright. Traditional color, by which these artists mean pigment or stone color, is very soft.

Pigment colors are prepared by hand with a pestle and mortar, worlds away from squeezing a tube. The raw mineral stone is placed inside the mortar and crushed until powder forms. After each day's grinding, the mortar is filled with clean water, the color remains as particles in suspension—

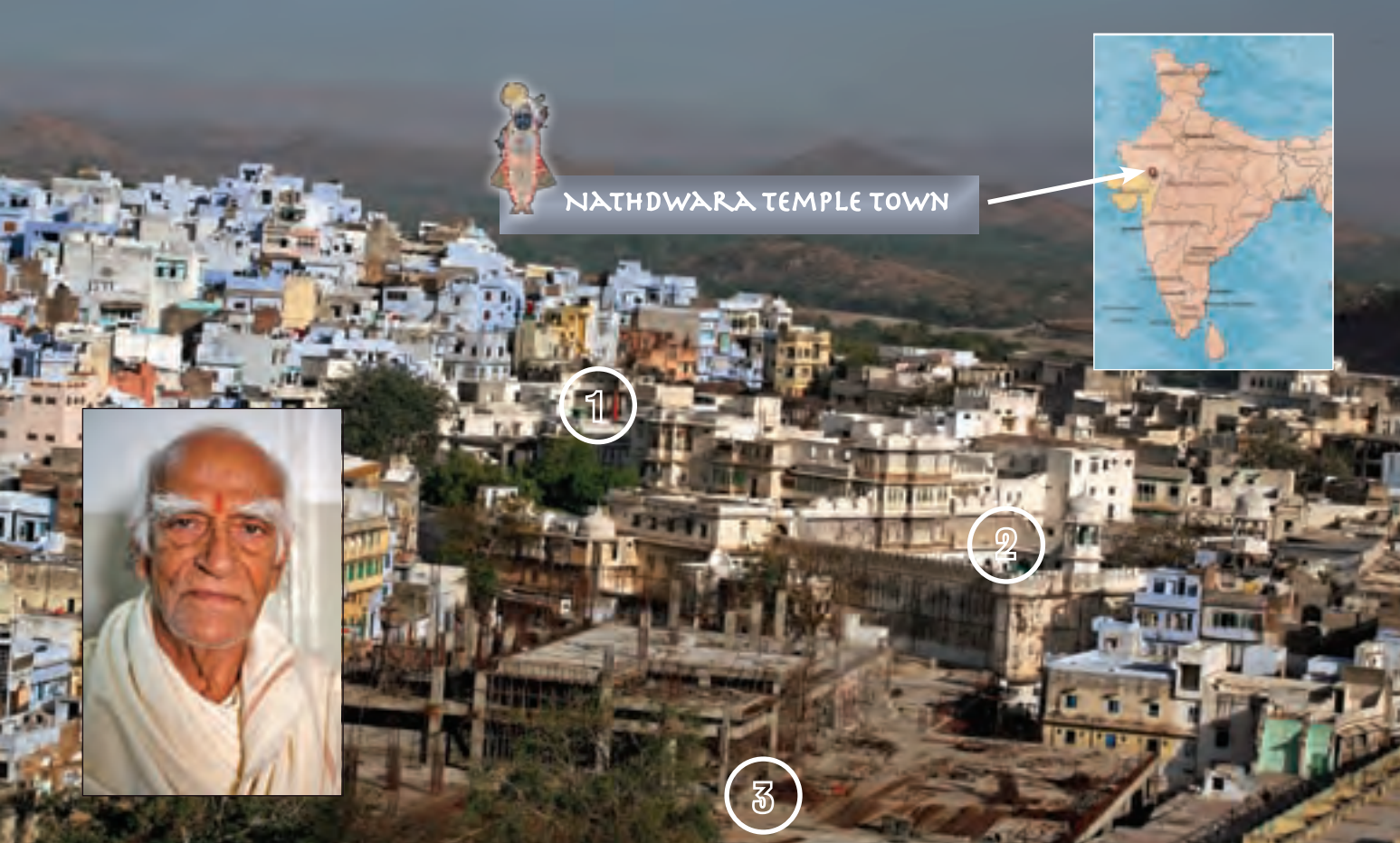


Generations past and future: (clockwise from top left) Three women bring offerings to a sage, painting by Gyanshyam, Lalit's father; two queens, mineral painting by Bhuralal, Lalit's grandfather; Lalit's son Kapil has produced a computerized animated short in Pichhvai style; the squirrel paint brushes and burnishing tools of the Pichhvai style; yellow paint is prepared by grinding a natural mineral; Lalit working on the art commissioned for Desmond's exhibition, using only natural pigments and not modern oil paints.



LALIT SHARMA





Town of Nathdwara: Looking out toward the congested Nathdwara temple complex, center for the Pushti Marg devotional sect of Vaishnavism: 1) The orange flag to the right of the number 1 flies about the Nij Mandir, the place of darshan for Sri Nathji; 2) first inner courtyard from the main entrance; 3) new temple administration building, criticized for being too large and out of proportion for Nathdwara's central area. (inset) Rakeshji Maharaj, head priest of Nathdwara who has never missed a single day to be with the Deity.

floating in the water, which is drained into a separate container. The residual sediment, which stays at the bottom of the mortar, is thrown away. A pigment color could take up to one month to prepare, grinding by hand for long hours. It is a time of contemplation for the artist, when the composition, geometry, drawing, the application of colors and the final details are all planned out.

Lalit pulls out his collection of traditional colors, many of which were given to him by his father, Ghanashyam. The *guru-shishya* transmission is not only about the passing of skills and knowledge, but also materials, which are prized possessions. They are as much a family secret as the actual skills themselves, especially today, when the complex technology of making colors has virtually disappeared. Traditionally, there are four-principle pigment sources: mineral, earths, alchemical and organic.

Minerals are mainly semiprecious stones such as malachite (a bright green) and lapis lazuli (bright blue) that are extracted from the earth. "Earths" are surface deposits, known as ferruginous colors. These are iron oxides, for example ramraj, yellow ochre. They are the earliest form of color, dating back to the Stone Age cave paintings. Alchemical colors are processed by requiring some kind of chemical reaction. One

alchemical color is derived from verdigris, which is the bluish-green patina formed on copper or bronze as it tarnishes. "Indian yellow" is another alchemical color, produced by very different method which begins with feeding a cow mango leaves and collecting the urine, which is a natural alkali. It is precipitated into a pigment with a certain type of flower—the artisans consider it a sacred gift from the cow. Organic colors are made from plant sources, such as indigo, a dark blue dye obtained from the indigo plant; or from insects, such as red lac; or from animals. The chemistry of these pigments is extremely complex. They are stored dry until mixed with gum arabic for application.

After they are applied, these colors are burnished with an agate stone. This pushes the pigment into the paper or cloth, making it flat and shiny. The shinier the surface, the more light it will reflect and therefore appear—as Lalit says—"softer." The whole method sets up this process, called "stone color," not after the origin of the pigment, but the burnishing stone. After the cloth is pasted to a board and the under drawing is rendered in ink—as illustrated with Shyam Sharma drawings on page 26—the colors are applied in blocks, using the ink line as a guide. The burnishing action actually heats the colors. For miniatures, the paper

is placed face down on a marble slab and rubbed on the back. But for the large Pichhvai, where the cloth is pasted or starched to a marble floor, grease-proof paper is placed over the top to protect the image from being scratched. Either way, the colors fuse at the edge forming an unbroken surface. This makes the brush move freely over the painting allowing whispers of paint to be seen, so the artist is able to make extremely fine transitions of tone and line.

Sadly today, few artists use mineral color. The majority use synthetic poster or powder color often manufactured in Calcutta, which is one of the reasons for the decline in the craft. The difference between synthetic and mineral color is profound. Synthetic colors separate the method from the material, whereas with mineral colors the method is born of the material. Synthetic colors produce synthetic paintings, which appear dull and lifeless. Mineral colors are by nature luminous. They are the physical embodiment of light, symbolic of the inner, spiritual dimension of the craft.

Enter the digital age

Kapil, Lalit's son, 28, wears the same air of confidence and the look of yesterday as his father, although he is a product of today's India. Versed in miniature and Pichhvai



PRAKASH BROTHERS

painting—the family business—he rejected a traditional apprenticeship. He instead opted to study graphic design at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad. He now lives in Mumbai where he concentrates on animation and spends much time shuttling back and forth to Udaipur. Whenever I visit Lalit, Kapil is usually in the background. Unlike the typical *guru-shishya* family, where respect is a form of distance, these two are more like friends, shadowing each other's lives. If Lalit roots through his bookshelf to find something, you can be sure Kapil will actually find it; they are a duo.

I had talked to them about working on a piece together when the idea of a digital Pichhvai came up. We settled on a concept called Varsha, the name given to the rainy season Pichhvai that is hung in the Nathdwara temple during monsoon. Kapil's computerized installation work consists of a large square box with viewing holes on all four sides. The viewer then sees this continuous animated sequences made from up of motifs from Nathdwara painting, clouds, cows, trees, birds, etc, all of which emerge from a flashing bindu (the symbol of unity or wholeness), flower, bloom and then are reabsorbed back into the bindu at the end of the sequence. Over the top, a sound recording plays bhajans, devotional songs, from the haveli.

The work is at an early stage (see photo p. 23), but he applies the same rules his father did when he moved from Pichhvai to oil and canvas. The technology changes, but the motifs, images and meanings remain, rekindled by a new generation, as did his forefathers each in their turn: Chatarbhuj, Narayanji, Bhuralal and Ghanashyam.

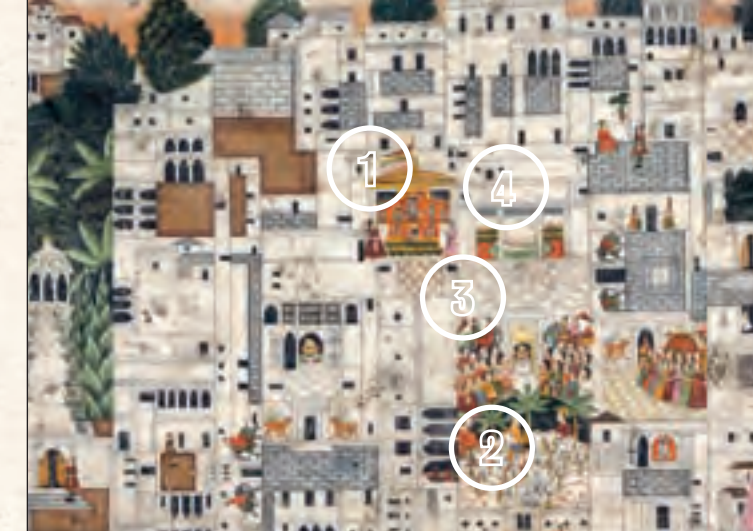
Nathdwara—temple town

Nathdwara is about forty minutes by car

from Udaipur, and we take care to arrive in time for the morning darshan at Krishna's temple. It is a gentle and spiritual scrimmage as you prod and poke through the thicket of bodies in Nij Mandir, Shri Nathji's inner sanctum. It is a small wonder that no one gets hurt, considering the number of pilgrims that pour through this rectangular room—just twenty-five feet in length and fifteen feet across. This is the spiritual source for all Pichhvai painters. It is not a temple, but a haveli, a traditional house arranged around a courtyard that is the home of the child Krishna, built on a child's scale.

I enter Nij Mandir from Rattan Chowk, the Gem Court. The shrine and Shri Nathji appear on my right side, flanked by rows of open doors that run the length of the room acting as entrance and exit, allowing the flood of devotees, myself included, to pass by quickly. Each has the same fervent look in their eyes, as we collectively huddle, jostle and fight to gain a foothold. The room is a series of sloped wooden viewing platforms, stepped at intervals like a cinema hall with chrome-plated barriers dividing women (at the front) and men (at the back).

The shrine itself is closeted by two thick silver doors, richly carved with the life stories of Krishna. They slowly open, and I spot a sindur-colored curtain that veils Shri Nathji. There is total silence as the curtain is parted by the priests, then the whole Mandir lets out a deafening cry of "Jai Krishna" as Shri Nathji comes into view. It is 9:30am and this is *shringera*, the second darshan of the day. The sheer beauty of the scene transfixes me. Shri Nathji is resplendently dressed in flowing yellow *gherdara jama vagha* (full coat) and *pagh* (cap) topped with *morchan-drika* (peacock plumage). Today is Ramnavami, birthday of Lord Rama, so the Deity is dressed specially for the occasion. Hands



Prakash family: (left) Sharad and Shiv Prakash, upper left and right, and three of the sons. (above) An Indian style schematic of the Nathdwara temple complex by Sharad shows: 1) the central sanctum of Sri Nathji; 2) "Kettle Drum gate" the main entrance; and 3) Govardhan Puja courtyard, where cows are invited to feast during Gopashtami festival.

stretch as each devotee bathes in the smoking *arati*, flame offering, that is wafted over our heads. The noise subsides, giving way to prayer, whispers of supplication, personal mantras as the crowd merges into a shared sense of the Divine.

The Pichhvai behind Shri Nathji for this darshan is unusual in that it consists of small miniature paintings that run across the cloth in a storyboard recalling Ram's birth. Generally, Pichhvais fall into three broad categories: those made for festival days, like the one on display; those made for specific seasons, monsoon, summer and winter; and those that express general themes and are not necessarily bound by convention. Often the center of the Pichhvai is left blank, as this area is obscured by the Deity, Shri Nathji, a four-foot, three-inch blue-black relief stone carving in front.

According to Pushtimarg belief, Shri Nathji is a living child, a Svarupa, not a murti or consecrated statue into which the Deity is invoked temporarily through worship, but a living incarnation of the child Krishna. Like any child, He has many needs that must be attended, enshrined within the eight darshans of the day. Each one—*man-gala*, *shringera*, *gwal*, *rajabhoga*, *utthapan*, *bhog*, *sandhaya arti* and *shayana*—sees Shri Nathji in the ritualized bathing, dressing, eating, in the fields with the grazing cows, bringing the cows back at dusk, and going to bed. Each and every event is depicted as it happens, so that the devotee is able to take part.

Pushtimarg history

Shri Nathji's original home was Mount Govardhan, near Mathura, in Uttar Pradesh. Vallabhacharya, the founder of the Pushtimarg sect, discovered Shri Nathji, according to the *Chaurasi Vaishnavana Ki*



SHYAM SHARMA

Exploring new areas: (left) Shyam Sharma and his daughter Saroj, who is also his apprentice, work on the piece commissioned by Desmond for his exhibit. It is his own concept developed from a traditional story in which a cow spontaneously pours milk from her udder upon a Siva Lingam.

aged what would become the Pichhvai art form. It borrowed from earlier cloth painting traditions, such as Phadchitra, a form of story painting, and Patachitra, canvas cloth painting, which depicted tales from the epic poem *Mahabharata*. Pichhvai artists took these crude folk styles and introduced the refinements of miniature painting. At this time the imperial Moghul courts were breaking up, and the artists formerly in their employ sought refuge in the smaller principalities.

Varti, a history of the sect, in the fifteenth century. It was not until 1670 that it was moved to Nathdwara—partly due to religious persecution and partly to find new patronage. Lore has it that the bullock cart that was carrying the Deity became embedded in mud at Sinhad, near Nathdwara. This was taken as an auspicious sign, and in 1672 a Mandir was constructed.

Of Vallabhacharya's seven sons, Vithal-nath, his second, was drawn to the vernacular arts of poetry, music and—of course—painting. He established the elaborate ritual worship of Shri Nathji and encour-

They adapted their work to the needs of the new-found bhakti movement of devotional Hinduism, of which Nathdwara became a center, and thus Pichhvai art was born.

The great historian of Indian art, A.K. Coomaraswamy called the realm of Indian miniatures, “a magic world, where all men are heroic, all women are beautiful and passionate and shy, beast both wild and tame are the friends of men and trees and flowers of conscious of the footsteps of the bridegroom as he passes by. This magic world is not unreal or fanciful, but a world of imagination and eternity, visible to all who do not refuse

to see with the transfiguring eye of love.”

Temple issues today

The Nathdwara temple is a major institution, employing some 500 priests and 450 administrative staff serving the needs of ten to fifteen thousand pilgrims on an average day, and up to 400,000 on festival days. Nathdwara is renowned as one of the wealthiest Krishna sects in north India. Devotees live all over the world, in Uganda, Nairobi, Los Angeles, New Jersey, Dubai, Muscat and London.

A major renovation now underway has provoked controversy among this community of devotees, and the Pichhvai artists themselves. Many believe that the construction plans by the temple board are insensitive to the original haveli design. Its architecture was specifically made at a small scale, proportionally with the size of the Deity, a child. For example, the roads narrow to pathways as devotees enter the haveli on foot. The renovation includes a huge administration building at odds with this scale.

To better cope with the ever-increasing number of devotees, the plan will widen the existing streets. Even this, just one part of the ambitious project, has caused problems. Construction crews have already



VITAL DAS SHARMA

demolished old buildings which housed irreplaceable wall frescos. The prominent artist, Amit Ambalal, author of *Krishna as Shri Nathaji*, aired his concerns in the national press, as did the National Museum in Delhi and many of Nathdwara's senior artists, who wanted more care to be taken with such delicate works by either removing them before demolition or just letting them be.

However, some of the younger generation of artists in Nathdwara see things in a different light. They see an opportunity to clean up the town, install a modern sewage system, create better facilities for the pilgrims all of which—hopefully—will skate more opportunities for them. Dinesh Sharma, 27, son of prominent artists Ghyana-

sham Sharma, told me, “Almost 90% of the people agree to the changes. No doubt the controversy will rage. Perhaps a review is called for, conducted in collaboration with, but independent of, the temple board who presently direct the project.”

The Jangir family

We wander through the narrow lanes of Nathdwara seeking out **Ramaischand Jangir's** house, in Niya, on the “street of painters.” He greets us at the door with a hearty smile, dressed in formal attire—white shirt and black trousers—which he immediately discards when he reaches his studio at the top of the house. Getting there through the narrow passageway and the two sets



Vital Dasji: (left) Seated in front of one of his paintings with his kit of brushes, mineral paints and other tools, Vital Das Sharma is one of the foremost Pichhvai painters of our time; (above) his exhibition work for Desmond depicts *Gopastami*, the moment the cows are brought back from the fields.

of steep stairs takes your breath away, so by the time you eject your shoes outside his studio, the sun has gripped your throat, and you gulp the offered water eagerly.

It is a tiny studio, no more than ten feet square, just enough to fit Ramaischand, his son Daivendra and his nephew Satish, the master and his two apprentices (see photo page 29). The three work here day and night, and a brief glance lets you know that they work very hard. Ramaischand earns his bread and butter in the local Nathdwara market, selling in the shops that line the streets near the Haveli. In these, pilgrims can buy all manner of Nathdwara curios, objects to adorn the family shrine back home, Deities, sacred paintings, silverwork, brocades—the list is endless. For the right price, one can buy a “full kit” for the perfect home shrine. Wood replicas of Shri Nathji painted to look like stone are extremely popular with the pilgrims.

At the end of the day, when the Haveli is closed and Shri Nathji is asleep, you see countless shopkeepers tallying up the day's take with ledgers and dexterous fingers. Among them are the art shops where the majority of Shri Nathji paintings are sold. Pichhvai's are rarely displayed, as the current demand is for paintings of Shri Nathji. They come in every conceivable size, from



A Tale of Two Paintings

THE TWO PAINTINGS ABOVE WERE DONE BY TWO DIFFERENT MASTER ARTISTS, the top by B.G. Sharma, the bottom by Raghunandan Sharma. Neither is the original, they are both copies of a composition of an earlier master. Nearly every figure on Lord Krishna's boat is in exactly the same pose, with minor variations only in the color of clothing. One has to look into the distant shore at the placement of the small boats to observe any substantial difference. This painting is part of a long tradition in Pichhvai of making copies or "traces." These are kept in the form of sketchbooks and are the prized possessions of any studio. After the master makes the drawing, they say the "line is set," and the craftsman will then use this trace in creating his painting. The objective is for the craftsman to not merely recreate the master's line, but to reach the state of artistic perfection achieved by the master in creating the line in the first place. As these traces moved with master painters from one town to another, regional differences arise. This particular painting, for example, has made the rounds of all the studios and is now part of their repertoire.

In our digital age it is so easy to copy anything, that the almost mystical process of following the master's trace is being lost. A whole generation of artists has arisen who only know how to copy, for example, with the use of projectors. They are compared to the tailors of Jaipur of whom it is said that if you give them a shirt to duplicate, and it is missing a few buttons, the tailor will make the exact same shirt with the same buttons missing. These new artists paint what is directly in front of them, without any discernment. With this decline in drawing standards, few craftsmen know where to start when confronted with a blank canvas.

the miniscule to the enormous. It is here where Ramaischand has to make a living.

To one side of the studio, the paintings of Shri Nathji are stacked one on top of the other against a crumbling wall. On the other side an airbrush machine sits ready for action, which lets you know this is a commercial studio, as it is used to quickly fill in the background areas of paintings. Before, this would have been rendered by hand, taking many days. Now it is done in a matter of minutes. Few artists who work in the local market follow the traditional methods. They take far too long and, at the end of the day, the pilgrims who buy these paintings do not know the difference. Nor do the shopkeepers care, as long as the supply of cheap paintings is met, quality is a secondary matter.

As Ramaischand changes clothes to work pants and the banyan vest typical of a painter, he smiles wirily, for things were not always this way. He is the cousin of Lalit Prasad Sharma. Narayanji was their great grandfather. He learned painting from his father Dvarkadas, a renowned Nathdwara painter, at the age of nine. His was a traditional apprenticeship, much like the one that he has given to his son and nephew.

"We learn sketching first," he says, reaching for the copy board, a small, white painted piece of wood with a handle at one end. One side is covered in sketches—self-portraits, profiles of gopis, Nandi the bull, the head of a horse; the other side with Ganesha and various tiger sketches. "Craftsman hardly ever keep sketchbooks," he explains. "This wooden block is the traditional paper. When it is full, another coat of white is applied. Ganesha, remover of obstacles, is the first thing we learned to paint."

Ramaischand and Daivendra have a traditional relationship. The distance between father and son is palpable. Both son Daivendra and nephew Satish remain in the background, speaking only when asked. Daivendra has had no formal schooling. His apprenticeship started and will end at home. His goal is to emulate his father's and grandfathers' work through copying. Daivendra is not free to experiment with differing media and materials, as is Lalit. He is tied to the market that dictates what and how he paints.

To Ramaischand, like many traditional artists, innovation does not mean creating something anew each time. Take the drawing of a circle, the first thing a craftsman learns to draw. It is made with one action, in the manner of Revashankar drawing a horse's head. To do this the hand must remain steady and the breath even; it is both a meditation and a test of control. The idea is not to reinvent the circle, which, is by definition perfect. Rather it is to know and understand the nature of a circle, a description of perfection. The trick is to emulate perfection as much as possible so that it becomes



JANGIR FAMILY

Exploring new areas: (above) Ramaischand Jangir, his son Daivendra and nephew Satish at work in their studio; (right) the commissioned work, a painting deliberately left unfinished, to be paired with an identical, finished painting for the exhibition

instilled in the hand and heart.

Within the *guru-shishya* system, the copying of models, often the work of one's father, is essential part of the craft. Without such a guide, how can the apprentice learn and know what perfection is? Lessons are unplanned and simple. Sit and watch patiently for hours, days, weeks, even years, then perform the same task. The initial tasks begin with color, how to prepare, how to apply, how to burnish, then—after a year or so—the apprentice will move on to drawing and finally painting. Innovation is a long-term affair realized after many years of training, a journey that could take decades.

Ramaischand's commissioned exhibition painting had to work within these limitations. Therefore, his choice to reproduce one of his father's works was both homage and a test. The initial groundwork was done

by Daivendra, with Ramaischand occasionally instructing. The first sketch, based on his grandfather's Morkuti (peacock) painting, was a loose drawing with a wash of color in the top corner, indicating how the final painting will look. It was simple and honest, so I encouraged him to reproduce it as a Pichhvai (six by nine feet), to see if it could transfer at scale. The final piece is a stark, massive ink drawing, a Pichhvai suspended, frozen mid-flow, like the first part of a sequence. With this in mind, I asked if he could make another Pichhvai—same scale, same image—only this time completely finished. The two could then hang together, as one painting, a positive and negative,

showing both work in progress and final execution. Ramaischand agreed, although he looked slightly bemused by the idea of making two paintings being seen as one.

Commissioning a contemporary painting is an awkward affair at best; with a traditional artist it is doubly so. Ramaischand struggled with the concept; his puzzled expression told it all. His willingness to commit and do the work to the best of his ability is more for



Massive works: Dinesh Sharma (at left) and Satish hold a huge procession scene which took months to paint in exquisite detail

his son's sake. He knows their predicament. They are stuck in a rigid system, a market that does little to encourage new work. So he passes the test onto his son, knowing that Daivendra needs the exposure. It is also a lesson, which Ramaischand, as guru, must facilitate. Just as the Haveli is changing, so will the demand for painting. One day it is airbrush paintings of Shri Nathji, the next, full-scale Pichhvais. Daivendra, if he is to continue into the future, must learn to adapt his skill to the task.

Bhilwara's master

We move on to Bhilwara, about 70 miles northeast of Nathdwara. In a ritual exchange each time I visit, **Badrilal Chitrakala Soni** greets me at the door of his beautifully gardened house with a bear hug. Master artists seldom show emotion, never mind outright enthusiasm. However, with Badrilal, the most senior artist of the Pichhvai tradition and miniature painting tradition in India, there is little ceremony and no pomp. Instead, you get a good, down-to-earth hug. He is a wonderful human being. Even at eighty-seven, he retains a commanding presence and an air of mischief, so the jokes fly thick and fast. "He is in good spirits," says Manish, his grandson. The Pichhvai commissioned for the exhibition seems to have given him a new lease of life—he is working again. Not that he has not worked enough already. His life is packed, a self-taught artist that has created the only living dynasty of painters in

recent times. Mention the craft in Bhilwara and there is only one family, the Soni's, comprised of Badrilal's five sons: Om Prakash, Gyam Prakash (Manish's late father), Sharad, Shiv, Trilok and Badrilal's nephew, Dinesh. I spent time with each in the last year as Dinesh and Sharad were given commissions, although the jewel in the family crown is Manish. The slim, elegant grandson, whose speech is as measured as his actions, epitomizes the *guru-shishya* system. Though he learned the craft, he was not intending to make it a career. "But," he states, "when my father passed away, I had to support my family. It also gave me spirit." Over the last four years, he has concentrated on painting under the watchful gaze of his grandfather. Family and duty are virtues so deeply ingrained in Manish, it is difficult to know where they stop and the young man starts. The result is a heady mix of guarded self-confidence—an intellectual with a craftsman's hand, who wields the brush like a sword. He is an accomplished artist at the age of 24, having travelled and exhibited in Europe at Switzerland's Reitberg Museum, no less.

Manish prefers, however, to remain at his grandfather's side. Badrilal is a walking university. He knows more about the craft than any other living artist. Eberhard Fischer, director of the Reitberg Museum, recently acknowledged Badrilal and my own teacher, Bannu Ved Pal Sharma of Jaipur, as the two most important miniature and Pichhvai

painters in the last fifty years.

Destiny has always had an eye on Badrilal. He was named after Badrinath, the sacred pilgrimage destination above Rishikesh. His mother, Puribhen had conceived many times, but each infant had died at childbirth. When she was pregnant with Badrilal in 1919, his father, Rangilal, went on pilgrimage to Badrinath, where he vowed not to sleep in a bed, not cut his hair, to never take sugar, etc., until the child was born and his eyes would once more see the sacred Badrinath. He returned home, kept his vows and was blessed with the birth of Badrilal. Eleven years later and with very long hair, he finally returned to Badrinath to complete his vow.

Rangila was not a painter, and Badrilal began life as an antiques dealer in Bhilwara, coming to painting through an unlikely path. At the time, post India's Independence, portrait artists were common in Bhilwara, but there were few miniature painters. In the 1950s, the erstwhile rulers of the local kingdoms, now minus their lands and strapped for cash, started to sell off their royal collections of art and jewelry. The local markets were flooded with antiques and miniatures. Many found their way into international museums, igniting the world's fascination with Indian miniature painting.

Like any good antiques dealer, Badrilal began to restore old paintings and make copies for resale. He learned the technique by visiting artists all over Rajasthan. "They



Soni and Sharma families: (clockwise from top left) Dinesh's nearing completion of his exhibition piece, the mineral colors are applied, then burnished into the canvas with small smooth stones to create a lustrous finish; Dinesh Soni (far left) with his wife Sunita, their children Samridhi and Sharddheya, and Dinesh's brother, wife and baby; Dinesh's apprentice at work in their studio; Mineral color painting by Dinesh Soni; four brothers, left to right, Dinesh, Ghanshyam, Suresh and Jagadish Sharma hold a sketch of the grandfather, Shanker Lal Sharma; a portrait based on that sketch



ALL PHOTOS: THOMAS KELLY



PHOTOS: THOMAS KELLY

Chitrakar family: (clockwise from top) Badrilalji Chitrakar shows grandson Manish (left) and an apprentice his sketchbook of 1,000 manifestations of Lord Ganesha; Manish paints Ganesha on part of the large canvas; mixing the mineral paints; they work with the large canvas pasted to the floor

would tell me their secrets,” he says, “how to make color, the different schools, everything. I knew how to talk with them.” He knew Ghasiram and was close friends with Narottam Narayanji (Lalit Prasad Sharma’s great-grandfather), two of the leading Pichhvai artists of the day. The experience brought a wealth of knowledge and created the family dynasty that flourishes today. All his sons are painters. Their studios produce some of the finest Pichhvai and miniature paintings to be found in India.

The commissioned Pichhvai for our exhibition was given to Manish with the hope that Badrilal would be involved. The initial idea was to build upon a remarkable series of Ganesha drawings that Badrilal had completed a few years previous. They illustrate each of the one-thousand and one names of Ganesha. To my knowledge this has never been done before. All the drawings were made directly with a pen without any preparatory sketches. It is an extraordinary example of pure invention, not only because of its mastery of line but because each drawing reflects the Sanskrit meaning of the name. Few artists today have such a scholarly command of their craft.

Inspired by this work, Manish wanted to take a few of these drawings and reproduce them in full color, as a complete Pichhvai. Badrilal, however, had other plans. He began by sketching Ganeshas in various postures. At his age the line is quite shaky, so Manish then went over the top with brush and ink—refining the original contour. Eventually, a composition was established and the first color, *hinglu*, a red, was applied. After some time and several questions from Manish, Badrilal observed that together the nine Ganeshas represented the nine rasas, or fundamental emotions.

The beauty of the painting is Badrilal’s method of working, as he rarely conceptualizes before starting the work. He creates intuitively because he is not bound by convention, rather it moves within him. As a master, he has a lifetime of experience to fall back on and this allows him to break the rules and innovate freely.

As I sit and watch Badrilal and Manish working together, I see the *guru-shishya parampara* in action. The transmission is tangible, as the young man becomes the hand of the elder. Badrilal starts and Manish finishes, two hands make one line. A line that belongs to neither, they find



BADRILALJI & MANISH CHITRAKAR



it together. This, I realize, is the essence of the *parampara*, the teaching lineage. This is the shared moment, intimate and real, the exchange from one human heart to the next, as the master becomes the pupil and the pupil becomes the master.

The common thread between all these artists is this shared experience between guru and shishya, whether it is Kapil and Lalit, Ramaichand and Daivendra or Manish and Badrilal. They each know that this is the *sutra*—the sacred thread—that binds them to each other, to their craft and to their forefathers. They struggle to survive because the thread is so fragile. They can protect it in the only manner they know how—painting.

Conclusion

Over the last nine months in reaching out to these masters, I see so much dignity amidst adversity, people sustaining their tradition, come what may. As I leave Bhilwara, I wonder how we in India and the wider inter-

national community may also help? What is actually being done to support these artists—and countless others—at national, regional and local levels?

For instance, in Nathdwara, I did not see in the reconstruction plans any indication of what the temple board intended to do for local artists. Similarly, at the national level there is little or no clear government policy intended to tackle the consumer-producer problem, the relationship between the production activity in the villages and towns and consumption at the national and international level. No organized and accountable body has been formed to address the issue.

India is fast becoming an economic *tour de force*, a global brand with India.com as the new mantra of the global business community. Issues of identity, contemporary and traditional, inform every facet of life as many ask what it actually means to be Indian. Unfortunately, history gives cultural credence, and therefore value, to an art form but cares little for its means of production

and even less for those who produce.

These artists participated in our commissioned painting project because all felt neglected and forgotten by the new India. In offering them commissions, we gave hope and acknowledged that their beliefs are also ours. We drew attention to the cause, the artist, rather than the effect, the painting. Our intention was not only to preserve this skill and knowledge base, but actually recognize it for what is really is, nothing less than the true spiritual fabric of the nation upon which all questions of “identity” are actually measured.

Finding answers to these questions is now more important than ever, and this may only happen if we bring these people, these traditions into the fold and listen to their stories. Surely, we should also try to protect this precious thread, for it is the backbone of India’s arts and crafts. Without this, we risk losing so much of what it is to be Indian and more importantly, what it is to be human.

About the Author

DESMOND LAZARO WAS born and raised in Leeds, England, but now resides permanently in India where he divides his time between Goa and New Delhi. He could be called a generational Indian repatriate, one who traces his family’s wanderlust to his great grandfather’s departure from Bangalore, India, in the late nineteenth century to Burma.

Desmond recounts, “As a railway man, he, like many others, was sent to Burma to build the railways. If India was the jewel in the crown, then Burma was the ruby, and the Empire hurried to make itself a transport system that could carry these treasures away with greater speed. A generation later, my grandfather, a railway engineer, continued to live in Insein district of northern Yangon, better known as the ‘Railway Lines,’ a Catholic neighborhood set aside for railway staff. My father, following the military coup and imminent civil war, severed ties with Burma and her railways when he fled to England in 1958.”

At age 20, Desmond earned



THOMAS KELLY

Portrait of the artist: India has recaptured the England-born artist whose interest in Indian miniatures led to his life’s mission. Lazaro’s book (at right) is a stunning and intricately detailed documentation of the Pichhvai painting methods and materials.

a degree in fine arts, specializing in oil painting. He recounts, “While doing my initial degree in the UK, I was fascinated with Indian painting, particularly Indian miniature. As an oil painter, I used to make ten-foot canvases of Krishna and Radha.”

Following graduation, he won the Commonwealth Scholarship to study painting at Baroda University in India. He had grown up with the

stories of Burma, of a family past which seemed “out of reach to me growing up in northern England.” Now came his opportunity to reconnect.

He recounts, “At the end of my first year in Baroda, I was desperately trying to deal with the reality of India, which was not the India of my dreams or paintings. My tutor’s wife, the Indian artist Neelima Sheik, learned of my

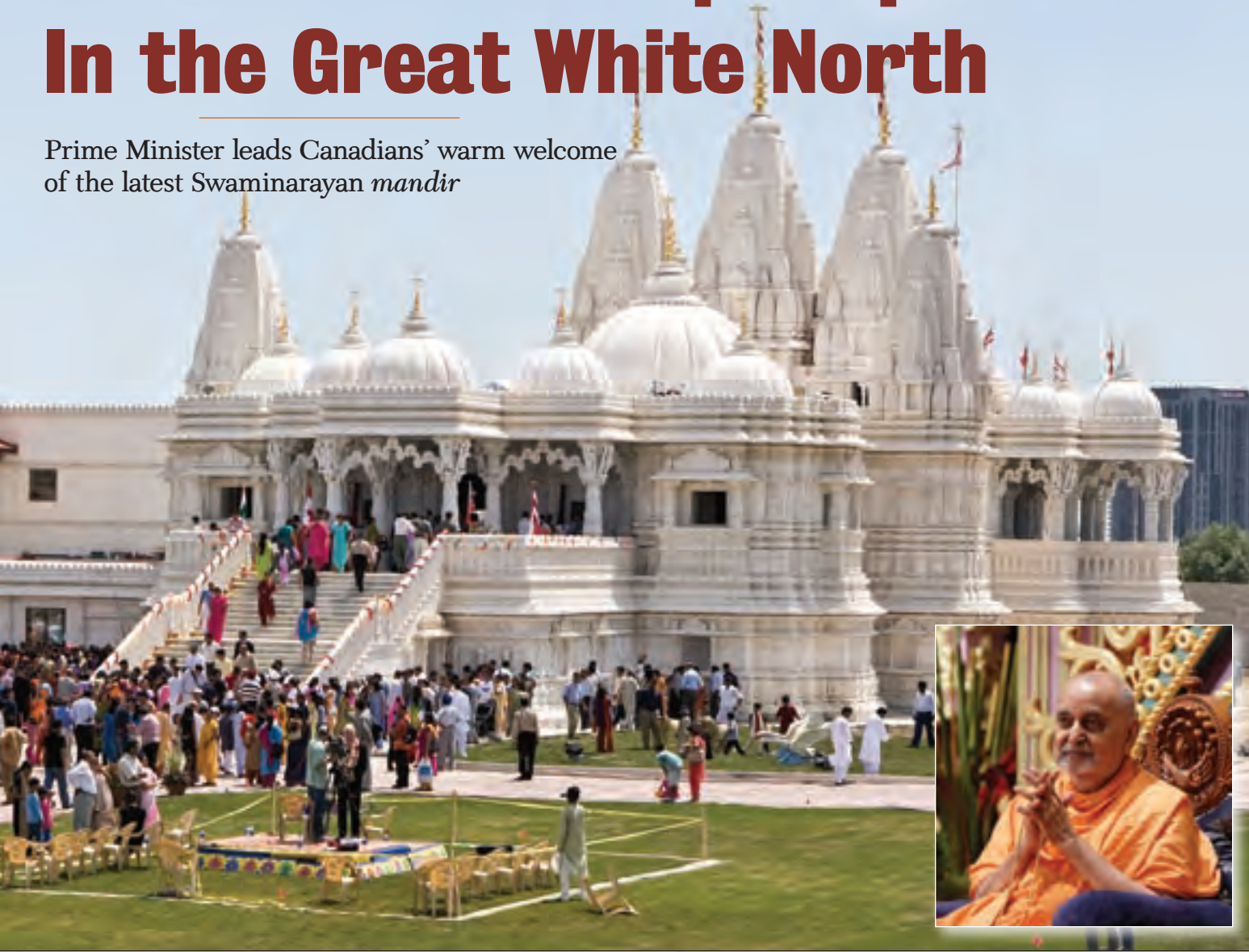


fascination with Indian miniatures. She suggested I visit the Jaipuri miniaturist, Master Bannu Ved Pal Sharma. Neelima had learnt the technique of miniature painting from Master Bannuji many years earlier. On her advice I went to Jaipur, initially to learn the technique for a few weeks. Twelve years later I am still learning.”

Today Desmond is 39 years old, and married to French fashion designer Agathe Gerin-Lazaro, who has lived in India for over 12 years. They have two boys, Emile, 5, and Felix, 3. His ambitious life’s goal is nothing less than the preservation and advancement of the Pichhvai painting tradition. He may be reached at d_lazaro@satyam.net.in.

Monumental Temple Opens In the Great White North

Prime Minister leads Canadians' warm welcome
of the latest Swaminarayan *mandir*



CANADA'S NEWEST AND MOST ELABORATE Hindu temple opened on July 22, 2007, its white marble domes and golden spires gleaming bright in the sunlight. Top Canadian authorities joined H.H. Pramukh Swami Maharaj, founder of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan, to participate in this event. "Today we're celebrating one of our country's greatest strengths—our commitment to pluralism," proclaimed Prime Minister Steven Harper to the thousands attending as he officially opened the new *mandir* in Toronto. Gathered in a giant tent adjoining the ornate temple, thousands of Hindus greeted his words enthusiastically, waving both Indian and Canadian flags.

Ontario's premier, Dalton McGuinty, concurred. "It seems to me Toronto is the per-

fect place for this *mandir*. This is a place where people from all over the world come together to create something beautiful—a strong and diverse society." Exemplifying this appreciation for diversity and tolerance, the leaders of both government and opposition—fierce political opponents—courteously stood side by side. This participation by Canada's highest-ranking leaders demonstrated how prominent and welcome Hindu communities have become worldwide, as did Prime Minister Harper's thoughtful speech. In 2002, even Queen Elizabeth II visited a Hindu temple in London.

The summer day's ceremonies had begun earlier with a joyous and colorful parade through the streets of Toronto. Onlookers were delighted by the many floats, singers,

sadhus, dancers young and old, flag bearers, marching band and mothers with babies in strollers. The thousands in the parade joined thousands more who had already arrived at the temple.

To begin the formal ceremonies, child dancers led a delegation of Canadian and international leaders up the temple's broad front steps. While elegantly dressed devotees crowded under the sprawling tent to watch the proceedings on closed-circuit TV, Sri Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed the rituals that instill the divine spirit in the temple's Deities, after which formal worship commences. The inauguration of the first traditional marble temple in Toronto was witnessed in the four corners of the world through live broadcasts.

A Hindu Museum for All

Outside the main building visitors explored the *haveli*, a community center, its portico a captivating structure in ornately carved teak wood. Everyone is welcome. Those entering find an 1,800-square-meter museum dedicated to the culture and basics of Hinduism. The exhibition, called "Understanding Hinduism," showcases the rich history, civilization, diversity and cultural heritage of India. "The museum will attract thousands of Canadians who can experience what it's like to immigrate to Canada from India," activity coordinator Aarti Patel observed. The goal is to facilitate stronger intercultural relations, mutual respect and harmony, helping the community more fully integrate into Canadian society. The exhibition topics include Hinduism's history and basic theology, cultural highlights, saints and heroes and the scientific discoveries of ancient India. Museum volunteers are present to answer questions or serve as tour guides. A key purpose of the museum is to conduct programs for local school children, just as BAPS has done in Delhi, London and Chicago. These tour programs have markedly improved the image of Hinduism among the children.

A Community of Temple Builders

The Toronto *mandir* is the 650th temple built under the leadership of Sri Pramukh Swami Maharaj, an official Guinness World Record for temple construction. In 1973, Pramukh Swami had asked two devotees living in Toronto to hold satsangs, spiritual classes. Such were the modest beginnings of this grand new temple. This is not unusual in the history of the fast-growing organization: BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha is less than 200 years old, tracing its roots to Lord Swaminarayan (1781–1830), a great Vaishnava saint of Gujarat who was a champion of temple building.

Pramukh Swami's devotees are such ardent builders, and now so experienced, that this *mandir* went from groundbreaking in 2004 to consecration in three years flat. Members of BAPS Swaminarayan were the key to such a rapid manifestation. They not only are expert fund-raisers, but have an admirable hands-on tradition of volunteering to do the construction work themselves. Even the monks join in.

Some devotees took extended leave from their work to participate in the project; others offered their holidays to organize fund-raising events and to help in the construction. One couple postponed their honeymoon trip, and many were the children that—inspired by the adults' perspiring devotion—gave from their own allowances.

Mitesh Badiwala, a cardiac surgery resident who was one of those hundreds of volunteers, said, "Growing up in Canada, there



Blessings and sadhus: Murtis of Bhagawan Swaminarayan and Gunatitanand give their blessings at the temple (top); sadhus of the 700-sannyasin strong BAPS order in the parade that celebrated the opening. (opposite page) Devotees gather at the doorsteps of the gleaming *mandir* on the opening day; (inset) Sri Pramukhswami Maharaj watches the performances.

wasn't a place I could come to explain my Indian roots and share them with the people who were close to me." A proud smile spread across his face with this words. "Now I don't need to say anything. I just have to bring them here." Meera Sharma, an Indian-born journalist who hosts a local Punjabi radio show, sees it as "a way to not just maintain our culture, but give to Canada."

Twenty-year old Anuja Thakar, a student of law and one of many youth volunteers, confided, "The *mandir* has become a second home to me, my parents and my friends. I feel that I personally contributed to it—a little financially and a lot physically—and I am proud to have it stand in my neighborhood. Because we worked together, I am now closer to many whom I would generally not even speak with." He continues, "I did every task thinking of my beloved guru. I think the biggest gift this process gave me was to

bring me closer to God. As Pramukh Swami Maharaj said, the *mandir* will be completed only because it is God's wish to build one, but seize this opportunity for yourself. I did."

Nishma Fumakia, a young nurse born in Kenya, shared the same devotional views. "Along with prayers comes effort. After all, what do we pray to God for, but for blessings and the success of our endeavors? Then we have to work on them. Making the sacrifice to come to the temple every day to help was done to please my guru and to earn his blessings. That created a strong spiritual bond between my guru and myself. I feel great satisfaction because I know how many hours of hard work and sleepless nights I put in for the success of the temple."

The construction effort was colossal and efficient. Extensive testing determined the resistance of different kinds of stone to the cold Canadian climate. Though seldom used

today, stone is the preferred material for temple building. Sacred texts advise, "It is a hundred times more meritorious to build a temple in stone." The most ideal materials were selected, including the finest Carrara marble, similar to that used by master renaissance sculptor Michelangelo. Containers of this white marble from Italy, limestone from Turkey, Burmese teak wood and local sandstone were shipped from their quarries to 26 different carving sites in India, where skilled artisans carved thousands of masterpieces in exquisite detail. These were carefully packed and shipped 12,800 kilometers to the building site in Toronto.

BAPS expects the temple to last for a thousand years. The structure is a holy entity in itself. Their sadhus explained, "The seers of ancient India conceived temples not just as buildings, awe-inspiring and beautiful, but as true representations of God."

"A Source of Pride for All Canadians"

A transcript of the speech given by the Right Honorable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada.

Your Excellency, High Commissioner Narayan; Premier McGuinty; Mayor Miller; Ministers Oda and Kenney; Members of Parliament Deepak Obhrai, Wajid Khan and Bruce Stanton; colleagues from the Provincial Parliament; swamis and BAPS officials; ladies and gentlemen; Your Divine Holiness, Pramukh Swami Maharaj; Jai Swaminarayan. *Swagatam*. Namaskar.

Today we celebrate one of our country's greatest strengths—its commitment to pluralism. A country of freedom and democracy, a land of hope and opportunity, Canada has drawn immigrants from all corners of the Earth. Our national makeup may be as diverse as six continents, but it is a country united in purpose—because regardless of our surname, the language spoken by our ancestors, or our religious affiliation, we are a people bound together by a common goal—to build a peaceful, prosperous nation rooted in equality of opportunity. And, my friends, it is this pursuit that makes us Canadian.

Canada's accommodation of diversity is, however, not without precedent. There have been forerunners, and of these perhaps none is as noteworthy as India. Tracing its beginnings to prehistoric times, the country has amassed a millennia-old history of linguistic, ethnic and spiritual pluralism. Such diversity has, at times, posed significant challenges for India. But the country is making a determined effort to alleviate tensions and reconcile interests through its democratic institutions. Where far too many other countries have failed, India is succeeding.

Speaking of the connection between his country's success and its commitment to pluralism, Prime Minister Singh said these

sage words: "If India succeeds, we will have lessons for the rest of the world. After all, we are one-sixth of humanity and if one-sixth humanity makes up its mind, our influence is going to be felt more and more in the comity of the nations." Well friends, while our country is far less populous than India, I believe the world has much to learn from the peaceful, prosperous, pluralistic society we have fostered. In Canada we embrace the cultural contributions and differences of our ancestors, while eschewing the age-old conflicts that detract from them and seeking a common future for the generations yet to come.

Today's event marks another step forward in our national quest. Located in the country's most ethnically diverse city, the BAPS Swaminarayan complex stands as a testament to Canada's and India's proud traditions of pluralism. Through its museum, the facility will inspire visitors to appreciate how the spiritually diverse, multi-ethnic heritage of Indo-Canadians has contributed to the fields of arts, architecture, science, democracy, education and pluralism, while its *mandir* will provide an additional place of worship for Hindus in the Greater Toronto

Area. On behalf of the Government of Canada, therefore, it gives me great pleasure to declare the BAPS Swaminarayan complex officially open.

In closing, I'd like to thank His Divine Holiness and BAPS Canada for seeing this ambitious project through to fruition. This awe-inspiring work of architectural brilliance will serve as a source of pride for not just Indo-Canadians, but indeed all Canadians. I'd also like to commend this organization for the role you've played over the years in fostering peaceful coexistence among all communities through heightened understanding and cooperation, while preserving heritage and faith.

Namaskar. Thank you. And God bless Canada.



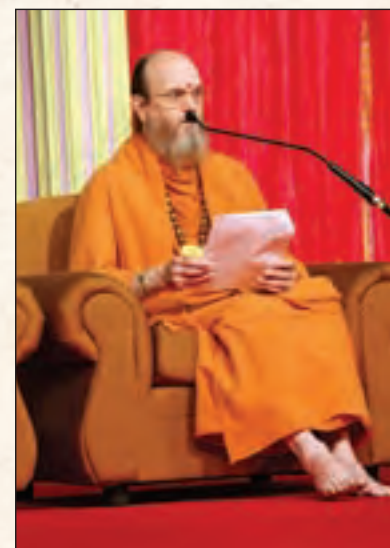
Working for the good of all: Leaders at the opening



ALL PHOTOS BAPS SWAMINARAYAN SANSTHA



Made with joy: (clockwise from top) Canadian Hindus hold to their roots while joyously celebrating their new country; devotees, intensely involved with the construction, help workers lay down tiles; a fire ceremony invokes divine blessings; HINDUISM TODAY's publisher, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, speaks at an evening event; the haveli's exquisite entrance portico



EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

Aging Gracefully

Secrets from India on
Soaring Spiritually
through Your Precious
Senior Years on
Planet Earth



SHUTTERSTOCK

DINODIA

By Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, Founder of Hinduism Today

Growing old. Let's talk about it. There is a false concept that stops people from living the long, full life described in the *Vedas*. Old age is as much a state of mind as of body. Today young people are taught that when you become old and gray, you are in the way. Not a nice thought! It is the older folk, the wiser folk, the experienced elders, who have lived longer and therefore can see further, to whom youth should be listening. But in our present times, young people have become the spokesmen, and they are allowed to learn by their own mistakes. What a perverted way to learn! They should be learning, if they ever become open to it, from the mistakes of their elders, that is if elders are willing to admit them. There is no excuse for ignorance. Yet, looking around, we find it to be all pervasive, like the Hindu God, equally distributed all over the world.

We are not getting old. True, the physical body does change. It has done so from birth, but it has a future. It really does. We live in it like we walk in our shoes. My satguru said, "Live in your body as loosely as your wear your sandals." It is not wise to accept the forebodings that we are headed toward a doomsday, end of the world, end of the physical body, absolute, total oblivion, and that is that; think no more about it.

Aging is an interesting process. Even though we are told that all the cells in the body change and renew themselves every three or four years, aging can be really scary, especially for those who identify themselves as their body. But not for those of us who know that we are not the body, we only live in it. It is our Earth suit in which to function on this planet. In fact, we don't live in it twenty-four

hours a day. At least eight hours, while we are sleeping, we are living in our astral suit, traveling here and there in the Devaloka.

When we correctly look at aged people, we look at minds that have been developed year after year after year. We look at souls that have matured because of their sojourn on Earth. We see them having gone through many birth karmas, *prarabdha* karmas—those we bring with us to live through—and prevailed. We look upon their situation as wonderful and enlightening, their wisdom as useful and worthy to make part of our lives. After all, if we hear from them, it is in our *prarabdha* karmas to have had that knowledge passed on to us. Only the ignorant would object. And they usually do.

The mind never gets old, though the brain may. The mind never deteriorates. Consciousness was never born and never dies. The mental body, which works through the astral body and the Earth suit, does not age, does not get weak, as modern people think of aging, as weakness, disability. It becomes stronger and stronger, more mature and more expansive, as do the emotions if they are understood and controlled from stage to stage. Age is not an obstacle; it is a legacy. The most senior among us should have faith in the future, not be led to think that turning fifty or sixty or eighty is some morbid milestone. It's not. Take heart. When I met Satguru Yogaswami, spiritual king of Jaffna, he was seventy-seven, still walking twenty miles a day, still meditating hours a day, and he would go on dynamically for another fifteen years.

Some die young, of course. Shankara was just thirty-two and Vivekananda thirty-nine. Others die old. Sri Chandrasekharendra passed on in his hundredth year, and we recently read of the passing of a

116-year-old yogi. The US Census Bureau reported that from 1900 to 2000, the number of people in the United States 85 and over grew tenfold, to four million, while the overall population grew less than fourfold. The bureau projects that the 85-and-over population will exceed 13 million by 2040. The number of centenarians is expected to grow to more than 834,000, from just 63,000 in 1900. And many live surprisingly active and healthy lives, even remaining in their careers after age 100.

1. Secrets to Longevity

There is no requirement to die at any established time, even if your doctor tells you that you have only two years to live, even if your astrologer predicts it, even if your enemies hope for your early demise. I was told that in Africa if a powerful medicine man tells a person he is going to die, the fear and belief are so strong that within hours he succumbs. Mind over matter? It's not much different when everyone around us is chanting the senility mantra—when your wife, kids, friends and boss keep saying, "You're not getting any younger, you know."

There are high laws to invoke, as age advances, to sustain the pranas, to strengthen the force of life within. Those who know wisdom's ways have overcome the "I'm getting old" syndrome, a mantra no one should ever repeat, even once. They know how the mind works, and by applying the laws, they have lived long, useful, happy and healthy lives. The redundancy system of one part of the body failing and another part taking over, especially within the brain, should be understood by the aging person, to know that all is not lost. If memory loss is experienced, things can often be memorized again and shifted over to another part of the brain. These are simple

techniques that are based on the truth that the mind is constantly maturing; so are the emotions, and so is the intelligence and accumulated knowledge. Most importantly, the wisdom of how to use the knowledge and to judge whether it is worthwhile at all—that, too, is maturing from decade to decade and life to life.

The psychological secret is to have a goal, actually many goals, in service to humanity to accomplish. People helping people, people serving people, that is what the Hindu Dharma is and has been proclaiming for some 8,000 years or more. Good goals and a will to live prolong life. It is even more life giving when the goal of human existence, in helping people to fulfill dharma, is strengthened by daily sadhana. When pre-dawn morning pujas, scriptural reading, devotionals to the guru and meditation are performed without fail, the deeper side of ourselves is cultivated, and that in itself softens our karmas and prolongs life.

Life is eternal on the inner planes, in the refined bodies of the soul. But a physical body these days is hard to obtain. We have to go through the embarrassment of birth, being slapped on the bottom, talked to in baby talk, and learning to walk, read and write all over again. It takes years and years before we get back to, if we ever do in the new life, the wisdom years that we attained in the previous birth.

So, take care of your physical body. No need to know too much about it, for it knows what it needs. Listen to its messages, respond quickly, find an ayurvedic doctor who can help you through the many changes the body will naturally go through, and face each one positively. This body is impermanent, true, but it is the only one you have, so make the best use of it. You have good work to do, and knowledge born of experience to pass along to the coming generation.

The older you get, the more disciplined you should get, the more sadhana you should perform as you drop off the extraneous things

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HINDUISM TODAY

of the world. If your children leave home and cultivate other interests, find new eager children to teach, new ways to serve. Be useful to others. Keep planting the seeds of dharma. Maybe they will be annuals instead of perennials, but keep planting for the future. Others might be saying, “old and gray and in the way,” but we say, “old and gray and here to stay.”

2. Renewing Life's Plans

When the body reaches middle age, a change of pace occurs. One feels like sitting rather than walking, sleeping more than one did before, and it is more difficult to make long-term plans, ten, twenty, thirty years ahead. At middle age, the question “What am I going to do with my life?” has long been answered but still should be asked, because at middle age, around forty, there is still a long life ahead. It should be planned out as carefully as the life span that has already been lived, based on the experiences gained from it. Many people plan out their lives at eighteen or twenty, and others don't.

Nevertheless, when the change of life at middle age comes, both for men and women, it is only wise to regroup one's thoughts, analyze one's desires, motivations and educational skills, physical, mental and emotional abilities. It is time to plan another forty years ahead with as much enthusiasm and dynamism as can be mustered up. After all, they say life begins at forty. A lot of people die at fifty or shortly afterwards because they feel that everything is breaking down. That is because they misinterpret what is happening. They think the death experience is coming, whereas only a change of life, of life experience, has occurred, which began at forty. If they took it as a new passage in life, they could be on smooth sailing until eighty.

Forty years of age is well known as a change of life. Seventy years of age is the prime of life. Eighty is the fulfillment of that prime. An eighty-year-old person, who has fulfilled the prime of life, holding a newborn infant makes a complete circle of life. As one nears eighty years of age, this is again time to revamp one's life, motivations, desires, and to plan for the next forty years, which recognizes a natural life span of 120 years. It is interesting to note that the muscular structure of the physical body does not start to deteriorate until after age seventy-two, and then only slightly, unless one neglects to exercise. Mystics say that eighty years of age is a difficult time to get through psychologically, physically and emotionally, because it is definite that your are old when you are eighty. Therefore, a new plan for motivation for the future should be made well in advance, at least at age seventy-two, so that when eighty rolls around it is well impressed in the subconscious mind that, this might be time to start slowing down and preparing for life after the life of the physical body.

It is at this juncture that one should give one's wisdom to the younger generation, be dedicated to and interested in children and

their welfare, manage orphanages, set up endowments and scholarships for educating the young, see into the lives of promising people and encourage them to greater heights. This is the time also to perform sadhana and intense tapas. This is where the yoga marga naturally comes in a lifetime. The physical forces are fading, the muscular structure diminishing. Great spiritual progress in burning out the last prarabdha karmas, even those that did not manifest in this life, can be accomplished at this time. If retirement is thought

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of, it should be at eighty-one, eighty-two, eighty-three, eighty-four, around that time. This should be the slowing-down period, yet still being active in the mental, emotional, sociological, political, ecological arenas. Here, now, is a time to practice hatha yoga and pay close attention to ayurveda.

There is another forty years before the natural life span of 120 is reached, plenty of time to fulfill the Sanatana Dharma, to get out there and give of the wisdom that has been accumulated through

the past eighty years. This is the real fulfillment of a life well lived. Or if your life was not well lived, you can teach people, from experience, what they should not do, and explain if they don't follow that advice, things won't work out right. If you did do what you should, you can teach people that you did and how it worked out well. Nine times nine is eighty-one; eight and one are nine. This is the beginning of the final cycle toward the fulfillment of the Sanatana Dharma—toward mukti.

3. Mentalities On Aging

Society in the Western world has no tolerance for the aged, only for the young. Therefore, the aged and the aging must look out for themselves and guide society into a new and mature outlook as to their value to society as senior citizens within society. In the Western world, the elderly are not respected. They are shoved aside, considered useless, as they interfere with the pursuit of the life and liberty of the younger people by giving advice and direction based



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on their experience. That's why Western people have to learn by their own experiences, because they have relegated the older generation to obscurity. It has become part of the culture. Not so in Asia. In Asian cultures traditionally the aged are venerated more and more each year for their knowledge, their guidance, their wisdom, their compassion, their existence. So much are they venerated in life, that when they have given up their Earth suit they are still venerated and invoked for their guidance, because of their accumulated

wisdom and their new-found powers in the inner world, so that the family, which makes up society, moves forward uninterrupted by chaos or contention, wars and famine. These ancestors in the inner world guide and correct and hopefully are born again into the same family as a fresh, knowledgeable influence. This is how Asian families progress as institutions from one stage of development to another because of ancestor worship.

It might not surprise you to hear this, but everyone is getting

older. A three-year-old will soon be a six-year-old; a twelve-year-old will soon be eighteen. There is a great difference between the eighteen-year-old and the six-year-old, and it all happened in twelve years. Society and parents are adjusted to the differences between a six-year-old and an eighteen-year-old. But Western society, and even modern Asian society, is dearth in adjustments to understand the differences between the forty-year-old and the eighty-year-old, their needs, their wants and their desires.

Western psychology says the older you get, the less planning you should do for the future; you should make short-term plans. This philosophy does not take into account that no one is ever too young to die, no matter how long-term his plans have been. “Agedness” is a state of consciousness of settling down, giving up and having nothing ahead in the future more than six months or one year. At seventy-five, I myself have a ten-year plan. I’m going to have another ten-year plan, then another one and still another one. Life is will-power. Life is not only physical. Death can be foreseen as an astrological time of trauma, and if given into, hey, you lose your Earth suit—no doubt about it! But if anticipated and known about, that and other lows in the cycles of the energies of life can be overcome with a strong mind and indomitable will, both of which never age, never weaken and are constantly, day by day, month by month, year by year, accumulating in strength and power.

Anyone who passively gives in to old age simply does not understand the process. He looks at his physical body and it looks different. But the twenty-year old looks different than he did when he was ten, and that was only ten years ago, and he is happy to look different. If the twenty-year-old is aloof from the world, having fun, and is frivolous and absents himself from the responsibility of the reality of the material world, he is forgiven, coached along. If the seventy-year-old were to be frivolous and absent himself from the realities of the world, he’d be dubbed senile. That would be the end of him.

3. Fears and Preparations

Society does not adequately explain the transitions that one goes through in life. Children are smart at the age of four, five or ten, and should be told what will happen through their whole life, as a picture book. When they are going through adolescence, the changes they experience should be explained to them. When they are forty and are experiencing the withdrawal of the vitality of the physical forces into a keenness of mind and shorter-term physical goals, this should also be explained.

Before fifty your goals are simply for the future, not knowing what that is. When the forces turn around at fifty, you start to withdraw. The body does not throw off the toxins like it used to. It does not heal itself like it used to. It does not regenerate itself like it used to. Then at sixty the forces tend to even out.

Two things people are often worried about and need to firm their minds against are the youthful fear “Who is going to take care of me?” and the aged fear “Who is going to take care of me?” These fears are very similar. The truth is, if you are not driven to fulfill dharma, you get old. You get old attitudes. You get set in your ways—bigoted, opinionated, communal, divisive. You seek division rather than amalgamation, become racist, basically self-centered and old by clinging onto your old ideas and not keeping up with

“The mind does not get old. Nor do the emotions. The astral body does not deteriorate. Neither does the body of the purusha, the soul. It is only the physical body that is slowly dissolving into the essences from which it came.”



PHOTOS BY DINODIA; BACKGROUND, SHUTTERSTOCK

the changing times. And, having perfected grossness and subtlety of selfishness, you become ignorantly dominant as an elder, manipulating sons, daughters and relatives for travel, comforts and other kinds of considerations. This is not the Sanatana Dharma. This is the “asanatana dharma” of the lower nature. Elders beware! You cannot hide behind your old age. The mind does not get old. Nor do the emotions. The astral body does not deteriorate. Neither does the body of the purusha, the soul. It is only the physical body that is slowly dissolving into the essences from which it came.

It is well known that even certain advanced souls on the planet may do well when they are young but at their still unperfected stage of evolution have the propensity of deterioration in spirit, mind, emotions as the body sinks, through age, into the substances from which it is created. This is not Sanatana Dharma as emulated by spiritual, devotional, happy, religious men and women who have experienced the frailties of the physique and added greater zeal, power and joy to the now dominant energies of the intellect and the soul. Let there be no mistake that admittance to old age is to admit failure on the path to enlightenment. Admittance to old age



is to invoke another birth. Admittance to old age means being set in one’s ways, not wanting to be interfered with by the young, unable to learn anything more or new, holding an inflexibility that cannot be challenged.

In the West, growing old is something people take for granted, something they do not look forward to, and yet it happens. And since it does happen and they don’t look forward to it, they try to squeeze everything out of what presents itself to them. In the East they look at growing old in a different way, more in the line of becoming full, becoming mature, becoming satisfied.

But very few people become satisfied in the West. They are too self-centered. And the balance between husband and wife is reversed. The woman is trying to live the part of a man and the poor man, he doesn’t have a chance. Consequently, old age sets in very quickly, and nothing is left to do but sit and grumble about the instinctive nature: “She didn’t bring my food in on time. Somebody made a noise and I couldn’t sleep,” and all the various things that people, as they get older and older, find to complain about. There is nothing profound, which is too bad, because each and every one has profundity within them.

4. Growing Old Gracefully

A short while ago I had the privilege of visiting a rest home for elderly ladies. Being experienced in looking at people and discerning the type of lives they had lived, seeing these ladies who sat grumbling, I could see the types of lives they lived in their marriages. I would say that all but two in the entire group had hung divorce over their husband’s head all through life. That is how they got their way: “If you don’t give me what I want, I will divorce you!”

But there were two souls sitting there who were also suffering, but they were happy. They had an inner joy. The conditions weren’t too good—they never are in such places—but these two souls sat happily observing, and I could see that they were understanding what they observed. That is the secret of growing old, being able to understand what you observe.

To grow old gracefully—and to get away from the habit of just growing old naturally and thus physically and emotionally losing the spirit entirely—you have to plan ahead. You have to know where you are going. Everyone who goes on in life is going to get old, believe it

or not. But we can pass through those years beautifully, providing the balance is right. You get that right balance by following good advice and conquering the mistakes that you have made in the past and making them right.

When we are selfish, self-centered and flare up and lose control of ourselves, we are like animals. When we reflect understanding, have control of ourselves and use our will to conquer our lower nature, we are using the Godly part of our mind. That's why I say people do just exactly what they want to do. It is either the spiritual being that is stronger, or the animal within them that is stronger. If they control the animal nature, then what happens? The spiritual being automatically takes over.

If they live according to the rules of the animal nature, then what happens? They snuff out the spirit, they snuff out life, and they decay. Decay immediately sets in. It is terrible to think about, but that's the rule. That's what happens. That's why we have basic laws and basic principles to live by. If we live by them, automatically good things will happen. You don't even have to wish or hope. Good things will just automatically come along. And if you don't live by the laws, automatically things that aren't too palatable present them-

selves before you, and you get entangled in them quite automatically.

So, let's think about the years to come. Let's see if we are laying the foundation for our mature years to rot away, or to become beautiful and content and happy with ourselves. Look into your home right now. Look at your life. What are you doing now? What have you done? What are you going to do? Do you have a foundation for a future that is real and permanent and full and joyous and happy? Or is your life like a child's sandbox? These are the things we have to face as we look ahead to our own advanced age.

5. Real Security Lies Within

It is a fast-moving age. Many people are now either on tranquilizers, alcohol, anti-depressants, nicotine, stimulants or high-powered vitamins of one kind or another to stabilize their emotions enough to get by, just to get by, to get through all the various things that present themselves that they can't cope with due to the rickety foundations that they have in their home. What they really want and need is to get within, to get quiet enough to get an answer within themselves that will give them a little security.

But there is no narcotic, no stimulant, no tranquilizer, no high-powered vitamin that is going to take you within. The only way is to sit down and become quiet, and not throw your energy into concentrating on how you are going to out-do or out-smart somebody else, get a little bit better control over your husband's finances or anything like that. That is not going to do it. That will bring sure misery, a fine hell on Earth, really. That's where the only hell is anyway. No, the way to true security is getting in touch with the divine spirit within you.

Try to feel it permeating you. Find out what life is. You are going to give up this physical body someday. Find out what's going to happen to you when you die. You can find out. Find out whether you are immortal or not. You will be able to go within yourself and find that out if you become quiet enough. Then you will not fear death. Then you will be somebody within yourself. A great new life force will permeate you. At first you won't know where it comes from or where it's going, but it will be there, and you won't have to try to be positive or think positively or make affirmations about this and that. You will be Mr. or Mrs. Positive. That is spiritual life.

There comes a time when you have to buckle down and do the

right thing, because we are all faced with growing old. Growing old can be decay or it can be full, joyous and beautiful. Think about that. Where are you headed? Are you headed for decay and misery, to drop back into the animal mind and complain about how little the five senses have to offer when you get old? Are you headed for complaints, suffering over old memories that pop up through the subconscious mind that you no longer have the will to even try to penetrate and understand but still have to live with? Or are you going to become full and beautiful by adjusting your life right now so that you will have an alive, alert mind to the end? The choice is yours. You must start now.

Aging is inevitable. The years go by. They go by so quickly, we hardly notice them. We can go on in our old habit patterns, becoming stronger and stronger in the negative ones; and the positive ones eventually will turn to negative ones, too. That's a certainty of evolution we don't want to look forward to. But there is another way. Become a spiritual being. That is your goal, your liberation, for as the years go by you can live in heaven, or you can live in your own self-created hell, and you don't want to do that. Think about it and create a heaven right now.



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"The way to true security is getting in touch with the divine spirit within you. Try to feel it permeating you. You are going to give up this physical body someday. Find out what's going to happen to you when you die. You can go within yourself and find that out if you become quiet enough. Then you will not fear death. Then a great new life force will permeate you."

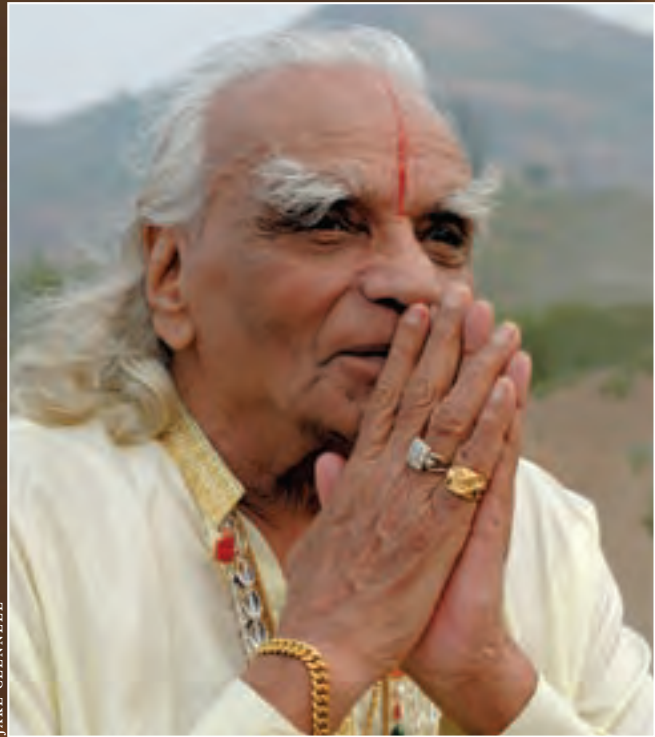
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Yoga and Aging

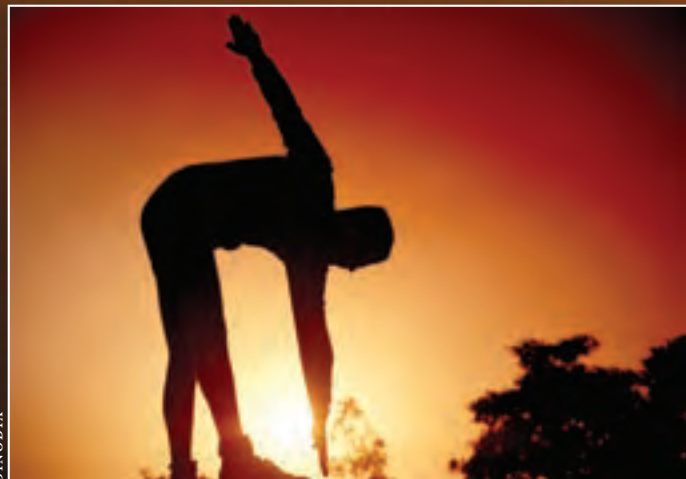
BY B.K.S. IYENGAR

ADAPTED FROM *THE TREE OF YOGA*



JAKE GLENELL

“Even in simple asanas, one is experiencing the three levels of quest: the external quest, which brings firmness of the body; the internal quest, which brings steadiness of intelligence; and the innermost quest, which brings benevolence of spirit.”



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It is never too late in life to practice yoga. If it were, then I should have stopped my practice long ago. Why should I do so now? Many Indian yogis reach a certain point in their lives and say they have reached samadhi, so they don't need to practice anymore. But I have not said that up to now. Why not? Learning is a delight, and there are many delights to be obtained through the practice of yoga. But I am not doing it for delight! In the early days delight was the aim, but now it is a by product. The sensitivity of intelligence which has been developed should not be lost. That is why the practice has to continue.

If you have a knife which you do not use, what happens to it? It gets rusted, does it not? If you want to go on using it, you have to sharpen it regularly. With regular sharpening, you can keep it sharp forever. Similarly, having experienced samadhi once, how do you know that you are going to remain alert and aware forever? How can you say that you can maintain it without practice? You may forget, and go back to enjoying your life in the same way as you did before. Can a dancer or concert performer give a fine performance if they have not practiced for a year? It is the same for a yogi. Though one may have reached the highest level, the moment one thinks one has reached the goal and that no practice is required, one becomes unstable. In order to maintain stability, practice has to continue. Sensitivity requires stability. It has to be maintained by regular practice.

You may be fifty years old, or sixty years old, and ask yourself whether it is too late in life to take up yoga practice. One part of the mind says, “I want to go ahead,” and another part of the mind is hesitating. What is that part of the mind which is hesitating? Perhaps it is fear. What produces that fear? The mind is playing three tricks. One part wants to go ahead, one wants to hesitate, and one creates fear. The same mind is causing all three states. The trunk is the same, but the tree has many branches. The mind is the same, but the contents of the mind are contradictory. And your memory also plays tricks, strongly reacting without giving a chance to your intelligence to think.

Life is swimming, and death is sinking. If you know these two, then there is no fear. Because we don't want to know them, fear comes. But why should I not face death happily? Fear says that as you get older, diseases and suffering increase. Your mind says you should have done yoga earlier, or you should have continued and not stopped in your youth. Now you say you are very old and perhaps it is too late, so

you hesitate. It is better just to start, and when you have started, maintain a regular rhythm of practice.

At a certain age the body does decay, and if you do not do anything, you are not even supplying blood to those areas where it was being supplied before. By performing asanas we allow the blood to nourish the extremities and the depths of the body, so that the cells remain healthy. But if you say, “No, I am old,” naturally the blood circulation recedes. If the rains don't come, there is drought and famine, and if you don't do yoga—if you don't irrigate the body—then when you get drought or famine in the body as incurable diseases; you just accept them and prepare to die.

Why should you allow the drought to come when you can irrigate the body? If you could not irrigate it at all, it would be a different matter. But when it is possible to irrigate, you should surely do so. Not to do so allows the offensive forces to increase and the defensive forces to decrease. Disease is an offensive force; inner energy is a defensive force. As we grow, the defensive strength gets less and the offensive strength increases. That is how diseases enter into our system. A body which carries out yogic practice is like a fort which keeps up its defensive strength so that the offensive strength in the form of diseases will not enter into it through the skin. Which do you prefer? Yoga helps to maintain the defensive strength at an optimum level, and that is what is known as health.

Much has been said by certain people about the dangers of yoga, and the risk of injury. But if you walk in the street carelessly, you can have an accident. So do you advise people not to walk? People die when they are in bed. So is it dangerous to sleep on a bed?

Hatha Yoga's Effects on Aging

Live longer. Yoga affects all the important determinants of a long life: the brain, glands, spine and internal organs.

Increased resistance to disease. Yoga produces a healthy strong body with increased immunity. This increased resistance extends from the common cold to serious diseases like cancer.

Increased vitality. Increased vitality due to yoga's effect on the brain and glands.

Rejuvenation of the glands. Yoga has a marked effect on the pituitary, thyroid, adrenal and sex glands. This produces a feeling of well-being, prevents premature aging and extends vitality and virility well into old age.

I have been doing yoga for over fifty years, and have taught many thousands of students in the five continents of this globe. Sadly, there are teachers of yoga who know very little and claim to teach. The problem comes not from the art of yoga, but from the inexperience of the teachers, and also from the impatience of the pupils. If a person who cannot stand tries to walk, he will break his legs, and so it is in yoga. In Western countries particularly, people want above all to do *padmasana*, the lotus pose. They say, “I think I can do it!” Unfortunately, the thinking is in the head, but the doing is in the knee! If you do not understand the intelligence of the knee and you force it to follow your brain, then the knee will break. But if you understand the stiffness as well as the mobility of the knee, and go step by step to remove the stiffness and increase the range of mobility, then there is no danger at all. If there are accidents in yoga, it is not the fault of yoga, but of the aggressiveness of the pupil who does it.

So you can all do yoga. The queen of Belgium started doing head-balance at the age of eighty-six. Nothing happened to her. I hope there will be no confusion about what I am saying. You can do it, but do it judiciously, knowing your capacity. If you try to imitate me, naturally you will suffer, because I have been doing it for half a century. You have to wait to reach that level. Yoga cannot be rushed.

From *The Tree of Yoga*, by B. K. S. Iyengar, © 1988. Reprinted by arrangement with Shambhala Publications Inc., Boston, MA. [www.shambhala.com](http://www.shambhala.com/html/catalog/items/isbn/978-1-57062-901-3.cfm). <http://www.shambhala.com/html/catalog/items/isbn/978-1-57062-901-3.cfm>

Look and feel younger. Yoga reduces facial wrinkles and produces a natural ‘face-lift’. This is mainly due to the inverted postures. By doing the inverted postures for a few minutes each day, we reverse the effect of gravity and use it to our advantage.

Vision and hearing improve. Normal vision and hearing depend to a large extent on the eyes and ears receiving a good nerve and blood supply. The nerves and blood vessels which supply the eyes and ears have to pass through the neck. As we get older, the neck becomes less flexible. Yoga postures and yoga neck exercises improve the condition of the neck, resulting in better eyesight and improved hearing.

Mental/emotional benefits. Because of yoga's rejuvenation effects on the glands and nervous system, including the brain, yoga results in a positive mental/emotional state.

FROM *REVERSING AGING*, BY DR. PAUL GALBRAITH



HIMALAYAN ACADEMY

Above left, Sri Iyengar, octogenarian author of the classic book *Light on Yoga*. Left, yoga at dawn; a granite image of Siva in meditation from the Brihadishvara Temple in Tanjavur; right, performing a classic, health-giving series of asanas called Surya Namaskara, “salutations to the sun”



SHUTTERSTOCK

Applying the Wisdom Of Ayurveda



DINODIA



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The aims of ayurveda are ayus, "longevity" and arogya, "diseaselessness." Above, after breakfast, an elder enjoys a healthy herbal beverage to start his day; below, some mouth-watering dishes at a veggie restaurant in Delhi; a devotee gets her daily exercise with a long walk in a park; meditation daily helps maintain poise and equanimity, which is essential to relieve stress; some ayurvedic tonics; a man undergoes oil therapy as part of an extensive rejuvenative and purificatory treatment called pancha karma.

Tips for Longevity

BY KARUNAKAR SHUKLA

Ayurvedic Medicine has delineated rasayana, rejuvenation and virility, as a branch of medicine where the main purpose is to maintain health as age advances, and to keep the body healthy, avoiding the transfer of disease to our offspring. Let's face it, we all age, but we don't need a life style of diseases like diabetes, heart diseases, hypertension, autoimmune diseases, obesity, and cancer etc. We can all age gracefully without these horrible diseases.



K. SHUKLA

Dinacharya, Daily Routine

1. Wake up early, before sunrise. The sun activates the pineal gland to send messages to the pituitary gland, which in turn massages the adrenal glands to release adrenal cortisol, which wakes us up from deep sleep.
2. Drink 1-3 glasses of warm water. This helps the peristalsis to begin and helps bowel evacuation.
3. Oral hygiene is of utmost importance for healthy gums, digestive health and healthy heart.
4. Get in touch with your senses by massaging your body with oil customized for your body type (or sesame as a default oil). To sharpen your sense of smell, put few drops in your nose, for eyes wash your eyes with water. Similarly, put a couple drops of olive oil or vegetable glycerine in your ear, you can also dip the Q-tip in olive oil and lubricate your ears.
5. Walk for 30 to 45 minutes, depending upon your schedule, and meditate regularly.
6. Eat a healthy breakfast according to your constitution.
7. Fried, processed and artificially sweetened foods, white sugar and white flour should be avoided at all times as they weaken digestion and deplete the body's nutrition.
8. Finish your day by meditating, exercising pranayama (breathing exercises) and quieting your mind.

Ritucharya, Seasonal Routine

Use a common sense approach to seasons. During the summer, dress light, eat fruits and vegetables and drink lots of fluids to prevent dehydration. During winter, dress warm;



HIMALAYAN ACADEMY

keep your vital organs, like heart and lungs, warm. Add more nuts and seeds to get extra oils and energy for winter, and lubricate your skin with oils or cold creams. In spring dress not too light or heavy. It is the seasons for allergies, so avoid mucous-producing foods like excessive sugar, dairy products, fried and heavy foods. Also, fasting on vegetables, fruits and rice proteins can be very helpful. The autumn season is considered best for cleansing.

Pancha Karma

Over time, we accumulate toxic materials in our bodies that lead to diseases. We may eat healthy, do our yoga, exercises and meditation, but mind may play a bigger role in a disease process. This is why *pancha karma* is advised. These treatments mimic the body's natural ways of detoxification. It has been divided into three phases: *purva karma*, preparation for detoxification. Next is *pancha karma*, which involves five methods of cleansing, followed by *pashchtya karma* (post *pancha karma*) to help restore the function of the body to its natural state with rejuvenating ayurvedic herbs called *rasayanas*.

The Science of Rasayana

BY DR. M.V. SUBRAMANYAM

One among the eight branches of ayurveda is *rasayana* [rejuvenation, literally, "augmentation of rasa," the vital fluid produced by the digestion of food]. It roots out morbidity and destructive diseases, checks disease processes, corrects the various body channels, restores nourishing and promotes health. *Rasayana* not only alleviates or cures diseases but also maintains the intactness of body components and enhances life expectancy. It provides optimum quality of the bodily tissues thus increasing mental and physical health, thus enabling one to live for a longer period of youthfulness.

Chyavanprash

BY TRIPTI SHARMA

For centuries, the ayurvedic herbal formula *chyavanprash* has been hailed as the ultimate anti-aging tonic. Long before there were vitamins, minerals and antioxidant supplements, there was *chyavanprash*, one of ayurveda's most respected anti-aging foods. *Chyavanprash* is in the ayurvedic category of *rasayana*, or rejuvenation. It is a super-concentrated mixture of vitamin-rich herbs and minerals designed to restore spent reserves of vital energy (*ojas*) and revitalize normal body functions. For centuries, it has been used to maintain youth and optimal health; its adaptogenic properties make it an excellent anti-aging and anti-stress tonic.



DINODIA



COURTESY LAURA ENGLEMAN

Abhyanga, Oil Massage

DR. JAYASHREE NATARAJ

Ayurveda envisages the benefits of *abhyanga*, oil massage, and recommends it as an important component of *dinacharya*—the daily regimen one has to follow in order to be healthy. *Abhyanga* improves the complexion; makes the skin glow and prevents dry and rough skin; promotes better skin texture; pacifies skin affections; improves blood circulation; improves strength and stamina; enhances muscle strength and bulk; improves the nervous system, thereby preventing nervous disorders; improves digestion; relieves constipation; and prevents aging.



J. NATARAJ

Abhyanga Procedure

1. Use warm oil: olive oil, coconut oil, sesame oil or medicated oil required for the specific purpose.
2. Apply oil gently all over the body, massaging in the direction of hair follicles.
3. While massaging the whole palm should be used.
4. The place of massage should be warm, without cold breeze.
5. Every day *abhyanga* to the scalp and the soles of the feet is mandatory. This will take care of the whole body even when the whole body is not massaged with oil.
6. The pressure exerted during oil massage should be just sufficient to produce warmth and should not be too vigorous.
7. Wait for at least 10 to 15 minutes, then take bath. A warm water bath is a must after the massage. This will improve circulation, enhance the absorption of the oil, prevent closure of the skin pores, and keep dust from accumulating on the skin which can be a cause of skin afflictions. Mild soap (vegetarian) is preferred, and if possible, the Bengal gram powder can be used as a good skin conditioner.

The above articles on ayurveda are drawn from the excellent website of The Ayurveda Holistic Community. The URL for the full text of these and other informative works is: www.ayurvedahc.com/articlelive/



DINODIA

Hindu Activists Meet in Dallas

Conversion, Indology studies, nonviolence, yoga as medicine are all on the agenda

PASSIONATE SPEAKERS AND A WIDE-ranging agenda enlivened the fifth annual Human Empowerment Conference (HEC), held from October 12 to 14 in Dallas, Texas. Here in East Texas, site of John Kennedy's assassination and deep in the Bible Belt, two hundred men and women, all sharing a profound love of Hindu dharma, sought to define and address the key issues of our day. The Dallas-based Sanatana Dharma Foundation organized the roving conference, whose name comes from the Vedic dictate, *krunvanto vishvam ariyam*, "Ennoble all humanity." HEC began as a project of the Voice of Dharma (www.voiceofdharma.com) in Houston in 2002. In subsequent years it has convened under the auspices of various local organizations, in Chicago, 2003, Nashville, 2004, Houston, 2005 and Los Angeles in 2006.

HINDUISM TODAY editors Paramacharya Palaniswami and Sannyasin Arumugaswami flew in from Hawaii and wrote this report. Comprehensive details will become available with the publishing of the conference papers.

The ten official topics included empowering the next generation of Hindu youth, the treatment of Hinduism within academia, media and religion, unresolved historical issues and prospects for Hinduism in Bangladesh and India.

Ms. Shruti of the India-based Shruti Foundation addressed this last issue. Her work is a remarkable attempt to inculcate pride in Indic genius, particularly Hindu methodologies of integral living, education, scientific thought, societal organization, ethics and work dynamics. She told the general assembly that following India's independence the

communist parties sought and, amazingly, were given control of the education system in the early 1950s. The long-term consequence of this control is that academia in India is, even to this day, permeated with Marxist philosophy, which is brazenly antagonistic toward any religion, and Hinduism in particular. One aspect of this communist domination, something she terms "Sanskrit phobia," has brought on a diminution of Sanskrit studies, which she points to as a major reason for the decline of Hinduism.

The conference's Sita Ram Goel memorial lecture, "The Evangelical Mind," was given by Dr. Valerie Tarico. Goel, one of the great Hindu thinkers and activists of the 20th century, wrote extensively on Christianity's negative impact in India. Tarico is a Seattle psychologist, former evangelical Christian and author of *The Dark Side: How Evangelical Teachings Corrupt Love and Truth*. Her talk was riveting, rich with "true believer" tales of her early life in a narrow-minded evangelical family. It is the evangelical Christians who are the most active in trying to convert people in India. Their misguided attempts are driven by a fundamentalist belief in the "Great Commission," the idea found in the *New Testament* that Christians are obliged to preach and convert all the peoples of the world. Tarico was scathing in her analysis of evangelical beliefs, concluding they are neither rational nor coherent. She offered the example of their belief in biblical inerrancy—that every single word of the *Bible* is true, punctuating her point with surreal examples.

She warned Hindus that evangelicals have the power of American innovation be-

hind them, marketing their product, Christian fundamentalism, with all the savvy of the most sophisticated Western corporation. Hindus, she prodded, should regard the belief system of these fundamentalists as a force as deadly and addictive as drugs.

In her conclusion, Dr. Tarico challenged Hindus to "be more evangelical about what you do and know, especially your religious pluralism." "Right now, Hinduism is thought of as an antiquated bunch of people who think statues are God. But I think Hinduism offers a path, a power to sow the seeds of wisdom that we need. You need to evangelize the ideal of dharma to counteract the existing stereotypes of Hindu belief."

Rajiv Malhotra, founder of the Infinity Foundation and supporter of the conference, wowed a rapt audience with two major speeches, "Hinduphobia" and "The U-Turn Theory." The whole of South Asian studies in the West today, he stated in the first lecture, are divisive, emphasizing and, in some cases, creating schisms between Dalits and brahmins, Dravidians and Aryans, women and men, minorities and Hindus. "India's problems are not seen as historical, or economic, but the result of a flawed culture, a flawed DNA." He explained how South Asian stud-

Participants: (left to right) Swami Vigyanand of Delhi spoke on India's history; Ms. Shruti, founder of Shruti research and education foundation in Delhi; Rajiv Malhotra; and Poornima Kumarasani, an observer from India; Sashi Kejriwal, conference volunteer and a philanthropist with a keen interest in Hinduism and India studies



PHOTO BY G. DEVRAJ

ies in Hinduism largely and quite intentionally focus on three narrow specialties: caste, minorities and women, all of them imbued with deep negativity. He pointed out that, by design or accident, the typical American social studies textbook covering Hinduism hides the positive aspects of Hinduism, such as yoga, vegetarianism, music, etc., while presenting inimical and prejudicial information about India in a concerted effort to "demonize the culture."

"India is the only major civilization whose study has been controlled from the outside," he lamented, and counterpointed the situation in China, where the government sponsors hundreds of Confucian institutions which are the main force in scholastic investigations of China. Malhotra pointed out that "to fight for our rights is the American way," and encouraged Hindus to become more active in supporting positive study on India while countering pervasive and pernicious foreign interpretations.

Malhotra's second talk introduced his thought-provoking "U-Turn Theory," the phenomenon whereby Western academics or scientists study a science, technology or spiritual procedure which originates in India and ultimately arrogate it to themselves. For example, there have been recent studies in American universities on the effect of breathing techniques and meditation upon health and well-being. These procedures were developed centuries ago by India's gifted yogis.

The Western scientist studies such techniques in laboratories, determines they do indeed work, publishes a report and receives personal fame and glory (and money) as if he had discovered the technique in the first place. The true genius, the yogi who perfected the practice, goes unnamed and unknown. "It is like the referee holding the stopwatch at the Olympic 100-meter dash receiving the gold medal because he timed the winning runner," quipped Malhotra.

He inventoried a long list of such "discoveries," from techniques of yoga and me-

itation to ayurveda. The catalog of inventions, processes, techniques and wisdom insights that have been appropriated from India was startling.

Dr. Ramdas Lamb of the University of Hawaii noted that while a clear majority of those who teach Judaism, Christianity or Islam are a part of the tradition or community they study, hardly 15% teachers of Hinduism in the West are practicing Hindus. The remaining 85%, he explained, fall into diverse categories. Some show great appreciation of Hinduism, others teach it from a Christian perspective while still others are influenced by a Marxist ideology that tends to see all religions in a negative light. Dr. Lamb, who is openly Hindu, told the community that if they want academic studies to embrace the Hindu perspective, they need to fund scholarships, institutes and university chairs in Hindu studies. Providing better financial support for the study of Hinduism's many positive aspects would also encourage more practicing Hindus to enter the academic community and discourse.

Dr. Indranill Basu Ray chaired a seminar on medical issues, especially the use of methods drawn from yoga, ayurveda and other Indian medical traditions to treat disease at lower cost. He shared that scientific research in America proves meditation and yoga play a beneficial roll in the treatment of heart attacks, cancer, asthma, chronic pain syndrome, etc., all without high medical fees. Dr. B.V.K. Sastri recommended establishing chaplaincy programs at all medical facilities. A well-attended morning meditation session by Dr. Ray put the concepts into practice.

An all-day Youth Leadership Workshop with 25 participants began with Niraj Mohankar's soliciting a half hour of complaints from the young adult audience: "lack of understanding of rituals," "too many scriptures to be able to make sense of the tenets," "unaware of the Hindu position on drinking, smoking, dating," and more. Four working groups then set about to propose solutions.

HEC 2007: Most of the 200 participants gather outside the Dallas Wyndham Hotel's conference center for a group portrait

The HINDUISM TODAY team gave five presentations: religion and media, the California textbook controversy, proselytization, ahimsa and conversion to Hinduism.

Asked for his evaluation of the event, Dr. David Frawley, one of the main presenters, whose lectures ranged from Hindu astrology to the need for religious pluralism, offered, "The conference indicates the on-going Hindu awakening and the new effort to project Hindu dharma in the global context."

As with all conferences, much of the real action took place in crowded halls, fueled by animated discussions between (and often during!) the plenary and break-out sessions. Over all, the conference seemed to fulfill its mandate, described as: "The confluence of 'Thought Leadership' and 'Activism Orientation' allows for the germination of new ideas, their fructification into real world projects and eventually into a measurable impact on the community at large." Dr. J.P. Sharma commented, "The zeal, the dedication, the industry and the competence displayed by the organizers were indeed commendable."

One project inspired by the conference launched almost immediately: to create ten full page, illustrated newspaper articles, one for each of the nine major Hindu festivals and one for the ritual of temple dedication, *kumbhabhishekam*. Fund-raising for this was completed within days and the HINDUISM TODAY team is commissioning writers, artists and photographers. The resulting articles will be made freely available for Hindus to submit to their local newspapers as each festival comes around, or when a temple dedication is scheduled. Repeated over the years, this series could counteract prejudices in the US and offer positive, celebratory coverage of Hinduism. It is just one of many conference initiatives that seek to uplift Hindu dharma in the West.

Message to My Elders:

Please answer our questions about Hinduism

BY ARCHIT KUMAR

I COME TO YOU ON BEHALF OF ALL HINDU YOUTH to present our dilemma. We understand that you have high expectations for us to continue the Hindu Dharma in its entirety, but you are sending us mixed messages. You declare your infinite love for the religion, but you often get stumped on the simplest question. One adult says that Hinduism is a monotheistic religion, while the other says it is polytheistic. What exactly is the correct answer? Another instance that demonstrates the lack of uniformity in our religion is this song, "Ishwar Allah Tere Naam, Sab Ko Sanmati De Bhagwaan." It was one of Mahatma Gandhi's favorite songs and means, "Some of us call you as Ishwar and some as Allah but we beg you, Lord, that you give intelligence to one and all." Ishwar and Allah are not the same. Please stop the recitation of the song. Only through proper knowledge and helpful guidance can our generation emerge as capable leaders to take the Hindu Dharma forward.

It is my distinct belief that knowledge is imparted through either literature or through adults. Teachers are meant to teach the youth. Since, unfortunately, designated teachers of Hinduism such as swamis and pundits do not have a strong presence in America, it becomes the responsibility of parents to teach the faith to their children in its entirety. However, many parents lack knowledge of the faith; and instead of admitting their lack of knowledge to their curious children, they spread misconceptions. Thus, they hurt the faith much more than simply saying, "I don't know. Look it up." Furthermore, while temples are the ideal sources of knowledge for Hindus, pundits are not fully equipped with the tools necessary to show the next generation the true roots of Hinduism. Pujas are conducted in Sanskrit, but pundits do not stop to explain the relevance of those words or the rite itself.

Given that this is a very busy world and that we all have demanding schedules, we find it appalling that the so-called leaders of Hinduism cannot join hands together to fight the onslaught of Christian missionaries working to convert the poorest and least educated Hindus, the outright attacks by Muslims in Kashmir and Bangladesh, and other such attacks on our faith. While it is appropriate to talk and discuss the problems, there is a point where discussion becomes futile. We urge you to act with strong resolve to stop the onslaughts. I do not imply that we must physically take action against those daring enough to challenge us. We simply desire a visible Hindu force that will take measures to stop the violence and blasphemy against us, spread the correct understanding of our faith and encourage others to join the cause. This point is especially valid in the US where it is common for religions to have a universal and united stand on key issues.

In an ideal world, Hinduism would have some sort of organization or international committee that is the go-to place for Hinduism. However, ours is the only faith that lacks this sort of organization. It is our plea with you to join hands in some way and create one such organization. We want to see Hinduism united. It is useless and self-defeating for five different groups or peoples to



such efforts.

Because there are many issues affecting Hinduism today, the religion is hanging on a small thread. Many young Hindus shy away from their religion and let others, who are extremely ignorant of the realities of the religion, influence their opinions on Hinduism. Since those youth are left with few options to find answers to their questions, some find their initial love of the religion into hatred. It is these Hindus who eventually malign the religion in a way that shapes others' views as well. And, since there is no one to fight these slanders in a united way, these lies become the truth. American Hindus should especially be aware of this fact, since the American academic community's views on Hinduism are regarded as the correct way Hinduism should be taught and interpreted. In essence, the diverse problems facing Hinduism cause a domino effect, creating a rift in the minds of young Hindus and distancing them from their true roots. As the old saying goes, united we stand, divided we fall. As of today, this plague is spreading. With many young Hindus on opposite sides, the fight to create a respectful and honest view of Hinduism will be sidetracked, with Hindus fighting amongst ourselves while those invested in the demise of Hinduism—radical Christians and Muslims—continue to slander the religion.

While it seems that we are disappointed with your leadership, this is untrue. We are dissatisfied with the results that have happened over the last few years. We bring these topics to light to educate and raise awareness to you from our point of view. Hinduism must continue. It starts with you. Leave our generation a platform to build on. Our gratitude for such a contribution would be beyond the power of words to express.

ARCHIT KUMAR, 16, is in eleventh grade at Greenhill School in Addison, Texas. He plans to attend college while at the same time working with Hindus to further dharmic causes. He will graduate in 2009. He is working with other Hindu youth in America on several projects that create networking opportunities for Hindus around the world. Also, he is helping to produce a small pocket-book of Hinduism facts. E-mail: architkumar05@gmail.com.

spend their time fighting the same problem in five different ways. Join together as one and fight as a community. The opposition fears the masses, not the individual.

Another important factor in the survival of Hinduism today is money. In this day and age, the world revolves around money. To be honest, we Hindus in America have plenty of it. We must invest this money in the right causes at the right time. Right now, there is a trial going on against the California history textbooks. They have published lies about Hinduism, and a group of parents (www.capeem.org) have taken a stand against these falsities. As I write, the organization fighting the lawsuit is appealing for funds needed by November, 2007. We can only hope they have raised them in time.

It will be a proud day indeed when Hindus can be proud to be called Hindus. Your monetary contribution makes this possible. Thus, it is imperative that all elders of the Hindu community make serious efforts to raise funds. But, let me emphasize that we must donate regardless of need. There are a profusion of topics waiting to be tackled, and insufficient monetary funding hinders the initiation of

BOOK REVIEWS

Dangerous Ignorance, Harmful Misconceptions

Invading the Sacred explores the alarming reality of Hindu studies in the West

BY JEFFERY D. LONG

THIS PROVOCATIVE BOOK COVERS THE awakening of the American Hindu community to troubling trends in the academic representation of Hinduism. Spearheaded largely by Hindu scholar Rajiv Malhotra and his postings on the web-site www.sulekha.com, a movement has emerged in recent years among Hindus in America which has expressed shock and outrage at the ways in which Hindu beliefs, practices, and sacred figures are depicted in writings by scholars associated with some of the most prestigious institutions of higher learning in this country. From one scholar's Freudian interpretation of Lord Ganesha's trunk as a "limp phallus" to an award-winning book which depicts Sri Ramakrishna as a homosexual pedophile, academic writing in the field of Hindu studies has produced a number of claims deeply offensive to Hindu sensibilities, bearing little or no resemblance to how Hindus understand Hinduism.

Academia's unseemly claims are misleading, especially if seen as representative of Hindu traditions, and not as the idiosyncratic interpretations that they are. They also tend to create a strongly negative impression of Hinduism in the minds of the many non-Hindus who read them. Such representations thus fuel what the authors of this volume term Hinduphobia—that is, bigotry and antipathy toward Hindus and Hinduism.

This is not to say that scholars do not have the academic freedom to pursue any interpretation they like of the phenomena they study—a freedom foundational to serious intellectual discourse. But this freedom is counterbalanced by a responsibility to uphold standards of integrity and rigor in presenting material accurately and fairly.

When the material that the scholar studies consists of the beliefs and practices of a religious community, particularly a minority community, one could argue—though this is a point that is still debated in the field of religious studies—that the scholar has even more of a responsibility to construct rep-



Understanding the bias: Yvette Rosser's concise chapter beginning on page 448 convincingly deconstructs the use of Freudian analysis in religious studies.

resentations that are not only accurate and fair, but that do not lend themselves to the abuse and harassment of that community—as some work in Hindu studies has lent itself to abuse on evangelical Christian websites where Hinduism is depicted as a violent, heterosexual and "filthy" religion.

Invading the Sacred incorporates a vast body of material that engages with the academic representation of Hinduism from several different perspectives, using a variety of methodologies. Some of the best articles are those by senior scholars of Hinduism who are themselves Hindu and who have been involved with academia for some time. In his preface, Arvind Sharma presents a thoughtful and even-handed overview of many of the conceptual issues involved in

the current debate over Hindu studies. S.N. Balagangadhara, in an essay on the Biblical underpinnings of "secular" social sciences, lays out the beginnings of a fascinating and provocative thesis that Christian theological assumptions are so deeply embedded in the social sciences that a truly sympathetic representation of Hinduism is impossible from within the confines of the Western academy. This, of course, raises the tantalizing question of what an authentic Hindu social science might look like.

The less intellectually compelling material in the book seeks to turn the Freudian methods of those scholars whose work is problematic against the scholars themselves. The problem, of course, lies with the inherent flaws of the Freudian methodology itself. Just as this methodology can lead one to see a phallus where there is only an elephant trunk, it can also lead one to see Hindu-phobia where there may only be a lack of empathy and an arrogance founded on the habit of not having one's scholarship challenged. The scholars involved have inevitably interpreted such "reverse analysis" as a personal attack, rendering this approach counterproductive.

The book also rests too many of its arguments on racial distinctions between Indian Hindus and "white" scholars of religion. Assuming that all Hindus are Indian diminishes the universal appeal of Hinduism. Also, much of the material in the book is repetitive. It would have benefited from further editing.

The most disturbing point to emerge from *Invading the Sacred* is the lack of a rigorous peer review process in the field of Hindu studies. The citation errors in Courtwright's book on Ganesha and the translation gaffes in Kripal's book on Ramakrishna are not a question of offended sensibilities or insider/outsider politics. They are a matter of scholarly rigor and academic integrity.

The question that *Invading the Sacred* does not address, but which it will raise in the mind of the thoughtful reader, is "Where do we go from here?" This book will do a tremendous service to Hinduism if it encourages more intelligent young Hindus to pursue the study of Hinduism rather than flocking to computer science, engineering, medicine and law. A greater Hindu presence in the academy of religion will allow more authentic representations of Hinduism to enter and influence the scholarly conversation.

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POINT-COUNTERPOINT

How to Rescue the Youth?

Views on instilling Hindu pride and knowledge in a generation immersed in pop culture

VIVEK & SHIVAM VERMA

IT IS DIFFICULT TO PINPOINT WHAT went wrong between our promising parents who immigrated to the USA and our less-promising generation. Some children blame their parents for not giving them a cultural and religious education and an urgency for their studies from a young age, yet fail to take some responsibility for it themselves. Regardless of how it happened, it is clear that, for many Hindu youth, an abiding interest in and love for Hinduism and Indian culture and a drive to excel in school has been lost between these two generations, to be replaced without thought by materialism, American culture and a lackadaisical approach.

Even though there are students in India and the USA who are incredibly gifted, we cannot help but predict that most Indian children will not achieve the accomplishments and expectations that their parents did. This is significant because we children of today have more resources at hand than our parents did. For instance, Indian American children do not live in as much poverty as their parents may have in India. We have access to world class education, and we are able to spend more time outside of school studying. But is it not unquestionably disturbing that today's Indian youths spend their wealth on fashion, spend their time on Facebook rather than *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and go out with their friends every Saturday rather than study?

Is it wrong that most Indian teenagers know more about Shah Rukh Khan

and Paris Hilton than Aryabhata and Brahmagupta? Is it wrong that religious events such as temple youth camps involve more dating and skipping class than imbibing religion? Is it not the slightest bit disturbing that most Indian youths go to the temple for dancing and youth organizations rather than for prayer and blessings?

From Vedic times up until recently, Indian young people studied and acquired knowledge with such profound fervor that it made them the top minds on the planet. Sadly, nowadays, many students spend more energy concentrating on their prom dresses and photos rather than exams and essays. By the time these Indian youth have children of their own, what will become of the glorious Indian mind of old? The Indian mind still has such potential, but the traditional discipline is no longer there. Instead, kids try to "discipline" their minds using Playstation, Xbox and social activities every weekend; as a result, their minds become no better than average.

It is time to call for a heightened sense of urgency among Indian youths. If this charade is continued, then the once legendary "Indian mind" identity will be lost in the USA after this generation. We have heard so many times that a mind is too precious to waste. Despite this common adage, years go by and many Indian youths still remain as oblivious and apathetic to improvement as ever. Everyone must take charge of this situation or else hazard losing the main thing that makes Indians unique, something that we may never get back. Is it already too late?

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VIVEK AND SHIVAM VERMA



DINODIA/SHUTTERSTOCK



RISHI BHUTADA

AFTER I READ THE PRECEDING essay by Vivek and Shivam, I might have concluded that Hinduism in America is inescapably doomed. The circle of various Western popular media influences has tightly closed around the Hindu-American teenagers of today. In general, they argue, there seems to be nothing we can do as a society of Hindu-Americans, short of hoping they arise from this ignorance without guidance. However, if one examines the assumptions of the article, a question arises: Have adult Hindu-Americans done all they can to engage teenagers in learning about their faith and heritage? Speaking from my own background as a 25-year-old Hindu-American, born and raised in the United States, I feel confident in answering that we have not done so. These obligations are not solely borne by the first generation of Hindus that immigrated here, who are now in their 50s and 60s. It is also borne by those of us in the second generation who are in our mid-20s or later. We are now old enough to explore our heritage and culture without any prompting from our elders and mature enough to relate it in turn to those younger than we.

Along what lines should we adults be working in order to teach teenage Hindus here in the United States about

their religion? I believe the answer lies in three areas that we need to address: constructively engaging teenagers when teaching them about Hinduism, instilling a sense of faith ownership in them, and working to create a more balanced academic and media environment.

One of the first steps to breaking through the fog of pop culture that is so prevalent in the lives of American teenagers today is to find avenues in which they will become interested in learning about their religion and heritage. For younger children, we have often used a variant of the Sunday school approach, believing that they will best learn in a structured classroom-like setting. However, once these children have reached their teenaged years, such a setting can be boring and even counterproductive. They subconsciously associate this boredom with Hinduism. This association becomes harder to break in later years. So then, how do we constructively engage teenaged students?

One approach that I have personally been involved in is organizing summer youth camps, where the counselors/teachers are college students and recent graduates. While the counselors may not be the most knowledgeable about Hinduism, their

ability to connect to the young people at an emotional level and willingness to research topics of interest is great. Plus, they make the topic interactive and dynamic for the students, thus constructively engaging them in such a way that they are more likely to retain what they are learning. As a result, we have been able to create the

association that learning about Hinduism is fun and interesting. Combined with follow-up activities such as youth lock-ins (all-night supervised get-togethers) and service learning opportunities, an approach like this provides an avenue to create a sphere of constructive engagement in which these teenaged Hindus discover what their heritage and culture truly is.

It is not enough, however, to just create this sphere of engagement and expect it to solve the problem of disinterest among youth. Many teenagers are frustrated with their lack of understanding of the rituals, bhajans, mantras, prayers and other aspects of Hindu practice that belong to our rich heritage. In this generation, the why is more important than the what or the how. For many parents that grew up in India, learning the meaning of various things happened automatically over time due to being in the immersive environment that is India. With this natural diffusion



RISHI BHUTADA

Alternatives: Families are torn between Western cultural influences and the refinements of heritage.

of Hinduism present in the environment, those who grew up in India came to own their faith and understand instinctively what it is about. However, such an environment is not present in the United States, where children might get the meaning of Diwali and Holi, but do not understand the importance of Makar Sankranti or Ganesha Chaturthi. It goes down to even the most basic level, where a child may not understand what the importance of performing *arati* is. It is thus incumbent on those who teach Hinduism, be they parents, Sunday school teachers, camp counselors or swamis, to make sure that whenever any aspect of Hinduism is taught, the meaning and practical importance of it is also taught. Otherwise, it becomes rote learning, where the child may memorize the mantra but does not internalize what makes that mantra powerful.

Along with encouraging students to internalize the meaningful depths of their heritage, it also becomes necessary to make sure they are not put on the defensive by misleading or incorrect information about Hinduism in the academic environment and mainstream media. Textbooks and newspapers alike can be rife with inaccuracies about our heritage. Without a sustained and united effort to engage those who publish and control these sources of information and explain to them what needs to be corrected, these inaccuracies will permeate into mainstream thought. It then becomes difficult to rid our society of these misconceptions.

For those of us in the second generation growing up here, we know exactly how hard it is to deal with this misinformation. Thus, it is necessary for us, both the first and second generations, to put resources and time toward this issue. Such an effort will not be easy, but if the groundwork is done now, it can be a cause around which each and every one of our local communities can unite, no matter how small or large.

By working along these three avenues, I believe that we adult Hindu-Americans will come closer to fulfilling our obligations to those younger than we regarding our rich shared heritage and culture. By constructively engaging them in an environment that provides the meanings behind the great philosophies, practices and ideals that make up Sanatana Dharma and making sure they are properly represented in the larger mainstream culture, we will take great strides forward in making sure that Hinduism in America will not only last for successive generations, but be able to grow and proudly expand.

ECONOMICS

Business as Usual

Far from a miraculous novelty, India's rise is a return to traditional global economic patterns

BY WILLIAM DALRYMPLE

THE IDEA THAT INDIA IS A POOR COUNTRY IS A RELATIVELY recent one. Historically, South Asia was always famous as the richest region of the globe. Ever since Alexander the Great first penetrated the Hindu Kush, Europeans fantasized about the wealth of these lands where the Greek geographers said that gold was dug by up by gigantic ants and guarded by griffins, and where precious jewels were said to lie scattered on the ground like dust.

At their heights during the 17th century, the subcontinent's fabled Mughal emperors were rivaled only by their Ming counterparts in China. For their contemporaries in distant Europe, they were potent symbols of power and wealth. In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, for example, the great Mughal cities of Agra and Lahore are revealed to Adam after the Fall as future wonders of God's creation. This was hardly an overstatement. By the 17th century, Lahore had grown even larger and richer than Constantinople and, with its two million inhabitants, dwarfed both London and Paris.

What changed was the advent of European colonialism. Following Vasco da Gama's discovery of the sea route to the East in 1498, European colonial traders—first the Portuguese, then the Dutch and finally the British—slowly wrecked the old trading network and imposed with their cannons and caravels a Western imperial system of command economics. It was only at the very end of the 18th century, after the East India Company began to cash in on the Mughal Empire's riches, that Europe had for the first time in history a favorable balance of trade with Asia. The era of Indian economic decline had begun, and it was precipitous. In 1600, when the East India Company was founded, Britain was generating 1.8% of the world's GDP, while India was producing 22.5%. By 1870, at the peak of the Raj, Britain was generating 9.1%, while India had been reduced for the first time to the epitome of a Third World

nation, a symbol across the globe of famine, poverty and deprivation.

In hindsight, what is happening today with the rise of India and China is not some miraculous novelty—as it is usually depicted in the Western press—so much as a return to the traditional pattern of global trade in the medieval and ancient world, where gold drained from West to East in payment for silks and spices and all manner of luxuries undreamed of in the relatively primitive capitals of Europe.

It is worth remembering this as India aspires to superpower status. Economic futurologists all agree that China and

India during the 21st century will come to dominate the global economy. Various intelligence agencies estimate that China will overtake the U.S. between 2030 and 2040 and India will overtake the U.S. by roughly 2050, as measured in dollar terms. Measured by purchasing-power parity, India is already on the verge of overtaking Japan to become the third largest economy in the world.

Looking back at the role Europeans have played in South Asia until their departure in August 1947, there is certainly much that the West can be said to have contributed to Indian life: the Portuguese brought the chili pepper, while the British brought that other essential staple, tea—as well as the arguably more important innovations including democracy and the rule of law, railways, cricket and the English language. All contributed to India's economic resurrection. But the British should keep their nostalgia and self-satisfaction surrounding the colonial period within strict limits. For all the irrigation projects, the great engineering achievements and the famous imperviousness to bribes of the officers of the Indian Civil Service, the Raj nevertheless presided over the destruction of India's political, cultural and artistic self-confidence as well as the impoverishment of the Indian economy.

Today, things are slowly returning to historical norms. Last year the richest man in the U.K. was, for the first time, an ethnic Indian, Lakshmi Mittal, and Britain's largest steel manufacturer, Corus, has

When the past fortells the future: *In an article published by Time magazine in a special issue to celebrate 60 years of India's independence, Scottish historian William Dalrymple explains why the rise of India and China as economic superpowers is but a return to historic normalcy in patterns of world trade*

been bought by an Indian company, Tata. Extraordinary as it is, the rise of India and China is nothing more than a return to the ancient equilibrium of world trade, with Europeans no longer appearing as gun-toting, gunboat-riding colonial masters but instead reverting to their traditional role: that of eager consumers of the much celebrated manufactures, luxuries and services of the East.

WILLIAM DALRYMPLE's latest book, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi 1857*, has just been awarded the Duff Cooper Prize for History and Biography. This article is reprinted from *Time magazine*, August 13, 2007 issue, Asia edition.



SCOTLAND

Hindu Festival Lights Up Edinburgh

DUSSEHRA, THE CELEBRATION OF Lord Rama's victory over Ravana, was celebrated in Scotland's capital, Edinburgh, with a distinctly Scottish flair. Drum and bagpipe marching bands led the traditional parade escorting the giant effigies of King Ravana and his two henchmen to Calton Hill. There a crowd of 2,500 watched as the wood and cardboard effigies were burnt and spectacular fireworks set off.

The Hindu celebration was a surprisingly all-community affair, enlisting not only the drum and pipe bands, but even the inmates of nearby Saughton Prison. For the second year, the prisoners built the effigies under directions from the Hindu community. Mohindral Dhall, president of the Scottish Indian Arts Forum, expressed gratitude to the inmates, "The work they have done is amazing." Much more elaborate and considerably bigger this year—Ravana topped 46 feet, the figures were a challenge to transport. It took more than four hours to transport the giants up the hill.

This was the tenth year for the Dussehra festival in Edinburgh, which takes place after the nine-day Navaratri celebrations. Organizers expressed their pleasure with the high turnout of youth. The Scottish bagpipe is likely the closest Western instrument to the temple horns of India, and has become a favorite of the Hindu community in the UK for festivals.

Bagpipes and Deities: (clockwise from top left) the Lothian and Borders Police Band lead giant effigies of Hindu Deities through the streets of Edinburgh; the 46-foot-tall evil king Ravana and his two cohorts set on Calton Hill; fireworks celebrate the demons' defeat



YOUTH

An Organic Venture

My vegetables' unexpected Hindu roots

BY TRISHUL SIDDHARTHAN,
MIAMI, FLORIDA

WITH HUMAN-INFLUENCED GLOBAL calamity on the rise, many in my generation have decided to incorporate environmentally friendly practices into our lives and daily routines. Recycling, hybrid vehicles and solar power are the rave in an attempt to transform an industrial infrastructure into a more sustainable and environmentally sound system. I was inspired by my love of gardening, and by the idea of decreasing my environmental footprint through every meal, to dig into organic gardening—to till my backyard and cover every arable square foot with “organic” plants.

This proved to be more difficult than I had imagined. I had some free time between college and medical school, but I never thought I would be spending my summer hours on back-breaking work, digging out two feet of soil in the high heat of Miami, mixing in peat moss and cow manure and finally adding a thick layer of mulch.

The key to organic food is the soil. A wise gardener once told me that if I do only one thing, it should be to protect and nurture the soil that holds my plants. From the soil all else will grow. To be certified organic means that no man-made chemicals can touch the soil I planted in. That couldn't be too hard, I thought; people were farming long before those chemicals were invented.

The modern organic movement got underway in the early 20th century, propelled by two Westerners who had been profoundly influenced by my ancestral home, India.

The British botanist Sir Albert Howard, working in Bengal as an agricultural advisor from 1905 to 1924, concluded that Western “scientific” agricultural practices were inferior to the traditional Indian methods. His findings are explained in his influential book, *An Agricultural Testament*. And in Germany, the Austrian Rudolph Steiner developed a comprehensive organic farming system which he called biodynamic agriculture. Steiner was very active in the Theosophical Society, which is rooted in Hindu and Buddhist mysticism; its headquarters is still located in Adyar, Tamil Nadu, not far from where my own parents were raised.

Steiner believed that the world and everything in it has a spiritual nature, and that inorganic matter cannot supplement the soil spiritually as organic matter can. Sustainable farming practices are based on the principle of harmony between organisms within the soil, which harbor a rich and diverse community ranging from earthworms to microscopic bacteria.

I proudly purchased 40-pound bags of cow manure and carried them through my house to the backyard. These would be the soul and heart of my garden beds and future plants. To thwart harmful nematodes, which can severely damage many crops, I armed my garden with marigolds. The roots of these lovely flowers produce natural chemicals toxic to nematodes.

I did not realize that it can take several years to build a healthy soil. When starting an organic garden, the first years can be quite discouraging. My corn was devoured

Plants' friend: Author Trishul with an organic pumpkin at Kauai Aad-heenam, home of HINDUISM TODAY in Hawaii

by aphids and wilted to the ground, but the rest of my crops—beans, squash, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers and assorted herbs—did well.

I found a study concluding organic crops attained a 95% yield when compared to those grown under chemical methods. Over the long run, the unsustainable, soil-depleting practices of chemical agriculture cannot compare with soil-building organic practices. A recent Cornell University study found that around the world, soil is being swept and washed away 10 to 40 times faster than it is being replenished; see www.news.cornell.edu/stories/March06/soil.erosion.threat.ssl.html. A Purdue University webpage (www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/AY/AY-228.html) points out that soils high in organic matter are less susceptible to erosion.

Converting a suburban backyard to food production presented some unanticipated challenges. Food plants are not as decorative as flowers, and my disorderly network of wooden trellises and shade cloth did not enhance visual appeal. One friend describes my backyard as a shantytown. But to me there is beauty in a row of peas growing up and over a bare wooden trellis. I see a spiritual splendor in my simple, homey vegetable garden, especially when contrasted with the surrounding metropolis of Miami.

My parents, generally supportive of my endeavors, were less than delighted at losing their well-kept lawn. It didn't help that while digging the garden bed, I encountered a sixty-year-old sprinkler system. A word to the wise: don't cut a pipe running through your backyard when you don't know what's inside it. Attempting to remove the pipe, I caused a flood that cost \$200 to fix.

I believe that the decrease in food costs and the lessened environmental impact will pay off in time. Furthermore, I consider growing and buying organic products an extension of ahimsa. Whereas Western theology considers that nature is a gift from God to be exploited, Hinduism sees God as present within nature. Environmentally sound practices are a part of a greater Hindu legacy of honoring the earth and all living beings and seeking to do harm to none. Organic gardening is one small Gandhian step in this direction. I am hopeful that these considerations will eventually dispel my parents' ire and earn their enthusiastic approval of our backyard vegetable garden.

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POPULATION

So, How Many Hindus Are There in the US?

US Census Bureau's American Community Survey provides the best answer

HINDUISM TODAY was recently asked to provide a definitive estimate of Hindus in America. Our conclusion: as of 2008, there are more than 2,290,000 Hindus in the US.

THERE ARE NO OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT statistics on the number of adherents to any particular religion in America, because the US Census does not collect data on religion. Estimates are made mostly by national polls. These are useful for large religious communities, but inaccurate for small ones. For Hinduism, we believe the soundest approach is based on the number of people in America of Indian origin. A single assumption is then made, that the percentage of Hindus among Americans of Indian origin is the same as the percentage of Hindus in India, 81 percent.

One could quibble with this assumption. Some claim—without providing any evidence—that there is a greater percentage of Christians among the immigrants than in India. But with just 2.3% Christians in India, even a doubling of that percentage in America would make only a slight difference.

The US Census Bureau conducts an ongoing statistical study called American Community Survey, which provides yearly updates to the decennial American census. The Survey offers up-to-date information on demographics, housing, society and the economy in America, based on a sample of three million households interviewed each year (out of 105 million). The 2006 Survey, which was released in October, 2007, counted 2,482,141 Asian Indians. This includes those of Indian origin coming from countries such as Trinidad, Kenya, Surinam and Fiji.

To update this figure for 2008, we must consider the average annual growth rate for Asian Indians. In the year 2000, the decennial census counted 1,678,765 Asian Indians; the Survey estimated 2,482,141 in 2006, which works out to an annual growth rate of about 6.8 percent.

Using that growth rate to extrapolate the 2006 Survey result two years, we calculate 2,831,190 Asian Indians in 2008. Assuming 81% of these Asian Indians are Hindus, just

as in India, we conclude that of the 2,831,190 Asian Indians, 2,290,000 are Hindus—QED! But despite the compelling logic of this analysis, HINDUISM TODAY has never seen it published elsewhere.



Getting the numbers right: A precise count is hard to achieve, but we can demonstrate that Hindus in America are far more numerous than estimates have suggested

What about the other estimates?

An oft-cited number for Hindus in America—the figure cited on the US Census Bureau website itself—is derived from the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) conducted in 2001 by the City University of New York. This was a telephone survey involving 50,281 households.

ARIS concluded that 0.4% of America's population, or about 1.2 million people in 2008, are Hindus. In the absence of a more extensive study, this has become a semi-official number, sustained by the ARIS report's easy availability at the main US Census Bureau website. Before the advent of the American Community Survey, there was no way of challenging ARIS' conclusions.

The ARIS report forthrightly acknowledges its limits. It admits, “because the survey depends on telephone interviews, overcoming language barriers has proven prohibitively costly. In effect, this survey has interviewed only the English-speaking

population of the US. In addition, many new immigrants originate in societies and states where responding to personal questions over the telephone is an alien experience, and discussions of one's religious beliefs and identification are deemed to be risky.” The report's conclusion mentions the impressive growth of Hinduism in America, observing, “there are more than three times as many Hindus in the US today as there were in 1990. Undoubtedly, due to the limitations of this study, we have not picked up the full impact of those changes yet.” Unfortunately, the ARIS estimate is typically quoted as fact, with no mention of these caveats.

Other figures are based on even less concrete information than the ARIS results. Harvard's Pluralism Project estimates 1,300,000 Hindus, based on the 2004 *World Almanac* figure of 1,285,000—which, in turn, was based on information from the 1999 *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* estimates 1,032,000 Hindus in America by 2000. The *World Christian Encyclopedia* (1985 edition) projected 700,000 Hindus in 2000, at 0.3% of the population, based on census date from the 1980s. The popular website www.adherents.com uses the ARIS figure, but updates it using growth estimates. All are no more than educated guesses.

Is that all?

Many Americans who are not ethnic Indians embrace Hindu practice or belief to one degree or another. Hundreds of thousands have flocked to swamis, pundits, saints and teachers from India since the 1960s. A 2005 Harris poll commissioned by *Yoga Journal* found that 16.5 million Americans practice yoga regularly. A 2004 Gallup Poll found 72 million Americans—24%—believe in reincarnation, an astonishing number that has held steady for decades and cuts across all religious affiliations, including even 10% of evangelical Christians. There is almost certainly overlap among these groups, but it is reasonable to state that at least a quarter of Americans share significant Hindu beliefs and practices.

"The sea suddenly broke the boundary that was imposed on it by nature. The sea rushed into the city. The sea covered up everything in the most beautiful of cities. Arjuna saw the glorious buildings becoming submerged one by one. He took a last look at the mansion of Krishna. In a matter of a few moments it was all over. The sea had now become as placid as a lake. There was no trace of the beautiful city that had been the favorite haunt of all the Pandavas. Dvaraka became just a name; just a memory."

— Dvaraka's end as described in the *Mahabharata*

DVARAKA

Behold the Holy City
Where Krishna Was Prince

Hidden city: Lord Krishna is greeted royally as He arrives at the Dvaraka pier in this artist's concept of the city, reconstructed from modern-day archeological explorations, discoveries and measurements

THE STORY OF THE TRAGIC END OF the fabulous city of Dvaraka has long been regarded as mere legend—that is, until an ambitious archeologist, Dr. S. R. Rao, began to investigate stone ruins sunk in the sea off the Kathiawar peninsula on India's western coast. The area lies, logically enough, adjacent to the modern city of Dwarka. Dr. Rao believes those sunken ruins to be Krishna's city, destroyed by a massive earthquake and tsunami. While such a catastrophic end might have seemed far-fetched a few years ago, the 2004 South Asian tsunami demonstrated to humanity once again the tremendous power of these cataclysmic natural events. Historically, decimation of coastal cities is more common than one might think. Less than 200 years ago, in 1819, in the same region of India, an earthquake sank the fort of Sindree and its surrounding village into the ocean. In November, 1775, in just ten minutes, a 9.0 quake destroyed the greater part of the coastal city of Lisbon, Portugal; one section of the city was submerged 600 feet.

Dr. Rao's underwater exploration of the ruins off modern Dwarka (as it is spelled on maps) suggests destruction was sudden and violent, with the ocean overwhelming walls and swallowing the city whole, just as described in the *Mahabharata*. "Dvaraka was submerged by tsunami-like high-en-

ergy waves, pulling down heavy blocks of stone used in the construction of the structures," he told the 7th National Conference on Marine Archaeology at the National In-



stitute of Oceanography (NIO) in October, 2005. "The heavy stones and rocks used in making the forts and gateways could not be destroyed by simple cyclones."

Dr. Shikaripura Ranganatha Rao's indomitable efforts in Dvaraka and later elsewhere have made India a leading force in marine archeology, even though he officially retired from the Archaeological Survey of India in 1980. The Survey, unwilling to part with Rao, enticed him back to found the now-renowned Indian National Institute of Oceanography. Among the many projects he became involved with, nothing has fired his talents and passion more than the offshore ruins in Gujarat.

The search for the lost city of Dvaraka had been going on since the 1930s, but with no success. The stone ruins off Dwarka, barely discernible from above water, could not be adequately studied prior to improvements in the field of underwater research. In 1983, Dr. Rao led the work of the Marine Archaeology Unit of the National Institute of Oceanography in studying these ruins. They started by examining what lay above sea level, to better understand what would be found under the water. In the center of modern Dwarka, beneath an ancient temple, Rao discovered layer upon layer of ruins, revealing a history of construction that included two earlier temples, an entire wall and figures of Vishnu. Digging further, he found the eroded remains of a town. Reaching sea level, which he estimates to represent about 1500 BCE, he recovered red

pottery that is characteristic of that period. The next phase of work would take him further down, below sea level, and thus further back in time.

Explorations between 1983 and 1990 revealed a well-fortified township, extending more than half a mile from the present shoreline and now mostly lying from 9 to 50 feet below sea level. Dr. Rao reasons that the submerged ruins date to 1700 or 1800 BCE. His underwater explorations yielded large bastions, fort walls, two gateways and three-holed anchors, which he says demonstrate an evolution from earlier, single-holed anchors he previously found in Lothal and Mohenjo-daro. Dr. Rao is convinced that the underwater ruins match the Dvaraka of the *Mahabharata*. "You see," he begins, his energy and vigor belying his 85 years, "when Krishna comes with Arjuna to see the city, there is mention of the fort walls and the *antahpur*s, citadels, describing a fully equipped, fortified town. We have found

these structures, six sectors and fortified parts of the city. The plan and certain details described in the *Mahabharata* match the archeological findings." Dr. Rao goes on to describe a submerged area covering at least 2,000 by 5,000 feet, or 235 acres, with houses, a temple, public buildings and semi-circular bastions that had been designed to divert the waters and protect the city from sea storms. The city's walls were erected on a foundation of boulders, showing that the land was reclaimed from the sea. The layout of the city is in alignment with the temples onshore in modern Dwarka.

It was the discovery of a seal (photo, right) that convinced Dr. Rao he had found Krishna's city. The seal is engraved with the images of a bull, a goat and a unicorn in an unmistakable style—a motif he says is no doubt of Indus origin and goes back to the 16th or 17th century BCE.

It is a small, flat artifact, no bigger than the palm of your hand, carved from a conch shell. This, Rao believes, is a seal of free pass: only those carrying it were allowed to enter the fabled city. "There is a reference in the *Mahabharata*," he explains, "that when Dvaraka was attacked by king Shalva, Krishna was not there. Upon his return, Krishna takes certain measures to defend the city. One of them is described to be a

mudra seal, an identity that every citizen of Dvaraka must carry. It was the duty of the gatekeepers to make sure that absolutely nobody without this seal would have entered the city. This gave us reliable evidence to identify these ru-



The Beauty and Tragic End of Krishna's City

The *Mahabharata* tells the story of holy Dvaraka, home to Lord Krishna in the last decades of his life. It is said that to avoid conflict with the powerful king of Magadha, a sworn enemy that had attacked them repeatedly, the Yadava clan of Krishna left their home in Mathura and fled to the west. Finding a delightful, peaceful place, they created a city to be their capital. It was made into a safe heaven, a fortress to withstand the fierce wars of the time. The *Mahabharata* recounts, "The city was well fortified on all sides, with arches, combatants and walls and turrets, and engines and streets barricaded with spiked wood-works, towers and edifices."

Descriptions of Dvaraka give a glimpse into the beauty which Krishna imbued into his city. "Arjuna could see the splendid fortress city from a distance, shining like the sun on the horizon. It could only be reached by passing along a heavily guarded gate. Tall flags lined the roofs of mansions, and the ground was strewn with flower petals. As Krishna's chariot moved slowly toward his father's palace, Krishna saw the opulence of his city—the orchards and flower gardens, the beautiful lakes teeming with swans and thick with red and blue lotuses.



Fulfilling a curse: Krishna forgives his unintentional killer

Golden archways studded with precious stones stood at every crossroad, and white mansions lined the roads."

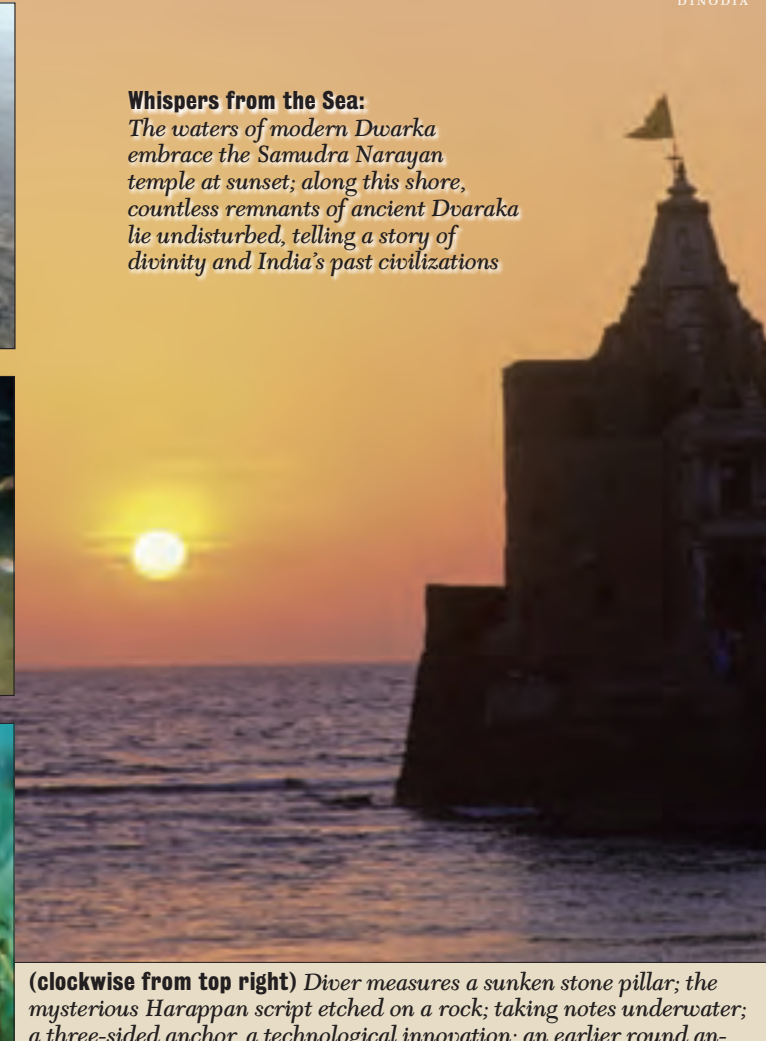
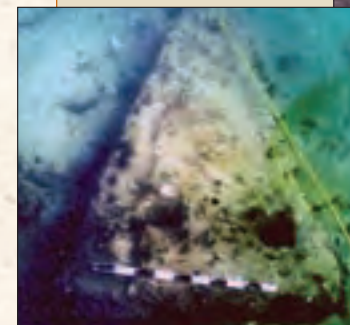
Some texts record that the city was designed by Tvastar, the architect of the gods. It is praised in the *Bhagavad Purana*, the *Skanda Purana*, the *Vishnu Purana*, the *Harivamsha* and the *Mahabharata*, all boasting Dvaraka's unsurpassed beauty and referring to it as the Golden City. "In the city, gardens flourished with celestial trees and the gold-towered buildings had balconies of crystal," says the Vishnu Purana.

After the epic Kurukshetra war ended with the victory of the virtuous Pandavas, Lord Krishna retired to live in Dvaraka for thirty-six years. Ill omens hinted at the shadows of the upcoming Kali Yuga: fratricide fights broke out between the Yadavas; hideous spirits traversed the skies, and Yama, God of Death, was seen in every household.

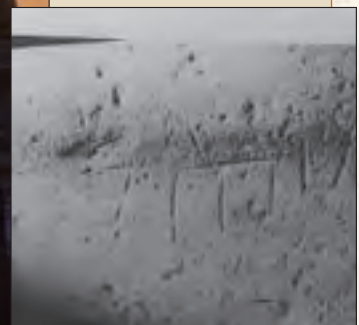
Distraught, Krishna retired into the forest and sat under a tree in meditation. A hunter mistook his partly visible foot for a deer and shot an arrow, mortally wounding Krishna. Not long afterwards, the sea mercilessly devoured the fabled city of Dvaraka.

Whispers from the Sea:

The waters of modern Dwarka embrace the Samudra Narayan temple at sunset; along this shore, countless remnants of ancient Dvaraka lie undisturbed, telling a story of divinity and India's past civilizations



(clockwise from top right) Diver measures a sunken stone pillar; the mysterious Harappan script etched on a rock; taking notes underwater; a three-sided anchor; a technological innovation; an earlier round anchor; the fort stone wall, still easily recognizable from above the water





World-renowned archaeologist: Dr. S.R. Rao

ins, where we found the seal, as Krishna's Dvaraka. Finding this mudra was very exciting." Skeptics point out, however, that the discovery of a single seal, which could even have come from another area, is not irrefutable evidence of the city's identity.

Dr. Rao contends that a scripted piece of fired pottery found underwater provides further dating evidence. Using thermoluminescence analysis (useful on any object that has been heated, but having an error of plus or minus several hundred years), he dates it to the late Harappan period, about 1,700 BCE. Using his own system of translation of the Harappan script, he believes the shard reads, "Mahagacha-sha-pa," or "Sea God protect." Dr. Rao's translation system, while regarded as a step in the right direction, is

not accepted by some linguists.

Critics also point out that only the *Mahabharata* describes the destruction of Dvaraka as being "a matter of a few moments." The *Harivamsha* and the *Matsya Purana* state that it took seven days to vacate Dvaraka before it was submerged by the sea. Dr. Rajiv Nigam, head of the geological division of the National Institute of Oceanography, and some other scientists believe in this more gradual submergence of the city.

Another issue is that Dr. Rao's dating of 1700 BCE does not agree with the traditional dating of this event. Based on the Indian calendar, some Indian historians hold that the destruction of Dvaraka took place around 3200 BCE. This event marked the beginning of the Kali Yuga, our present age when ignorance and darkness prevail in the world.

In spite of the objections, Dr. Rao's evidence is exciting and compelling. It is difficult to dispute that he has found an ancient submerged city; the question is whether or not it is Krishna's Dvaraka. In either case, it is an enchanting doorway to an important part of India's history. Dr. Rao wants the ruins preserved, protected and available. He proposes, "In my concept, tourists or even scientists could go around the structural remains of Dvaraka, in the sea, inside a giant acrylic tube to see the ancient city. Let us hope that some day the project will be taken up." The State Government of Gujarat and the Travel & Tourism Department are working on

his proposal, which could give rise to the world's the first underwater museum. Rao's work with Dvaraka is part of growing international interest in near-shore archeology which has turned up remarkable discoveries, as in Mahabalipuram. In this growing field of research, the future might reveal much more of India's fascinating and still hidden past.

BY MARK HAWTHORNE



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MARINE ARCHEOLOGY

In search of the past: Divers of the Indian National Institute of Oceanography explore Dwarka's waters

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Swami Durganatha Shanmuga, Administrator.



COMMENTARY

On India's Presidency

Did being a devout Hindu cost me the post?

BY DR. KARAN SINGH

Dr. Karan Singh, son of the late Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir, has had a long career in academics and Indian politics. The following article is drawn from an interview (www.indianexpress.com/iep/sunday/story/208645.html) by the Indian Express newspaper in which he discussed why he lost the race for president of India in August, 2007.

I HAVE BEEN IN PUBLIC LIFE FOR 58 YEARS. I STARTED AT 18, becoming head of state in Jammu and Kashmir for 18 years under three different capacities. Then I joined Indira Gandhi's cabinet and was a minister for 10 years. I've also been in Parliament for 18 years, in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, and I've been an ambassador. In some ways, my whole career was a preparation, as it were, for presidency. If it had come my way, it was fine. If it hasn't, as you said, I'm a philosopher, and it doesn't really matter.

I have many other interests, none of which is connected to the presidency. I head the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). For 30 years I have been president of what is called the Temple of Understanding, a worldwide interfaith movement, trying to bring people from different faiths and religions into harmonious dialogue. My third area of interest is environment. I head an NGO called People's Commission on Environment & Development. Then, of course, there is my role in politics. I'm deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha. Most important of all, for me, is the spiritual quest. I've been talking about Vedanta around the world, and I think that in life the inner spiritual quest is the most important single activity one can undertake.

But why didn't I become President? Bardhan (Communist Party of India's general-secretary A. B. Bardhan), a very senior man for whom I have high regard, said the first objection the Left had was that I am the son of a maharaja, and second, that I am the founder of the Virat Hindu Sammelan. I'm not comparing myself, but Ashoka, too, was the son of a maharaja; Buddha was; Ram was. Second, from the age of 18, I've thrown my lot with democratic



I'm not sure if atheism is an essential part of the ideology of the Left in India. That's really for the party to answer. But it was in other communist countries. As a guest of (Nikita) Krushchev, I asked, "Mr. General-Secretary, is it possible in your country to be a believer and also a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union?" He said, "No, it is not. We do respect religion and other faiths; but to be a member of the CPSU, you have to be an atheist." Whether that applies to the Left in India or not, I do not know.

I think in India secularism has come to mean something quite different from what it means in Europe. Secularism in India should not mean anti-religiousness. Secularism is what Gandhiji preached or what even *sarva dharma sambhava* says, that is, "equal respect for all religions." But the Left still looks at secularism from the absolutist point of view, as either pro- or anti-religion.

I don't know if there is an atheist among the senior members of the Congress Party of India. Even Dr. Manmohan Singh is a devout Sikh. And I think all the others have their own religious beliefs. In India 99 percent of the people are religious. By census figures, people who write "no religion" or "agnostic" are less than one per cent. I don't think that the "anti-religious" definition of secularism of the Left is sustainable.

S. Radhakrishnan: India's Philosopher President

SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN WAS born on September 5, 1888, at Tiruttani, forty miles to the northeast of Chennai, in South India. His early years were spent in Tiruttani and Tirupati, both famous as pilgrimage centers.

As a young man he wrote, "Religious feeling must establish itself as a rational way of living. If ever the spirit is to be at home in this world, and not merely a prisoner or a fugitive, spiritual foundations must be laid

deep and preserved worthily. Religion must express itself in reasonable thought, fruitful action and right social institutions."

Dr. Radhakrishnan had an illustrious academic career, teaching for years at Oxford University, serving as vice-chancellor of the Banaras Hindu University and chancellor of the University of Delhi. He entered politics in the 1940s, serving as ambassador to Russia, Vice President of India, and from 1962 to 1967 as the second president of India.

An Oxford daily wrote of his lectures in England, "Though the Indian preacher had the marvellous power to weave a magic

politics, spearheading the transition from feudalism to democracy. When the issue of (the abolition of) privy purses (payments to the former princely rulers) came up, I stood by the government in which I was a minister.

As to the second objection, I have said I'm interested in Hinduism, I have a PhD on Sri Aurobindo, and I've been lecturing on Vivekananda and Aurobindo across the world. The Virat Hindu Sammelan was set up during the time of the mass conversions in Meenakshipuram, in South India. So it was a sort of social reform movement to see why the unfinished social revolution in Hinduism has got stuck.

[Asked about being an openly practicing Hindu and wearing an "Om Namah Shivaya" bracelet.] I've never been apologetic about this. If Om Namah Shivaya is the reason I didn't become president, then certainly it is a great blessing, because I would not exchange my Om Namah Shivaya, as Arjun says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "Even for the sovereignty of the three worlds, what then for this land."

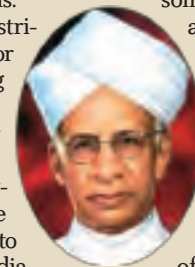
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web of thought, imagination and language, the real greatness of his sermon resides in some indefinable spiritual quality which arrests attention, moves the heart and lifts us into an ampler air."

Prof. H.N. Muirhead said, "Dr. Radhakrishnan has the rare qualification of being equally versed in the great European and the not less great Asiatic tradition which may be said to hold in solution between them the spiritual wisdom of the world, and of thus speaking as a philosophical bilingualist upon it." See more about Radhakrishnan at www.uramamurthy.com/srk_phil.html



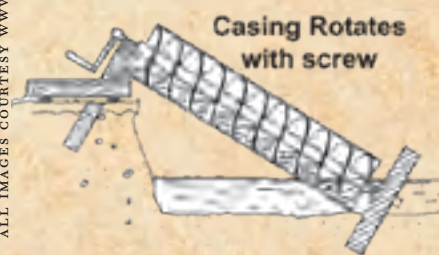
Marvelous Methods to Free the Poor and Stay Off the Grid

DO YOU LIVE OFF THE LAND? DO YOU want to be independent of the local power company, help reverse global warming and combat poverty all at once? If the answer is yes, then www.practicalaction.com is the place for you. The site says, "In an increasingly divided and fragile world, Practical Action aims to demonstrate and advocate the sustainable use of technology to reduce poverty in developing countries. Practical Action is a charity registered in the United Kingdom which works directly in four regions of the developing world—Latin America, East Africa, Southern Africa and South Asia, with particular concentration on Peru, Kenya, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal." The focus is on small-scale technologies in the areas of energy, shelter, transport, water and sanitation, food and agriculture, manufacturing, disaster mitigation and information-communications technologies.

The many resources include guidelines and schematics for micro-hydroelectric energy production, decentralized rural electrification and ancient, human-powered water lifters that can move hundreds of gallons of water an hour. Refrigeration is critical for food processing, and this web-site offers three small-scale refrigeration methods. The no-moving-parts sorption system uses a non-toxic coolant, daytime solar energy and night-time low temperatures to make ice.

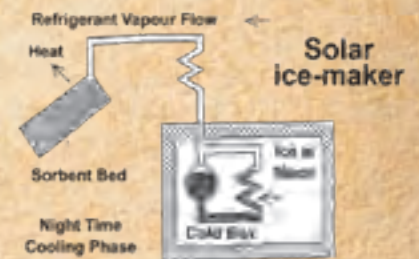


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Top: web site, citing some of the ways Practical Action is helping the world; above: traditional screw-style water-lifter; right: eco-safe ice-maker expels heat at night and preserves the cold by day

The site provides links to books, specifications for NGOs who want to use these technologies and ways that each of us can contribute to getting sustainable technology into the hands of people who need it.



<http://www.hinduism.co.za>

WHILE MANY NEW WEB 2.0 SITES are coming online, they often lack substance. Meanwhile, others like www.hinduism.co.za are all about content. The site's lean design allows fast access to an incredible Hindu gold mine: "Understanding Hinduism." It is a simple model: a collec-

tion of excerpts from the writings of great saints like Swami Sivananda, the epics and Vedas, all organized under more than 200 in-depth pages. Links such as Hinduism-Brief Sketch, Founder of Hinduism, Vrat-Resolution, Marriage, Mind Power, Mantras, Sacred Fire, Cows Are Sacred, Guru, Silent

Teachings, Caste System, Untouchables, Yuga and Dharma each take you into a mini-world of fascinating texts and additional links. The page on marriage alone is a treasure chest of information on this crucial life ceremony. Bookmark this site for future reading. It will take you months to peruse all the information. Thanks to the creators of this site for their meticulous attention to getting together so much content in one place, and so well organized!

Hindu Heritage Endowment

FUND TO KEEP THE FAITH ALIVE AMONG TAMIL YOUTH



Saivite Tamil Foundation children's camp in Chicago in June, 2007

The Saivite Tamil Foundation was formed two years ago to keep alive the principles of Saivism among the children and youth of thousands of immigrant Sri Lankan Tamils now living in North America. According to the Foundation's volunteer executive director, Dr. Rajasingam S. Jeyendran, the driving forces behind the group are dedicated volunteers and a deep Hindu faith exemplified by his wife, Sivagandhi. They have set up a fund with HHE to give their work greater exposure.

"After 1983, many Sri Lankan Tamils migrated to Canada, and some to the USA," Dr. Jeyendran explained. His wife Sivagandhi felt that these dislocated families, especially their children and elderly, needed help because they no longer live in communities that support their religious traditions. After witnessing a close friend die at a young age without the traditional help and consolation of the Sri Lankan Hindu community, Mrs. Jeyendran created the Foundation. To fill the cultural and religious gap that Tamil immigrants face, Foundation volunteers run camps that bring Hindu teaching and practice alive to children. The Foundation also encourages service to the elderly. Dr. Jeyendran, who has a busy Chicago medical practice, notes, "My wife is deeply interested in this because her faith in Hinduism is very strong. She feels that children need clear, simple presentations of their religious tradition."

The need for the Foundation's work will likely only increase. Fierce anti-Tamil riots in Sri Lanka in 1983 convinced many Tamils to leave. The number of Tamils from Sri Lanka in Canada rose from 2,000 before 1983 to almost 200,000 by 2006, with many entering the United States during the same period. The struggle has intensified in recent months.

The Foundation's activities typically involve groups of twenty to thirty. In May, the Foundation sponsored a children's retreat in Corona, California, introducing them to Hindu religious practices, meditation techniques and cultural activities. In June, 2007, the Jeyendran home in Chicago was the venue for a three-day camp for Sri Lankan Tamil children, ages 6 to 16, with religious advisor Rishi Thondunathan leading classes and performing a simple Ganesha puja. In August, they hosted a gathering of Sri Lankans, featuring Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, publisher of HINDUISM TODAY. In October, the Foundation sponsored two week-long programs in Toronto that included a children's retreat and visits with elders in nursing homes.

Dr. Jeyendran hopes the Foundation's Endowment (fund #71) at HHE will someday provide financial stability for their work. He feels their HHE fund will also give greater exposure to the difficulties faced by immigrant Tamil Sri Lankans. "We want the Hindu community to know that the Foundation exists," Dr. Jeyendran concluded. "We want them to contact us so we can provide them with our services." The Foundation's website is www.saivite.org.



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Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund Anonymous 61.00 Renu Aravindraj 14.25 Rema Devi Balakrishnan 250.00 Gunavadee Caremben 5.02 Somasundaram Caremben 5.02 Sukanta Caremben 5.02 Victoria Lynne Johnson 29.00 M. Karnakaran 25.00 Amooda Koothan 1.64 Saravan Koothan 1.64 Auslin Mangal Lawrence 250.00 Saroja Devi Manickam 6.50 Amanda Muttulingam 250.00 Lalitha Muttulingam 250.00 Mayuran Muttulingam 250.00 Natraj Narayanswami 100.00 Nirmalswari 20.00 Sandhyadevi Param 4.00 Subramaniam Pennathur 83.34 Kirtideva Peruman 9.97 Niroshnee Peruman 14.95 Deivani Ramanathan 250.00 Kumar Ranganathan 100.00 Girish Samugam 32.27 Akileiswaran Samuthiran 11.34 Jayasutha Samuthiran 14.49 Devaladevi Sivaceyon 8.59 Nutanaya Sivaceyon 20.12 Patudeva Sivaceyon 8.59 Hemavalli Sivalingam 2.61 Kantaruban Sivalingam 2.61 Rohini Sivalingam 10.36 Potriyan Sivanathan 14.40 Siven Veerasamy 20.26 Total 2,131.99	Boys School for Iraivan Priesthood David Bohn 20.00 Bala Sivaceyon 48.88 Total 68.88	Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund Manoharan Navaratnarajah 75.00 Gassa Patten 1,000.00 Total 1,075.00	Sri Ganesha Hindu Temple of Utah Endowment Fund Utah Temple Devotees 5,000.00
Kauai Aadheenam Mathavasi Medical Fund Anonymous 51.00 Corinne Baumann 20.00 Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam 41.75 Dora Kovacs 200.00 Gowri Nadason 155.58 Kumar Ranganathan 100.00 K. Lakshmi Kantha Reddy 875.00 Vayudeva Varadan 54.00 Other Donations 6,300.00 Total 7,797.33	Swami Agnivesh Endowment Fund Prasad Krishnan 3.00	Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund Prasad Krishnan 3.00	Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund Hiranya & Saraswathi Gowda 153.00 Kumar Ranganathan 50.00 Total 203.00
Kauai Aadheenam Mathavasi Medical Fund Anonymous 51.00 Corinne Baumann 20.00 Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam 41.75 Dora Kovacs 200.00 Gowri Nadason 155.58 Kumar Ranganathan 100.00 K. Lakshmi Kantha Reddy 875.00 Vayudeva Varadan 54.00 Other Donations 6,300.00 Total 7,797.33	Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund Victoria Lynne Johnson 28.00 Hans J. Keller 1.00 Total 29.00	Thank You Bodhinatha Fund Anonymous 402.00 Hotranatha Ajaya 84.00 Durvasa Alahan 101.00 Shyamadeva Dandapani 101.00 Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai 324.00 Lila Shakti Devi 101.00 Toshadeva Guhan 108.00 Maha Lakshmi Gunasegaran 282.00 Jothiswarar 50.00 Rani Jothiswarar 50.00 Trond Liland 20.00 Kumar Natarajan 50.00 Manoharan Navaratnarajah 150.00 Shanta Devi Periasamy 1,539.76 Jayshree S. Rao 651.00 Alex Ruberto 60.00 Aran Sambandar 54.00 Hitesvara Saravan 108.00 Dasa Sivam 108.00 Indivar Sivanathan 51.00 Ramesh Sivanathan 97.12 Vayudeva Varadan 63.00 Other Donations 3,206.09 Total 7,760.97	Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment Anonymous 100.00 Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam 41.75 Julia Hall 45.00 Dora Kovacs 200.00 Natraj Narayanswami 150.00 Subramaniam Pennathur 83.33 Kumar Ranganathan 100.00 Silas H. Zirkle 375.00 Total 1,095.08
Malaysian Hindu Youth Education Trust Devdatta & Swati Mhaiskar 20.00	Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund Krish & Devika Muruga 50.00	Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund Victoria Lynne Johnson 28.00 Hans J. Keller 1.00 Total 29.00	Yogaswami Hindu Boys' Home Fund Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam 41.75 Dora Kovacs 200.00 Krish & Devika Muruga 50.00 Natraj Narayanswami 50.00 Dharmalingam Siddhan 150.00 Total 491.75
Malaysia Hindu Renaissance Fund Anonymous 1,130.00	Malaysian Hindu Youth Education Trust Devdatta & Swati Mhaiskar 20.00	Maha Ganapati Temple of Arizona Endowment Anonymous 1,000.00 Chellappa Deva 500.00 Total 1,500.00	India Hindu Tribals Endowment Devdatta & Swati Mhaiskar 20.00
Hinduism Today Production Fund Subhash Kumar Choudhary 100.00 R. Prakash Dixit 300.00 Murli Melwani 2,000.00 Subramaniam Pennathur 83.33 Subhadra Raj 82.07 Narayana & Sarojini Rao 7,116.00 Total 9,681.40	Malaysian Hindu Youth Education Trust Devdatta & Swati Mhaiskar 20.00	Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund Vayudeva Varadan 36.00	Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund Vayudeva Varadan 36.00
Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund Nina Anand 800.00 Jeri Arin 84.00 Bavani Ayyar 200.00 Rema Devi Balakrishnan 900.00 Kris Bhat 87.00 Ravichandran Ceyon 41.00 Shelley L. Cummins 97.50 Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam 334.00 Chellappa Deva 200.00 Uma Geetha Vani Dunn 1,001.00	Malaysia Hindu Renaissance Fund Anonymous 1,130.00	Saivite Hindu Scriptural Fund for the Visually Impaired Alex Ruberto 60.00	Saivite Tamil Foundation Endowment Dr. & Mrs. S. Jeyendran 1,000.00
Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund Nina Anand 800.00 Jeri Arin 84.00 Bavani Ayyar 200.00 Rema Devi Balakrishnan 900.00 Kris Bhat 87.00 Ravichandran Ceyon 41.00 Shelley L. Cummins 97.50 Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam 334.00 Chellappa Deva 200.00 Uma Geetha Vani Dunn 1,001.00	Malaysian Hindu Youth Education Trust Devdatta & Swati Mhaiskar 20.00	Sri Chandrabhadra Debnath Endowment Shyamal Chandra Debnath 50.00 Ramakumar & Sailaja Kosuru 10.00 Total 60.00	Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment Other Donations 600.00
Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund Nina Anand 800.00 Jeri Arin 84.00 Bavani Ayyar 200.00 Rema Devi Balakrishnan 900.00 Kris Bhat 87.00 Ravichandran Ceyon 41.00 Shelley L. Cummins 97.50 Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam 334.00 Chellappa Deva 200.00 Uma Geetha Vani Dunn 1,001.00	Malaysian Hindu Youth Education Trust Devdatta & Swati Mhaiskar 20.00	Murugan Temple Yalpanam Festival Fund Vayudeva Varadan 18.00	Pooled Income Fund (PIF) Satya & Savitri Palani 100.00
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Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund Nina Anand 800.00 Jeri Arin 84.00 Bavani Ayyar 200.00 Rema Devi Balakrishnan 900.00 Kris Bhat 87.00 Ravichandran Ceyon 41.00 Shelley L. Cummins 97.50 Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam 334.00 Chellappa Deva 200.00 Uma Geetha Vani Dunn 1,001.00	Malaysian Hindu Youth Education Trust Devdatta & Swati Mhaiskar 20.00	Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund Ramakumar & Sailaja Kosuru 25.00 Ananda Manickam 11.00 Suselah Periasamy 1,241.00 Total 1,277.00	Grand Total \$9,358,481.66

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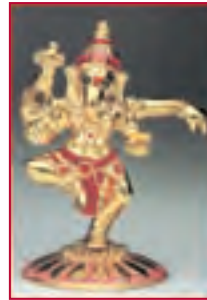
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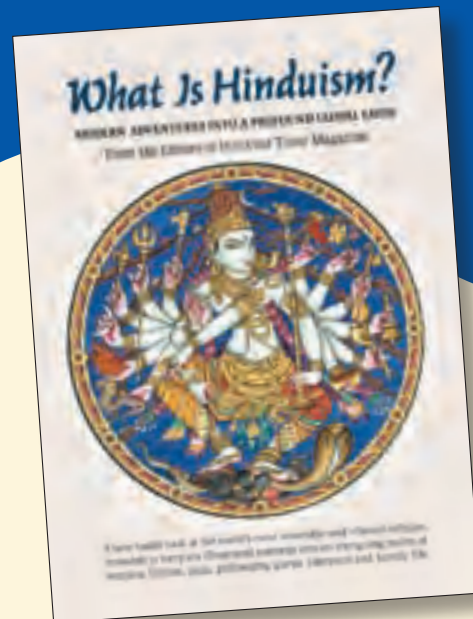
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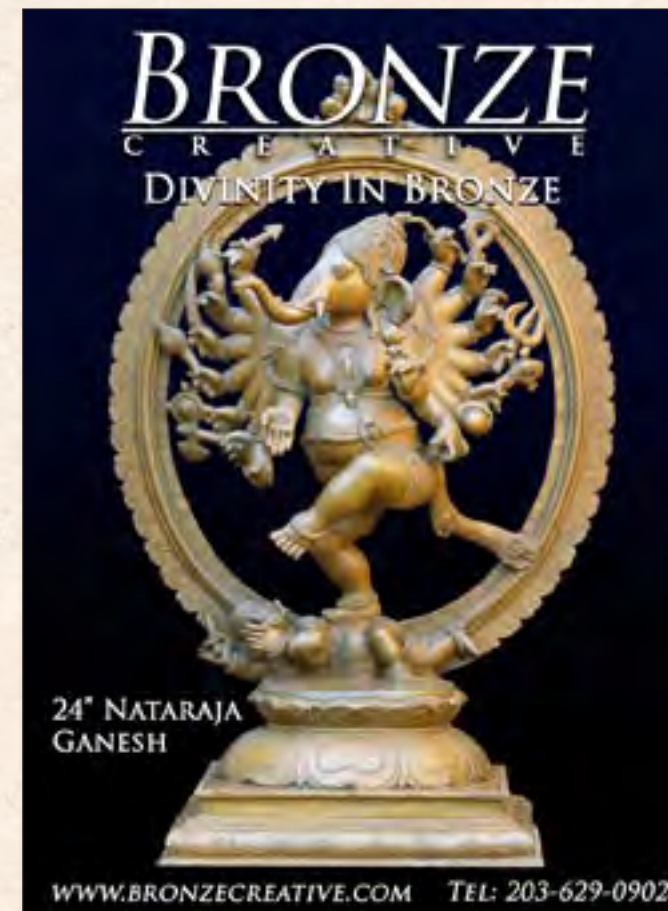
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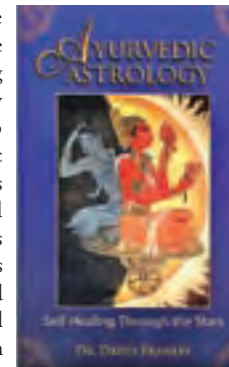
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*F*lying auspiciously was this colourful kite,
 Spread like the sparkling spangle in the twilight,
 So prominent and opalescent,
 Feelings of an exclusive souvenir
 That has your heart engraved on it.

As this four angled kite
 Lowered its wonder-striking features,
 Its tegument put me under some spell.
 Wrong was my opinion when I saw it high,
 Thinking that it was just a kite; but now I have to sigh,
 Because down came this blessed bird with the strongest colours.
 Amazed and mesmerized me like no others,
 Trapping all my sensories but expanding all my moods,
 To let go off my spirit to wonder in the woods.
 Lurking through those gloomy murks,
 Looking on were the other common birds,
 Crazy thinking of what I was doing.
 Because its striky moves gave me some notion,
 About this bird that brought me
 A certain consternation,
 I closed my eyes for a moment.

Without applying any movements,
 Being still as the stationary mast,
 Immobile but with a steady heart,
 Just to come back to my senses,
 And tell myself that I wasn't dreaming,
 I gave myself this concession,
 Gradually opening my eyes,
 Eagerly looking out for the ensconced bird,
 Which earlier on appeared in front of me,
 I turned to look around—there it was!
 That turquoise neck and chest,
 With its bluish purple ventral parts,
 Outstanding with its lengthy train
 Of greenish feathers,
 Like polka dots, on ly to resemble eyes,
 With its ostentatious display,
 Vainly and priggishly prancing
 With smooth flows of sensuous saunter.
 I sequestered to watch vigilantly,
 Not wanting to nudge its natural behavior
 That pared my disbeliefs,
 Lissomly parading its luscious trains,
 Fanning and jerking with splendid trails,
 Carelessness may have almost tumbled me down,
 Over the huge roots of massive forest trees
 When I was in a mad rush to seek out
 More of its beauteous moves,
 A grand spectacle,
 I would never want to miss.
 I stayed composed to silently laud.

This anomalous bird of much pride,
 Dancing phenomenally, full of chaste,
 Preening gracefully using its prinky beak.
 Its eyes so killingly enterprising,
 Brilliant and lambent; so suave and impressive,
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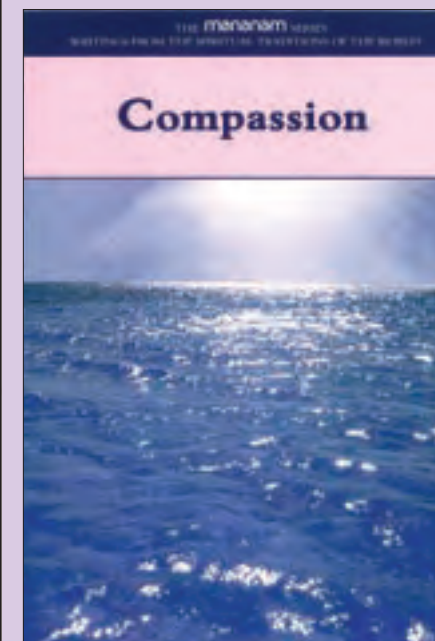
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