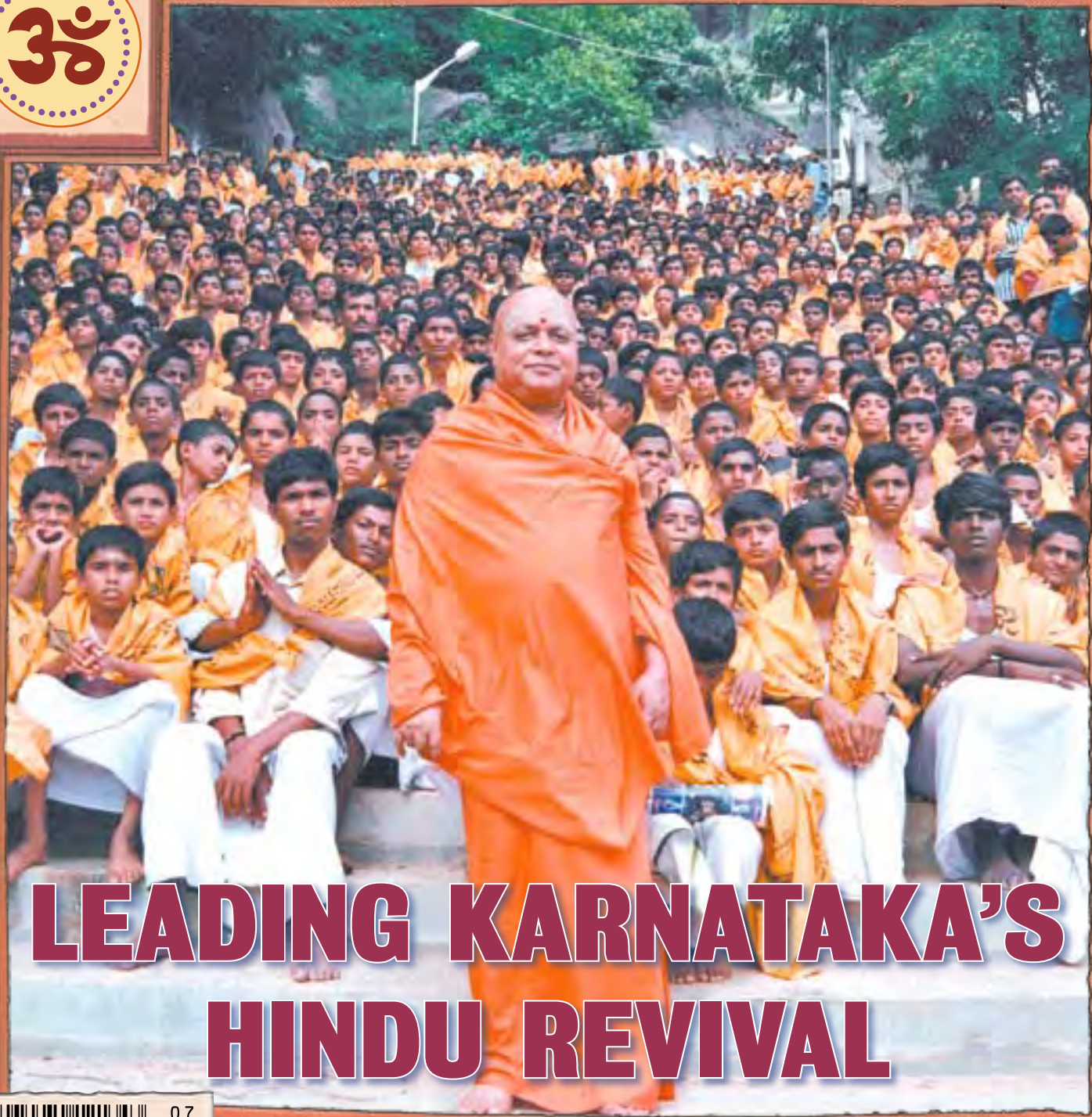


HINDUISM TODAY

July/August/September, 2005

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



LEADING KARNATAKA'S HINDU REVIVAL



WISE EARTH MONASTERY

COVER: Sri Balagangadharanatha Swami stands at his monastery with students of his two-week summer school in religion; (above) Swamini Mayatitananda in a reflective moment in the mountains near her North Carolina ashram.

JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER, 2005 • HINDU YEAR 5107
PARTHIVA, THE YEAR OF EARTHLY PROSPERITY

Bodhinatha Veylanswami

www.gurudeva.org

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An aerial photograph of a large-scale construction project for a granite temple. The temple's structure is composed of numerous tall, rectangular stone pillars arranged in a grid-like pattern. The entire site is heavily encumbered with a complex network of wooden scaffolding. In the background, a modern, multi-story building with a white facade and arched windows stands on the same hillside. The surrounding landscape is hilly and sparsely vegetated. The sky is clear and blue.

This elaborate granite temple is under construction at an ancient monastery on the high plains near Bangalore. Our feature profiles Sri Balagangadharanatha Swami, the moving force behind this edifice and a host of social innovations... Page 18

A PALACE FOR SIVA IN KARNATAKA



Mahastwaratri at famed Grand Bassin in the Mauritius highlands

MAURITIUS

Shining Diaspora Success

IN 1890 JHUMMUN GIRI NAPAL GOSSAGNE HAD A VISION of the Grand Bassin lake of Mauritius springing directly from India's Ganges. He organized the first Mahasivaratri pilgrimage in 1897. The lake, known for deva sightings, is now a powerful Hindu *tirtha*—the Ganga Talao. This year 250,000 went up for March Mahasivaratri. This peaceful, pan-Hindu, all-island celebration has become a diaspora success story of the transition of Hindu's culture and tolerance into the 21st century. The Jyothi Lingam temple is the most worshipped of the water's edge temples and devotees lovingly queue up for hours for worship. The Lingam was reported to have suddenly lit up during the Mahasivaratri worship. A pilgrim reveled: "There's an air of mysticism and divinity here. You really feel suddenly transformed into a spiritual being."



More support: Hope likely Indian

U S A

Searching for Hope's Origins

US EXPERTS' COMPUTER models of the 45.52 carat Hope diamond "very much support the theory that it was cut from the French Blue diamond," said Jeffrey Post, a Smithsonian

institution museum curator. The 112-carat French Blue was purchased by Jean Baptist Tavernier, a 17th-century merchant, probably from the Kol-lur mine in India. It was sold to King Louis XIV of France in 1668, later recut to 67 carats and stolen in 1792. In 1812, a 44-carat deep blue diamond appeared in the collection of Henry Philip Hope.

Changing hands several more times, it was finally donated to the Smithsonian. Research into the Tavernier stone, the French Blue and the Hope, showed that two smaller "versions" could fit into the Tavernier stone. Legend says the diamond is cursed because Tavernier stole it from the eye of a statue of the Hindu Goddess Sita. Many of its owners suffered grave misfortunes.

DIASPORA

CHINA

Modern Yoga Migrates to China

GOOGLE "BEIJING YOGA" and, surprise—dozens of links to yoga retreats and events in Beijing! Next, go to www.yogafinder.com, click on "Find Yoga Classes" and then choose country "China" and city "Shanghai." From the way the list reads you might think you were in California. What is compelling is not only the array of options but the degree of cross-national integration: yoga teachers in California are holding programs in China in cooperation with Chinese yogis. China's 1980's policy to teach English in elementary schools, is paying off big time today. Political tensions still bristle between nations, but China's youth are all open arms.

While US-style holistic health jargon dominates the web site blurbs, we were happy to note

in one article from Beijing's www.cityweekend.com.cn a "full disclosure" that the "Vedas of Hinduism are the source of other teachings, including *Upa-nishads* and karma. Modern Yoga is based on the four Vedic texts, the *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva Vedas*."



No wall of China for Hindu teachings

EUROPE

Swastika Ban Abandoned

IN JANUARY, 2005, BRITISH Prince Harry wore a Nazi uniform to a costume ball sparking outrage, especially among Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in

Germany, where the swastika is banned. They proposed that the European Union legally ban the use of the swastika across Europe. Many Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and civil rights groups raised articulate protests, and EU legislators dropped the proposal in late February. For the 10,000-year-old symbol of auspiciousness, it was an important victory over its dark night of abuse by Hitler's Third Reich.

Many pointed out that despite being banned in Germany, the East German neo-Nazi movement is vital and growing. Conservative MEP for north-west England, David Sumberg, who is Jewish, said, "I think it's the right decision. There are far more grave issues to confront than whether we ban this particular symbol. It's shown in a variety of guises and is impossible to enforce."



Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam honored at temple opening

SINGAPORE

Woodlands Temple Relocated

WITH 13,763 PERSONS PER SQUARE MILE, SINGAPORE IS THE fourth most densely populated place on Earth. City planning has been at the core of her success, and Singapore has often been forced to close small Hindu temples built decades ago on government land before the city became Earth's most urbanized society. Fortunately the city has been generous in its relocation and consolidation policies, and devotees have ended up with much-improved, properly built temples. A recent case was the relocation of Woodlands Sri Arasakesari Sivan temple to Sungei Kadut. The government's \$16.25 million in compensation was used to build a beautiful new complex comprising a temple and a four-story building on 24,000 square feet of land with a pond and a tree in the middle of the prayer hall. It got off to a big start when over 8,000 enthusiastic devotees rushed to enter the temple during the March consecration ceremonies.

EGYPT

Hindu Palace Anomaly

IT IS SAID THAT IN EGYPT the Hindu Palace of Cairo, after the Great Pyramid and



Hindu Palace in a desert

Giza's Sphinx, is subject to more fable, legends and rumors than any other monument. No, it is not a temple. It was the extravagant home of Belgium-born Baron-General Edouard Louis Joseph Empain (1852-1929) one of the greatest colonialist entrepreneurs of the 20th century. He set out building the new town of Heliopolis in the desert, ten miles outside Cairo in 1907. The theme for city development was modern "Moorish style." But for his own home he brought in the best Hindu artists and sculptors from Indonesia, where he had extensive business interests. Some think it mimicks Angkor Wat; others say it was modeled after the great temples of Orissa. Today it is abandoned and under guard in the middle of what is now an upscale Cairo suburb. Visitors are not allowed, and rumors are that it is haunted.

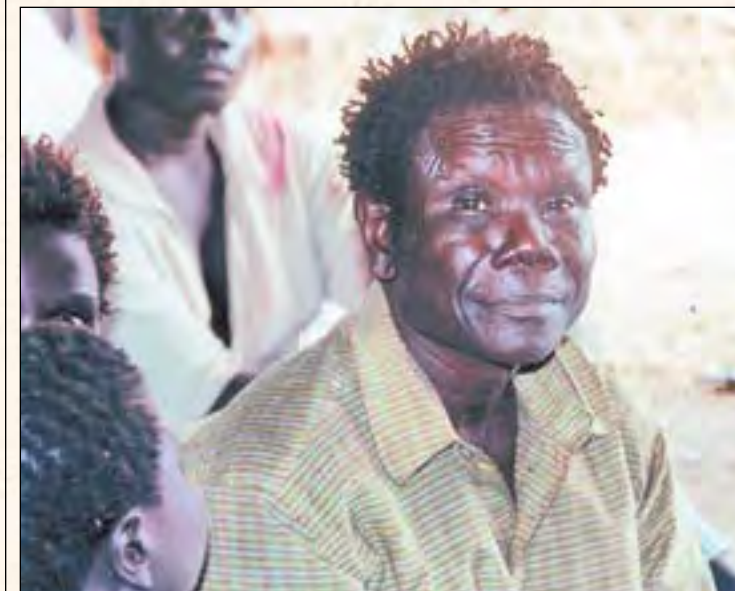
ANDAMANS

Wise Tsunami Survivors

WHEN THE WATER IN THE creek suddenly ran out to sea on the morning of Dec. 26, 2004, the aboriginal Onge tribe scattered pig and turtle skulls around their settlement and hurled stones toward the ocean to occupy the attention of the evil spirits while they fled into the jungle, bearing amulets of ancestral bones for

"We knew that more land would soon become covered with sea, and angry spirits would descend down to hunt us away," the 60-something man told Pandya. "But our ancestral spirits would come down to help us if we stayed together and carried our ancestral bones with us to ensure assistance from the good spirits."

The Onge are one of four Andamanese tribes believed to have migrated from Africa during the Stone Age, some 30,000 to 60,000 years ago. Black-skinned and short in stature,



Onge tribals survived the Tsunami by following ancient wisdom

protection. Minutes later, the tsunami slammed into their tribal reserve in India's remote Andaman Islands. All 96 Onge survived, even as residents of the nearby town of Hut Bay perished.

While Thailand tourists didn't know what was happening when they suddenly found themselves standing on exposed seabed, and fishermen in Sri Lanka ran out to pick up stranded fish, the Onge (pronounced OHN-ghee) knew that the disappearing water meant danger. "The water went away very quickly, and, like breathing in and out of the body, the sea water had to come back very rapidly and in a big way," Totanagey, an Onge man, explained to anthropologist Vishvajit Pandya.

the tribes lived in isolation for millennia. Now, the surviving 97 Onge live on two reserves on Little Andaman Island.

Pandya found that the Onge reacted immediately to what was going on, guided by their concepts of evil spirits.

Knowing that the creek rises and falls with the tide, the Onge suspected that the extreme fall in their village creek meant "the sea was pulling back, preparing to strike like a fist." Totanagey told Pandya, a professor at the Dhirubhai Ambani Institute in Ghandinagar, India. They fled to the hills, as their ancestors had taught them and lived. But with much of their marine food habitat destroyed, the survival of the Onge still hangs in the balance.



Leaves of neem trees growing near the offices of HINDUISM TODAY in Hawaii

INTERNATIONAL

India Victory: Neem Is Free!

IN MARCH THE BBC REPORTED from London that India won a 10-year-long battle at the European Patent Office (EPO) against a patent granted on an

anti-fungal product, Neemix, derived from neem. The EPO initially granted the patent to the US Department of Agriculture and multinational WR Grace in 1995. But the Indian government successfully argued that the medicinal neem tree, *azadirachta indica*, is part of traditional Indian knowledge. The winning challenge comes after years of campaigning and legal efforts against “bio-piracy.” Leading the campaign in the neem case was the European Union Parliament’s Green Party, India-based Research

Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology (RFSTE) and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). “Denying the patent means upholding the value of ‘traditional’ for millions of [people] not only in India but throughout the South. The free tree will stay free,” said RFSTE director, Dr. Vandana Shiva.

BRIEFLY...

ORISSA’S FAMOUS JAGANATHA Temple is planning to sell off all plots of land it owns in this and other states in an effort to overcome its severe financial crunch. The 12th-century temple at Puri owns about 700 acres of land in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. In Orissa alone, its land holdings total around 5,400 acres. With the sale of real estate, the temple administration hopes to realize about US\$23 million, the interests of which, when invested, would be sufficient to meet the temple’s daily expenses and employees salaries.

A MAGNIFICENT TEMPLE IS under construction in Minneapolis in the American Midwest. Coming up on 40

pristine acres in Maple Grove area, the Vishnu temple when completed (most likely in 2006) will be the largest in the state.

IN APRIL, MAOIST REBELS IN Nepal demanded that elite private schools shut down unless their lower admission and tuition costs, scrap singing of the national anthem, stop teaching Sanskrit and remove photographs of King Gyanendra. The demands are part of a drive by the Maoists to install their own “people’s education.”

ARCHAEOLOGISTS IN MAHABALIPURAM district have discovered remains of a 4th century Hindu temple built by the kings of the illustrious Pallava dynasty. The December 26, 2004, tsunami uncovered the temple, which is a huge



Trinidad musician demonstrates the steel pan “drum”

TRINIDAD

D’Bhuyaa Saaj Goes to India

SINGERS AND MUSICIANS IN countries of the diaspora have usually looked to India for inspiration. In February of this year the river flowed upstream for a while when the first Indo-Caribbean/West Indian folk musical group, D’Bhuyaa Saaj from Trinidad and Tobago, traveled to India for a month-long tour to Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kol-

kata. They toured with River of Babylon, a Jewish Indian group, and Sidi Goma, an African Indian group, under the auspices of the Archives and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology.

Trinidad’s press was aglow with pride, “It is recognizing survivors of the Indian diaspora, accepting them not only as a by-product but as a part of Indian culture. For so many years, Indo-Trinidadians have looked to India as a source of cultural inspiration from which to construct an ethnic identity. But perhaps for the first time, the tables might be turned.”

complex. Offshore divers found extensive evidence of human activity. Excavations revealed the remains of a big temple with an entrance porch, open courtyard, a wall and many figures over six feet tall.

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT IS

moving to bring about an act to regulate the management of the shrines and temples in Uttaranchal. It would cover the famed Himalayan tirthas of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Yamunotri and Gangotri shrines. The Char Dham Teerth Bachao Sangharsh Samiti has threatened to not allow reopening of the temples’ doors if the Government does not drop the plan, citing ulterior motives to create revenue centers and usurp the administrative powers of the priests and temple committees.

ANAND MOHAN SHARAN TEACHES on the faculty of engineering at the Memorial University

in Newfoundland, Canada. During a visit to Patna, Bihar, India, he offered that the Mahabharata war was fought between the Pandavas and Kauravas in 2156 BCE. He used computers and several kinds of software to analyze astronomical evidence. His date is yet another estimate among those ranging from 3137-1400 BCE.

INDIA’S NATIONAL MISSION FOR

Manuscripts was taken aback when the results of a survey projected a staggering five million manuscripts in India, making it the largest storehouse of the “records of yore” in the world. And the count is not the final tally, says Mrs. Sudha Gopalakrishnan, the director of the mission. Seven hundred thousands of these are from only three states—Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa. They came across a voluminous copy of the *Mahabharata* weighing a quintal—100 kilos!



HINDU RENAISSANCE TEAM

HINDUISM TODAY was founded January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami. 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 a resource for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, reports on events and encouraging others. to subscribe.

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IN MY OPINION

Behold the Old as New

Following the dharma passed on by our ancestors strengthens tradition and yields bliss

BY UDAYABHANU PANICKAR

MARK TWAIN, THE GREAT American writer, once wrote, “India is theadle of the human race, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and the great grandmother of tradition. The most valuable and the most instructive materials in the history of mankind are treasured up in India only.”

Hats off to Mr. Twain. He is correct. The treasure of India has no limits. It possesses everything man needs to know about God and the path to the realization of God. No other culture, country or collection of scriptures can claim to have such a vast reservoir of divine knowledge.

Our spiritual heritage cannot be contained in a single cult or a creed. It has never been asserted as a one dogma, nor is it viewed as a one path to salvation. It’s not even a religion as such—nor is it just a way of life. It is the divine knowledge of the Absolute Truth, which—when learned and practiced—can lead us to the experience of the ultimate bliss. It is a continuously evolving and absorbing science—a flexible body of knowledge centered around the soul’s quest for divine realization. And it makes provisions for all souls in this quest. Yet, it remains immeasurable as it safeguards the very purpose of all life everywhere and in all things. It is called Sanatana Dharma. The wise know it by no other name.

Human suffering began when the practice of dharma started to decline. If we do not personally enjoy peace, prosperity and happiness, which is a heritage made available to us by our ancestors, it is due to our neglect of dharma as revealed in tradition. Some abandon this tradition to seek an “Ultimate Truth” through the hasty application of self-made methods erroneously assumed to provide quick and easy access to the goal.

Those with correct knowledge of the Absolute do not deviate from dharma as taught by our ancestors. The rich may lose



UDAYABHANU PANICKAR

their luxuries. Servants may become the served or vice versa. Death may occur at any time. Regardless of circumstances or consequences, the wise—those with knowledge of “the Absolute”—will always adhere to the wisdom laid down by the great masters who have passed before us.

British historian Arnold Joseph Toynbee once said:

“At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way to salvation is the ancient Indian way. Here we have the attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family.”

This sentiment has never been as true as it is today. Man’s deepest foundation for spiritual progress is his perception of oneness. The existence of this oneness is the truth that assures all of us the eventual attainment of God Realization. This truth was laid down millions of years ago by our ancestors in the land known today as India. From time to time it was shaken and distorted. Yet it never fell, for it was based upon something invincible. All of the many challenges simply reinforced it.

So, let us dive into that vast ocean of divine knowing provided for us by our ancestors. Let us fill our minds with this knowledge, so that we are inclined to perform dharma and make ourselves ready for that experience of the ultimate bliss. Let us learn from our predecessors what we may not live long enough to learn from ourselves through our own mistakes. May we not waste time seeking something new when that which we need already exists. Let us adopt those established traditions which have endured the test of time. And, finally, let us pass the light of the past to the future for the liberation of innumerable souls yet to come.

Udayabhanu Panickar is a writer, editor, journalist and photographer who has lived in New York City for 26 years.

"Mom, Dad, Meet Elaine"

The challenges of mixed-religion marriages and how couples, families and community can best respond

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

MORE AND MORE HINDUS IN WESTERN countries are marrying non-Hindus. Many such couples meet while attending the same university. Those studying to be doctors often meet in medical school, future lawyers in law school and budding financial analysts in an MBA program. They marry and then often work in the same field.

This trend is occurring among Hindus born in Western countries or who immigrated at a young age to the United States, Canada, Australia, England or other European countries. Naturally, they identify strongly with the Western country and culture they grew up in and have little or no connection with the country of their parents' origin. As a Hindu from India, Sri Lanka, the Caribbean or elsewhere, they are a minority in school, and most of their friends, from grammar school through graduate school, are non-Hindus. Little wonder they so often marry outside their faith. As one young man told his parents who brought him to the US from India as a child, "If you didn't want me to become an American, why did you bring me here?"

The fact that many attend a university that is some distance from their parents' home, and therefore need to live in a dormitory or apartment with other students, also contributes to the likelihood of marrying a non-Hindu. Mixed religious marriages are more common among Hindu girls than boys. An unverified statistic we were given a few years ago for the Houston, Texas, area is that ninety percent of Hindu girls and fifty percent of Hindu boys marry a non-Hindu.

In a mixed religious marriage, there is a strong possibility that the children will not be raised as Hindus. Because they are not practicing Hindus, even though they may not have formally converted to another religion, they have joined the mass of people in the West who have no religion. Thus, a mixed marriage in which the children are not raised as Hindus is, in reality, a form of conversion—a type of conversion is rarely discussed or recognized. Over decades, this trend could eventually lead to the Hindu community's virtual disappearance into the mainstream of America, Canada, Australia or England. It's a serious matter that will define the future of Hinduism in the West.

Challenge of Parental Acceptance: A major difficulty these young couples can face is lack of acceptance by the Hindu parents. Sometimes the parents' negative reaction is so strong that they virtually disown their son or daughter. They even refuse to speak of the union, which then becomes a taboo, an unresolvable problem that creates tremendous strain and hurt among all members of the extended family. The non-Hindu parents may also react to their child's marrying outside the family's traditional religion.



Advice: In any and all cases, my guru's advice to parents is that if you truly love your child you automatically love whomever he or she loves. That's what love is. It is unconditional, not to be taken away when a grown son or daughter makes a major choice in life with which you disagree. Also, family problems need to be talked about and resolved—not swept under the carpet.

I advise couples that they can help prevent such unacceptance. For one thing, don't rush into the marriage. Give your parents time to adjust and ample opportunities to get to know

your prospective spouse and his or her parents. Use reason and avoid emotion when discussing the proposed marriage. Parents are impressed to see their son or daughter becoming a better, more mature person. Show them by your actions that the relationship with your spouse-to-be makes you a more responsible adult, more aware of your duties in life and better at fulfilling them. Above all, keep the dialog going.

Challenge of Religious Training: After marriage, the question of the children's religious upbringing can cause contention. Consider a Hindu man married to a Christian woman. The two naturally hold different opinions on what is best for their child's spiritual upbringing. Some couples conclude that it is best to expose the child to both religions, in this case Hinduism and Christianity. They hope they can bridge the gap by teaching both faiths equally and letting the boy or girl choose between the two when they are old enough to do so. However, our guru's experience in his fifty years of ministry was that this approach doesn't work. At the least, it confuses the child, who ends up with no strong religious identity. At worst, when the non-Hindu religion is aggressively critical of Hinduism, often expressed by the non-Hindu grandparents and others, the child may be turned against Hinduism for life.

My guru's experience was that those who have been educated in Christian schools have little respect for the swamis, pandits and gurus of Hinduism. They don't acknowledge the sanctity of temples. They may attend the temple to fulfill minimal social customs, but in their hearts they don't believe the Gods live in the temple, because they have been told in school that the stone Deities are just stones, *pujas* are primitive rituals and worshipping idols is against God's commandments.

A child's exposure to fundamentalist religions is particularly problematic. These faiths believe theirs is the only true religion and that all peoples should be converted to their faith. When such zealots find out that the child has a Hindu parent and attends



Hindu events, they may become openly aggressive in systematically criticizing Hinduism and turning the child against it. It is impossible for even tolerant parents to protect their children from such assaults, which are unforeseeable when the marriage begins.

Recently we heard of a Hindu woman whose husband joined a fundamentalist Christian group. He subsequently made his wife discard her sacred jewelry and refused to allow medical care for their children, insisting that God alone would heal them.

Advice: A young couple should discuss and decide the issue of which religion their children will be raised in before they are married. Religion may seem unimportant to both—a non-issue—before marriage. However, for many couples it takes on profound significance when the first child is born. Should the child receive the name-giving sacrament in a Hindu temple? Will he or she be baptized in a Christian church? What religious and ethical beliefs do we teach the child? Should we teach belief in reincarnation or that we only live one life? We know couples who thought these issues were trivial at the time of marriage. But when their children were old enough to attend temple or church, the dispute became divi-

Awkward moment: Our artist illustrates the first meeting of a potential non-Hindu daughter-in-law. The son has arrived unannounced at his parents' home, and introduces his fiancée, Elaine. The father, openly lamenting the prospect, is consoled by his wife.

sive enough to cause divorce.

Challenge of Community Acceptance: Another problem is lack of acceptance in the Hindu community and at local temples. If, for example, the wife is non-Hindu, women devotees of the temple may deliberately make her feel like an unwelcome outsider. We know of some mixed religious couples who have experienced such shunning. As a result, they stopped attending the temple.

Advice: The phenomenon of mixed religious marriage, being a major trend, needs to be thought about, discussed and embraced with compassion. It is too large and crucial to be overlooked. The future of the Hindu diaspora is at stake. As a minimal solution, one person at each temple can be appointed to work with mixed couples to assure they feel welcome in the group.

Challenge of Becoming a Hindu: Another problem is the misconception that you have to be born a Hindu to be a Hindu. There are certainly Brahmanical traditions that do not accept that non-Hindus can become Hindus. However, many Saivite, Shakta and Vaishnava traditions have historically extended their arms and welcomed others into the Hindu fold.

If there is no channel for the non-Hindu partner to become a Hindu, the likelihood increases that the Hindu will convert to the spouse's religion or fall away from religion altogether. Mixed marriage outside of India has been a part of Hinduism for as long as Hindu merchants, laborers and professionals have been migrating to foreign countries. The Hindu communities formed in these countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, have accepted and brought non-Hindu spouses into Hinduism for many generations.

Advice: Temples need to decide if they want to have a program for bringing non-Hindu spouses into Hinduism. Temples that choose to have such programs can establish, as a regular part of their educational offerings, special classes to prepare and qualify non-Hindu spouses to formally enter Hinduism through receiving the name-giving sacrament.

Challenge of Raising Hindu Children in the West: Finally, let me share some thoughts for Hindu couples living in the West who have young children. If you consider it important that your grandchildren be Hindus, you need to give careful thought to the religious training you are providing your children as they grow up.

Advice: If you teach your children the misconception that all religions are the same, that it doesn't make a difference which religion you follow, it will be more likely that your child will marry a non-Hindu, and less likely your grandchildren will be raised Hindu. Many parents these days hear their grown children say, "You always told me all religions are one. So what difference does the religion of my spouse make?" (The issue of radical universalism is discussed in detail in the Insight Section of this issue.) However, if you teach your children that religions are different and Hinduism is unique and great, then chances are much higher that your grandchildren will carry on your Hindu heritage. To help ensure this, it is crucial that you integrate religion into the family routine. Have a home shrine at which the entire family worships daily. Take the family to the local temple once a week and for festivals. Make sure your children acquire a good intellectual understanding of Hindu traditions and are shown how Hinduism can benefit their life in so many practical ways.

Hindus have been facing marriage outside of their village, language, caste or *jati* for thousands of years. But such marriages still perpetuated Hinduism. Marriages outside of Sanatana Dharma pose a new threat, one that seriously impacts our religion's future and deserves, therefore, our most thoughtful responses.

LETTERS

Jai Motilal Banarsidass!

OH, MY GOD! WHAT A WONDERFUL STORY on Motilal Banarsidass's family tradition ("Honoring a Century of Excellence in Publishing," Apr/May/Jun, 2005). Not only was it a colorful treat for the eyes but an extraordinary delight for all who read it. Our friends and relatives, who have known us for years, are all ready for a party. Indeed, we are all indebted to the Himalayan Academy family for the interest shown and to Rajiv Malik for his meticulous efforts in putting the article together. There have been so many write-ups on Motilal Banarsidass by Indian media, but yours was par excellence. Perhaps your organization is gifted with extraordinary writing skills.

SMT. LILA JAIN, N.P. JAIN, J.P. JAIN
AND ALL THREE R.P. JAINS
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Rudra Veena Saved

I HAVE RECEIVED AN HONOR FROM THE respected Mrs. Diptiji Chaudhary, Mayor of Pune Municipal Corporation, regarding my most valuable work in Indian classical music, giving concerts and popularizing Lord Shiva Shankar's ancient instrument, mother of all stringed musical instruments, known as the Rudra Veena, throughout the world. Truly speaking, this is all due to the big efforts of HINDUISM TODAY ("To Save a Soulful Art Form," Jan/Feb/Mar, 2005). A good friend broadcast the article in English, and it was translated into Japanese and broadcast along with twenty minutes of our Rudra Veena music on a radio station in Tokyo, Japan, on January 20. I thank Lord Siva for giving me such an opportunity on this planet.

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Diabetes, Diet and Exercise

I was pleasantly surprised recently at a *satsang* following the passing of my mother to hear a pundit talking about health matters with regard to diet and exercise. As a medically trained person living in a land where diabetes, high cholesterol and heart disease are rife among Indians, I wish that every opportunity were used to emphasise the basics of healthy living. This logic is absent in the eating patterns of our community. Most of our dishes are too sweet, sugar being unnecessarily added to alter the natural taste, e.g., of pumpkin; too salty; and too oily, e.g., deep-fried *pakoras*, *phulorie*, *saheen*, etc. *Mohanbhog* and *jeelabi* are both sweet and fried. It is often said that a little won't hurt, but how do we measure what is little for the individual? Is there a divine rule which prevents us from offering mainly or merely

fruits as prasad? Many pundits are known to me professionally on account of the complications from their diabetes, high cholesterol, cardiovascular disease and weight problems, the treatment of which is often non-curative. The limitation of complications relies on efforts at prevention, and this requires awareness, a balance between diet and exercise along with medication where necessary. A healthy mind requires a healthy body in order to fulfill its earthly purpose. Pundits occupy a position of influence which affords the ideal opportunity of emphasizing the necessity for good physical health alongside spiritual well-being. Indeed, one impacts on the other.

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What about Hindus in Sikkim?

CONGRATULATIONS ON PRODUCING A VERY good magazine. I have become interested in the social issue of religious conversion. I read the article on Nagaland ("Fighting to Preserve a Tribal Heritage," Jan/Feb/Mar, 2005), which I was not aware of. I am from Sikkim and have also observed the trend of conversion of Lepcha tribals to Christianity. The Lepcha language and culture have become endangered. I kindly request that you cover Sikkim and generate awareness of the issues the people here are facing so that some of the Lepcha population who have not converted will take initiatives to preserve their tradition and culture.

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Why Live with Your Family?

INDIAN MOVIE ICON AISHWARYA RAI WAS invited on the David Letterman Show a few days ago. He introduced her as often called one of the most beautiful women in the world, and the most famous actress known to billions of people around the world, but still unknown to Americans. Letterman asked her, "You still live with your parents. Is this common in India?" She said, "Well, we don't have to take our parents' permission to have dinner with them." Of course, the audience applauded. What I'd like to say is that she does not know that here two cultures are coming together. In the Christian culture in America, when children become 18, they usually leave and make their own life. Most of my American colleagues couldn't wait for their children to become 18 and leave. My daughter lived with me until she got married at 28, and a couple of my American friends used to ask me why I didn't ask her to move out. I used to tell them that if she moves out on her own, it would hurt my feelings. But

after she got married, she moved into her own home with her husband. This is an Indian custom. Hindu philosophy is based on the *Vedas*, which teach holistic living—a tight family where each person does their dharma (duty). This is a group family system, which promotes joint living—rather than individualistic living—where human beings are the happiest, and has the lowest divorce rates. In the joint family system, children and grandparents are the happiest. I think every system has its good and bad points.

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About Arranged Marriage

I HAVE READ MANY OF YOUR ARTICLES ON marriage and cannot believe how backward and narrow-minded the entire Indian society is. One thing I would like to point out is that you repeatedly mention that arranged marriages are better than love marriages because there is a much lower rate of divorce. However, let me point out that a society that does not allow partners to meet before getting married certainly does not tolerate divorce. Having been surrounded by Hindu arranged-marriage couples my whole life, I assure you they are not divorced because of societal expectations, not because they have a happy marriage. I know someone who is married to an alcoholic, a disgusting man, and she is literally just waiting for him to die so she can be free. That sounds very stable.

Also, having seen Western couples in their 50s and 70s, I realize what a mutually respectful relationship consists of. Women in Indian culture are treated like inferior beings who just cook and clean for their demanding husbands. When they have guests, they have to serve the men and not actually sit down as an equal on the dining table.

What I found incredibly ironic is that you say that Western marriages fail because of in-laws. That is absolutely hilarious because just about every Indian woman I know has had mother-in-law problems. What is even more ironic is that I know so many arranged marriages where the parents arranged the marriage because they are close to the parents of the groom/bride, but after the marriage they have a falling out and can't stand each other. I know one girl whose parents-in-law don't even give her permission to visit her parents whenever she wants. That sounds like wholesome, traditional family values to me! Just because the Indian society is good at keeping up appearances does not mean that the household is happy.

You only need to go through the Indian matrimonial websites to see what values they deem important, for example: "Wanted 20-25-year-old female, very good looking, tall,

fair/very fair, educated, from well-off family." You claim that this method of looking for a partner is superior when it is completely and utterly superficial. Given that most proposed couples only meet once or twice, there is no way they can learn about their personalities and care for each other. So what is their decision based on? Mainly, if not only, physical attraction, and money.

While I know it is impossible to change deep-set, backward, racist and sexist ideas, hopefully in time Indian society will progress and start treating women and children with more

respect, give people more autonomy and allow them to experience their own life, instead of just worrying about keeping up appearances for a superficial society. It's just sad that we are about 200 years behind the rest of the world.

VIJAYSHREE V.
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Correction

✓ The Lord Ganesha *murti* for the Richmond Hill Hindu Temple was gifted by a devotee of the temple, not by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, as incorrectly stated

in our Jan/Feb/Mar, 2005, issue, "Toronto, Canada: Hinduism Arrives in Style."

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

Letters, Hinduism Today
107 Kaholalele Road
Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA
or faxed to: (808) 822-4351
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Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of Hinduism Today.
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Forging a Glorious Future Together

Become a Benefactor: Include HINDUISM TODAY in Your Estate Plan

WE, THE HINDUISM TODAY STAFF in Hawaii, always feel humbled by the scope of the magazine's task. Imagine trying to represent and do justice to an endlessly vast Hindu tradition! It is a grand and ambitious mission which inspires and motivates our dedicated, worldwide team to keep doing their best, and to strive constantly for growth. We give serious thought to the future, and to establishing the means for growth—for this current issue, the next issue, next year, decades and, yes, even centuries from now.

With his remarkable far-sightedness, our magazine's founder, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, established a *Hinduism Today Production Fund* (of Hindu Heritage Endowment) to provide a constant and growing source of funds to subsidize the production of the magazine far into the future. Then, his successor and current publisher, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, established the Benefactor program, by which a supporter can significantly help this effort with a gift he will make *in the future*. He becomes a benefactor by making the *Fund* a beneficiary in his estate plan of a gift of \$5,000 or more—either in his will, in his life insurance, in a revocable living trust or charitable remainder trust.

We urge you to consider becoming a benefactor of HINDUISM TODAY and thus share in this work and mission, now and far into the future. Please contact us for a benefactor flyer (pictured).

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THE HINDUISM TODAY PRODUCTION FUND

Join Us to Strengthen
The Future of Hinduism
Around the Globe

Benefactors: Dr. S. Sunder and his family, California (top), and David Wiekrykas, Michigan (above), felt grateful to HINDUISM TODAY and wanted to help in a way that would go on forever. (right) Our flyer explains how to become a benefactor.

QUOTES & QUIPS

“It takes a lot of courage to be happy all the time.”

Satguru Siva Yogaswami (1872-1964), Sri Lanka's most renowned contemporary spiritual master

There was once a time when all human beings were Gods, but they so abused their divinity that Brahma decided to take it away from them and hide it where it could never be found. Where to hide their divinity was the question. So Brahma called a council of the Gods to help him decide. “Let’s bury it deep in the Earth,” offered the Gods. But Brahma answered, “No, that will not do, because humans will dig into the Earth and find it.” Then the Gods said, “Let’s sink it in the deepest ocean.” But Brahma responded, “No, not there, for they will learn to dive into the ocean and will find it.” Then the Gods said, “Let’s take it to the top of the highest mountain and hide it there.” But once again Brahma replied, “No, that will not do either, because they

will eventually climb every mountain and once again take up their divinity.” Then the Gods gave up and lamented, “We do not know where to hide it, because it seems that there is no place on Earth or in the sea that human beings will not eventually reach.” Brahma thought for a long time and then proffered, “Here is what we will do. We will hide their divinity deep in the center of their own being, for humans will never think to look for it there.” All the Gods agreed that this was the perfect hiding place, and the deed was done. And since that time humans have been going up and down the Earth, digging, diving, climbing and exploring—searching for something already within themselves.

An old Hindu legend

Love gives and gives and gives and seeks no return. Therefore, love has nothing to lose—and consequently, nothing to fear.

Dada J.P. Vaswani, spiritual head of *Sadhu Vaswani Mission*

The bonds of dharma do not bind but promise sweet liberation. **His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj**, spiritual head of *BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha*

The world will change for the better when people decide they are sick and tired of being sick and tired of the way the world is and decide to change themselves.

Sidney Madwed, motivational speaker

Kumar: Mom, remember how you always

DID YOU KNOW?

Indians Are Among America's Most Affluent

Socioeconomic Statistics And Demographics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics Latinos	Asian Indians	Chinese	Filipinos	Japanese	Koreans	Vietnamese
Not Proficient in English	0.7	0.8	30.3	8.4	31.3	7	10	32.9	40.4
Less than High School	15.3	29.1	48.5	12.6	23.6	13.1	9.5	13.8	37.8
College Degree	25.3	13.6	9.9	64.4	46.3	42.8	40.8	43.6	13.8
Advanced Degree	3	1.2	1.6	12.5	8.5	4.3	4.6	5.6	2.5
Median Personal Income	\$23,640	\$16,300	\$14,400	\$26,000	\$20,000	\$23,000	\$26,000	\$16,300	\$16,000
Median Family Income	\$48,500	\$33,300	\$36,000	\$69,470	\$58,300	\$65,400	\$61,630	\$48,500	\$51,500
Living in Poverty	9.4	24.9	21.4	8.2	13.1	6.9	8.6	15.5	13.8
Public Assistance	1.3	4.5	3.5	0.9	1.8	1.6	0.9	1.6	4.8
Homeowner	78.2	54.4	52.4	56.8	65.7	67.6	70.8	51.9	60
In Labor Force	63.6	59.8	61.5	71	65.1	68.3	58	62	63.5
High Skill Occupation	21.4	12.3	9.6	51.6	41.9	29.7	32	27	22.6

Numbers: According to the US Census, Asian Indians (of which about 83% are Hindus, following India's religious demographics) are the most affluent and most educated immigrant community in the USA. The above figures are percentages unless otherwise noted.

Frank and Ernest



worried that I'd break your best teacups if I played with them? **Amma:** Yes, I remember. **Kumar:** Well, your worries are over.

Truth is one, paths are many. Stick to one path, but do not say to others that this is the only one. Recognize all other paths and respect them. **Swami Satchidananda** (1914-2002), founder of *Integral Yoga Institute and Satchidananda Ashram*

Receptivity is the ability to accept all experiences of life without reacting to them. **Mata Amritanandamayi Ma**, Kerala-based hugging saint

Two Hindu swamis were conversing. One said to the other, “How did you like my latest book, ‘The Art of Levitation?’” His companion replied, “It kept me up all night.”

There is no such thing as a problem without a gift for you in its hands. We seek problems because we need their gifts. **Richard Bach**, American author, in *Illusions*

Try to treat with equal love all the people with whom you have relations. Thus the abyss between ‘myself’ and ‘yourself’ will be filled in, which is the goal of all religious worship. **Anandamayi Ma** (1896-1982), God-intoxicated yogini and mystic Bengali saint

A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops. On my desk, I have a work station.

Like the household fire, devotees seek the glory of the Lord even from afar and enshrine it in their inner chamber for enlight-

enment. The glory of our Lord is full of splendor, all-illuminative and worthy to be honored in every heart. **Rig Veda 7.1.2**

If a diplomat says yes, he means maybe. If a diplomat says maybe, he means no. If a diplomat says no, he ain't no diplomat! **Andre Gabor**, economist

The important thing is not to think much, but to love much; and so, do that which best stirs you to love. **Gurumayi Chidvilas-ananda**, spiritual head of *Siddha Yoga Dham Association*

When culture is flooding out of the temple, our actions are productive and our minds are creative, our speech is pure, our hearts rejoice and we become good citizens. Religion makes us good citizens, because we are peaceful inside and want peace in our land. Peace comes first from the individual. It is unrealistic to expect peace from our neighbors unless we are peaceful first, unless we make ourselves peaceful through right living, right worship and right religious culture in the home. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927-2001), founder of *HINDUISM TODAY*

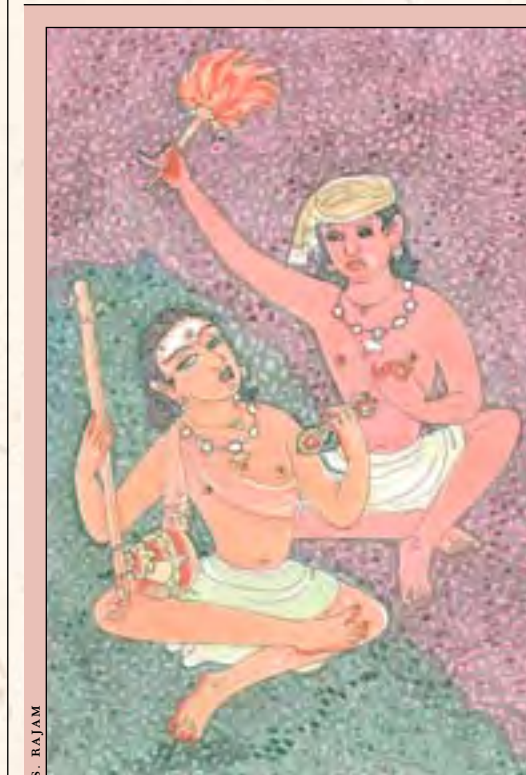
Avoidance Of Anger

Tirukural 301: It is restraint that restrains rage when it can injure. If it cannot harm, what does restraint really matter?

Tirukural 303: Forget anger toward all who have offended you, for it gives rise to teeming troubles.

Tirukural 305: If a man be his own guard, let him guard himself against rage. Left unguarded, his own wrath will annihilate him.

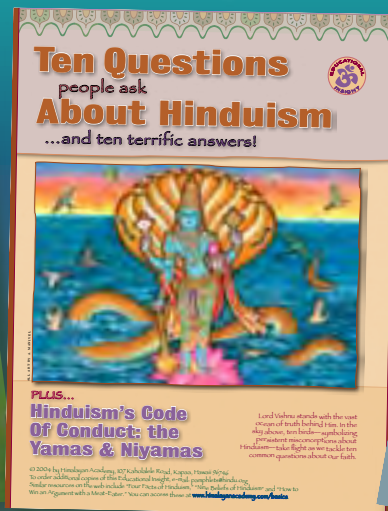
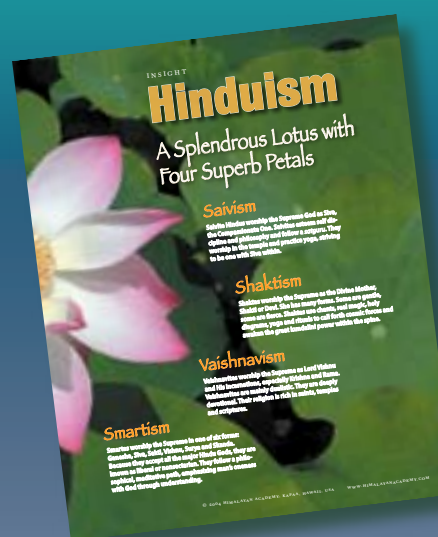
Tirukural 308: Though others inflict wrongs as painful as flaming torches, it is good if a man can refrain from inflammatory tantrums.



Are your associates confused about Hinduism?



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FROM THE VEDAS

Invoking the Divine Vital Forces

The *Rig Veda* Rishis pray for the blessings of Agni, God as Fire

THE AGNI HOTRA FIRE CEREMONY IS man's oldest religious ceremony. Altars prepared according to designs specified by the Hindu Vedas are to be found as far away as Iran, and some say, even in Northern Europe, near the Baltic Sea. This form of worship, also called Yajna ("Sacrifice"), lives on with the ever new and dynamic vitality of Fire itself. It is performed daily and weekly in homes and temples throughout the world by Hindus of virtually all denominations. Our most ancient scripture, the *Rig Veda*, has thousands of Vedic mantras dedicated to Agni, the Lord of Fire. The vision and spirit behind them are foundational to Hindu faith and practice. Here are excerpts from the *Rig Veda*, 1.19-22.

Earnestly we invoke you to dwell in the innermost chambers of our heart, to accept our loving devotions to you. Please come to us, O adorable God, with your vital forces.

No one except you is divine and devoid of malignity. No one knows who causes the great waters to come down and who presides over the eternal laws; please come to us, O adorable Lord, with the vital forces.

No one knows, who is fierce and mighty, who commands the rain to come down and who has unconquerable strength. Please come to us, O adorable God, with vital forces, to embrace us and enlighten.

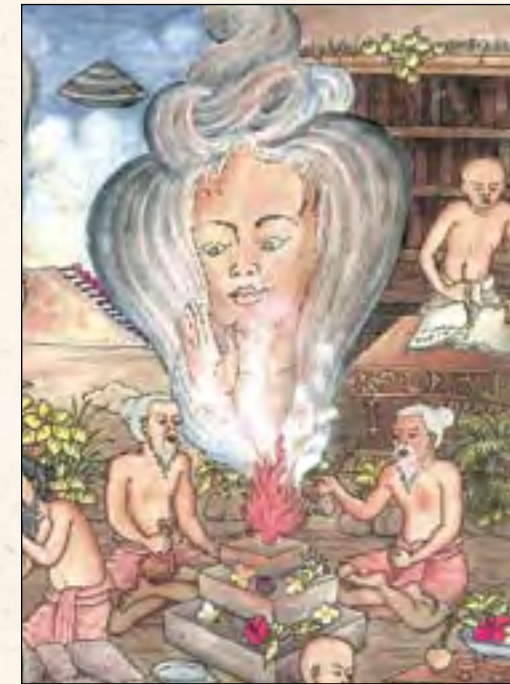
O adorable God, may you come to us with vital forces, brilliant, terrific and yet benevolent and protective. O Lord of spiritual fire, may you be with us with vital forces working behind the luminaries in the radiant celestial regions beyond the sun.

O adorable God, please be with us with vital forces which scatter the clouds, and set in motion the cosmic forces. Please be with us with vital forces which work through the clouds, through the rays of the sun and with their vigour agitate the ocean.

O adorable God, may you be with us with your vital forces; I pour out the devotional prayers, sweet like elixir, which may lovingly be accepted by you and enjoyed. We invoke the resplendent, adorable Lord, the preserver of the devotees' spiritual fire, offering heartfelt expressions of devotion. Strengthened by that faith, we invoke the resplendent adorable Lord. May He be with us hither to awaken divine consciousness and happiness.

May the mighty resplendent and adorable presiding Lord render the fiends (men dangerous to society) powerless and make sterile the devourers of the virtuous.

O supreme and glorious God, preserver of the virtuous, may you continue to be the bestower of truth and justice, stationed in a po-



The invocation of God through the Vedic fire ceremony, depicted as performed in an ancient monastery

sition where you have a full knowledge of the consequences of our actions. May you bestow happiness upon us.

Awaken the pair of mental and vital powers. Yoke them every morning in work and worship. May they experience the joy of spiritual eminence. We invoke these divine vital powers animating the chariot of the human body. May they touch the height of spiritual radiance.

We call you, O vital powers; come with your swift and sweet controlling power, like a wet whiplash, to lead mankind to its ultimate destination. O vital powers, the innermost chamber of the prayerful devotee, to which you are proceeding in your car, is not far from you. For preservation, I invoke the divine creator, imbued with golden radiance. Only realization of His nature leads one to the final destination. Worship the eternal divine creator alone for protection; with the aid of His imperishable laws we can achieve our noble aspirations.

We invoke the source of light, the divine creator, bestower of a wonderful home full of wealth and wisdom. May our friends assemble and sit down to

"We invoke the source of light, the divine creator, bestower of a wonderful home full of wealth and wisdom."

pay homage to the divine creator, for only He can bestow divine wisdom.

O adorable God, may you depute all the vital virtues of cosmos and Nature's bounties to embellish our devotional prayers.

O adorable God, may all the lovable virtues, generosity, wisdom, knowledge and intellect gather here to promote our well-being and guidance.

May these divine virtues, full of infinite vigour and preserving faculties, be with us in all our activities for our protection and happiness.

I invoke all virtues, venerability, resplendence and adoration, O glorious God, for spiritual bliss and felicity.

Under the auspices of Veda Pratishthana, New Delhi, in the late 1970s, renowned Vedic scholars SWAMI SATYA PRAKASH SARASVATI and PANDIT SATYAKAM VIDYALANKAR completed the first ever Indian English translation of the entire four *Vedas*.

The *Vedas* are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, *sruti*, 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.

INDIA

Karnataka's Revival

How one gifted leader has transformed his state's educational, social and religious landscape



Swamiji: Sri Balagangadharanatha Mahaswami

BY RAJIV MALIK, DELHI

IAGADGURU SRI SRI BALAGANGADHARANATHA SWAMI TOOK charge as the 71st spiritual head of Sri Adichunchanagiri Mutt in 1974 at the age of 30. Twenty million members of the Vokkaligas community, mostly farmers, look to this ancient monastery for both spiritual and mundane guidance. Sri Swamiji's 70 predecessors oversaw Hindu temples, managed endowment lands, taught the monastery's Natha tradition and assisted the community in every way, even to the settling of disputes between neighbors. Most of those swamis lived during the time of kings who saw to the economic well being of the community.

Dharma's future: Students of the Sanskrit school sing religious songs every evening with youthful devotion

But under the last two centuries of rule by invaders, the entire area had suffered both economically and spiritually.

Sri Swamiji set out to uplift the Vokkaligas community through creating access for the rural community to education and health care—the two most pressing needs. Even given the huge base of support, which includes a number of wealthy devotees, Sri Swamiji's accomplishments over three decades are astounding. As of 2005, he has built 350 government-recognized and highly regarded schools with 60,000 students, a significant number on full scholarship. The



One of 350 Institutions: Located in a valley of 100 acres surrounded by beautiful hills, this premier school caters to non-resident Indians from around the world

schools include what are now some of Karnataka state's foremost engineer and medical schools (both allopathic and ayurvedic). Sri Swamiji is involved in a number of other programs, including free feeding for 10,000 people a day, the planting of 20 million trees, the on-going construction of the Sri Bhairava Temple at the ancient monastery headquarters, and the operation of the state's largest Sanskrit school, where Sri Swamiji was himself the first teacher.

HINDUISM TODAY sent me to Bangalore in March, 2005, to report Sri Swamiji's story. The magazine's founder, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, and Sri Swamiji had a long history of friendship, with Sri Balagangadharanatha Swami instrumental in helping with construction of the Iraivan Temple at the magazine's headquarters in Hawaii. The 11-acre carving site for the all-stone temple is located in Bangalore on property on loan from Adichunchanagiri Mutt.

Sri Swamiji's efforts have focused on the basic necessities—*anna*, *akshara* and *arogya*, food, education and health. Spirituality pervades his work and institutions, but there are limits to what can be done in government-recognized schools for teaching

Hinduism. Nevertheless, there has been a decided impact on the religious life of the students and even the surrounding community.

Swami Nirmalananda, a disciple of Sri Swamiji, was my guide for a visit to the Jagadguru Chander Shekar school. It is about 50 miles from Bangalore and has about 700 students. He said, "Just opposite this school is a huge chunk of land which was acquired by Christian institutions. They were carrying out conversion-related activities, in a low-key manner, in the name of social service. But with the coming up of our institution, they have all but stopped their conversion work. And this is not just the case here. Wherever our institutions, managed by Hindu swamis, have gained strength and popularity, they have adversely impacted this conversion business."

I arrived in Bangalore on the evening of the 12th and spent the next five days racing from ashram to school to college to teaching hospital dumbfounded by the extent of Sri Swamiji's empire. He maintains such a schedule nearly continuously, circulating through his 30 monastic centers scattered across the state. The swami in charge of each center oversees up to several dozen in-

stitutions. When Swamiji's schedule became impossibly tight a few years back, devotees bought him a helicopter to use as needed, though mostly he goes by car.

I was rapidly introduced to Sri Swamiji's work by none other than the Hindu cab driver who drove me from the airport to Adichunchanagiri Mutt's Bangalore branch in Vijayanagar. Learning my destination brought forth a torrent of praise. "The Mutt is a holy place run by an eminent guru," he said. After that, for one full hour he gave a nonstop lecture on the activities of the Mutt, Sri Swamiji and the good work being done for the downtrodden and the poor. The driver does not belong to the Vokkaligas farming community, who make up Sri Swamiji's core supporters. Yet, the remote village from which he hails has tremendously benefited from the Mutt's educational institutions. So at the outset it was clear that the Mutt's reach is much beyond just one community.

At the Bangalore branch I received a warm welcome from Sri Sivaraman, Public Relations Officer, Shri C. Hanumegowda, Former Director of Public Instruction with the Karnataka Government, presently working as the administrative officer of Sri Adichunchanagiri Mutt, and Dr. Dodda Range Gowda, an authority on Kannada literature and the editor of the Mutt's monthly publication, *Shree Kshetra Adichunchanagiri*. After an hour's briefing on the Mutt's activities, I had the privilege of meeting personally with

Sri Swamiji. I found him affectionate, loving, charming and down to earth.

The next morning I interviewed him for two hours [see sidebar, page 22]. Though he has a good command over English, he would keep switching between Kannada and English. Ever-smiling Swamiji answered a wide gamut of questions, in his characteristic soft voice. He began by explaining, "I am the 71st Pithadhipathi (head of the Mutt). Our lineage is the Nath Sampradaya, connected with Matsyendranatha and Gorakshanatha (circa 9th century ce). My guru was Ramanand Natha Swami, though I also trained at the Kailash Ashrama of Sri Tiruchi Mahaswamigal for six years. Mahaswamigal created such an atmosphere that his disciples became very good sannyasins." Sri Swamiji himself has 35 *sannyasin* disciples from all castes and communities of Hinduism. "These *sannyasins* are educated in Sanskrit colleges in *Vedas*, *Agamas* and other scriptures. Most are well-qualified post-graduates."

Sri Swamiji took joy in describing his 20-day moral education program for rural youth which is given free of cost. To date, 5,000 boys and girls have taken the course, learning religious songs, yoga, meditation and how to do social service. He said, "They are taught how to mingle with the poor, how to serve the nation, how to develop a feeling of devotion towards God and their parents and maintain good relations with their siblings. After the training, many are able to teach

others, and they have started conveying my message to the masses all over Karnataka."

Once a year they celebrate a week-long festival, the Sarva Dharma Sammelan, attended by more than one million people, mostly from the rural areas. There are exhibitions, lectures on moral education and Hinduism, as well as a folk-art conference attended by 15,000 artists brought for the occasion. Swamiji added, "We have many plans to rejuvenate the temples and develop and promote Hinduism."

Sri Swamiji then described his community marriage programs in which 15,000 couples are wed each year. "Food, shelter and the wedding hall are all provided free to the families, saving them hundreds of thousands of rupees each. We set the most auspicious date. They have the additional advantage of the divine presence of the *satguru* who is there to bless the newly married couples."

I asked Sri Swamiji for his observations on Hindus' living abroad. He said that at first they are happy, they make money. Their children do well, but then go out of hand in their teenage years. "The parents lose their own youthful vigor, brightness and all those things, and ultimately they lose their children also. With empty hands they return to their homes. This is their situation." In response, Sri Swamiji started BGS International School in Bangalore, and later added one in Delhi and Mangalore. These schools cater to the children of parents living in the

West, and to the well-off in India. "BGS," short for "Bala Gangadharanatha Swami," has become a trademark for top quality education. "From five years old and up," Swamiji beamed, "they can study in our school, learn about India and maintain a touch with our ancient wisdom, tradition and culture. We give free education in villages. In rural areas we collect money according to the local standards. In cities like Delhi we charge fees according to the standard of the people living there. After all, we have to bring money back to the rural areas. We maintain 12,000 employees all over India, mainly in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu."

Though Swamiji is a strict vegetarian, as are most other Hindu saints, he does not aggressively advocate vegetarianism for his devotees. He says he would like them to exercise more control over their thoughts rather than just focusing on what to eat and what not to eat. But if at any stage one feels a particular diet does not suit him, the person should amend his dietary habits.

He complained of "double-talking" politicians. "For the sake of votes, they come seeking our blessings. But when they get on the stage, they speak another language. There is no ethics or dharma in politics today. Dharma should be in politics and not politics in dharma, just as milk should be in a glass and not the glass in the milk."

As our interview concluded, Swamiji directed visit various educational institutions

around Bangalore with Swami Nirmalanandaji, who is in charge of Chikkaballapura Mutt and many educational institutions under the Mutt's jurisdiction.

Our first destination was Jagadguru Shri Chandrashekharnatha Swamiji Rural English School [named after the 69th pontiff of the order] located in the lap of nature at Melekote Village, 50 km from Bangalore. Everywhere I went there was an instant rapport with the swamis as each one had met Gurudeva, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami. I was amazed to see the well-maintained building and lush green lawns of SJC. This school matched the best of public schools of Delhi in terms of infrastructure and facilities. What was most surprising is the extremely low tuition fees. Just \$45 takes care of one year's expenses for a child. I pay as much each month for my two children to attend a well known public school in West Delhi as they charge for a whole year at SJC. Various scholarships are also available. Twenty-five percent of the children, from poor and disadvantaged families, study free of cost.

At the SJC Institute of Technology's ladies hostel and the BGS Rural English School, Agalagurki, situated on the same campus, again the buildings and ground grand, well maintained and spread over a huge area. Swami Nirmalanandaji told me that Shri Balagangadaranatha Swamiji takes personal interest in finalizing the layout plan of each and every institution. "If you ask him, he

can tell you the exact measurement of any of the pillars that you see in the buildings."

We spoke to many students about life at college and the hostel. Most noted how important the weekly Monday morning prayers are in helping them remained focused on their studies. They were happy to add that a lady yoga teacher teaches them meditation and hatha yoga. In the evening, the girls enjoy watching television with evening snacks and coffee served from a high-tech kitchen.

A few kilometers away is Chikkaballapura Mutt, our final destination for the day. The Mutt and the engineering college are spread over one-hundred acres of lush, green surroundings. We reached there around 7 pm and participated in an hour-long session of devotional songs and worship, an everyday affair at the Mutt performed by students of the engineering college led by Swami Nirmalananda. Each of Swamiji's 40 Mutts has a temple honoring a different Deity. At Chikkaballapura Lord Hanuman presides. The present Hanuman Temple is small, but work on a huge temple spread over several acres is about to begin.

After seeking Hanuman's blessings, we proceeded the next day, March 14, to Sri Jagadguru Chandrashekharnatha Swamiji Institute of Technology, situated on sixty acres of land 50 kms from Bangalore. The huge buildings, hi-tech laboratories, and 40,000-book library left me mesmerized. Everything is professionally managed. The highlight of our visit



Rural temple program: Sri Swamiji inspects chariots prepared as part of his program to supply one each, free of charge, to Karnataka's rural temples



Schools for the bright and for the challenged: (left) SJB Institute of Technology; (above) children at the BGS Residential Blind School in Archkarahalli



INTERVIEW

On Praise, Youth, Science, Guru & More

Sri Balagangadharanatha Swami shares the wisdom of his ancient Natha lineage

Hinduism Today's correspondent, Rajiv Malik, interviewed Sri Sri Balagangadharanatha Swami. Here are some excerpts:

GOD IS EVERYWHERE. GOD IS FOUND EVEN AMONG children, wife, mother and sister. We appreciate God through hymns and uttering His names. If we praise those close to us as well, definitely it will lead to a peaceful life. When we appreciate them, they also will take care of us. If you praise your wife, she will make two additional dishes for you, out of sheer happiness. Say some good words of appreciation to your parents and children, and you will make them more happy. Your home will become a *svarga*, heaven, just by speaking good words and genuinely praising others. When it can get you such wonderful results, why should you be a miser in using good words or appreciating others? So my message is to always be happy and cheerful and say good words to others.

Over the years we have trained our youth in a wrong way. Today the youth have become addicted to computers and television sets. It is our fault. The minds of our youth have been badly damaged. It is our duty to correct the youth, but it is very difficult to make this correction now. That is why we have to forcefully take them to the centers of devotion, such as temples, and then give them training with love and affection. It is sad to say that it all started with both the parents going to the office in the morning and coming back at night without bothering what will happen to their children. They put their children in the hands of people who do baby-sitting. If our whole family cannot maintain one child, how do we expect that just one or two ladies will properly maintain 20-50 children who are left in their custody? In the past we used to have a joint family system, and such problems were not there. Today we are just going after money. Children are suffering as the working parents get to spend very little time with them. If grandparents are there, they can also look after the child. But, unfortunately, the joint family system is vanishing. In the olden days, they used to say that every house must have an old family member. It is unfortunate that we are pushing the old people out of homes and putting them in old-age homes.

After studying science, youth start getting confused. We are not using science to learn how to live life in a better manner or to understand religion in a scientific way. Scientific knowledge today is devoid of devotion. It is a dry subject and does not give happiness or peace. Unless materialism blends with spiritualism, there cannot be restoration of peace and tranquility on the Earth. Therefore, science should be for the benefit of man and not for the destruction of the Earth.

My guru used to narrate this story: "Once there was a disciple who wanted to know the truth. His guru told him to go to a pond, look inside it and then report back what he had seen. The first day, he went there and reported that he only saw fish. The next day, he

came back and told his guru that again he saw only fish, and that the pond only has fish. He was sent back a third time and told to observe more keenly. This time he came back saying he had seen diamonds and some other precious things in the pond. Again he was sent back. This time he said that he saw many images on the water, such as of birds flying over the pond, clouds and more. And on the last day he went to the same pond and came back with the answer that he saw only the water." Truth is like this. So many obstacles would be there in the beginning but ultimately truth will be realized just as that disciple finally saw the water. Without being blessed by a guru, we will not be able to see many things. The guru is a bridge between the devotee and Lord Siva. There is "God" and there is "Atman," the soul, and in order to know this, the assistance of a guru is quite necessary. The way of devotion, *bhakti marga*, is the only way by which we can get to the truth.

People come in your life to settle the past-life relationships they have had with you. The cause and effect theory is very much applicable in such cases. Without a cause, there is not an effect. Some reason behind the association has to be there. Interestingly, once the past relationship account is settled, such people can simply vanish from your life. One should not grieve the loss of such people, as they are bound to leave us once the purpose of their relationship is served. For example, when the sun sets in the evening a multitude of birds come to a big tree. They spend the night at the tree, and when the sun rises they fly away, leaving the tree behind. For that, why should the tree grieve? Our Mutt is like a big tree to which students, disciples and devotees keep coming, but they leave us when the work is over. Why worry over their leaving? Is it not the duty of the tree to provide shade and shelter to everyone who comes under its branches? It provides shade and shelter without expecting anything from those who come to it. And when they leave, the tree does not worry.

When the fruit or leaf is ripe, it attains the saffron color, the color worn by *sannyasin* monks. This color is the sign which declares that the person wearing it has no attachment to any worldly object. He is not attached to name and fame. Just as when the leaves and fruits also attain this color, they automatically fall from the tree, so the *sannyasin* walks away from or renounces the world. At that stage no one will cry or suffer a loss—neither the one that is leaving, nor the one who is being left, because no attachment is there on either side.

When an orange flag is waved before a train or a bus, what happens? The driver stops, because he recognizes the color as a symbol of warning, a symbol of danger. Today the human race is speedily running after so many things. The *sannyasin* in saffron robes serves as a sign of caution. The moment people see this color worn by a *sannyasin*, they must stop and ponder their lives and consider in which direction are they heading?



MU DEVARAYAN



MU DEVARAYAN

Folk arts: Students perform a dance based on the stories of Lord Siva for Sri Swamiji and guests

was the welcome given to me (as a representative of Gurudeva) by 2,000 students and faculty members in their morning assembly. It was a pleasant surprise when Dr. Ningappa, the principal, announced that Gurudeva had visited the institute and had laid the foundation stone for an important building.

Shri Ningappa reported, "We have morning prayers every Monday, as we had today, when all students and faculty members assemble to pray and chant Vedic mantras. We have pictures of Swami Balagangadharanatha displayed prominently at important places. Swamiji visits frequently and interacts with the faculty and the students. Swami Nirmalananda, who is looking after the functioning on a day-to-day basis, shares his views with the faculty and students every now and then. As the saints are visiting our institution frequently, we are always getting charged spiritually and have strong holy vibrations all around. The faculty, students and parents know they are associated with a spiritual body headed by a distinguished saint and therefore have high expectations of us," says Swami Nirmalananda.

The formula for running the institutions and the branches of the Mutt is clear and simple, say insiders at the Mutt. Raise the money with the financial help and support of the rich and spend it on providing education, food, shelter and health care to the poor. The work of hundreds of BGS educational institutions has resulted in the whole community being educated over the last two

decades. Prosperity has followed. Graduates of the Mutt's engineering and medical colleges have good jobs. Some are settled abroad. Many of the educational institutions run at a loss, but others make a profit. For instance, at the engineering and medical colleges 15 to 20 percent of the seats, known as management quota seats, are allocated at the sole discretion of management. For these, the institutions are able to get hefty donations by accommodating qualified children of the affluent who do not mind paying high fees. The money raised is used to support the low-income schools for poor and the needy students. In addition, the Mutt receives abundant offerings from devotees and income from agricultural lands.

It is generally maintained that no government financial aid is taken by the Mutt for running the educational institutions. However, the government has been generous in providing land for the schools at preferential rates, a policy which applies to all social and charitable organizations that run schools and health care facilities. For example, in Delhi the international school was allocated four acres of land at much less than the prevailing market rate.

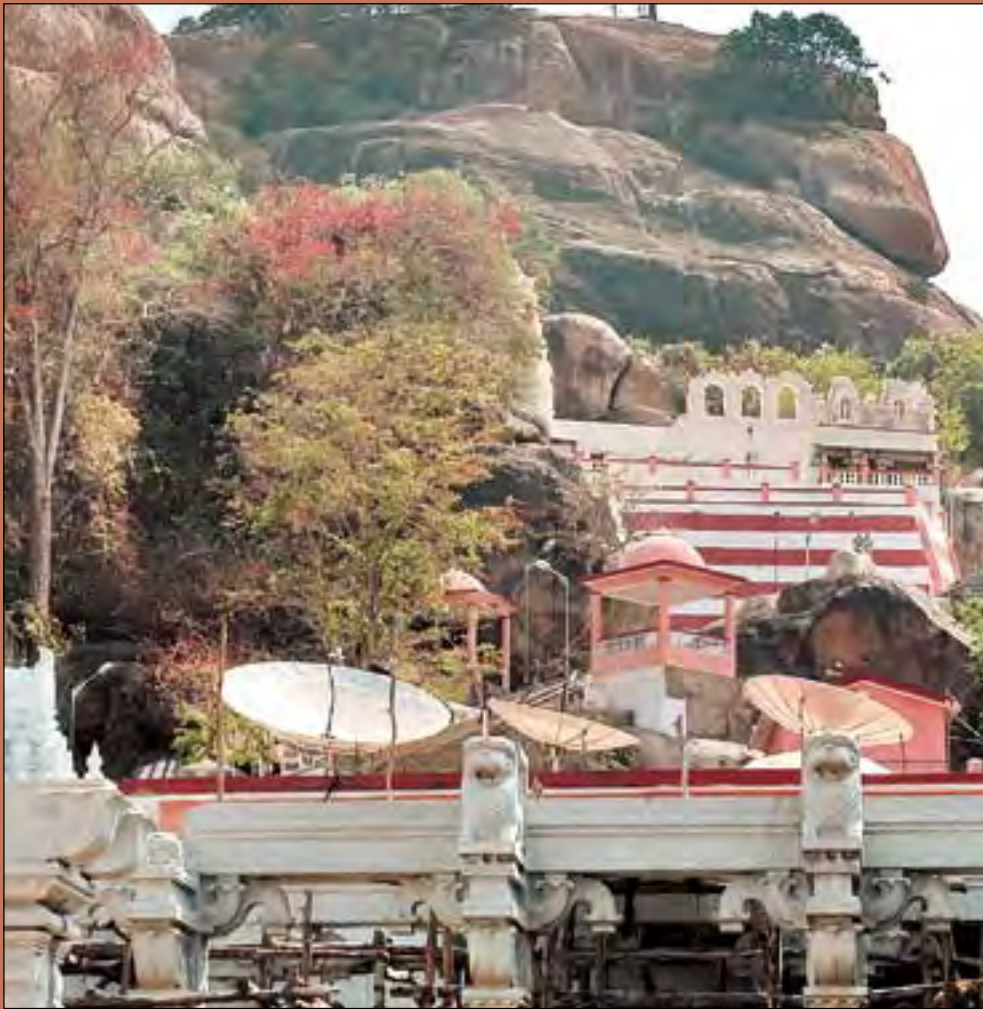
From Chikkaballapura we rushed to Hoskote, on the outskirts of Bangalore, where Swamiji was inaugurating a new building at a private trust school. Here I witnessed the deep reverence people in Karnataka have for Swamiji. This was not a function organized by his devotees, but even here he was the

center of attraction and people were queuing up to touch his feet and seek his blessings. The education minister of Karnataka was there to receive Swamiji. Other prominent saints were also on stage, but Swamiji was given the central place. Over one thousand people listened to his speech in pin-drop silence. While some religious leaders criticize the trend of computerization, Swamiji spoke for the judicious blending of the ancient with the modern. The crowd seemed to agree with his approach and acknowledged with applause. The organizers had also ensured that Swamiji's pet project of planting saplings was a part of the ceremonies.

Swami Nirmalananda told me that because BGS stands for success, quality and spirituality, Swamiji is the most sought-after figure for launching new and renovated temples and schools. His is believed to be a magic touch, a touch that has the blessings of Lord Bhairaveshvara Himself.

We proceeded to Shri Jagadguru Balagangadharanatha Swami Institute of Technology, a 27-acre haven with its canopy of trees and lush green lawns. Nearby, a medical college is coming up. Dr. Putta Raju, Principal, showed us around the magnificent campus, pointing out that they have 20 to 30 percent more classroom and laboratory space and equipment than is considered the norm.

Next we saw the BGS International Residential School, a marvel of architecture on 100 acres of in a lush valley. With 450 students, it is a part of Swami's commitment



Ancient and modern: Satellite dishes sit just behind and above the pillars of the new Bhairaveshvara Temple at Sri Kshetra, while in the background are the present Mutt main building and the rock cliffs with caves wherein many yogis have meditated

Marriages and medicine: (above) Sri Swamiji with couples who were part of a mass community marriage ceremony sponsored by the Mutt; (right) The BGS Foundation of Health Sciences facility, located next to the BGS Apollo Hospital in Mysore City



to keep children of non-resident Indians in touch with their cultural heritage. It was inaugurated in 2001 by the then prime minister of India, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Sonia Gandhi, Sai Baba and the Dalai Lama are some of the dignitaries who have visited. It has state-of-the-art laboratories and computer centers for the students. The residential facilities are fairly luxurious, designed with the affluent non-resident Indians in mind, who are the school's main patrons. Whereas the ordinary rural school fee per annum, inclusive of transportation, is \$47, here it is \$4,545 per child—slightly more than the average cost of a private day school in the US.

Most of the students I talked to were happy with the disciplined life they were leading in the BGS institutions whether they were studying as day students or living at a hostel.

Each institution is under the direct charge of a swami disciple of Swami Balagangadara-nathaswami. Each swami has an office in the institution and interacts with the faculty and the students on a daily or a weekly basis. "The management and supervision of our temples of learning by the saints is what makes them stand apart from the other educational institutions," Swami Nirmalananda pointed out.

Moral education, though not a part of the official school curriculum, is taught by the

administrating swami, along with meditation, chanting and yoga. At these sessions, mantras such as "Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru Devo Maheshwara" are chanted by thousands of students and their teachers. At many schools, huge halls have been constructed for teaching meditation and yoga, and holding *satsangs* and singing *bhajan*s.

At some schools, the teachers live in staff quarters not far from the student hostels. In such cases, they monitor the after-school activities of the children. I often saw children engaged in serious study even after hours, preparing for their upcoming exams.

Swami Shraddhanatha said, "We mostly get children from big cities, like Bangalore and Mysore. They are used to watching cinema and television in their spare time. But after staying with us for a while, they leave their old habits and pick up good ones. They participate in the temple, in prayer and meditation classes. It brings a sort of revolution in their personalities and they become different from children of the cities, more humble and straightforward."

I heard collaborating testimony from the students. B.S. Sudeep, 15, at BGS International School, Bangalore, said, "The school is peaceful, with good surroundings. We receive moral education and learn to be

disciplined. After joining this school, I have improved in the areas of discipline, sports and academics." Barsha Raja, 14, said, "Here the teachers lay emphasis on understanding the children. Swamiji comes to visit often. My attitude has changed, I have grown responsible." Fellow student Pretina Shrestha, 15, confided, "I was brought up in London. There I did not focus on Hinduism, because my surroundings were all Christian. I never used to fast, but here we all fast on Sivaratri. Now I am learning Indian culture." At one of the engineering colleges, Shubhalaxmi told me, "I am now a different person altogether. Earlier, I did not pay attention to prayer, God or spirituality. I now realize these are the necessary parts of an education. The faculty here is very friendly and helps you in the overall development of your personality. Sri Swamiji visits frequently and blesses us all."

On the 15th, we left the Bangalore Mutt at 7 am and visited Guru Bhavan, the birthplace of Sri Swamiji in Banandur, then proceeded to the Sri Jagadguru Balagangadharanatha Swamiji Residential Blind School at Archakarahalli, Ramnagar. It was a heartrending experience for me to be in the midst of hundreds of blind children, who staged an excellent cultural show which included recitation of *Bhagavad Gita* verses by a Muslim boy. I

was given the honor of addressing the assembly of blind children and the teaching staff. They looked blissful, and the auditorium was charged with high spiritual vibrations as they sang songs praising their satguru, Balagangadharanatha Swamiji Maharaj.

Later, at the Vishwamanava High School in Mandya, I spoke with Swami Shradhanatha, a senior disciple of Swamiji. He said this school caters to the common folk, and its students achieve high marks each year. Swamiji expressed distress at the fact that these days parents place no emphasis on their child's spiritual development. They look only for their son or daughter to do well on exams and become an engineer or a doctor. In fact, many consider spiritual and moral education and activities as a waste of time.

Moving onward, we arrived at the hundred-acre Adichunchanagiri Hospital and Research Centre, one of Swamiji's favorite projects, which provides medical treatment to the rural people. Three to four hundred patients are treated every day free of charge by the out-patient department. The hospital has facilities to treat 750 in-patients.

Finally, we reached the 250-acre grand township project, Sri Adi Chunchanagiri Kshetra, the ancient seat of Natha Sampradaya, 110 kilometers in the granite hills west of

Bangalore at an altitude of 3,300 feet. Here the \$11.3-million Kalabhairreshwara Temple project, under construction, will likely be completed 2006.

Upon reaching Sri Kshetra, we were rushed to the huge dining hall where a thousand students were about to dine. They were all smartly dressed in white dhotis with blue tops and a red sash on their shoulders. The scene was colorful and breathtaking. Amid the chanting of Vedic mantras, food was served to the children by other children. For some time I felt transported back to the Vedic age, the age of *gurukulam* schools. How efficiently the small children were serving food to rows and rows of students with the help of small trolleys. It spoke volumes about their commitment and dedication towards their fellow beings.

Recently, Sri Swamiji conducted 15-day programs for 2,500 rural ladies at Kshetra. They were trained in Hindu lore, devotional singing and yoga.

Kshetra is a sacred place in Hinduism. It is said that Lord Siva Himself meditated here. With His divine power He created a "Siddha Yogi" and blessed him as the first pontiff of this Mutt. As this pontiff had the authority to appoint the heads of India's twelve cardinal mutts, the name Adi ("first") was given only

to pontiffs of this Mutt. Adichunchanagiri is a part of the folk lore of the local people of Karnataka. I experienced its sacredness when I entered one of the ancient caves where the Natha Siddhas performed penance and meditated in olden times.

From my room I had a breathtaking early morning view of Kshetra, with small ponds and greenery all around. A cool breeze was blowing as if welcoming me to this divine destination. I witnessed the multitudinous workers on the temple project. Masonry and stone-cutting work was going on at a blistering pace. Sri Swamiji said, "In ancient times, four or five kings over a period of a hundred years could complete a temple like this. Today, with modern equipment, the same can be done in ten years time."

The present Sri Kalabhairreshwara Temple at Sri Kshetra was constructed long ago. It has been a long-felt need of the Math and devotees to construct a new temple in place of the existing one. The temple is being built according to the *Saiva Agamas* under the direction of Sri Muthaiah Sthapati. The main sanctum is near completion [see photo inside the front cover].

The next day we started with a visit to the 35-year-old Sanskrit *pathashala* (priest school) run according to ancient traditions.



PHOTOS MU DEVARAYAN



MU DEVARAYAN

Quality facilities: (left) students of the BGS Residential Blind School in Archkarahalli depart the cultural hall for their noon meal; (above) The Jagadguru Shri Chandrashekaranaatha Swamiji Rural English School, Melekote

As we entered, the building was reverberating with Sanskrit verses chanted by the students of different classes. Here the religious rituals are taught in a scientific manner, and the library is a treasure-house of rare Sanskrit literature and texts. Sri Swamiji himself once taught Sanskrit here.

At the nearby Kalabhareshwara Temple, a stream of devotees and visitors were pouring in to worship the main Kal Bhairava Deity, which will eventually be shifted to the new

premises.

On the 17th we visited Adichunchanagiri Institute of Technology in Chikmagalur, 240 km from Bangalore. The weather here is so pleasant throughout the year that it is called the Kashmir of Karnataka. It has world-class facilities. Engineering students not only from India but all over the world ply for admission. Over the past 25 years, this institute had produced thousands of engineers who now enjoy eminent positions in the govern-

ment and private sectors in India and in many parts of the world.

On to Mysore, we stopped at the BGS Apollo Hospital, a 200-bed hospital and landscaped campus at Kuvempunagar in Mysore with advanced equipment for specialized treatment. It is being expanded shortly by 400 more beds.

On the last day of our sojourn, the 18th, we drove 200 kms to Bangalore's Sri Kalabhareshwara Swamy Ayurvedic Medical Col-

lege Hospital and Research Centre. Here, again, wonderful work is being done. Nature cure and yoga are an integral part of the ayurvedic treatment that is being given to the needy at affordable prices. Asked about the prospects for graduates, Dr. H. Namish Prasad, principal of the institution, affirmed they are quite good. He said, "The government of India has made it national policy that every primary health-care center should have a third doctor from India's ancient sys-

tems of medicine, especially Ayurveda."

After a quick visit to the Iraivan Temple carving site, I departed for Delhi. One week was far too short to cover the 350 BGS in-



stitutions, but I had managed to visit about two dozen. It was beyond my comprehension how Sri Swamiji could be taking care of 350 institutions and 40 mutts spread all over Karnataka. Yet, everywhere I went, every swami and student of these institutions told me that Sri Swamiji visits frequently. He takes care of every expansion plan. Everywhere I went, I saw new construction work taking place. All this is indeed a miracle which is shaping the future of the state of Karnataka.



Working with body and soul: (left) Swami Nirmalanandaji learns more about a newly installed MRI machine at the BGS Apollo Hospital, Mysore; (right) Swami Shambhunatha and Swami Nirmalananda at a shrine for their guru



Dedicated monks: Swami Shradhanatha

Karnataka welcome: (above) map of Karnataka State shows Mutt headquarters in Kshetra; (right) HINDUISM TODAY's correspondent Rajiv Malik is honored





Multi-faith ministry: New recruits of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, a unit of the Indian army, salute their Hindu (in lead), Muslim and Sikh priests, each carrying their faith's scripture, at their swearing-in ceremony near Ramgarh, Haryana, November 8, 2002

MILITARY

Religion in India's Army

Soldiers maintain a deep personal faith while seeking interreligious harmony

LT. COL, RETD, N. C. GUHA, DELHI

IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT OUR TROOPS mostly come from rural backgrounds and are religious by nature. Even India's troops from urban backgrounds and educated families have deep-rooted faith in their religions. As a result, religion forms an important part of a soldier's life. His faith inclines him to uphold his religious ideology, including his moral and ethical duties. Daily practice of his faith makes him a better human being. It helps in promoting self-discipline, reduces the stress factor of a soldier and overcomes the feeling of loneliness. Besides, religion is also considered as the single most important battle-winning factor. As with other modern armies, the Indian army has striven to meet the religious needs of all soldiers of all faiths in a harmonious spirit.

In 2002, there were 980,000 active troops and 800,000 reservists in our army.

The routine religious activities of a unit temple—that is, a temple attached to an army unit—is just the same as we find in civilian life. Hindu soldiers celebrate Mangala Arati, Nitya Puja, Sandhya Aratrikam, etc. *Havans* (fire worship), special *pujas* and other services are performed according to the soldier's faith on holidays such as Dussehra, Deepavali, Janmashtami, Holi, Guruparab (Birthday of Guru Nanak), Christmas Eve, etc. For troops belonging to the Christian community, Church services are held on Sundays and holidays. Similarly, *kirtan* or *bhajan*s (devotional songs) are conducted on a regular basis in the temple for the Hindus as are Sabadh Kirtan and Gurbani in the Gurudwara of the Sikh regiment. It may

come as a surprise that in Mathura and other cantonments of the pre-partition days, *masjids* (mosques) constructed for the troops of Muslim units of the undivided British Indian Army still continue to be maintained, often by the Hindu or non-Muslim troops [Muslims comprise just two percent of the Indian army]. Id and other major Muslim celebrations are held regularly in these mosques under the supervision of a *maulvi* (Muslim priest). As a result, an atmosphere of perfect religious harmony and esprit de corps have existed in India's Armed Forces since the beginning.

The army includes religious teachers who are qualified priests in uniform with badges of rank in war, but permitted to put on civilian wear like any other civilian priest in normal circumstances. Their duties include



Shell temple: Members of the Indian Army pray at a makeshift temple made of spent shell casings at Kargil, August 26, 1999

religious discourses and lectures on values to the troops. Traditionally, these religious teachers come from brahmin families or priestly castes. They are adept in ritualistic worship. It is customary in most army units for a religious teacher to read out the horoscope of the unit on the Raising Day of the unit (anniversary of the unit's founding), to which the troops listen with rapt attention as it gives them an indication of the unit's likely performance during the rest of the year. Tying of the sacred thread on the wrists and applying vermillion *tilak* on the forehead of the soldiers by the religious teacher gives them a sense of purity and happiness. It also inculcates a sense of belonging to the unit.

Attendance or roll call is taken of the soldiers for the Mandir (temple) parade every Sunday and at important religious functions. This is how spiritual discipline is instilled in the soldiers. In a noncombat location, even the women and the children of our soldiers attend these functions. As the children of the soldiers grow up in such a close-knit family environment, many of them later join the Armed Forces. Even in the remote and high altitude mountainous terrain in the operational combat areas, a religious teacher visits the troops regularly, which enhances the morale of the troops greatly. In any case,

a religious institution is also the place where exhausted, broken and desperate souls take refuge to recover their lost strength. Post-Korean War psychological research has shown that strong religious faith builds up mental resistance to brainwashing. Therefore, a religious institution such as a temple, gurudwara or church is authorised to every unit of our Armed Forces and preserved and maintained as such.

In this connection, the inspiring words of Swami Vivekananda uttered a century ago are most appropriate and still hold good: "Your forefathers underwent everything boldly, even death itself, but preserved their religion. Temple after temple was broken down by the foreign conquerors, but no sooner had the wave passed than the spire of the temple rose up again. Some of these old temples of Southern India and those like Somnath of Gujarat will teach you volumes of wisdom, will give you a keener insight into the history of the race than any amount of books. Mark how these temples bear the marks of a hundred attacks and a hundred regenerations, continually destroyed and continually springing up out of the ruins, rejuvenated and strong as ever! That is the national mind, that is the national life-current. Follow it, and it leads to glory."

Hindu Observances: Some of the older and

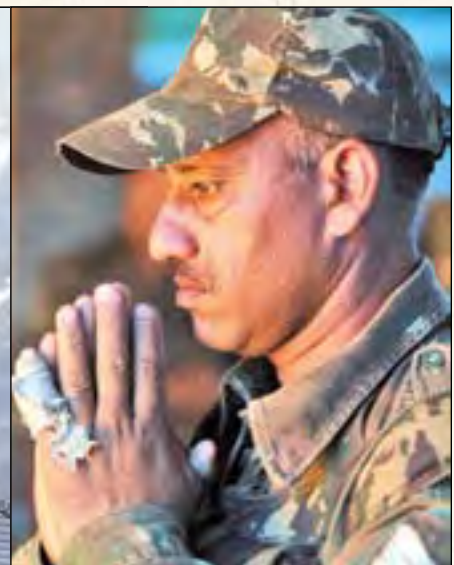
most famed Army regiments remain caste, religion or region based, with the religious observances of the regiment following its tradition. For example, the icon of Lord Vishnu, popularly known as Badri Vishal, installed at Badrinath in Garhwal, Uttar Pradesh, by Adi Shankaracharya, is the presiding deity of the Garhwal Rifles, an Infantry regiment of the Indian Army drawn from this area. Badri Vishal is worshipped in all the Battalions of the Garhwal Rifles. For the Garhwal Rifles personnel, Badrinath is of supreme significance. The name of Lord Badri even embellishes the Garhwal Rifles' war cry and is their ultimate motivating force.

The typical person from Garhwal is animated with intense religious fervor. As per *Markandeya Purana*, Goddess Durga is the powerful Deity who killed the demon king Mahishasura in a fierce battle and restored peace and tranquillity in heaven. The Goddess Durga is represented as a golden-colored Deity with ten hands having a gentle countenance, but according to other accounts the Goddess is having eight hands. Being the embodiment of shakti (strength), troops get a lot of happiness and derive inner strength by worshipping Her image. In all the battalions of the Garhwal Rifles, Goddess Durga with eight hands is worshipped. Within the Garhwal Rifles, Vijay Dashami



DEV RAJ AGARWAL

Regiment temple: The temples of Badrinath and Kedarnath (above), two of Hinduism's top pilgrimage destinations, are revered by the Garhwal Rifles, as evidenced by their name on Kedarnath's entry gate



REUTERS/DIPAK KUMAR

Solace: An Indian soldier in Kashmir prays in front of the burning pyres of his fallen comrades killed by a landmine, May 24, 2004

or Dussehra in the month of September/October is the religious event of the year.

Garhwal Rifles units fully observe the festival for ten days, beginning with the *ghatastahpana* ceremony at the unit temple in which nine grains are set in a pot to germinate during the following days. On the ninth day is *shastra puja*, during which all the weapons of the unit armory are decorated with flowers and displayed in a square fashion in the center of the parade ground or an open space. Similar ritualistic celebrations with minor changes are performed during the Dussehra and Durga Puja days in all the battalions of Gorkha Regiments, Kumaon Regiment and other army units.

Another vital aspect which needs deliberation is the performance of various religious rites as described in our Holy Scriptures. These rites usually take the form of worshipping of arms, equipments, vehicles and musical instruments. Religious rites are also performed before undertaking expeditions or going into the battle. It is equally important that mortal remains are properly laid to rest by organizing befitting funerals in the highest traditions of the army. In fact, this is the least that any army or a nation can do to pay their last respect to a martyr.

Battle Cries: The battle cries of the various regiments in the Army can be traced to deep-rooted faith of the troops in their pre-siding Deity or in their pride of belonging to

their community. It is from a soldier's strong conviction in his religious faith or class composition that he gets the last ounce of his inner strength in battle. The deafening battle cries by the troops is the last act of final assault on the enemy with fixed bayonets. It is a do-or-die situation. While the battle cry revitalizes the inner strength and spirit of our own troops, it is also intended to totally demoralize the enemy and shatter his hopes of surviving.

For example, the battle cry of the Garhwal Rifles is "Badri Vishal lal ki ji," "Victory to the Great Lord Badrinath." That of the Gorkha regiments is "Ayo Gorkhali," "Here come the Gorkhas." The Sikh cry is "Bole so Nihal, Sat Sri Akal," "He who cries 'God is Truth,' is ever victorious." The Jat regiment, who originate from Rajasthan, shout, "Jat balwan, Jai Bhagwan," "The Jat (clan) is powerful, victory be to God." And the Dogra Regiment, raised from Jammu/Kashmir, cry, "Jawala Mata ki jai," "Victory to Goddess Jawala"—a popular form of Shakti in their area.

Religious Harmony: It is said that if one religion is true, then all the other religions also must be true. As such, every man should follow his own religion. A Christian should follow Christianity, a Muslim should follow Islam, and so on. Therefore, the true meaning of religious harmony is to allow every one the equal liberty to stand by his own religious faith and belief. A truly religious man

should think that other religions, too, have so many paths leading to the Truth and maintain an attitude of respect and tolerance towards them. In fact, the spirit of religious tolerance in Hinduism is rooted in the *Rig Veda* statement, "*Ekam sad viprah bakudha vadanti*," "One alone exists. Sages call that by different names." The idea that God can be realized through different spiritual paths has been taught through the ages by many saints. But Sri Ramakrishna, the great Indian teacher of the 19th century, is regarded as the prophet of religious harmony all over the world. It is through the fine cord of religious harmony that we come closer to each other and project a united front as a nation. Like all the centers of the Ramakrishna Order where important religious ceremonies of other religious faiths such as Guruparab (the birthday celebrations of Guru Nanak), Christmas Eve and New Year Day, etc., are celebrated in the true spirit of universality, such events are also held in the Armed Forces for promoting integrity and religious harmony amongst the troops belonging to various compositions.

Religious Integration: It may be noted that the organization and composition of the Indian army is highly secular and apolitical. All religious practices are observed without any discrimination. After Partition, the Indian Army units, i.e., Battalion/Regiment (a composite fighting unit), inherited from the British Indian Army was based on caste and religion. However, during the pre-Partition days it was sufficient to have one religious teacher of the class composition in the unit.



The religious practices were also restricted to that religion. After Independence, in keeping with the national policy, the class composition has undergone changes. While no changes have been made in the basic fighting regiments, the units of Technical and Supporting Arms and others of the Armed Services have been remodelled on a mixed-class basis. In order to maintain the religious sentiments of the troops, facilities have been provided to the religious institutions of all such units under the guidance of a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian priest. Troops of all religions are allowed leave of absence to practice their religions. Where the number exceeds more than a hundred of a particular faith, a religious teacher is provided. Discourses are held followed by community meals. Inside the cantonment area, these facilities are centralized as the Station Religious Institution and the functions are also managed as Military Station Functions.

In the Regimental and Training Centres, where basic training is imparted to the troops, these facilities are also centralized. It is compulsory for the recruits to attend. These occasions are used to inculcate in the young soldiers the feelings of religious integration, harmony and tolerance.

Training of the religious teacher is done

in the Regimental and Training Centres. Although enrollment of religious teachers is made from the same background as the Regiment, grooming is done at the Centre so they fit in a multi-religious organization. Teaching includes all religious observances from birth to death. Teachings from the religious books are interpreted to inculcate moral values, social values and cultural values. The teachings are practiced and the required knowledge is ascertained through examinations. Customs and unwritten traditions of a religion are passed along as teachings. Also, trained religious teachers from the units are sent periodically for further education, freshening of knowledge and integration with other religions at the Institute of National Integration.

As a nation is composed of different states, religions, culture, caste and creed, so is the case with the Armed Forces. It is a nation within India. Religious integration is made an instrument to inculcate the feeling of national integration. During their service tenure, the troops, though having varied religious background, live together, fight together and eat together—sometimes even from the same plate. An Indian soldier is fully trained to take his rightful place as a citizen in the country without any bias towards any reli-

gion. He shuns religious groups preaching religious dichotomy as he understands the true value of an individual and his religion.

Conclusion: It is observed that most of us tend to overlook the broader aspects of a religion and generally look at it from a narrow angle like a selfish man. We must not forget that as true Indians and responsible citizens we should treat all persons in the society alike irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Like a military commander or a true leader, we should lead from the front and take the masses along, or else, the country is bound to disintegrate. Therefore, we in the Armed Forces can ill afford to lose sight of this vital aspect and must always keep a close watch for any secessionist elements or divisive forces that may have crept in within the forces. Even though we in India pursue multiple religious faiths and at times fight with each other on petty issues, yet in times of national crisis or in the event of any foreign aggression, the people of our country have always displayed great solidarity and stood by the Armed Forces like a totally galvanized nation in the true spirit of national integration.

Lt. Col. (Retd) N.C. Guha is a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna from New Delhi. This article originally appeared in The Vedanta Kesari, October, 2004.

The Tirukural on the "Merits of the Army" and "Military Pride"



The Great South Indian Tamil scripture on ethics, Tirukural, is 2,200 years old. Its 1,330 verses cover an astonishing range of topics, from the nature of God to the correct choosing of friends to how to run a kingdom, including the twenty verses here of chapters 77 and 78 on the military. The illustration above is of the hero "gleefully" removing a spear from his own body to use to attack the enemy.

Foremost among a monarch's possessions stands a conquering army, complete and fearless.

Only seasoned soldiers remain bravely determined when onslaughts decimate them and threaten defeat.

So what if a legion of rats roars like the raging sea? The mere hiss of a cobra will deaden their din.

Commanding a long tradition of valor, acquainted with neither defeat nor desertion—that defines an army.

That indeed is an army which stands together, even when faced with death's grim fury.

Valor, honor, trustworthiness and a tradition nobly upheld—these four are an army's protective armor.

Well-trained armed forces will withstand every attack, then outflank and storm the foe.

Even without a winning offense and defense, an army of splendid appearance may still win acclaim.

An army will prevail as long as there is no desertion, no privation and no contention.

Though courageous troops abound, there can be no army without commanders.

Dare you not, my enemies, to stand against my monarch! Many who did now stand as stone monuments.

It is more gratifying to carry a lance that missed an elephant than to hold an arrow that hit a thicket-dwelling rabbit.

Intrepid courage is what they call valor, and clemency toward the defeated is its sharp edge.

Having hurled his spear at a battlefield elephant, the hero found another piercing his side and grasped it with glee.

Is it not a disgraceful defeat to the courageous warrior if his defiant eyes so much as blink when a lance is hurled at him?

When recounting his days, the heroic soldier regards all those on which no battle scars were sustained as squandered.

To fasten the warrior's anklet on one who desires glory more than life is to decorate heroism with distinction.

Men of courage who do not fear for their lives in battle do not forfeit soldierly ardor, even if the king prohibits their fighting.

Who would dare deride as defeated men who die fulfilling valor's vow?

Heroic death that fills the sovereign's eyes with tears is worth begging for and then dying for.

Verses 761 to 780 of the Tirukural, translation by Himalayan Academy

BY MARK HAWTHORNE, CALIFORNIA

WHEN SHE AWOKE FROM A HEART and double-lung transplant operation at Yale-New Haven Hospital in Connecticut in 1988, Claire Sylvia was not only happy to be alive—the 48-year-old dancer craved beer, green peppers and fried chicken, foods she had given little thought to prior to the transplant. It quickly became apparent to Claire that she had developed more than just a fondness for new flavors. She had also acquired some intriguing personality traits, including an increased libido. In fact, she had the desires and boundless energy more suited to an 18-year-old male than a woman approaching middle age. By age 50, she was backpacking around Europe, searching for she knew not what.

Claire's story, chronicled in her 1996 memoir, *A Change of Heart*, gets even stranger when she begins having dreams in which she communicates with a young man whose initials are T. L. She feels certain that "T. L." had donated the heart now beating in her chest and the lungs she now breathed with. In keeping with official policy, however, the staff at Yale-New Haven Hospital had told Claire nothing about her organ donor, except that he died in a motorcycle accident in Maine. But as time goes by, and the intensity of Claire's dreams increases, she begins to put clues together and discovers that the donor was an 18-year-old man named Tim Lasalle. She soon sets up a meeting with Tim's parents, accompanied by a friend and Jungian psychoanalyst named Robert Bosnak. Claire learns from Tim's family that he had loved green peppers, beer, and especially chicken nuggets.

Skeptics will naturally label these happenings a coincidence, but Claire's experiences are not unique. In 2003 the DISCOVERY HEALTH CHANNEL explored this issue in *Transplanting Memories*. Among those featured in the documentary is an eight-year-old girl who receives the heart of a murdered 10-year-old girl; her ensuing nightmares, in which the heart recipient sees the killer, help solve the crime. Viewers also meet Debbie Vega, who received the liver of an 18-year-old named Howie. Howie loved peanut M&Ms, cheese doodles and karate, and he seems to have passed all these characteristics on to Debbie.

Looking for Scientific Answers

Yet, medical science is reluctant to admit that such post-transplant experiences occur. In the face of overwhelming anecdotal evidence, most doctors offer scientific ex-

MEDICINE

Transplanting Karmas

Organ recipients get more than expected when their donor's feelings, desires, memories and character traits manifest in their lives

planations for these phenomena. Writing on TransWeb.org, an organ transplant Web site, transplant surgeon Jeff Punch, MD, states, "A transplant is a profound experience, and the human mind is very suggestible. Medically speaking, there is no evidence that these reports are anything more than fantasy."

Among the theories explaining how such experiences could occur, "cellular memory" is one of the most popular. The term has come to refer to the capacity of living tissue cells to memorize and recall characteristics of the body from which they originated.

While many in the scientific community remain skeptical, Paul Pearsall, PhD., is convinced that the heart has its own form of intelligence. Cells have memory and communicate beyond time and space.



New spirit: Claire Sylvia

He believes the heart processes information about the body and the outside world through an "info-energetic code"—a complicated network of cells and blood vessels that serves both as our circulatory system and as a structure for gathering and distributing energy information. Further-

more, he contends that the soul, at least in part, is a set of cellular memories that is carried largely by our hearts. This view is, of course, closely aligned with ayurveda, which regards the heart as not merely a pump but also the seat of consciousness itself.

And then there's Dr. Candace Pert, a pharmacologist and professor at Georgetown University who believes the mind resides throughout the body, not just in the brain. Dr. Pert is well known for her work with neuropeptides—the molecular language that allows the mind, body, and emotions to communicate. She writes in *The Wisdom of the Receptors: Neuropeptides, the Emotions, and BodyMind* (1986), "The more we know about neuropeptides, the harder it is to think in the traditional terms of a mind and a body. It makes more and more sense to speak of a single integrated entity, a body-mind."

Still, most Western doctors consider cellular memory the stuff of science fiction. Indeed, the idea of a body part carrying

"memories" to another body is the basis of the 1920 sci-fi novel *Les Mains d'Orlac* ("The Hands of Orlac") by Maurice Renard. It is the tale of a celebrated pianist who loses his hands in a train wreck and is given the hands of a murderer in a transplant operation. He then assumes the personality of his appendages' psychopathic donor. Renard based his fictional surgeon on Dr. Alexis Carrel (1873-1944), a French biologist and surgeon whose experiments with transplants and grafting procedures earned him the Nobel Prize in 1912.

Exploring Alternative Causes

Claire Sylvia's case reminded biologist and author Rupert Sheldrake more of reincarnation than cellular memory. Known for keeping an open mind where unconventional science is concerned, Dr. Sheldrake believes the tastes and traits Claire "inherited" from Tim can be attributed to the morphic field in and around the organs. Asked to elaborate on his theory, he responded: "I think that transplanted organs may help to tune the person into the morphic fields of the person they are transplanted from. If somebody had several different transplanted organs from different people, then there might be several different influences working upon them. On the other hand, it may be that some organs have more influence in this respect. The heart may lead to more transfer of memories than, say, a kidney."

Some experts theorize that transplanted organs may retain some form of electrical energy. To explore this theory, cardiothoracic surgeon Mehmet Oz, MD invited energy healer Julie Motz to participate in a heart transplant procedure. As director of the mechanical heart-pump program at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York, Dr. Oz combines Western medical technology with Eastern tools and alternative therapies, such as acupuncture and aromatherapy. When Motz put her hands on the ice chest containing the donor heart, she had a vision of two women in a car, arguing. When Motz told Dr. Oz what she'd seen, he explained that the heart was from a woman killed in an automobile crash; she and her mother had been quarrelling in the car. Later, when the heart was inside the



DIGITAL STOCK



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Howie lives on? A team of surgeons took the liver of Howard Smith Vereen (above left) shortly after his death and transplanted it into Debbie Delgado-Vega (above right) who was suffering from autoimmune disease. Debbie is well, thriving and thankful for what is called a "donation for a lifetime" on her website for liver disease awareness, which she uses to help others in her community.

recipient but wouldn't start beating, Motz suspected that negative energy from the fatal argument had made the heart "afraid" to beat. As Motz explains in *Transplanting Memories*, "I leaned over and whispered in [the recipient's] ear. I said, 'You have got to get angry, and you have got to give your new heart permission to get angry.' And then I did something that I don't usually do because it looks a little weird. I actually put my hand over the surgical drape and sent energy directly into the heart. And the heart came

back and started to beat. The perfusionist [who operates the heart-lung machine during surgery] told me later he'd never seen a heart come back so far, so fast."

While many mainstream scientists dismiss this issue as fantasy, alternative healers continue to explore the causes of transplanted memories. Asked about Claire's experiences, her friend Robert Bosnak said, "Assuming that her spirit merged with Tim's, I have no explanations, just musings. I could imagine that the body is like a hologram in which

each shard is a full but vague picture of the whole. The greater the mass of genetic material, the more precise the picture becomes. I had predicted that, based on Claire's post-transplant behavior, Tim would have been hyperactive, which was indeed the case." Claire Sylvia continues to do well, and she now rarely experiences the strange feelings and cravings she inherited from Tim. "All has lessened as time goes by," she emailed recently. "I am more fully integrated now as 'third being.'"

Hinduism's View of Organ Transplants

HINDUS BELIEVE EVERY ACTION HAS KARMIC IMPLICATIONS and something as serious as replacing a major organ can carry some of the donor's karma to the recipient, as demonstrated when a recipient has acquired some of the donor's characteristics. Hindus also believe that the soul of the donor lives on in the inner world after death, and may influence the organ recipient, an explanation carefully avoided by science. The fact that part of a deceased donor's physical body still "lives" may interfere with his moving on to the next incarnation. Earthbound, kept in close proximity on the astral plane to the recipient by virtue of his still-living organ, the donor expresses his desires, felt as impulses and thought forms by the recipient. These could fade if the donor finally does move on, but some traits may have already been integrated into the recipient's personality as *vasanas* (mental patterns) of her own.

In 1999, HINDUISM TODAY consulted a number of prominent swamis and Hindu physicians on the subject of medical ethics. Regarding organ transplants, Swami Satchidananda of the Integral Yoga Institute was unequivocal. "What are we doing by transplanting organs?" he said. "By replacing organs in a clearly dying body, we are not allowing the soul to fulfill its karma in this life by dying

at the proper time and getting a new body. The trend of science seems to want to keep the soul indefinitely in the same old body with repaired parts. This is not the correct thing to do." Swami Tejomayananda of Chinmaya Mission agreed. "The Hindu way of life is to accept the inevitable," he said, "to go through the karma, exhaust it, and be free to take on new life to evolve further spiritually."

But Swami Chidananda Saraswati Maharaj ("Muniji") of Parmath Niketan, Rishikesh, felt that it is "important to donate organs" in the Hindu spirit of giving and sacrifice. Swami Bua of New York also supported organ transplants. "Let us encourage and support the scientists and medical men who are working with pure intentions towards a painless, diseaseless society," he said. "We should only guard against unscrupulous traders in human organs."

Dr. Virendra Sodhi, a experienced ayurvedic and naturopathic doctor in Bellevue, Washington, advocated a compromise. "Some transplants, such as the cornea, are okay, but not the heart, which is the seat of the soul according to ayurveda," he said. "If the quality of life is going to be very good after the transplant, I might not have a problem, but if they have to be on harsh drugs all the time, maybe transplanting is not the best idea."

The Best Keeps Getting Better

For nearly 80 years, the annual Chennai Music Festival has amplified tradition with talent and innovation

BY ANANTHA KRISHNAN, CHENNAI

A MY AIR-INDIA FLIGHT TOUCHES DOWN ON the airport tarmac, my heart flutters with anticipation. This is my first trip to Chennai, which is the fourth largest city in India, the capital of the southern state of Tamil Nadu and home to some six million people. Driving from the airport into this sprawling metropolis that engulfs more than 50 square miles, my first impression of its hustle, bustle, traffic, noise and pollution is repellent. Yet soon enough, I discover that this place is a veritable treasure of culture and friendliness. Of course, I can smell and almost taste curry in every lane.

It's the middle of December and the festival of music and dance that I have come to witness is just about to begin. One of the largest music celebrations of its kind in the world, it features a month of performances that take place all over the city.

Unlike the classical Hindustani music of North India, the Carnatic music of the South is more structured, lyrical, ornamental and strict. Due to these formalities, it offers less opportunity for improvisation but is more representative of time-honored tradition. "Carnatic music seeks more to enlighten than entertain because of its Vedic origin. This is an art for God's sake and not for art's sake," says one knowledgeable musician.

Lord Siva's "original band" is said to have consisted of celestial musicians playing *mridangam* (drum), *tambura* (drone), cymbals, *vina* (stringed instrument) and flute. Today, a traditional South Indian classical performance might feature these five instruments along with the *ghatam* (clay-pot) and the violin. In South India, music and dance have developed as an adjunct to worship. Devotion is the driving force of this art form, which

is comprised of songs in Sanskrit as well as in all of the main southern languages: Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. According to South Indian tradition, the purest form of teaching has always been the oral method, in which training is passed along personally from teacher to student. Because of this, many of the great South Indian compositions have been lost simply because they were never written down.

Bharata Natyam is the featured style of dance at the festival. It is the oldest of the four major dance traditions of India and the main classical dance of the South.

The Chennai Music Festival offers a rare opportunity for new artists to be discovered and for established performers to hold their ground in the hearts and minds of the festival's dedicated attendees. Celebrated annually since 1927, this grand music extravaganza has always been organized and promoted by Chennai's Music Academy, an educational institution that was formed one year after the first festival took place and is today the oldest and most respected music institution in South India. There are over 40 such schools in Chennai alone, and they all join the Academy in offering more than 1,000 music and dance performances during this festival month. The concerts themselves are graded,

Center stage: The 2004 Chennai Music Festival featured well known artists like *bharata natyam* dancer Malavika Sarukai and Carnatic vocalist Trichur V. Ramachandran (below, second from right)

with juniors performing in the afternoons and seniors in the evenings. The afternoon slots are generally admission-free and not crowded, but the evening concerts are packed. That's when the stars come out to shine.

Though violin has long been part of the South Indian classical ensemble, there has been a recent trend toward bringing in other Western musical instruments, such as the mandolin, guitar and saxophone—as well as a variety of keyboard instruments. Carnatic music is still the style of choice and the expectations for excellence have not diminished. While these new instruments are very popular, they are still considered a novelty.

The dancers are also experimenting.



COURTESY ANANTHA KRISHNAN



COURTESY ANANTHA KRISHNAN

There are new dance categories with names like "dance-drama" and "celluloid classics." This last division features young high-steppers performing dance sequences from old Tamil film classics. One of a handful of overseas participants this year included a dance group from Singapore performing traditional Chinese dance.

Finally, there is one non-musical specialty of the festival that cannot be neglected. Distinguished and distinctive South Indian cuisine like *dosai*, *vadai*, *pongal* and *uttappam* can always be found in a variety of preparations at a number of Chennai's famous eateries, casually referred to as "canteens." I must say that these canteens are as much a crowd-pleaser as are the performers. Certainly they make as much or more money. When I asked one plump fellow what made him step into one of these establishments even during the high point of an excellent concert, he replied with gusto: "It is in the tradition, sir. A music-lover will have his snacks while visiting the festival during the music season. The music and the canteen go together."

Canteen visits and instincts for socializing

can make an audience forever mobile and audible in a concert hall during a performance. This can be somewhat disconcerting for those who are not used to it—especially connoisseurs from the West who are accustomed to a certain reserve in the art of music appreciation.

A young man named Gopu, sitting next to me, said, "This is the way a Carnatic music lover experiences a concert. It does not make him any less of a fan. Yet as these artists of today travel the world and get used to the quietly disciplined venues elsewhere, they are starting to demand similar behavior in Chennai halls as well."

During this festival season, there are a number of *bhajan* groups out and about. These dedicated souls are not formally trained. They qualify for their music only through their heart-rending devotion. Yet they are unforgettable. Many a morning, I woke up to this joyful singing. Peering down from my hotel window, still in my pajamas, I regretted not being right down there on the dusty road to catch these joyful and carefree renditions belted out by *bhaktars* (worship-

pers) so fully immersed in the *bhava* (devotion) of their music they hardly noticed the sun rising.

Because the death anniversary of the great South Indian composer Thyagaraja coincides with the festival, many committed musicians now travel on pilgrimage to his burial place on the banks of the river Cauvery in the tiny hamlet of Thiruvaiyaru. These ardent souls can be heard singing the saint's legendary compositions far into the night.

Even when the festival is over, Chennai residents are reluctant to let go of the party spirit. Certainly, at times like this it seems this ancient musical tradition will live forever. Yet as my taxi goes scarily winding and speeding toward the Chennai airport, I ponder the despondent thoughts expressed by one music lover who was concerned that the arts of South India were dying. Even as he was talking to me, I could not help but think: "Although some legends of music may appear to be lost, new genius is undoubtedly in the making, and great innovations are certainly on the horizon. Nothing great is ever lost."



A master's due praise: During an award presentation in Chennai in 2004, HINDUISM TODAY Editor Paramacharya Palaniswami extols S. Rajam (right) for a lifetime of artistic achievement

"I Was There"

One of South India's most respected classical musicians, Sri S. Rajam, 87, has enjoyed a long affiliation with Chennai's famous annual music festivals. He is also a highly accomplished and uniquely creative graphics artist who has done many paintings for HINDUISM TODAY. Below, the master reflects upon Chennai's legendary legacy of music.

What were these festivals like in the beginning? My father took me to the very first one. I was only about ten years old at the time. In those days, the evening performances would begin around 4:30 in the afternoon. There was no electricity, just lanterns—and

no mikes. No more than 150 people would attend a single performance. It was wonderful—all natural. From the start it was uniquely famous.

What was the original purpose of these music festivals? The Music Academy wanted to create an awareness of South Indian classical music in its purity. During those first presentations, there were demonstrations during the day and performances at night. Music scholars as well as dance and instrumental performers were featured.

How have the festivals changed through the years? In the beginning they were all rather academic. Education was the focus, and the scholarly musicologists were the main feature. These musicologists were very good teachers and produced the best of performers, but they were not performers themselves. After a while, an "Expert Committee" was formed to bring in highly qualified performers. I worked in All India Radio as Music Supervisor from 1945 to 1979. When I turned 60, I had to retire. At that time, I was asked to join this Expert Committee. I accepted and have been a member ever since.

Are the festivals getting better with age? Now the Academy is experimenting with different instruments and different combinations of styles. In the beginning, these things were not done. A strict classical standard was maintained. These changes are good and signify progress, but there is also a strong desire these days for "show" and the sale of tickets. With modern technology, the nature and character of the instrumental and the vocal music is being lost. Also, there used to be more *gurukulams* (stringent live-in training schools for young musicians). They helped maintain a standard. Now, these strict *gurukulams* have been replaced with more lenient public schools.

Do you have any suggestions for raising the standards? The festival could be shortened and the performances could be lengthened. Also, in the old days, when a musician walked on stage, he did not come prepared. He would be asked by the audience on the spot to sing or play a certain song. Let this kind of confrontation be reinstituted. This would stem the growth of the mushrooms, and bring them up to a very high level. This would also inspire a love of learning.

All Religions ARE NOT THE SAME



THE PROBLEM WITH HINDU UNIVERSALISM

By Frank Gaetano Morales, Ph.D. (Dharma Pravartaka)

In the photo below, representatives from major faiths joined parliamentarians, scientists and journalists at Oxford University in April of 1988 to discuss the global problems faced by Earth's peoples. Each priest, minister, imam, monk, rabbi, swami or shaman stood proudly for a congregation and religion distinct from all others. Among the Hindus present were this magazine's founder and the editor, front row. Organizers found it challenging to find eminent Hindus who openly called themselves Hindus and were willing and qualified to stand up for their faith. Many candidates they approached did not describe themselves as Hindu, preferring a more universalist identity. Such leaders were not included in this Global Forum on Human Survival. In this article Dr. Morales, a devout Hindu, discusses the origins and the problems of this syndrome, which he terms Radical Universalism.



PHOTO: GLOBAL FORUM

A CRITIQUE OF RADICAL UNIVERSALISM

It is by no means an exaggeration to say that the ancient religion of Hinduism has been one of the least understood traditions in the history of world religion. The sheer number of stereotypes, misconceptions and outright false notions about what Hinduism teaches, as well as about the precise practices and behavior that it asks of its followers, outnumber those of any other religion currently known. Leaving the more obviously grotesque crypto-colonialist caricatures of cow worship, caste domination and *sati* aside, even many of the most fundamental theological and philosophical foundations of Hinduism often remain inexplicable mysteries to the general public and supposed scholars of Hindu studies. More disturbing, however, is the fact that many wild misconceptions about the beliefs of Hinduism are prevalent even among the bulk of followers of Hinduism and, alarmingly, even to many purportedly learned spiritual teachers, *gurus* and *swamis* who claim to lead the religion in present times.

Of the many current peculiar concepts mistakenly ascribed to Hindu theology, one of the most widely misunderstood is the idea that Hinduism somehow teaches that all religions are equal, that all religions are the same, with the same purpose, goal, expe-

rientially tangible salvific state and object of ultimate devotion. So often has this notion been thoughtlessly repeated by so many—from the common Hindu parent to the latest *swamiji* arriving on American shores yearning for a popular following—that it has now become artificially transformed into a supposed foundation stone of modern Hindu teachings. Many Hindus are now completely convinced that this is actually what Hinduism teaches. Despite its widespread popular repetition, however, does Hinduism actually teach the idea that all religions are really the same? Even a cursory examination of the long history of Hindu philosophical thought, as well as an objective analysis of the ultimate logical implications of such a proposition, quickly makes it quite apparent that traditional Hinduism has never supported such an idea.

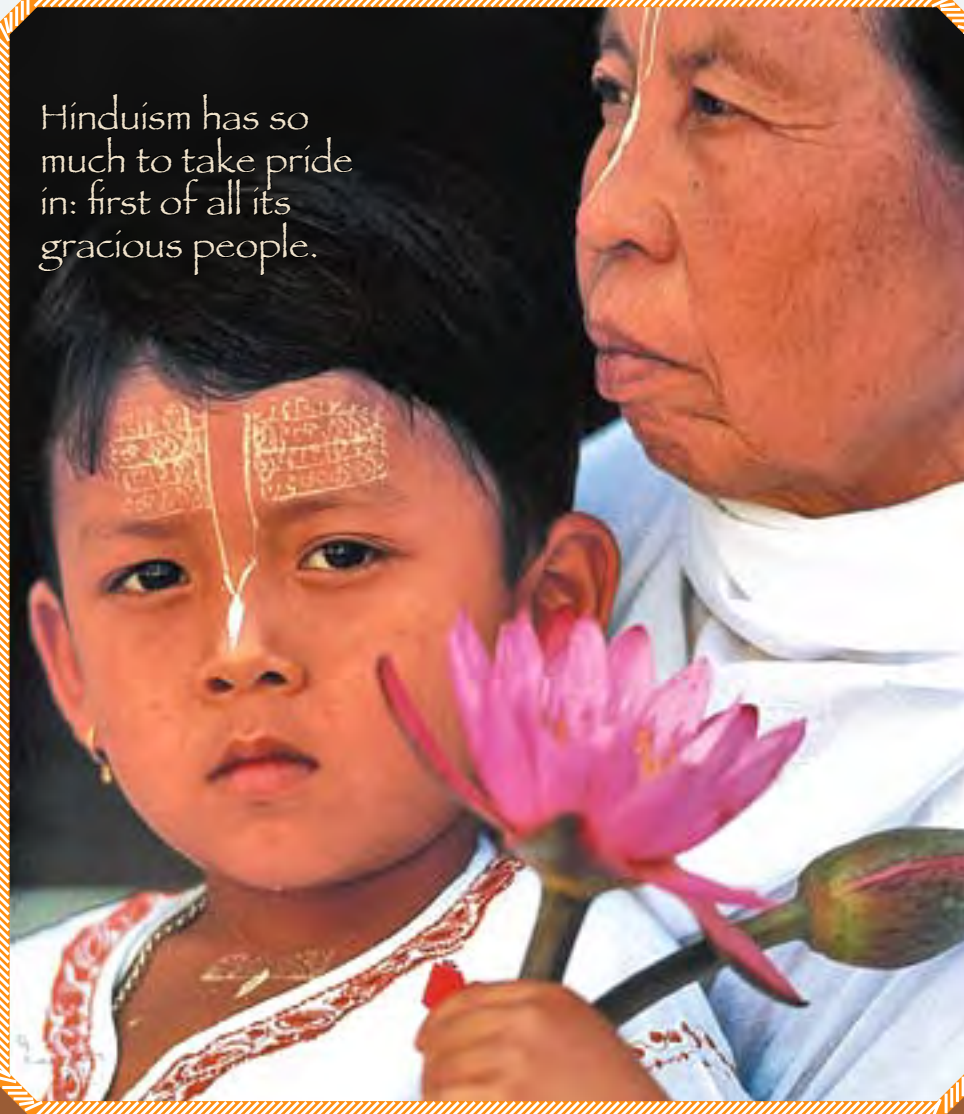
The doctrine of what I call “Radical Universalism” makes the claim that all religions are the same. This dogmatic assertion is of very recent origin, and has become one of the most harmful misconceptions in the Hindu world in the last 150 or so years. It is a doctrine that has directly led to a self-defeating philosophical relativism that has, in turn, weakened the stature and substance of Hinduism to its very core. The doctrine of Radical Universalism has made Hindu

philosophy look infantile in the eyes of non-Hindus, has led to a collective state of self-revulsion, confusion and shame in the minds of too many Hindu youth, and has opened the Hindu community

to be preyed upon much more easily by the zealous missionaries of other religions. The problem of Radical Universalism is arguably the most important issue facing the global Hindu community today.

Hinduism has so much to take pride in: first of all its gracious people.

LINDSAY HEBBARD



What's a Kid to Do?

Indian Hindu parents are to be given immense credit. The daily challenges they face in encouraging their children to maintain their commitment to Hinduism are enormous and well known. Hindu parents try their best to observe fidelity to the religion of their ancestors, often having little understanding of the religion themselves, other than what was given to them, in turn, by their own parents. All too many Indian Hindu youth, on the other hand, find themselves unattracted to a religion that is little comprehended or respected by most of those around them—Hindu and non-Hindu alike. Today's Hindu youth seek more strenuously convincing reasons for following a religion than merely the argument that it is the family tradition. Today's Hindu youth demand, and deserve, cogent philosophical explanations about what Hinduism actually teaches, and why they should remain Hindu rather than join any of the many other religious alternatives they see around them. Temple priests are often ill-equipped to give these bright Hindu youth the answers they so sincerely seek; mom and dad are usually even less knowledgeable than the temple *pujaris*. What is a Hindu child to do?

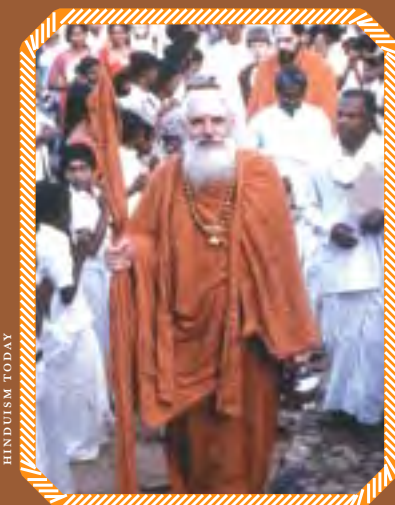
As I travel the nation delivering lectures on Hindu philosophy and spirituality, I frequently encounter a repeated scenario. Hindu parents

“Sameness with all other religions is incompatible with authentic Hindu dharma. Sameness is making Hinduism irrelevant and redundant. It is sliding Hinduism towards extinction by dilution and assimilation, in the same manner as Christianity's inculturation strategy made many pagan religions extinct. It positions Hinduism as a takeover target, with a friendly takeover of some components and a hostile takeover and/or outright cultural genocide of other components.”

MR. RAJIV MALHOTRA, FOUNDER OF THE INFINITY FOUNDATION

will approach me after I've finished my lecture and timidly ask for advice. The often-repeated story goes somewhat like this: “We raised our daughter (or son) to be a good Hindu. We took her to the temple for important holidays. We even sent her to a Hindu camp for a weekend when she was 13. Now at the age of 23, our child has left Hinduism and converted to the (*fill in the blank*) religion. When we ask how she could have left the religion of her family, the answer she throws back in our face is: ‘Mama/dada, you always taught me that all re-

Parallel Thoughts From the Teachings Of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami



This afternoon we had a nice visit with a fine young man here at my *ashram* in Sri Lanka. During the conversation, I encouraged him to stand strong for Hinduism. “When you stand strong for your religion, you are strong,” he was told. Today there are many Hindus from India and Sri Lanka in the United States and Europe who when asked, “Are you a Hindu?” reply, “No, I'm not really a Hindu. I'm nonsectarian, universal, a follower of all religions. I'm a little bit of everything, and a little

bit of everybody. Please don't classify me in any particular way.” Are these the words of a strong person? No. Too much of this kind of thinking makes the individual weak-minded. Religion, above all else, should bring personal strength and commitment to the individual. When a Hindu is totally noncommittal, releasing his loyalties as he goes along through

life, disclaiming his religion for the sake of so-called unity with other people or for business or social reasons, he can easily be taken in, converted to other people's beliefs. Even when it is just a way to get along with others, by seeming uncertain of his path, he opens himself to alien influences of all kinds.

Young adults hear their parents disclaiming their religion by saying “Oh, I am a Christian. I

am a Muslim. I am a Buddhist. I am a follower of all religions. All religions are one.” All religions are not one. They are very, very different. They all worship and talk about God, yes, but they do not all lead their followers to the same spiritual goal. The Christians are not seeking God within themselves. They do not see God as all-pervasive. Nor do they see God in all things. Their religion does not value the methods of yoga which bring Hindus into God Realization. Their religion does not have the mysticism of worshiping God and the Gods in the temple. Jews, Christians and Muslims do not believe that there is more than one life or that there is such a thing as karma. They simply do not accept these beliefs. They are heresy to them. These are a few of the basic

and foremost beliefs that make our religion and theirs very, very different indeed.

Many Asian Hindus traveling to America, Europe or Africa for business reasons think that in order to fit in, to be accepted, they must deny their religion. The Jews, Christians and Muslims did not deny their faith when they found themselves in alien countries, yet their businesses flourish. But too many Hindus say, “I am a Muslim. I am a Jew. I am a Christian. I am a Hindu. I am a universalist.” These are very naive statements. The Muslims do not think these Hindus are Muslim. The Jews do not think that they are Jewish. The Christians know they are not Christians. And the Hindus know they were born Hindu and will die as Hindus, and that they are disclaim-

ligions are the same, and that it doesn't really matter how a person worships God. So what does it matter if I have followed your advice and switched to another religion?"

Many of you reading this article have probably been similarly approached by parents expressing this same dilemma. The truly sad thing about this scenario is that the child is, of course, quite correct in her assertion that she is only following the logical conclusion of her parents' often-repeated mantra all religions are the same. If all religions are exactly the same, after all, and if we all just end up in the same place in the end anyway, then what does it really matter what religion we follow? Hindu parents complain when their children adopt other religions, but without understanding that it was precisely this flawed dogma of Radical Universalism, and not some inherent flaw of Hinduism itself, that has driven their children away. My contention is that parents themselves are not to be blamed for espousing this non-Hindu idea to their children. Rather, much of the blame is to be placed at the feet of today's ill-equipped Hindu teachers and leaders, the guardians of authentic Dharma teachings.

In modern Hinduism, we hear from a variety of sources this claim that all religions are equal. Unfortunately, the most damaging source of this fallacy is none other than the many uninformed spiritual leaders of the Hindu community itself. I have been to innumerable *pravachanas* (expositions), for example, where a *guruji* will provide his audience with the following metaphor, which I call the Mountain Metaphor. "Truth (or God or Brahman) lies at the summit of a very high mountain. There

are many diverse paths to reach the top of the mountain, and thus attain the one supreme goal. Some paths are shorter, some longer. The path itself, however, is unimportant. The only truly important thing is that seekers all reach the top of the mountain."

While this simplistic metaphor might seem compelling at a cursory glance, it leaves out a very important elemental supposition: it makes the unfounded assumption that everyone wants to get to the top of the same mountain! As we will soon see, not every religion shares the same goal, the same conception of the Absolute (indeed, even the belief that there is an Absolute), or the same means to their respective goals. Rather, there are many different philosophical "mountains," each with its own unique claim to be the supreme goal of all human spiritual striving.

A Tradition of Tolerance, Not Capitulation

Historically, pre-colonial, classical Hinduism never taught that all religions are the same. This is not to say, however, that Hinduism has not believed in tolerance or freedom of religious thought and expression. It has always been a religion that has taught tolerance of other valid religious traditions. However, the assertion that a) we should have tolerance for the beliefs of other religions is a radically different claim from the overreaching declaration that b) all religions are the same. This confusion between two thoroughly separate assertions may be one reason why so many modern Hindus believe that Hindu tolerance is synonymous with Radical Universalism. To maintain a healthy tolerance of another person's religion

does not mean that we have to then adopt that person's religion!

Uniquely Hindu: The Crisis of the Hindu Lack of Self-Worth

In general, many of the world's religions have been periodically guilty of fomenting rigid sectarianism and intolerance among their followers. We have witnessed, especially in the record of the more historically recent Western religions, that religion has sometimes been

used as a destructive mechanism, misused to divide people, to conquer others in the name of one's god, and to make artificial and oppressive distinctions between "believers" and "non-believers." Being an inherently non-fundamentalist worldview, Hinduism has, by its nature, always been keen to distinguish its own tolerant approach to spirituality vis-à-vis more sectarian and conflict-oriented notions of religion. Modern Hindus are infamous for bending over backwards to show the world

just how nonfanatical and open-minded we are, even to the point of denying ourselves the very right to unapologetically celebrate our own Hindu tradition.

Unfortunately, in our headlong rush to unburden Hinduism of anything that might seem to even remotely resemble the closed-minded sectarianism sometimes found in other religions, we often forget the obvious truth that Hinduism is itself a systematic and self-contained religious tradition in its own right. In the same manner that Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism or Jainism have their own unique and specific beliefs, doctrines and claims to spiritual authority, all of which fall within the firmly demarcated theological bounds of their own unique traditions, Hinduism, too, has just such Hindu-centric theological and institutional bounds. Like every other religion, Hinduism is a distinct and unique tradition, with its own inbuilt beliefs, worldview, traditions, rituals, concept of the Absolute, metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, cosmology, cosmogony and theology. The grand, systematic philosophical construct that we today call Hinduism is the result of the extraordinary efforts and spiritual insights of the great rishis, yogis, *acharyas* and gurus of our religion, guided by the transcendent light of the Vedic revelation that has stood the test of time. It is a tradition that is worthy of healthy celebration by Hindus and respectful admiration by non-Hindus.

Such a realization and acceptance of Hinduism's unique place in the world does not, by any stretch of the imagination, have to lead automatically to sectarianism, strife, conflict

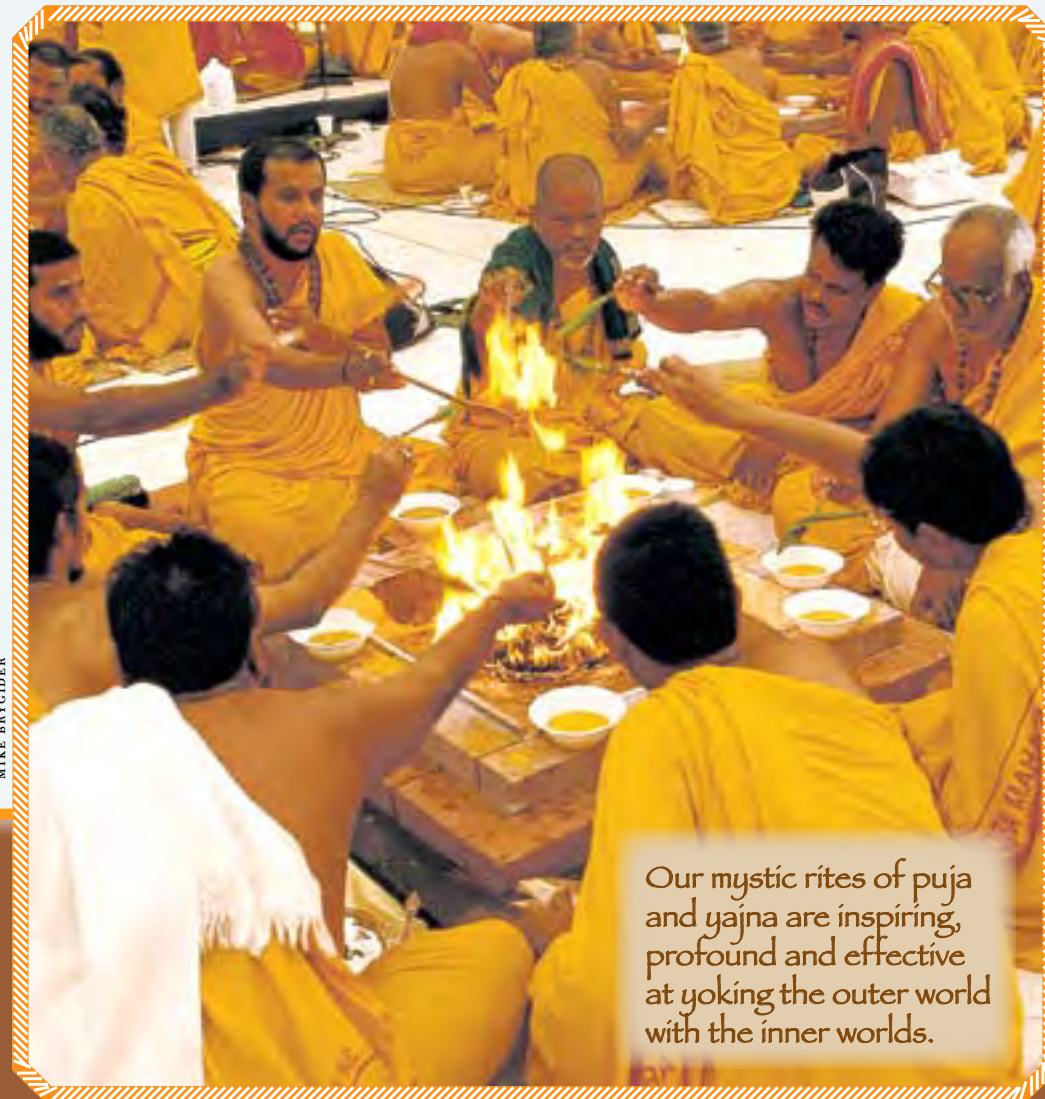
or religious chauvinism. Indeed, such a recognition of Hinduism's distinctiveness is crucial if Hindus are to possess even a modicum of healthy self-understanding, self-respect and pride in their own tradition. Self-respect and

To maintain a healthy tolerance of another person's religion does not mean that we have to then adopt that person's religion!

the ability to celebrate one's unique spiritual tradition are basic psychological needs, and a cherished civil right of any human being, Hindu and non-Hindu alike.

Letting the Tradition Speak for Itself

When we look at the philosophical, literary and historical sources of the pre-colonial Hindu tradition, we find that the notion of Radical Universalism is overwhelmingly absent. The idea that all religions are the same is not found in the sacred Hindu literature, among the utterances of the great philosopher-*acharyas* of Hinduism, or in any of Hinduism's six main schools of philosophical thought (the *Shad-darshanas*). Throughout the history of the tradition, such great Hindu philosophers as Vyasa, Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha, Vijnana Bhikshu, Swaminarayan (Sahajanand Swami) and others made unambiguous and unapologetic distinctions between the religion of Hinduism and non-Hindu religions. The sages of pre-modern Hinduism had no difficulty in boldly asserting what was, and what was not, to be considered Hindu. And they did so often! This



Our mystic rites of puja and yajna are inspiring, profound and effective at yoking the outer world with the inner worlds.

What happened to the religion of the ancient Greeks? They must have missed several generations. The ancient Mayan, Hawaiian, Druid and Egyptian religions are all virtually forgotten but for the history books.

The great men and women in our history have withstood the most severe challenges to our religion and sacrificed their energies, even

their lives, that it would not be lost to invaders who sought to destroy it. It is easy to be courageous when an enemy is on the attack, because the threat is so obvious. Today the threat is more subtle, but no less terrible. In fact, it is really a greater threat than Hinduism has ever had to face before, because an enemy is not destroying the religion. It is being surrendered by the Hindus themselves through neglect, through fear, through desire for land and gold, but mostly through ignorance of the religion itself. If Hindus really understood how deep into their soul their religion penetrates, if they knew how superior it is to any other spiritual path on the Earth today, they would not abandon it so easily, but cherish and foster it into its great potential. They would not remain

silent when asked about their religion, but speak out boldly its great truths. They would not hesitate to stand strong for Hinduism.

How can Hindus in the modern, mechanized world pass their religion to the next generation when they are not proud enough of it to announce it openly to business associates and all who ask? When the Muslim seeks employment, he is proud to say, "I worship Allah." The Christian is proud to say, "I worship Jesus Christ." But too often the Hindu is not proud to say, "I worship Lord Ganesha." In our great religion there is one Supreme God and many Gods. The average Hindu today is not proud of this. He feels others will reject him, will not employ him, will not like him. Of course, this might be true. It might be very true. Then he



lucid sense of religious community and philosophical clarity is seen first and foremost in the very question of what, precisely, constitutes a “Hindu.” Without knowing the answer to this most foundational of questions, it is impossible to fully assess the damaging inadequacies of Radical Universalist dogma.

Who Is a Hindu?

Remarkably, when the question of who is a Hindu is discussed today, we get a multitude of confused and contradictory answers from both Hindu laypersons and from Hindu leaders. Some of the more simplistic answers to this question include: anyone born in India is automatically a Hindu (the ethnicity fallacy); if your parents are Hindu, then you are Hindu (the familial argument); if you are born into a certain caste, then you are Hindu (the genetic inheritance model); if you believe in reincarnation, then you are Hindu (forgetting that many non-Hindu religions share at least some of the beliefs of Hinduism); if you practice any religion originating from India, then you are a Hindu (the national origin fallacy). The real answer to this question has already been conclusively answered by the ancient sages of Hinduism.

The two primary factors that distinguish the individual uniqueness of the great world religious traditions are a) the scriptural authority upon which the tradition is based, and b) the fundamental religious tenets that it espouses. If we ask the question what is a Jew?, for example, the answer is: someone who accepts the *Torah* as his scriptural guide and believes in the monotheistic concept of God espoused in these scriptures. What is a Christian? A person who accepts the Gospels as their scriptural

guide and believes that Jesus is the incarnate God who died for their sins. What is a Muslim? Someone who accepts the *Qur’an* as their scriptural guide, and believes that there is no God but Allah, and that Mohammed is his prophet. In other words, what determines whether a person is a follower of any particular religion is whether or not they accept, and attempt to live by, the scriptural authority of that religion. This is no less true of Hinduism than it is of any other religion on Earth. Thus, the question of who is a Hindu is similarly easily answered.

By definition, a Hindu is an individual who accepts as authoritative the religious guidance of the Vedic scriptures, and who strives to live in accordance with Dharma, God’s divine laws as revealed in those Vedic scriptures. In keeping with this standard definition, all of the Hindu thinkers of the six traditional schools of Hindu philosophy (*shad-darshanas*) insisted on the acceptance of the scriptural authority (*shabda-pramana*) of the *Vedas* as the primary criterion for distinguishing a Hindu from a non-Hindu, as well as distinguishing overtly Hindu philosophical positions from non-Hindu ones.

It has been the historically accepted standard that if you accept the four *Vedas* and the *smriti* canon (one example of which would include the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Puranas*, etc.) as your scriptural authority, and live your life in accordance with the dharmic principles of these scriptures, you are then a Hindu. Thus, any Indian who rejects the authority of the *Vedas* is obviously not a Hindu—regardless of his or her birth. While an American, Canadian, Russian, Brazilian, Indo-

nesian or Indian who does accept the authority of the *Vedas* obviously is a Hindu. One is Hindu, not by race, but by belief and practice.

Clearly Defining Hinduism

Traditional Hindu philosophers continually emphasized the crucial importance of clearly understanding what is Hinduism proper and what are non-Hindu religious paths. You cannot claim to be a Hindu, after all, if you do not understand what it is that you claim to believe, and what it is that others believe. One set of antonymous Sanskrit terms repeatedly employed by many traditional Hindu philosophers were the words *vaidika* and *avaidika*. The word *vaidika* (or *Vedic* in English) means

one who accepts the teachings of the *Vedas*. It refers specifically to the unique epistemological stance taken by the traditional schools of Hindu philosophy, known as *shabda-pramana*, or employing the divine sound current of *Veda* as a means of acquiring valid knowledge. In this sense the word *vaidika* is employed to differentiate those schools of Indian philosophy that accept the epistemological validity of the *Vedas* as *apaurusheya*—or a perfect authoritative spiritual source, eternal and untouched by the speculations of humanity—juxtaposed with the *avaidika* schools that do not ascribe such validity to the *Vedas*. In pre-Christian times, *avaidika* schools were clearly identified by Hindu authors as being specifically Bud-

dhism, Jainism and the atheistic Charvaka school, all of whom did not accept the *Vedas*. These three schools were unanimously considered non-Vedic, and thus non-Hindu (they certainly are geographically *Indian* religions, but they are not theologically/philosophically *Hindu* religions).

Dharma Rakshaka: The Defenders of Dharma

With the stark exception of very recent times, Hinduism has historically always been recognized as a separate and distinct religious phenomenon, as a tradition unto itself. It was recognized as such both by outside observers of Hinduism, as well as from within, by Hinduism’s greatest spiritual teachers. The saints and sages of Hinduism continuously strived to uphold the sanctity and gift of the Hindu worldview, often under the barrages of direct polemic opposition by non-Hindu traditions. Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Charvakins (atheists), the four main philosophical schools found in Indian history, would frequently engage each other in painstakingly precise debates, arguing compellingly over even the smallest conceptual minutia of philosophical subject matter. The sages of Hinduism met such philosophical challenges with cogent argument, rigid logic and sustained pride in their tradition, usually soundly defeating their philosophical opponents in open debate.

Adi Shankaracharya (788-820), as only one of many examples of Hindu *acharyas* defending their religion, earned the title “Digvijaya,” or “Conqueror of All Directions.” This title was awarded Shankara due solely to his formidable ability to defend the Hindu tradition from the

philosophical incursions of opposing (*purva-paksha*), non-Hindu schools of thought. Indeed, Shankara is universally attributed, both by scholars and later, post-Shankaran Hindu leaders, with being partially responsible for the historical decline of Buddhism in India due to his intensely polemic missionary activities. No Radical Universalist was he!

The great teacher Madhva is similarly seen as being responsible for the sharp decline of Jainism in South India due to his immense debating skills in defense of Vaidika Dharma. Pre-modern Hindu sages and philosophers recognized and celebrated the singular vision that Hinduism has to offer the world, clearly distinguished between Hindu and non-Hindu religions, and defended Hinduism to the utmost of their prodigious intellectual and spiritual abilities. They did so unapologetically, professionally and courageously. The Hindu worldview only makes sense, has value and will survive if all Hindus similarly celebrate our religion’s uniqueness today.

Traditional Hinduism Versus Neo-Hinduism

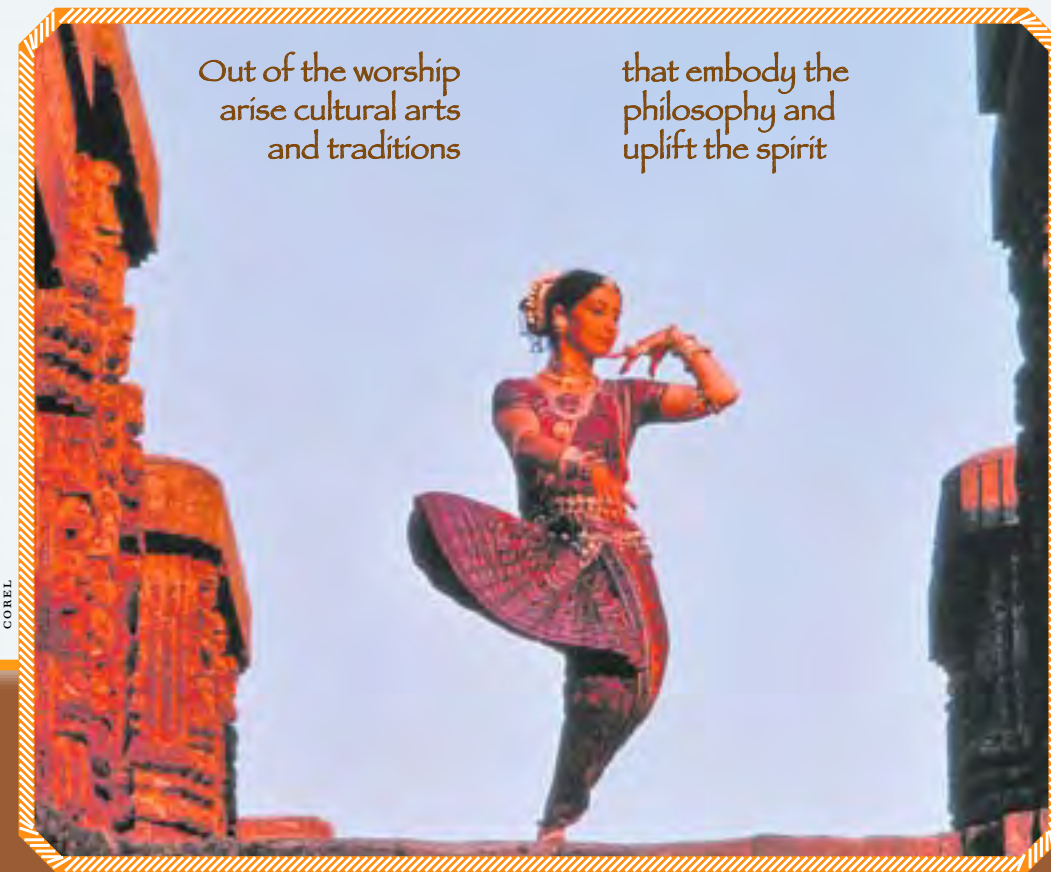
A tragic occurrence in the long history of Hinduism was witnessed throughout the 19th century, the destructive magnitude of which Hindu leaders and scholars today are only beginning to adequately assess and address. This development both altered and weakened Hinduism to such a tremendous degree that Hinduism has not yet even begun to recover. The classical, traditional Hinduism that had been responsible for the continuous development of thousands of years of sophisticated culture, architecture, music, philosophy, ritual and the-

should seek out people who do respect Hinduism. These are the people to associate with.

This confusion about Hinduism, what it is and is not and who is a Hindu and who is not, occurs in San Francisco, New York, Chennai,



Mumbai, New Delhi and in London. It is mainly in the larger cities in India, the United States and Europe that people are not upholding the Sanatana Dharma anymore and are surrendering it, the most precious thing in their life, to adopt an ecumenical philosophy. The sad thing is that no one is objecting. Yes, no one is objecting. It doesn’t seem to bother anybody at all. No one bothers when a Hindu denies his religious heritage in order to be accepted into a place of employment, or while working with fellow employees. No one bothers when that same Hindu returns home and performs puja in the closet shrine among the shoes. The shrine is in the closet so the door can be quickly closed in case non-Hindu visitors arrive. Isn’t this terrible?



But these same Hindus expect their sons and daughters to believe in the religion that they are publicly denouncing. They expect their sons and daughters to worship in the closet shrine they hide at home. The children today just will not accept this deception. Modern education teaches people to think for themselves. They will soon reject Hinduism and maybe their parents, too. Yes, youth do reject it, and they are rejecting it more and more each year that this deceptive attitude

continues on the part of the elders. Having rejected their Hinduism, the young people are not adopting another religion. What then are they doing? They are living as nonreligious people.

When the pressures of mechanized industrial society get too difficult for them, when they need God and need the strength of their childhood faith, they will have no place to turn—not even to their parents. They may even seek escape in committing suicide, by

hanging themselves, poisoning themselves. It’s happening now, happening more and more as the years go by. And now divorce is widespread among Hindus. The elders sit in judgment and proclaim, “Divorce is wrong. Therefore, you shouldn’t get a divorce. You are breaking the rules by getting a divorce.” Too many elders have already broken the rules by not standing strong for their religion, and they are not listened to. Our fellow Hindus should not be harshly judged and cast out when things go wrong in their life. The elders should offer gentle advice and help in as many ways as possible to make up for any wrong that has been done. When the younger generation fails, the elders must share their strength with them to make them succeed, drawing on

the wisdom of Sanatana Dharma.

But it is never too late to stand strong for Hinduism. Hindu societies have to provide marriage counselors, people who go to the homes and counsel the couples before the relationship comes to the point of planning for divorce. Yes, we must provide professionally trained men and women to help a troubled couple before they go to the attorney, and others who can counsel our troubled youth, our elderly and our poor. Every Hindu who needs help must be able to find it somewhere within his own religion. Who can provide that help? The elders can and must.

It is important that you immediately refrain from following the patterns taught to you or your parents by the British Christians. One such

ology came under devastating assault during the 19th century British colonial rule like at no other time in India's history. For a thousand years previous to the British Raj, foreign marauders had repeatedly attempted to destroy Hinduism through overt physical genocide and the systematic destruction of Hindu temples and sacred places. Traditional Hinduism's wise sages and noble warriors had fought bravely to stem this anti-Hindu holocaust to the best of their ability, more often than not paying for their bravery with their lives.

What the Hindu community experienced under British Christian domination, however, was an ominously innovative form of cultural genocide. What they experienced was not an attempt at the physical annihilation of their culture, but a deceptively more subtle program of intellectual and spiritual annihilation. It is easy for a people to understand the urgent threat posed by an enemy that seeks to literally kill them. It is much harder, though, to understand the insidious threat of an enemy who, while remaining just as deadly, claims to seek only to serve a subjugated people's best interests.

During this short span of time in the 19th century, the ancient grandeur and beauty of a classical Hinduism that had stood the test of thousands of years came under direct ideological attack. What makes this period especially tragic is that the main apparatus that the British used in their attempts to destroy traditional Hinduism were the British-educated, spiritually co-opted sons and daughters of Hinduism itself. Seeing traditional Hinduism through the eyes of their British masters, a pandemic wave of 19th-century Anglicized Hindu intellectuals saw it as their solemn duty to "Westernize"

and "modernize" traditional Hinduism to make it more palatable to their new European overlords. One of the phenomena that occurred during this historic period was the fabrication of a new movement known as "neo-Hinduism." Neo-Hinduism was an artificial religious construct used as a paradigmatic juxtaposition to the legitimate traditional Hinduism that had been the religion and culture of the people for thousands of years. Neo-Hinduism was used as an effective weapon to replace authentic Hinduism with a British-invented version designed to make a subjugated people easier to manage and control.

The Christian- and British-inspired neo-Hindu movement attempted to execute several overlapping goals, and did so with great success:

- A.** the subtle Christianization of Hindu theology, which included concerted attacks on iconic imagery (*murti*), panentheism, and belief in the beloved Gods and Goddesses of traditional Hinduism;
- B.** the imposition of the Western scientific method, rationalism and skepticism on the study of Hinduism in order to show Hinduism's supposedly inferior grasp of reality;
- C.** ongoing attacks against the ancient Hindu science of ritual in the name of simplification and democratization of worship;
- D.** the importation of Radical Universalism from liberal, Unitarian/Universalist Christianity as a device designed to severely water down traditional Hindu philosophy.

The dignity, strength and beauty of traditional Hinduism was recognized as the foremost threat to Christian European rule in India. The invention of neo-Hinduism was the response. Had this colonialist program been car-

ried out with a British face, it would not have met with as much success as it did. Therefore, an Indian face was cleverly used to impose neo-Hinduism upon the Hindu people. The resultant effects of the activities of Indian neo-Hindus were ruinous for traditional Hinduism.

The primary dilemma with Hinduism as we find it today, in a nutshell, is precisely this problem of 1) not recognizing that there are really two distinct and conflicting Hinduisms today, neo-Hindu and traditionalist Hindu;

and 2) traditionalists being the guardians of authentic Dharma philosophically and attitudinally, but not yet coming to full grips with the modern world—i.e., not yet having found a way of negotiating authentic Hindu Dharma with modernity in order to communicate the unadulterated Hindu Dharma in a way that the modern mind can fully appreciate it. Hinduism will continue to be a religion mired in confusion about its own true meaning and value until traditionalist Hindus can assertively, pro-

fessionally and intelligently communicate the reality of genuine Hinduism to the world. Until they learn how to do this, neo-Hinduism will continue its destructive campaign.

The Non-Hindu Origins of Radical Universalism

Radical Universalism is neither traditional nor classical. Its origins can be traced back to the early 19th century. It is an idea not older than two centuries. Its intellectual roots are not even to be found in Hinduism itself, but rather are clearly traced back to Christian missionary attempts to alter the genuine teachings of authentic Hinduism. Radical Universalism was in vogue among 19th century British-educated Indians, most of who had little accurate information about their own Hindu intellectual and spiritual heritage. These Westernized Indians were often overly eager to gain acceptance and respectability for Indian culture from a Christian European audience who saw in Hinduism nothing more than the childish prattle of a brutish, colonized people. Many exaggerated stereotypes about Hinduism had been unsettling impressionable European minds for a century previous to their era. Rather than attempting to refute these many stereotypes about Hinduism by presenting Hinduism in its authentic and pristine form, however, many of these 19th-century Christianized Indians felt it was necessary to instead gut Hinduism of anything that might seem offensively exotic to the European mind. Radical Universalism seemed to be the perfect base notion upon which to artificially construct a "new" Hinduism that would give the Anglicized

19th-century Indian intelligentsia the acceptability they so yearned to be granted by their British masters.

We encounter one of the first instances of the Radical Universalist infiltration of Hinduism in the syncretistic teachings of Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), the founder of the Brahmo Samaj. A highly controversial figure during his life, Roy was a Bengali intellectual who was heavily influenced by the teachings of the Uni-

The main apparatus that the British used in their attempts to destroy traditional Hinduism were the British educated, spiritually co-opted sons and daughters of Hinduism itself.

tarian Church, a heterodox denomination of Christianity. In addition to studying Christianity, Islam and Sanskrit, he studied Hebrew and Greek with the dream of translating the Bible into Bengali. A self-described Hindu "reformer," he viewed Hinduism through a colonial Christian lens. The Christian missionaries had told Roy that traditional Hinduism was a barbaric religion that had led to oppression, superstition and ignorance of the Indian people. He believed them. More, Roy saw Biblical teachings, specifically, as holding the cherished key to altering traditional Hindu teachings to make them more acceptable to India's colonial masters. In his missionary zeal to Christianize Hinduism, he even wrote an anti-Hindu tract known as *The Precepts of Jesus: The Guide to Peace and Happiness*. It was directly from these Christian missionaries that Roy derived the



HASMUKH SHAH & NAVANIT SHAH

We have illumined holy men and women and the world's most ancient and venerable scriptures.

pattern is that if one person in the community comes up, cut him down, malign him, criticize him until all heads are leveled. If anyone does want to help out spiritually, they have to be quiet and conceal themselves, lest they be



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maligned. Nobody is standing up to defend the religion; nobody is allowing anybody else to stand up either. This has to change. It has to change, no matter how painful it might be to praise people rather than criticize them, and to support and to protect them.

During the era of India's domination by alien religions, when Hinduism was scheduled to be destroyed, the attack was to be performed in three ways. The first strategy was to convince the women to abandon their age-old *sthi* dharma—of maintaining the home, its purity and ways of worship—thus drawing them away from the household in order to receive a so-called "higher education" or to teach in alien religious schools, thus denying future generations the mother's religious counsel

and grounding in the dharma. The second strategy was to overtly break down the various castes of temple priests by encouraging them to accept other, often higher-paying occupations, thus leaving the temples untended. The third strategy was to convince Hindus that they had inherited a crude and outdated religion. This last attack was accomplished mainly through ridicule, by ridiculing

every aspect of the religion that could possibly be ridiculed.

Though India was politically dominated for generations by adherents of alien faiths, and though every attempt was made to discourage, weaken and crush the native religion, the carefully calculated, systematic assault failed to destroy Hinduism. Hinduism cannot be destroyed. It is the venerable eternal religion,

the Sanatana Dharma. But it was an effective campaign that has left in its wake deep *samskaric* patterns, deep subconscious impressions, which still persist in the minds of the Indian people. It is going to be difficult to completely eradicate these impressions, but with the help of all the millions of Hindus throughout the world, in adhering to and extolling the benefits and joys of Hinduism and the gifts which it holds for mankind, this is possible and feasible, within the range of accomplishment, perhaps within this very generation.

There are Hindus in every country of the world today, but they are struggling to adjust to life in other societies, not sure of what to accept for the benefit of themselves and their families and what to reject. Many are ashamed,

having accepted the *samskaras* of ridicule aimed at their religion by the missionaries of other religions and therefore cower behind the doctrines of alien religions or no religion at all, apart from an existential fear of the annihilation of consciousness at death. The Hindu framework of thinking, of emotional management and of knowledge does not allow for the existence of a Western influence. But there are Hindus in the frustrated Western world, and this is a reality. To them I say, Courage! Courage! Have the courage to come forth with your religion. Don't be a victim of the calculated ridicule aimed at the destruction of your religion, which is the destruction of your religion and of you and future generations if you accept it. Hinduism is one of the great reli-

bulk of his ideas, including the anti-Hindu notion of the radical equality of all religions.

In addition to acquiring Radical Universalism from the Christian missionaries, Roy also felt it necessary to Christianize Hinduism by adopting many Biblical theological beliefs into his neo-Hindu “reform” movement. Some of these other non-intrinsic adaptations included a rejection of Hindu panentheism, to be substituted with a more Biblical notion of anthropomorphic monotheism; a rejection of all iconic worship (“graven images” as the crypto-Christians of the Brahma Samaj phrased it); and a repudiation of the doctrine of *avatars*, or the divine descent of God. Roy’s immediate successors, Debendranath Tagore and Keshub Chandra Sen, attempted to incorporate even more Christian ideals into this neo-Hinduism invention. The Brahma Samaj is today extinct as an organization, but the global Hindu community is still feeling the damaging effects of its pernicious influence.

The next two neo-Hindu Radical Universalists that we witness in the history of 19th century Hinduism are Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). Though Vivekananda was a disciple (*shishya*) of Ramakrishna, the two led very different lives. Ramakrishna was born into a Hindu family in Dakshineswar. In his adult life, he was a Hindu temple priest and a fervently demonstrative devotee of the Divine Mother. His primary object of worship was the Goddess Kali, whom he worshiped with intense devotion all of his life. Despite his Hindu roots, however, many of Ramakrishna’s ideas and practices were derived, not from the ancient wisdom of classical Hinduism, but from the non-Vedic religious

outlooks of Islam and liberal Christianity.

Though he saw himself as being primarily Hindu, Ramakrishna believed that all religions aimed at the same supreme destination. He experimented briefly with Muslim, Christian and a wide variety of Hindu practices, blending, mixing and matching practices and beliefs as they appealed to him at any given moment. In 1875, Ramakrishna met Keshub Chandra Sen, the then leader of the neo-Hindu Brahma Samaj. Sen introduced Ramakrishna to the close-knit community of neo-Hindu activists who lived in Calcutta, and would in turn often bring these activists to Ramakrishna’s *satsangas*. Ramakrishna ended up being one of the most widely popular of neo-Hindu Radical Universalists.

Swami Vivekananda was arguably Ramakrishna’s most capable disciple. An eloquent and charismatic speaker, Vivekananda will be forever honored by the Hindu community for his brilliant defense of Hinduism at the Parliament of World Religions in 1893. Likewise, Vivekananda contributed greatly to the revival of interest in the study of Hindu scriptures and philosophy in turn-of-the-century India. The positive contributions of Vivekananda toward Hinduism are numerous and great indeed. Notwithstanding his remarkable undertakings, however, Vivekananda found himself in a similarly difficult position as other neo-Hindu leaders of his day were. How to make sense of the ancient ways of Hinduism, and hopefully preserve Hinduism, in the face of the overwhelming onslaught of modernity? Despite many positive contributions by Vivekananda and other neo-Hindus in attempting to formulate a Hindu response to the challenge of



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modernity, that response was often made at the expense of authentic Hindu teachings. Vivekananda, along with the other leaders of the neo-Hindu movement, felt it was necessary to both water down the Hinduism of their ancestors, and to adopt such foreign ideas as Radical Universalism, with the hope of gaining the approval of the European masters they found ruling over them.

While Ramakrishna led a contemplative

life of relative isolation from the larger world, Swami Vivekananda was to become a celebrated figure on the world religion stage. Vivekananda frequently took a somewhat dismissive attitude to traditional Hinduism as it was practiced in his day, arguing (quite incorrectly) that Hinduism was too often irrational, overly mythologically oriented, and too divorced from the more practical need for social welfare work. He was not much inter-

ested in Ramakrishna’s earlier emphasis on mystical devotion and ecstatic worship. Rather, Vivekananda laid stress on the centrality of his own idiosyncratic and universalistic approach to Vedanta, what later came to be known as “neo-Vedanta.”

Vivekananda differed slightly with Ramakrishna’s version of Radical Universalism by attempting to superimpose a distinctly neo-Vedantic outlook on the idea of the unity of all religions. Vivekananda advocated a sort of hierarchical Radical Universalism that espoused the equality of all religions, while simultaneously claiming that all religions are really evolving from inferior notions of religiosity to a pinnacle mode. That pinnacle of all religious thought and practice was, for Vivekananda, of course, Hinduism. Though Vivekananda contributed a great deal toward helping European and American non-Hindus to understand the greatness of Hinduism, the Radical Universalist and neo-Hindu inaccuracies that he fostered have also done a great deal of harm as well.

In order to fully experience Hinduism in its most spiritually evocative and philosophically compelling form, we must learn to recognize, and reject, the concocted influences of neo-Hinduism that have permeated the mass of Hindu thought today. It is time to rid ourselves of the liberal, Christian-inspired reformism that so deeply prejudiced such individuals as Ram Mohan Roy over a century ago. We must free ourselves from the anti-Hindu dogma of Radical Universalism that has so weakened Hinduism, and re-embrace a classical form of Hinduism that is rooted in the actual scriptures of Hinduism, that has been preserved

for thousands of years by the various disciplic successions of legitimate *acharyas*, and that has stood the test of time. We must celebrate traditional Hinduism. The neo-Hindu importation of Radical Universalism may resonate with many on a purely emotional level, but it remains patently anti-Hindu in its origins, an indefensible proposition philosophically, and a highly destructive doctrine to the further development of Hinduism.

“We’re Not Superior...Therefore We’re Superior”

In addition to demonstrating the non-Hindu nature of Radical Universalism from a historical and literary perspective, it is also important to examine the validity of the claims of Radical Universalism from an overtly philosophical perspective. We need to see if the idea that all religions are the same makes any objective rational sense at all. The problem that is created is that since only Hinduism is supposedly teaching the “truth” that all religions are the same, and since no other religion seems to be aware of this “truth” other than modern-day Hinduism, then Hinduism is naturally superior to all other religions in its exclusive possession of the knowledge that all religions are the same. In its attempt to insist that all religions are the same, Radical Universalism has employed a circular pattern of logic that sets itself up as being, astoundingly, superior to all other religions. Thus, attempting to uphold the claim of Radical Universalism leads to a situation in which Radical Universalism’s very claim is contradicted. A good way to see the inherent circular logic of this claim is to conduct a formal propositional analysis of the argument.

gions of the world, and you are a Hindu, one of the great people of this great religion.

The time has come for Hindus to be openly proud of their religion—the oldest religion on the planet. The time has come for Hindus

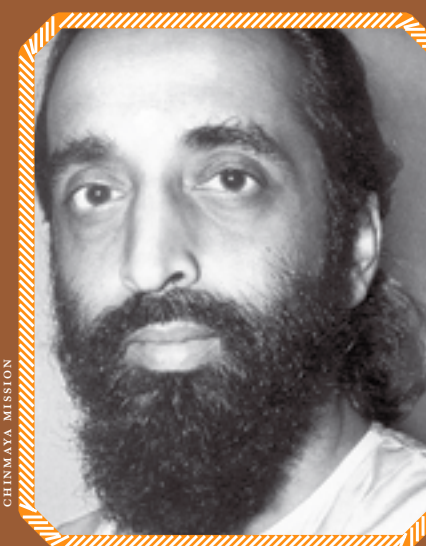


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to proclaim their beliefs and to defend their beliefs. The time has come for Hindus to stand up for Hinduism, no matter what the cost. The results will be a younger generation which respects the older generation again. The results will be a younger generation proud to be called Hindu. The results will be a younger generation eager to pass the tenets of Hinduism on to the next generation in a proud and a dynamic and a wonderful way. The time is now—begin! Western nations are becoming truly pluralistic. These are days of truth. They are days of correction of wrongdoing, days of Self Realization, which cannot be hidden under a cloak of deception. Believe

me, no Christian or Muslim looks at the Vedic-Agamic goal of *atmajnana*, Self Realization, in the same way Hindus do. The days are gone when it is necessary to observe Christmas in the ashrama and sing non-Hindu hymns at *satsanga*. There was a time to hide the Vedic Truth beneath a basket and behind a cross, but now is a time to shout Self Realization from the rooftops. Self Realization is, in fact, what all people on the planet have come here to experience.

The days of holding back are over. The floodgates are open. Hindus must come forward and be soldiers of the within. There is much work to be done. Come forward courageously. Stand strong for Hinduism, for your forefathers, for your family and for future generations on this Earth.



CHINMAYA MISSION

“Let Us Be Hindus” The First Public Lecture Of Swami Chinmayananda

Swami Chinmayananda’s legendary mission began with a bold and brilliant lecture in Pune, India, on December 23, 1951. Because only 18 people attended, the organizers of the event thought it was a flop, but the 32-year-old swami knew it was not. “Let Us Be Hindus.” It called for a Hindu renaissance. That renaissance became the theme and substance of the swami’s work for the following 42 years.

IT HAS BECOME A NEW FASHION WITH THE EDUCATED Hindu to turn up his nose and sneer at the very mention of his religion. I, too, have been among these critics. But when it is proclaimed that we would benefit socially and nationally by running away from Hinduism, I pause to reconsider my stand. However decadent our religion may have become, it is far better than no religion at all. My proposal is that we bring about a renaissance of Hinduism so that within its greatness which has been proven through many centuries we may reattain the past culture and civilization that we have lost.

To some, no doubt, Hinduism in India has come to be nothing more than a bundle of superstitions or a certain way of dressing, cooking, eating, talking and so on. Our Gods have fallen to the mortal

1. Modern Hinduism is the only religion that supports Radical Universalism.
2. Radical Universalism states that all religions are the same.
3. No other religion states or knows that all religions are the same.
4. Since a) no other religions know the truth that all religions are the same, and since b) only Hinduism knows the truth that all religions are the same, only Hinduism knows the truth of all religions.
5. Only Hinduism knows the truth of all religions.
6. Therefore, Hinduism is both distinct and superior to all religions.
7. Therefore, given Hinduism's distinctness from and superiority to all religions: all religions are not the same.
8. Since all religions are not the same, Radical Universalism is untrue.

Hinduism: The Empty Mirror?

A further self-defeating aspect of Radical Universalism is that it severely negates the very need for Hinduism itself, relegating the Hindu tradition to merely being an ideological vehicle subservient to the Radical Universalist agenda, and rendering any meaningful sense of Hindu cultural and religious identity barren. If the Radical Universalists of neo-Hinduism claim that all religions are the same, then each and every religion is simultaneously deprived of all attributive uniqueness. They are deprived of their identity. This is manifestly true of Hinduism even more so than any other religion, since Radical Universalist neo-Hindus would be the sole representatives of Radical Universalism on the world religious stage today.

If we say that the ancient teachings and

profoundly unique spiritual culture of Hinduism is qualitatively no better or no worse than any other religion, then what is the need for Hinduism? Hinduism then becomes the blank backdrop, the empty theatrical stage, upon which all other religious ideas are given the unbridled freedom to act, entertain and perform, all at the expense of Hinduism's freedom to assert its own identity. Hinduism, subjugated to the Radical Universalist agenda, would find itself reduced to being merely an inert mirror, doomed to aspire to nothing more philosophically substantial than passively reflecting every other religious creed, dogma and practice in its universalist-imposed sheen.

Brahman and Free Volition

The primary reason why Radical Universalists claim that all religions are the same is found in the pretentious assumption that the various individual Absolutes toward which each religion aims are, unbeknownst to them all, really the same. In other words, the members of all other religions are also really seeking Brahman; they are just not intelligent enough to know it! As every other religion will vociferously affirm, however, they are not seeking Brahman. Brahman is not Allah; Allah is not Nirvana; Nirvana is not Kevala; Kevala is not polytheistic Gods/Goddesses; polytheistic Gods/Goddesses is not Yahweh; Yahweh is not the Ancestors; the Ancestors are not tree spirits; tree spirits are not Brahman. When a religious Muslim tells us that he is worshiping Allah, and not Brahman, we need to take him seriously and respect his choice. When a Buddhist tells us that he wants to achieve Nirvana, and not Brahman, we need to take his claim seriously and respect his deci-

sion; and so on. To disrespectfully insist that all other religions are really just worshiping Brahman without knowing it, and to do so in the very name of respect and tolerance, is the pinnacle of hypocrisy and intolerance. The uncomplicated fact is that, regardless of how sincerely we may wish that all religions desire the same Absolute that we Hindus wish to achieve, other religions simply do not. We need to accept and live with this concrete theological fact.

Distinguishing Salvific States

The Christian's ultimate aim in salvation is to be raised physically from the dead on the es-

chatological day of judgment, and to find herself in heaven with Jesus, who is to be found seated at the right hand of the anthropomorphic male Father/God of the Old and New Testament. Muslims aspire toward a delightfully earthy paradise in which 72 *houris*, or virgin youth, will be granted to them to enjoy (*Qur'an*, 76:19). Jains are seeking *kevala*, or aloneness, in which they will enjoy an eternal existence of omniscience and omnipotence without the unwanted intrusion of a God, a Brahman or an Allah. Buddhists seek to have all the transitory elements that produce the illusion of a self melt away, and to have themselves in turn

melt away into the nihilism of *nirvana*. To the Buddhist, Brahman also is an illusion.

Each of these different religions has its own categorically unique concept of salvation and of the Absolute toward which its followers aspire. Each concept is irreconcilable with the others. To state the situation unequivocally, if a Christian, Muslim, Jain or Buddhist, upon achieving his distinct notion of salvation, were to find himself instead united with Brahman, he would most likely be quite upset and confused indeed. And he would have a right to be! Conversely, the average yogi probably would be quite bewildered upon finding 72 virgins waiting for him upon achieving *moksha*, rather than realizing the eternal bliss of Brahman. One person's vision of salvation is another person's idea of hell.

Reclaiming the Jewel of Dharma

Sanatana Dharma, authentic Hinduism, is a religion that is just as unique, valuable and integral a religion as any other major religion on Earth, with its own beliefs, traditions, advanced system of ethics, meaningful rituals, philosophy and theology. The religious tradition of Hinduism is solely responsible for the revelation of such concepts and practices as yoga, ayurveda, vastu, jyotisha, yajna, puja, tantra, Vedanta, karma, etc. These and countless other Vedic-inspired elements of Hinduism belong to Hinduism, and to Hinduism alone. They are also Hinduism's divine gift to a suffering world.

If we want to ensure that our youth remain committed to Hinduism as a meaningful path, that our leaders teach Hinduism in a manner that represents the tradition faithfully and with dignity, and that the greater Hindu com-

munity can feel that they have a religion that they can truly take pride in, then we must abandon Radical Universalism. If we want Hinduism to survive so that it may continue to bring hope, meaning and enlightenment to untold future generations, then the next time our son or daughter asks us what Hinduism is really all about, let us not slavishly repeat to them that all religions are the same. Let us instead look into their eyes, and teach them the uniquely precious, beautifully endearing, and philosophically profound truths of our tradition—truths that have been responsible for keeping Hinduism a vibrantly living religious force for over 5,000 years. Let us teach them Sanatana Dharma, the eternal way of Truth.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Frank Morales, Dharma Pravartika, 42, is a devout Hindu, a teacher and lecturer on yoga spirituality, an ordained priest in the Vaishnava tradition, founder of the American Institute for Yoga Studies. His commitment to Hindu thought and practice began at age 12. He has a Ph.D. in Philosophy of Religion and Hindu Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His website is www.dharma-central.com. There the complete, unexpurgated text of this article ("Does Hinduism Teach that All Religions Are the Same? A Philosophical Critique of Radical Universalism") is available. Dr. Morales' first book, *Experiencing Truth: The Vedic Way of Knowing God*, is scheduled for publication in 2005.



Children are the future of Hinduism. They will only be strong if we are strong.

PEAL S. GIROTA

level of administration officers at whose altars we pray for special permissions and get them if the required fees are paid to the priests!

This degradation is not the product of any accidental or sudden historical upheaval. For two hundred years, Hinduism has been catering to the rich. Once upon a time long ago, the learned philosophers, known as brahmins, wisely advised the rulers, called *kshatriyas*. But through time, the brahmins and the *kshatriyas* became indulgent, and the purity of their lifestyle deteriorated. Today, the cry of the educated class is really against this un-religion. Only the thoughtless would call this Hinduism.

Certainly, if Hinduism can breed for us only heartless and corrupt businessmen, cowardly workers, loveless masters and faithless ser-

vants; if Hinduism can give us only a state of social living in which each man is set against his brother; if Hinduism can give us only starvation and destitution; if Hinduism can encourage us only to plunder, to loot and to steal; if Hinduism can preach to us only intolerance, fanaticism, hardheartedness and cruelty; then I too cry, "Down! Down with Hinduism!"

The true Hinduism is a science of perfection. There is, in this true Hinduism, a solution to every individual, social, national and international problem. True Hinduism is the Sanatana Dharma (eternal truth) of the Upanishads.

The Upanishads proclaim in unmistakable

terms that, in reality, man is God. Man is therefore advised to live his day-to-day life in such a systematic way that, hour by hour, he is consciously cleansing himself of all those imperfections that have gathered to conceal the beauty and divinity of his true, eternal nature. The methods by which an individual may consciously evolve by his own self-effort comprise the content of Hinduism. The vast amphitheater of Hinduism is preserved, yet hidden, deep within the camouflage of its heavy descriptions, which are contained in the scriptures and their many, many commentaries. This overgrowth has so effectively come

to conceal that true grandeur of this Temple of Truth that, today, that temple is all but lost amidst its own festoons.

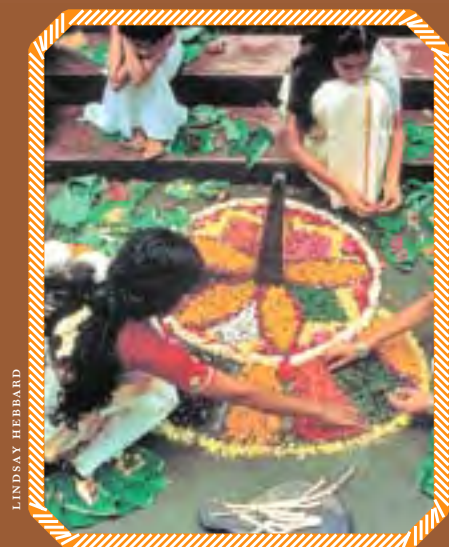
Religion becomes ineffective if the seekers are not ready to live its ideals. For that matter, is there any philosophy political, social or cultural that can take anyone anywhere if its followers don't obey certain principles in daily life?

However great our culture might have been in the past, that history alone cannot help us in our present trails. We must learn, then live, the Hindu life. Knowledge alone will not suffice. A study of a cookbook, however thorough it may be, cannot satisfy our hunger. No matter how long we meditate upon and repeat the name of a medicine, we cannot obtain its cure unless we actually ingest it. Similarly, the

blessings of religion can be ours only when we are ready to live its recommended values.

Renunciation is also required. Without renunciation, no progress is possible. We must renounce the thrills of our childhood games so that we might grow to be men of noble action. Unless we are ready to renounce the low, animalistic values of material life and replace them with the noble values of a truly religious life, we cannot hope to gain the blessings of religion.

In conclusion, let us first know what Hinduism is. Then, let us take an honest oath not only for our sake, but for the sake of the whole world—that we shall, when once we are convinced of the validity of this Eternal Truth, try honestly and consistently to live its values. Aum Aum.



LINDSAY HEBBARD

Easing Sneezing

Although allergies are less serious than annoying, they don't have to make our summer miserable

BY DR. VIRENDER SODHI

FLOWERS ARE BLOOMING, BIRDS ARE CHIRPING AND trees are turning green with new life. It's spring. Unfortunately for some, this means a good healthy dose of allergic rhinitis, commonly known as hay fever. Those of us who suffer from this seasonal affliction may feel an urge to rub our noses, eyes and ears. We might even get a sore throat. All of this is simply our immune system's response to airborne pollens coming from different plants and flowers.

Hay fever usually manifests with relatively harmless symptoms like mild nasal congestion and skin irritation. Rarely, it can develop into a life-threatening illness of extreme allergic sensitivity called anaphylaxis. An allergy should not be confused with the common cold. For one thing, colds are highly infectious. Seasonal and perennial allergies are not. A person with a cold has a low-grade fever and cloudy nasal secretions. Allergy sufferers experience clear nasal discharge and usually no fever.

Both seasonal and perennial allergies have similar symptoms. The fundamental difference, of course, is that perennial allergies are a perpetual threat year-round. Up to 30 million people in the US suffer from seasonal allergies like hay fever. Although hay fever can occur at any age, it most often affects children and adolescents. It usually develops after at least two seasons of exposure to a new environment, which explains why people will not suffer from seasonal allergies immediately after moving to a new location.

The most common causes of seasonal allergies are the pollens of grass, trees, weeds and molds. In perennial allergies, house dust, animal dander, molds, mites, bacteria and a variety of chemicals are to blame. These latter elements are introduced into the home environment by domestic pets, carpets, forced air and gas heat.

Almost all victims of hay fever also have low-grade sinus infections. Also, many have too little stomach acid and too much intestinal yeast. These particular conditions are further aggravated by the intake of food additives and preservatives.

Hay fever victims often have red, irritated skin around the nose and dark circles under their eyes. Nasal congestion, nasal discharge, sneezing and palatal itching are also classic symptoms of this affliction. Sneezing that produces a thin but profuse nasal discharge may occur in annoying sessions of 10 to 20 sneezes at a time. There may also be headaches and earaches. Prolonged congestion may lead to some alteration or loss of smell and taste. Persistent post nasal drip might cause a dry cough and irritation in the throat.

Bronchial irritation prompted by allergies may cause reactive airway diseases that are often also experienced by asthma patients. Studies indicate that 38 percent of hay fever sufferers are also asthmatic, while only three to five percent of the general population suffer from asthma.

Mucous foods are a problem for allergy sufferers. Certain foods produce more mucous than others. These are recognized by Ayurvedic medicine as *kapha* foods and include wheat, sugar, potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, bananas, oranges, tangerines, grapefruits.



For those seeking to reduce mucous, dry grains like chick peas, kala channa (gram), corn, buckwheat, amaranth and quinoa are good to eat. Diets rich in a variety of multi-colored fruits and vegetables are also highly recommended for good health generally and allergy patients specifically. I recommend that at least five fruits and two vegetables be taken on a daily basis.

Carpets are a major source of suffering for allergy patients because they breed dust mites. Dust mites are not a problem when they are alive. When they die, however, their body fragments become air born and cause allergic reactions in the mucous membranes of the nose, throat, eyes, ears and lungs.

My advice to allergy patients is to install stone, hardwood or laminated floors. If you are building a new house, don't install a gas heat furnace. Put in floor or electric heating instead. If you have gas heat and don't want to change, then use HEPA filters, which will improve the air quality indoors. Putting an extra charcoal filter in places where you spend more time would also be advisable.

We can also perform some internal body cleansing to help guard against allergies. *Neti* is especially recommended. *Neti* is the Ayurvedic douching of the nasal passages with water containing equal parts salt and baking soda. This practice alleviates allergy symptoms while soothing irritated mucous membranes. For allergy victims, performing *neti* is as important to practice daily as brushing the teeth.

A strengthened immune system provides excellent protection against allergies. Taking zinc (15 mgs) twice a day, water soluble vitamin A (10,000 IU) three times a day and of vitamin C (500 mgs) three times a day boosts the immune system. Quercetin, a bioflavoid taken twice a day, along with Ayurvedic herbs like guggul, shilajeet, amla and pippli also help. I recommend Guggul-lip, available from my company, Ayush Herbs Inc., when there are underlying food allergies and sinus infections. Guggul-lip acts like a steroid without negative side effects. It also yields a powerful anti-inflammatory agent. One tablet of Guggul-lip taken three times a day for three to four months should be adequate.

Shilajeet is a mineral pitch that also helps boost the immune system. One capsule (500 mg) of Shilajeet extract should be taken three times a day for three to four months. Pippli is a powerful anti-allergic herb that helps to improve digestion by stimulating gastric secretions. Almost all my patients with allergies have low hydrochloric acid in their stomachs. Pippli also produces more mucous to protect the stomach lining. Adding Amla Plex (one teaspoon, three times a day) can provide additional assistance in the prevention of allergies.

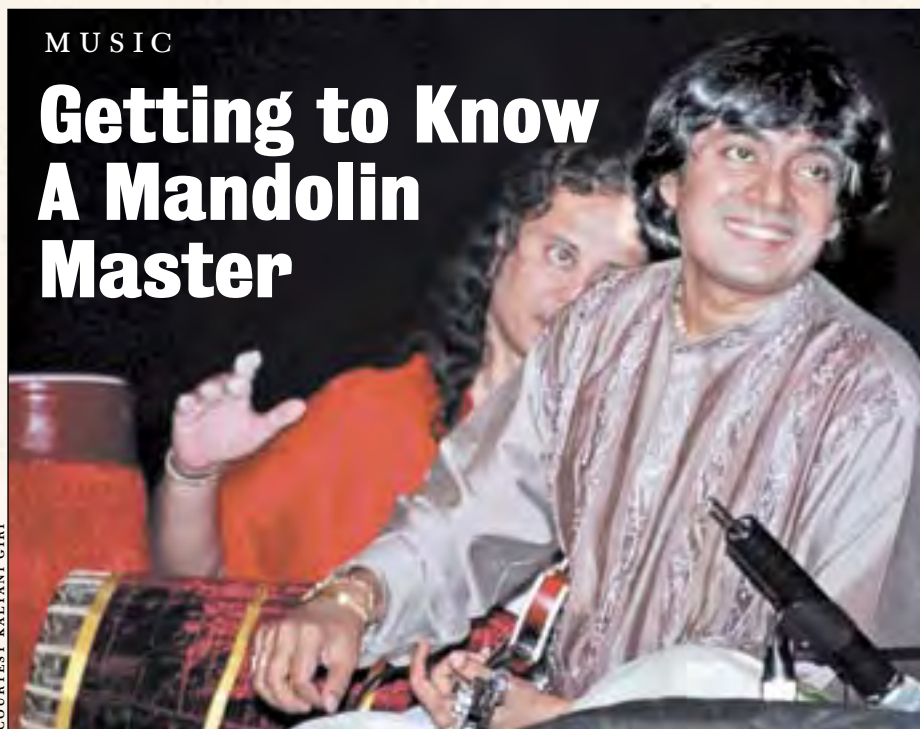
A fifty-year-old patient came to my clinic with a history of perennial allergies and chronic sinusitis. He had tried many different antibiotics and had been administering the nasal steroids for three years. By the time he came to me, he was experiencing frequent nose bleeds and his allergy symptoms had gotten worse. Once he started the protocols I have suggested above, his symptoms completely reversed. I, too, suffer from perennial allergies, and benefit greatly from these same protocols. If we can do it, so can you.

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MUSIC

Getting to Know A Mandolin Master



Live on stage: The youthful Uppalapu Shrinivas in concert in Houston, Texas, in 2004

A chat with the man who helped make the mandolin as respected as the vina in South Indian music

BY KALYANI GIRI, HOUSTON, TEXAS

AN ANCIENT ADAGE CONTENTS THAT talent does what it can, genius does what it must. In the 1980s when he was barely a teenager, child prodigy Padmashri Uppalapu Shrinivas stunned the elite Madras Carnatic music world with a musical facility far beyond his years. Concert halls burst at the seams to accommodate music lovers piling in to hear his music and watch his nimble fingers dance their magic on the mandolin.

Shrinivas was born in 1969 in Palakol, West Godavari, Andhra Pradesh, and received his training in Carnatic music from R. Subbaraju, a disciple of Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar. Over the past 25 years he has received 30 major titles and awards in the field of South India's classical Carnatic music—among those, the coveted Government of India title of “Padmashri.”

Today Shrinivas continues his musical evolution on a convoluted journey that has been essentially spiritual and steeped in tradition, yet enriched with courageous discovery. In 2002, the innovative East-West fusion group, Shakti—consisting of Shrinivas playing with supergreats Zakir Hussein and John McLaughlin—was nominated for the Grammy Awards, losing only to sitar mae-

stro, Pandit Ravi Shankar.

My husband, Krishna, and I have shared a special history with Shrinivas. Twenty-one years ago in Chennai, he performed at our wedding. I will never forget that performance. Despite adulation from a global legion of fans, Shrinivas remains shy, almost otherworldly. I talked with the soft-spoken musician after his concert here in Houston last year. Here are some intriguing excerpts.

What was it like bringing the mandolin into the world of Carnatic music? It was initially difficult. Many people discouraged me. They believed there was no scope for this instrument in Carnatic music and advised me to take up vina or violin instead. But it was the sound of the mandolin that attracted me. I decided that if I was going to be a musician I would play mandolin. My father taught a variety of music instruments, and the mandolin was one of them. I was confident that it would lend itself easily to Carnatic music, but I had to modify the instrument to accommodate the tonal range required to play the many *ragas* of Carnatic music.

How would you assess the popularity of classical Indian music among the youth of India? Compared with 20 years ago, it has

improved. Lots of youngsters are attending Indian classical music concerts and many are taking up the music in practice. There is a big cultural revolution underway.

How has fame influenced your life?

I think all that has come to me is the result of the blessings of my spiritual masters, Sri Kanchi Paramacharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam and Bhagavan Sri Satya Sai Baba of Puttaparthi. Personally, I don't believe I have any extraordinary talent. It is only by the grace and blessings of my masters that I have survived.

You are deeply religious. What are some of your spiritual practices?

Every morning after my bath I do *puja* (worship). If I'm in Chennai, I go to the temple every day. There is a small Pillaiyar and Hanuman temple close to my house. Even on tour I visit temples whenever possible. I have been to the Sri Meenakshi Temple here in Houston, too.

When you are recognized in the streets, are you bothered by people vying for your attention? Are you ever mobbed?

It's really a pleasure to talk to people. I always like spending time like this because there is so much I can learn. I'm not that much of a star. Not many people recognize me. I'm certainly not mobbed.

Does audience reaction effect the quality of your performance?

I always believe that the audience dictates the success of the concert. Their reaction is very important. The more they enjoy the music, the more I'm inspired to play. When they applaud, it brings me joy.

Have you experienced difficulties in music?

In life, there are ups and downs. Without hard work, we cannot succeed. I had to make music a priority to be successful.

Must you compromise your classical training to play with fusion groups like Shakti?

I have to learn the music like everyone else. The improvisations can be done according to your own imagination and must happen spontaneously on stage. L. Shankar and I work very well together. He also has firm Carnatic roots. If you have a strong foundation, you can play any music easily. My big ambition is to perform with all the great musicians of the world.

You have accomplished so much already. What are your plans for the future?

I have started a school in Chennai called the Shrinivas Institute of World Music. My main intention there is to popularize Carnatic music and extol its greatness. 



Who am I? Little Rama, at right, will find inspiration from his namesake, Lord Rama, throughout his life

FAMILY

The Importance of Hindu Names

A proper name is a child's lasting connection to our ancient heritage

BY DR. AMRIT PAL BINDRA

IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT, NOT REALIZING THE SIGNIFICANCE of the name, many Hindu parents thrust Western names on their beloved children. Our ancient Hindu sages developed the tradition of selecting names that sound pleasant and have auspicious meaning. Frequently they are names of our Gods or Goddesses. Elaborate naming ceremonies reinforce the significance of a name. In our everyday life, a name helps identify an individual and his cultural and religious identity. From my observations over more than four decades in India as well as in Australia and the USA, I have perceived the following reasons why parents choose a name outside our Hindu tradition.

1) Ignorance: Some parents are ignorant about the significance of a name and impulsively give some random name to the child. Many educated parents in India think it is “cool” to give Western names to their children. Those of us who understand the significance of names should teach others that a beautiful and meaningful name leads to higher self-esteem as well as a pleasant impression of the person on others. As an extreme example,

if someone is referred to as “Mr. Stupid,” we are likely to form a negative impression before even meeting the person. In our scriptures the subject is covered in great detail. In the *Ramayana* the meanings of names are elaborated at the time of the naming ceremony for Lord Rama and his brothers, Lakshman, Bharat and Shatrughan. It is emphasized that these names were chosen after careful deliberation. We owe it to our children to give some serious deliberation before sticking them with the name by which they will be identified for their entire life.

2) Persecution: Some parents feel that identification as a Hindu will lead to persecution. It is amazing that some professionally successful, first-generation immigrant parents with their traditional names think that a Hindu name would somehow adversely affect their children's success in this society! Although this is true in Muslim countries, it is certainly not the case in North America. In some rural parts there might be a bias, but that is more often race-based, and no one can change that. African Americans adopted Christian names and religion, but that did not end the racial bias

against them. On the other hand, some sacrifice to protect one's heritage is justified. Generations of Hindus suffered atrocities during Muslim rule, but most of them refused to surrender their Hindu identity. Hindus in Bangladesh are still suffering persecution but remain unwilling to give up their heritage. Compared to those sacrifices, the disadvantages of Hindu names in North America are marginal and, hopefully, short-lived.

3) Enticement: Some first generation immigrants see a financial gain, such as free child-care services from close American friends. This is a question of the value one puts on a tradition. All parents love their children, and if made aware of the value of a name, most of them would not be willing to trade naming rights to their children for a short-term convenience. Education would help in many such cases, but it would be a daunting task when parents themselves have been raised in a cultural vacuum where a monetary gain outweighs everything else. In the story of Lord Rama, it is stated, “Teaching right and wrong to a very greedy person is like planting seeds in a dry and rocky ground.”

4) Inferiority Complex: Some people subconsciously believe in racial inequality based on color—for instance, white being superior to brown, and brown being superior to black. Many deny this, but we all know that generations of Hindus in Africa did not adopt African names, but after coming to Western countries embraced Western names. There is no reason to feel defensive about being a Hindu. From a historical perspective, the contributions of Hindus to mathematics, astronomy, medicine, arts, music, philosophy and to the concept of human rights are unparalleled. From a current perspective, Hindus in North America are model citizens, the most educated, wealthiest and law-abiding ethnic group. It is time that we start taking pride not only in our individual achievements, but also in the achievements of our entire community. I urge Hindu youths who have been given alien names to learn about their heritage, take pride in it and adopt meaningful names to reflect that pride in their heritage.

5) Political Ambition: Sometimes people take on meaningless Western names or nicknames in the hope of winning elections or political favors. Although it is reasonable to assume that most Americans would relate better to a Western sounding name, the assumption that it will translate into greater acceptance is questionable. North America is a continent of immigrants, and the vast majority of people judge someone by what one has to offer rather than by the name. People from every part of the world live on this continent and most people have difficulty pronouncing names from different parts of Europe, let alone the rest of the world. Moreover, as stated earlier, Hindus in America have earned a positive image as being hard working, intelligent, educated, successful, law-abiding citizens. Therefore, the advantage of a Hindu name could outweigh the slight disadvantage. The election of Swati Dandekar to the Iowa State Assembly in 2002 is a living example that a Hindu does not have to compromise his/her name to be successful in political life. From

Namakarana samskara: During the Hindu name-giving ceremony, namakarana samskara, the father whispers the new name in the child's ear as part of a religious sacrament

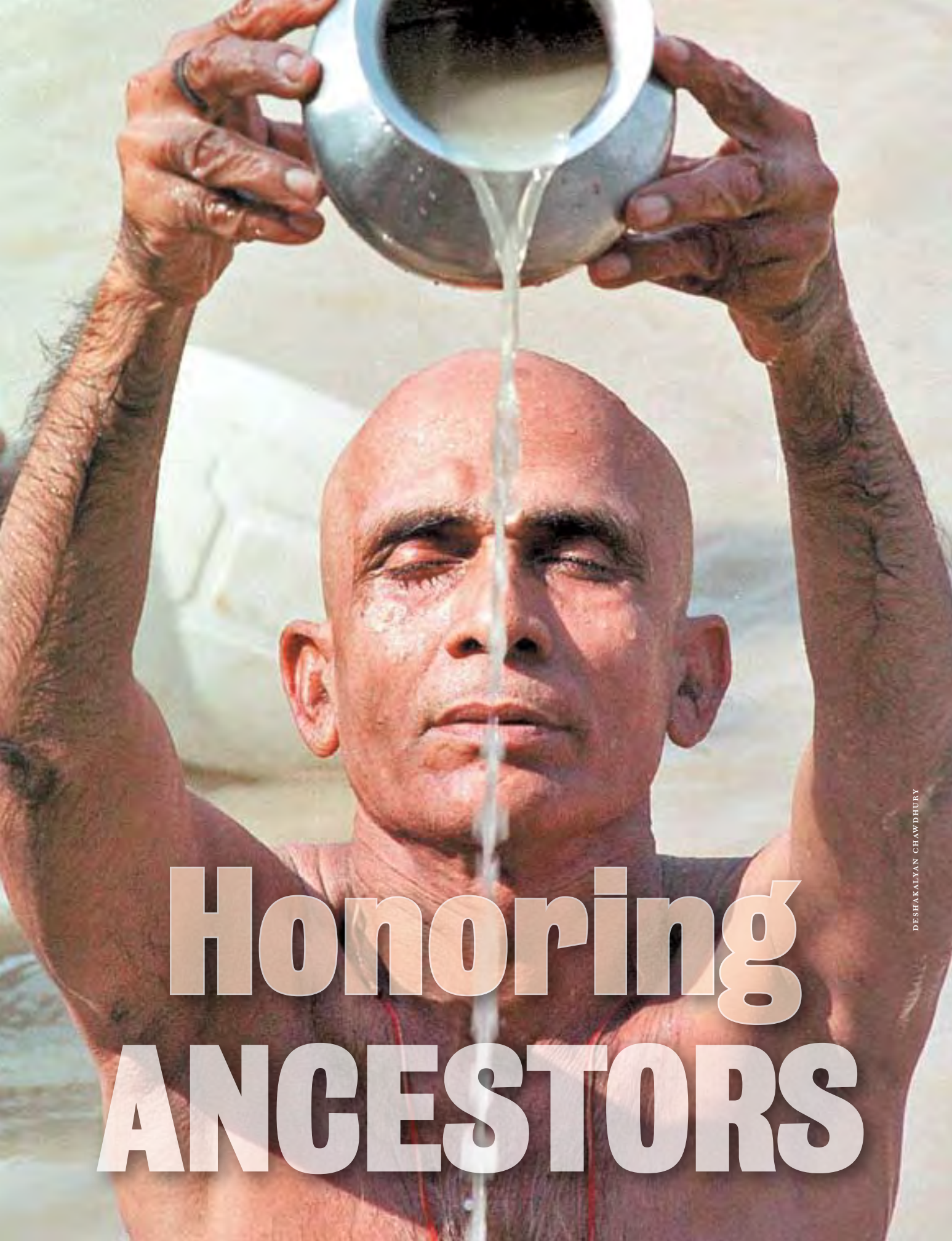
another perspective, we owe it to our rich tradition to overcome any negative bias with our sincere and hard work, rather than abandoning the Hindu heritage for some short-term selfish objective.

There may be many more reasons why some Hindus in India and abroad are giving Western names to their children, but the root issue is the value one puts on the tradition. If a tradition is valued in a family, then the children are taught that value and the tradition lives. If little value is placed on a tradition, then children stay ignorant about it, or accept it as something passed on from generation to generation but of no particular value. It is unfortunate that, although Hindu traditions are based on logical and well-researched concepts, many of us do not put much value on them. In contrast I have observed Muslims and Christians putting a high value on their traditions. We seldom come across Muslims giving Western names to their children.

The Vedic heritage is our most valuable asset, and our name is the most prominent marker of our identification with that heritage. Preservation and enhancement of a culture needs continuous and determined effort, just as agriculture needs constant attention to water, fertilization and weeding. Given a lack of attention, a fertile field turns into a patch of weeds. Similarly, lack of attention results in degeneration of a rich culture. Vedic culture proclaims the whole creation is one family and concludes every ceremony with the prayer, “May every being be happy.” The loss of this heritage would be a great loss not only for India, but for the whole of mankind. We should remember that our names are the most visible sign of the value that we place on our heritage. It is time to make a determined bid to maintain and nourish our valuable heritage, starting with our children's names.

FOR LINKS TO MANY HINDU NAME WEB SITES VISIT
WWW.LOWCHENSAUSTRALIA.COM/NAMES/INDIA.HTM





DESHAKALAN CHAUDHURY

Honoring ANCESTORS



TRADITION

The ancient Hindu practice of ancestor worship invokes the benevolent presence of souls passed on, seeks protection for those now departing and prays that embodied souls might be blessed with peace on Earth

BY SRI SWAMINI MAYATITANANDA
NORTH CAROLINA

BEGINNING ON JANUARY 1, 2005, WE at the Wise Earth Monastery in Candler, North Carolina, performed a 13-day food offering ceremony for the souls who lost their lives during the earthquake-generated tsunami that razed the coastal villages of Southeast Asia and killed more than 300,000 people on December 26, 2004. On January 13, we conducted a culminating rite of worship during which offerings were made to the deceased relatives of the departed as well as to Soma, the moon Goddess, and Agni, the fire God.

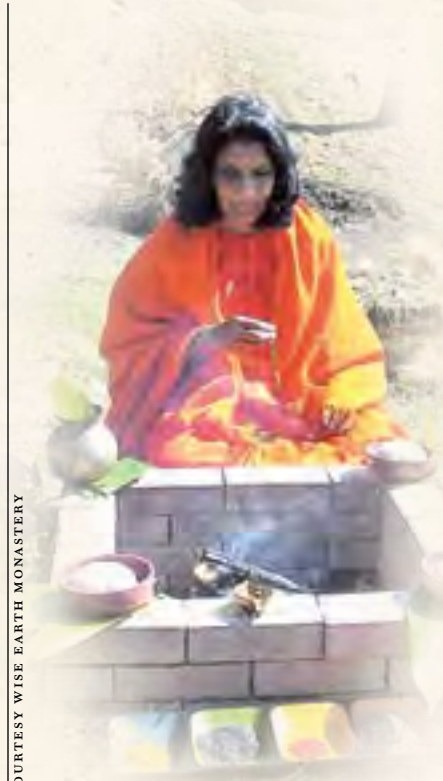
Generally, this sequence of rituals, called *shraddha tarpana*, is performed by the *grihasta* community (families) during the 13 days immediately following the death of a loved one. I performed it as a symbolic gesture of respect for all of the thousands who died in the tsunami.

According to the *Vedas*, cremation is the most appropriate way to dissolve the physical body after death. This purification through fire allows the soul to be easily released from the physical plane. Although the soul is eternal and self-sufficient, its subtle imprint, sometimes called individual *jiva*, needs to ascend after death. To aid in this ascension, a transitory form called the *linga-sarira* must be created so that the *jiva* can successfully make its journey into the higher ethers. According to the *Sama Veda*, it takes a full year for the departed *jiva* to reach Pitri Loka, the abode of the ancestors.

During our *shraddha tarpana*, hundreds of crows and black birds gathered on the ceremonial grounds for the occasion. This was an auspicious sign that the ritual offerings had been successfully received by the journeying souls.

An Inspiring Testimony: A fine young man named Rajan is a disciple of mine who lives in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. By the grace of God, he was not at home when the tsunami flood waters ravaged his home, but his aunt and uncle perished in the catastrophe. Like so many who suffered the loss of their loved ones, and millions more who remained stunned by the grief of it all, Rajan and his wife, Anu, felt helpless and lost.

An ancient tradition: (Left opposite) A Hindu man worships his ancestors in India



COURTESY WISE EARTH MONASTERY

A moment of reflection: Swamini Mayatitananda performs *japa* after three days of ancestor worship performed for thousands who died during the tsunami that struck Southeast Asia on December 26, 2004

Along with thousands of my disciples worldwide, Rajan and Anu tuned into our twelve days of food offering in North Carolina. On January 13, they gathered all of their family members and friends together to perform their own *shraddha* at the same time we were doing ours.

Rajan later confided to me that during those 13 days both he and his wife had a number of mystical experiences. In one vivid dream he saw his departed aunt dressed in a bright pink sari, carrying a bouquet of multicolored flowers. She was walking in familiar fields outside her home and smiling as she approached Rajan. The air was crisp and clear, and the scent of jasmine was everywhere. It was a good dream.

The following morning Rajan was informed by authorities that the bodies of his

aunt and uncle had just been discovered in the very fields Rajan had seen in his dream.

Later, Rajan and Anu both experienced visions of children dressed in white who joined in the chanting of mantras during the food offering.

Stories like this provide testimony to the fact that, even in the most traumatic of circumstances, we are never alone or helpless. The healing energies of the universe, when carefully invoked, are always there to support us. Just the thought of such an unshakable truth can inspire us to rever that one life force that supports both the physical and the spiritual worlds.

The Importance of Service: Striving to understand and apply a perception of loving service is important in establishing a connection with the ancestors, for the vast powers of nature respond well to selflessness.

There are many ways to serve. Giving time and money are just two. The greatest service is not physical but spiritual. Spiritual service begins within our thoughts and feelings. We can make any act of service more spiritual by the way that we hold ourselves inwardly as we perform that action. To serve with a reverence for the oneness that we all share is an example of this spiritual service.

Service also aids in restoring the memory of our ancestors and allowing us to heal the long-ignored rift we have created with the spirit world through neglect. Honoring ancestors through service not only brings an immediate sense of comfort to bereaved families, it also helps to resolve the shock carried in the subtle body of those individuals who have perished. Such service also earns a palpable grace from our ancestors that can fortify our lives with stability.

I believe that the state of chaos and restlessness that we are currently experiencing in both the inner and outer worlds has its roots in our faltering relationship with the ancestors. These beings maintain a vital connection with the living, and because of this can help us in practical ways—if we invoke them properly. Our invocation gives them permission to provide us with guidance, inspiration and protection. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* (Verse 1.11.2) advises, “Let there be no neglect of the duties to the Gods and ancestors. Be one to whom mother is God. Be one to whom father is God.”



Getting ready: Swamini prepares implements and offerings for the shraddha tarpana. These include flowers, bamboo leaves, black sesame seeds, rice cakes, whole milk, spring water, kusha grass, an oil lamp, a mortal and pestar and a mixing urn.

A Special Time for the Ancestors: According to Vedic tradition, important rites for the ancestors should be performed each year. These should occur on the anniversary of the day of death, as well as during the period of *pitri paksha*—the dark fortnight following the last autumnal full moon of the year. *Pitri paksha* is considered the most auspicious time to offer nourishment and oblations to the ancestors.

The Vedic sages recognized that each of us exists as an interdependent being linked to the universe through our ancestry. They predicted that the collective grief of the modern world would be caused by the loss of our ancestral memory—and that this would cause the breakdown of dharma, the orderly fulfillment of an inherent nature or destiny that guides and safeguards our living values as they relate to self, family, community and nature. They understood that honoring ancestors keeps us living in harmony not only with our forebearers but also with the whole of humanity.

Offerings made during *pitri paksha* are said to reach the ancestors directly due to a special boon granted to humanity by Lord Yama, the cosmic purveyor of death. The origin of *pitri paksha* may be traced back to the story of Karna, the renowned hero of the *Mahabharata* who, when he ascended to the celestial world after his death, was rewarded with gold and silver for his many charitable deeds performed on earth, but was not offered food. Much to his embarrassment, he was made to understand that, while on Earth, he had not performed any offerings of food to the ancestors, nor had he shown any such generosity in offering food to anyone. Dismayed by this revelation, he prayed to Lord Yama that he might return to Earth to recompense for this neglect.

Lord Yama did indeed allow him to return to Earth, but only for fourteen days. During that short time, which has come to be known as *mahalaya paksha*, Karna nourished the brahmins and the poor with a great abundance of food. As a result of this

You Can Do It, Too!

Here is an abbreviated form of the Shraddha Tarpana that you can perform yourself.

- Pick a spot by a river and face south.
- Place a double handful of black sesame seeds or black rice into an urn, add four cups of water or organic milk and mix.
- Use your right hand to pour the mixture slowly onto the earth while visualizing that you are giving nourishment to the souls of the departed.
- While you are pouring, recite the following mantra: "Om Namo Vah Pitrah Sau-myah Svadha." This means, "Obeisance to you, O gentle ancestors."
- Sit in a meditative mood, seeking the presence of the ancestors and praying for the newly departed.

penance, Lord Yama granted certain boons to all of humanity. By Yama's decree, all souls who encountered a premature or unnatural death, like those taken by the recent tsunami in Southeast Asia, would benefit from all *pitri paksha* rites performed anywhere in the world at any time.

Performing the Ancestral Ceremony: The *Shraddha Tarpana*, when dedicated to a departed family member, is traditionally performed on sacred ground by a river by the eldest male of the family. Guided by a priest, this presiding family member makes ritual offerings to the departed, as well as to three generations of fathers that passed before. Twelve days are devoted to building the *jiva's* transitory body, piece by piece—first the torso, next the arms and legs and finally the head.

On the first day of the ceremony, cakes made from rice flour and cow's milk are placed on beds of *kusha* grass. Three of these rice cakes are used immediately. The first is offered to the sacred water, symbolizing Soma, the moon Goddess, whose gratification protects the ancestors. The second rice cake is eaten by the spouse of the man officiating at the ceremony with the prayer that she might give birth and thus continue the family lineage. The third rice ball is offered to Agni, the God of fire, whose grace is invoked for protection and the auspicious performance of the ceremony. On each of the following eleven days, a rice cake is offered into the sacred water to slowly and methodically build that transitory body neces-



sary for the *jiva's* celestial journey to the abode of the ancestors. On each day a new part of the body is formed until finally on the twelfth day, the head is created. On the thirteenth day, his newly manifested entity is worshiped as a God in an important culminating ritual. After all of the ceremonies have been completed, the remaining rice cakes are given to the cows and crows.

Each year, this same ritual practice is also observed by Hindus during *pitri paksha* to revive their memory of their ancestors and to seek their blessings.

Looking to the Future: With the passage of time, the cosmic unrest experienced during *pitri paksha* intensifies. Natural disasters are increasing steadily during this period. The terrible disaster of September 11, 2001, occurred during *pitri paksha*.

We must strive to calm these recurring cycles of upheaval. Each one of us can help in this endeavor by personally respecting our ancestors. This can be accomplished in a practical way by making small sacrifices with our ancestors in mind. We can offer food to the poor, devote an hour a week to community service, pray to alleviate suffering, offer a pound of rice to a homeless shelter, visit a nursing home, fast one day a month for world peace and make a conscious effort not to injure, pollute or otherwise compromise the Earth, her rivers, animals, plants and the environment. The highest personal contribution we can make is to embrace a spirit of reverence for nature and work toward healing the damage we humans have brought to the planet.

According to the *Vedas*, we are arriving at an age of darkness called the Kali Yuga

and will witness a breakdown of dharma and morality. This is a time when our most profound goals should include embracing our ancestors and honoring the Earth.

Ancestor worship may be performed anytime, anywhere. Each experience of life provides an excellent opportunity to reconnect emotionally and spiritually to the memory and vibration of our forebearers, even if we do not have specific, historical details about their lives. We may begin to resonate with them in our dreams and feel their grace protecting us in ways not outwardly apparent.

May the challenging events of these trying times serve as a metaphor, not for the eruption of nature and the erosion of dharma, but for a building determination within us all to change our ways and restore the divine heritage of our ancestors to its rightful place at the center of our lives.



Seeking feminine grace: Swamini performs the ritual of tarpana, offering sanctified milk at the source of a stream that represents Soma, the moon Goddess. She will later make offerings into the sacred fire to honor the masculine spirit of protection.



Sri Swamini Mayatitananda has been teaching Vedanta and Ayurveda for 25 years. She is the spiritual head of Wise Earth Monastery and School of Ayurveda centered in Candler, North Carolina, <http://www.wisearth.org> and has written three books entitled Ayurveda: A Life of Balance, Ayurveda: Secrets of Healing and The Path of Practice. She is also the founder of Mother Om Mission (MOM), a charitable organization in Guyana, South Africa. On March 12, 2002, in Rishikesh, India, she received swamini initiation in the Veda Vyasa tradition from His Holiness, Swami Dayananda Saraswati (above). Swamini's current projects include raising funds for 300,000 flood victims in her native Guyana, South America (go to www.wisearth.org/info/guyana_flood.html for more information) and developing the Honoring the Ancestors Conference 2005 for Kripalu, to be held in Massachusetts, September 25 to 27 (go to www.wisearth.org/programs/pitri_paksh_2005.html).

Knitting Hats in a Peace of Prayer

A busy mother raises money for a noble cause by blending work and worship

BY VATSALA SPERLING, VERMONT

CLDREN ARE MOST SUSCEPTIBLE to the darkness of Kali Yuga, O Siva. Please keep them safe and innocent. Give them a good education. Sculpt them into peaceful and tolerant adults. Give them good health, O Siva. Aum Namah Sivaya.” When I silently repeat this, my prayer, over and over again with the correct posture and deep breathing, it brings me deep relaxation, followed by a feeling of freshness and a sense of joy. External sounds cease to be bothersome because of the quiet rhythm within the mind. This is what we expect the practice of *japa* (repetition) to achieve, a calm and focused mind. But wait a minute, while performing my *japa*, I just finished making a hat.

The connection between chanting *japa* and making hats became clear to me when our son Mahar turned three and was ready to start preschool. Ever since the early seventies, my husband Ehud had made a study of Rudolph Steiner and his progressive theories on education. Ehud had published Steiner’s biography and several other books about his work. My own research indicated to me that Steiner’s philosophy embodied the core concepts of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Vedas*, ayurveda and ancient methods of raising children.

Today, Steiner’s teachings regarding education are followed in the Waldorf private schools, which have sprung up all over the world. These schools cultivate a child’s innate sense of wonder by encouraging active, imaginative play, working with the hands and developing a connection with nature. Waldorf students are not exposed to television, radio, the Internet, video games, violent toys, fast food or rote learning. Waldorf teachers study the personality of each child and nourish his or her blossoming spirituality, intellect and physique. These schools also support alternative health practices, vaccination choices, the organic food movement and the religion and culture from which each child comes.

Because Ehud and I share the same commitment to creating a *sattvic* (contemplative) lifestyle for our son, we decided to enroll Mahar in a Waldorf school. We were elated to find the Upper Valley Waldorf School near our Vermont home, and Mahar began attending their nursery in 2001. Just a few weeks after he started his education,

a letter arrived from the school asking for a donation. “Waldorf education is for those who seek,” it said.

We were pleased to see that unlike some things in life only available to the rich, Waldorf education is provided for those who seek, regardless of whether they can afford it or not. The basic necessities of existence—water, air, and food—are for everyone. A sensible education—another basic necessity—should also be for all, not just for those who can buy it.

“Writing a donation check is such a soulless activity,” Ehud said to me one day. “We

should demonstrate our good intentions with actions, too.” So I thought to myself: “What can I do to support our local Waldorf school and help make it more affordable?” Just as I began to ponder this question, a dear friend of ours, Mrs. Veronica Cowie, offered to show me how to crochet. Soon, I was teaching myself how to crochet hats, and had an idea: “I can make hats to help the school. If I can find buyers for them, my hat-sale money can be a scholarship fund for the Waldorf School.”

Ehud liked my idea. He bought me lots of colorful wool, and Cindy from his publishing



Work is worship: Hat-making time is *japa* time for mother and author Vatsala Sperling

office designed and printed labels and catalogs. Kelly, another employee at his office, took care of phone calls, invoices, e-mails and shipments. My hats landed in eight different retail locations in Vermont, including the Frog Hollow Craft Gallery, where my work was chosen by an eight-member jury. I’ve had a few painful experiences dealing with retailers, but am grateful that many of them felt honored enough to sell my hats and further a good cause at the same time. Now we are able to send regular checks to the school so that a few more needy children might receive a Waldorf education.

I must say that I’m getting pretty good at selling my hats. After giving the retailers a 45 percent discount, my profit can range from US\$20 to US\$80 per hat. On direct sale without involving a retailer, I can make between US\$30 to US\$125, depending on the complexity of the work. My sales pitch goes something like this, “You may not need, want, or even like my hats, but you must buy one (or a few) because every dollar that you spend on these hats helps children receive a soul-centered and holistic education.” The outcome is often pleasant. I have found that people do love to help children. The joy that comes from being able to help is very visible on the faces of these unsuspecting victims of my avid salesmanship.

This one-woman hat company is far from becoming a giant, publicly traded corporation with a head office on Wall Street and production sweatshops in developing countries. Nevertheless, it has undeniable commercial prospects and is certainly a great way to provide scholarships for children.

There is another aspect to hat-making that cannot be shown on any profit-and-loss spreadsheet. When I hold a skein of yarn, cast on my first stitch and begin to create a pattern and color scheme in crochet, the bells of my inner shrine begin to ring. It’s *japa* time. As the hat grows in my hands, stitch by stitch and row by row, my mind becomes quiet and focused, deeply engrossed in calling out to Siva over and over again. “O benevolent Lord of creative destruction, please be kind to the little children. Give them good health, good education and a happy holistic start in life so that their tomorrows will hold hope and light and peace. O Siva. Om Namah Sivaya.”

As the busy mother of a six-year-old boy, with a full share of familial and social commitments, I have not been able to set aside any specific time for making hats. My sessions last from fifteen minutes to three hours. But all my free time is hat-making time—*japa* time, that is—time to relish the peace and quiet that comes from sustained hand-eye coordination, simple unhurried repetitive motion, and nourishing the hope that every little effort to help children is worth the joy and pain it brings.

BOOKS

HELP Is at Hand

Teaching Hinduism from a Hindu viewpoint

IMANY HINDU MOMS AND DADS have long suffered trying to unravel the angle of Hindu misconceptions children often bring home from school. “Why do we pray to idols in the temple?” these innocent young ones ask their parents in confusion. “Are we really superstitious? Why do we worship so many Gods and Goddesses? What is the caste system and why does it exist? Why have Hindu wives committed suicide by throwing themselves on their husband’s funeral pyre? And does Goddess Kali really kill people and drink blood?”

Hinduism as it is taught in public school systems outside India has always been distorted to one extent or another by errant Abrahamic interpretation. The book, *Hinduism for Schools* (133 pages, Vivekananda Centre London Ltd. US\$19.10), written by Seeta Lakhani and edited by her father, Jay, addresses these misrepresentations with intelligent clarity. Although specifically crafted for the Western classroom, their book has something for everyone. First and foremost, of course, it provides a correct overview of the world’s most ancient faith. Aside from this, it is beautifully designed and features great art. In the interest of full disclosure, HINDUISM TODAY provided most of the artwork. The whole package is

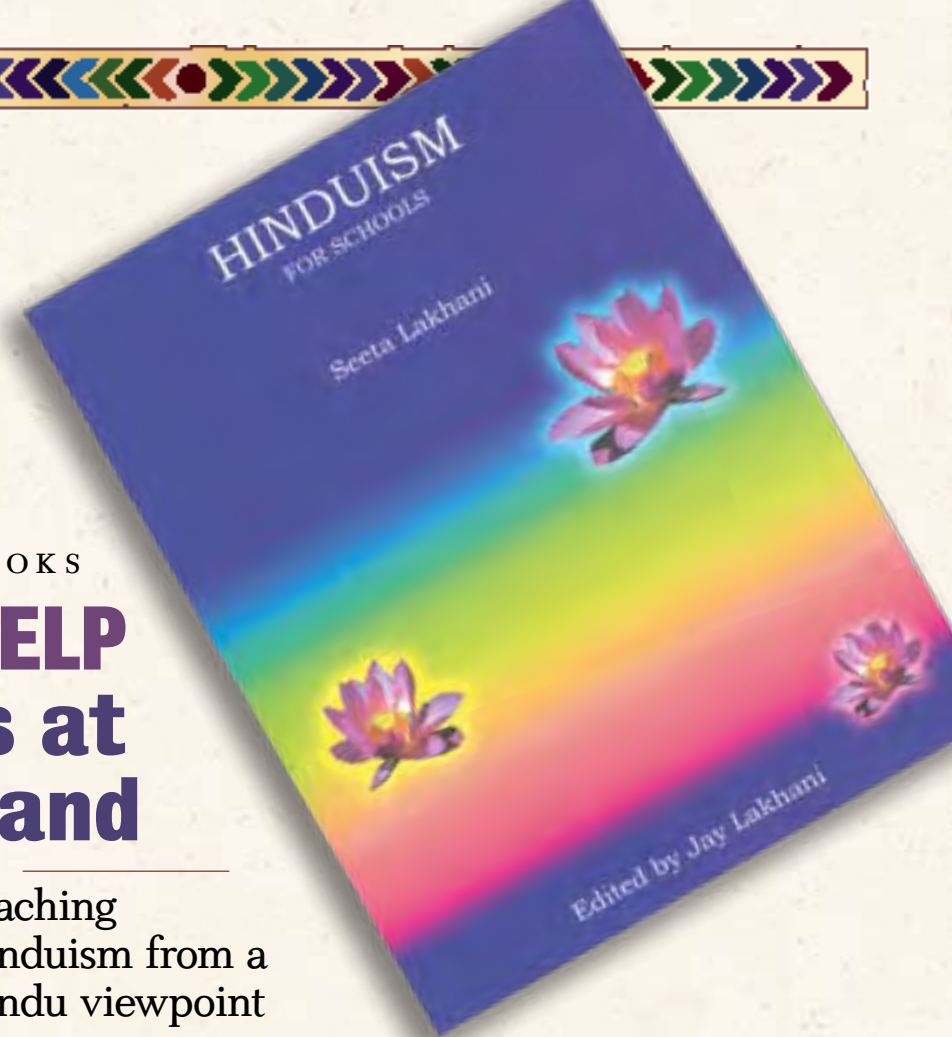
truly inspiring.

The author wisely chooses to amplify only a select few of Hinduism’s frequently misunderstood attributes. Her approach is positive. She extols Hindus for their tolerance of other religions and explains why they are this way. She shows how the various Hindu theologies are highly advanced and synchronized with modern scientific thought. And she reveals the deep mysticism of Hinduism in its teaching that the soul of man is God in essence.

Seeta takes issue with the fact that Hinduism is too often presented as a history lesson with no relevance to modern times. “Hinduism prides itself on being a living religion,” she writes. “It is constantly evolving and refreshing its message of spirituality through contemporary spiritual giants.” First among the giants that she is referring to are Swami Vivekananda and his preceptor Sri Ramakrishna, to whom the book is dedicated.

Hinduism for Schools comes with a series of textbooks stocked with information to prepare students for the tests of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). These GCSE tests are given to assess student attainment at the end of the period of compulsory secondary education (age 14) in the United Kingdom.

HINDUISM FOR SCHOOLS, BY SEETA LAKHANI, VIVEKANANDA CENTRE LONDON LTD. 6 LEA GARDENS, WEMBLEY, MIDDLESEX HA9 7SE, WEB: [HTTP://WWW.VIVEKANANDA.CO.UK](http://WWW.VIVEKANANDA.CO.UK)



Odyssey of an Odissi Dancer

An interview with Masako Ono, a skilled dancer who voyaged from Japan to India to learn the ancient art she so loved, and remained there to teach it

BY ANANTHA KRISHNAN, CHENNAI

NOT MANY COULD WALK INTO AN entirely new land, learn all the facets of its culture, adopt it as “home away from home” and become a professional in a native art. And that is exactly what Masako Ono of Japan has done in India’s eastern coastal state of Orissa. Certainly one of the most notable contributions Orissa culture has made to the world is the exquisite traditional dance form called Odissi. Perhaps the most lyrical style of Indian classical dance, Odissi is exemplified by its graceful gestures and movements which vivify the sensuous sculptures found in some of Orissa’s Hindu temples.

With the towering structure of Lingaraj temple visible miles away, navigating through the bustling streets of Bhubaneswar, the capitol of Orissa, I find myself in front of a two-story house with a neatly manicured garden in front. The rhythms and jingles emanating from the house suggests that a dance class is in progress. Stepping in, one would be surprised to find not another Indian Odissi teacher, but instead a relatively tall, slim and doe-eyed Japanese lady teaching the movements. Masako Ono, through

sheer determination and dedication, has mastered the art she fell in love with and has made Bhubaneswar, a city vastly different from her native Tokyo, her home.

Masako performs often in India and abroad and reaps the recognition she well deserves. We interviewed Masako in her home, retracing the journey that brought her to where she is today.

Her beginnings in Indian dance

I started dancing when I was five. I learned Western classical ballet, jazz and hip-hop. One day at elementary school, I saw a picture of the Taj Mahal and was stunned by its beauty. My fascination for India continued and I majored in Indo-Pakistan studies. I learned Hindi and Urdu and came here for a brief visit. One of the first things I saw was dance—Bharatanatyam and Kathakali.

After returning to Japan, I took a Bharatanatyam class from a Japanese teacher in Tokyo. One of the students in the class handed me a videotape of an Odissi performance by

Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, and it changed my life. I was taken by the graceful movement and the aura he brought to the atmosphere. I said to myself, “I’ve found what I want to do in my life.”

The Indian Embassy gave me a brochure for Nrityagram, a dance school based near Bangalore. I came to India again and visited Nrityagram, only to find that it was closed. I was depressed and went back to Japan and wrote to Protima Gauri Bedi, the school’s founder. There was no reply for a while. Just as I was about to give up and take a job offer in Tokyo, I got an invitation from Protima to join Nrityagram. Torn between dancing and fulfilling my responsibility by finding a job and taking care of my mother, I was pleasantly surprised when she told me to follow my dreams. I withdrew all my savings and took the first flight to Bangalore.

Life at Nrityagram

Nrityagram is located in the middle of a jungle, at least for me, with no proper roads, so rustic. When I reached Nrityagram in 1996, Protima asked me a few blunt but deep questions which today still help me to continue my journey: “What do you want?” “I want to learn Odissi dance.” “Are you going to be a professional dancer or learn a bit and go back to Japan?” “I will try to be a professional dancer.” “You just want to be an Odissi dancer or you *will* be an Odissi dancer?” At this point I realized what she was getting at, and I knew I had to declare, “I *will* be a professional Odissi dancer.”

Life at Nrityagram was intense and rigorous, yet so joyful and educative. In short, I learned everything there. It helped me hone my inborn talents. In addition to Odissi, I learned yoga and Pilates. There were also workshops on Flamenco, African dance, contemporary dance and martial arts like Kalaripayattu.

The challenges of blending in to a new country and culture

I could hardly speak English when I first arrived. It took me almost ten months before I started to be comfortable with it. There were twelve students at the campus, all Indian girls. Initially, I felt it was going to be very difficult to make friends with them because of my bad English. But they were just angels, so kind, caring and understanding.

Coming to Bhubaneswar

I had been visiting Bhubaneswar since 1998 for long stretches to take Odissi classes from teachers who are based here. After my train-

ing at Nrityagram, I was a bit restless and wanted to be at the birthplace of Odissi to get better exposure. I received intensive training under the legendary Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra and three other remarkable teachers. Each of them has something unique in their style, and that helped me in becoming a well-rounded dancer. I have been living here for two years now, giving performances and lectures, teaching yoga and Odissi.

What makes Odissi special

When I did other forms of dance, it was mostly body and movement, and I had to be aware of these two aspects only. Since there was more freedom, a misstep here or there could easily be covered up and gotten away with, but with Odissi, there’s no such luxury. Odissi has to be performed strictly

reporters and organizers, and that helps me to motivate myself.

In Japan, because of unfamiliarity, I feel the audience is in a mixed emotional state: on the one hand, they love watching Odissi, and on the other, it takes time for them to come to grips with the costumes and movements, as they are more familiar with Western classical dance.

Ethnic discrimination in dance

There is a common belief that any ethnic art is more suited to people who belong to that ethnic group. If that were true, we would not see such accomplished Western classical musicians in China, Japan and other countries. It is hard to get accepted in the beginning, but today, I don’t feel any different from an Indian dancer. No doubt, it takes double the effort and hard work to overcome the differences, both in your own mind and in performing the art.

Her fusion choreography

After dancing for seven years, I felt I had reached a stage when it was time to analyze my own dance. I never questioned what I learned at Nrityagram, but if I were to continue to perform in the same style, it is almost like copying. That led me to experiment, while very much keeping the essence of Odissi. Lately, I have been collaborating with dancers, musicians and artists from India and abroad. These collaborations help me refine my choreographic skills. I have also been working on blending Odissi, yoga and tantra in my pieces. These would be staged as fusion dances and not as Odissi performances.

Her dancer’s diet

I follow a vegetarian diet. It keeps me light, as the digestion is faster. My belly is always flat. I find it makes it easier to bend and twist the body and to leap higher.

Her future goals

As an artist, I will continue to strive to inspire, encourage, energize and move people through my dance. I hope to be innovative in my fusion collaborations, to impart the knowledge I have gained to my students, to promote the image of Odissi abroad as a classical art and dispel the notion that it is “ethnic” or “folk art” and to do something special for my dear mother. Without her support and backing, I would not be sitting here talking with you.

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Her passion: Masako Ono performs intricate Odissi dance movements with precision and an intensity that is felt even in stillness



Blessed welcome: Pujya Atmaswarup Swami applies a welcoming pottu to HINDUISM TODAY's publisher, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, in front of a portrait of Sri Pramukh Swami Maharaj upon his arrival at the Swaminarayan Temple in Neasden, UK

EDUCATION

Parents Are the Key

Religious education of children begins with reeducating Mom and Dad

Under the able leadership of Sri Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) organization has successfully developed a wide range of programs to teach Hinduism to the next generation. In March, 2005, HINDUISM TODAY's publisher, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, and managing editor, Sannyasin Arumugaswami, met with the education team of the BAPS Swaminarayan Temple in Neasden—Atmaswarup Swami, the temple head; Yogibhai Patel, class coordinator; Tejas Gandhi, publications coordinator; Devan Parek, youth coordinator; Alpesh Patel, Gujarati teaching administrator; and Lalji Ladwa, head of religious education for the Swaminarayan Independent School. The discussion was candid and, based as it was upon 50 years' experience, provided many useful insights for parents and temple administrators alike seeking to provide a meaningful and lasting Hindu education to their children.

L'ME GIVE YOU A LITTLE OF OUR BACKGROUND experience in America," Atmaswarup Swami said. "Originally the migrants from our Gujarati community had gone to the United States for dollars. Insurance policies, mortgages, etc.—all that occupied their mind. They borrowed money to go. They were not from rich families or highly educated. They had loans to repay and worked at all sorts of odd jobs to earn dollars. Then they had a family. When the children were young, they were like little puppies, very sweet and all that. But when they grew up, when they came to the teenage level, they started questioning their parents. They started asking many whys. They started questioning the very basics of their existence. Suddenly, some of them went into drugs. That stunned the parents. They said, 'Oh my God, I'm losing my children. What am I doing this for? I'm earning money for what? If my children don't want me, I'm really losing out.' That was

the shock effect that really got the Indians back to their roots. They realized they had brought some values to the country, but did not pass them on. Sometimes it was too late, sometimes it was just in the nick of time, that they started to build the temples, study the scriptures, bring the swamis and replicate what was there in India."

Today BAPS has 70 sadhus solely dedicated to children's development worldwide teamed with thousands of volunteer teachers recruited from their membership. They have developed extensive teaching programs supplemented with books, video tapes, CDs and websites. Still, they discovered their efforts with the children required strong parental support. "Without the parents' support," Swami said, "we were not much of a success. Now with the parents' support, the success is much better."

Some parents simply wanted the teachers to raise their children for them, Swami said. But that approach could put the temple's



teaching program on Sunday at odds with the parents' own example at home the rest of the week. Yogibhai Patel gave an example of the way parents could work against the temple's efforts: "We were teaching the children to respect their parents," he said, "to bow down and touch their feet. So one of the children went home and did that. His father harshly rebuked him and said, 'What are you trying to do? Don't be too religious.' So it backfired on us. We were teaching something that was good for them, but the parents didn't put much importance on those cultural values." Judging from the chagrined looks of the others at our meeting, this incident had obviously sent shock waves through the organization and provoked a thorough examination of the roll of the parents. They were now looking at not only the parents' examples, but at their general parenting skills.

Beginning two years ago, the temple teamed with a professional organization that offers parenting courses. They have adapted the program of The New Learning Centre in London (www.tnlc.info) to include the BAPS nine "core values." These are God, guru, *niyamas* (religious restraints), parents, *satsang* (religious gatherings), behavior, habits, study and company. The Centre promotes a thoroughly modern approach to child-rearing, firm yet nonviolent. They found it best to focus on parents with children between three and ten. It was difficult, Yogibhai said, to impact the situation with parents of older children.

Yogibhai added, "The parents who attended thought they were going to learn how to straighten their children out. They had to realize they had to straighten themselves out before their children, because the way in which the parents were dealing with the children was wrong. These professionals taught the parents how to deal with the children in the correct manner. So this had a very positive impact on the parents, and the children affected have become much, much better."

"The main purpose in setting up the children's activities is really only to assist the parents in looking after their children, not to take over," Swami explained. "Sometimes the parents are happy to pass on the whole responsibility to us. The parenting course is a must. Unless you have the parents, you're efforts just don't succeed. Parents need to be equally involved. We pass on some values on Sunday, then they spend all week at home, and next Sunday it is back to square one."

Swami then shared how his instructors approach the children, "One of the golden rules that Pramukh Swami has given to these teachers is that you must love the children

as though they are your own. With that love you handle them. That will really generate a lot of energy to pass on the values to them. Before you teach the children, you must realize what their needs are. When you address some of their worldly needs, they get interested in the organization. Then you can also pass on the spiritual and cultural values. It is a holistic approach."

The education team explained that the Neasden temple runs a Sunday school for three hours, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. This is their main teaching program. The first 45 minutes is called "Children's Forum," encompassing morals, religion and culture. It is followed by 30 minutes of sports and then one hour and a quarter of Gujarati language study, which also includes a significant religious focus. They conduct these classes for nine years, from age 6 to 14. The children do well in their language studies, but, Swamiji lamented, tended to forget Gujarati in their later teens. "They see no economic benefit to retaining it," he said.

Each festival during the year, such as Deepavali, Ramnavami, Janmashtami and



Study materials: A range of story and work books, instructional videos and a children's magazine compliment the class work

Holi, offers additional teaching opportunities, including dance and drama. After witnessing his children in a drama, one parent said, "I never knew until today my children had such talent." The children are encouraged to do volunteer work at the temple, and given major responsibility in the process—an experience that bonds them to the temple, makes them feel they "own" it, as Swami said.

For example, each year on Deepavali day the temple hosts 50,000 visitors. The children are given the task—by themselves—to organize and run the shoe rack. Yogibhai claims it to be the largest in the world. They operate it from 7:00 am to 10:30 pm, with up to 3,000 pairs of shoes at once, and not one is lost by day's end. Such delegation of responsibility has been a successful part of their teaching program.

The temple promotes sports programs for

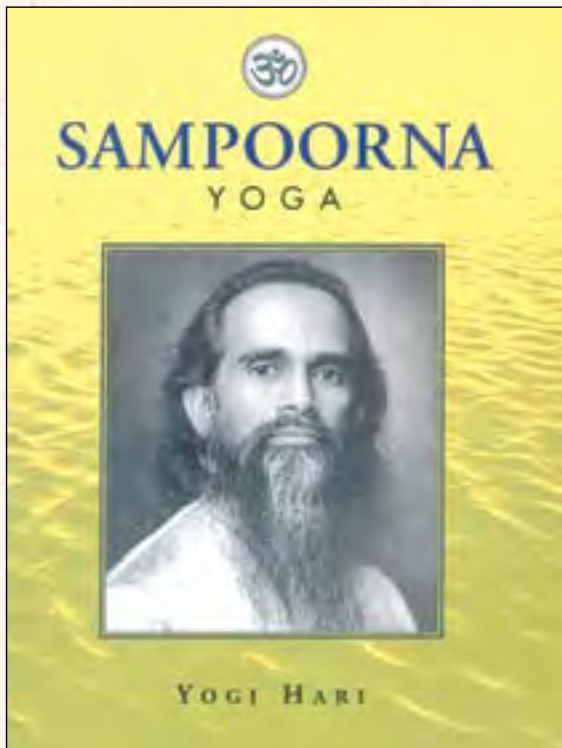
the children and even has a complete gymnasium, near the *satsang* hall.

As to materials, "children don't like big books," Yogibhai observed. Consequently, the educators worked to produce a large number of smaller items, not only the story books and workbooks, but also videos and CDs which capture the children's attention. One excellent CD was produced entirely by the children themselves. They wanted to present the teachings in Gujarati, but have adapted to the need for English-language material. In part, Swami said, they had studied the kind of teaching materials the Christians were using, adapting, for example, the concept of a children's *Bible* to create a children's *Bhagavad Gita*.

Another useful training program was begun in 2004 when groups of children were sent to residential homes for the elderly. There they put on a cultural program with dance, song and speeches, then spent time with the elderly of all the communities of the UK, Indian and non-Indian. They'd ask, "Uncle, do you get a chance to go out? How often do they take you for shopping? Do they take you to a park? Do your children come and visit you?" Swami said, "They got very nice feedback. These elderly people were excited because for the very first time, someone had come to their doorstep to entertain them. These children also went with some gifts for them. One of them confided, 'For the last thirty years I haven't had a gift from anyone.' The children for their part learned that although the residential homes had all the facilities, each one living there felt alone. When they came back, they told us, 'What I learned is that when my parents get older, I will not put them in a residential home. I will take care of them.'"

Yogibhai said they work with the teens to stand up to peer pressure, especially as they move into college. A key, he said, is to convince them that "the Hindu way is the way for the world to move forward, because it is the way that teaches everyone of every background to live harmoniously without conflict."

They also deal creatively with peer pressure of another sort, that created by English festivals, such as New Year's Eve. Instead of trying to keep the youth away from parties, the temple has its own New Year's Eve party for December 31, which the youth plan themselves. "It has nothing to do with Hinduism, but if we do not do this, they will go out to other parties. And in that one party, they can lose all the values they learned in their life. We protect them and entertain them," Swami said.



The Power Of Fire

YOGA AND THE SACRED FIRE (91 pages, Lotus Press, \$19.95) is the most recent book by Dr. David Frawley, Pandit Vamadeva Shastri, a prolific author who has published a rich array of works on ayurveda, yoga and Vedic spirituality. Drawing upon the Vedic teaching that fire is both a sacred element and a personal Deity, Dr. Frawley asserts that through worship and yogic penetration of fire, it is possible to discover the essence of life itself. "Yoga is about an inner transformation at the deepest core of the mind and heart," writes Frawley, "which depends upon fire not as a material force but as a spiritual being and an inner guide."

Frawley postulates that the spiritual evolution stimulated by the practice of yoga is a process already occurring to one extent or another not only in human beings but in all of nature as well. He says that while the first stretch of the soul's evolutionary journey threads its way through the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms, finally reaching the world of man, the practice

of invoking the sacred fire is one method by which the soul might transcend the human condition to evolve even further. Dr. Frawley asks us to light within ourselves a new sacred fire of consciousness for the sake of improving our current, collective human condition of confusion and darkness. Invoking the yogic wisdom through the sacred fire, he says, can help us to accomplish this.

YOGA AND THE SACRED FIRE, BY DAVID FRAWLEY, LOTUS PRESS, P.O. BOX 325, TWIN LAKES, WISCONSIN 53181 USA
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Yoga: a Visual History

THE DOUBLE-DVD, AUDIO VISUAL PACKAGE *Yoga Unveiled* (three hours, 15 minutes, US\$36.99) is an inspiring and comprehensive review of yoga. It is based on the insightful premise that, although yoga is more popular in the West than in India, the land of its origin, Westerners are missing out on a lot by not understanding its fuller historical, cultural and philosophical context.

Produced by Gita and Mukesh Desai, the film traces the history of the 5,000-year-old practice, introducing its most famous and important schools and teachers along the way. It also focuses on the migration of yoga from the East to the West, where today 20 million people are practicing yoga in the United States alone.

Stunning visuals and rare archival footage spiced with a wide variety of devotional music, mostly Hindu, complement the film's commentary, which is provided by modern-day yoga scholars, historians and practitioners—all eager to pool their knowledge and speculate upon yoga's international future. This DVD package will inspire even doubting couch potatoes with great possibilities of yogic transformation—physical, mental and spiritual. Disk One, entitled *Yoga Unveiled*, contains the following chapters: 1. *Origins of Yoga*. 2. *Branches of Yoga*. 3. *Passage from East to West*. 4. *Modern Yoga*. Disk Two, entitled *Yoga as Therapy*, contains interviews with practitioners of Western and Eastern medicine who incorporate yoga in treatment of diseases.

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RESOURCES

A Worthy Way

Good advice for serious yogis

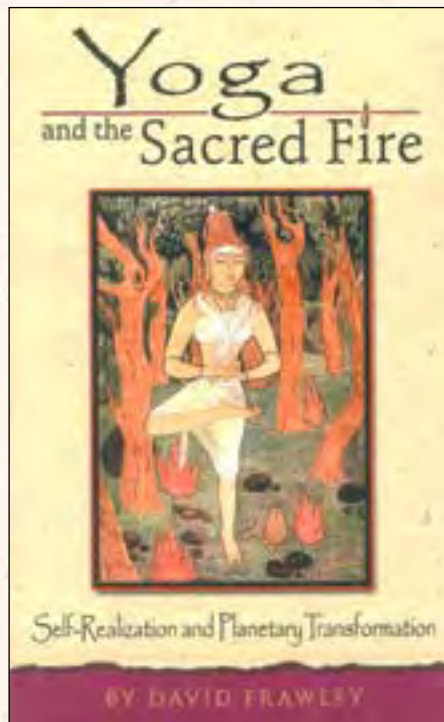
BY JANE SRIVASTAVA,
SOUTH CAROLINA, USA

IN HIS FIRST BOOK, *SAMPOORNA YOGA* (219 pages, Nada Productions, Inc., \$24.95), Yogi Hari helps yoga aspirants discover a fuller experience of their quest by providing the history and philosophy of yoga along with methods for its application. Yet this fine book is, first and foremost, Yogi Hari's working testimony. What the reader reads is what the author does.

After putting yoga in Vedic context, the author describes six yoga paths, explains the importance of the guru, details a yogic diet, demonstrates hatha (physical) yoga and provides a practical and comprehensive plan for putting it all together in the practice of Sampoorna Yoga, the yoga of fullness.

Yogi Hari's style is friendly and conversational—like a guru teaching his disciple. In fact, each chapter concludes with a robust collection of practical questions and answers. This informative, application manual may be enjoyed by anyone interested in the ancient practice of yoga.

SAMPOORNA YOGA, BY YOGI HARI, NADA PRODUCTIONS INC.
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Hands-on practice: Professor Ronald L. Barrett and his wife treat lepers in Varanasi

HEALTH

Touching Untouchables With Compassion

A California university professor learns lessons in love from healers treating lepers in India

DURING A VISIT TO VARANASI IN 1996, Stanford University professor Ronald Barrett discovered a large leprosy treatment clinic run by a group of ascetics known as the Kina Ram Aghoris. Fascinated by their implementation of Aghora medicine in the treatment of leprosy and moved by the plight of young leprosy victims begging in the streets of Varanasi, Barrett started delving deeply into the study of the Aghori's ancient medicinal practices and eventually began writing a book about it.

The traditions of the Aghoris can be traced back to the practices of the "mad ascetics" of the Kapalika order who lived in the 14th century and followed "left-handed tantric practices" such as living in cemeteries and drinking from human skulls. Because some of today's adherents of this tradition are said to continue these practices, the word *aghora*, which literally means "nonterrifying," may evoke in the minds of some, a picture of intoxicated ascetics engaged in wild and ghoulish practices. Certainly, such a perception would be understandable, con-

sidering their undisputed history and the fact that a cohesive understanding of their tradition is difficult to find.

While Barrett does not refute this reputation of the Aghoris, he is quick to assert that the people he met from this tradition were a sedate and socially respected assembly of ascetics and householders who, despite a continuing presence of death in their symbolic culture, followed their religious disciplines through established channels of social service and healing. Barrett explains that, although their association with ghosts, death and cremation has earned them notoriety, their aim is to boldly confront their aversions—the greatest being death—that they might attain perfect fearlessness and become true Aghoris, for whom all things are "nonterrifying."

Barrett spent 22 months in India, primarily with the lepers of Varanasi that were being treated at the Krim Kund clinic in an ashram established in the 16th century by an renunciate named Baba Kina Ram. Barrett summarizes their healing system as consisting of an eclectic collection of practices ranging from modified ayurvedic and

biomedical applications to more ceremonial practices such as a ritual called the "rites of self-cremation."

He was also impressed by the fact that they not only focused upon the physical ravages of the disease, but also dealt with the resulting psychological damage suffered from severe social discrimination.

The Aghora medical adept attempts to heal or soothe his patients with the power he has accrued from his deliberate confrontation with death and disorder. Although he does this primarily through fire and water rituals, it is also the unreserved faith of his patients that forms an important part of their improvement or cure. The *vibhuti* (holy ash) of the ritual fire is applied to their foreheads, necks and afflicted areas. It is also ingested as *prasadam* (blessed food sacraments) and taken home by patients to be used in more rituals they perform themselves.

Barrett is careful to note that Aghora medicine is being practiced by professional doctors who volunteer their time at small ashram-based clinics where medicines are often concocted and modified according to the directions of modern-day Aghora specialists.

A variety of challenges plagued Barrett's research in the beginning. Not knowing the local language was one of his biggest hurdles. Finally, he discovered that the personal experience of participation provided him with his greatest source of understanding. More than once he set aside his camera, notebook and pencil to join the activities he had previously only observed.

According to Barrett, the social stigma of leprosy is far more detrimental to the patient's condition than any of the physical symptoms that result in infection. He also discovered that diseases with similar symptoms, like Leukoderma or vitiligo, elicited the same public disdain. In India, such social condemnation affects life in a fundamental way. These unfortunate souls are forced to endure continued threats of divorce, eviction, loss of jobs and ostracism from social networks, even long after they have been "cured." To make matters worse, such extreme yet unspoken censure provokes concealment strategies among patients and their families, making immediate detection difficult and treatment less effective, increasing the possibility that the disease will result in incurable deformities and disabilities.

Barrett chose the perfect place for his study. While 67 percent of lepers worldwide live in India, 73 percent of those live in Varanasi. Certainly, he hopes his research will provide new insights in the field of medical anthropology. But more, he prays that—because of his involvement—a few more untouchables might be touched.

Self Has No Gender

A story from one of India's respected literary epics condemns the discrimination of women

BY RUTH VANITA

THERE IS A POPULAR MISCONCEPTION, derived from ancient and medieval Hinduism, that marriage is the only respectable way of life for a woman, and that wifely devotion is her prescribed path to salvation. Any intelligent questioning of this perception offered by the modern Hindu woman is often written off as an unfortunate consequence of Western influence. To this I would reply that the ideas of feminine independence and the irrelevance of gender to social roles have an ancient history in their own right within the stories and scripture of Hinduism.

One example of this ancient reference comes from the *Mahabharata*, a famous Indian literary epic. In a latter portion of this long story, a great and wise old warrior named Bhishma, who is mortally wounded and lies dying on the battlefield, shares some final words of wisdom with a king named Yudhishtira. Part of this discourse consists of a story about a fiercely independent lady mystic named Sulabha, who debates the status of women with a king named Janaka. Sulabha's extraordinary life itself is a living example of a woman's capacity for achieving spiritual liberation and social emancipation, and her confrontation with Janaka forms no small part of the *Mahabharata*. In this solicitous narrative, Sulabha is the archetypal unmarried female sage and Janaka is the archetypal philosopher king. Their debate generates one of the many important messages of the *Mahabharata*. Sulabha ultimately proves that gender is insignificant and should not be used to evaluate a person's actions.

According to the story, Sulabha, a woman of extraordinary beauty, goes to the court of King Janaka just to meet this most unusual ruler who is said to have attained God realization. Immediately, she doubts the validity of his spiritual illumination and uses her yogic powers to enter his mind and examine the quality of his consciousness. Janaka perceives that she has done this and becomes upset. He tells her in no uncertain terms that it was improper for her, a woman, to enter his mind uninvited. Then he boldly asserts that, indeed, he has achieved the highest spiritual realization despite being a householder and that she is the one who is not a true ascetic. He also informs her that she is a wicked woman deluded with "ignorance or perverted intelligence," and that what she really wants to do is display her superiority over men. He repeatedly asks her who she is, where she has come from and to which man she belongs. King Janaka asks these questions of Sulabha because he believes emphatically that a woman must belong to some man—a father, a husband or a son—and that a woman is literally defined by her ties to men.

Sulabha's response to all of this takes the form of a learned discourse on life and existence in general. She contends that all



COURTESY RUTH VANITA

of manifest form constantly undergoes change—even though these changes are so minute they often go unnoticed, like the modifications of a flame—but that the *atman* (the Self God within), which is the essence of all things, does not change and has no gender. She then asks the king, "If it is true thou hast, O king, been freed from the knowledge of the duality that states 'This is mine and this other is not mine,' then of what use are questions like: 'Who art thou?' 'Whose art thou?' and 'Whence does thou come?'" When the king cannot answer these questions to her satisfaction, she points out to him how little power and control any king actually has. Despite all his wealth, she insists, he can only do certain things. He is always dependent on others, such as his counselors, and his life is circumscribed by their demands. Finally, she makes the bold statement that no king could possibly withdraw from the world enough to achieve spiritual emancipation since, according to the requirements of a king's duty, he must share the problems of all the householders within his care.

To refute the king's allegation that it was sinful for her to intrude upon his mind, Sulabha states that a mystical merging of two entities is not the same as their physical union, since gender is not an issue on the higher planes of mental and psychic communication. Much to the king's distressed amazement, Sulabha finishes by telling him that she is a royal *kshatriya* (warrior) just like he is, that no man is fit to be her husband and that she wanders the earth alone, practicing asceticism.

"The *atman*, which is the essence of all things, does not change and has no gender."

In relating this story, Bhishma contends that Janaka was unable to answer Sulabha's reasoned questions adequately, that Sulabha's arguments provided philosophical justification for a woman to make unconventional choices and that Sulabha herself was a good example of these choices. Bhishma further maintains that her arguments were not restricted to women of any particular caste or class, since they were based on the oneness of the universal *atman* (God), and could therefore apply to any woman anywhere.

The position of women in society is, of course, only one of many topics discussed in ancient Hindu stories and scripture. When an open-minded assessment of these texts is encouraged in the light of modern-day thought, we provide ourselves with the opportunity to personally determine their value and perhaps help modify the perception of certain erroneous stereotypes that may have come into prominence due to ignorance or misunderstanding.

Ruth Vanita, a Professor at the University of Montana, was Reader at Delhi University and is the author of several books, including Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History.

"What the Bleep Do We Know?"

It's an off-beat movie exploring quantam mechanics, the nature of consciousness and the powers of our mind

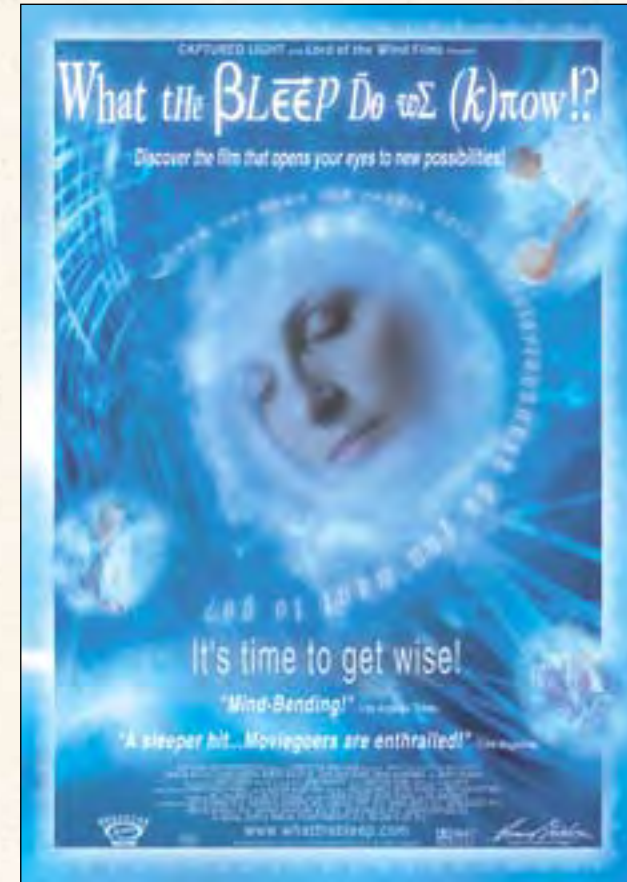
BY MARK HAWTHORNE, CALIFORNIA

WHEN THREE FILMMAKERS STARTED out to make a small documentary four years ago, they could hardly imagine their labor of love would become a feature-length production and the biggest art-house hit of 2004. William Arntz, Betsy Chasse and Mark Vicente simply wanted to bring their ideas about the nature of reality into the mainstream and get the public talking. Their docu-drama "What the Bleep Do We Know!?" (www.whatthebleep.com) which views consciousness through the lens of quantum physics, eventually won every independent film festival award it was nominated for, and it's guaranteed to find an even larger audience now that it has been released on home video and DVD.

The film combines a host of storytelling techniques—including animation, computer-generated images and interviews with more than a dozen articulate scientists and thinkers—to explore the mind's ability to directly participate in the creation of reality. We hear from such experts as David Albert, Joe Dispenza, Amit Goswami, John Hagelin, Stuart Hameroff, Miceal Ledwith, Daniel Monti, Andrew B. Newberg, Candace Pert, Jeffrey Satinover, William Tiller and Fred Allen Wolf. Also offering insights is JZ Knight, a 59-year-old woman from Washington State who, since 1978, has been channeling Ramtha, a 35,000-year-old warrior from Atlantis. He teaches the divinity of humans and the synthesis of science and spirituality. Many of those associated with "What the Bleep?" are Ramtha followers.

Among the ideas these physicists, biologists, neurologists, philosophers and scholars postulate are that matter is completely insubstantial, people can be addicted to emotions, and that time need not flow in one direction. The film's most notable message, though, is the proposition that our perception of reality may be a mental fabrication. If this is true, then that perception can be transformed by simply altering the attitudes

we hold about ourselves—attitudes that are often damaging to our self-esteem. Clinicians today call this technique cognitive behavior therapy, and it has become a popular method for treating a variety of emotional



Expanding awareness: The hit movie bravely ventures into rare territory for the American film industry

and behavioral problems, including depression, anxiety and substance abuse. The filmmakers, however, have taken their cue not from psychotherapy but from quantum mechanics, which states that observation can alter phenomena.

Weaving the interviews and other material together is a dramatic narrative starring Marlee Matlin as a dour professional photographer who leads an uninspired existence in Portland, Oregon. Matlin's character, Amanda, relies on antidepressants to get her through each day and each job assignment.

The film cleverly interjects Amanda into explanations of how the consciousness of the observer affects the reality seen, thus vividly illustrating each important point. The movie is unrated, but probably would come in at "PG-13." Reviewers were either against it or loved it.

"What the Bleep?" expresses ideas that have been promulgated by a number of thinkers in recent decades. In *The Tao of Physics* (1975), for example, physicist Fritjof Capra ties Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism together with Western science and notes how much quantum physics and metaphysics have in common. Deepak Chopra examines the link between physics and Hinduism in *Quantum Healing* (1989). In his 1995 book *The Self-Aware Universe*, Amit Goswami uses quantum physics to promote the theory that mind and matter both have their origins in consciousness, which he argues is the ground of all being. While the film does an admirable job of demonstrating this link, the science sometimes comes a little too fast to keep up with.

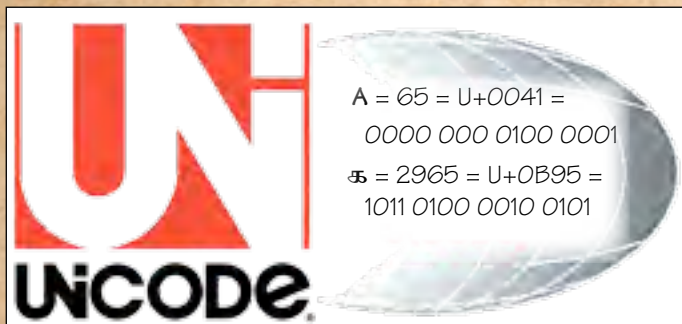
Moreover, it fails to mention that the founders of quantum physics, who developed the science a century ago, did not believe there was any connection between physics and mysticism. Ken Wilbur, author of *Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World's Great Physicists* (1984), asserts that although the founders of quantum physics—Niels Bohr, Albert Einstein, Werner Heisenberg, Max Plank, and others—were all mystics in their own way, they were virtually unanimous in declaring that modern physics offers no proof of mysticism or transcendentalism. Plank, for example, believed that science and religion deal with two very different dimensions of existence. (Plank is credited with inventing quantum physics, which tries to explain how subatomic particles work, in 1900.)

As pure cinema, "What the Bleep?" is by no means a stunning achievement. The acting is wooden

and the humor is sophomoric. Also, many in the scientific community have derided the film's simplistic approach to physics and, not surprisingly, its New Age pedigree. Yet one cannot deny its boldness, and that's where it succeeds, challenging the audience to consider the nature of reality—which may explain why so many spiritually-minded thinkers have embraced it. With its blend of science and existential pondering, "What the Bleep Do We Know!?" is best as a shared experience and is guaranteed to inspire some engaging conversations.

DIGITAL DHARMA

Visit www.hindu.org

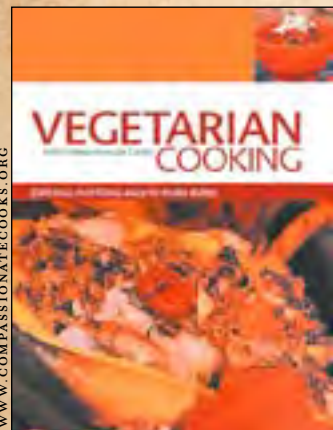


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A single list for every character in nearly all the world's languages
CYBERSPACE

The Future of Communication

WHEN APPLE ANNOUNCED UNICODE TAMIL SUPPORT IN ITS latest Mac OS X "Tiger" system, we cheered at HINDUISM TODAY. But what does it mean? Well, it is complicated and yet very simple. Unicode is a series, 1,114,111 "points" long, capable of holding characters from all languages. Each character has a unique "code point," no two ever the same. For the future of computing the implications are awesome: the code point 2965 (U+0B95) will *always* and everywhere be the Tamil character *ka*, in any computer, any system, on any keyboard, in any software, in any e-mail, even in China or Botswana. For mankind, what an incredible agreement achievement—United Nations of the Mind! See www.unicode.org



WWW.COMPASSIONATECOOKS.ORG

Tofu Vegetable Stir-Fry with Peanut Sauce, Harvest-Stuffed Acorn Squash, Magic Chocolate Cake, Three Bean Chili...Yum!

CUISINE

Good For You, And Animals!

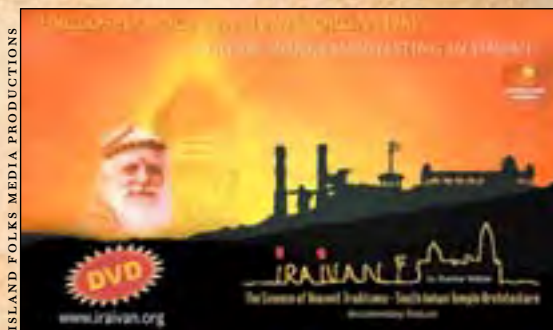
VEGETARIAN COOKING WITH *Compassionate Cooks*, a DVD by Colleen Patrick-Goudreau and Alka Chandnath, brings you six hands-on demonstrated recipes for mouthwatering, nutritional, satisfying dishes and a wealth of convincing information on vegetarianism. Ideal for beginners or experienced cooks alike, it runs 69 minutes and is available online, \$20.00, plus shipping from www.compassionatecooks.org.

ARCHITECTURE

21st Century Chola Temple

S HANKAR NATHAN, CHENNAI, has done yeoman service to the ancient science of stone temple building with his documentary on the magical story of Hawaii's Iraiwan temple, *Iraiwan, the Science of Ancient Traditions*. You will be thrilled to watch the unfoldment of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami's vision and the amazing collaboration of his monks with India's South Indian stone craftsmen under the direction of architect,

Dr. V. Ganapati Sthapati. With an upbeat, modern sound track and state-of-the-art animation sequences, set in a Hawaiian paradise, this DVD will rivet your family to their seats for 45 minutes. Perfect also for presentation to young people to make them proud of their



ISLAND FOLKS MEDIA PRODUCTIONS

Ancient Hindu architecture goes to Hawaii

Hindu heritage. For more information and to order see www.iraivan.org.

SAIVISM

A Deep Well For Siva

VEDANTA AND KRISHNA have for sometime held the highest profiles in modern Hinduism, but Saivism is gradually coming forward. www.shalvam.org is a site that has been growing steadily and today offers a wealth of information about Lord Siva. Don't be put off by all the transliterated text. If you dig, you will find a broad range of useful information to enhance your understanding and practice of *Saiva Neri*—Siva's Way.



WWW.SHAIVAM.ORG

Hindu Heritage Endowment

NEW KAUAI AADHEENAM YAGAM FUND

Throughout history, the Maheshvara Puja (feeding of devotees) has been an important religious and cultural event. Sivakumar and Lavanya Saravan were inspired to carry on this tradition by opening the Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund, HHE endowment #61. The purpose of this fund is to provide healthy vegetarian meals for visiting pilgrims at the Hindu monastery on Kauai during the annual *mahasamadhi* observance for the monastery’s founder, Gurudeva, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, and at other festive times, such as Satguru Purnima. Sivakumar shares the story of how he and his wife were inspired to create this fund:

“My wife Lavanya and I would not be where we are today without Gurudeva’s loving guidance that transformed our lives. After Gurudeva’s *mahasamadhi* in 2001, we were thinking of what we can do on the *mahasamadhi* day every year as a way of remembering all that Gurudeva had done for us, often in mysterious ways. Gurudeva had touched our lives and given new meaning to our existence, and we were looking for a way for that love of Gurudeva to flow to all devotees who will come to pray at the Iraivan Temple. The idea of creating a fund that will pay for an *annadanam*, “gift of food,” on his *mahasamadhi* day each year came to our minds. We quickly wrote to Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, Gurudeva’s successor, asking for his blessings. We subsequently learned from Bodhinatha that there had always been a tradition of performing *annadanam* in the Kailasa Parampara and that our paramaguru Sri Yogaswami called it a *yagam*. Hence, the name for the fund was born. As we researched further, we learned that Rishi Tirumular had written about *annadanam* in his *Tirumantiram*, calling it Maheshvara Puja. Tirumular has mentioned that the things given to Lord Siva’s devotees are verily the oblations to Gods and ancestors. Gurudeva always ensured that the pilgrims to Kauai Aadheenam were treated well and provided with food whenever possible, and he always made everyone who came into contact with him feel very special. We hope that through the Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund this spirit of Gurudeva will live for centuries to come. We hope that everyone who has been touched by Gurudeva or enjoyed a meal at the monastery will contribute generously to this fund.”



Gurudeva with Sivakumar & Lavanya Saravan at Kadavul Temple in Hawaii

CREATING A FUND IS SIMPLE AND EASY

There are no fees or percentage taken to open an endowment with HHE, and the fund proposal can occur by phone or e-mail in less than an hour. The minimal amount required is \$5,000, or a monthly payment plan can be arranged. This \$5,000 is needed before the principal can begin earning interest and paying grants to the beneficiary. Currently the annual grant is based on 4% of the endowment’s principal. For example, a principal of \$5,000 typically generates a yearly grant of \$200, \$10,000 earns \$400 and \$100,000 generates \$4,000. Orphanages are popular beneficiaries, and many of funds that benefit orphanages have reached over \$20,000. The children at the Indian orphanages supported by HHE are receiving about \$800 each year, or Rs. 36,215. The Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam orphanage in Sri Lanka (fund #12) was totally destroyed during the December 26, 2004, tsunami, so the Rs. 89,268 grant for 2004 was life-saver for the 42 boys. This is one example of how the sixty-two HHE funds are making an impact with needy institutions worldwide.

GIVING TO A FUND IS EVEN EASIER

You can help needy institutions by giving to one or more HHE funds on the web by going to www.hheonline.org. Donations are safe and secure, whether you live in the USA or other countries. Make a one-time donation or sign up for a recurring donation. For more information, call Sannyasin Shanmuganathaswami at 1-808-822-3012, ext. 244 or e-mail hhe@hindu.org.

JANUARY TO MARCH ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS														
Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment			Toshadeva Guhan			Dancing with Siva Endowment			HHE Administrative Fund					
Anonymous	US\$756.00		Suguneswary Gunasegaran	27.30		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58	Niraj Thaker	19.27		
Rajendra Giri	60.00		Isanah Kameni	34.20		Total	10.58		Total	10.58	Total	1,130.27		
Gunasekaran Kandasamy	104.58		Gunasekaran Kandasamy	360.00		Hinduism Today Production Fund			KA Religious Art and Artifacts Fund			Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund		
Puvaneswary Roberts	108.00		T. Iswarah Kumar	106.50		Anonymous	12.51		Anonymous	20.83	Anonymous	Mirta Noemi Cotto	30.00	
Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58		Shankar Mahadeva	1,000.00		Rajendra Giri	60.00		Rajadeva Alahan	153.00	Rajendra Giri	Rajendra Giri	60.00	
Niraj Thaker	19.27		Rushikesh H. Mehta	66.00		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58		Lynn Heck	12.50	Niraj Thaker	Niraj Thaker	19.27	
Other Donations	31,052.45		Logadasan Murugesu	175.00		Total	83.09		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58	Total	Total	109.27	
Himalayan Academy	2,250.00		Gassa Patten	150.00		Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund			Total	196.91	Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund			
Total	34,450.88		Adi Sankara Perumal	28.00		Anonymous	344.84		Thank You Bodhinatha Fund			Rajendra Giri	60.00	
Iraivan Temple Endowment			Anjeeni Devi Perumal	14.00		Ajit S. Adhopia	179.96		Anonymous	50.00	Anonymous	Natraj Narayanswami	12.50	
Anonymous	453.00		Linda Seeley	75.00		Lila Shakti Devi	50.00		Tyler Comer	66.67	Anonymous	Ganesan & Rajalakshmi		
Tyler Comer	66.66		Jiva Shanmuga	102.00		Rajendra Giri	60.00		Amarnath Devarmanai	324.00	Anonymous	Ramalingam	75.00	
Sri & Kalagambi Ganesan	26.14		Vinaya Sharma	240.00		Lynn Heck	12.50		Rajendra Giri	60.00	Anonymous	Niraj Thaker	19.27	
Halbert Hargrove	1,000.00		Nigel Subramaniam Siva	240.00		Gunasekaran Kandasamy	104.58		Manoharan Navaratnarajah	150.00	Anonymous	Total	166.77	
A. Nithiahnandan	90.00		Nagaraj Tanguturu	160.00		Murali Krishnaswamy	250.00		Shanta Devi Periasamy	345.00	Anonymous	Karnataka Temple Development Fund		
Alka R. Patel	588.00		Shivani Vinayaga	443.88		Devi Marks	500.00		Puvaneswary Roberts	108.00	Anonymous	Anonymous	12.50	
S.V. Ravi Rahavendran	453.00		Total	6,325.25		Natraj Narayanswami	12.50		Alex Ruberto	30.00	Total	Total	12.50	
Puvaneswary Roberts	108.00		Hindu Businessmen's Association Trust			Alex Ruberto	45.00		Chamundi Sabanathan	108.00	Swami Vipulananta Children's Home Fund			
Devananda Tandavan Charitable			Paramaseeven Canagasaby	10.59		Jutikadevi Sivaraja	216.00		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.57	Anonymous	Anonymous	58.33	
Remainder Unitrust	9,913.08		Vel Mahalingum	7.06		Rodney & Ilene Standen	30.00		Niraj Thaker	19.28	Anonymous	Ganesan & Raji Balaganapathy	500.00	
Niraj Thaker	19.27		Manogaran Mardemootoo	17.64		Niraj Thaker	19.27		Jeremiah Umakanthan	25.50	Anonymous	Marlene Carter	300.00	
Atul Thakkar	1,000.00		Easvan Param	474.10		Matthew Wieczork	62.00		Vayudeva Varadan	62.00	Anonymous	Rajendra Giri	60.00	
John Thomsen	5,000.00		Janaka Param	16.00		Total	1,886.65		Raja Vishnu	602.00	Anonymous	Ariel Lewin	501.00	
Jeremiah Umakanthan	25.50		Vedapragassen Peruman	7.06		Suntheram Family Trust Fund			Total	1,961.02	Anonymous	Puvaneswary Roberts	108.00	
Total	18,742.65		Total	532.45		R. Suntheram	1,500.00		Mathavasi Travel Fund			Niraj Thaker	19.28	
Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund			Boys School for Iraivan Priesthood			Total	1,500.00		Rajendra Giri	60.00	Total	Total	1,546.61	
Hemaksheshaa N. Batumallah	10.00		Anonymous	12.49		Hindu Press International Fund			Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58	Hindu Literature Fund			
Rathi Devi Batumallah	215.00		Rajendra Giri	60.00		Rajendra Giri	60.00		Total	70.58	Anonymous	Anonymous	30.00	
Veerasley Batumallah	250.00		Bala Sivaceyon	28.86		Natraj Narayanswami	12.50		Udayan Care Endowment Fund			Paul Yogananda DeSantis	648.00	
Suguneswary Gunasegaran	82.21		Niraj Thaker	19.27		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58		Total	60.00	Anonymous	Rajendra Giri	60.00	
Tarakini Gunasegaran	4.00		Total	120.62		Total	83.08		Saivite Hindu Scriptural Fund for the Visually Impaired			Natraj Narayanswami	12.50	
Tirunyanam Gunasegaran	16.71		Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund			Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund			Anonymous	60.00	Manitha Neyam Trust Fund			
Kriya Haran	145.00		Rajendra Giri	60.00		Rajendra Giri	60.00		Rajendra Giri	60.00	Total	Bala Sivaceyon	31.20	
Prema Iyer	100.00		Gowri Nadason	60.00		Manoharan Navaratnarajah	75.00		Alex Ruberto	45.00	Total	Total	31.20	
Amooda Koothan	3.53		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58		Gassa Patten	1,203.00		Manitha	105.00	Tiptur Shiva Temple & Youth Hostel Fund			
Egilen Koothan	17.63		Niraj Thaker	19.27		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58		Grandrige V. Raghu	6,407.50	HA Book Distribution Fund			
Saravan Koothan	1.76		Vayudeva Varadan	54.00		Total	1,348.58		Total	6,407.50	Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58		
Saroja Devi Manickam	7.00		Total	203.85		Swami Agnivesh Endowment Fund			Mahajana College Fund			Total	10.58	
Vijay, Daksha & Neil Mithal	5.00		Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam			Rajendra Giri	60.00		Anonymous	12.51	Pooled Income Fund Trust (PIF)			
Logadasan Murugesu	175.00		Marlene Carter	300.00		Rajendra Giri	60.00		Total	12.51	Anonymous	Gowri Nadason	20.00	
Puvaneswary Roberts	108.00		Aran Sendan	51.00		Total	60.00		Taos Hanuman Fund			Satya Palani	100.00	
Akileiswaran Samuthiran	17.30		Niraj Thaker	19.28		Saiva Agamas Trust			Anonymous	12.50	Kapaleeshwara Temple Orphanage			
Padmini Samuthiran	54.78		Total	370.28		Matthew Wieczork	20.00		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58	Anonymous	Total Endowment Funds	\$5,874,599.56	
Sathialingeswari	26.14		KA Renovation Endowment			Total	20.00		Spiritual Park of Mauritius Endowment			Total Pooled Income Funds	\$198,355.45	
Devaladevi Sivaceyon	7.80		Total	10.58		Sri Subramuniya Ashram Scholarship Fund			Anonymous	23.08	Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund			
Nutanaya Sivaceyon	7.80		Anonymous	32.49		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58		Natraj Narayanswami	10.00	Anonymous	Grand Total	\$6,072,955.01	
Putudeva Sivaceyon	7.80		Total	32.49		Total	111.58		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58	Anonymous	Funds at Market Value, March 31, 2005		
Hemavalli Sivalingam	1.58		Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund			Positive Discipline Endowment			Mahajana College Fund			Total Contributions		
Kantha Ruben Sivalingam	1.58		Anonymous	50.00		Tyler Comer	66.67		Anonymous	12.51	Kapaleeshwara Temple Orphanage			
Rohini Sivalingam	1.58		Aran Sendan	51.00		Natraj Narayanswami	10.00		Rajendra Giri	60.00	Anonymous	Anonymous	20.00	
Lavanadevi Sivam	159.00		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.58		Sharmila Kesavalu	131.00	Anonymous	Total Endowment Funds	\$5,874,599.56	
Potriyan Sivanathan	5.22		Total	111.58		Total	87.25		Murali Krishnaswamy	250.00	Anonymous	Total Pooled Income Funds	\$198,355.45	
Girish Skanda	10.00		Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment			Tirumular Sannidhi Preservation Fund			Jayanthi Vasudevan Naiker	300.00	Anonymous	Grand Total	\$6,072,955.01	
Javanya Skanda	3.00		Anonymous	50.00		Raghavan Srinivasan	250.00		Natraj Narayanswami	25.00	Anonymous	Funds at Market Value, March 31, 2005		
Subasene Skanda	10.00		Manoharan Navaratnarajah	75.00		Gopalakrishnan Subramaniam	10.57		Ganesan & Rajalakshmi	75.00	Anonymous	Total Endowment Funds	\$5,874,599.56	
Total	1,454.42		Total	125.00		Total	260.57		Ramalingam	75.00	Anonymous	Total Pooled Income Funds	\$198,355.45	
HT Lifetime Subscription Fund			Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment			Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund			Raghavan Srinivasan	250.00	Anonymous	Grand Total	\$6,072,955.01	
Sanjay Bajekal	160.00		Anonymous	50.00		Anonymous	50.00		Total	250.00	Anonymous	Funds at Market Value, March 31, 2005		
Rathi Devi Batumallah	215.00		Manoharan Navaratnarajah	75.00		Total	50.00		Hindu Heritage Endowment			Kauai's Hindu Monastery		
Veerasley Batumallah	80.00		Total	125.00		MISSION STATEMENT: Hindu Heritage Endowment is a publicly supported, charitable organization recognized as tax exempt by the IRS on April 22, 1994. Employer ID 99-0308924. Founded by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, its philanthropic mission is to provide secure, professionally managed financial support for institutions and religious leaders of all lineages of Sanatana Dharma.			PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS: Halbert, Hargrove/Russell, Investment Counsel; Alvin G. Buchignani, Esq., Legal Counsel; and Hirose, Kato and Co., CPA. HHE is a member of the Council on Foundations, an association of 1,931 foundations which interprets relevant law and management and investment principles.			I WANT TO PARTICIPATE. WHERE SHOULD I SEND MY DONATION? You can send your gift to an existing fund, create a new endowment or request information through the address below. Donations may be made online at www.hheonline.org , or use the HHE tear-out card in this magazine to join our family of benefactors who are Strengthening Hinduism Worldwide. Thank you.		
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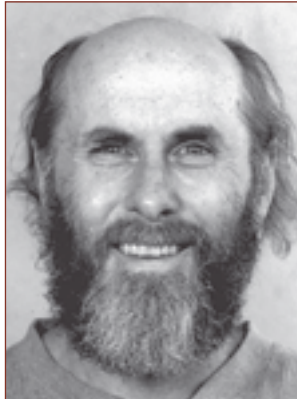
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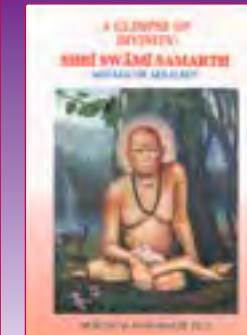
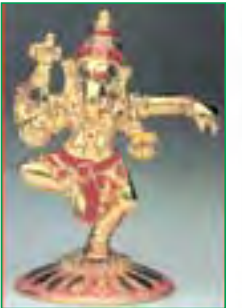
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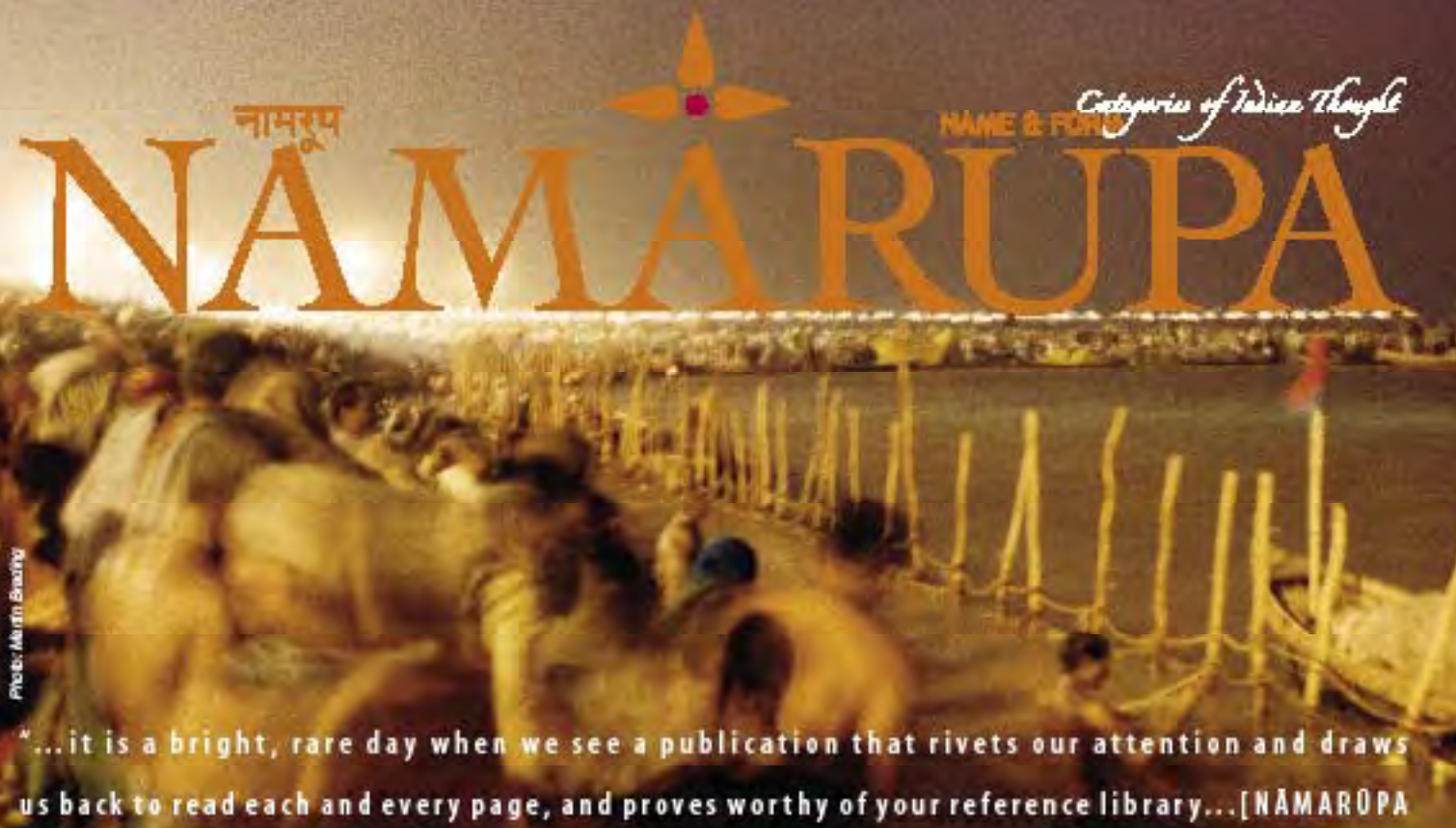
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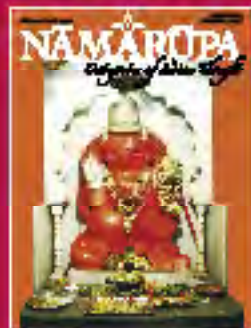


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ISSUE 1 SPRING 2003



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ISSUE 3 FALL 2004

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07:00	Ramdevji Devotional songs	18:30	Swami ji Devotional songs
07:30	Swami ji Devotional songs	19:00	Swami ji Devotional songs
08:00	Explanatory Discourses	19:30	Swami ji Devotional songs
08:30	Pragyaat (Devotional songs)	20:00	Swami ji Devotional songs
09:00	Swami ji Devotional songs	20:30	Swami ji Devotional songs
09:30	Swami ji Devotional songs	21:00	Swami ji Devotional songs
10:00	Swami ji Devotional songs	21:30	Swami ji Devotional songs
10:30	Swami ji Devotional songs	22:00	Swami ji Devotional songs
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11:30	Swami ji Devotional songs	23:00	Swami ji Devotional songs
12:00	Swami ji Devotional songs	23:30	Swami ji Devotional songs
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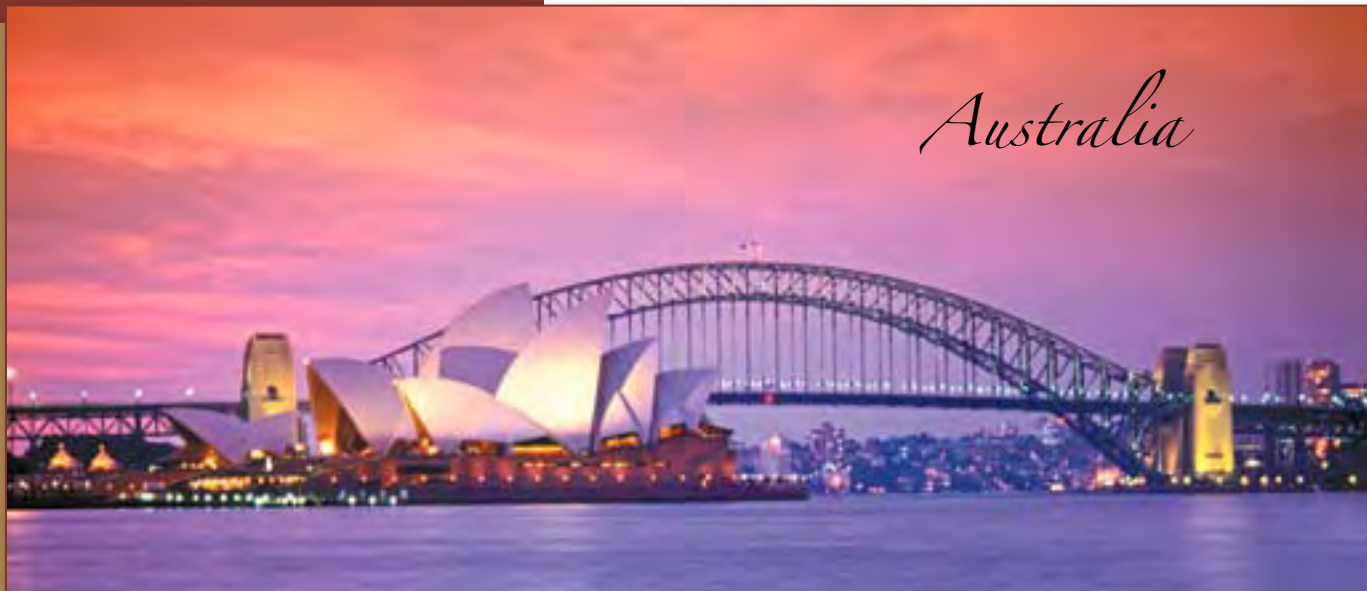
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Thoughts By the Lotus Pond



I sit by the lotus pond,
My thoughts on the world beyond:
Like the zen poet in the mountains
Sipping sake all, all alone.

If wine can lead me to the wisdom
of Thine divine Kingdom
I'd fill my cup to the brim
And forget Baghdad grim.

I sit by the lotus pond,
Thinking of my battles lost and won:
The stem of the mystic lotus bud
Arises from the life sustaining mud.

I sit upon the mountain rock
Watching the glacier, the Ganges waters unlock:
Light issues from the mind of darkness.
Because Thou Art There I am here;
My energies in harness.

Restless is my heart
On the waves of my ambition.
What dreams do Thou make me dream?
What desires do I harbour?
Until I reach Thy crest
My heart will never rest:
Dreaming of Thee by the lotus pond,
Thee, Thee alone my being is fond—
My infinite Muruga.

Dedicated to the celestial artist, philosopher and friend, S. Rajam.
By Dr. Arjunan Subramaniam, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 27th October, 2003.