

HINDUISM TODAY

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



London's Hindu Temples

s. n. navaratham



thomas l kelly

COVER: The Sri Ghanapathy Temple, London, held its Maha Kumbhabhishekam on January 25; (above) Kathmandu's Durbar Square, where Nepal's massive earthquake reduced two ancient temples to rubble, including one where our photographer is standing

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International Yoga Day!

History is made as millions gather
in a global celebration of yoga . . . page 54

Left: Thousands of Europeans celebrate International Yoga Day below the Eiffel Tower in Paris on June 21, 2015; above: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi leads 35,000 through the yoga poses on New Delhi's ceremonial boulevard, Rajpath or "the King's Way"

GLOBAL DHARMA

EDUCATION

Chair of Vedic Studies Established at UC Irvine

IN EARLY MAY, 2015, THE Dharma Civilization Foundation celebrated the establishment of a presidential chair in Vedic and Indic Civilizational Studies with a huge gathering of scholars and well-wishers at the University of California, Irvine. The chair is part of UCI's plan to create a graduate degree program in religious studies.

Officially initiated as of January, 2015, the chair was funded by a million-dollar gift from Ushakant and Irma Thakkar and half a million dollars each from the Thakkar extended family

and the president of UCI, for a total endowment of \$2 million.

Dr. Georges Van Den Abbeele, Dean of Humanities at UCI, hosted the event. In thanking the donors, he explained, "This new endowed chair anchors UCI's religious studies program by permanently securing faculty-led research and instruction in one of the world's most influential religions, Hinduism."

Dr. Thakkar, who is also the current chairman of DCF, expressed his gratitude and dedicated the chair to his parents and elders of his family. He



History in the making: Leaders of the Dharma Civilization Foundation and university officials pose with the Thakkar family

told the gathering, "Together, we want to establish an eminent India center, the best in the United States, at UCI. We Indians have created over 700 temples of worship in America.

Now won't you join us in making temples of education, too?"

Plans are under way to create additional chairs in Hinduism, as well as in Jain, Sikh and Buddhist studies.



Religious tolerance: The swastika is an ancient symbol of auspiciousness in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism

USA

University Bans Swastika

GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY suspended and barred from campus a Jewish student who had put up a swastika on a school bulletin board on March 18, 2015. They also reported the incident to law enforcement for possible prosecution. The student, inspired by a recent trip to India, had hung the bronze swastika in the GWU's International House residence hall in an effort to educate fellow students.

Even though police said there was no grounds for prosecution, the university proceeded with

disciplinary actions, which were met with strong protests from Hindu, Jewish, interfaith and student rights groups. GWU rescinded the charges in late May.

Samir Kalra, senior director of Hindu American Foundation, clarified, "The swastika is one of the most sacred symbols of Hinduism, with a 3,000-year history of peace before it was misappropriated by the Nazis. We wanted to ensure that any Hindu, Buddhist or Jain student who sought to display the symbol as a part of their faith would not be punished for doing so."

HYDERABAD

Modi Visits His Ailing Guru

IN MAY, 2015, INDIA'S PRIME Minister, Sri Narendra Modi, met with his guru, Swami Atmasthananda Maharaj, in a Kolkata hospital. Swami, 96, is president of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission Order.

"It was an informal meeting, the two met like guru-shishya. It did not seem as if he was the prime minister," Swami Subhakarananda Maharaj shared. Mr. Modi received blessings from his guru, along with a piece of

chocolate.

The two first met in 1966, when Narendra, age 16, was living the wandering life of a sadhu. He asked Swami Atmasthananda for his blessings to renounce the world and take sannyasa. But Swami advised against it, saying renunciation was not for him, because he was meant to be among people and not in seclusion. Swami encouraged the youth to take up a life of public service.



Guru-shishya: Surrounded by his brother monks, the aged Swami Atmasthananda Maharaj blesses the Prime Minister, his shishya

TAIWAN

Colored Powder Catastrophe

AT THE FORMOSA FUN COAST water park on the outskirts of Taipei, on June 29, 2015, a sudden explosive fire enveloped hundreds and burned for a full minute. Nearly 600 people were injured, many seriously. The horrific accident took place during Color Play Asia, a music event during which clouds of colored cornstarch powders were sprayed on the crowd. The New Taipei Fire Department said the powder was likely ignited by the stage lights.

Cornstarch, normally a

harmless, edible substance, is a highly flammable carbohydrate. It can ignite explosively when large quantities of the fine powder are dispersed into the air, as was done in Taiwan.

The use of colored powders in secular concerts and other events has been adapted from the Hindu festival of Holi. During Holi, however, powders are tossed randomly in small amounts, and accidental ignition is unheard of. But this new use is hazardous, as seen at Color Play Asia, and should be stopped.

be used for day-to-day worship. The 126 Gods represented on the new structure were sculpted from white concrete by two craftsmen from India who spent more than a year living at the temple.

God's home: The new 65-foot, half-million-dollar structure was funded by contributions from dozens of donors



TOP TO BOTTOM: HUMANITIES.UCI.EDU; NBCNEWS.COM; MLIVE.COM

USA

Michigan Temple Expands

IN JANUARY A NEW EXPANSION was completed at the Paschima Kasi Sri Viswanatha temple in Flint, Michigan. The construction of the temple section is the culmination of a year-long vision for the property, said Hanuman Marur, president of the temple.

"Temples are sacred and

important structures in Hinduism. This new temple is similar to the type found in India," shared Marur. "When people come here, they should get a feeling of a traditional temple."

This expansion will be reserved for special worship occasions and ceremonies, while the main temple will continue to

their tradition on this day.

After the worship of Goddess Sri Lalita Tripurasundari, sons and daughters were guided through the performance of an abhishekam, bathing their mother's feet as a demonstration of respect and love. Leading the worship, priest Janakiram Kuppa explained to the children that they were worshipping the Goddess within their mother as they applied chandanam, kumkum and flowers to her feet. A room full of smiling faces and motherly love was testament to the day's success.

Mother's Day is observed in March or May in every continent in over 60 countries, including UK, Germany, Turkey, Vietnam, South Africa, Ecuador, Japan, Fiji, Myanmar and India.



Showing appreciation: Mothers are worshiped as the embodiment of the Goddess on this special day

India's Wisdom Needed Today

HUFFPOST FOUNDER AND editor-in-chief Arianna Huffington spoke with journalist Shekhar Gupta on NDTV's "Walk the Talk" show. Describing herself as an idealist, the Greece-born Arianna says being an outsider gives her a different perspective about conventions and a deep respect for ancient wisdom—one of the reasons why she's drawn to India and its spirituality.

During the interview, she praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi: "I love the fact that he wants to bring back a lot of the ancient teaching." When asked to define Indian spirituality, Arianna replied: "It's the recognition

that we are not just material beings, not just a physical body. So much of Western thought and Western medicine treats human beings as just physical bodies, and it's not like that. We know it's not but we treat each other like that, and it's a shrinking of the human experience."

At age 17, Arianna stayed in India for three months studying comparative religion at Shantiniketan in West Bengal.

"I have always been drawn to the spiritual aspect of India. Right now the world is going through so many stresses of modern life, including here in India, with modernization. It's an incredible moment to reach back



to the ancient wisdom around meditation and yoga and rediscover it in ways that can deepen our experience."

An editor with insight: Arianna Huffington is considered one of media's most influential women

INDIA

Explore the Ancient Sciences

THE SANDHI SERIES IS A TEN-part collection of articles (bit.ly/sandHI) that explore India's traditional knowledge systems. Selected academic experts present their exhaustive research on such topics as cosmology, metallurgy, mathematics, architecture, ayurveda, ecology and agriculture. The articles, inspired by the Science and Heritage Initiative (SandHI), are curated by Amita

Sharma, former additional secretary in the Ministry of Human Resources Development.

The series' particular focus is India's material and intellectual historical discoveries that are foundational to our modern fields of science, mathematics, technology and medicine. The articles are often rather complex and academic, but well worth exploring.

colonial times, even though a dance performance is one of the 16 parts of traditional puja worship in the temple, according to the *Agama* scriptures.

A 2014 STUDY FROM THE PEW Research Center, polling numerous faiths in the US, showed that Hindus retain the largest numbers of adherents raised within their religion. Among adults raised as Hindus, 80 percent said they continue to identify with the faith.

ON JANUARY 26, 2015, THE president of the Portuguese Yoga Confederation, Jorge Veiga e Castro (Jagat Guru Amrta Suryananda), was awarded the

prestigious Padma Shri prize by the Government of India for his "exceptional contribution" to the promotion of peace and yoga in the world. He was influential in the founding of International Yoga Day. Only a handful of non-Indians have received this honor.

Global Dharma news provided by

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

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



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IN MY OPINION

Passing On Our Heritage

Following the example set by our forebearers, we can ensure that our Hindu traditions continue

BY SHIVA E. SEEJORE

My friend, who was born and raised in India, recently attended a Ramayan Yajna at a mandir founded by West Indian Hindus. She was amazed that everything was performed in the exact same manner as in India. "Imagine," she said, "indentured Indians were able to preserve their culture and pass it along from generation to generation without any communication with the Motherland."

Imagine, indeed: no mail, no phone, no Internet and no freedom to practice your religion in a new land. Indentured Indians would sign a contract for five or ten years of labor, after which they expected to return to their families. Unfortunately, at the end of their contracts, few were able to return. Many were beaten and jailed and some killed. In the Caribbean they remained isolated, and it must have taken such a great effort to preserve their traditions, living in European colonies rampant with forced religious conversion and cultural oppression.

Many Hindus sought to preserve their religion by walking from village to village playing instruments and reciting passages from poems and sacred texts. This was the only way such things could be done, because in many colonies the law forbade the building of temples. Our ancestors could work the land and turn a profit for plantation owners, but could not own land, return to India or build their own houses of worship.

Children of my mother's generation had to show proof of affiliation with a Christian church in order to attend school. She and other Hindu students were forced to go by Christian names. My uncle had to adopt a Christian name in order to even be considered for a job in government.

But try as they might, the Europeans could not erase who they really were. Despite these and other hardships, our forefathers persisted, successfully preserving our culture and keeping our traditions alive. They were wise and inspired enough to pass down that legacy to the next generation so we could enjoy the rich tapestry of cultural values that we still have today.

Now it is incumbent upon us—reflecting on the efforts of generations past—to ask ourselves, what are we doing to preserve our culture in the US? At this time, all types of Hindus are Anglicizing their names, trading Rachna for Rachel or Gaurav for Garth. It's easy to let go of your culture and assimilate. After all, Indo-Caribbean Hindus in the US are now twice removed from their heritage after two immigrations. But shouldn't it be easier today to preserve our culture, while living in a society that emphasizes personal freedoms? After all, there are entire days of sacred text readings, pujas, bhajans and havanas accessible at the click of a button via online video. So, why aren't we closer to our culture now than our forefathers were?

This cultural dilution is evident even in children of immigrants from India. Despite being just one generation removed from the birthplace of Hinduism, they relinquish their cultural roots just to blend in.

How do we honor the efforts and sacrifices of our parents and grandparents? We should do for the next generation what our forbears did for us. We should tell our story; we should teach the next generation the importance of our history and our culture and not let it fall by the wayside. Many Indo-Caribbean immigrants living here work day and night to build a future and provide for our children; but what legacy and values will we leave to them? Will they know where they came from and what struggles it took to get here? Are we leaving them to adopt someone else's values, or should we instill the Hindu values our forefathers fought to preserve? It would be shameful if we let our cultural identity die in the next generation. Let us make our grandparents and great-grandparents proud; for it is only when you know your history and culture that you will know your own greatness and worth.

Shiva E. Seejore, 35, was born in Trinidad and currently resides in New York where he is an adjunct health professor. Email: myntzer077@netzero.net

BRIEFLY...

THE 4TH ANNUAL HINDU MANDIR Priests' Conference was hosted by the Hindu Temple of Minnesota in May, 2015. HMPC is an initiative to provide leadership to the Hindu-American community by encouraging Hindu temples across North America to nourish, protect and sustain Hindu Dharma.

PRIESTS AND TEMPLE STAFF IN Telangana, India, called off a three-day income strike in June, 2015. The government agreed to raise the grant to

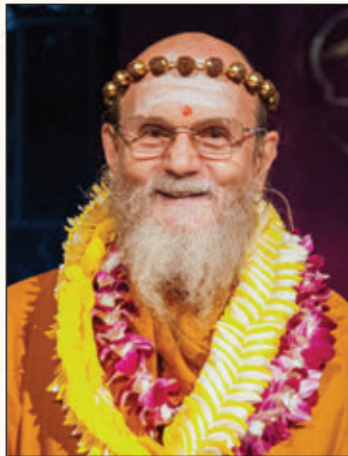
each temple from US\$39.27 per month to \$94.25, of which \$70.69 would be paid to priests and \$23.56 to conduct basic rituals.

THE DEATH OF SASHIMANI DEVI, the last in a long line of *devadasis* at the Lord Jagannath Temple in Puri, marks the end of the 800-year-old tradition of temple dancers who performed for the Deity. Sashimani chose not to groom anyone as a future devadasi in her lifetime. The profession fell out of favor under British influence during

The Journey to Liberation

Though moksha may seem remote, there is wisdom in keeping this ultimate goal in mind as we live our day-to-day life

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI



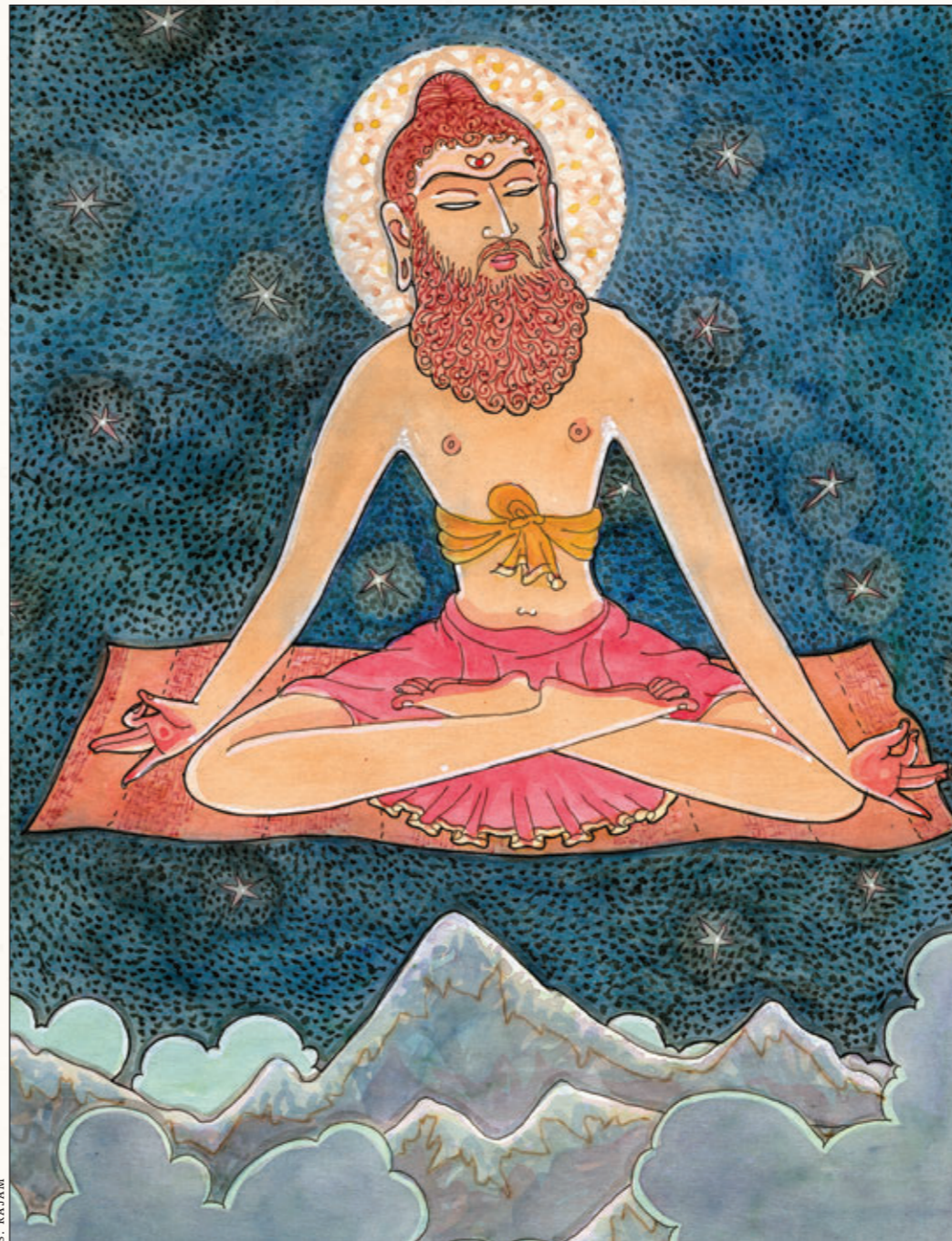
describe the journey that leads to it. While the destination may be distant, the journey toward it is already happening, whether we recognize it or not. I ask listeners to visualize a mountain with a winding path leading to the summit, which is blissful experience of God Realization and moksha. In each life we are born near the same point on the path we reached at the end of our last life. Ideally, in each lifetime we move farther up the path toward the mountaintop; we don't stand still or go backwards. Standing still results from living a materialistic, self-centered life. Going backwards is the price we pay for adharmic deeds, such as serious violence and dishonesty.

This singular, long-term goal defines the direction of dharma in the well-lived life and provides a north star for all navigating the rough seas of Earthly existence. Most souls have much to do and achieve before striving for it directly, though all hope to attain it ultimately. It is achieved only after a certain level of perfection has been attained, maturity of the soul sufficient to harness the forces of instinct, intellect and emotion. Happily, Hinduism affirms that every person on Earth will eventually reach the unitive state of moksha and be free from rebirth.

To describe how we can move toward moksha, I use the analogy of dance. I ask listeners, "What is most needed for a youth to become good at Hindu classical dance?" Invariably, most respond with the answer I have in mind: "Practice!" Reading books about dance won't make you a good dancer. Nor will attending classes without practicing what you have learned. Regular practice is needed to keep the body limber and to master the art. Making strides on the spiritual journey to liberation is the same. To grow and evolve into our divine potential requires regular practice, ideally daily practice. The spiritual advancement we make is directly related to the time and effort we devote to religious practices. Sage Patanjali stresses this in his *Yoga Sutras* (verse 1.21; 22): "For those who have strong dedication, samadhi is near. Whether one's practice is mild, medium or intense also makes a difference."

Being "on the Path"

My Gurudeva taught, "When the soul has had enough experience, it naturally seeks to be liberated, to unravel the bonds. That begins the most wonderful process in the world as the seeker steps for the first time onto the spiritual path. Of course, the whole time,



S. RAJAM

through all those births and lives and deaths, the soul was undergoing a spiritual evolution, but unconsciously. Now it seeks to know God consciously. That is the difference. It's a big difference." He stressed that seekers who are devout, who are sufficiently awakened to practice yoga, to seek the inner meaning of life have arrived at this crucial stage. While liberation may be lifetimes away, this is indeed the time to cognize the goal and begin molding yourself for it by living in a way that brings advancement and unfoldment of your soul.

But who has the time in a normal day for a generous period of spiritual practice? Many tell me they have no time at all. Employment, transportation, eating, entertainment, exercise, home duties and spending time with family and friends take up the whole day,

Above and Beyond: *Having fulfilled karma and dharma, the yogi realizes God within and reaches the state of perfect freedom.*

every day. As a solution, I recommend shortening the period of sadhana but doing it regularly. For youth I suggest a ten-minute "spiritual workout" of worship, introspection, affirmation and study. (See my full description of the subject here: bit.ly/Ten-Minutes.) If you are following dharma and performing regular daily sadhana, you can be assured you are moving forward in a significant way in this life on your journey to liberation. As we make progress, we gradually learn to sustain refined states of consciousness, without descending into the lower-chakra realms of fear, anger, jealousy, confusion and malice. After liberation, our consciousness abides fully in the three highest chakras—vishudha, ajna and sahasrara, force centers of divine love, divine sight and illumination.

Gurudeva reminded us: "We have taken birth in a physical body to grow and evolve into our divine potential. We are inwardly already one with God. Our religion contains the knowledge of how to realize this oneness and not create unwanted experiences along the way. The peerless path is following the way of our spiritual forefathers, discovering the mystical meaning of the scriptures. The peerless path is commitment, study, discipline, practice and the maturing of yoga into wisdom. In the beginning stages, we suffer until we learn. Learning leads us to service; and selfless service is the beginning of spiritual striving. Service leads us to understanding. Understanding leads us to meditate deeply and without distractions. Finally, meditation leads us to surrender in God. This is the straight and certain path, the San Marga, leading to Self Realization—the inmost purpose of life—and subsequently to moksha, freedom from rebirth."

What's Your Definition?

The point in evolution at which a soul earns release and the understanding of what happens afterwards is described in many ways. We can get a sense of the range of perspectives from the ancient *Brahma Sutra*, which cites a number of then current views: that upon liberation the soul (jiva) attains nondifference from Brahman (IV.4.4); that it gains the attributes of Brahman (IV.4.5); that it exists only as pure consciousness (IV.4.6); that even though it is pure consciousness from the relative standpoint, it can still gain the attributes of Brahman (IV.4.7); that through pure will alone it can gain whatever it wishes (IV.4.8); that it transcends any body or mind (IV.4.10); that it possesses a divine body and mind (IV.4.11); and that it attains all powers except creatorship, which belongs to Ishvara alone (IV.4.17).

While these views vary, they all describe a state of being and evolution that far transcends normal mortal consciousness. Isn't that something worth thinking about, something worth striving for? It is the state of great souls such as our paramaguru Siva Yogaswami, who lives vibrantly in the Sivaloka, showering blessings to devotees on Earth. It is the highest of human achievements, the pinnacle and very purpose of all other experiences in life—the revolutionary transcendence of limited identity in favor of unitive consciousness and all-pervasive love. All the worlds rejoice when an old soul is freed from samsara, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

“THE RISHIS ASKED THE GODS: 'WHAT must a person do if he wishes to reach the blissful state of union with God? Is there a state that not only confers upon us supreme, unbroken bliss, but also puts an end to pain, sorrow and suffering? Does this process of reincarnation go on forever?' The Gods explained: 'No. Each time the soul takes on a new body, it gets closer and closer to becoming perfect. To gain a better birth each time, one must live according to the natural laws that Hinduism proclaims and live out the karma in this life positively and fully while at the same time refraining from creating painful new karmas. After a number of such excellent incarnations, and after God Realization has been attained, the soul body becomes mature enough that it no longer needs to take a physical incarnation. Instead, it continues its evolution on inner planes of consciousness. This release from samsara is called moksha. The soul is said to be freed from the bondage of birth and death.'” With this dramatic passage, my Gurudeva, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, explained liberation from rebirth.

To attain life's ultimate purpose, three qualifications must be met: Earthly karma must be resolved; dharma must have been well performed and God must be realized. The *Upanishads* assure us, "If here one is able to realize Him before the death of the body, he will be liberated from the bondage of the world" (*Katha Upanishad* 2.3.4).

Why Even Think About It?

I have found a sure-fire way to put an audience to sleep within five minutes. It's to talk at length about moksha. Why is this? The challenges of day-to-day living are a sufficient focus; there is no mental real estate to also think about moksha. After all, there are three other more immediate goals: dharma, wealth and love. Few seem to incorporate moksha into their philosophical framework. Most have only the vaguest concept of what existence after liberation would be like. Besides, why think about something that seems so far off, something to be concerned about in a future life? Knowing that release comes only when the soul is ripe for realization, having matured through many lives, the average devotee concludes that moksha is as remote as Jupiter, strictly the concern of yogis and sadhus.

The challenge is to make life's ultimate spiritual attainment relevant to day-to-day family life. In public presentations I refer to moksha as the X-marks-the-spot destination and then



LETTERS

American Brahmin

It was a delight to read the article "Emerson and the Transcendentalists" in the July/Aug/Sep, 2015, issue. Many of my Indian expat friends are unaware of his role in the spiritual legacy of America. Emerson did indeed seem to have lived the life of an "American brahmin" in the wider sense.

He came from a family of ministers, teachers and mystics. He began lessons at age three and became a *bramachari* as a student of Harvard Divinity School at age 15. As a householder, he married, had children and was a benefactor of a large clan of relatives and fellow transcendentalists. His benevolent nature is evident from a study of his horoscope.

There is one factual error near the end of the article. Ram Mohan Roy had hoped to travel to America but died in 1833 in England. Emerson did read Roy's writings, at least those in English, beginning in his college days in the early decades of the 19th century. He traveled to Europe the summer that Roy died, and would no doubt have met him, except for Roy's sudden death. Emerson had expressed the hope of bringing him to America.

It would be another 60 years before a Hindu scholar would appear in America: Swami Vivekenanda. Perhaps it was just as well in the long run, as Vivekenanda was better prepared as a spokesperson of the broader Hindu awareness, whereas Roy was a virulent critic of many aspects of Hindu practice.

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Reactions to Ramanuja

I am more than casually disappointed with Lakshmi and Tim Sridharan's article in the Jul/Aug/Sep, 2015, issue of HINDUISM TODAY on Ramanuja, titled "Love of God Is Vedanta." It represents the prototype of the long-known Vaishnavite intellectual arrogance which has resulted in the progressive decay, not revival, of the Sri Vaishnava movement in Tamil Nadu.

The article is replete with high-handed comments about the superiority of Ramanuja over the Advaitins of his day. This includes conceited phrases such as the "arrogant Advaitin" and the usual victim mentality that somehow every Saivite was out to hurt or maim Ramanuja. They also point out Ramanuja criticisms of Adi Shankaracharya, including the apparent lack of credible answers to the locus of ignorance in the *Viveka Chudamani*.

The article undermines nondualism as a prima facie reality. It is the authors who fail

to understand the reality that the locus of ignorance within nondualism is embodied in ignorance of the Self. It's the *dvaita* argument that falls short, not the *advaitin* one.

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In the article on Sri Ramanuja in the recent edition of HINDUISM TODAY, you mentioned that he lived from 1017 to 1137. That is a rich 120 years of saintly life that reformed and enriched our Sanatana Dharma at a critical time of its existential crisis.

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Hindu Resource

The July/Aug/Sep, 2015, article "Singapore's Sri Thendayuthapani Temple" was a wonderful piece, written with such warmth, portraying the Chettiar community in a positive light for their role in building many wonderful Murugan temples all over Southeast Asia. Congratulations and keep it up. Our salutations go to HINDUISM TODAY for such a remarkable publication that every Hindu the world over should read.

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I wish to send my appreciation on the accurate facts you have shared on Singapore's Sri Thendayuthapani Temple. I am also a Nattukottai Chettiar and the owner of a community Facebook page. It has 5,000 Nagarathars as friends from 82 countries: bit.ly/NattukottaiChettiar

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Giving Thanks

Every third month I wait in great anticipation as to what HINDUISM TODAY will feature; each magazine always has something special, different, spiritual and thought provoking. HINDUISM TODAY reminds me what a great religion Hinduism really is.

Your April/May/June, 2015, issue featuring cows is outstanding. I never knew that so many swamis are in service of cows. The whole article, "Bharat's Blessed Bovine," was so touching, so spiritual. It is disturbing to note that India is the number one beef-exporting country in the world.

K. THURUVAN
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One Step at a Time

There has been considerable angst about the nonreligious ways in which meditation is frequently taught in the West. Many are concerned that the goal, God Realization, is being obscured by the mental, physical and emotional benefits of the practice. But is it wrong to allow beginners to focus on the immediate, tangible results of their efforts? Such a focus provides the incentive to continue and deepen their practice, since they will quickly perceive the benefits in this life.

Similarly, when climbing a ladder, it is better (and much safer!) to keep one's attention on the step one is presently standing on—and the next, when ready to proceed—rather than on the very top step. Proceeding up the ladder one step at a time will eventually bring the individual to the top.

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Youth on the Right Path?

Hinduism in a nutshell is: *dharma* (universal code of conduct and righteousness), *karma* (law of cause and effect) and *punarjanma* (cycle of births and deaths called *samsara*). It's a pity young Indians, especially first- and second-generation youth in India and across the globe, know nothing of their vast and rich intellectual heritage.

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New Civil Rights Class

The US Supreme Court has recently ruled that same-sex marriages are legal in all 50 states. If it hasn't done so already, I urge the Hindu community throughout the US to open its hearts and minds to same-sex families and to offer the *vivaha samskara* to same-sex couples who wish to share in sacred marriage. After all, we are all God loving God.

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Outdated Textbooks

I was explaining to one of my Jewish doctor friends about the richness of Sanatana Dharma and how Lord Rudra is considered the oldest Deity. He immediately pointed out that Hinduism practices the caste system, which he considered bad. I wondered how he got this bad impression about my rich religion. After reading the California Textbook Corrections PDF—bit.ly/textbook-corrections—I understood how school kids

are being brainwashed to have a negative impression of Hinduism. I thank you all for your efforts to correct the mischievous information in the schoolbooks of California.

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Temple Discrimination

I write in reference to the Jan/Feb/March, 2013, letter from Mikael Aktor titled "Why No Temple Access?" In the 21st century, where more and more Westerners are looking towards Hinduism for their spirituality, the barring of a white Hindu from a Hindu temple in India is sad. I wonder if temple managers in India are aware that Hinduism is not for Indians alone. Whites, blacks, browns and others are connecting to Hinduism and accept it. Temple managers in India must realize this and welcome new converts into their temples and feel proud.

In Malaysia we do not refuse entry to converted Hindus. Even non-Hindus are welcome in our temples. Quite recently an American Muslim wanted to enter our temple in Seremban. We welcomed him and he even partook of a sumptuous vegetarian

meal with other devotees. As for Mikael Aktor's case, he could have been mistaken for a tourist—perhaps he was not appropriately dressed. He could have informed the temple manager that he was a Hindu and shown proof, if he had any. I am sure that all Hindus are very sorry that Mikael Aktor was treated the way he was and we apologize profusely for the ugly incident.

K. THURUVAN
SEREMBAN, MALAYSIA

Incredible India

People have developed misconceptions about India's unity on account of its diversity. One might ask: "Why does India survive as a united and democratic country with all of its differences?" One of the reasons is that Hindu culture teaches us *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*: the world is family. The statement is not just about peace and harmony among societies in the world, but also the saying is about a truth that somehow the whole world has to live together, like a family. This is the reason why we Hindus think that any power in the world, big or small, cannot have its own way and disregard the ways of society.

Another uniting feature is our epics and

scriptures. Ethical and moral values that we get from our epics—*Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*—have provided us with an inexhaustible stock of stories, symbols, families, metaphors, all to understand and pass down wisdom for any social and personal relationship of the day.

The challenge for Indian leaders is to keep the current state of unity despite all of our differences. The dynamic and living reality that is Vedic culture is deteriorating. It's time now to rejuvenate it or else India will be in danger. By keeping its Vedic customs, culture and thinking, India will continue to be incredible.

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

Our Publisher's Vision for HINDUISM TODAY Magazine

As interest in Hinduism grows, so does the need for a clear, objective and authoritative voice

WE THANK OUR GENEROUS READERS for having helped the HINDUISM TODAY Production Fund increase its principal by \$100,000 over the past few years. "This has been a great step forward," shared publisher Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami. "The increase in grants is making it possible for the editors to produce fine articles more regularly, such as the ones on Nepal and Varanasi in this and previous issues."

As a next increment in developing the fund, he and the staff have now set a hefty new goal—to build up the principal so that grants can one day cover all of the magazine's production costs.

"We are currently a long way from that and we need to work toward it," explains Satguru. "Right now we are dependent on revenues from advertising, copy sales and subscriptions. But these sources have a habit of drying up when there is a drought. We don't want that for HINDUISM TODAY. We want it to be secure as only the Production Fund can make it, ultimately independent of societal fluctuations and freed of the eternal search for funds.

"To sustain this level of performance, the fund's principal needs to grow to five million



Publisher Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami at Hinduism Today headquarters in Hawaii: "The growing interest in Hinduism started among the youth and now permeates all age groups; it is also spreading to many countries"

dollars, and the plan is to raise that amount through estate gifts. And, being future gifts, it will be a long time, of course, before they all actually come into the fund. That is ok. Our goal is simply to establish that, according to our donors' pledges, the day is definitely coming when HINDUISM TODAY is finally financially secure.

"This is an important project, a serious project," Satguru stresses. "Today, we see more and more Hindus searching for clear, unambiguous knowledge about their faith and looking to HINDUISM TODAY for answers. This is natural, for the magazine is unique, as far as we know, in that it gives friendly coverage to the immense variety of Hindu ways and traditions with objectivity and clarity, distinguishing each one from the others, so that there is no confusion. This makes a vast Hinduism approachable, understandable and, especially, usable to great advantage. It is vital to keep this information flowing. Over the next 50 years, I see that trend toward more interest in Hinduism continuing to grow, among Hindus everywhere and non-Hindus as well. I see a groundswell of enthusiasm that will parallel the growth of yoga over the past 50 years. HINDUISM TODAY needs to be there, fully endowed, fully functional and able to continue its important work."

Find out more about the Production Fund and the many opportunities available to support it significantly via your estate plan at www.hheonline.org Contact us at hhe@hindu.org or call 1-888-464-1008.

QUOTES & QUIPS

The winds of grace are always blowing,
but it is you who must raise your sails.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), *celebrated Bengali writer*

God is one's very own. It is the eternal relationship. He is everyone's own. One realizes Him in proportion to the intensity of one's feeling for Him. Sri Sarada Devi (1853–1920), *renowned saint and mystic*

All the paradoxes of quantum physics can be solved if we accept consciousness as the ground of being. Dr. Amit Goswami, *theoretical nuclear physicist*

That dark dweller is my only refuge. O my companion, worldly comfort is illusion; as soon you get it, it goes. I have chosen the indestructible for my refuge, Him whom the snake of death will not devour. My beloved dwells in my heart all day. I have actually seen that abode of joy. Meera's lord is Hari, the indestructible. My lord, I have taken refuge with you. Your maidservant. Mira

Bai (1500–1550), *princess of Rajasthan, Northwest India, a saint celebrated for her lyrical poetry dedicated to Krishna*

Indian music is oriented solely to the end of divine communication. If I have done something in this respect, it is due entirely to the grace of the Almighty who has chosen my humble self as a tool. M. S. Subbulakshmi (1916–2004), *renowned Carnatic singer*

India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, pacifying love for all living things. Will Durant (1885–1981), *American writer, historian and philosopher*

To study the Way is to study the Self. To study the Self is to forget the Self. To forget the Self is to be enlightened by all things. Dogen Zenji (1200–1253), *Japanese Zen Buddhist teacher and founder of the Soto school of Zen in Japan*

Joys and sorrows are time-born and cannot last. Therefore, do not be perturbed by these. The greater the difficulties and obstructions, the more intense will be your endeavor to cling to His feet and the more will your prayer increase from within. And when the time is ripe, you will gain mastery over this power. Anandamayi Ma (1896–1982), *God-intoxicated Bengali saint*

Man should not simply live, but live well, with conduct governed by moderate virtue. This is regarded as difficult, as

virtue denotes doing the right thing, to the right person, at the right time, to the proper extent, in the correct fashion, for the right reason. Aristotle (384–322 bce), *Greek philosopher, Plato's disciple*

Happiness is simply the knowing of our own being; the natural, effortless and innate condition of our Self, when it is no longer pulled into an imaginary past or projected into an imaginary future by resistance and seeking. Rupert Spira, *English studio potter*

A spiritual person should be a normal person, a sound person. In order to reach God, a spiritual person has to be divinely practical in his day-to-day activities. Sri Chinmoy (1931–2007), *renowned spiritual leader and author*

Be quiet in your mind, quiet in your senses and also quiet in your body. Then, when all these are quiet, don't do anything. In that state, truth will reveal itself to you. Rumi (1207–1273), *Sufi mystic and poet*

It's the recognition that we are not just material beings. Arianna Huffington, *co-founder and editor-in-chief of The*

Huffington Post, *when asked to define Indian spirituality.*

Sunder your desires even unto the Lord. The more the desires, the more the sorrows, the more one gives up, the more bliss there shall be. Tirumantiram verse 2585

Everything in the universe has a rhythm, everything dances. Maya Angelou (1928–2014), *US novelist and poet*

We want to claim that which we already are. You are already the Self, you are just not aware of it. Do not put it off based upon some concept that we are not ready, we are not worthy, we need more of this or that. None of those principles apply when it comes to Self Realization. Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, *publisher of HINDUISM TODAY*

You have to be an intellectual fool to be in front of the satguru. If you hear ordinary



things from the guru, look closely at yourself. He is your closest mirror. He is only biding his time with you until the extraordinary ones come along to utilize his depths. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927–2001), *founder of HINDUISM TODAY*

DID YOU KNOW?

Sindhur Applied at Weddings

THE KUMARI TANTRA TELLS US, "AT THE time of marriage, the bride's hair should be parted down the center, or *simanta*. The right part of her hair represents *yoga shakti*, which brings fortune, wealth and other benefits for the family and secures its spiritual welfare. The left side of her hair represents *kshema shakti*, which preserves the benefits brought about by yoga shakti. To honor these two energies, vermilion powder should be applied at the simanta, and the two sides of the hair should be adorned with flowers" (*translation by Dr. S. P. Sabharathnam Sivacharyar*).

The tradition of placing vermilion on the simanta has been traced back to the Indus-Saraswati civilization which existed more than five thousand years ago, through ancient artifacts which depict the custom. Identical practices are followed by

Hindus today. According to Sri Narayani Amma, head of the Sri Narayani Peedam in Thirumalaikodi, the red hairline mark is the home of Mahalakshmi, Goddess of Wealth.

Vermillion powder is called *sindhur* in the north of India and *kumkuma* in the south. Historically it was made from cinnabar—the ore from which mercury is derived. Most modern powders are made from turmeric and lime.

Adi Shankaracharya poetically glorifies the hairline mark in the *Soundarya Lahari* (verse 44): "O mother, let the line parting your hair—which looks like a canal through which the rushing waves of your beauty ebb, imprisoning your vermilion on both sides, and which is like a rising sun, by using your hair which is dark like the platoon of soldiers of the enemy—protect us and give us peace."



Newlywed: The groom applies *sindhur* to the bride's parted hair during their wedding

BASICS

The Satguru's Unique Function

TO TRANSCEND THE MIND AND REACH the ultimate goal, seekers need the guidance of a satguru, an enlightened master who has followed the path to its natural end and can lead them to the Divine within themselves. Satgurus are the masterful guides and mystical awakeners who bring us into the fullness of spiritual life.

The satguru is the devotee's spiritual guide and preceptor, friend and companion on the path. Having become religion's consummation, the satguru can see where others are and know what their next step should be. Nothing is more precious than the first soul-quickenening, life-changing *saktipata* from a guru. Nothing is more central to spiritual awakening than the progressive *dikshas*, or initiations, he bestows. A

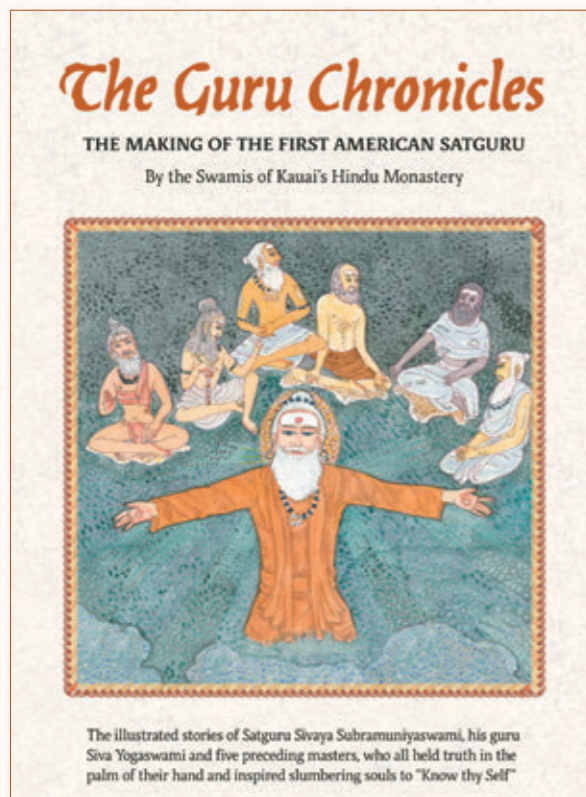
satguru is needed because the mind is so cunning and the ego is a self-perpetuating mechanism. It is he who inspires, assists, guides and impels the *shishya* toward the Self of himself.

The satguru, perfected in his relationship with Siva, administers the *sadhana* and *tapas* that slowly incinerate the seeds of *sanchita* karmas. It is his task to preside over the annihilation of the *shishya*'s ego and subconscious dross, all the while guiding the awakened kundalini force so that safe, steady progress can be made from stage to stage.

The *Agamas* affirm, "Individuals who become, by the grace of Siva, eager to extricate themselves from worldly fetters, obtain initiation from a competent preceptor into the path that leads to Sivasayujya" (from *Dancing With Siva*).



How Enlightened Men Live



Here is an adventure into the rarely divulged world of spiritual masters, full of extraordinary stories, insights and spiritual encounters. At its heart is the untold life of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, who founded HINDUISM TODAY, his guru Siva Yogaswami and five preceding masters of the spiritual lineage. Illustrated by the South Indian genius, S. Rajam.



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"Deeply captivating. The book has a musical magic, a beautifully lyrical story that happens at once in the past and the present, with the promise of an ever-deepening future of awakening for the reader. It brings so vibrantly to life the simple life and deep spiritual culture of India and Sri Lanka. S. Rajam's art adds to the musical quality, as his work is rhythmic and lyrical, too." **GAYATRI RAJAN, CALIFORNIA**



FROM THE AGAMAS

Where Souls Attain the Qualities of Siva

The eternal and endless existence of the most subtle plane of creation

The following is a lucid translation from the Matanga Agama, chapters 2, 3 and 4, continuing the revelations of the Paramesvara Agama. Matanga listens as Siva explains merging with God and Mahapralaya.

The highest tattva, the most rarefied realm of the supreme Lord, is full of resplendent rays of His shakti, illuminating the entire plane. That plane is the world meant for playful deeds related to perfected souls. He abides there, absolutely free from the state of becoming or evolving. Siva's form in this highest realm is the power of knowledge and action.

"Sadasiva is the ultimate limit of all other forms. Supreme, He is capable of pervading even atoms. Omnipotent, He permeates the relevant deeds performed in the various planes of existence. Sadasiva transcends the cosmic functions and is unaffected by desire and aversion. Known simply as Existence, He is capable of protecting souls according to their maturity and fitness. Free from beginning and end, benign and compassionate, the Lord is said to be the possessor of form in a figurative sense only. Though He is present in the world of multiple realities and beings, His form is beyond direct perception.

"When Lord Sadasiva becomes free from His duty of maintaining authority over the properties of the tattvas and all the worlds, He is enabled to reach the plane above the world of souls—the *Adhikara* tattva. Having reached that supreme abode, He keeps Himself aloof from all cosmic activity. The specific plane in which Lord Sadasiva keeps Himself at repose is called *Nivritti Bhuvana*. It is the realm reached by perfected souls who have been united with it through relevant initiation. The dominant Lord of this realm is *Sthiramurti*, in the form of *Sadyojata*, who reigns there with unflinching efficacy.

"At the time of dissolution, *mahapralaya*, Lord Sadasiva withdraws into Himself all the worlds, tattvas and perfect souls, including *Sthiramurti*. Each tattva and world becomes absorbed in Him, one after the other.

"Above these realms and tattvas is *Shantyatita Bhuvana*, imperishable and free from modifications, a world in the *laya* tattva, the realm of absorption. The souls whose Siva-centered consciousness has been perfectly unfolded by Sadasiva reach this highest abode and attain the qualities of Siva. In this *laya* tattva, the form of Sadasiva is absolutely free from the association of actions. That form is composed of four murtis, as mentioned before. It is exceedingly pure and auspicious. In this innermost dwelling there is transcendental enjoyment befitting the Lord of all tattvas and all worlds.

"This power is granted to those in this deepest of realms—the *laya*-tattva. It is extensive, consisting of all existence. It is replete with masses of multi-faceted sources of enjoyment, serving as the material cause for a body fit enough to experience them. Occupied by the prominent *anga* and *brahma* mantras, the *laya* tattva is the source for the emergence of letters which are pure knowledge.



Siva creates all: From the deepest realms of existence, Siva issues forth all of creation

"Not impaired by false notions nor comparable to any other tattva, it is filled with the primary powers that promote the evolutions taking place within other tattvas. It is the abode of the Lord who is the protector of pure realms. For the sake of benefic enjoyments, to be experienced by highly perfected souls, the *laya* tattva never goes out of existence. It is endless, eternal and not associated with any world."

Dr. S. P. Sabharathnam Sivacharyar, of the Adi Saiva priest lineage, is an expert in ancient Tamil and Sanskrit, specializing in the *Vedas*, *Agamas* and *Shilpa Shastras*. This excerpt is from his recent translation of the *Matanga Agama*.

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Before (above)—Kathmandu Durbar Square: Festival gathering at the Maju Deval (or Maju Dega) temple, right, and the Trailokya Mohan Narayan temple (center background) in the square outside Gaddi Baithak, a European-style building added in 1908 by Rana rulers onto the older royal palace complex of Hanuman Dhoka

And After (left): In this photo taken July 16, 2015, from the other side of the courtyard, only the two stepped platforms remain of the temples, the Siva Lingam still in place on top of the larger platform, and the kneeling Garuda still facing the smaller one

ON APRIL 25, 2015, AT 11:56 AM Nepal Standard Time, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake rocked Nepal so violently that Kathmandu shifted 10 feet to the south in less than 50 seconds. Hundreds of thousands of walls, floors and roofs collapsed on people who had no time to escape. Nearly 9,000 lost their lives and another 23,000 were injured as the massive quake and its many aftershocks turned much of Central Nepal into vast stretches of heartbreaking rubble. HINDUISM TODAY's Nepal-based photographers, Thomas and Liam Kelly, and correspondent Sally Acharya set out immediately to render aid to their neighbors, then report the crisis to the international community. In this feature, now months after the event, they tell the story in words and photos.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Earthquake Devastates Nepal's Sacred Sites

Nepal's Hindus and Buddhists face an enormous rebuilding task following the greatest single loss of a nation's cultural heritage in history

BY SALLY ACHARYA, KATHMANDU

ON SATURDAY MORNINGS MY HUSBAND and I liked to walk to Kathmandu Durbar Square, arriving just before noon to climb the tall ochre flanks of the Shiva temple known as Maju Deval. We would perch at the top to relax and watch the square below. We had moved back to Nepal five years ago. My husband is Nepali, I'm American, and both of us felt privileged to have places like this in our lives. Durbar Square is the historic heart of this town and in many ways the heart of Nepal, where the spiritual intersects with the mundane and the past weaves into a signboard-filled, horn-blaring present.

Nothing was roped off. Children could climb on sacred temples hundreds of years old. Vendors plied their wares from the medieval veranda of Kasthmandap, a temple and pilgrims' shelter that legend says was made from a single tree and gave its name, meaning "sacred porch of wood," to Kathmandu. You could circle the temple once, the equivalent to worshipping all 330 million Deities, or just buy some fish.

Across the square, people would stop between errands for a moment of darshan before my favorite image, the massive Kala Bhairav, whose intense stare seemed able to knock anyone, at least for a moment, out of the auto-drive of everyday life—a life that was about to change for all of us.

On April 25 my husband had a meeting, so instead of Durbar Square I was at my desk at 11:56 a.m. and our teenager was preparing to shower. Suddenly the house gave a thump and bumped upwards, and the quake alarm we'd installed by the bedrooms began

shrilling frantically. I dropped under the desk as our house began lurching and bucking. The floor dipped and tilted. The bamboo linen racks swayed forward and fell towards me.

We've heard for years that Kathmandu was overdue for a major quake and was arguably the most dangerous city on the planet in terms of earthquake risk. At least 100,000 people would die and 60 percent of Kathmandu would fall, experts said, if an earthquake similar to the one that leveled the city in 1934 struck again. We'd seen the pictures of pancaked houses in Haiti, and had no reason to believe Nepali buildings were any better. A friend of mine always wore an earthquake whistle around her neck to give her a chance of being dug out from rubble. I had installed the alarm and made sure that every room had a solid piece of furniture with "duck and cover" space. But we joked grimly that if a big quake came, "we'd be chutney."

The house was still swaying—intact, though maybe just for a moment—when I crawled over fallen furniture, losing a shoe in the process. My son emerged from his room in a bath towel; he'd crawled under his bed with the dog. We rushed out of the still-vibrating house—mom, son and dog—not taking a second to look for shirt or shoes or leash.

The house across the street was gone. In its place was a heap of bricks surrounded by neighbors asking the same question: "Were they home?" Was anyone there, under the rubble that had been a tile-roofed farmhouse with carefully tended pots of begonias?

Thanks to a Bhagwat Puran puja, they were safe. It was being held on a nearby playing field, and the lady of the house was there with neighbors, skipping her usual literacy

lesson with a helpful neighbor girl—who a few minutes before the quake had knocked on the door, found nobody home, and left the yard just as the ground shook and the house was pulverized into a cloud of dust.

Aftershocks came one after another, 15 or 20 minutes apart. Some were massive; all were terrifying. Neighbors grouped together in the largest yard. My husband finally reached home, having seen two buildings collapse in front of his eyes. Nobody knew the extent of damage, or the death toll, or the quake's magnitude. But as neighbors clustered together, some crying and others trying to calm them, a common theme began to emerge in their comments. People were all saying, "What if it had been at night?" "What if it hadn't been a Saturday?"

We didn't know it then, but a half million structures had fallen, most of them houses. At night, families would have been buried as they slept inside. And in Nepal, every day but Saturday is a school or work day. Nearly

.....

Aftermath: (right) People camped in the streets of the relatively undamaged Indra Chowk area of Kathmandu as aftershocks still threatened to topple buildings; (bottom, left to right) new construction was no insurance against collapse as shown in the heavily damaged Gongabu area, of Kathmandu; many people brought their dogs along, unwilling to leave beloved pets in risky homes; map of the earthquake's epicenter; Dharmasthali, on the outskirts of Kathmandu, a few days after the quake



THOMAS L. KELLY

Life Broken Apart



THOMAS L. KELLY



THOMAS L. KELLY



DAVIS/TNS/NEWSCOM



SALLY ACHARYA



UNKNOWN

5,000 schools fell in the quake, and countless compound walls collapsed, including the school in my lane, during what would have been recess time.

Even in their shock, people spoke of feeling grateful or protected that the quake happened when it did. They told of hanging onto door frames for those horribly long 50 seconds, chanting "Ram Ram" as mud and dirt fell around them. They expressed amazement that more houses hadn't fallen, at least not yet.

The death toll would mount to nearly 9,000, with 23,000 injured and up to three million homeless. It's painfully devastating, but here in Nepal we can't help but compare it to what could have been: hundreds of thousands dead in their homes, Kathmandu left an apocalyptic wasteland, children crushed in their schools. If such a dreadful

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Gone in an instant: (top left) The temple of Hari Shankar in Patan Durbar Square, one of seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Kathmandu Valley, reduced to rubble; (middle left) volunteers clear the rubble; (below left) Kalmochan temple's forlorn Garuda stands watch over the temple platform—all that's left of the huge structure; (below middle) the huge dome of Kalmochan temple before the earthquake; (bottom right) Kalmochan priest Govinda Prasad Koirala sits with the rescued temple Deities as army men secure a tent to protect Them



LIAM KELLY

quake had to happen, Saturday at noon was the best possible time—except for one place: Saturday is when families and friends go on outings to temples. We soon started hearing terrible rumors.

The Temple Is Gone!

It took three hours before the aftershocks subsided enough that we felt we could risk a dash through the narrow lane, past the ominously tall and crack-riddled brick walls, to reach the main street. By then we'd heard a rumor by cell phone that the nine-story Darahara viewing tower had fallen. It was a popular spot with teenagers, and my son was anxious about friends who often climbed it on Saturdays.

Once we managed to exit the lane, we walked towards downtown, staying in the street away from all the threatening walls, to find out if rumors were true and also to help anyone who might be pulling survivors from houses. Everywhere were fallen bricks, shards of glass, and people spreading blankets on the road, refugees in their own city.

Yet we never thought the temples could fall. In all the talk of a great quake, it was the new and shoddy buildings that worried people. The sturdy temples had proven their worth century after century. But that means they had also endured century after century of seismic stress, along with monsoon rains, termites, the rattling of cars and the corrosion of pollution. Many had sections rebuilt

after past quakes, and sometimes not well. Maintenance had been delayed. Retrofitting hadn't happened.

About a half hour's walk from our home flows the Bagmati River, and on its bank is the temple complex of Kalmochan Narayan. It's not famous—neither a UNESCO Heritage Site, or a draw for tourists—but I'd always been fond of it. I'd chatted with the sadhus who lived for months in its long pilgrim's house, their numbers increasing each year at Sivaratri, and enjoyed the antics of its resident troop of street-savvy monkeys.

But the temple was gone. In place of its massive Mughal-style dome stood a mountain of rubble. We couldn't believe our eyes. Yet even then there was no thought that similar mounds had replaced temples all over central Nepal, so that virtually every place we knew or had heard of, visited or planned to visit, was lost.

Bhagwati Koirala, the priest's amiable wife, was looking at the temple when it fell. She was standing in her doorway in the traditional priest's quarters, facing the temple and its kneeling Garuda, when the world shook and her eyes filled with dust. "It was so thick it stung," she recalled later. "I couldn't see anything for five minutes. When the dust cleared and I saw the temple was gone, I couldn't believe it. I started to pray, 'Please, God, let the people be safe.'"



SALLY ACHARYA

No safe haven: The heavily damaged seismograph station in Gorkha, near the epicenter, fared only slightly better than the stone temple in the foreground

"I was astounded," said the priest, Govinda Prasad Koirala. "How could this be? I wanted to cry. I thought, 'Why was this, God? Was the country so sinful? Yet a family of four, two adults and two children, was standing in the swirling dust in front of the temple. They had been inside but escaped just as it crashed to the ground.'"

Such stories would soon turn up everywhere. Of course, many were not so fortunate. But survival stories at fallen temples are a big part of what's repeated in Nepal as people process the vast destruction.

Six days after the quake, the temple's sacred images were dug out of the rubble with the help of the Army. Narayan, Laxmi and

Saraswati were placed under a tent in the compound, surrounded by flowers and candles. That, too, would be duplicated many times at temples we'd visit over the next month—temples in rubble or tragically damaged, but no worshipers killed, and Deity images recovered intact.

After the quake, the priest noted, "There are actually more people coming than before." One was Gita Oli. Trapped in a house as it crumbled in the quake but surviving unharmed, she was organizing a puja with over 100 neighbors, all homeless and living in tents. "It will give peace to the dead, and also to us," she said.

The earthquake that shook Nepal doesn't seem to have shaken the faith of its people—or, for that matter, their sense of humor. "Even God has received a tent," remarked pilot Yuvraj Kumar Bhattarai, a regular devotee at the temple, when he saw the Deity images lying prone under a tent like refugees. Even the priest, Koirala, made a quip: "God is tired, He was standing for 150 years. Now He wants to rest for a bit."

As we spoke, Bhagwati Aryal walked over to the temple. She had spotted the intact Deities as she was passing on the busy street nearby and decided to take a minute to pray. Coincidentally, I'd been to her town a few days after the quake delivering aid. Only a handful of homes had been left standing.

At Kalmochan Temple, "Even God has Received a Tent"



PRITI THAPA



THOMAS L. KELLY



PRITI THAPA



THOMAS L. KELLEY



Twelve people had died, including nine children who were indoors watching Saturday cartoons.

"We can't really say why something like this happens," Aryal sighed. "I don't think God punishes people. Why would God punish little children? It's just nature. Somehow it had to happen. But it was a Saturday, and it wasn't at night, or how many would have died? God was very kind to us."

The priest's wife nodded towards the image of Narayan. "You can see how it is. Everything collapsed, but God is still here."

Worst Heritage Disaster in History

Three weeks after the earthquake, the list of collapsed and damaged heritage sites collected by the Department of Archaeology was 43 pages long, and it still wasn't complete. This was the worst heritage disaster in history. "I don't know of any disaster, ever, that has affected this many monuments," said Christian Manhart, head of UNESCO in Kathmandu.

It's been said that Kathmandu had more temples per square foot than anywhere on Earth. But now it may have sacred debris. As of June, the damage list included 721 historic structures across 20 districts, essentially the entire central section of Nepal. Of those, 133 heritage sites had collapsed, 95 were partly collapsed and 493 had been damaged.

Even these numbers don't give a sense of the impact. For those who aren't familiar with Nepal, the names may blur together; but for us they represent all the beloved landmarks of our communities and lives. It's as if all your closest friends were on the Titanic, and all you can say afterwards as you read the

casualty list is, "Not him! Not her, too!"

Almost every historic place in Nepal is either a Hindu temple, Buddhist stupa or a compound that includes shrines. Each of the seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Kathmandu Valley is either a religious site or an inseparable mix of spiritual and secular. Swayambhunath and Boudhanath are Buddhist; Pashupatinath and Changu Narayan, a fifth-century temple, are Hindu.

And then there are the three Durbar Squares: Patan, Bhaktapur and Kathmandu's Durbar Square, also known as Hanuman Dhoka or Basantapur. Each of these is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. When kings built a palace they would surround it with temples. The number of temples on their plazas increased over the centuries as the valley's feuding city-states engaged in a kind of esthetic Cold War, each trying to express its power by building the most glorious temples. The result was a treasure for the people of Nepal and the whole world. Many residents of Kathmandu live within walking distance of one of the squares and would visit the temples regularly for morning puja, evening arati, seasonal festivals or just for a stroll.

Surrounding these squares are the old neighborhoods. Traditional Kathmandu homes are built around community courtyards with a central shrine, so that old sections of the city lead maze-like from one shrine to another, finally opening onto broad squares with temples or stupas where devotees can pray, children play and neighbors bask in the sun. These places are close to people's hearts, and most are horribly damaged.

A few days after the quake my husband and I walked to Kathmandu's main Durbar Square, where we could so easily have been when the quake hit—high at the top of Maju Deval, also known as Queen Mother's Temple. This temple to Siva was built in 1690 and called by one guidebook "probably the most popular meeting place in the city."

To stare at the empty platforms was an encounter with the meaning of impermanence that raised questions about what can even be known about the past. A few seconds had transformed the majestic temple into the

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The world responds: (opposite) Worried survivors, unnerved by the aftershocks coming every 15 to 20 minutes for days, gather in an open field in Tudhikhel on the first day; (below, left to right) the Indian government responded immediately and on a huge scale to the disaster, here at Tribhuvan airport with aid for Sindhupalchok; the vast experience of the Japanese in earthquake disasters was a major help in the first post-quake days; these survivors in Kathmandu—unlike those in the villages—were lucky to have a hospital to be treated in; the Los Angeles County Fire Department at Bir Hospital

Rescue Teams from Far and Wide Rushed to Help



THOMAS L. KELLEY



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semblance of an ancient pyramid, which isn't what it had been at all. If you didn't have a visual record of Maju Deval, there would be no way to know that a three-story temple had once perched at the top of that pyramidal base.

Next to it was a scene that seemed suddenly so ancient: a single Garuda statue, praying to emptiness, surrounded by dust. What had vanished was the three-roofed Trailokya Mohan Narayan temple, another fixture of the landscape we'd taken for granted as eternal. And a few feet behind Garuda should have been the 12th-century Kasthmandap, once a pilgrim's shelter in the kingdom of Kantipur. Travelers of ages past would have said, "I'll meet you at Kasthmandap," and so the name of the city evolved. A pile of rubble was all that remained.

Yet Nepal's sacred heritage wasn't completely lost. Every temple and shrine we spotted still standing prompted a cheer, like spotting a friend coming through the dust, limping but alive. There was the Siva Parvati temple, horribly cracked but stubbornly standing, with the statues of Siva and Parvati, still at their window, observing the debris below. Siva viewing destruction: strangely

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The aftermath: (left) The cremation ghats at Pashupatinath were active constantly in the weeks after the quake; (below, left to right) mud flats down river from the overwhelmed ghats were used for cremation; the dead wait; mountain villages for hundreds of miles were heavily damaged, some even obliterated, by the main quake and its aftershocks

appropriate, I thought.

And there, too, around the corner, was the powerful Kala Bhairav, gazing now at the rubble-strewn universe with a face like intensity personified. Bhairav was intact. Person after person would light a lamp, reverently touch the twelve-foot image with its necklace of skulls and piercing eyes, and stand for a moment with hands clasped in prayer and contemplation.

Time to Rebuild

The surviving structures—and there are many, like the towering Taleju temple to Durga—will need extensive repairs. The thick list of damaged sites and their overwhelming needs is kept in the office of the Director General of Archaeology, Bhesh Narayan Dahal. In a strange coincidence, he had spent the day before the quake in Barpak, the remote place that was about to become the quake's epicenter, checking on a museum dedicated to a national hero. He had barely been back in Kathmandu for an hour when the tectonic plate nine miles beneath Barpak slipped and the destruction began.

"I'm a devotee of Siva," Dahal recalled. "So I said, 'Om Namah Sivaya,' over and over. It was terrible. Nobody could move. We could only pray to God."

It will take years to restore the heritage of Nepal. Much is lost forever. But much has survived to be restored, and there are extensive digital records to guide the way to rebuilding even some of the most shattered monuments.

Perhaps each generation has to find some way to show anew that they care, and that the creation of the beautiful and sacred isn't

limited to ancestors in a golden past. Heritage includes buildings, but it's more than buildings. It's a commitment and a sacred trust. The Siva and Bhairav and Durga shrines that survived the quake were mute, and yet they seemed to have something to tell us. Nothing in this world can escape destruction. But change and destruction are also the ways to new creation.

Volunteers Rise from the Rubble

The 7.8 magnitude earthquake and its aftershocks, including a violent 7.3 tremor on May 12, leveled over half a million homes, and damaged a quarter of a million more. The cost of rebuilding and bouncing back from the quake was estimated at \$6.7 billion. That's a lot of need to meet in a country with a Gross Domestic Product of less than \$20 billion a year, lower than the last-ranked U.S. state of Vermont.

Even those of us in Kathmandu with standing homes were sleeping outdoors—in yards, under tarps strung up on vacant lots, at refugee camps—or in a car parked in the open, as did my family. But sitting helplessly and waiting for the government or for foreign aid wasn't an option. Even as they slept in tents themselves, members of youth clubs and local Guthi heritage groups fed community members, often serving them from neighborhood temples.

It seemed everyone quickly began doing something to help: organizing to reach quake-struck villages, carrying rice on motorbikes to suffering relatives, or simply feeding neighbors informally. One housewife went out on the street, passing out packets of instant noodles to anyone in need. Villagers

Bidding Farewell to the Deceased



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in areas not hit hard by the quake, like my sister-in-law, collected rice from their harvest and sent bags off by truck to those who had lost everything.

Local young people, concerned that thieves might abscond with temple artifacts, guarded neighborhood shrines. The tech-savvy fanned out across the city to record data on their smart phones. Dozens of informal groups—like Helter Shelter for tarps, and To Da Loo for latrine building—began distributing everything from rice to farming implements to women’s toiletries.

The World Responds

Other countries, too, responded quickly and generously. On the day after the quake, India sent 187 tons of supplies, including 50 tons of water, 22 tons of food and two tons of medicine along with 300 disaster-relief troops. China quickly sent a 62-person disaster response unit with 20 tons of aid. Tents from the Chinese Red Cross soon appeared across the country.

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Famed sites damaged: (above right) The central stupa of Swayambhu in Kathmandu, with its iconic eyes, survived; (below, left to right) but surrounding shrines were heavily damaged; this monk’s monastery at Swayambhunath is in ruins behind him; 40 people were standing on this ledge of the Gorakhnath hillside temple when the quake struck, all escaped unharmed; the temple’s sacred fire, which has burned for 800 years, continued undiminished

By late June, India had promised \$2 billion in aid over five years, a quarter of it as grants. China had pledged \$760 million. There would be \$260 million from Japan, \$130 million from the US and \$112 million from the European Union. Aid agencies poured into Nepal or geared up their existing efforts.

Less welcome were Christian evangelists



sensing an opportunity to gain converts in the midst of the disaster. Rahul Priyadarshi published a scathing article on AhankhNaad (bit.ly/NepalConversion) reporting on the initial barrage of tweets some evangelicals sent out within hours, including one that went, “Praying for those affected in Nepal this AM. May the fields be ready for harvest [i.e., making of converts] as four of our own will be there in a month!”

The amount of actual conversion activity on the ground was difficult to judge. But

there were reports of aid workers telling quake victims they would receive benefits such as scholarships and jobs if they joined a church—a common tactic before the quake as well. And there were many complaints about Christian groups providing aid only to members of their own churches.

“I’ve definitely seen some Christians come and just work with Christians,” said Paul Ramble, a relief worker near the epicenter. “They go and help members of churches, and then people think, ‘Should we become Christian to get support?’ I’m from a Christian family, but I don’t think that’s right. And it makes it difficult for the rest of us to work, because we have to cover a lot more people.”

In some localities, village officials who tried to spread aid equitably to households found that church members would complain about discrimination when they didn’t receive tents—although they had already received tents from Christian groups and aid was being reserved for those who had none.

All across the quake zone, reports came in that people with some level of privilege—often because of political connections or simply because they lived near a road—were stockpiling aid for their personal use. Some relief van drivers were even found to have sold the food aid for profit, prompting angry roadblocks by villagers.

Many voiced concerns about the influx of aid. How would the money be used? Would it reach the neediest people, or would too much end up in the pockets of the corrupt,

be directed mainly to the villages of the well-connected, or fuel negative cultural impacts? Skepticism is still rampant.

The spirit of the Nepali people is the greatest reason for optimism. They never sat passively and waited. They pulled neighbors from the rubble, fed each other, trekked miles to provide relief, and volunteered in countless ways to help those they had never met. Ultimately, it’s that spirit that will lift the country from the devastation of the Great Quake.

Near the Epicenter

Six weeks after the quake, we drove towards Gorkha Bazaar. From miles away we saw a great cloud of dust boiling up from the mountain, and we thought more buildings must be falling, perhaps to yet another aftershock. But the dust cloud came from the shattered remains of that fortress-and-temple complex, where workmen were shoveling debris and tossing shards of tiles and brick off the roofs of places that gave birth to the country of Nepal.

It was here, in 1743, that a 20-year-old prince came to the throne of a rugged northern kingdom with a population of barely 70,000 and decided he could conquer everything around, including the rich and cultured city-states of the distant Kathmandu Valley. History records the battle cry of his soldiers: *Jai Gorakh Nath! Jai Kali!* The soldiers of Gorkha spilled out of this mountain fortress and went to war shouting the names of their temples and Deities, declaring to the world that they were the people of Gorakhnath and Gorakh Kali—the Gorkhali, the people of Gorkha, the Gurkha soldiers.

When you see the place, it makes sense

that the people and temples would be so inseparable. The kings of Gorkha took no chances when it came to relations with their Deities. They built their stronghold only a few feet above the entrance to the far older cave temple of Gorakhnath, where the sage himself is said to have meditated. The palace is flanked by a temple to Kali, and others are crowded close by—temples for Pasupatinath, Guheswori and Sri Vidhya. In the Gorakhnath temple burns a sacred fire that was said, when the earthquake struck, to have been smoldering continuously for nearly 800 years.

The kings also took no chances with invaders. The cliffs are faced with sheer stone walls that make it impregnable and a bit dizzying. Every day, but particularly on Saturday, devotees would make the climb for darshan at the closely grouped temples, leaving with ash from the ancient fire on their foreheads. On Saturday, April 25, some 500 had gathered on the narrow stone terraces and steep stairways. Many would have been gazing north over the crenellated walls at the panorama of majestic ridges that could make anyone feel they could conquer the world, or at least soar above it. Beyond one of those ridges is the village of Barpak. At 11:56am, far underneath that little village, a piece of tectonic plate slipped and the earthquake began.

At that moment Iswornath Yogi, a hereditary priest at Gorakhnath and one of four serving the temple, was on his knees clad in saffron for a Graha Shanti puja to remove the negativity of an ill-omened planetary alignment. “My body suddenly bowed down, all on its own,” recalls Yogi. The mountain and everything on it, including the temples and bells and

people, began shaking furiously. Dust flew, bricks fell, and the walls made a sound like a bomb exploding. There was no place to run.

He told the assembled worshipers the only thing that came to him: “You need to get out, but leave with love and respect.” And somehow, people did. Hundreds picked their way down the shaking stairways past imploded temples, collapsed gates and buckled 400-year-old walls. One person was trapped under a falling gate, but others pulled him to safety. “From the blessing of God, no one was killed,” Yogi says.

He counted 18 aftershocks before 4pm, but still returned that evening for arati. The sacred fire never went out. Public puja would be suspended for months to keep devotees safe, but the priests continued the daily worship without pause.

Several of the temples here are gone now, but the main sacred sites, Gorakh Kali and Gorakhnath, remain standing—though with considerable damage. The historic palace survived with severe damage and will need rebuilding.

Bishnu Prasad Khanal of the Department of Archaeology gazes at the rubble that was the Sri Vidhya temple. “Five days earlier, the *gajur* (sacred pinnacle) fell off, and we all wondered why,” he says. “There were plans to perform a puja because it was inauspicious.”

He looks down at all that’s left: a stone cow and a stone turtle. At least, he says, none of the main images at any temple was harmed. “At least,” he says, “it was only the walls.” And the walls spared the people. Hundreds

Grievous Losses for the Nation’s Buddhists



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Gorkha Country



walked away that day, many returning to crumbled homes and unimagined difficulties, but alive. "Temples can be rebuilt," Khana says. "People can't."

Pashupatinath Copes With the Quake

Pashupatinath Temple, one of the holiest sites in the Hindu world, survived the quake largely unscathed. This boosted the spirits of many Nepalis, as Siva Pashupatinath is viewed as Nepal's protector deity. But this was also an epicenter of pain. On Sunday alone, the day after the quake, 140 bodies were cremated. Even as the ground rocked with aftershocks that would kill yet more people, the eleven ghats at Pashupatinath weren't enough for all the bodies. Mourners flocked to the water's edge to perform the final rites for loved ones just pulled from the rubble. At one point 32 pyres burned at a time, heaps of wood and straw piled along the banks of the Bagmati River. And the bodies kept coming, a hundred a day, for much of the week.

Temple authorities waived the usual cremation charge of 1,800 rupees (about \$18), but there weren't enough priests at hand for all the cremations and mourning rites. In Nepal, Hindu practice doesn't rely on formal institutions; even in ordinary times it's common for families to call their own priests to

Pashupatinath to perform the rites. Management of rituals, whether it's a joyous or tragic occasion, is almost invariably a family or community affair. So, in effect, the same dynamic that enabled most of the city to be



austerities and rites as best they could, with support from priests and each other.

Even two months later, bodies were still being brought for cremation, victims of an injury or illness related to the quake. In striking numbers, people also came to Pashupatinath to pray and gain spiritual sustenance. Priest Lila Prasad Acharya, who works with mourners at the Kriya Putri Bhawan and hears stories from people who say they survived while chanting the name of God, noted that people have become more spiritual since the earthquake.

"Of course, many temples fell, and naturally that will happen. They were old. Their time had come," Acharya said. "Neither humans nor anything made by humans can be eternal. But people feel protected. They know it's important to remember God."

fed, have water and find a place to pitch a tarp, even before any formal mechanisms could respond, the close-knit networks of families and communities also helped Pashupatinath meet the overwhelming need for priests and ritual requirements.

The Kriya Putri Bhawan, where mourners can stay for 13 days while conducting lengthy and complex mourning rites, waived fees for impoverished families. It did not have space for everyone, though, so mourners strung tarps on adjacent open space and followed

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Toward recovery: (above) rebuilding under way at Swayambhu as scaffolding is erected around the heavily damaged tower at left; (below, left to right) An international team of veterinarians, World Vets, tend to wounded animals in Lele Village; resident of Lele Village salvaging wood for reconstruction; villagers went right to work rebuilding the homes and animals sheds in Sira Village, Sindhupalchok

Buddha Saved Us

While 81 percent of Nepalis are Hindu, Buddhism is also at the center of Nepal's soul, both as the faith of the 11 percent who identify as Buddhist and as a powerful element of cultural identity. It's a point of pride that Buddha was born in Nepal, in Lumbini, which was rocked but not damaged by the quake. The Hindus see Buddha as an avatar of Vishnu and a wise teacher of beliefs that grew from and complement Sanatana Dharma.

Khempo Karma Chhiring Tasi Lama, chairperson of the Buddhist Philosophy Promotion and Development Committee, explains the Buddhist standpoint: "We are the same. Buddha was born in Nepal, Sita was born in Nepal. Many years ago Hindus and Buddhists came from the same roots. We are brothers and sisters who should always work together."

There are two strands of Buddhism in Nepal. One is Newar Buddhism, practiced by 15 percent of Kathmandu's Newar community according to family lineage in a complex interplay with Hinduism. Newars, for instance, have Hindu and Buddhist castes. The other is Tibetan Buddhism, which is strong in the highlands, where prayer flags wave in the wind and shrines and gombas, or monasteries, dot the trails and ridges.

The highlands area was squarely in the quake's high-damage zone. In the Langtang Valley, an entire tourist town, with 55 guest-houses full of trekkers, was wiped off the earth by a massive landslide that buried it

under 20 feet of mud, ice and rock. "Most of the monasteries were in the Himalayan area, in mountain districts, and the earthquake hit that area very hard," Lama said.

Before the earthquake, Nepal had 2,171 Buddhist monasteries. Afterwards, it had 871. The quake flattened 1,300 monasteries or damaged them so badly that monks have been living under tarpaulins. But while initial projections of deaths were in the hundreds, in fact only five monks lost their lives at monasteries. "We believe in the Buddha and religion, so I think our Buddha saved us," says Lama.

One place where Buddhism, Hinduism and Nepali identity come together is Swayambhunath. For 1,500 years it's been a sacred spot. Hundreds of pilgrims would climb the steep stairs each morning to circumambulate the shrine where the eyes of the Buddha, which symbolize the awakening of wisdom and compassion, gaze down on the city.

But among all the bad places to be during the quake, Swayambhunath must have been among the most terrifying. Of all the UNESCO World Heritage sites, it was certainly the most confined and impossible to escape as columns toppled, massive bells clanged to the ground and visitors were trapped under rubble. Weeks later it was still a claustrophobic disaster scene with barely a patch of ground not covered in debris. Astoundingly, no one was killed.

Buddha's calm eyes, so iconic of Nepal, are also painted at Boudhanath, the largest stupa

in the world. The surrounding community is heavily Tibetan Buddhist, with numerous monasteries, and the history of Boudhanath intersects intimately with the trade route to Tibet. It, too, was damaged, although less severely.

Is there a lesson to be found in the earthquake from the Buddhist perspective? "An earthquake is a natural thing. It comes from time to time," Lama observed. "Nobody can do anything about the suffering that happens naturally. It's a fact of nature. It is our common fate that everyone has suffering in life. But we can control how we act towards each other. We must always try to do the right thing and not do harm to others."

Ecumenical Earthquake

The earthquake was a sadly ecumenical affair, and people of all faiths are struggling to recover. Most Nepalis are Hindu, Buddhist or follow indigenous faiths, called Bon and Kirat, that blend Hinduism and Buddhism with animism and shamanism. Another four percent are Muslim; and while most of these live in the minimally affected southern plains near India, there is also a traditional Muslim community in Kathmandu, where the earthquake damaged a 500-year-old mosque and collapsed two minarets. People were pulled from the rubble, and all survived.

About one percent of Nepalis are Christian according to the 2011 census, although church leaders say it is now double that number. Their worship services are held on

Rescuing Animals, Putting up Homes



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD: THOMAS L. KELLY



SALLY ACHARYA

Rebuilding Is Underway



PRETI THAPA



PRETI THAPA



Saturday, and many were killed in churches that collapsed. The Christian Broadcasting Network put the number of fatalities during worship services at around 500.

Rebuilding the Temples

The legendary wish-fulfilling temple Manakamana, about three hours west of Kathmandu, exemplifies what needs to happen all over Nepal. When the earthquake struck, the temple committee was ready not only to repair the damage—cracked pagoda-style roofs and a 20-inch tilt to the northeast—but to reconstruct the temple entirely, from the ground up.

When we visited, the cable car over the Trishuli River to the ridge-top temple—a master stroke of internal tourism—hadn't reopened yet after the quake, so we coaxed a jeep up the back route along a thin, boulder-strewn, cliff-hugging zig-zag of a trail that brought us in two bruising hours to the town of Manakamana. I would definitely not recommend this over the 10-minute cable-car ride.

Manakamana is among the most beloved shrines in Nepal, and since the opening of the cable car ride in 1998, nearly a million pilgrims a year make the trip to the hilltop temple, 60 percent of them Nepali and the rest mostly Indian. It's said that Bhagawati, a form of Parvati who according to legend also took the form of a 17th century queen of Gorkha, will grant the heart's desire (*mana kamana*) to those who worship at her temple.

When the quake struck, thousands were reportedly standing in line for the cable car or temple entry. Scores ran from the temple as it rocked back and forth, dislodging bricks and finally tilting around severely to the northeast.

But all survived, and Manakamana was ready to fix the damage. The temple committee had already raised much of the estimated \$15 million needed to completely dismantle, repair and reconstruct the 17th-century structure, preserving the appearance but strengthening it and mending the weaknesses resulting from age and previous quakes. Master carvers were on the scene, putting

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Putting it back together: (counter-clockwise from upper-left) Artisan showing off his carving as Manakamana Temple in the Gorkha District is rebuilt; Doleshwor Mahadev Temple in Bhaktapur was already slated for reconstruction, with funds raised—they just proceeded with the temple's reinforced concrete foundation and pillars; Manakamana before the quake destroyed it; as do many, engineer Sanu Dangol, about to enter a risky heritage site for a damage assessment, stops to worship and take solace at the undamaged shrine of Kala Bhairav in Hanuman Dhoka

the finishing touches on spectacular replicas of the weakened 17th-century struts, doors, windows and pillars. Artisans from traditional woodworking families and workshops in Bhaktapur had spent a year and a half crafting painstaking replicas of the temple's elaborate woodwork. A puja was set to begin shortly to remove the gajur, or sacred pinnacle, and begin the work. They only had to wait for the aftershocks to calm down. While no one would say that a quake had auspicious timing, for Manakamana all the pieces were certainly in place.

Admittedly, the timing was happenstance, since the renovations were six years in the planning. But this state of preparedness was



THOMAS L. KELLY

the result of a commitment to heritage that will need to be duplicated on an unprecedented scale all across Nepal if the temples are to rise from the ruins.

Monumental Challenge

The renovation of temples has never been undertaken on the massive scale now facing Nepal. In all of history, no country has ever suffered such a loss of heritage at one time.

To get an idea of what a challenge it will be, consider Patan. The quake toppled the oldest temple, Char Narayan, and the three-roofed Hari Shanker temple. In the days after the quake, fragments were dug out of the debris and gathered into a secure courtyard by the Nepal police, local volunteers, and staff of the Patan Museum, Department of Archaeology and Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust.

Two months later, skilled craftsmen were going through the fragments piece by piece, matching them so they could be fitted together later. The long, painstaking process would be nearly impossible except for photographs that meticulously documented the structures as they had been. The next step will be to replace the missing chunks with replicas, using traditional methods.

Ram Govinda Silpakar is one of five woodworkers deployed by the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust to work on the Patan restoration. When he's not working in the garden of the Patan Museum, he sleeps in a

tent, because his home in Bhaktapur also fell in the quake.

"Everybody is having trouble," he shared. "The people are suffering, the Gods are suffering. I think it will be three or four years until I can rebuild my home, but it will be even longer for all our temples to be repaired. It will take three or four months to fix these windows (for Char Narayan), but at least three years to rebuild the whole temple, with carving and masonry. And that's just one temple."

There is also a dearth of skilled craftsmen. Most learn the craft from childhood, but young people increasingly choose high-status professions such as medicine or engineering, or simply go abroad as laborers in the hope of earning better money.

"We really need 20 times the amount of masons, carvers and so on. We just don't have enough that are really qualified," said Thomas Schorr, a restoration architect and long-time Nepal resident. "There are a lot of ideas now about training. I can't say how successful it will be, but the quake could change a lot of things. There are so many unemployed people, so many people going abroad. I've heard people say if you can make 1,600 rupees a day (about \$16) as an experienced craftsman, it wouldn't be worth going to Saudi Arabia for foreign employment."

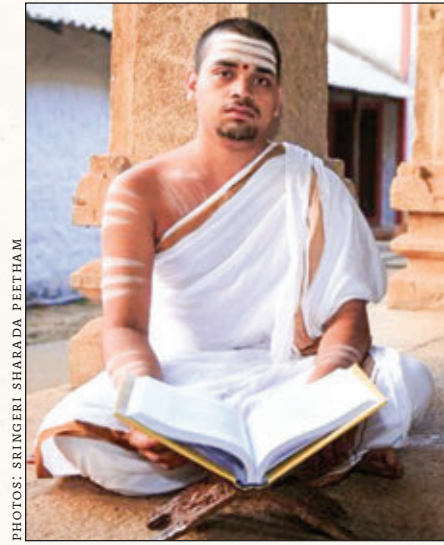
"The artists at that time were so talented," said Shivaram Chiguthi, another traditional carpenter working on restoration. "Just think of it—they had no computers, no fancy equipment. It was all by hand and all in their head. But there are young people now who are also very talented."

The golden age of temple-building may have been in the past. But hopefully the skills will reemerge and bring the temples back from the rubble, along with a commitment to rebuild Nepal and the lives of its people. That, at least, is my own heart's desire—my *mana kamana*.

For those who want to help, photographer Thomas Kelly and writer Sally Acharya have assembled a list of local organizations and people they know active in the relief work: bit.ly/NepalRebuild.



Sally Acharya is a writer who lives in Kathmandu, Nepal. She has worked as a reporter for Gannett, won awards for environmental and cultural reporting, and was staff writer for American University in Washington DC before returning to Nepal with her husband Homraj, who is country director of a nonprofit organization, and their son Shiva.



PHOTOS: SRINGERI SHARADA PEETHAM



From scholar to Sannidhanam: (clockwise from left) Immediately after donning the ochre robes of sannyasa, the successor designate receives a holy staff and water pot from his guru; as a student at Sringeri; obeisance is paid to the Deities at all the math's temples and guru samadhi shrines.

MONASTICISM

Sringeri's Pontiff Anoints Successor

An eminent Shankara monastery continues its unbroken guru lineage

BY CHOODIE SHIVARAM, BENGALURU
TWELVE CENTURIES AGO ADI SHANKARA established four centers of Vedic learning across India, appointing the jagadguru of each from among his disciples. These aren't ordinary monasteries or seminaries, but bastions of a living, unbroken heritage of Vedic philosophy, guiding millions of devotees around the world. Among the four, the Sringeri Sharada Peetham prides itself with an unbroken line of 37 jagadguru-

tracing back to Adi Shankara's disciple, Sureshvaracharya. The guru-shishya system of succession is a significant aspect of monasticism in India, especially for these four centers. Highly venerated, the jagadgurus here are Shankara's legatees. They accept only one disciple, anointed as their successor to carry forth the Shankara lineage without dilution. This once-in-a-generation event is an eagerly anticipated occasion.

In the Sringeri lineage, sannyasa diksha (initiation into the life of a renunciate monk) is received only by those of the brahmacharya ashrama (path of celibacy). The jagadgurus affirm that their selection is guided by Goddess Sharadamba (Saraswati) and divine approbation is sought in the decision of a successor. On January 4, 2015, the 36th Sringeri jagadguru, Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswami, declared 22-year-old Vedic scholar, Kuppa

Venkateshwara Prasada, as his choice: "He has been under my tutelage for the past five years. He has studied the *Nyaya Shastra* and has mastered the *Vedas*. He possesses guru bhakti, detachment and all the virtues befitting an ascetic. Thus, I have chosen him as my shishya." On January 23, 2015, in the traditional *shishya sveekara* ceremony, Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswami (our 2011 Hindu of the year awardee) formally accepted the youth as his disciple and pronounced him successor to preside as the 37th Sringeri jagadguru. The event was attended by thousands and watched on TV by millions more.

History of Divine Guidance
 In an example of Goddess Sharadamba's direction, when the 32nd pontiff, Sri Sri Narasimha Bharati VIII, was immersed in his worship one night, the Goddess appeared to him and said, "Make room." Recognizing the divine decree, he began searching for a successor. Eight years later, eight-year-old Sivaswami—born at the time of the vision—was anointed as Sachchidananda Shivabhinava Narasimha Bharati, the peetham's 33rd pontiff. Sri Bharati Tirtha himself was anointed in 1974 by Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha. Known as Sitaramanjaneyalu until that time, the youth had become a dedicated devotee of the acharya at Ujjain in 1966 and remained in Sringeri

to pursue Shastric studies. His impressive progress prompted speculation among devotees that he might become the successor. One devotee ventured to ask Sri Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha about this. In response, the acharya asked him to fetch the almanac from his cupboard. As the devotee did so, a piece of paper fell from among the books. To his surprise, the acharya saw that the piece of paper contained the date and time of his own installation as jagadguru. He exclaimed, "Goddess has given me the signal for the shishya sveekara." Having already identified the traits of an ascetic in Sitaramanjaneyalu and upon receiving this divine sign, Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha Swamiji proceeded to anoint him as his successor. "The guru-shishya parampara in this monastery exists solely because of the will and grace of Goddess Sharadamba" Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Swamiji explained. "As my guru did earlier, I too have received Her divine signal to nominate a successor and mold him to carry on the lineage. In the Sringeri tradition, we do not choose the successor based on their horoscope, but based on their qualities and virtues."

The New Successor's Early Life
 Kuppa Venkateshwara Prasada was born on Naga Panchami, July 24, 1993, to Kuppa Shivasubrahmanya Avadhani and Seetha Nagalakshmi in the holy town of Tirupati. Hailing from a scholarly lineage, he was exposed to the *Shastras* from early childhood. K. V. Sarma, Sri Avadhani's brother, explained: "For 96 years without break, our family has conducted *Bhagavatha Sapthaha* (reading of the *Srimad Bhagavatha* for seven days) at a temple in Hamsaladeevi, a village near our native town in Andhra Pradesh. My father feels the result of this dedicated spiritual pursuit is what has given a jagadguru in this family."

The family exemplifies balance between tradition and modernity. Their daughter Krishnapriya is a software engineer in the US; their other son is an engineer with one of India's largest corporations. But the consumerism and technological addictions that pervade modern life held no attraction for the young Venkateshwara Prasada, who remained austere and unattached. After his sacred thread ceremony at the age of five, Venkateshwara Prasada began learning the *Krishna Yajur Veda* from his grandfather, Sri Kuppa Ramagopala Vajapeyayaji, a Vedic scholar. He continued Vedic studies under his illustrious father, principal of the TTD Veda Pathashala in Tirumala. Interactions with Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswami during his father's visits to Sringeri, beginning in 2006, profoundly impacted the brahmachari, who decided to study at the Veda Pathashala in Sringeri. His progress there was phenomenal. "Within five years, beginning with the basics of Sanskrit, he has mastered *Tarka*, *Nyaya Shastra* and other texts," marvels Dr. Shivakumara Sharma, a senior Shastric scholar at the Pathashala. "Scriptures that take six years to learn, he mastered in two. It is a blessing from my previous lives that I had an opportunity to tutor the jagadguru." Sharma continues, "He was never drawn to distractions that his generation is addicted to, like cell phones or cricket. He was an intense learner and a dedicated student." Recognizing qualities befitting a successor, Sri Bharati Tirtha Swamiji discreetly nurtured and groomed the young student, closely monitoring his day-to-day activities and progress. "Often, while I was tutoring the youth, Sri Swamiji would walk in to observe, evaluating my teaching and the shishya's progress," Shivakumara recalled.



The Family's Reactions

Daughter Krishnapriya observed: "We knew that Sri Swamiji was paying special attention to him, and thought that was because of his progress in studies and devotion to the guru. We never imagined he would be chosen to head the peetham." She flew in from the US to be part of the ceremonies. "We still cannot believe there was a jagadguru amongst us. Yesterday he was my younger brother. Today he is the Sringeri jagadguru. It is overwhelming. Words cannot express my joy and devotion. I feel blessed to address my brother as Sri Sannidhanam."

The family's elation was boundless. "This is the fruition of merit earned over a million births and will lead us in a pious path for another million. The feeling of blessedness is beyond description," exults his father, Shivasubrahmanya.

The *Shastras* decree that the mother's consent is mandatory in order for one to be granted sannyasa diksha, a requirement that is strictly followed in the Sringeri tradition. From Adi Shankaracharya's mother, Aryamba, to the present, devotees feel a deep sense of gratitude to these mothers for giving them a guru who will lead them into the path of spiritual pursuits.

Overwhelmed, devotees reverentially touched the feet of mother Seetha Nagalakshmi. Sister Krishnapriya remarked, "This has raised the benchmark for us and spiritually elevated us. In everything we do, we must be conscious that the jagadguru belonged to our family. Our conduct and practices should be driven by this."

The Initiation Rites

The math administration made elaborate arrangements for devotees to witness the all-important rites on January 22 and 23, 2015. Thousands of devotees thronged Sringeri. Even before daybreak they had occupied vantage points to witness the rituals of induction into sannyasa on the banks of the river Tunga—an event that had not occurred in four decades. A strong media contingent, including a gaggle of cameras and outdoor broadcasting vans, brought the celebration into the homes of millions of viewers.

Brimming with festive excitement, Sringeri town decorated itself to welcome the new Sannidhanam. Huge signs paid obeisance to the jagadgurus; traditional garlands, mango leaves and banana plants adorned every lane. People bustled about clad in their best traditional attire.

All rituals were performed in adherence to the tenets laid down in the *Shastras*, transporting us to the era of Adi Shankara. The event began on the morning of the 22nd with the successor-designate seeking his guru's blessings, followed by Ganapati homa. The youth then paid obeisance to all the Deities at the math's temples and the samadhi shrines of previous jagadgurus. Next came the important *ashta-shraddhas*, signifying the irrevocable severing of all familial and worldly ties.

Shraddhas are rituals normally performed in veneration of deceased ancestors. Performing these is an important duty for householders. When taking sannyasa, the initiate performs these rituals to ancestors, living parents and even to himself—fulfilling final obligations to family, signifying the

end of his personal life and the commencement of his life as a sannyasin. Held in front of the samadhi shrines, the rite was intently watched by devotees and family, including grandparents. Notably, his father stoically guided the young brahmachari through the ceremonies. "Vairagya (dispassion, non-attachment) is a great virtue in this family," observed a pandit of the math. "No wonder they were able to give us a jagadguru."

The youth then performed purification rituals which included the *brahmanvadhana* (a small fire ceremony preparing for initiation into sannyasa) and *abhishekam* (ritual bathing) of the *danda*, the staff he would receive the next day. He fasted all day and stayed awake all night in penance at the samadhi shrines. This vigil the night before the initiation is an important ritual for renunciates. Throughout, people reverently followed the successor-designate's movements, observing his gait, stature and demeanor. Acceptance and reverence was instant. But the young brahmachari was oblivious to this; his mind was firmly on his duties.

The morning of the big day began with Purushasukta and Viraja homas, performed to cleanse the body and absolve one of all sins committed knowingly and unknowingly. As the rays of the morning sun brightened the sky, the young devotee walked into the river to perform the *preschocharana* and *sarva-bhoota-abhaya pradhana* rituals. "In these rituals," Shivakumara Sharma explains, "the renunciate stands in the river and takes a vow of nonviolence towards all beings by thought, action or words. Performing Gayatri japa one last time, he discards his white robes, the holy thread and sacred tuft into



A spiritual rebirth: (far left) Devotees attending shishya sweekara celebrations; (left) Sri Vidhushekara Bharati performs a padapuja to his guru, a ceremony done only once in the life of the young jagadguru

the river, becoming free of all bindings. This is called *Savitri tyaga*."

Then he rose from the Tunga river and stepped into a thatched hut on the banks, where Sri Bharati Tirtha Swamiji bestowed upon him the saffron monastic robes, *danda* and *kamandalu* (water pot), thus initiating him into sannyasa. When the guru and his shishya emerged from the hut, the skies reverberated with the sounds of auspicious chants, drums and slogans of euphoric devotees hailing the gurus.

Taking his disciple to the samadhi shrine of his guru, Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha, Sri Sri Swamiji bestowed on his successor *pranava mantra diksha*, completing the process of shishya sweekara. Pranava signifies Parabrahman, the ultimate in knowledge. Shivakumar explains, "The guru places his hand on the disciple's head and transfers divine powers so he may attain *brahmajnana*."

Crossing the river, the newly initiated sannyasin performed the *panyankashoucha*, a ritual first bath (as a new-born, having begun a new life) at the riverside. The two pontiffs then proceeded to the Sharada temple for the *yoga-patta* ceremony, which marks the official declaration of the shishya as the successor to the peetham.

Sri Swamiji seated his shishya on the *Vyakhyaana Simhasana* (throne of transcendental wisdom), placed a *saligrama* (a small

sacred stone) on his head and worshiped it. The jagadguru then blessed the youth with the monastic name Vidhushekara Bharati. The initiate then performed padapuja, reverently bathing his guru's feet, and together they offered prayers to Goddess Sharadamba. The senior and junior jagadgurus are reverently referred to as Mahasannidhanam and Sannidhanam respectively.

That evening they addressed the devotees. Speaking in chaste Kannada and showing no nervousness or hesitation, Sri Vidhushekara Bharati left his audience spellbound. "From early on, I wished to lead a spiritual life and fulfill a higher purpose. I also had a wish to learn the *shastras* from the jagadguru. When I reverentially placed this request, the jagadguru graced me with his highest blessings and unbounded grace, seeking my progress at all times. Any joy or accomplishment I might have today are solely due to his blessings; and with his blessings, I will carry forth my duties as the math pontiff." The celebrations concluded with a palanquin procession.

Responses and Reactions

Sannidhanam's now former family were the first to accept his new station. "Immediately after the initiation, we noticed a complete change in his demeanor," Krishnapriya recalls. "There was an aura around him. We

could no longer identify him as Venkateshwara Prasada. For us, he had become Sri Sri Vidhushekara Bharati. We felt an overpowering and instantaneous reverence."

On renouncing his birth family, the shishya becomes the child of his guru. One could see the motherly tenderness and pride in the eyes of Sri Swamiji as he followed every move of his successor. "The most important duty of the jagadguru is to choose a shishya," he said. "My guru once told me, 'The biggest test for me was in anointing a successor, and I have passed with flying colors.' I too have to pass this test." He implored devotees to accord full devotion and status to his successor.

The Sringeri jagadgurus have traditionally ensured that equal status and protocol are bestowed upon the new incumbent, without discrimination in seniority. In 1931, during the ceremonial procession for Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha's induction, his guru Sri Chandrashekara Bharati quickly walked ahead and sat in the silver palanquin meant for the successor. Bewildered math officials approached the guru, pleading that he occupy the golden palanquin as per tradition. Directing them to seat the new pontiff, just 14, in the golden palanquin, the acharya replied, "This day's celebrations are for the new jagadguru. Henceforth, Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha is our jagadguru. All honors, protocol and celebrations to the peetham belong to him."

Struck by the young Sannidhanam's erudition and effulgent countenance, devotees applauded him as the most felicitous successor for the peetham. Mahasannidhanam confirmed this, saying, "I wished to name him after my paramaguru, Sri Sri Chandrashekara Bharati. However, it would be inappropriate to address my disciple with the name of my paramaguru. In Sanskrit, *vidhu* is a synonym for *chandra*. Thus, I gave him the monastic name Vidhushekara Bharati, with the belief that in him we will see Chandrashekara Bharati again."

Just as we always need competent doctors and engineers, we also need qualified spiritual leaders. Hinduism, the Sanatana Dharma, is in express need of devout ascetics who can guide people spiritually. Sri Avadhani encourages parents to allow their children to embrace sannyasa: "By detaching from family and in allowing the child to take sannyasa, both the child and parents help establish and strengthen dharma. This sacrifice will lead us towards salvation, which should be the ultimate goal of life."



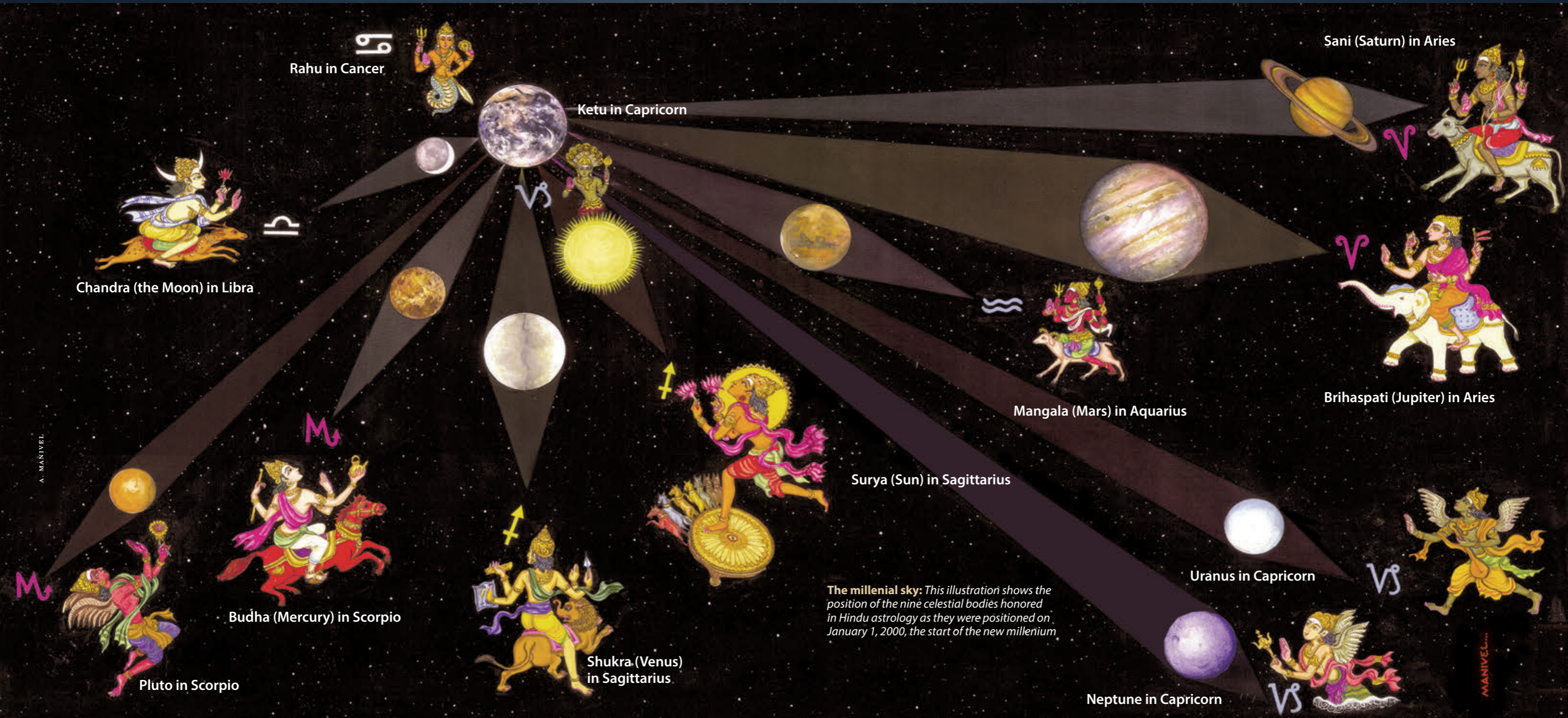
EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

Jyotisha, Hindu Astrology

How the Science of Light Can Help You in Daily Life

By Pandit Vamadeva Shastri

In the Hindu view, the planets are not mere celestial bodies circling the Sun. They are also divine beings—shown here as they were positioned on the first morning of the current millennium. Each is like a prism, conveying subtle energy from the far galaxies, thus impacting man's affairs on Earth according to its unique nature and location in the sky. The ancient science of space and time that understands and maps this influence is called *jyotisha* (literally "science of light") or Hindu astrology. We explore that system of knowledge in this Educational Insight.



The millennial sky: This illustration shows the position of the nine celestial bodies honored in Hindu astrology as they were positioned on January 1, 2000, the start of the new millennium

A. MANIVEL

MANIVEL



It's About Time

AN INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

BELIEVING NOTHING, THE SKEPTIC IS BLIND; BELIEVING EVERYTHING, THE NAIF IS LAME. Somewhere between the two lies the lauded land of viveka, discrimination, which neither doubts every inexplicable phenomenon nor swallows every unexamined statement. In this issue we explore the uncanny Vedic technology of jyotisha, that hoary knowledge, derived from secondary Vedic texts, which embraces both astronomy and astrology. It's about time.

President Ronald Reagan confounded the White House staff and embarrassed aides by having his itinerary and major meetings scheduled in consultation with his wife's astrologer in California. Scoffing staffers counted it pure silliness; others thought it merely impolitic of him, maybe because of the implication that he wasn't totally in charge or that a Christian would so publicly propound such things.

Mr. Reagan is not a lone heretic. Queen Elizabeth I, a Virgo, consulted the stars. Galileo, the Italian mathematician and astronomer, cast charts on the side, as did the German celestial scientist Johannes Kepler. Britain's Princess Diane followed the stars, and many Hollywood stars do the same. Ditto with Carl Jung and American millionaire J.P. Morgan. A 2013 Harris Poll concluded that 29 percent of Americans (and nearly half of 18- to 24-year-olds) believe in or follow astrology. By contrast, 92 percent of the Chinese public think horoscopes are nonsense.

Like so many other things, astrology in the West is about personal things—about me and mine, my spiritual progress, my love life and

business success. These concerns are not absent in the East, but larger concerns dominate. Astrology in India is about auspiciousness, about connections, about sacred timing and being in a flow with the ebb and tide of divine forces.

Astrology is a part of Vedic self-understanding. We look to the stars to see ourselves better, to discover the mysteries that lie all about us and within us. In rita dharma, that heavenly cosmic orderliness, stars are more than massive conglomerates of molecules or fiery furnaces fleeting afar. They are entities, potent presences that affect us despite their distance. There are, of course, many Hindus today who pooh-pooh such notions. "Stuff and nonsense," they will cry, "What thoughtful person can accept that stars, so remote, influence life on Earth?"

But what thoughtful person, asks the astrologer, would deny the powerful tides dragged across our planet by a faraway moon, or gainsay the not-so-subtle solar forces that are the very stuff of life here? "Ah, but go out another few thousand light years and tell us what petty influences persist," our doubter might challenge. The jyotishi (Vedic astrologer), realizing the basic East/West difference in world views, attempts to help the skeptic understand the Hindu perspective. "In Eastern thought, particularly Hinduism, we conceive of all existence—including the stars and planets—not as being 'out there,' but rather 'in

here'—within the consciousness of each one of us. In other words, consciousness encompasses all of creation. The 'outside' and 'inside' are mirror images, and the essential nature of the cosmos is not that of multitudinous distinctions but rather the many-faceted expression of a one unified Reality. Thus we do not follow the mechanistic, externalized approach typical of Western thought."

The astrologer is something of a tribal shaman. Ideally, he or she is the one among us with special insight, with a wider vision that lifts

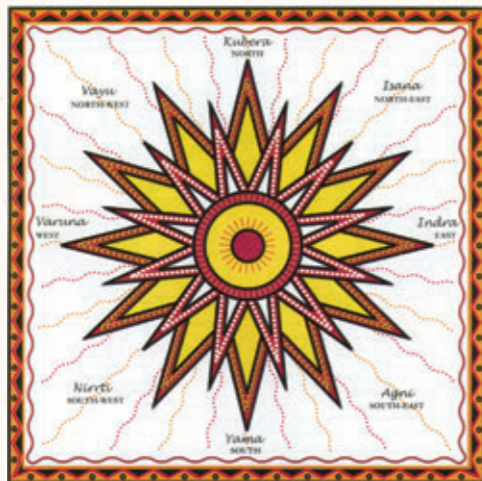
awareness beyond our little world, connecting us to the canopy above, expanding perception beyond the narrow sliver of time in which we live by bringing past lives and actions into the now. You could say that astrologers tell time with a bigger watch.

The genuine astrologer is, in a sense, a time navigator. He teaches that time is not all colorless and neutral, the same in all directions. Time has its eddies, its waxing and waning, its preferential ways—and in that sense is much like the oceans. No ship's captain worth his hardtack would consider the sea a uniform body of water, everywhere equal and indifferent to his passage. No, the sea is alive with idle doldrums and treacherous tempests, and, yes, dangers worthy of anticipation.

To the astrologer, time is like that sea, with moods and forces, some propelling us swiftly forward, others opposing our well-plotted progress. How foolhardy the seaman who keeps his canvas unfurled in a storm or stows his sails when the good winds blow. Time is a kind of moral wind, blowing now this way, now that. As a ship's captain heeds the chart reckoned by his navigator as to course, winds and tides, so our life's journey benefits from periodically examining another chart, our astrologer's appraisal of protean time's patterned flow.

Those who still doubt are members of a hoary club. Yogaswami of Jaffna had the perfect prescription for them, one that sets aside all of the good versus bad, will versus fate kerfuffle: "All times are auspicious for the pure Siva bhaktar."

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Engaging energies: (right) A Balinese Hindu astrologer uses a mobile device to check the compatibility of his brother and a potential spouse who are getting acquainted over tea and pastries; (left) a yantra representing Surya, the Sun



Working with Our Karmic Code

Philosophically, Hindu astrology reflects the law of karma, which includes both free will and an aspect of predetermination, or fate. Predetermination means our present condition is the result of our past actions from previous lives; free will means we shape our future by our present actions—how we respond to the challenges. The birth chart represents a person's karmic code, the samskaras with which he or she is born, imprinted on the subtle or astral body. This code is analogous to the genetic code that outlines the main potentials of the physical body. The birth chart indicates the main potentials of our entire life.

From an astrologer's point of view, the birth chart is the most important document we have in life. Yet, like the genetic code, it is written in a mathematical language that requires decoding by a trained expert, and it calls for careful examination over time to unfold its dynamic secrets. K.N. Rao observed, "A horoscope reflects the allotment of karmas of previous lives. We are all getting the results of our karma, but not all of our karma."

According to the Vedas, when a soul takes birth, it descends

through the heavens and the atmosphere before reaching Earth, taking on heavier sheaths of material density. It can only take birth in the physical plane at a time karmically in accord with its nature and destiny. The birth chart represents the seed pattern of its life; how it develops depends upon environment as well.

Sam Geppi offers: "This karmic energy points to the lessons that need to be learned in that lifetime. For example, a person who needs to work through anger problems in this lifetime will inherit a body, mind and upbringing that will challenge them to confront their anger and hopefully transcend it. In the case of anger, the element of fire will likely predominate. An astrological chart reveals this. It is a portrait of the soul's karma and the pattern of illusion in which we may become trapped.... This is maya, the illusion that we are merely an acting, mind/body experience."

Chakrapani D. Ullal, widely honored as the father of Vedic astrology in the West, observed, "Astrology is a science of indications only, it is not fatalistic. Therefore, people should have the idea that they have the power, if they want to, to bring amendments

and changes, to modify the influence by their effort and their willingness. When I give a reading, I say, 'By using the willpower, by gaining the grace of God or guru, we can change everything.' Otherwise, people misunderstand astrology by thinking 'Oh, it is in the stars.' It is in the stars only for those people who do not want to take responsibility for their life. Jyotisha is a science of self-revelation. Through jyotisha, one begins to understand one's own nature; and one of the fundamental rules of spirituality is self-acceptance. Jyotisha tells you what you really are, and that understanding enables a person to accept. That moment of acceptance is the beginning of spirituality. As long as we don't accept the outer nature, we cannot transcend to the inner nature."

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami advised: "When unfavorable times arise which have to be lived through (as they all too frequently do), we do not carp or cringe, but look at these as most excellent periods for meditation and sadhana rather than worldly activities. Just the reverse for the positive periods. Spiritual progress can be

made during both periods. Both negative and positive times are, in fact, positive when used wisely. A competent jyotisha shastri is of help in forecasting the future as to when times will come along when advancements can be made. A positive mental attitude should be held during all the ups and downs that are predicted to happen. Be as the traveler in a 747 jet, flying high over the cities, rather than a pedestrian wandering the streets below."



A. MANIVEL

Cosmic Consciousness

ASTROLOGY IS THE SCIENCE OF FATHOMING THE INFLUENCE of the sun, moon, planets and stars upon living creatures. In Sanskrit it is called *jyotisha*, which means the "science of light"—specifically, "Vedanga Jyotisha," the astrological limb of the *Vedas*, said to be the very eye of the *Vedas*.

Jyotisha is a system of understanding how our lives and our karmas relate to the movements of the cosmos, which is cognized as a single greater organism. Under jyotisha is included astronomy, meteorology and forms of divination, including palmistry, the reading of omens, *svara* (reading the breath) and various oracles.

Like yoga, jyotisha is a super science that links us with the cosmic intelligence behind nature. Its first message is that we are one with the Universal Being. New discoveries in quantum physics demonstrate the interrelatedness of the universe, showing subtle levels of immediate interaction even at great distances of time and space. Jyotisha is an integral aspect of the traditional Vedic sciences, along with ayurveda, vastu and yoga, all of which are usually used together.

How can the stars and planets influence events on Earth? Obviously the Sun is the basis of all life. According to the *Vedas*, it also projects a force of intelligence and spirituality. The Moon is important to all creatures and governs the fertility cycles of animals. In the Vedic system it rules the emotional nature. It is well known that the large magnetic and gravitational fields of the planets affect the Earth physically. That they would have subtler influences as well is not illogical.

Astrology is common in one form or another in all cultures, though in India it has had the widest and freest development, from the most ancient period to the present day. Ancient Greece and Rome used astrology extensively, as did Europe to the eighteenth century, even though it was often banned by the church. We could say that the type of astrology used by a culture reflects its understanding of the universe, particularly the subtle and spiritual influences guiding our lives. Curiously, modern cultures continue to employ astrology even



when its validity is questioned by the scientific community. The ever-popular sun signs in newspapers reveal this undying interest.

Jyotisha remains an important facet of Hindu spiritual, religious and social practice, not only in India but worldwide, throughout the Hindu diaspora. It is widely used by Hindus, from common villagers to the sophisticated urban elite. It is an important component of temple worship, pilgrimages and yoga practices. It is avidly used for guiding family life, business and career, physical health and psychological well being. Jyotisha is famously employed by politicians to aid them in winning elections.

Hindus follow a special sacred yearly astrological calendar, called *panchangam*, for the right timing of all actions. India has many notable astrological and planetary temples, and new ones are coming up as astrology grows once more in popularity. Astrological icons are found in Hindu temples of all types. In South Indian temples, an altar of astrological Deities, called the *nava-grahas* ("nine planets"), is placed in the corner of the central courtyard. After doing the clockwise perambulation around the Deity sanctum, devotees perform a second walk around the planetary Deities' shrine.

Many yogis and sages have been astrologers or written on astrology. This includes modern figures like Sri Aurobindo, Ganapati Muni, Paramahansa Yogananda and his guru Sri Yukteswar, Sivananda Murty, Swami Dayananda (Arsha Vidya Gurukulam) and historic figures like Madhva, Bhishma, Vashishta, Parashara, Bhrigu and others.

Newborns are traditionally named based on their jyotisha charts

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 Honoring the planets: (clockwise from right): A chamber in an Andhra Pradesh temple enshrining the nine planets in granite, with Siva behind in the form of Dakshinamurti; an artistic rendering of Earth circled by the celestial bodies of astrology; a yantra of the Mahamrityunjaya mantra

Remedial Measures

Jyotisha does not leave us helpless before the onslaughts of karma. It provides practical ways of dealing with them. Sadhana invariably helps neutralize the effects of a "bad chart." Ultimately, in fact, there is no such thing. A chart that does not portend worldly benefits, such as wealth or marriage, is likely to be good spiritually. "Afflictions" to home, family, marriage and money are often necessary for a person to renounce the world and devote himself to spiritual practices. Afflictions in the area of health can benefit from spiritual practices like mantra japa. While one career may not be favorable for success, another may be. Many remedial



measures can help with karmic obstacles, including penance, pilgrimage, bhakti, praying for divine intervention, mantras and yantras, performing rituals, seva and charity. Planetary effects can be softened through special disciplines such as feeding crows (Saturn) or planting trees (Jupiter). Remedial measures are routinely recommended in Vedic, yogic, tantric and ayurvedic texts.

The main remedies are ritual and mantra. Propitiating the planets is an integral part of all Hindu rites. Many temples, particularly in

the South of India, have a shrine with murtis of all nine planets (*nava-graha*). You can worship them and even employ temple priests to perform special planetary pujas for you.



DEVALAYAM RAMIREDDY, Y. (WIKIMEDIACOMMONS)

Each planet also has a name mantra (e.g., Om Sum Suryaya Namah for the Sun) and a set of special names, 108 or 1,008, that are chanted to propitiate it. Each planet has a Vedic verse and a Puranic verse used in its worship. Chants to the planets can be done singly or in combination (depending upon the recommendation of one's teacher) while meditating on a yantra and an image of the Deity or related Deities. Scriptural verses to the Deities can also be recited. For example, Vaishnavas prescribe the Santana Gopala Stotra, to Krishna, for couples whose charts are unfavorable for bearing children. The Mahamrityunjaya Mantra, to Lord Siva, is used to counter the influences of Mars and Saturn.

Hindus commonly wear gemstones to balance negative and promote positive influences. Some but not all astrologers prescribe gemstones. Mantras and rituals are preferable but require

more time on the part of the person. Each planet has a particular gemstone: ruby for the Sun, pearl for the Moon, red coral for Mars, emerald for Mercury, etc. High quality gemstones can be expensive. Less costly substitutes, though less effective, are allowed. Gemstones should be chosen with care and preferably with a good astrologer's approval. They should be properly energized with mantras and rituals to function in the best possible manner.

Having said all that, sometimes it is better to try to learn from difficult karmas rather than trying to avoid or change them through remedial measures. We cannot buy off the planets or our karma merely by putting on expensive gems or paying someone else to take care of our life. Humility and devotion should be the basis of all remedial measures, along with a willingness to work on ourselves. Some things just can't be changed or avoided.



which provide optional syllables, based on the nakshatra, to begin the child's name. Astrological concepts are pervasive in the organization of the calendar and holidays, as well as in areas of life such as the timing of marriage, opening a new business or moving into a new home. Hindu priests and teachers are routinely trained in astrology, among other Vedic disciplines. Introduced as an elective study at the university level in India in 2003, Vedic astrology manages to retain a position among the sciences in modern India. There is a movement in progress to establish a national Vedic university to teach astrology together with the study of tantra, mantra and yoga. All this despite complaints by some scientists.

From Kerala in the South to the Himalayas in the North, there is an astounding variety of profound astrological approaches, systems and techniques, including different ways of designing the birth chart.

A Mystical Science

How did the ancient Hindu rishis and yogis arrive at the knowledge of astrology? By the same means that all the other Vedic and yogic systems of knowledge arose, and by which they are studied today. Those methods include meditation and samadhi, starting with *dharana* or *samyama*, on the Sun, Moon, planets and stars. Another means is communion with planetary Deities, who can speak to us and disclose their nature and influences. Another is reason-based thinking in which we draw connections between phenomena at cosmic and individual levels. Finally, centuries of experience, study and communication among astrologers have helped turn intuition into science.

Intuition continues to play a key role. Chakrapani explained, "A dedicated Vedic astrologer will naturally develop a powerful sense of intuition and be able to connect with divine sources of guidance, including devas, gurus and advanced souls. This is one of the fruits of an astrological practice rooted in meditation and devotion, going far beyond what can be discovered through mere astrological techniques and calculations. As the astrologer develops vak shakti, the power of speech, his statements can become infallible."

Eighteen traditional systems (siddhantas) are mentioned in Vedic astrology, some bearing the names of the greatest sages of Hinduism. Unfortunately, none of their texts has survived intact. Five of the eighteen were, however, summarized by Varaha Mihira—perhaps the greatest astrologer of classical India—in his *Pancha Siddhantika*, namely, Pitamaha (or Bhishma), Vashishta, Paulisha, Romaka and Surya. Of these, only the Surya Siddhanta has survived, and that in a later form. In addition, we have the work of Rishi Parashara, which has endured in expanded form as the *Brihat Parashara Hora Shastra*.

That is the main text of Vedic astrology used today, containing all the essential features of the system. Many South Indian astrologers, however, use the *Brihat Jataka* and *Brihat Samhita* of Varaha Mihira, which are similar to Parashara's overall indications.

Antiquity

Evidence indicates that jyotisha goes back to ancient times. The Kali Yuga calendar, which begins in 3100 bce, is well known. Greeks in the fourth century bce wrote of an Indian calendar relative to ancient king lists with a beginning date of 6700 bce (mentioned by Megasthenes in his *Indika*). The nakshatras (asterisms) are mentioned in the *Rig Veda* and other Vedic texts, with a nakshatra Sukta noted in the *Taittiriya Brahmana* (I.1.2). Nakshatra positions relative to equinox and solstice points aid in the dating of Vedic texts. The *Atharva Veda* (XIX.7) contains a full listing of the nakshatras, starting with Kritika as the point of the vernal equinox and the solstice in Magha nakshatra, or early Leo, providing a date of around 2000 bce. There are references of equinoxes in Rohini (late Taurus, ca. 3000 bce), Mri-gashira (Orion/Gemini ca. 4000 bce), and yet earlier.

The *Rig Veda* (I.164.48) refers to a twelvefold wheel of heaven with 360 spokes, showing that a zodiac of 360 degrees was well known in Vedic times. In verse I.155.6, Lord Vishnu is said to have four times ninety, or 360, names, suggesting a divine name for each degree of the zodiac. The *Satapatha Brahmana* (X.5.45) refers to a 720-fold zodiac divided by *upa-nakshatras*, or sub-asterisms, showing a detailed mathematical observation of the heavens.

Rahu and Ketu, the lunar nodes that foreshadow eclipses, are also mentioned in Vedic texts. The planets are mentioned by group or individually. For example, in *Aitareya Brahmana* XIII.10, we find reference to the birth of Venus (Bhrigu) and Jupiter (Brihaspati), and their relation to the two main rishi families, the Bhrigus and Angirasas, showing a planetary connection with the sages.

A Comparison with Western Astrology

Like its Western (or Hellenistic) counterpart, jyotisha employs a system of planets, signs, houses and aspects. However, it relies on the sidereal zodiac for its calculations, which differs from the tropical zodiac used in Western astrology, in that an *ayanamsa* adjustment is made for the gradual precession of the vernal equinox. This puts Hindu astrological calculations in line with the fixed stars and removes it from the criticism of modern astronomy that astrological signs are no longer astronomically accurate. The main *ayanamsa* currently used is around 24 degrees less than positions in the tropical zodiac, causing most planetary positions to go back one sign from the Western to the



MUSEUMS RAJASTHAN



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India's star gazers: (above) The 18th-century Jantar Mantar Observatory in Jaipur, India; (right) visitors view an instrument used to record the azimuth of celestial bodies, one of the facility's 19 main astronomical instruments. This ranks among the world's most impressive collections of pre-telescopic masonry instruments and still functions perfectly; (below) a mandala representing the navagrahas, "nine planets."

Choosing & Working with a Jyotisha Shastri

Go to astrologers known to have good reputations for their interpretations, predictions and spiritual insight, and who are recommended by people you know and respect, particularly in the Hindu and yoga communities. An astrologer should follow a strict ethical regimen in the pursuit of dharma. He should begin and end his work with mantra, meditation or worship and live and work in a sanctified environment. He must maintain a good sense of humor and humility and give counseling that is beneficial, not harmful to the client, and not fatalistic in nature.

Beware of those who claim to give quick, fantastic and infallible predictions, particularly without any detailed examination of your

chart, or who declare that they can magically solve your problems through mantras done by them, gems they sell to you or rituals they perform for you, particularly if these are expensive and are done at a distance.

It is best to look upon an astrologer like a counselor, doctor or therapist. We don't expect one session to be enough. An astrologer may need an hour or more to examine the birth chart before even seeing a client. Initial readings with the individual may take over an hour and require several follow-up sessions. Focusing on particular time periods or specific issues may require additional research and analysis. It is best to choose an astrologer you can

interact with on a regular basis.

The competent astrologer is not a psychic with a crystal ball. Time, effort and examination of a number of factors are needed to reach conclusions as to what is likely to happen to you or what you should do in any given area. Astrological counseling must have an element of spirituality and should direct us to higher goals in life, not simply encourage or direct the fulfillment of worldly desires.

Once you have found a good astrologer, it is best to maintain an ongoing relationship with him, like a close friend or advisor. Like a loving mother, father, guru or wise friend, a good astrologer



can help navigate life's challenges. The right use of jyotisha alleviates what is perhaps the greatest fear for human beings—uncertainty and anxiety about the future. It helps us confidently navigate through the confusing waves of prarabdha karma, remaining aware of our outer destiny and our timeless inner Self as well.

Most Vedic astrologers, particularly in the West, charge for their work, which is the basis of their livelihood, and they deserve comparable compensation as for any professional consultant. Take care to compensate the astrologer appropriately. Without the proper dakshina or offering, advice given may not prove effective.



Hindu chart. This naturally results in a very different reading. It can be confusing for those accustomed to their Western chart, particularly for the Sun sign, so emphasized in Western astrology. An Aries in Western astrology might be a Pisces according to jyotisha.

An additional 27-fold division of the zodiac by nakshatras is used in jyotisha. Personality traits are read more through the nakshatra of the Moon (birth star) than by the Sun sign. The birth star is used for naming a person, for determining optimum timing of rituals, and for astrological forecasting. Nakshatra positions of planets are examined in the birth chart as well.

Jyotisha rests upon a complex system of calculations that takes into consideration a massive amount of data about planetary and stellar influences, including the mathematical and geometrical relationships between heavenly bodies. A *jyotishi* must be able to produce the rationale behind his determinations; he cannot rely on speculation or intuition alone. Traditional Hindu astrology does not usually use the newly discovered outer planets (Uranus and Neptune) or Pluto; but it affords special importance to Rahu and Ketu, the lunar nodes, which reflect subtle influences.

Jyotisha includes nuanced sub-systems of interpretation and prediction, including numerous divisional charts, several systems of *dashas*, or planetary periods, and other factors like *ashtakavarga* and *muhurta*. It determines signs, houses and planetary aspects differently than Western astrology and has a sophisticated system of yogas, or planetary combinations.

The Indian system is well known for its understanding of longer cosmic cycles, or yugas. It begins with sixty-year cycles reflecting the movements of Jupiter and Saturn, extends to 3,600-year cycles, and ultimately dates the universe at billions of billions of years. As there are several levels of these cycles, there is still some debate on exactly where we stand in all of these presently.

Vedic Astrology Today

With the availability of computers to streamline calculations and the many new books coming out, jyotisha is enjoying a renaissance and expansion that is likely to continue for decades. Dr. BV Raman was the main architect of the revival of jyotisha in modern India in the twentieth century, bringing the ancient science into a modern English medium. He was instrumental in its development in the West as well, taking several important trips to the US and inspiring a new generation of jyotishis there. Dr. Raman was the founder

of *The Astrological Magazine* and the Indian Council of Astrological Sciences. His son and daughter, Niranjan Bapu and Gayatri Vasudev, continue in his work.

India has many important astrological organizations. The Indian Council of Astrological Sciences (ICAS) holds regular classes in major cities throughout the country. The Institute of Astrology, founded by K.N. Rao at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in New Delhi, offers a sophisticated course to train competent astrologers. Vaughn Paul Manley, who studied there, writes: "Astrology may still have a ways to go in order to become recognized as a valid science and academic subject. But, without a doubt, K.N. Rao and the faculty and students of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan are making a significant contribution towards this end. Arguably his school has produced the finest replicable, scientific research on astrology today. It is setting an example for other institutions by teaching astrology with a high degree of academic excellence."

In recent decades Vedic astrology has gone global, along with yoga, Vedanta, vastu and ayurveda. Many non-Hindus and Western Hindus are taking up the science and using it in a regular manner to improve their lives. Hindu-based groups that have promoted it include the TM movement, the Krishna movement (ISKCON), Sivana, Self Realization Fellowship (SRF), Arsha Vidya Gurukulam and many others. Jyotisha services are now common in yoga centers and ashrams. Various Hindu/Vedic astrology organizations have arisen, including the Council of Vedic Astrology (CVA), the American College of Vedic Astrology (ACVA) and the British Association of Vedic Astrology (BAVA). Jyotisha is highly popular in Russia, perhaps even more so than in the US. Many ayurvedic groups include it in their curriculum.

Most traditional jyotisha texts were composed in a medieval Hindu society. Vocations and other aspects of life have evolved radically since that time. For dealing with modern society, planetary influences must be reinterpreted accordingly. Hindu astrologers today are looking at how modern inclinations and professions can be viewed through the chart.

Chakrapani observed, "Western Vedic astrologers have done a lot for the advancement of Vedic astrology in recent years, through books, trainings, consultations and conferences. They have put Vedic astrology into an understandable, contemporary English idiom. They have made Vedic astrology in the West a respected practice and branch of knowledge. The science has gained more respect in India."

just as of medicine, but some can be expensive, such as certain gemstones and elaborate rituals. While these may be helpful, some astrologers intimidate the client into feeling they must have these expensive measures or their lives will be ruined. This is not unlike a doctor who recommends medical cures that are burdensome to his patient.

In India there are so-called tantric guides who utilize astrology and other occult and spiritual practices. Some are genuine and provide good advice. But there are charlatans as well, who advertise a kind of cure-all approach to human problems, including disease, infertility, lack of a proper marriage partner and career difficulties. Their promises extend even to fabulous wealth, fame or power—all for a certain price. Some do not actually charge for their readings, but offer a list of expensive



Misuse of Astrology

Jyotisha is a sacred science of reading our karma, which makes it powerful and potentially intimidating. We would all like to improve our karma, promote the fulfillment of our desires and remove life's difficulties. Most people go to astrologers primarily hoping for this, not necessarily seeking deeper spiritual and karmic guidance, which is what a good astrologer can best provide. Unfortunately, there are astrologers who, understanding this vulnerability, take advantage of people, charging large fees for consultations and recommendations.

One of the most controversial areas of Vedic astrology is remedial measures. Such measures are an integral part of the system,



S. RAJAM

Astrology for You

HERE ARE FIVE PRIMARY USES OF JYOTISHA, which relate to the main goals of human life: 1) kama: family and relationship issues such as marriage compatibility, timing of children and domestic happiness; 2) artha: help with finances, business and investments; 3) dharma: determination of career and vocation; 4) moksha: guidance in spiritual life and for cosmic and self-knowledge; and 5) arogya: physical and mental health, which is the foundation of the first four.

In addition, there are four main applications: 1) Hora or jataka examines individual birth charts. This is the main approach that we consider for personal potentials and well-being. 2) Mundane astrology examines the charts of nations and political leaders to predict social and political events. It is also used to predict weather and earthquakes. 3) Prashna ("question") astrology addresses specific questions—at both individual and collective levels. 4) Muhurta ("moment") chooses favorable times for all types of action, mundane and spiritual, individual or collective. Hindu holy days, for example, are determined by calculations based on muhurta as recorded in the Hindu calendar (panchangam).

How Might I Benefit from Jyotisha?

Astrology can be of tremendous benefit. It clarifies our nature, destiny and karma, revealing our svadharma ("own" or "unique path"), so that we know how to pursue our life's highest purpose. It helps us deal with the limitations of destiny that are present in every life. It shows us how to optimize our hidden potentials. It gives us the key to right timing of actions. And it helps us understand the fundamental laws and patterns of the universe.

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Cosmic Divinities: (left) Lord Surya, the Deity of the Sun, seated on a throne with the mudra of blessing; (below left) a yantra representing Saturn

astrologer seeking to avoid karmic responsibility in life, which is the opposite of what astrology is meant to teach us, then we can easily fall prey to misleading schemes.

Astrology should be part of a spiritual path of controlling the mind and reducing desire, a way of self-knowledge, not a means of ego enhancement for either the astrologer or the client. Then it can work magic—the magic of higher consciousness, not the magic of quick worldly benefits.

Chakrapani offers this advice: "When a person values astrology not just as a profession, but as a knowledge, as a wisdom, as a means to understand one's growth, then that knowledge is supported by the devotion—the feelings, the faith you have in your own self, as well as in the Deity or the spirit which may guide oneself. And when you have that kind of a faith, the inspiration within gives you judgment, rather than the mechanical interpretation of a chart, which anybody can learn by studying textbooks."

remedial measures. Often the rituals they recommend are done at a distance, without the person being there, which is usually recommended for successful rituals. Astrologers who are improperly or inadequately trained may simply give bad advice, which can have a negative impact on the lives of their clients, much like a wrong diagnosis and treatment in medicine. Some, particularly new astrologers, may put too much confidence on mechanical techniques of chart readings and make dire predictions based upon these without any real track record in the field.

Vedic astrology is a genuine profession to follow, but only if applied with continual deep study and as a spiritual practice. It cannot be approached merely as a job and should not be taken up as a lucrative, influential or powerful career.

Yet, we cannot always blame the astrologer. If we approach an



How Accurate Is It?

Jyotisha deals with probability, as the factors that determine karma are very complex, both individual and collective, of present and past lives. In this respect it presents a forecast, something like a weather forecast, which contains variables, with some things quite likely and others only possibilities. The planets provide indications and energies that we can become aware of and use in a more positive manner. The stars themselves do not compel us to act, but reflect the subtle forces through which our actions must proceed. We are not controlled by the stars. Rather, they are a reflection of ourselves and our place in the cosmos. To be really accurate, an astrologer requires an extensive analysis of various factors. This can extend into many hours and multiple readings. For this reason, most astrology aims only at macro-managing the chart. Micro-managing can only be done with charts that are given considerable time and effort.

Should a Vedic Astrologer Be a Hindu?

This question was asked at the 1992 International Symposium on Vedic Astrology. Most of the astrologers interviewed by HINDUISM TODAY said yes. Dr. B. Sureshwara of Chicago answered rhetorically, "Should a Catholic priest be a Christian?" Chakrapani added, "If he is not Hindu, embedded in the tradition, he will not really understand Hindu astrology. Every aspect of it is interconnected with the Hindu religion." Who then would qualify as a Hindu? Sureshwara proposed, "anyone who believes as a Hindu," and Chakrapani, "anyone who sincerely loves Hinduism."

What Is the Nature of a Reading?

Most people go to astrologers for an examination of their birth chart. This can be looked at for a general life examination; or specific domains of life, like career or health, can be examined within it. Along with the birth chart, the Vedic astrologer will explore various divisional (*amsha*) charts, particularly the *navamsha*, nakshatra positions, and planetary periods (*dashas* and *bhuktis*), and perhaps annual charts or solar returns.

Hindu astrology is as much concerned with helping us improve our karma as with telling us what our destiny is likely to be. It is a kind

of "karmic management" program to help us optimize our karma. It is not a "karmic fatalism" under which we are consigned to passively accept bad circumstances in life. To use it in a deterministic manner is to misuse it. By doing so, we fail to benefit from its real power, which is to help us gain mastery over our lives and not be the victims of fluctuating outer events. Astrology is the ultimate science of time management, an aid in dealing with life's many choices.

Chakrapani explains, "By looking at the horoscope and how the planets demonstrate dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth), kama (pleasure) and moksha (liberation), one gains insight into the individual's basic instincts and can suggest the best lifestyle and spiritual regimen (*sadhana*) for that individual. The three gunas—sattva (calmness), rajas (action) and tamas (inertia)—coexist in a varying degree of dominance, also evident from the chart. The interplay of the gunas determines the nature of all our thoughts, feelings and actions, hence *sadhana* is recommended according to the predominant guna. Hatha yoga and meditation for those of sattvic nature, devotion for the rajasic person and selfless religious service for the tamasic."

Chakrapani continues, "Sometimes the advice just lets people cope better with life. Sometimes it is just the knowledge of karma and reincarnation implicit in Vedic astrology which, especially for the Westerner, creates a spiritual perspective on life. It helps the individual take responsibility for the circumstances in which he finds himself and forego resentment at the seeming misfortunes indicated in the chart—which is, after all, a mere messenger of one's karma and, in fact, an opportunity for personal growth."

What Information Should I Expect to Acquire?

A reading of your natal chart should yield an understanding of trends and periods of your life, with favorable times for action. It should provide a clarification of your karma in all the main fields of life. It may

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Star power: (right) A guide introduces a centuries-old super accurate sundial to students at the Jaipur Observatory, explaining how astronomy and astrology go hand in hand; (below left) a yantra representing Venus

Fields of Application

There are various areas of specialty in the world of jyotisha. Here we present the insights of experienced practitioners of Vedic astrology on five fields of application.

Parenting by Dharma, by Dennis Flaherty

Firstly, an astrologer can identify for devout parents those times for conception more divinely ordained than others to bring an evolved and high-minded soul into their family. Health of their newborn is then naturally the parents' foremost concern. The child's chart will indicate areas of constitutional weakness and potential illness. In some cases *balarishta* yogas—negative karmas of the past with the potential to cut this life short—are seen. In all cases, including extreme ones, remedial measures are effective, especially the parents' prayers. This is not just wishful thinking. I have personally seen miracles.



The astrologer can suggest appropriate education based on the child's inclinations for profession. Spiritual inclinations may be seen and encouraged. Appropriate disciplines can be recommended. For example, if the child has a strongly placed Saturn, verbal admonishment can bring about humbling results. If Mars is strong, physical chores constructively engage the child's nature, while corporal punishment will negatively engage the Martian nature, further fueling *samskaras* of anger and potential violence. What is good for one child is not good for another.

Planning a Stellar Career, by William Levacy

I have found three special places that identify career activity. The first house or ascendant and its ruling planet give big clues. The sixth house, that of service, has more to say about those "bread-and-butter" jobs that make us money. The tenth house, of karma or action, tells us about career or life purpose. Vedic astrology can give clues to your karma in this life. It can tell you where your dreams lie and



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how you might make the most money. From that point forward, you can set a vision for your future and develop the competence to deploy those dreams completely, correctly and in a timely manner.

Right Timing, by Christina Collins-Hill

Electional astrology (*muhurta*, "moment," in Sanskrit) selects a time for an action to commence by searching for positive future planetary placements. By doing this, we can relieve or correct difficult conditions in the natal chart which cause impediments to a desired objective. Spiritual *muhurta* includes timings for initiation, weddings, name-giving, etc. Material *muhurta* covers matters of education, business, surgery, travel, law, etc.

The Great Cycles of Life, by Edith Hathaway

A *dasa* is a cycle or period of time. In Vedic astrology there are 55 different *dasha* systems, of which the *Vimsottari* is most used. *Vimsottari* (literally 120) refers to man's ideal 120-year lifespan, with various cycles, subcycles and sub-sub-cycles within it. These *dashas* are indicators of when the karma-phala, fruits of karma from

past lives, will unfold. The sequence of the *dashas* is the same for everyone, but the starting point varies according to the individual chart, specifically the Moon's *nakshatra*. The duration of the *mahadashas*, or major cycles are: Sun, 6 years; Moon 10 years; Mars 7; Rahu 18; Jupiter 16; Saturn 19; Mercury 17; Ketu 7; and Venus 20. *Dashas* unfold differently for each person, depending upon the birth chart.

Astrology for Health, by Vamadeva Shastri

Medical astrology aims at assessing our health potential, our likely diseases, their possible cure and our lifespan, as well as potential emotional and mental problems. This system is intimately connected with *ayurveda*, the Vedic medicine. All of us eventually get sick and die, so every chart has negative health potentials—a disturbing fact when dealing with those close to us. Proper analysis can show us when a person is likely to get sick and their potential for recovery. By providing early warning of impending negative planetary periods for our health, astrology gives us time to take precautions and offers methods to minimize the negative effects.



include remedial measures to follow, such as gems, mantras, yajnas and pujas. A good astrologer can easily see important trends and can sometimes predict specific events, but even the best will only be 80 percent correct in predictions, and may go wrong completely if the birth time is incorrect. Knowing that given birth times are not necessarily accurate, he will ask questions of the client to see if the events in the person's life agree with their chart as calculated by the given date. Sometimes a change or "rectification" of a few minutes in the birth time will yield a much more accurate chart. Follow-up consultations should include a review of previous readings, their indications and predictions and any remedial measures suggested, along with appropriate adjustments. Follow-up readings may address changes in planetary periods, transits or annual chart indications, along with the client's questions and concerns.

What Can I Do to Get Started with Astrology?

1) First, find a suitable astrologer and have your birth chart read. He or she will help you learn about your chart so you can understand its various elements, including your ascendant, Moon sign, Sun sign, important yogas, and the ruling planets. 2) Some devotees find it helpful to learn the birth charts of their family members as well. 3) It is informative to be aware of your nakshatra, its name, Deity, ruling planet and indications. 4) Learn and celebrate your *tithi pravesh*, or Vedic lunar birthday. 5) Learn about remedial measures, particularly mantras to the planets and the place of planets in temple worship. 6) You may wish to incorporate jyotisha japa along with your regular japa.

Once I Have My Interpreted Chart, How Do I Use It?

1) Most importantly, you can use this knowledge to understand and mold your character, as you work with your emotional and intellectual inclinations, strengths and weaknesses. 2) Through the years, you can observe and anticipate the ebbs and changes as you go through your planetary periods. 3) You may find it helpful to consult your shastri when planning major events, changes or facing important life issues. Knowing when influences will prevail, you can plan accordingly in working through your karmas. 4) Use the information you have gained when making long- and short-term plans and decisions.

In a Nutshell

In need, jyotisha is an intricate, complicated system of knowledge, requiring a good grasp of astronomy, astrology and human nature. People can and do spend lifetimes exploring its vastness. But here is a super-simple summary.

Vedic astrology is based on mathematical divisions of the zodiac and defined relationships between planetary locations. The zodiac is a narrow band across the sky through which the sun, moon and planets travel, expressing various influences, both physical and subtle. The main zodiac division used is that of twelve signs, or rasis, of 30 degrees each, but other divisional charts are used as well.

The Earth rotates at about one sign every two hours, causing the signs and planets in them to rise in the east and set in the west. The point of the sign rising in the east forms the cusp of the first house (bhava). This is the ascendant, rising sign or lagna, which determines the orientation of the chart as a whole. The sign ahead of the rising sign becomes the second house, with the rest of the houses following



How Is the Panchangam Best Used?

1) Acquire a panchangam for your area and observe the auspicious days and times it indicates. I recommend the detailed *Panchangam* by Himalayan Academy, produced annually for any time zone. It has a good introduction explaining its use. 2) Use the panchangam to choose auspicious days and times to begin activities and projects, such as weddings, new ventures or entering a new home. Many festival days are ideal for special events.

What Other Ways Can I Use Jyotisha?

1) Those who have a shastri to consult (or are well versed in the science themselves), may use jyotisha to help in selecting employees, associates, business partners, etc. 2) Baby names are often chosen according to astrological factors. 3) One of the main uses is for marriage. Traditional families will always consult a shastri to check compatibility between potential spouses, and between their families. 4) Jyotisha can, in many ways, grant a deeper, more appreciative, understanding of other people and thus improve relationships.

How Can I Use this Wisdom to Guide My Children?

1) The knowledge revealed in the child's natal chart will help you understand and confidently work with his or her nature and development. 2) It will enable you to competently guide the child through the various periods indicated in the chart. 3) Applied at a deeper level, jyotisha can help you cognize how your nature, as a parent, impacts the child. All this gives patience and stability. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami observed: "For raising offspring, a forecast can be of the utmost help. A baby predicted to have a fiery temper should be raised to always be kind and considerate of others' feelings, taught to never argue with others. Of course, good examples must be set early on by parents. This will soften the inclination toward temper.

.....
Planets and the zodiac: (right) The nine heavenly bodies that form the heart of jyotisha. Each planet is regarded as a devata, or planetary Deity and cosmic power, as shown in this artwork, each depicted with his animal vahana, or vehicle. (below) The twelve zodiac divisions shown circling the Earth, each with its color and symbolic depiction.



S. RAJAM

in sequence.

Each house rules over specific domains of human life (see page 53). Mapping the specific houses, their signs and the planetary positions within them is the foundation of Vedic astrological interpretations. To these fundamentals many other calculations can be added.

William Levacy summarizes in *Beneath a Vedic Sky*: "The astrologer's role is to match the patterns in the birth chart with patterns in the heavens to understand the nature of that person's life. The astrologer consults the records in the ancient texts, much of which is memorized, and then analyzes, synthesizes and draws a conclusion about the likely events at hand. The correctness of the reading is directly proportional to the experience and spiritual advancement of the astrologer, as well as to the recipient's desire and receptivity to having their chart read clearly."

Planet	Devata	Adhidevata	Pratyadhivevata	Vahana
Sun	Surya	Agni	Siva	Horse
Moon	Chandra	Apas/Soma	Parvati	Deer
Mars	Mangala	Bhumi	Skanda	Lion
Mercury	Budha	Vishnu	Narayana	Parrot
Jupiter	Brihaspati	Indra	Brahman	Goat
Venus	Shukra	Indrani	Indra	Elephant
Saturn	Shani	Yama	Prajapati	Crow
Rahu	Rahu	Durga	Naga	Tiger
Ketu	Ketu	Chitragupta	Brahman	Bird

Planets: There are three levels of planetary Deities. The Devata represents the planet itself as a Divine power. The Adhidevata represents the over-ruling cosmic power beyond the planet. The Pratyadhi-Devata represents the aspect of Ishvara behind the planet.



LEFT: TIMESSQUAREALLIANCE; RIGHT: IFTIMES.CO.IN

Breathtaking: (far left) Thousands gather in New York City's Times Square for a full day of yoga classes and celebration of inner peace; (above) Prime Minister Narendra Modi leads the Yoga Day in New Delhi, attended by 35,000 practitioners from 100 nations

YOGA

It's Official: International Yoga Day

Millions take to their yoga mats as the United Nations names June 21, the summer solstice, as the annual global celebration of India's science of yoga

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGING. Hardly a century ago yoga was an arcane discipline for the few, dismissed as a world-negating practice not helpful in "real life"—a term which then meant paying your mortgage and finding your soul mate. That was then; this is now. On December 11, 2014, in a proposal endorsed by a record 177 of its 193 members, the United Nations General Assembly adopted June 21 as an annual International Day of Yoga.

In America alone there are now over 75,000 yoga teachers, and the business of yoga has grown to a staggering \$20 billion a year. Ironically, a yoga class has become one place to look seriously for a kindly, disciplined and forward-thinking spouse.

Yoga's public expression soared on June 21, 2015, as millions of practitioners in nearly every nation gathered to stretch, breathe, let go and find oneness within. In New Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sat humbly on a green yoga mat to lead 35,000 people—including citizens, cabinet members and foreign diplomats from 100 countries—in a massive 35-minute yoga class that earned a

Guinness World Record (a national obsession in India).

"We are not only celebrating a day, but we are training the human mind to begin a new era of peace and harmony," Modi told participants. "This is a program for the benefit of mankind, for a tension-free world and to spread the message of harmony. It is not about exercise, but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and nature."

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the Yoga Day participants worldwide. He recalled that he tried his first yoga asana—the tree pose—during a visit to India earlier this year, sharing that once he regained his balance he "began to feel a certain peace of mind. My hope is that yoga will give people everywhere the sense and the oneness we need to work together to live in harmony and usher in a life of dignity for all."

In all Indian state capitals, schoolchildren, bureaucrats, homemakers, soldiers and ordinary folk took part in the exercise. Every branch of the Indian military participated, on nuclear submarines and in the deep snows of Kashmir on the world's highest battle-

ground. In Modi's home state of Gujarat, yoga events were organized at a staggering 30,000 locations.

Global Gatherings

Despite the massive turnout in India, the majority of participants were in other countries all over the world. This spiritual celebration in nearly every nation on Earth, all on the same day, may be unique in the history of the world.

One significant (though comparatively small) gathering was held on a soccer field in Lisbon. Following a tradition started in 2002, over 1,000 Europeans, united by the motto "The Light Is Coming," gathered at the Prof. Moniz Pereira Athletics Track to practice yoga, celebrate the concept of a day without bloodshed throughout the planet and honor ethnic and cultural diversity and inter-religious tolerance. The impetus for Lisbon's "World Yoga Day" tradition has come from Portuguese satguru Amrta Suryananda Maha Raja, who recently received India's Padma Shri award—in part for his 14-year effort to get the UN to recognize this day.

While Lisbon may have been the place where World Yoga Day started—and where some of the most difficult asanas were performed—this June 21 it was suddenly among the smaller gatherings. In Singapore 4,000 participated; in Paris 9,000 enrolled for the class at the Eiffel Tower; in Sydney, Australia, 10,000 came together—and in spite of soggy weather, over 30,000 reportedly showed up in New York's Times Square.

In organizing the event for India, the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy), had to make some last-minute concessions to the program to accommodate religious differences. The Surya Namaskar routine was removed because Muslims objected that it deifies the Sun. Also removed was the chanting of AUM, thought to be too closely entwined with Hinduism and Buddhism.

Such complaints are not uncommon. Christians in the United States have sued (unsuccessfully) to have yoga removed from public schools, arguing it is a Hindu practice and thus has no place in secular classrooms. Probably aided by all the publicity, yoga classes for youth are burgeoning, as teachers help students reduce stress, nurture simple physical disciplines and even learn to harness their emotions and get along better.

Indeed, many feel threatened by yoga's cultural impact. *The Washington Post's* June 6 edition revealed how some US communities struggle to understand yoga's relationship to meditation (see sidebar). The article begins at the newly opened Meditation Museum in Silver Spring, Maryland, where exhibits

refer to the pursuit of God, the "Supreme Soul" and often "The One." A constant visual theme is an orangeish, reddish light emanating from a vague, otherworldly source. The message is clear: Meditation is about connecting with the Divine. That message is in confounding contrast to what's commonly presented in business seminars and public schools throughout the US, that meditation is something akin to mental weight-lifting, a secular practice that keeps your brain and emotions in shape. Public schools say it can help students chill out before tests by calming the mind and training it to look upon disruptive thoughts from a non-judgmental

distance. Gyms, meanwhile, list yoga (i.e., hatha yoga) alongside Zumba classes, as if it were merely a set of physical exercises.

This jumbled juxtaposition between the religious and secular versions of yoga and meditation epitomizes a key debate about the ancient practice as it explodes in the United States: What is the purpose of yoga and meditation? And who gets to decide?

Soft Power Is Artful Power

Yoga Day will have far-reaching impact in the years ahead, for it is an open affirmation of India's soft power in the world. According to Joseph S. Nye, Jr., who coined the term in the late 1980s, "soft power" is the ability of a nation to persuade or influence others without force or coercion. It is a term widely used in the world of foreign policy, and some argue that these gentler forms of influence are, in the long run, more potent than any military. India is a formidable force in the world of soft power, from its spiritual treasures to its culinary genius (are there really 9,000 Indian restaurants in London?), from its millennia-old music, art, drama and dance, to its sophisticated medical knowledge-base (ayurveda has exploded around the world). Spreading increasingly, powerfully, globally are India's national ideas of nonviolence, religious tolerance, devotion and soul-stirring philosophy. Chinese philosopher Hu Shih (1891–1962) observed: "India conquered and dominated China culturally for 2,000 years without ever having to send a single soldier across her border."

Soft power, it turns out, is a better way to change the world, a surer tactic to influence and change the values held by others. As Mr. Nye noted, world security hinges as much on winning hearts and minds as it does on winning wars. Your yoga mat may be the next international battlefield.

What Is Yoga?

The term yoga refers to a wide variety of Hindu practices. Therefore, it is always helpful when discussing yoga to use a modifier to clarify which kind of yoga is meant. The yoga most widely taught is known as ashtanga yoga. *Ashta* means eight, and *anga* means limb. This system comprises eight progressive practices, of which the well-known postures are the third. The first two—and the foundation for all spiritual progress—are yama and niyama, Hinduism's ethical restraints and guidelines for a dharmic, spiritual life.

Vamadeva Shastri, author on yoga and

ayurveda, notes that the meditative side of yoga is little known: "Yoga today is most known for its asana (yogic posture) tradition—the most popular, visible and outward form of the system. Buddhism, by comparison, is known as a tradition of meditation, as in the more popular forms of Buddhist meditation, like Zen and Vipassana. Many people who have studied yoga in the West look to Buddhist teachings for meditation practices, not realizing there are yogic and Vedantic forms of meditation that are traditionally not only part of the yogic system but its core teaching! In the *Yoga Sutras*, only three sutras out of 196 deal with asana. The great majority deal with meditation, its theory and results."



TRADITION

London: A Sri Lankan Citadel of Saivism

The Tamil Hindus' dedication for their beloved Lord Murugan has made London the largest bastion of Saivite Hinduism in the Western world

By RAMAI AND VATSHALAN SANTHIRAPALA, LONDON

LONDON IS FAMED FOR ITS RICH culture, racial diversity and regal history, recently capturing the attention of *Forbes* magazine, which deemed it the world's most influential city. Inside this cosmopolitan metropolis an untold Hindu story of equal fascination emerges. In this article, we chronicle the immigration of Saivite Hinduism to London from Sri Lanka's Jaffna Peninsula, the journey from one island in the Indian Ocean to another 5,000 miles away. An estimated 300,000 Tamils reside in the UK, the densest concentration in the Western world, the majority of them within London itself. Most have immigrated from Sri Lanka; a minority hail from India, Malaysia, South Africa, Mauritius and Singapore. This homogenous concentration has provided a unique community enabling Saivism to flourish and remain true to its orthodox principles. London is today home to at least



23 Saivite temples, all founded by Sri Lankan Tamils in the last 40 years, many hidden inside unassuming English exteriors. Through these holy structures, the rich power of the Tamil faith flows out, making London the West's most prominent Saivite bastion.

The History of Tamil Immigrations

Historically Tamils in Sri Lanka remained staunch adherents of Saiva Siddhanta as revealed in the holy texts of the Vedas and Saiva Agamas, despite centuries of oppressive colonization by Portuguese and British rulers. The search for professional opportunities in the 1960s inspired the first wave of Sri Lankan migrations. A second wave began in the early 80s, as the civil war drove thousands of refugees from their lush, tropical homeland.

By unforeseen providence, the existence of all these temples—and many elsewhere in the diaspora—is largely due to the traumatic flight of refugees. They stoically endured all challenges in their new homelands to perpetuate the rich culture of Saivism for their generation and beyond. There was also a driving spiritual power from inner realms—Lord Murugan, Skanda. In many respects this is His story—one that London's temple elders have wanted to share for decades.

The Pioneer of Saivism in Europe

Among the many great souls who generously contributed his time, finances and love to propagating Jaffna's religion in London and throughout Europe, Sri Somasundaram Sabapathipillai stands out as the preeminent pioneer. He came to the British capitol with a singular mission—to ensure that his faith would survive the 5,000-mile journey west. Born December 27, 1910, in Point Pedro, Jaffna, he completed his masters in London and returned to Sri Lanka to practice law. In 1939 he married Maheswary, daughter of Sri and Smt. Mailvaganam. The great sage Siva Yogaswami (1872-1964) of Nallur, Jaffna, paid an unheralded visit to the newlyweds and told Sabapathipillai, "You have the blessings of Lord Murugan now that you are marrying the daughter of Mailvaganam." That auspicious blessing may explain the impact the young attorney was to make in Europe.

Even in married life, he pursued austerities and pilgrimages. Ultimately he relinquished his legal career to concentrate on his spiritual destiny and received the triple Saiva initiations from Sri Eesana Sivachariar, principal of the Saiva Siddhanta College in Palani, India. From that moment onwards, he performed daily Siva puja and supported temples beloved by Lord Murugan—Kataragama, Nallur and Keerimalai in Sri Lanka and Thiruchendur in South India. He was a prime mover in bringing together all Hindu institutions in Sri Lanka to form the still-influential

All Ceylon Hindu Congress. In 1965, at age 55, Sabapathipillai moved to London. Shortly after arriving, he was invited by the Ceylon High Commission to conduct puja to Lord Murugan at the embassy in Hyde Park on February 4, Sri Lanka's Independence Day.

Hindu Association of Great Britain

Before long, he quickly recognized the need for an umbrella organization for London's

London with festivities: (Clockwise from above left) Flag raising at the Highgate Hill Murugan temple; women carry milk to be offered to the Goddess; dressed as the child saint Thirugnanasambandar, Pranav Sarma is the son of Shri Shridhar; portrait of Sri Somasundaram Sabapathipillai



Tamils, who were practicing their religion throughout the city in small isolated groups. He invited Tamils originating from Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, Singapore and South Africa to meet and commune as one. The first meeting of the Hindu Association of Great Britain—the first Saivite association in Europe—was held on Navaratri, October 23, 1966, with the resolve to "foster Saiva Siddhanta locally and then globally." A constitution was drafted and ardent devotees were encouraged to take positions in the organization.

Thiruchendur Murugan Arrives

It was clear that the community needed a temple in order to promote Saiva Siddhanta and conduct pujas on a regular basis. But no appeal for funds would be made until there was sufficient demand and assurance that institutions could be properly maintained. To cultivate community support, devotees offered their homes for weekly puja and for festival celebrations, mostly importantly Mahasivaratri, which many observed every



RAMAI SANTHIRAPALA



COURTESY OF SHREE GHANAPATHY TEMPLE



VATSHALAN SANTHIRAPALA

Humble exteriors, magnificent interiors: (left top) *Europe's first consecrated Hindu temple, the Wimbledon Ghanapathy Temple still sports the exterior of the Presbyterian church that it once was;* (left middle) *Inside is a different story. At great sacrifice and after many years of work, traditional sanctums were built and the Mahakumbhabhishekam was held in January of 2015, thirty-four years after it was founded, in 1981.*

year in the Wimbledon home of Mr. and Mrs. Ratnasingham. As attendance in homes increased, gatherings were shifted to public halls.

In the early 70s, devotees concluded they had outgrown the use of pictures and small statues in the rituals. The time had come to acquire from India a proper image of the Deity, cast in the traditional five metals—*panchaloka*. This desire was realized in 1973 when the murti of Thiruchendur Murugan arrived. He was commissioned by Sri Sabapathipillai, who received Him in Chennai and carried Him on a flight back to London. The radiantly smiling Deity brought great joy to the Tamils.

Upon His arrival, Murugan was placed in the Bharat Sevashram Sangha at Shephard Bush, West London, a fitting first landing for the Lord of Renunciates, as the BSS monks are known for their high standards of monasticism. Skanda Shashti, a major festival day to the God, had special significance in London that year. Devotees witnessed the *prana prathista* (life-infusing) ceremony for the murti. An elaborate homa invoked Lord Murugan from the inner worlds to infuse the murti with His Divine Grace, and the first abhishekam and puja were performed. This was a wonderful and poignant day for London's Tamils: the Lord of their hearts had arrived. Shouts of "Vetri Vel Muruganukku! Haro Hara!" reverberated through the hall.

The Traveling Lord

Following His consecration, Thiruchendur Murugan traveled throughout the City and beyond, staying at the home of Sabapathipillai and others during the week. On weekends and festival days He was taken to large public venues so that His many devotees could see Him and experience His darshan. C. Krishnamoorthy, retired engineer, project manager and past president of the Hindus Association of Great Britain, said, "When Murugan first came, we didn't have any temples. We only had the Friday evening pujas at Wimbledon Kenneth Black Memorial Hall. We thought to make Him available to all Hindus living in UK, and everyone was keen to arrange pujas. He traveled all over England, and huge crowds came wherever this beautiful statue went. I think He had a grand time." This unusual pattern was followed for 25 years.

Lord Murugan also traveled beyond the borders of London to Skanda Vale, a multi-faith ashram

Old structures transformed: (left bottom) *The London Sivan Kovil in Lewisham resides in a former warehouse, beautifully remodeled inside and out*

in Wales (which now enjoys three temples and 90,000 pilgrims annually); to Edinburgh, Scotland; and to Birmingham, where a grand puja was attended by Tamil, Telegu, Punjabi and Gujarati devotees. Today most of the places He visited have a vibrant and strong temple culture, a tribute to the immense sakti, spiritual power, that emanates from Him.

The increasing numbers and fervor of Murugan's devotees fed the desire to build Him a temple. In 1974 an offshoot of the Hindu Association of Great Britain was formed—a financial instrument, the Britannia Hindu (Saiva) Temple Trust, whose sole aim was to raise funds to build a temple. The devotees' hard work and perseverance paid off. A site at 200A Archway Road in North London was purchased in 1977, which would one day become the Highgate Hill Murugan Temple. In 1979, Thiruchendur Murugan was installed at this site, but without full consecration rites. As it turned out, this was not to be His permanent residence.

Europe's First Hindu Temple

The Hindu Association of Great Britain encountered many obstacles in their attempts to establish a consecrated temple. Manickavasagar Srikantha explained, "There was even a parliamentary debate on whether a Hindu



COURTESY OF SHREE GHANAPATHY TEMPLE

In service of the Deity: (left) *Four priests of the Shree Ghanapathy Temple*

place of worship could be established in the UK. One of the MPs raised objections to allowing 'pagan worship' and concerns about milk baths clogging the city drainage system. We presented the case that our worship was prescribed by our scriptures, the *Saiva Agamas*. Eventually, we prevailed and a bill was passed to allow a Hindu temple to be built." Clearly, Lord Ganesha, the Remover of Obstacles, had to arrive in the capitol in order to clear the way for this and other temples.

In 1978 Mr. Ratnasingham, a founding member of the Association, was entrusted with the divine task of bringing a *panchaloka* murti of Lord Ganesha from India. Two years

later, the community purchased the Wimbledon Churchill Halls, in a leafy south suburb, from Sir Cyril Black, a former Member of Parliament. Devotees converted the former Presbyterian church into a Ganesha temple. By September of 1981, the Shree Ghanapathy Temple was inaugurated with the celebration of its Mahakumbhabhishekam (consecration ceremony). This was Europe's first fully sanctified temple. Lord Ganesha had found a permanent home. This temple has become a conduit for Hindu education and cultural activities. The Inner London Educational Authority has recommended it as the best place to learn about Hinduism and temple worship. Several thousand public school children now visit every year and hundreds of children attend classes at the adjacent Sai Baba center. The vision and success of the temple is attributed to the grace of Lord Ganesha working through Mr. Ratnasingham, who departed this Earth plane in 1998.

Homes in North & South London

Meanwhile, weekly pujas to Lord Murugan continued in the mid-80s at the Wimbledon Hall in South London using small murtis, but attendance diminished following the installation of the *panchaloka* murti at Highgate

Lord Murugan: The First Guru

From antiquity, Lord Murugan's energy has reverberated within the hearts of South Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils. South India is home to six of His most holy abodes (the Arupadai Veedu pilgrimage), and Sri Lanka boasts the world-famous shrines of Nallur, Maviddapuram and Katargama, the latter of which attracts significant devotion from Hindus and Buddhists alike. Murugan is also known throughout India as Kumara or Skanda.

Ancient Tamil history is intrinsically linked to Lord Murugan. At the Adichanallur archaeological site in Thirunelveli, South India, where evidence of civilization dates back 3,800 years or more, excavations have unearthed relics of an iron Vel with rooster—both symbols associated with Lord Murugan—thought to date from a proto-Tamilian race many thousands of years ago.

The first image of Murugan crafted for London was a 32-inch-tall, five-metal replica of the Senthil Andavar Deity enshrined at the famed seaside temple of Thiruchendur in South India. The exquisite smiling face of Murugan (right) became the driving force behind the spread of Saivism in the UK. Known in Britain as Thiruchendur Murugan, He now resides in a shrine at the Stoneleigh Rajarajeswari Temple.



RAMAI SANTHIRAPALA



Hill in North London, fifteen miles away. Cross-town transportation is painfully slow; and with an influx of Tamils from the recently declared war zone of Jaffna, there was an urgency to amplify pujas for Lord Murugan in South London.

After evaluating the devotees' needs, the Hindu Association of Great Britain resolved that Thiruchendur Murugan should return to South London. In compensation, the devotees of Highgate Hill obtained a new murti of Murugan in the form of Arumugam (the Six-Faced One) with His consorts Valli and Devayani. Construction at Highgate Hill continued, and in 1986 London's second fully consecrated Hindu temple was established.

The Thiruchendur Murugan murti remained without a permanent home. Sri Sabapathipillai departed this world in 1989 with a tinge of sadness that he had not found a place for His Lord. But that was taken care of before too many more years. Another temple, this one for the Mother Goddess, Sri Rajarajeswary Amman, was being built at the Surrey suburb of Stoneleigh. Thiruchendur Murugan finally took up permanent residence in a side shrine in this temple, which celebrated its Mahakumbhabhishekam in 1999. He becomes the center of worship on His monthly day of Karthigai and during His annual festivals of Tai Pusam, Skanda Shashti, Thirukarthigai (Karthigai Deepam) and Vaikasi Vishakam.

Expansion to Contemporary Times

With both Lord Ganesha and Lord Murugan properly installed in London, the two temples provided comfort, solace and hope to Tamils fleeing Sri Lanka's civil war. Though Great Britain felt very different from the homeland, the refugees' culture of temple



worship, the bedrock of their lives, was still available.

As the Tamil Saivite population increased, and their priests found it easier to travel between nations, the number of temples increased rapidly. Mrs. Shymala Srikantha, a devotee of the Highgate Murugan Temple relates, "Priests whose contracts ended always found a way to stay here. They all branched out and created more temples. First Murugan, then Amman, then Sivan. But they all are thankful to Lord Murugan, from

Whom all these temples have come." Now, thirty years later, most London devotees find themselves within a thirty-minute drive of a spiritual home emanating the traditions of Jaffna. Nearly every Hindu here can take a short ride on the tube (British for subway) to catch the morning arati before going to work.

Along with the rise of temples has come an increase in the complexity and frequency of pujas. Tamil festivals such as Thai Pongal, Thai Pusam, Mahasivarathri, Tamil New Year, Ganesha Chathurti, Skanda Shashti, Navaratri, Thirukarthigai and Thiruvembai are glorious celebrations in each and every temple. The core focus is to perform them concurrently with the traditional celebrations in Jaffna. The link to the motherland is ever present and never forgotten. It is the power of the homeland that is believed to sustain such a rich culture. While London cannot rival the fullness of Saivite culture practiced for thousands of years in India and Jaffna, it has come a long way toward replicating the essential religious lifestyle for Tamils who now call this city their home away from home.

The annual chariot festivals are a re-energizing time of intense daily worship, usually lasting ten days. Beautifully decorated regal chariots are paraded around the city streets. The processional Deity is brought forth to circumambulate His or Her temple and bless the community. The months of May to August are a gala time, as there is at least one



LEFT: PRASHANTHAN CHANDRAVARNAN; RIGHT: COURTESY OF SHREE GHANAPATHY TEMPLE

Precise rites and deep devotion: (clockwise from far left); In Highgate Hill, Lord Murugan is pulled on His chariot through the streets; children attend classes for religion and cultural arts at the Sai Center adjacent to the Wimbledon Ganesha temple; all festivals are replete with nadaswaram (temple horns) and tavil (drums)

chariot festival every weekend with drums and temple horns resounding through the streets.

Complex rituals with homas, Vedic chanting and elegant abhishekams occur frequently. Major festivals are supported by close connections with Jaffna and Tamil Nadu, and Sivacharyas are often flown to London to join the resident priests, exponentially increasing the effervescent darshan that emanates from these powerful pujas.

Supporting the opulent temple culture are Tamil cultural organizations and private tutors teaching the arts of Bharatanatyam, Carnatic vocal, Tamil language and expertise in traditional instruments, such as vina and mridangam. This cultural development infuses temple festivals with music and dance. For the more cerebral, Saivite conferences have been established to preserve the great heritage among adults and youth. The Federation of Saiva Temples, UK, held its 16th Saiva Conference in April.

This success story is due in part to Britain's

sophisticated culture, which has openly welcomed Tamil traditions and understood the innate need for Hindu temples thousands of miles away from ancestral homes. Though often condemned for its colonial expansionism and wars, Britain has notably upheld social values of refinement, meritocracy, pluralism and religious tolerance, providing a fertile environment in which Saivism has flourished.

The Future

The tireless work of founding temple trustees will need to be continued in the decades to come if the rich Saiva culture is to be maintained and grow. The Shree Ghanapathy Temple and Highgate Hill Murugan Temple have begun incorporating the next generation into temple management committees and allowing a few committed souls to gain experience and understand expectations for the future. But many of the current generation are confused about their identity. As succession planning has begun in some of the major temples, there is a ripple of unease that the heirs of these institutions have yet to be found.

Balancing East and West is not easy. Parents want their children to secure professional and financial status, and spirituality and religion are often set aside to be explored in later years. This strategy relies on the next generation holding onto links with Jaffna—a region that is not their birthplace and which

perhaps they never visited. Some youth feel disconnected and do not see Jaffna's relevance to their lives today in this fast-paced Western city. Others have devoted their lives to promulgating the traditions of their parental homeland. Many want to understand their religion but have not found expressions that have meaning to them, nor a way to learn about their spiritual origins at their own pace. Stories of the Gods and life in Jaffna appear abstract, and a clear relevance to their everyday lives needs to be established. There is an urgent need for relevant religious education.

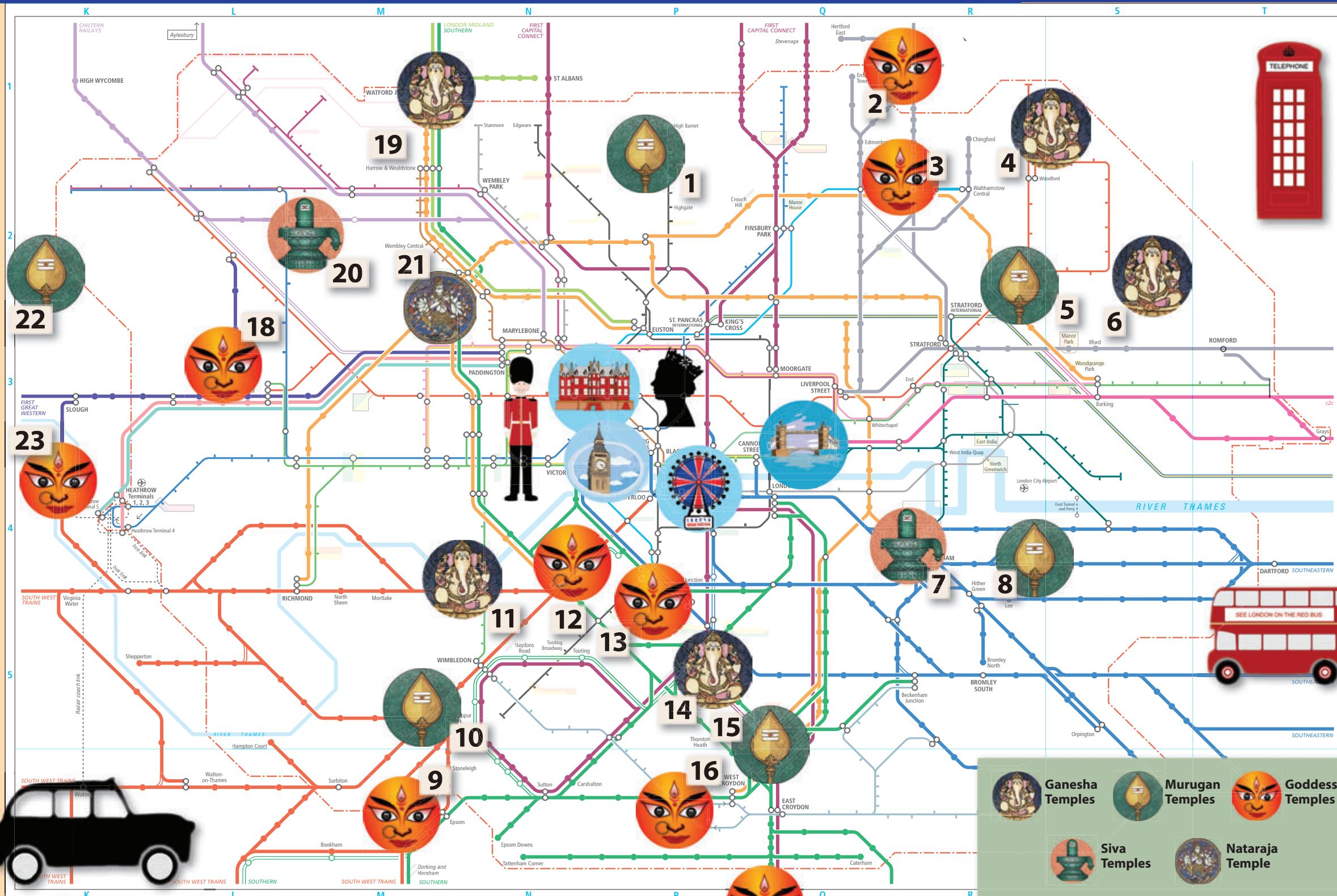
Our Personal Reflections

Next year's fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Hindu Association of Great Britain will provide an opportunity to reflect on the historical growth of Saivism in the UK—a story that will continue to emerge with time.

We, the brother-sister writers of this article, are filled with gratitude for our forefathers, who spread Saivism throughout Europe; for our temples whose darshan fills our lives; for our dedicated Saivite grandfather and our beloved ever-present guru, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami of the holy Kailasa Parampara and his successor, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, who keep the essence of Jaffna Saiva culture alive for us. Our hearts say thank you to Thiruchendur Murugan, the divine being who is bridging Saivism from Jaffna to London.






Visit London's Temples by Tube

Surrounding the City's Famed Historic Sites Are 23 Temples to Siva, Ganesha, Murugan and Amman



Temples are listed with their building status, festival attendance, average Friday evening attendance and opening date where known.

1. Highgatehill Murugan Temple, synagogue; 5,000; 200; 1986
2. Enfield Nagapooshani Amman Temple; hall, 20,000; 500; 2002
3. Sri Merupuram Mahabhadrakali Amman Devasthanam
4. Sri Katpaga Vinayagar Temple; hall; 2,000; 100; 2002
5. London Sri Murugan Temple; public house; 5,000; 250
6. London Sri Selva Vinayagar Temple
7. London Sivan Kovil; warehouse; 600; 100; 1999
8. Mankalopathy Sri Vel Murugan Temple
9. Sri Raja Rajeswari Amman Temple; church; 3,000; 80; 1999
10. Sri Thiruthanigai Vel Murugan; 500; 50
11. Shree Ghanapathy Temple; church; 8,000; 200; 1981—Europe's first fully consecrated Hindu temple
12. Sri Muthumari Amman Temple
13. London Sri Meenakshi Sunthareswarar Temple
14. Shree Sakthy Ghanapathy Temple; automobile workshop; 300; 40; 2001
15. Sivaskanthagiri Arulmigu Murugan Temple; hall; 200; 50; 2001
16. London Muthumari Amman Temple
17. Sri Swarna Kamadchy Amman Temple; factory building; 1,000; 75; 2008; Crawley, between London and Brighton
18. Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman; church; 2,000; 250; 1993
19. Shri Sithi Vinayagar Thevasthanam; warehouse; 2,500; 150
20. Eela Patheeswarar Temple; hall; 500; 300; 1999
21. London Nataraja Temple; hall; 100; 25; 2006
22. Uchi Murugan Kovil, High Wycombe, between London and Oxford
23. Shri Meenakshi Amman Temple, High Wycombe; hall; 100; 40; 2013

 Ganesha Temples	 Murugan Temples	 Goddess Temples
 Siva Temples	 Nataraja Temple	

Voices—London Movers and Shakers

Sri Sivagamaratnam Kamalanatha Kurukkal, Chief Sivacharya, Enfield Nagapooshani Ambaal Temple, BA (Hons) Hindu Civilization and Culture, Jaffna University: "Saiva religion is the world's foremost religion and the oldest, starting aeons ago. Lord Siva is its Supreme Lord. From our rich scriptures—the *Vedas*, *Saiva Agamas*, *Upa-nishads*, *Thevarams*, *Thiruvagasam*—we derive the principles of Saiva Siddhanta. Reflecting on Saivism's expansion to other countries, London is unique as it has so many Saivite temples. The affirmation of the *Skanda Puranam*, "May the greatness and truth of Saiva Siddhanta be spread throughout the whole world," has manifested here. Saiva Siddhanta arrived like



a unique jewel which has been staunchly protected with pride. The foundation of Saivism is to understand yourself and be loving towards others. "Praise be to Siva, Lord of people from foreign lands, who is also Supreme God of my own country," is the key concept of our texts, for we believe Lord Siva is the Father of all. Through the construction of temples, we have been able to teach the next generation our customs and religion. Just as a cow's body is full of milk, but only accessible from its udder, so, too, the Universal Lord is accessible with the help of temples and their Deities. Due to the daily prayers and ceremonies, the temple emanates God's power. Hence, to purify our soul it is important to attend the temple. Our London temples all conduct pujas as per the principles of our Agamic scriptures."

Chelliah Krishnamoorthy, 79, founding member of the Hindu Association of Great Britain, and Highgate Hill Murugan Temple trustee: "We are worried about what

happens when we go. Is the next generation going to take over these temples? Will there be money to pay the priest to do the pujas? Sri Lankans need to think about this.



Frequently elders or certain individuals don't allow others to get involved because they want to be in the forefront. But if we don't allow others to be involved, who will carry on? I also want to add that Sabapathipillai, who brought Thiruchendur Murugan to London, was a highly evolved soul, a great man and for his great sacrifices, we are forever grateful."

Appathurai Vairavamoorthy, 81, founding member of the Hindu Association of Great Britain, Treasurer, Highgate Hill Murugan Temple: "My job is to see that



there are enough funds to run at least for the coming three months. Our revenues don't meet expenditures. The temple is not run on a commercial basis. We are subsidized by rentals on properties the temple owns and by voluntary contributions. We try our best not to force people to pay for temple services. We offer *annadanam* (free food) almost daily. Anyone, whether they attend the temple or not, can walk off the street, eat and go. One issue with our temples is that we're all laymen. The priests are paid people and they have other jobs like any other workmen. And there is no spiritual leader as such. That is one of the things lacking in all our temples. Everyone follows the rituals, but they are not necessarily very spiritual. Unlike privately owned temples, like those of Ramakrishna Mission, which are very peaceful, there is a certain unrest here because of internal

disputes and arguments. On the positive side, we have 3,000 members. It's not a one man show. Everybody feels that the temple is theirs. At the end of the day, they know everybody is working for the temple. The temple will never fail."

Geetha Maheshwaran, 50, school teacher, daughter of the late Ratnasingham, a prime mover in the early London Saiva community: "My father founded the Shree Ghanapathy Temple. We held Sivaratri each year at our house for about 20 years, because we had one of the bigger houses. One of my earliest memories is enjoying Sivaratri with ladies downstairs doing prayers, men on the second floor and the kids playing upstairs. We loved that we could stay up all night. We didn't know much about the actual festival, but it was the beginning of the community coming together. Dad was deeply involved with the Britannia Hindu Shiva Temple Trust. But there was a lot of politics. It took so long, and my father felt a temple was urgently needed. God guided him. He and my mum re-mortgaged their house, and bought the Wimbledon property in the summer of 1980. He really wanted to

make sure the next generation was involved. He got us all to come here during the holidays. And within a year we built this temple. Of course, there were official contractors who got all of the walls done. But we came every day. We learned how to mix cement at the right ratios and put up plasterboard. So for us, our sweat is the very foundation



of this. My father did that with every single thing that we did. With every building that we did, every new building part, he got the kids involved in it. So they really felt that this was their temple. He was a karma yogi, not attached to position, could not sit still, was always working, had that soul for service, very charming and grounded. He would sit and chat with everyone. If we had crazy ideas, he would listen and say, 'Yes, fine, go and do it.' His passing was traumatic for us. But there was no question. We will carry on the work."

Devotees talk about religious life and their participation in temple activities

Krishna Ragunathan, 42, business director, trustee, Sri Rajarajeswari Amman: "I was born in 1972 and went to a Catholic school and got influenced. My dad was very worried and started telling me about Hinduism, Pillaiyar, Murugan and Krishna. He made a big effort with us. We were lucky that the Ganesha temple is built right behind my house. So, suddenly Pillaiyar came into our lives. We grew up in the temple, going there so many times. My mom and dad were mad, mad, mad Murugan devotees. And the Thiruchendur Murugan that ended up at the



Amman temple was a big connection for our family. My mom and dad still go every year for Kandashasti at Thiruchendur in India. They are the big driving forces for me. To encourage young people, we need to be less critical of things like their pronunciation of Tamil songs and let them sing, carry the Deity, encourage them to take the lead role. Slowly, they will be less shy, like I was, and start getting more involved."

Dr. Kirrija Prabakaran, mother of two: "Worship is very important. It helps us de-stress, beautify our mind and strengthen our positive feelings. As a professional, I

see those from cultures where prayer is not important struggle a lot with depression and other mental illnesses. I feel better when I go to temple, hearing these Thevarams, the bells ringing, the abhishekam and the puja. When I come home, my mind is charged. I have more energy to run daily things for the next



few days. That's helpful. Then it flattens until the next temple visit."

Vasee Nadesan Prasad, 33, banker, Shree Ghanapathy Temple Committee member: "My parents came to this country in the late 1970s. My mum jokes that during the festival in the 1981 I was in her stomach and heard Ganesha's bell ring and that's what's brought me here consistently. It all started with my parents. My roles include festival organization, liaising with the local police, the local community and liaising with the priests closely on organization inside the temple to ensure the festival runs smoothly. I generally work to bring new ideas, develop the festivals, develop the temple in some way and try to be a link with the younger generation. There is a second generation of devotees coming to this temple. We offer the same opportunity

that the generation above gave me, and making sure that continues down the line. A case in point: a set of boys, nicknamed 'Ganesha's boys,' help out during the annual festival, whether it be setting up, carrying Ganesha around the temple, being here early to prepare or cleaning up outside. It's amazing during the festivals. Even if they have to study for exams, they all find the time to come here and do what they can, even if only for an hour to help and leave. And it's a constant changing mix. They come and go. But this opportunity is always available to



them to come and help. It's something that has grown and grown. I think the development of the temple has been on that basis, and that's what's driven us forward. It's hard, but it's amazing, because I think if you put 100 percent into what you do at the temple, if you surrender to Him, you just give everything to Him, then everything else just falls in place. You don't know or realize it at the time, but it does."

Banuja Srikantha, 20, student: "My dad has been at this Highgate temple since it was built. We have literally grown up in the temple. The more I come, the more I grow. I

love coming here to find that inner peace, mental relief. It's a spiritual journey as well, because I want to find out the purpose of life and all of that here. I try to come here every time I come down from university. I do have a little shrine in Uni where I just pray. And I've also started to recently meditate. I don't



know how the two go together, but it's really, really good. Some children don't come to the temple because things have happened to them which has made them lose that. A lot of people my age don't actually believe in God. I also have friends who come to the temple for the wrong reasons. They are being forced to come to the temple, and I don't think that's right. You should come to the temple because you want to come to the temple, not because your mom or your dad are forcing you to go. It has a lot to do with how the religion is implanted in them."

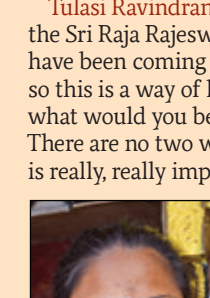
Aschani Thayaparan, 16, student: "My family is very religious, so that keeps me connected. Home is hectic, but in the temple I can leave everything behind and talk to God about my worries and problems and hope for His guidance. Only about 40 percent of my Tamil Hindu friends go to the



temple. For the others, homework, exams and especially the Internet have become a distraction. They also don't know why they should go. They feel they have no reason to go. We need education on the meaning behind the temple. What's going on during puja? Why spend so much money on milk for bathing the Deity, when you could give it to charity? That's what I want to know. It does not make sense to me that you can ask God for something and He will give it to you. Getting these sorts of answers would definitely encourage people to go to the temple."

Neara Prabaharam, 13, student: "I have a lot of extracurricular activities, such as vocal, violin, dance and rowing. I go to temple at least once a week. But mainly I pray at home, because there you don't get distracted as much. It's just you and God. I feel that's stronger. When I wake up, I normally do a morning prayer asking for my day to go well. I go to temple once a week, and to the festivals. I like seeing God all dressed up; it feels like God is more awake. Balancing school and spiritual life is important, because I don't want to lose my spiritual life completely. Sometimes it's quite difficult. But I

still really want to stay connected with God. If you want help from God, you can't expect Him to help you when you lead life without Him knowing that you are committed to Him. That's why you've got to keep it up. My school day can be very tight. Connecting with God is my way of keeping on top of everything, and not falling and cracking under pressure."



Tulasi Ravindran, 20, avid volunteer at the Sri Raja Rajeswari Amman Temple: "I have been coming here since I was a baby, so this is a way of life. On a Friday night, what would you be doing? Go to the temple! There are no two ways about it. My faith is really, really important to me. It has held my hand through life. I don't know what kind of person I would be without it. It's made me all that I am today, what I am inside. So I do these things, serve in the temple. I do as much as I can to say 'Thank you' and say how much I really appreciate it."

Defending Hinduism's Philosophical Unity

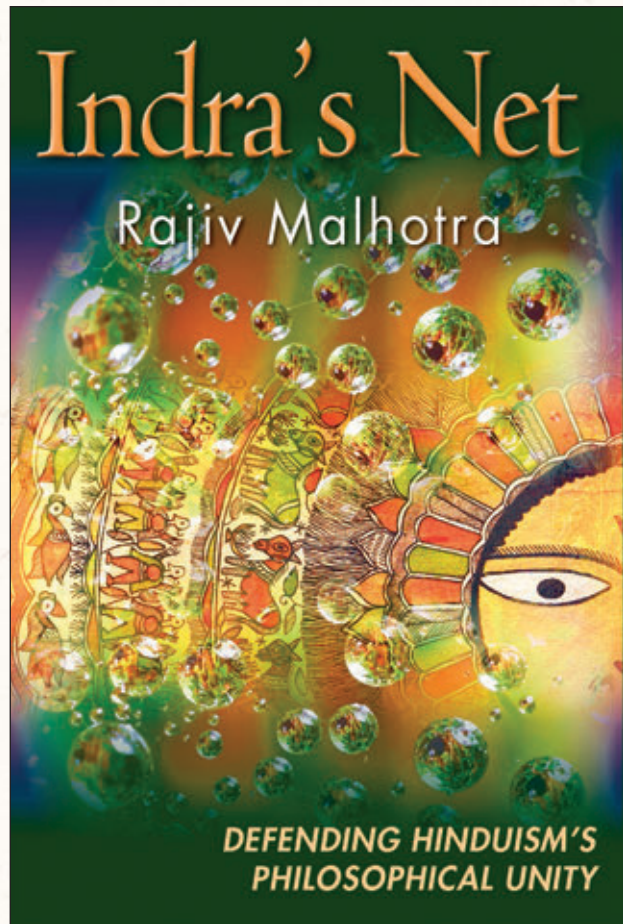
Indra's Net explores and debunks eight myths about Hindu tradition that are widespread in the Western academic world

Eminent author and scholar Rajiv Malhotra has worked vigorously for decades to counter the tsunami of misconceptions about India and Hinduism propounded by Western academia. This misinformation suffuses the media, fills our textbooks, is echoed by Western-influenced intellectuals in India and confounds the minds of Hindu youth in universities worldwide. What is the source of these ideas? Find out in the author's book, *Indra's Net*, which we summarize and excerpt from below.

RAJIV MALHOTRA WRITES: "*Indra's Net* is about the ongoing battle over Hinduism's positioning on par with the world's major religions. It rebuts an increasingly powerful academic school which posits that Hinduism, as such, has never existed. Hinduism today is dismissed as a potent myth concocted by Swami Vivekananda. This thesis brands Vivekananda's movement as *neo-Hinduism*, where *neo* implies something phony.

"This pernicious ploy is used to fragment Hindu society by pitting its spiritual giants against one another and distorting their subtle and deeply intricate viewpoints. In the political arena, the neo-Hinduism thesis claims that Vivekananda manufactured Hinduism in order to unite the Indians against the British—an elitist enterprise undertaken at the expense of suppressing the traditions of the Indian masses. "The ramifications of a discourse that pits contemporary Hinduism against its hoary past are profound and terrifying. The claim denies the existence of an integrated, unified spiritual substratum in ancient India. This battle, therefore, is also an intellectual one, with implications for the very survival of Hinduism as a tradition with a rich past, to be understood on its own terms.

"This school of thought represents an insidious, subtle, but nevertheless powerful form



of colonialism and conversion. Explicit conversion is not even necessary; one is systematically reprogrammed to believe that one was never a Hindu in the first place; and that one loses nothing by abandoning Hinduism other than the label."

The Author's Awakening

Malhotra says he discovered the scope of the "neo-Hinduism" thesis in 2012 as a member of an American Academy of Religion panel discussing his book *Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism*. In that book he contrasts Hinduism's unity in diversity with the Western paradigms of

monolithic religion. To his surprise, the critics at the panel "barely engaged with the ideas in the book. Instead they were fixated on arguing against the very existence of any unified Hindu tradition. What I knew as Hinduism was now being rebranded as 'neo-Hinduism,' a false ideology. I was shocked by the allegation that my reference to the notion of Hinduism marked me as a dangerous person. I wondered: 'What could be the basis of such an attack? Why was it being represented thus by respected scholars?'"

Malhotra describes his subsequent research into the roots of these allegations. He exposes the history and characters behind the flawed conclusions that have become pervasive assumptions and the default consensus-reality held in academia and modern media. It began, he says, with "the Christian missionaries characterization of India's past as being chaotic, incoherent and without clear ethical and philosophical foundations." He quotes T. E. Slater of the London Missionary Society, who wrote in 1902, "The Hindu writings are a product of national genius, but there is no orderly development, no progressive manifestation of truth....they constitute an anthology, not one organic whole. What is styled 'Hinduism,' is a vague eclecticism."

Malhotra continues, "Paul Hacker, a prominent German professor of Sanskrit and Indology, was the first academic to develop this set of ideas in the 1950s. He popularized the term *neo-Hinduism* to refer to the modernization of Hinduism brought about by many Indian thinkers, the most prominent being Swami Vivekananda. Hacker charged that 'neo-Hindus' had disingenuously adopted Western ideas and expressed them using Sanskrit."

Hacker's protegee, Wilhelm Halbfass, was

among the most influential Indologists of his time. He brought Hacker to teach at the University of Pennsylvania in 1971. Halbfass translated many of Hacker's writings and edited the translated collection of Hacker's works on neo-Hinduism, giving his mentor high praise. Hacker's ideas quickly pervaded US academia and were also promoted by prominent UK Indologist Ursula King, some of whose students later became top professors of Indian studies in US universities.

Dual Agenda

Malhotra argues that Professor Hacker was not an unbiased academic: "What is less known about Hacker is that he was also an unabashed Christian apologist who freely used his academic standing to further the cause of his Christian agenda. He led a parallel life, passionately advocating Christianity while presenting the academic face of being neutral and objective."

Halbfass never translated any of Hacker's works on Christianity, which would have exposed this side of his work. However, long after Hacker's ideas had spread, Halbfass confessed in a biography of Hacker that his ideas were problematic for being so rooted in his Christianity: "Hacker presents himself as an Indologist and historian,...yet through all the documentation and analysis, we also hear the voice of an advocate of the European tradition and, more specifically, of a Christian theologian." See: www.sunypress.edu/pdf/53259.pdf

Reverberations in Indian Intelligensia

Malhotra states that Hacker's ideas have become accepted as truth by the large majority of Western academics. He cites numerous references to Hacker and his ideas by top professors of Indian studies in key US institutions. Malhotra notes that the myth of neo-Hinduism has spread to mainstream media, popular portrayals of India, and government policy-making. Leftist, secular Indian writers have adopted this self-alienated world view of their own history and spiritual culture. India's eminent historian Romila Thapar wrote a widely cited article stating that the Hindutva political movement had created a new form of Hinduism by artificially collapsing the earlier pluralistic and variegated realities of India into a neo-Hinduism monolith.

Malhotra writes: "One of the mainstream's loudest critics of this so-called nationalist neo-Hinduism is the journalist Pankaj Mishra, who has written for *The New York Times* and published widely acclaimed international works. His opinions influence English-speaking Indians who regard

him as authoritative. In his article [2004] 'The Invention of the Hindu,' he articulates his thesis that 'Hinduism is largely a fiction, formulated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.' He regards Hinduism as a construct of colonialism that was enthusiastically and dangerously endorsed by Indian modernizers and reconfigured as a global rival to the three big monotheisms. Hinduism, he claims, did not even exist prior to the arrival of Muslims in India, and then it got crystallized by the British."

EIGHT MYTHS

Malhotra implores Hindus to "do their homework" and gain an in-depth understanding of the issues. "My goal is not to force readers into an 'either/or' position, but to encourage more participants to enter the debate." In Part I of *Indra's Net*, he explains that from the basic premise of neo-Hinduism originating from Hacker's Christian agenda, eight myths have developed. Readers who understand these issues will recognize them as they emerge in different arenas of the public discourse about Hinduism.

MYTH 1: India's optimum state is Balkanization

"One of the most dangerous assertions being made is that India's natural state is one of Balkanization (division into smaller regions). In other words, before colonialism, it was never unified. Those who hold this view believe India should be returned to that state, largely by disempowering Hinduism, (because it is considered a unifying force believed to benefit only the elites), and by empowering the forces of fragmentation.

"Such a discourse on the fragmentation of India has been used to stir up internal divisiveness and conflict—ironically, in the name of human rights. [Malhotra's book *Breaking India* shows how this has come about, along with its political ramifications.]

"Theories of the coherence of India and its civilization are dismissed by alleging that such claims necessarily imply an imposition of homogeneity and hegemony. As a corollary,

there is the conclusion that Indians ought to simply deny any unified positive identity based on their own past, and instead seek a common identity based on the further importation of modern Western principles of society and politics. Those few individuals who dare articulate Indian coherence are characterized as dangerous and accused of fascism, identity politics, fundamentalism, links to atrocities, oppression of Dalits, tribal communities, minority religions and women. This misconception denies India's cultural unity based on the dharmic traditions."

MYTH 2: Colonial Indology's biases were turned into Hinduism

"In general, the colonial Indologists presented Hinduism so as to depict the heathens as lowly and uncivilized, requiring evangelization. Many Europeans labored hard to recover Sanskrit texts, did important philological work and struggled to understand Hindu traditions, but through their own lenses.

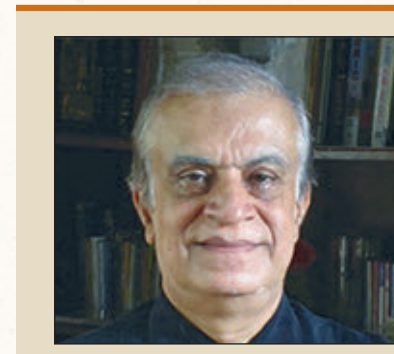
"It is tendentious and untrue to claim Indians passively read their own texts under the tutelage of Europeans, without any sense of their traditional meanings, (adopting a Western definition of Hinduism).

"Being open to influence from others does not render a culture 'inauthentic.' Hinduism has always insisted that its traditions are interpreted and practised in the context of place, time and custom."

MYTH 3: Hinduism was manufactured and did not grow organically

"A basic claim is that contemporary Hindu leaders, particularly Vivekananda, Gandhi and Aurobindo, invented an artificial new religion called Hinduism.

"This shows a serious misunderstanding of Indian culture. Since earliest times, prominent Hindus have disagreed among themselves. New ideas were constantly introduced to challenge old ones. Vivekananda should be seen as updating the tradition for modern times, not as fabricating something



Born in 1950, Rajiv Malhotra is an Indian-American researcher, writer and speaker on current affairs as they relate to civilizations, cross-cultural encounters, religion and science. A successful entrepreneur in the information technology and media industries, he took early retirement at age 44 to pursue philanthropy, research and public service. He established the Infinity Foundation for this purpose in 1994. His Yahoo discussion group has over 5,000 members, and he has 115,000 Twitter followers. See www.RajivMalhotra.com for more and to order a copy of *Indra's Net*.

inauthentic. Vivekananda and his heirs articulated Hinduism in a new way, using the English language in a European idiom.

"The notion that there are mutually conflicting stages of tradition, modern and post-modern, is a Eurocentric one. Dharma encompasses traditional, modern and post-modern attitudes—in parallel, not in conflict."

MYTH 4: *Yogic experience is not a valid path to enlightenment and tries to copy Western science*

"The importance of *anubhava* (the direct experience of higher states of consciousness attained in meditation) in Hinduism is denied by the neo-Hinduism camp, which claims that authentic tradition, especially Advaita Vedanta, considers only the *sruti* (Vedic text) as the path to *moksha* (enlightenment). This makes Vedanta and yoga appear mutually incompatible and denies that Hinduism is a coherent, unified and continuous system.

"But meditation practices and exalted experiences are at the very foundation of classical Indian texts. Indeed, many cutting-edge Western cognitive scientific research programs have evolved under the profound influence of dharmic traditions."

MYTH 5: *Western social ethics was incorporated as seva and karma yoga*

"The neo-Hinduism camp claims that Vivekananda, Gandhi and Aurobindo imported their emphasis on social responsibility and social action from Christianity. While there was some Western influence, concepts such as *seva* and *karma yoga* were present in the

prior tradition. *Loka sangraha* (service to others) and *bhakti* (devotional surrender) derive from ancient Hinduism, with roots in the *Bhagavad Gita* and earlier. The application of these old ideas to new contexts, such as the social degradation created by colonial rule, is not a discontinuity or contradiction."

MYTH 6: *Hinduism had no prior self-definition, unity or coherence.*

"Hinduism is claimed to have had no self-defined and conscious understanding of its own distinctiveness from other religions. Neo-Hinduism is said to have been built by distorting a mishmash of prior traditions having irreconcilable texts and local customs.

"Westerners tend to denigrate Hinduism as random, fragmented, chaotic and without unity because it has no central authority or ecclesiastical structure, no closed canon or 'Bible' of sacred texts, and no 'creeds' to which members of the faith must subscribe. The Western notion of unity and coherence is based on an obsession for control, expansion and hegemony, exemplified in the way a large multi-national corporation (such as the Roman Catholic Church) functions. But top-down structures and reified codes of orthodoxy are not the only mode of unity. The Kumbha Mela illustrates Hinduism's decentralization beautifully."

MYTH 7: *Hinduism is founded on oppression and sustained by it*

"Hinduism is accused of violating the rights of minorities, women and others. But dharmic culture is better able to absorb multiple

communities, metaphysical points of view and new scientific developments than do the Abrahamic religions: dharma has no need to reconcile itself with an absolute history, nor was it formulated under any centralized governance or adjudicating authority.

"The neo-Hinduism thesis also demonizes Sanskrit as oppressive and fossilized, thus discarding centuries of cultural and philosophical development and the sense of unity that predated colonialism. The Western equivalent would be to dismiss the entire corpus of Greek and Latin literature and philosophy for being corrupted by its elitism."

MYTH 8: *Hinduism presumes the sameness of all religions*

"While defending contemporary Hinduism, I do not treat every one of its tenets as sacrosanct. I actually agree with the neo-Hinduism camp in criticizing the assertion, attributed to Vivekananda and many of his heirs, that all religions are paths to the same goal. I am troubled by the tendency to see all religions as offering equivalent things in the hope of reconciling them in a kind of perennial philosophy."

Responding to the Myths

In Part II of Indra's Net, Malhotra responds to these myths with a narrative and lexicon that can serve as ideological tools in the public square

Historical Continuity, Foundations

"Indian thought prior to colonialism exhibited both continuity and change. The consolidation of what we now call 'Hinduism' be-

gan prior to colonialism. Colonial indologists disrupted the historical continuity of Indian thought, selectively appropriating Indian ideas that fit their own narrative and rejecting those that did not. But Indian systems do not carry the burden of having to reconcile their latest ideas with a standard, canonized, non-negotiable history.

"The claim that Hindu *seva* (social service) was appropriated from Western and Christian ethics is baseless. The example of Sahajanand Swami (1781-1830) illustrates the role of traditional Hindu leaders and organizations in launching large-scale *seva* movements without importing any colonial models." Malhotra also cites many pre-colonial Hindu textual references to social responsibility.

Malhotra replies to the charge that an emphasis on yoga and meditation, as highlighted by Swami Vivekananda, did not exist in what some scholars say is the authentic Indian tradition of Vedanta. Malhotra details Hinduism's ancient nexus between experiential spirituality and formal scriptural/philosophical discourse, noting that "Differences between Shankara and Patanjali have been exaggerated by the neo-Hinduism camp to imply that Shankara rejected the subject states of personal realization." Anyone familiar with the range and depth of Adi Shankara's work knows that he was both a dedicated practitioner of raja yoga and a devout bhakta of the Hindu Gods.

Hinduism's Open Architecture

Malhotra offers this alternative to the depiction of India as a fragmented culture: "Everything that exists—divinity/God, individual creatures, and the material world—constitutes an integral unity. This unity-in-diver-

sity is captured in the metaphor of Indra's net, an infinite number of nodes of light which each contain and reflect all the others, forming a single web. Hinduism may be defined as a unified portfolio of ideas, practices and traditions, a toolbox for discovery. The use of such tools has led not to a dogmatic belief but to a framework with an open architecture."

Digestion, Self-Destruction, Defenses

Malhotra advises Hindus to be aware and hold strong in the face of the plunder of the dharmic religions. "The integral unity of Indra's net is under siege from something insidious. I refer to the widespread dismantling, rearrangement and digestion of Hindu traditions into Western frameworks.

"Digestion works in a series of steps, and only by understanding the entire process can one understand its ultimate consequences. First, the 'desirable' elements (such as a subset of yoga) are separated from the rest of the source tradition, thereby rupturing its integral unity. These separated elements then get 'scrubbed' to remove the dharmic contexts in which they are naturally found so as to 'secularize' them. Finally, they get re-contextualized either as Judeo-Christian or as Western science, while the dharmic sources get erased or else denigrated as inferior. As a result, the predator culture boosts its power at the expense of the source that is digested."

Malhotra closes his book with some specific strategies. "I have coined the terms 'porcupine defense' and 'poison pills' to refer to those qualities of dharma that the predator cannot swallow. By making these qualities explicit and including them in the definition of dharma, we can protect it from predators. These qualities then serve as a deterrent to

digestion. Take for example the 'Hindu Good News.' We are all originally divine (*sat-chit-ananda*) and not originally sinners. There is no such thing as original sin. We simply do not have the problem that Christianity offers to solve. The laws of karma and reincarnation are non-negotiable, and we have no need of a savior. Such a poison pill disrupts the DNA of the host predator which is bound to the belief in one life."

The author continues, "After hundreds of interviews with U-Turners of the past 20 years [Westerners who began to adopt Hindu beliefs but then reverted to former faiths], I am convinced that many of them would have given up Judeo-Christianity if their gurus had explained what in Hindu dharma is indigestible into their religion of birth. This is especially true in the early states of romantic engagement when the seeker is overwhelmed by what Hinduism offers, and is willing to relinquish his or her earlier religious narrative, but does not yet have any idea what this would entail. The problem has been our gurus' frequent lack of understanding of the serious differences between Hinduism and the Abrahamic religions—or their desire to obscure and under play these for purely strategic reasons—resulting in a lack of clarity and courage."

While not all will agree with Malhotra's conclusions or his recommended strategies, his book is thought-provoking and well researched, representing decades of studying and defending against the anti-Hindu assault. It provides background, both useful and detailed, that can be marshalled to counter the tenacious misconceptions about India and Hinduism influencing global media and public education from middle school to the university.

TIMELINE Evolution of the Neo-Hinduism Notion



1950: Malhotra begins his analysis at the University of Bonn, in Germany, where Professor Paul Hacker coins the term Neo-Hinduism. A renowned Indologist, he was also a Lutheran with a Christian agenda who later converted to Catholicism.



1970s: At the University of Pennsylvania, Prof. Wilhelm Halbfass (born in Germany) translates and publishes Hacker's writings in English, which are injected into US universities nationwide. Halbfass brings Hacker to teach at UPenn.



1970-90s: In India-studies programs in UK universities, Hacker's teachings are transmitted from German into English



2000 onward: In India, Marxist, leftist, "secular" intellectuals, including Jawahar Lal Nehru University (JNU) professors and graduates, echo Hacker's ideas. Anyone espousing a Hindu cause in the public forum is branded a nationalist fundamentalist.





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Mosum Shah, Unviversity of Chicago, 2013 HAF Congressional Intern

Education

HAF's Hinduism 101 Training was an amazing and succinct learning experience. Our school textbooks do a poor job of explaining Hinduism. HAF is fixing that by educating our teachers about Hinduism so that they can do a better job of teaching about it at school. Now that I have taken the training, I finally understand how to educate those who are interested in learning more about Hinduism!

Hindu American High School Student, 11th Grade, Texas



Human Rights

HAF came as the light at the end of the tunnel for the Bhutanese American Organization Philadelphia (BAOP) and all the Bhutanese in general. We were lost at the crossroads of language, culture and spirituality when the Hindu American Foundation came ready to help us walk down the difficult path of keeping our roots intact. HAF rekindled hope when we were hopeless.

Leela Kuikel, Executive Director, Bhutanese American Organization Philadelphia

Interfaith

Thanks to the Hindu American Foundation, communities throughout the US have not only come to a deeper understanding of Hinduism, but have benefited from their participation, which has led to stronger interfaith alliances, where the many paths have been honored on the journey toward one truth.

Steve Spreitzer, President and CEO, Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion



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Hindu Heritage Endowment

NEW INFO-TECH FUND TO HELP MONKS WITH IT FINANCING

It began in 1985 when one late afternoon Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswami, founder of Kauai's Hindu Monastery, entered a little computer store in the historic town of Kapaa. The event is described in The Guru Chronicles: "After playing with a state-of-the-art Macintosh for a while, he bought one for himself. Computers had never much interested him, but this one seemed different, friendly, approachable. For a week he experimented with it, calling the monks into his office every time he discovered a new feature. The guru and his shishyas learned the computer together, side by side."

The story continues. "Seeing its potential, he ordered one for each of his monks, instructing them to adapt their various services to this new tool. And did they. From that day forward, the monks saw that their satguru always had the newest, fastest, sleekest Macintosh on his desk; and from the release of Apple's first PowerBook, fellow airline passengers would gaze covetously at the holy man's cool laptop. Going headlong into the world of computers to do the work of dharma proved a strategic move of prodigious proportions."



Gurudeva sits at his first Macintosh computer in the latter half of the 1980's

On a regular basis visitors to Kauai's Hindu Monastery ask how so few monks accomplish so many tasks—publishing books, a quarterly magazine, maintaining graphically rich websites that are updated frequently, fund raising and construction for the \$16-million-plus Iraivan Temple project, growing their own food, overseeing Hindu Heritage Endowment, which has over 75 funds, to name a few of the major ongoing activities.

The answer? Macintosh computers! Over the years, the monks have developed sophisticated computer routines for efficiently handling all such tasks at a high level of professionalism. Of course, the monastery has a significant interest in making sure that the latest in information technology can always be acquired. To help accomplish that goal, the monastery has opened a new fund at Hindu Heritage Endowment—the Kauai Aadheenam Info-Tech Fund (fund #86) which is abbreviated as KAIF.

The fund's description reads as follows: "The Kauai Aadheenam Info-Tech Fund provides grants to Kauai Aadheenam for its basic information technology needs for all departments. This includes hardware such as computers, monitors, servers, tablets, portable phones and printers. It also includes purchasing standard software, providing internet, phone and webinar access, internet server services and professional IT management. Additionally, it covers hiring IT experts for special projects such as creating customized software."

The monastery is committed to presenting Hinduism in a modern, graphically rich, well-written manner. Decades ago, the monastery achieved this standard in its books and magazine. More recent efforts have extended this standard of quality to its websites. Most recently it has begun utilizing webinars where the technology is still being perfected. And soon to come will be a mobile application for its magazine Hinduism Today. These achievements were only possible through extensive and effective use of information technology.

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APRIL TO JUNE ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment		Umasankaran Mohambourame	122.02	Tirumular Sannidhi Preservation Fund	
Anonymous	221.66	Gowri Nadason	146.40	Shyamadeva Dandapani	33.00
Rajendra Giri	110.00	Sivakumar Saravan	500.00		
Roshan Harilela	375.00	Parimala Selvaraj	93.00	Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund	
Gayatri Rajan	75.00	Bala Sivaceyon	30.00	Anonymous	150.00
Chamundi Sabanathan	75.00	K.D. & A.D. Williams	36.36		
Vayudeva Varadan	18.00	Total	1,260.78	Hindu Heritage Endowment Administrative Fund	
Other Donations	64,153.82			Tamnash Gupta	70.20
Total	65,028.48				
Iraivan Temple Endowment		Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund		Kauai Aadheenam Religious Art and Artifacts Fund	
Frank Burkhardt	30.00	Aravindraj Chandrasekaran	15.00	Rajadeva Alahan	153.00
Gunasegaran Chitravello	0.00	Shyamadeva Dandapani	33.00		
Kiran Davane	50.00	Rajendra Giri	110.00	A. Saravanapavan Family Murugan Temple Pillaiyar Shrine Fund	
Naresh & Sanchita Gupta-Goyal	27.00	Kulagan Moonesawmy	17.09	Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00
Dheeraj Handa	51.00	Gowri Nadason	146.40	Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	15.00
Victoria Lynne Johnson	11.00	Toshadevi Nataraj	60.00		
P. Lina Peter	100.00	Tejasinha Sivalingam	5.00	Thank You Bodhinatha Fund	
Anonymous	130.00	Vayudeva Varadan	54.00	Hotranatha Ajaya	33.00
Ganga Sivanathan	432.00	Other Donations	4,800.00	Anil Ananda Badhwar	21.00
Adi Srikantha	108.00	Total	5,240.49	Shyamadeva Dandapani	216.00
Other Donations	30,938.00			Anonymous	1660.82
Total	31,877.00	Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam		Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai	324.00
		Anonymous	474.00	Debashis Ghosh	300.00
		Ananthakumar Renganathan	200.00	Gaurav Malhotra	1,502.00
		Total	674.00	Silvarajoo Muniandy	50.00
Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund		Sri Subramuniya Ashram Scholarship Fund		Toshadevi Nataraj	50.00
Anonymous	500.00	Anonymous	324.00	Jigisha Patel	2,002.00
Thirujnanam Arnasalon	5.63			Mrunal Patel	1,002.00
Hemakshesha Naatha Batumallah	2.00	Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund		Mano Rajah	150.00
Mekaladeva Batumallah	25.00	Anonymous	300.00	Venugopala Reddy	10.00
Uma & Ram Challa	1,188.00			Chamundi Sabanathan	108.00
Jyoti Chatterjee	8.45	Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment		Aran Sambandar	108.00
Victoria Lynne Johnson	11.00	Mano Rajah	75.00	Rajeshkumar Shah	201.00
Juhiyaasana Koothan	5.68			Tejasinha Sivalingam	15.00
Anil Kumar	27.00	Hinduism Today Production Fund		Ganga Sivanathan	112.00
Saroja Maureemootoo	22.80	A.K. & Bani Bhattacharyya	500.00	Anba Dayananden Valayten	11.11
Jogendra Moorooogen	1.41	Ron & Jennifer Burke	150.00	Vayudeva Varadan	272.00
Toshadevi Nataraj	60.00	Anonymous	50.00	Shama Vinayaga	156.71
Bijamati Pareatumbee	60.00	P.C. Ghosh	90.00	Michael Wasylkiw	648.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	49.98	Rajendra Giri	110.00	Total	8,952.64
Rajeshkumar Shah	1,735.00	Hiranya Gowda	155.00	Sri Chandra Madhab Debnath Endowment	
Hemavalli Sivalingam	3.23	Rajiv Kaushal	72.00	Shyamal Chandra Debnath	150.00
Thillaiampalam Srijaerajah	251.00	Rajagopal Krishnan	40.00		
Kannan Srikanth	251.00	Bhagawandas P. & Rajani Lathi	5,000.00	Murugan Temple Yalpanam Festival Fund	
Anjali Sundaram	251.00	Murli Melwani	1,500.00	Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00
Total	4,325.18	Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01		
		Gayatri Rajan	75.00	Manitha Neyam Trust Fund	
Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund		Total	7,792.01	Anonymous	150.00
Vijay Atmavilas	499.00	Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund		Bala Sivaceyon	60.00
Naitram Baboolall	499.00	Roshan Harilela	375.00	Nutanaya Sivaceyon	30.00
Hemakshesha Naatha Batumallah	23.00	Sudhir Jagirdar	250.00	Kumaraswamy Sivakumaran	151.00
Shaun Deepan Cadle	347.74	Anonymous	500.00	Total	391.00
Anonymous	108.00	Gregg Lien	500.00	Tiptur Shiva Temple & Youth Hostel Fund	
Sanyasi Ganta	499.00	Kartikatipin Ramachandran	20.00	Lyubov Chesnokova	25.00
Krishnarao Gorrepati	499.00	Chamundi Sabanathan	75.00		
Tirunyanam Gunasegaran	98.00	Gouri Shanker	11.00	Taos Hanuman Fund	
Bhaveshan Moorghen	5.68	Rodney & Ilene Standen	30.00	K.D. & A.D. Williams	36.36
Shanda Kumaran Moorghen	5.68	Total	1,261.00		
Udeyadeva Moorghen	5.68	Hindu Education Endowment		Swami Vipulananta Children's Home Endowment	
Kirtideva Peruman	17.19	Hasu N. & Hansa H. Patel	100.00	Anonymous	150.00
Kan Sakthi	499.00			Sivamayam Gunaratnam	90.00
Ramai Santhirapala	499.00	Hindu Press International Endowment Fund		Canaganayagam Kugendra	60.00
Rajendra Shah	499.00	Hiranya Gowda	105.00	Devi Tandavan	35.00
Sai Singh	120.00	Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund		Total	335.00
Rohini Sivalingam	164.04	Gassa Patten	1,350.00	Hindu Literature Fund	
Kannan Srikanth	499.00	Mano Rajah	225.00	John & Abha Wiersba	153.00
Anjali Sundaram	499.00	Tejasinha Sivalingam	5.00		
Total	5,386.01	Total	1,580.00	Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund	
Gurudeva's Trilogy Distribution Fund		Saiva Agamas Trust		Hiranya Gowda	255.00
Vel Mahalingum	5.75	Ganga Sivanathan	112.00	Rajagopal Krishnan	40.00
Janaka Param	95.00			Total	295.00
Total	100.75	Spiritual Park of Mauritius Endowment			
Kadavul Nataraja Ardra Abhishekam Endowment		Anil Kumar	27.00		
Aravindraj Chandrasekaran	9.00				
Amey Surendra Gangal	21.00				
Devajyothi Kondapi	303.00				

APRIL TO JUNE ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Himalayan Academy Book Distribution Fund		Ramanathaswamy Temple Cleaning Fund		Insurance Premium	
Anonymous	150.00	Danyse Crotti	100.00	Mrunal Patel	3,003.00
Shyamadeva Dandapani	33.00	Hiranya Gowda	66.00		
Total	183.00	Total	166.00	Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment	
				Other Donations	600.00
Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund		Anantha Ladies Home Endowment		Total Contributions	\$168,867.19
Meenambal Govindarajan	101.00	Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	30.00		
Victoria Lynne Johnson	3.00	K.D. & A.D. Williams	36.36	Funds at Market Value, Jun 30, 2015	
Total	104.00	Total	66.36	Total Endowment Funds	\$13,726,479.20
		Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples (Kovil Maadu) Endowment		Grand Total	\$13,726,479.20
Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment		Microsoft Matching Gifts Program	125.00		
Anonymous	761.66	Anonymous	66.00		
Marlene Carter	162.00	Kishore Krishna	125.00		
Sunil Chacko	795.00	Natraj Narayanswami	11.00		
Aravindraj Chandrasekaran	15.00	Toshadevi Nataraj	30.00		
Sasikumar Darmalingam	30.00	Arunasalam Vathavooran	100.00		
Aran Om Malhotra	101.00	K.D. & A.D. Williams	36.36		
Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01	Total	488.36	Jaffna Kannathiddy Kali Kovil Endowment	
Kumaraswamy Sivakumaran	151.00	Anonymous	150.00	Anonymous	150.00
Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00	K.D. & A.D. Williams	36.36	Total	186.36
Andrew Stich	100.00	Total		Pakistan Hindu Empowerment Fund	
Soma Sundaram	15.00	Arvind Chandrakantan	2,001.00	Sanjay Dahya	34.44
K.D. & A.D. Williams	36.36	Anil Kumar	27.00	Anil Kumar	27.00
Total	2,367.03	Total	2,062.44	Panchangam Endowment Fund	
Siva Poomi School Trust		India Hindu Tribals Endowment		Bhagirath Gopinath	101.00
Anonymous	150.00	Jothi & Shridhar Kotta	5,000.00	Sidharth Sankar	5.00
				Ragu Suppiah	10.00
India Hindu Tribals Endowment		Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund		Total	116.00
Jothi & Shridhar Kotta	5,000.00	Vayudeva Varadan	72.00	Digital Dharma Endowment	
				Digital Dharma Drive 2014	11,017.00
Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund		India Hindu Temple Cleaning Fund		Anonymous	96.66
Vayudeva Varadan	72.00	Danyse Crotti	50.00	Bhagawandas P. & Rajani Lathi	5,000.00
		Hiranya Gowda	99.00	Chenna Keshav Madiraju	1,001.00
India Hindu Temple Cleaning Fund		Manogaran Mardemootoo	56.91	K.D. & A.D. Williams	165.08
Danyse Crotti	50.00	Kulagan Moonesawmy	17.09	Total	17,279.74
Hiranya Gowda	99.00	Toshadevi Nataraj	60.00		
Manogaran Mardemootoo	56.91	Ganga Sivanathan	112.00		
Kulagan Moonesawmy	17.09	Total	395.00		
Toshadevi Nataraj	60.00				
Ganga Sivanathan	112.00				
Total	395.00				

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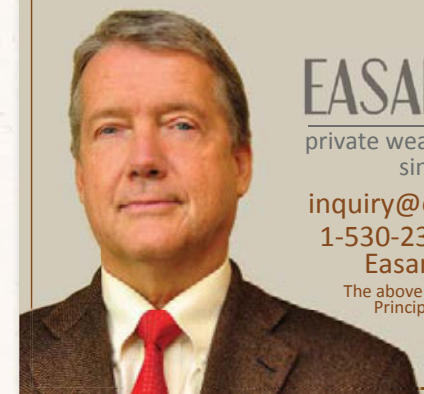
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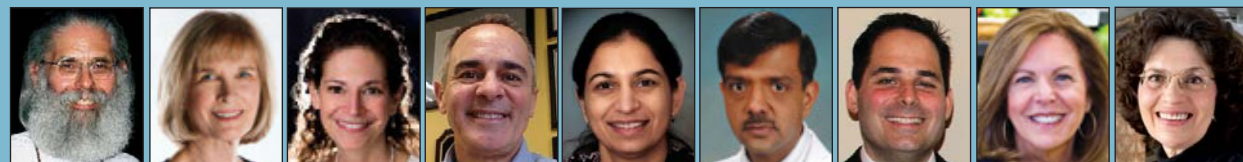
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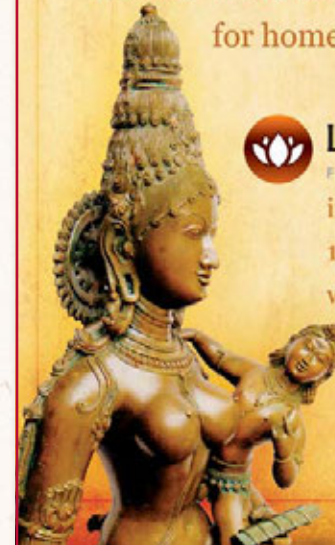
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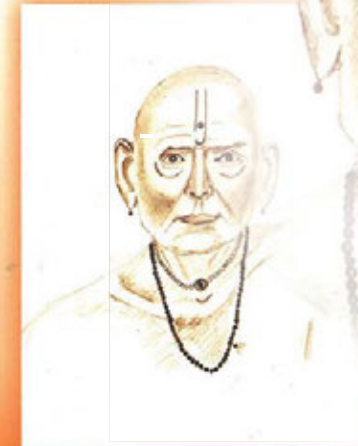
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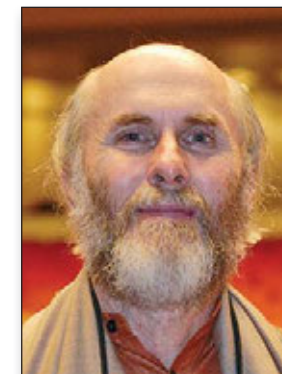


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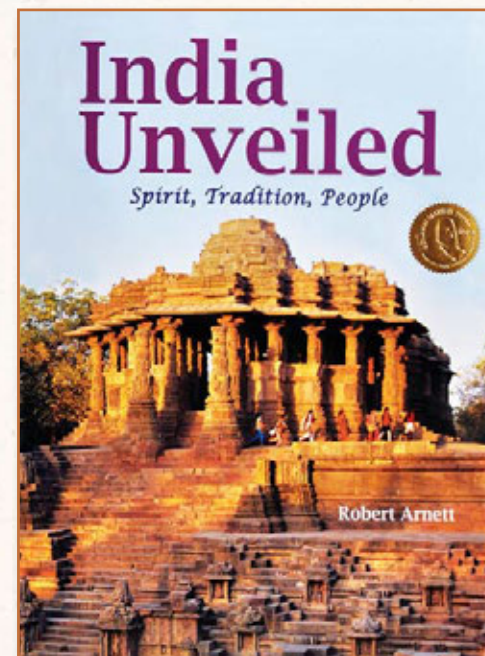
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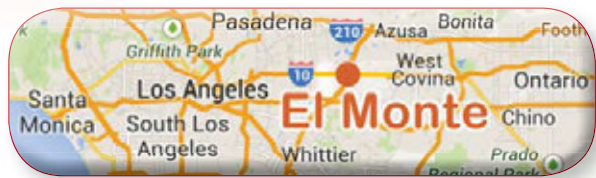
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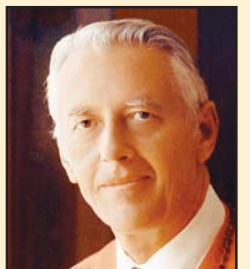
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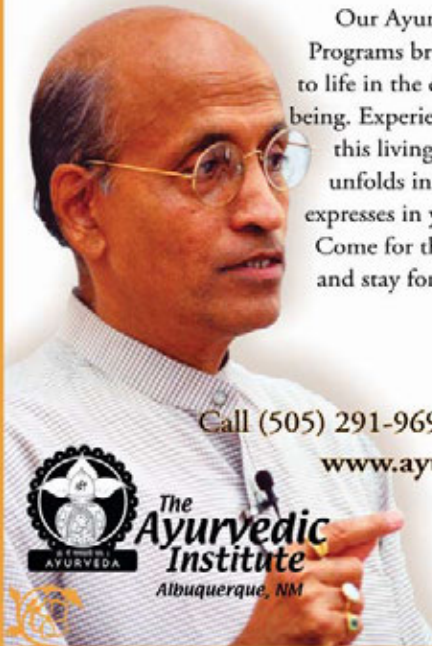
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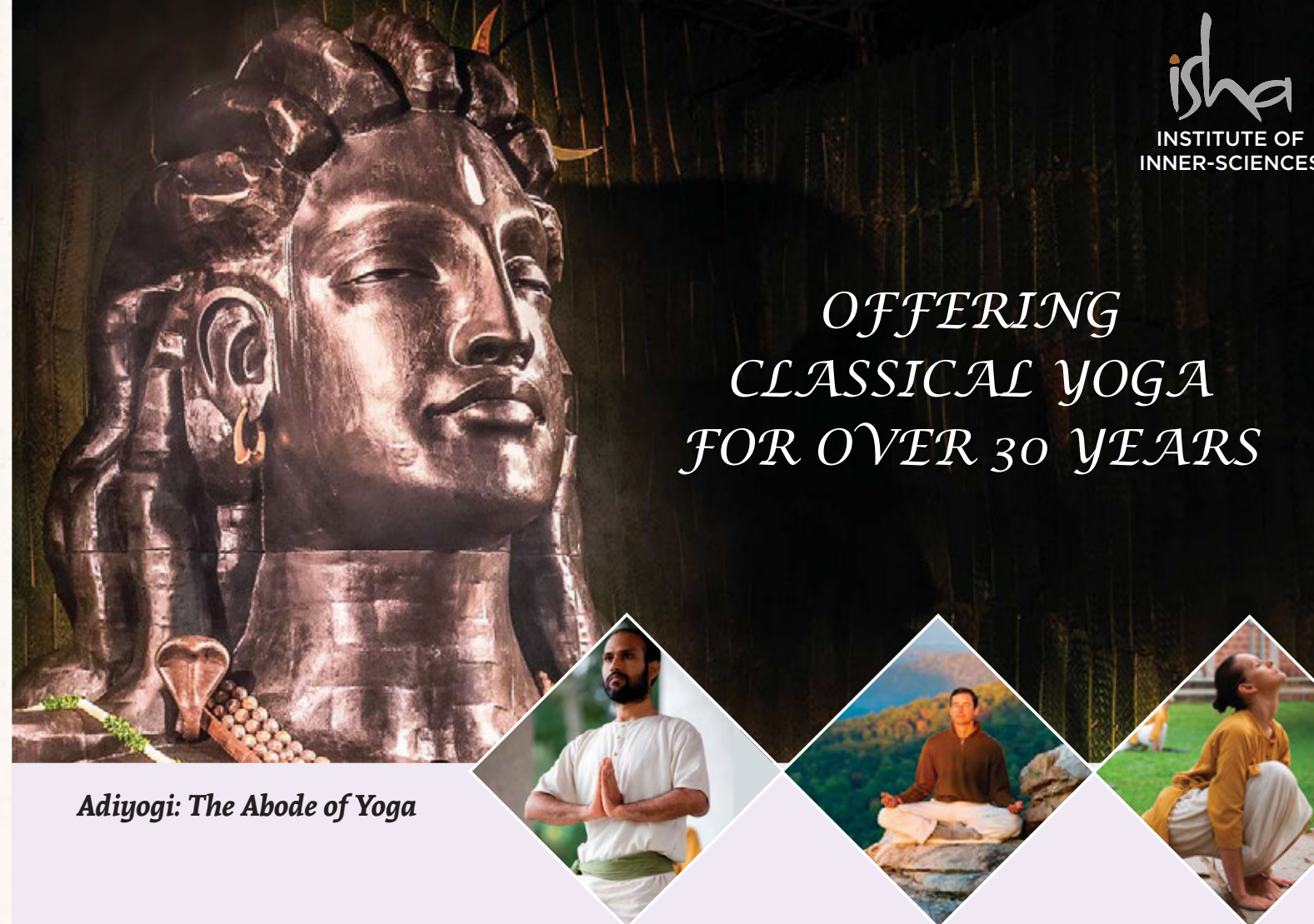


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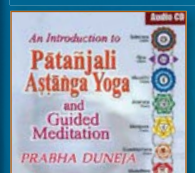
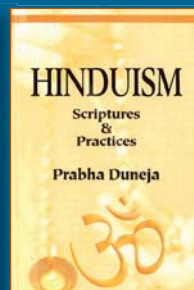
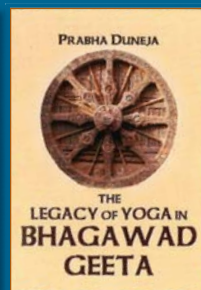
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vegetarianism

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A search for “vegetarian” on YouTube yields approximately 780,000 results. Nearly every video is in favor of vegetarianism, and they have been uploaded by a wide range of educators, religious leaders, athletes, children and animal-rights activists. Even most of the 4500 videos we found by searching for an anti-vegetarian message turned out to be in favor of not eating meat.

In one adorable 2013 video—which has amassed over six million views so far (and which prompted this article)—a young Portuguese child refuses to eat a plate of meat put in front of him. The boy enters a thoughtful discussion with his mother about the animal’s death. He says he would rather the animal had lived than died for him to eat it. In the end, the mother is brought to tears by her son’s innocent compassion. See: bit.ly/veggieboy.

In a more extreme example of pro-vegetarian media, the YouTube channel “Alltime10’s” presents ten facts on meat processing in a short but powerful video showing horrific scenes of slaughterhouse practices. The video cautions meat-eaters of its ability to instantly make them vegetarians. The startling film was presented on *Huffington Post* and has collected over half a million views: bit.ly/tenfact.

With thousands of videos and millions of subscribers, TED Talks is another prominent forum for the subject. Here vegetarianism is presented in a casual but intimate way, offering unique ideas and personal testimony. In his presentation, vegan bodybuilder Joshua Knox proves that athletes can succeed without eating meat. He tells the story of his transformation from a voracious meat-eater to a powerful vegan athlete: bit.ly/veganbber. Graham Hill—founder of treehugger.com—talks about something he calls “weekday veg”—basically being a vegetarian Monday through Friday with a break on the weekend. This typifies the slow transition from meat eating that seems to be gaining popularity among people trying to improve their diet. His talk can be seen here: bit.ly/partveggie.



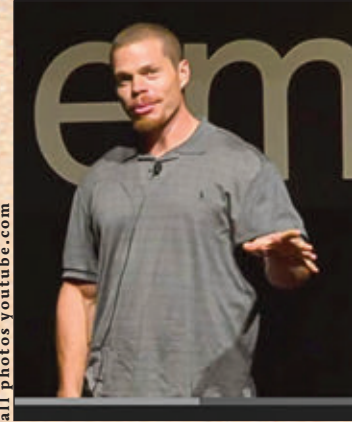
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Online veggies: (clockwise from above) A delectable Indian vegetarian meal; Veggie athlete Joshua Knox can credibly refute a meat-eaters argument; A young child refuses to eat an animal; Sri Sri Ravi Shankar speaks elegantly about this compassionate Hindu value

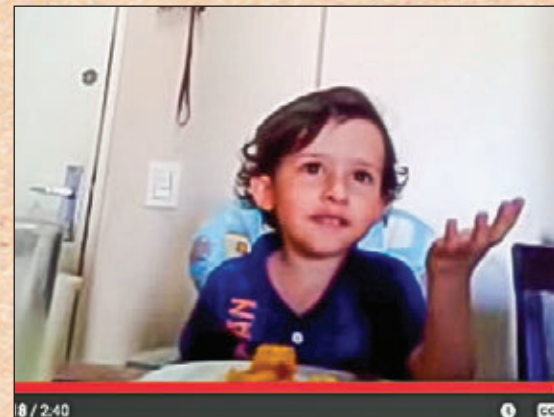
As might be expected, YouTube’s loudest veggie voices are health related. And supporting testimony from viewers is readily apparent in the comment sections, giving credence to the benefits of a vegetarian diet. Some viewers even make a pledge to stop eating meat on the spot.

The religious context for vegetarianism has a surprisingly small presence. However, the 45-minute film “All Religions Say: Be Vegetarian!” is extensive, citing scriptures of world religions. It presents the Hindu view with quotes from the *Mahabharata* and the Vaishnava scripture *Adi Lila*. You can see it here: bit.ly/veggiequote. Other videos present the opinions of individual religious leaders. Sri Ravi Shankar, for example, offers a compelling message about being vegetarian and includes testimony from his followers on how it has aided their spiritual life. See: bit.ly/beveggie.

Geobeats takes on the challenge to counter vegetarians with a pro-meat, ten-facts-based video. The somewhat archaic clip has just over 19,000 views. See how many of its “facts” you can prove wrong (or completely ir-



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relevant) at bit.ly/promeat.

Have a look yourself and see what others are saying about a meat-free lifestyle.