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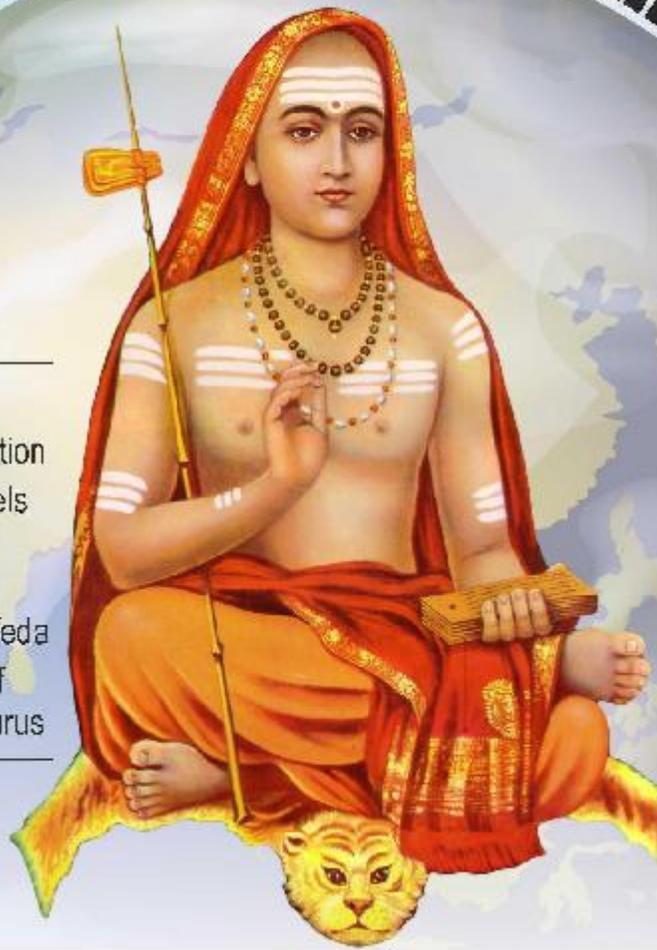
HINDU VISHWA

Vishwa Dharma Digest

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Volume XXXIX

No. 2

April-June 2019

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद्द्यानं विशिष्यते ।
ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागसस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् ॥

भगवद् गीता १२-२२

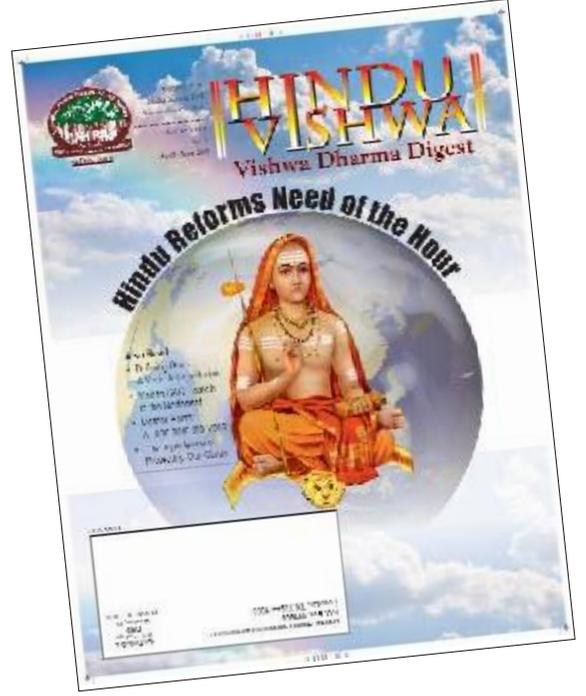
*Sreyo hi jnanam abhyasaj jnanad dhyanam visisyate
dhyanat karma-phala-tyagas chantir anantaram*

Bhagvad Gita 12.12

Knowledge is superior to practice, meditation is considered better than knowledge; renouncing the results of actions better than meditation, verily by such renunciation comes tranquility

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World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), founded in 1970 and incorporated in the state of New York in 1974, is an independent, nonprofit, tax-exempt and volunteer-based charitable organization serving the needs of Hindu community in USA. It aims to build a dynamic and vibrant Hindu society rooted in the eternal values of Dharma and inspired by the lofty ideal of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, i.e. the entire creation is one family.

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Take a Look Inside ...

Hindu Reforms: Need of the Hour

COVER STORY



Reform of the Hindu mind and the society is an ongoing process, but it is always slow. Some of the reforms are long overdue, particularly for the NRI who deal with the society dominated by the Western religions.

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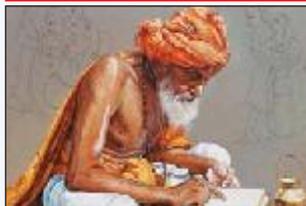
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Seeing "Eye to Eye"

"Seeing eye to eye" is a statement I have heard used a lot throughout my life. It implies "being on the same wave length", and/or, "in sync/agreement", with each other. Being in agreement means that there is no conflict, and therefore no arguments, and creates a sense of peace and humility between parties involved in the discussions.

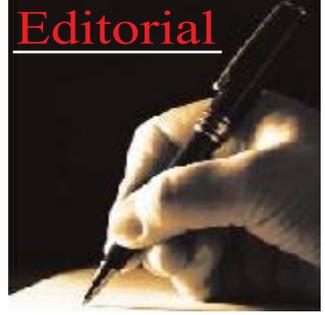
Disagreement, or "not seeing eye to eye", creates the potential for conflicts, especially, if there is no "agree to disagree" agreement. Conflicts can easily resonate into arguments, with the potential for discords, shouting matches, antagonism and even hatred, as each side "fights" to be right. So, knowing that we may not always "see eye to eye", how do we avoid such arguments, discords, shouting matches, and volatility, that could lead to a bad outcome and cause rifts in relationships?

It takes a lot of perseverance, "guts", stamina and desire, to avoid conflicts and walk away from a divisive situation. Sometimes, walking away becomes the best option, especially when the situation is a "no win" one. I have witnessed many arguments between family members, public figures, friends, and, executives of organizations, inclusive of mandirs. When neither party will come to a compromise or agreement, they are not seeing "eye to eye", and, there can be no solution at that point in time. Chaos sets in, and such situations can have damaging and long-lasting negative effects on family members, friends, colleagues, and relationships, in general. So, rather than argue, fuss, fight and brawl, it is

best to walk away, and try to figure out a less divisive way to solve the situation.

But, this usually requires being on "equal footing" in the same situation and viewing it from all sides. It is not an easy thing to do, because it requires impartiality, understanding and acceptance. If, regardless of the outcome, there is no acceptance, then there is no "eye to eye".

So then, "common reasoning" or compromise becomes necessary for a solution. Because, when all parties hold on to their own personal reasoning there can be no compromise and "fallouts" will definitely occur. In cases like these, for the good of all, we must work to temper the situation, give everyone time to think carefully, and logically, then regroup calmly with a common purpose of solving the problem. Better reasoning will prevail, and solutions will appear. The problem will be solved or compromised. And, hopefully all parties will continue to be friends, and respect each other, after "seeing eye to eye". If in doubt, just remind yourself of the continued Hindu tradition of shashtrarth, when learned and novice alike, discussed, debated, and disagreed on various issues including spirituality and lived happily. ◆◆◆



Editorial

THREADS 2019 to be Held in Boston in November

THREADS 2019, a unique conference with one audacious goal: To tell the story of the Hindu-American will be held on November 1-3, 2019 in Boston, MA. It is a conference which focuses on inclusion and collaboration and showcases the strength of unity in diversity.

Hindus immigrated to America from all corners of the world, and today are deeply interwoven in the fabric of America. They have enriched America with many far-ranging contributions in such diverse fields as science, technology, entrepreneurship, medicine, holistic living, education, arts, public service and journalism. It is time to chronicle the story of their integration and contributions, and pay tribute to America for embracing them with open arms as they fulfill their aspirations of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness in this land of opportunity

THREADS 2019 will bring together accomplished Hindu-Americans from diverse fields to share their stories and journeys, to appreciate the opportunities offered to them by their adopted country, and to engage with each other and explore ideas for brighter and better future for all Americans.

There will be keynote speeches, panel discussions, lightning talks and poster presentations. The eight theme areas are: Science & Technology, Education, Arts & Literature, Public Service & Advocacy, Industry & Commerce, Medicine, Holistic Living, and Service & Philanthropy.

For more information, please visit: www.threads2019.org.



Flamenco

a Dance

Expression of

Roma Spirit

By Abhishek Gaur, MD



Last night, we watched the Flamenco performance at the Barcelona City Hall. In looking for the theater, we ended up at the entrance of the real City Hall or Ajuntament de Barcelona, the place where we had just concluded our free Gothic quarter tour. Tired and hungry, we decided to ask the advice of the policia standing guard at the entrance to the 'City Hall' building. He smiled and said we have to go towards Plaça de Catalunya and it is close to it. His expression conveyed a slight amusement betraying the thought that this wasn't the first time he has been asked that question. We hurried to the venue and found it to be near the corner of the Plaça junction on the Rambla. A petite looking usher in dancer's attire asked us if we needed the ticket. Having bought it online, she

advised us to make sure we are there 15 minutes before the show. After grabbing a quick bite of veggie burgers from an avant-burger place, we headed back to the City Hall club. The gates opened promptly, and we headed to the performance hall, a small nightclub in a basement with dark walls and focused lights. The theater was a small entertainment center in the basement, good for about a 150-odd people. It was painted mostly in black and had a well-lit stage and a bar in the back. We had the preferred seating but not quite the front row VIP seats, where they served some food for those who bought it.

Six artists including a male guitarist in the late 20s, a singer couple in their late 50s, two female dancers in their 40s, and a male dancer in the late 30s, occupied the stage.

We expected to see something like the 'Dancing with the Stars' show, an Argentinian tango passionate dance, but this was going to be different. The two singers started taking turns in what sounded like a combination of Hindustani vocal and Rajasthani folk song. The guitar was subdued and sometimes sounded like a sitar. The constant hand clapping provided the beats. My wife and I heard and felt like we were at a Hindustani folk performance. It reminded me of the music and dance by artists from Bundelkhand, during our wedding reception, and a dance performance we saw in Udaipur, during our visit about ten years ago, with our extended family in India. The individual dancers took center stage, and wearing the traditional attire of vivid red and pitch black color cloth, they danced to the tune tapping their feet rapidly. Their feet tapped in rhythm with the clapping, further providing the beats to the music. Rapid body movements and turns portrayed the intensity of the dance form and expression. The dance form is physically demanding, and made our hearts beats fast, just watching it. When a dancer took the center stage, the others supported him/her enthusiastically. The young man who performed the finale was so energized that when he took the final few turns, you could see the drops of sweat shining in the bright lights showering that showered the stage.

After the program, intrigued by the eerie similarity in this form of art and Indian folk art, I started researching it. Not surprising, the origin of Flamenco starts with the Roma people who were forced to leave India about 1000 years ago, and have pejoratively been called the gypsies. Historians believe that Mahmud of Ghazni likely took them as slaves from India during his barbaric attacks on the affluent temples in the Northern, and Northwestern provinces in India. Flamenco, widely understood as a Spanish dance form, is really a combination of song, dance and instrumental music. The heart of Flamenco is the song. After having watched Flamenco on the American television, we had expected to watch a dance of lovers portraying joy and intimacy. Instead, we heard a song that was kind of telling a sad story. On my research, I found that Flamenco songs are broadly divided into a "profound song" (cante jondo), intermediate song (cante flamenco) and light song (cante chico). What we heard that day was sad and profound with some light moments. The cante jondo music is a twelve beat rhythm, found in blues and folk songs, and I thought I heard it. There are songs for various occasions. The Roma people found in southern Spain are referred to as Gitanos. The Gitanos likely brought with them native Indian instruments, like the bells, tambourine and wooden castanets, that are also found in the Middle East. In the Indian mandirs (temples), during devotional music (kirtan) and folk performance,

we often have these as accompaniments. The Flamenco outfit, also called 'traje de gitana' (Gitana outfit) is thought to have origin from Gitanos. But is now also considered Andalusian. It is a bright red or black, body hugging dress that has multiple layers, flares and frills that add to the color and beauty of the dance. Madonna made it popular in her video of the song 'La Isla Bonita'

The stylized arm, foot, hand and upper body movements of the dancers reminded me of the classic Hindu dances like *Bharatnatyam* and *Kuchipudi*. The dancers express a lot of emotions and ours portrayed anguish. Male dancers emphasize the footwork, while the female dancers use the hand and the upper body movements. Since I did not understand the language, I could not tell the reason for the anguish. Often, the song reflects the pain and persecution felt by a non-white Hindu in the midst of Christian white majority. The Gitano flamenco performers consider cante jondo as a form of prayer communicating with God and audience. In fact, at the end of a dance sequence, an intense dancer may go into a trance like a state of transcendent emotion. This is referred to by a unique Andalusian word, 'duende'. It comes from flamenco and epitomizes the years of persecution, gender, class struggle, political and religious suppression. We could perceive that quality and intensity at the climax of each performance. There was certainly an admixture in the art, with elements from Moors and Jewish cultures. Historically, what started off as primarily a family folk singing activity, with dance and musical instruments being considered secondary, later evolved into a dance form with accompaniments. This became commercial with introduction in the cafés. Although this provided living for the artists, it also degraded the art. Flamenco dance competitions started in the early 20th century, and the art was promoted in the urban centers, to restore to its authentic form.

Flamenco is the cultural heritage of Andalusian Roma. It is the expression of the Roma spirit. Flamenco is the story of persecuted people trying to survive, and still struggling to find an identity. ◆◆◆

About the Author

Dr. Abhishek Gaur

is a Cardiologist in a private practice in Georgia.

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Visit to SAC Hostels in the Northeast

By Renu Gupta

The Northeast section of Bharat consists of seven states: Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. Many people also add the state of Sikkim to this great jewel of Bharat. The Northeast covers over 8% of the total land mass and consists of 3.8% of the total population of the country. This unique area has approximately 98% of its border connected with foreign countries like China, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. Only a 26 mile stretch of land connects the Northeast with the rest of Bharat. It is very unfortunate that this very special area has been historically disconnected and disassociated from most of Bharat. The majority of our countrymen don't even know that the Northeast and its residents are an integral part of our country. This land is full of natural resources, and an abundance of agriculture, being a significant producer of rice, fruits and vegetables. And, notably the state of Assam is the largest producer of tea not only in Bharat, but also in the whole world.

The Northeast is culturally rich in various art forms,

including music, fashion, handicrafts, and dance. Skilled art forms including weaving and knitting are part and parcel of household activity. Every tribe has its own unique fashion forms to wear sarees, and has its own designs. A design of scarf, which is worn by every person, represents different tribes. Even the sarees appear the same, yet they are different in designs and style.

The Northeast is predominantly a tribal area consisting of over 250 different tribes, with caste hierarchy playing a notably insignificant role in daily life. There is no dowry system in the society. Each tribe has its own identity and culture. Majority of the tribes are historically, and staunch Hindus, but increasingly Christian missionaries and aggressive Muslim infiltration from Bangladesh, have gone all out to destroy the rich culture, heritage, and Dharmic traditions of the Northeast. The result is that three states (Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland) are now Christian majority states. Many districts in Assam are now completely Muslim majority. This infiltration of foreign religions has significantly damaged the historic Hindu



Imphal, which allowed us to visit Support-A-Child (SAC) supported hostels nearby. Shri Ajay Pareekji (the Organizing General Secretary of VHP in the North east) arranged our trip, and along with other respected volunteers of VHP accompanied us on our tour of these areas.

In the Northeast, all of the work undertaken by VHP is done under the banner of *Uttar Poovanchal Jan Jaati Seva Samiti*, which was registered in 1990. This Samiti is active in each of seven states of the Northeast. We visited three states of Northeast: Assam, Meghalaya and Manipur. Each state has its own unique and rich heritage, language, food and different style of shawls and skirts. While they are very close to each other, they have a strong foundation of their own traditions and territories.

A latent nationalist consciousness amongst the people of the Northeast has been awakened, and the alienation from the rest of Bharat has given way to an increasing feeling of integration within a united Bharat. In my personal travel, I found that in particular, the people of Manipur have a great deal of anger

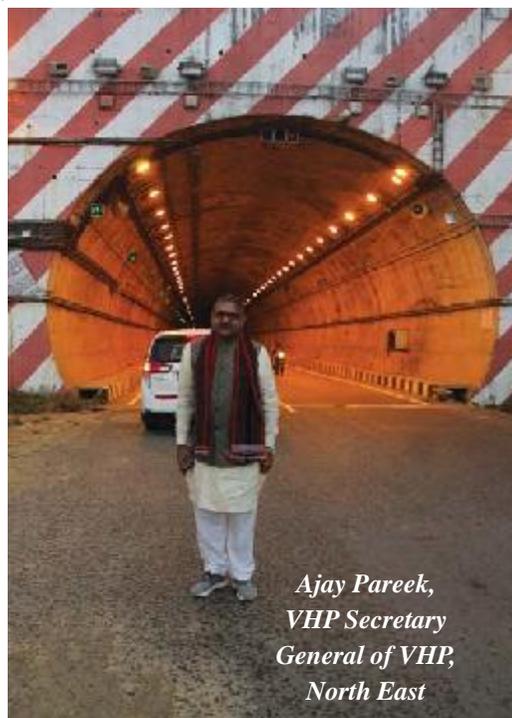
ethos of the Northeast.

For many years, Christian missionaries have created two major misconceptions to manipulate the society of the Northeast. The first misconception is that Christian missionaries are the only ones capable of providing good education and better living, with the notion that Christians are superior in all aspects of daily life. The second misconception is that the society of the Northeast is divided between Christians and non-Christians. Using these misconceptions, they have been able to heavily diminish the Hindu heritage of the Northeast.

The INA Museum, which is a memorial to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's Azad Hind Fauj, was one of the most memorable experiences in this trip. Located forty kilometers away from Imphal, it is the spot where Bose and his army reached from Southeast Asia. The museum displays several rare photos and materials of the Azad Hind Sena. After taking in the sights and sounds of the magnificent world heritage national park Kaziranga preserve, and having rare Darshan of *Kamakhya Mandir*, we visited some of important cities of the Northeast like Guwahati, Shillong, and

and frustration, for not getting enough recognition, and for being pressured by anti-Hindu forces in neighboring states, as well as in Burma. There is also some confusion about what religious traditions, people of Manipur follow, which is slowly being changed.

The VHP is currently operating over 16 schools and 20 hostels in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura,



*Ajay Pareek,
VHP Secretary
General of VHP,
North East*

Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram. These institutions house over 450 students. SAC also currently gives full financial support to 126 out of 450 students. Our current goal is to add over 100 more students in the SAC fold by the end of 2019. It should be noted that VHP volunteers are working under very difficult and strenuous conditions. While they are committed and fully dedicated, contributions from SAC in the USA not only inspires, but

also greatly helps them in their everyday work. The SAC also plans to support two tailoring centers in SAC hostels where youths will get proper training in skilled jobs, such as tailoring, weaving, knitting, and etc.

Our first stop in Assam was in Phuloni, a village about one hundred kilometers away from Guwahati. This hostel houses over 22 boys. The hostel itself is in the compound of the Vidya Bharati School. Since the hostel is currently in an older building, a new building is under construction. We met all the students of the hostel and found boys very respectful and disciplined. They recited some prayers to us and demonstrated their intelligence. The Vidya Bharati School has over 400 students who come from the nearby area. The 22 boys that currently live in the hostel are selected strictly on financial needs. The local team is excited with the support from SAC-USA, especially with the new building expected to be ready soon. They plan to expand the student's base in the hostel. We met two teachers who are also previous students of the hostel.

Our second stop was the Shri Shankardev Shishu Niketan located in Hojai, a medium size town that is over 60% Muslim. This hostel was started by Swami Krishnanadaji in 1986. This is one of the oldest schools with over 900 students, and also has a large hostel. This hostel was also built alongside the standing Vidya Bhartai School. The hostel

The VHP is currently operating over 16 schools and 20 hostels in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram. These institutions house over 450 students. SAC also currently gives full financial support to 126 out of 450 students. Our current goal is to add over 100 more students in the SAC fold by the end of 2019.

currently houses over 32 boys, who live in a very simple and moderate home setting. The hostel also has Mandir of Vishnu and Shiv Bhagwan. Assam has a rich tradition of Naamdhari, which means that the mandir does not have any deity but the recitation of all of the names of the deities takes place. With the school functioning very effectively for a long period of time, in a very sensitive location, with a Mandir, large halls, and other facilities, it has become a center of *Ghar Wapsi* for many of our fellow citizens, who want to reconvert to Hindu Dharma.

Our third stop was the girls' hostel in Haflong's. After driving over 125 kilometers from Hojai, we reached Haflong, which is a hill station. After four hours we reached the girls hostel. Over 28 female students greeted us, looking very beautiful in their traditional dress, with each dress



Arun & Renu meeting with staff, Haflong Assam



*Kitchen at Hojai
SAC Hostel*

being different. We had a very warm welcome. The girls recited chapters from the Bhagwat Geeta, that they remembered by heart. The hostel is a very impressive building. The ground floor was built by the partnership of Swami Narayan Sampradaya and IDRF, and the first floor is built by the ONGC. There is a prominent Mandir in the complex celebrating the freedom fighter Rani Gadinlue, who is highly regarded in entire Northeast. The girls weave traditional design scarves in hostel. These students study in the nearby Vivekananda English

medium school, run by VHP.

The fourth stop on our trip was the Mohta Boys Hostel. We visited this hostel in morning. The boys' hostel is located besides the Vivekananda School, housing over 35 boys. The hostel is very simple and moderate, built with donations from local businessmen. We also joined the Morning Prayer session of the school. All of the students were standing for 30 minutes, very disciplined and calm. Their uniform was very impressive in teal and maroon



Innocent and beautiful children of North east



Kitchen at Haflong Hotel, Assam

recreational activities. Each boy and girl has their own bed, desk, and basic utensils to use. I found rooms, clean and well arranged. Around 8 to 10 children share one large hall. Hired cooks and other staff members run the kitchen and associated facilities. Many senior students also help with running the hostels. They receive a total of four meals daily - morning breakfast with milk, lunch, afternoon snacks, and dinner. Their daily schedule is very tight and busy, including doing school homework, playing games, performing prayers, and helping with chores to keep the hostel running.

While the challenges are significant, the dedication shown, and the hard work done by volunteers, rises to these

color.

We had the fortune to meet Shri Ramnathji, a very dedicated RSS pracharak. He is from Etawah in Uttar Pradesh, and has been serving the Haflong area for the last 45 years, leaving behind his home area on the other side of the country. He was inspired in this traveling area in his early years and saw the problem and challenges. Through his hard work, he has established two hostels and schools, imparting quality education. Ramnathji is very well respected and appreciated in the area for his dedication and hard work.

All of the boys and girls in the hostels come from a very poor and backward background. They receive a quality education, attend board certified schools, enjoy safe and comfortable home-like environment, are imparted with high values in life, and engage in other

challenges. The Northeast represents a very valuable asset to the nation, but requires a lot of work to win the confidence and trust of the region. I really appreciate very much the dedication of all the volunteers, and full-time/part-time staff. The Northeast has huge scope of work. The main organizer, Pareekji, has set the goal to expand number of boys and girls boarding in SAC hostels from 450 to 1000 by end of this year. Let us resolve to achieve this goal. ◆◆◆

About the Author

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Mother Earth: A Term from the Veda



... माता भूमिः पुत्रो अहं पृथिव्याः ।

...maata bhoomih putro aham prithivyah
(AtharvaVeda 12.01.12)

Our planet, Earth is beneficial and soothing as the mother is to her children.

We are duty-bound to treat her right and benefit from her grace and splendour.

"PROTECT OUR SPECIES", Theme of the 2019 Earth Day

It is important to reflect on this day that we resolve that our wealth will be acquired in a net positive way to our Mother Earth ...in an ecologically and socially sustainable way. Any other way is simply irresponsible! Hence, the duty of all humans to protect all species of our ecosystem.

Refusal to face painful facts or unpleasant truths

The fear that we will be asked to tidy up the mess we have been and are creating pushes us to simply refuse to accept responsibility for irresponsible behaviour.

Yet, prevention is not only better but also cheaper than cure! The starting point is: we all need to first drop the hoarding attitude which has led to the abusive use of resources, destruction of the environment, etc. ...as if we have a second planet earth as reserve!

The Veda calls on humanity to respect the ecosystem

The Veda, the universal knowledge revealed at the creation of the human race shows the way. Its application is more relevant today than ever, as highlighted by the

hymns in honour of the Mother Earth. "The Prithvi Sukta" (AtharvaVeda 12. 1. 1-63) refers to earth as 'Mother Earth' and call upon humanity to respect the ecosystem - air, water, trees, rivers, etc. and abide by the laws of nature.

The first hymn of the *Prithivee (Bhoomi) Sukta* (पृथिवी/ भूमि सुक्त) is as follows:

सत्यं बृहद्दत्तमुग्रं दीक्षा
तपो ब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवीं धारयन्ति ।
सा नो भूतस्य भव्यस्य पत्न्यरुं
लोकं पृथिवी नः कृणोतु ॥१॥

*Satyam Brihad-Ritam-Ugram Deekshaa
Tapo Brahma Yajnyah Prithiveem Dhaarayanti,
Saa No Bhootasya Bhavyasya Patnyurum
Lokam Prithivee Nah Krinotu.*

Meaning: Those who are truthful in thoughts, speech and deeds, who possess true knowledge of the Divine Creation (Earth & the universe), who always exercise self-control, who are devoted to God and abide by the laws of the Creation (Nature), follow the guidance of learned persons always enjoy peace, progress and prosperity on this planet, Earth. This is an eternal truth, valid in the past, present and future.

Aparigraha (Sanskrit: अपरिग्रह)

Expounding the knowledge of the Veda, Sage Patanjali has in the Yoga Darshan (Yoga philosophy) handed over a holistic approach to healthy living: Yama (यम, social discipline) and Niyama (नियम, personal discipline). One of the don'ts is Aparigraha, the virtue of non-

possessiveness, non-grasping or non-greediness.

The word *parigraha* (परिग्रह) means the attitudes of craving, possessiveness, and hoarding of material possessions and includes the results as well as the intent, namely - the things acquired as a result of those attitudes. The contrary, *aparigraha* refers the desire for possessions of what is only necessary or important, as per the stage and context of one's life. It is willpower at work to stay away from the greed and avarice, overruling desires to indulge in one's own material gain or happiness comes by hurting, killing or destroying other human beings, life forms or nature. *Aparigraha* includes the psychological state of "letting go and the releasing of control, transgressions, fears" and being content, anxieties offloaded. Adopted in life, the concept of *aparigraha* serves as a constant reminder that "we've only got one (Mother Earth)...we need to treat her right".

Respect for Mother Earth

Earth Day is time to revisit our life experiences as infants! 'As infants, our instincts told us we could not survive without our mother and she was our entire world.' Common sense (a rare commodity) requires us to be ever aware that Mother Earth is vital for our survival. Ancient civilizations and cultures had the awesome feel to respectfully connect to nature in all aspects of life.

We only have to take some moments daily to watch the Creation, and enjoy our relatives and friends to connect to nature and appreciate the wonders of the Creation unfolding before us:

★ "Observe ...the fresh air of the forests ...germinating seeds ...growing plants ...colourful flowers ...crops in fields ...fruit-laden plants and trees ...the scenery at sunrise and sunset, ...the shades of light on the sides of hills and mountain tops ...nature at changing seasons ...stars and moon in the sky ...the innocence of children ...hardworking ants;

★ "Listen to ...the chirping of birds ...the sound of water flowing in streams and rivers ...sound of waves on lakes and oceans;

★ "Feel the warm/cool soothing breeze.

That's the walk-the-talk policy. When we enjoy that magic and let our children enjoy that magic, we are surely handing over the methodology to value the grace and splendour of Mother Earth. If we fail, we will break the transmission line and generations to come will "care even less" and the "take-for-granted attitude" will amplify the threat to not only other species but also to human life.

We, humans, cohabit millions of species, some known and lots unknown. Every single feature in the Creation and each form of life on Earth play an exclusive role in the complex ecosystem. Regrettably, human activity (deforestation, trafficking and poaching, unsustainable

agriculture & animal husbandry, soil, water & air pollution, pesticides, etc.) is the only one that irreversibly upsets the ecosystem, the balance of nature, amongst others - climate change, habitat loss and extinction of living species. The unfortunate Dodo has engendered a renowned saying: "as dead as the Dodo".

Why care for "Mother Earth"?

As a cradle, she sustains life by providing the life fundamentals.

- Air, water, food, shelter, etc.
- Medicinal herbs and other crops for healthy living.
- She (nature) is consistent
- Day and night prompt all to a mindful and balanced life
 - the seasons are for the welfare of all living beings
 - The waters, the land, vegetation form a self-sustainable ecosystem.
 - She is a marvellous source of knowledge, material and spiritual treasures
 - Discoveries before, in the era of Modern science and beyond only explain the manifestations in nature;
 - Inventions and creations by humans have been possible through applications of materials existing on Earth;
 - All living beings are made of the same five elements found in our planet: space, air, fire (energy), water, and earth.

Treat Mother Earth Right

Like drops add up to form the ocean, there is need for each of us to be involved. As concerned citizens, consumers, voters, educators, faith leaders, scientists, decision-makers, every individual effort counts.

The goals of the Earth Day Network are inspirational:

- Educate and raise awareness about the accelerating rate of extinction of millions of species and the causes and consequences of this phenomenon.
- Achieve major policy victories that protect broad groups of species as well as individual species and their habitats.
- Build and activate a global movement that embraces nature and its values.
- Encourage individual actions such as adopting plant-based diet and stopping pesticide and herbicide use. ◆◆◆

About the Author



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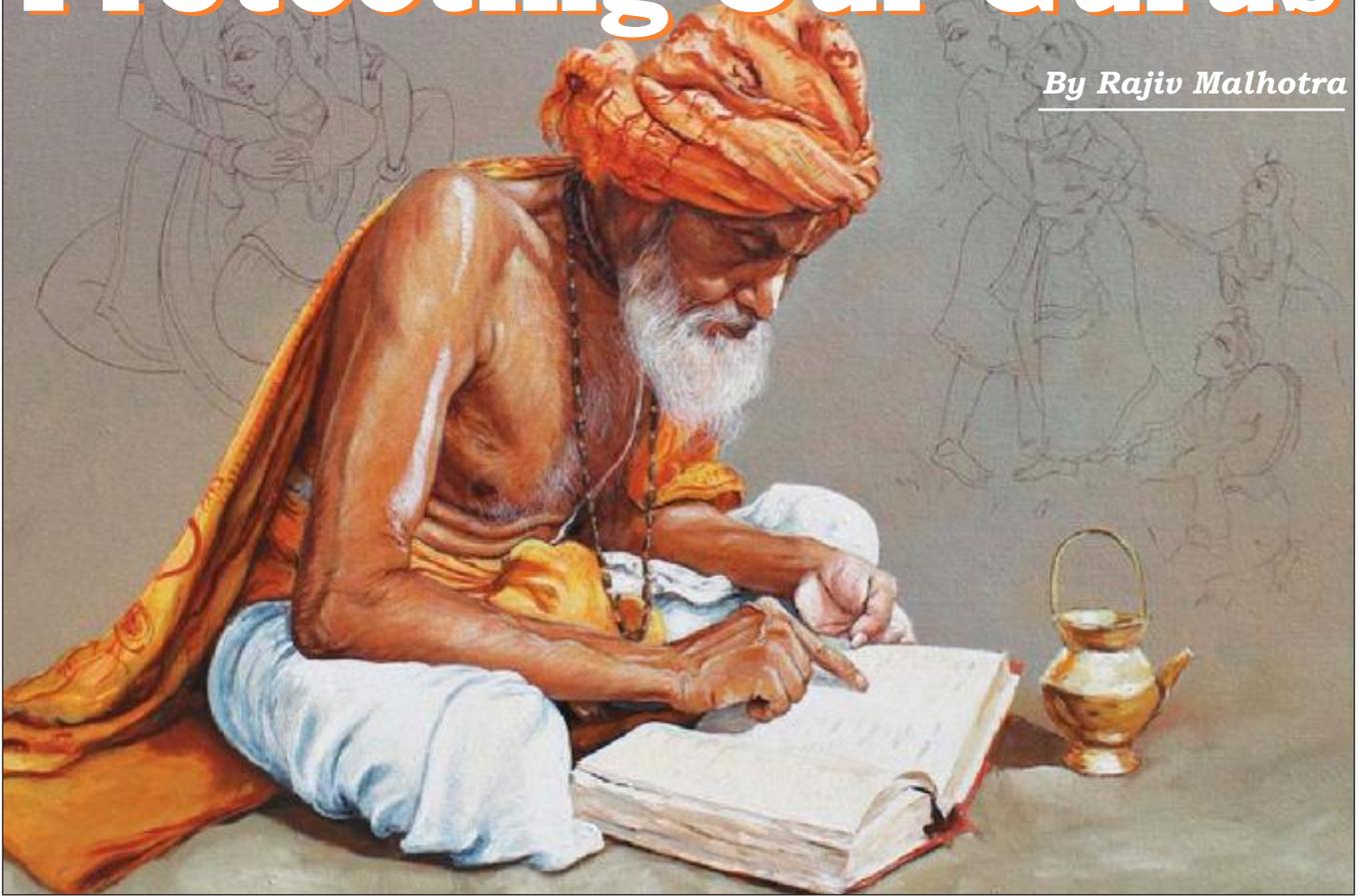
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The Importance of Protecting Our Gurus

By Rajiv Malhotra



One of Hinduism's most important and distinctive qualities is the widespread appearance of living masters throughout its long history. It is they who have kept the tradition alive and constantly refreshed with new insights and interpretations for each time and context. My book, *Being Different*, explains how the Vedic metaphysics of *sat-chit-ananda* helps to bring about such a powerful flow of gurus in diverse circumstances. Gurus have exerted very powerful influences in preserving and enhancing the tradition through time.

An institutionalized "religion of the book" is vulnerable because it can be wiped off by eliminating its physical infrastructure and burning/banning its books. But in the case of Hindu dharma, every such attempt at its destruction was followed by a renewal, brought about by living gurus. Given the public's faith in our sadhus, mahatmas and acharyas, it is clear that as long as we have dynamic gurus, we will thrive.

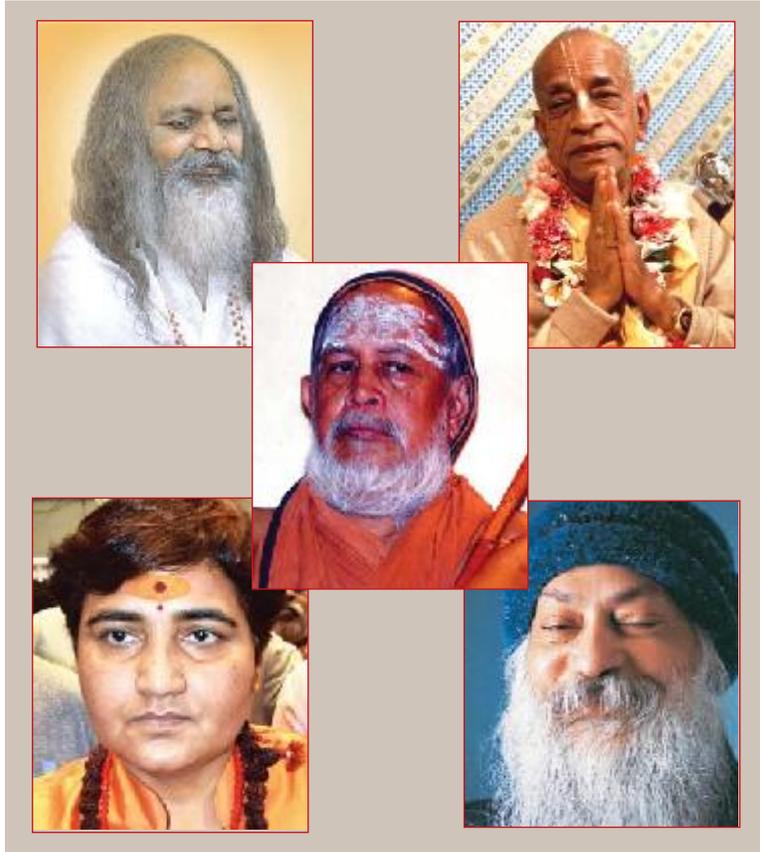
This is the reason why the gurus have frequently become the targets of vicious attacks by Hinduophobic forces seeking to undermine the tradition.

In recent decades, we saw vicious attacks against Osho in USA charging him with serious crimes, including murder. Then Swami Muktananda, over a decade after his death, was accused of sexual misconduct - ironically, by women who were his ardent devotees during his lifetime. After Swami Prabhupada died, ISKCON in USA was prosecuted for allegations of sexual harassment. Yogi Amrit Desai, one of the most prolific teachers of yoga for white Americans since the 1970s, was suddenly removed from his own institution, Kripalu Center, on similar charges. Attempts were also made to bring down Maharishi Mahesh Yogi when he was in his prime of success. Swami Prakashanand Saraswati is another guru charged of child molestation at age 82 in USA. The accusers claimed to have been "groped" over a decade earlier, leaving one to wonder why it took so long to complain. Critical video evidence was "lost" by the prosecutors. Yet it took the jury only 50 minutes to pronounce him guilty of charges amounting to 50 years of imprisonment.

This strategy of aggressive persecution was also

imported into India. We saw the Shankaracharya of Kanchi facing false murder charges, later proven wrong, but by then the media had worked round the clock to damage the public image as much as possible. Once the Shankaracharyas were exonerated, the media did not apologize, much less restore their image. Asaram Bapu, Sadhvi Pragma and Ashutosh Maharaj are among many others whose followers are convinced they have been falsely accused and unfairly treated by media.

Similarly, one finds that the charges against Swami Nithyananda have already been proven false. But, the media has done very little to give him fair treatment. I can say based on meditation courses I have taken with him in Bidadi (Bangalore) as well as



Varanasi, that thousands of persons have received great benefits from him. His followers tend to be extremely well educated, young, fully aware and assertive of their rights. And this applies to men and women equally. I do not find them to be the types who would easily get duped, or who would turn a blind eye if there were wrong doing.

I was introduced to Swami Nithyananda by a retired psychiatrist who had closely followed my own work for many years. He earned my trust over time. (I did notice that he was very ambitious to climb up the Nithyananda organization.) I relied on his side of the story when he started telling me things against Swami Nithyananda. Later on, I learned that it was a case of petty jealousy, because his goal to occupy some position of importance did not materialize. So he had turned into a vicious enemy.

Since that time, I started to make my own inquiries. I discussed the allegations with numerous women inside the organization, and as a result I feel assured that if the charges had been true, these educated, confident women would not remain so loyal and supportive to their guru. Also, I examined some of the legal evidence with the help of lawyers, just for my own curiosity I found that

the legal due process against him seemed politically motivated and lacked transparency. In fact, one independent legal expert with an excellent reputation has told me that this case was mishandled as a "hatchet job" just to try and nail him on spurious grounds.

Unfortunately, even when legal cases lack merit, they often linger on for years in order to create a smear image campaign. I feel there ought to be a time limit to prove guilt after a criminal case starts; if the system is unable to prove guilt in that time limit, the accused should be set free and the case dismissed. After all, the authorities simply should not be able to destroy a person's life on unproven charges and linger on for more than a decade or even longer.

Furthermore, the media has no right to behave as if has the authority to adjudicate. Far worse than any damage cause by the legal action (if at all it ultimately proves guilt) is the devastation caused by the media mafia. They seem determined to bring down any Hindu who is vocal and successful. There ought to be provisions that if the media accuses someone of charges that cannot be established within a specified timeframe, then the media ought to spend three times as much space/time to apologize, and to give the side of the story of the person who was falsely accused. Only such a deterrent would make the media accountable and stop the blatantly irresponsible coverage.

In my book, *Breaking India*, I charted the mechanisms both in India and abroad that are involved in destroying India's civilizational fabric. In Swami Nithyananda's case, he has been very active and successful in fighting against Christian conversions in south India, especially in Tamil Nadu. I know from personal experience how the breaking India forces plan elaborate strategies to go after someone, once he is marked as a threat. There is no morality or ethics in their methods. This much I can say from personal experience, having faced these very same

Continued on page 33

New S-VYASA Yoga Center Inaugurated in Houston

By Manu Shah



On 27th April, S-VYASA inaugurated its Yoga Center at the West Oaks Mall, in the presence of its Founder Dr . H. R. Nagendra, yoga teachers and students.

The "phones in meditation mode" policy set the tone for the event and the Vedic chanting by Vishwarupa Nanjudappa and Srikhanta Parmeshwara further elevated the positive energy in the room. Emcee Suveena Guglani invited President of VYASA Houston Dr. Sudha Rajan to introduce the "NASA to VYASA" Chief Guest of Honor Dr. H.R. Nagendra. Dr . Nagendra is the Chancellor of the S-VY ASA deemed University in Bengaluru and the "NASA to VYASA" is a reference to his stint at NASA.

The Center was formally inaugurated in the traditional Indian way with the lighting of the lamp by Dr. Nagendra and the Guests of Honor. Dressed in his signature white shirt and dhoti, Padma Shri Dr. Nagendra, fondly known as Guruji, left a promising career abroad and joined his aunt Lakshmi Amma to serve and spread the practice of yoga. He is credited with bringing a scientific research dimension to the usefulness of yoga through many publications and led the formulation of the 35 minute yoga protocol which incorporates all the four streams of yoga - Karma, Gyana, Bhakti and Hatha yoga for the International Yoga Day.

In his address, Guruji spoke of the great strides in yoga awareness and its practice, not only in India but around the world and credited this to his student - Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal interest and push

Sitting: L to R: Suveena Guglani, Kirthi Jain, Vishwarupa Nanjudappa, Smitha Mallaiah, Brij Gopal Pallod, Jugal Malani, Shiv Das Agrawal.

Standing: Dr. Manjunath Sharma, Alison Jeffries, Dr. Sudha Rajan, Raj Malani, Kiran Bhutada, Dr. H.R. Nagendra, Ramesh Bhutada, Dr. Lorenzo Cohen, Durga Agrawal, Sushila Agrawal, Kaushal Agrawal.

Attendees at the opening



in the project.

Yoga, he pointed out, should not be a one day celebration but must be incorporated in the educational system to bring about a transformation in the nation. Yoga has now been made compulsory in the Teachers Training program and tremendous research is underway to understand how yoga can help in the prevention and improvement of cancer and diabetes. Based on Swami Vivekananda's teachings, the University infrastructure and education delivery is considered on par with the IIT's for yoga education.



He also lauded the efforts of directors Vishwarupa Nanjudappa, Smitha Mallaiah and Board members Dr. Sudha Rajan, Prakash Morolia and Kirthi Jain who have been pivotal in carrying out the mission and vision of the organization. Longtime key contributors to the organization and yoga practitioners themselves, Dr. Durga and Sushila Agrawal, Ramesh and Kiran Bhutada and Jugal and Raj Malani were felicitated for their generosity. Dr. Lorenzo Cohen and Alison Jefferies were also felicitated for their support and trailblazing research work in using yoga in different cancer populations and encouraging the practice of yoga at the MD Anderson Cancer Center. S-VYASA and MD Anderson have a MOU for yoga research for two decades. Smitha Mallaiah, Program Director proposed the formal vote of thanks.

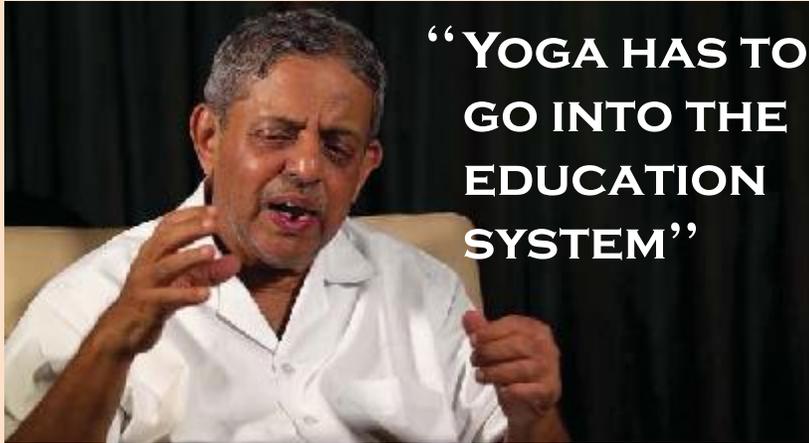
Dr. Manjunath Sharma, Director of Research,

explained yoga's benefits analyzed from studies carried out at the S-VYASA lab at Bengaluru, India. Brain waves mapped during pranayama showed distinct structural changes such as an increased thickness of the cortex. SVYASA's teachers also taught yoga to India's research teams in Antarctica to weather the harsh conditions and the social isolation. On learning this, lab members of eight other countries also approached VYASA. The Institute has also been tapped by NASA to develop a yoga module for astronauts. ◆◆◆

Despite a packed schedule, Dr. Nagendra took time to answer a few questions. See on next page



L to R: Kirthi Jain, Dr. Manjunath Sharma, Dr. H.R. Nagendra, Vishwarupa Nanjudappa, Smitha Mallaiah



“YOGA HAS TO GO INTO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM”

How did your journey in yoga begin?

My uncle Seshadri taught me yoga when I was nine years old and I also started memorizing the Gita but it was only after I did my Masters that the whole transformation started. We were a group of people trying to understand the purpose of life. We started studying the Upanishads, Vedanta and started the practice also.

Can you tell me something about Patanjali?

Patanjali is, you can say, almost an incarnation - he is the master of masters, he

is everything that can be achieved by Yoga. He was a highly developed individual and brought all the yoga traditions and put it into a mathematical precise language. What we know about Patanjali and what we see is hardly one percent of what he taught. The entire dimension of Vibhuti Pada, and Kaivalya Pada (two chapters in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra) are still not fully understood and so we are trying to do research in that direction.

You once said that as a species "we've become gigantic on one hand and a pygmy on the other hand." Please elaborate?

Modern education makes your mind sharper, intelligent, creative but on the other hand calming, and silencing the mind is hardly taught. As a result, we've grown gigantic on one front and on the other side a pygmy - a big imbalance. This imbalance is the root cause for all the challenges we have.

You mean like depression, anxiety, stress, addictions..?

Yes. We have to bring the system back to a balance. It's like trying to fly with one wing. That's why yoga's inclusion in the education system is very important. The modern education system has ruined us...you may learn some yoga and do it for a few days but if you want to bring a transformation in society, it has to go into the education system.

Patanjali says one must use the body to gain mastery over the mind?

When you do the yogic postures, you must do it correctly. The definition of an asana is "*sthira sukham asanam*." You must sit quietly, calmly without movement like a statue if you are sitting or standing. Any position you do, you must become steady. That's the first step. Then you stay for a longer time, then you should enjoy this process and this way Patanjali says the mind will get tuned to the infinite object like the vast blue sky or the ocean - "*Ananta samapatti*." This is how you use the body as a tool to gain mastery over the mind.

Why is gaining mastery over the breath so powerful?

The breathing, prana and mind are connected... Patanjali says you start controlling the breathing which is easier and the mind comes under control. If the mind is very haphazard, the breathing is also very shallow/unrhythmic. Once you start making the breathing uniform and controlled, the mind will also come under control.

What would you say to someone who wants to start yoga but says they have no time?

Are they busier than our Indian Prime Minister? He practices for 1 1/2 hours every day without fail.

The best asana?

Shavasana - the corpse pose. Somebody asked me which is one practice in yoga which I want to do without fail and it will give me all the benefits and I said keep a smile on the face all the time - "*Santosha anutaka sukha labha*." Patanjali says if you are happy, contented and smiling - that's the best yoga.

What about surya namaskar?

Surya namaskar is good, it combines all the different asanas. You can start off with 9, then increase to 27, then 108.

The word "consciousness" has been cropping up more frequently. How does yoga help achieve this?

Yoga's objective is that...to reach the highest states of consciousness. Patanjali's *sastanga yoga* takes you to *Samadhi*. *Samadhi* takes you from this level of consciousness to a higher level and you can keep going higher

This June 21 is the 5th International Day of Yoga. What kind of meaningful change do you think this will

bring about in the world?

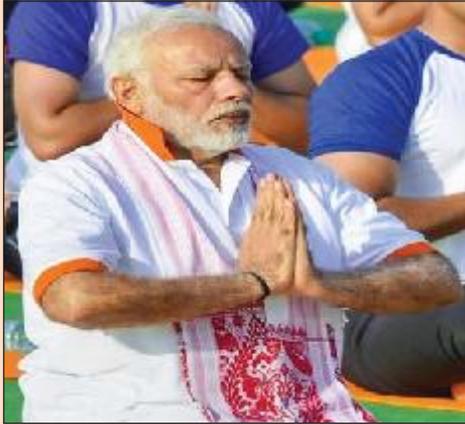
The whole approach of yoga is to change ourselves. Unless we change, the world cannot change.

How do you begin your day and what is your diet like?

I sleep around 10-11 pm and get up around 2-2:30 am. For three hours, I do some *asanas*, *pranayama*, meditation, cleansing, *upasanas* or worship of the gods. Breakfast is normally a soup and some fruits, a little idli maybe, lunch is some chappati and dinner is some milk and fruits. In the afternoon, I rest for about 30 minutes to an hour.

You were Modi's personal yoga trainer. What kind of student was he?

Very regular. When we had the class, he used to call all the cabinet ministers in Gujarat. The class started at 6 am. I would go 10 minutes earlier to prepare everything. He would come 5 minutes early. The beauty of it was that because he came 5 minutes early, all had to come early and they would not miss a single day. His time management is fantastic. Once he decides, he will do it. He practices for 1 1/2 hours every day.



Narendra Modi practices yoga for 1 1/2 hours every day

Can one practice yoga by following YouTube videos?

A good teacher will also tell what you should not do, that's very important. If you do just the way you want, you will have problems. You have to follow the directions properly. We also recommend that you must do *Shavasana*/Corpse pose in the end so if there are any imbalances, they will get corrected. Otherwise they will aggravate.

You are a pioneer of cyclic meditation - a yoga technique that involves doing the poses in a slow conscious manner.

The principles are there in the Upanishads, so I developed a module from them. It helps to calm the mind, brings balance and releases the superficial and deep stresses and it can take you to a very deep level.

Five most beneficial yoga poses?

Every pose has benefits. *Vajrasana* after lunch is very helpful for digestion, *shavasana*, some standing poses like *ardha kati chakrasana* (Lateral bend pose), *sarvangasana* is good if you can do the *sarvangasana - matsyasana* (shoulder stand - fish pose) combination.

Any particular direction one must face when doing yoga?

It is good to face east.

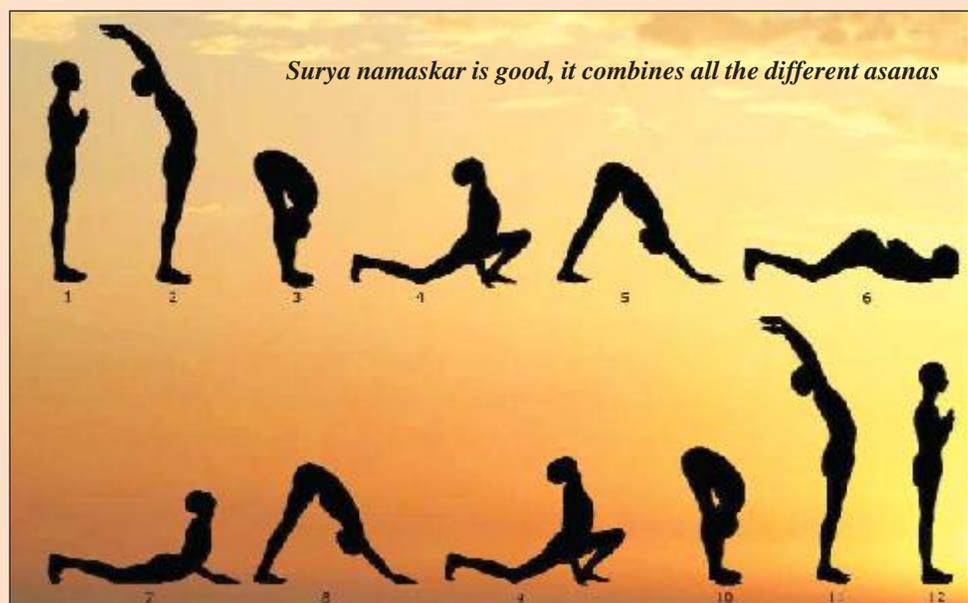
Your favorite book?

I wrote a book on happiness called "Happiness Analysis." In the Upanishads, it is called the *Ananda Mimamsa*.

We all want to be happy. But what is happiness? Only when we understand, then we will become happy otherwise we go in the wrong direction. You do several things but you're not happy. So the best thing is to understand what happiness is and practice that. I chant the verses.

Three simple things we can do to harmonize our lives?

Moderation in food, moderation in activity and a nice smile on the face. ♦♦♦



Surya namaskar is good, it combines all the different asanas

Hindu Reforms:



Need of the Hour

By Jayant Mehta MA, MD

As a practicing Hindu and a former Hindu priest, I have felt that Hindu religious practices are quite different from the teaching of the major Hindu spiritual texts. *Shruti* literature includes Upanishad and Bhagwat Gita - the corner stones of Hindu philosophy- but most Hindus never read these scriptures. The basic spiritual texts that form the foundation of Hindu faith and traditions are not taught to the Hindu youths and even the priests who perform the rituals rarely understand the essentials. Very few Hindus understand the language of the scriptures- (Sanskrit), and uniform translation is not easily available. Religious practices are derived from family traditions, or one of the many denominations of Hindu *Sampraday*. Temple worship and rituals come from the *Smriti* literature. To complicate the matter further, some of the "*Gurus*" make their own rules. The Brahmin who performs the rituals may not be a well-trained *Guru*, and most of the Hindus neither read the spiritual texts nor get a formal education on basic teaching of the *Santana Dharma*. Meaning of the stories from the epics

and *Purana* are confusing to the modern youth.

This issue is important because the world is getting smaller and Hindus both in India and abroad are getting more into the rituals, rather than progressing to the path of spirituality, or better practice of Dharma. Many Hindu priests and some of the *Gurus* do not take time to learn about the other major religions of the world, which limits their ability to relate to the youth. Western books have described Hindu *Dharma* as a very confusing and contradicting religion and labelled it as "Hinduism". Our new generation is staying away from our ancient faith because they want simple answers and they lack good role models. Millions of Hindus in India are still very poor and the cruelty on the name of caste system persists. Violence on women and chronic mistreatment of the widows continue to be a sad state of affair in Hindu society.

Corruption, dishonesty and superficial religiosity are prevalent in India, indicating limited positive effect of *Dharma* on the daily life of Hindus.

Christianity and Islam are rapidly growing religions.

Reform of the Hindu mind and the society is an ongoing process, but it is always slow. Some of the reforms are long overdue, particularly for the NRI who deal with the society dominated by the Western religions.

Their society also has problems. Some of their leaders are very eager to convert others to their own fold, declaring that their theology and their Holi books have the final authority. Honesty, non-violence and kindness towards the poor are not improving in the area where these religions have dominating position. It seems that religions in general have very limited positive influence on morality at large.

On this background a reform movement is urgently needed. Reform of the Hindu mind and the society is an ongoing process, but it is always slow. Some of the reforms are long overdue, particularly for the NRI who deal with the society dominated by the Western religions. Such reforms are part of every dynamic religion or a faith group. When the religion fails to keep up with science and technology, ultimately the religion decays. Take an example of recent Zika virus epidemic and Catholic practice of not using birth control measures. A progressive leader will change the church's position and lead their people to a right direction. Christian churches are going through reforms from time to time. Throughout the history, Hindu leaders have also changed their positions and guided the mass towards a correct path. In 1897, when M.K Gandhi went to England, his *Baniya* community declared him an "out caste" for crossing the ocean. In 1915, thousands came to greet him at the Bombay seaport, when he returned to his homeland from South Africa. Now a days, thousands of Hindus cross the ocean every day without the fear of being placed on "out of caste" status. Ability to make such changes have kept the Hindu faith alive and well in spite of adverse circumstances and foreign invasions that we had to deal with in the past and we are facing at the present. Unfortunately, it took many years to get rid of "Sati" tradition. Several other traditions that are in current practice need a change.

This article is about the need for such reforms and its value in keeping *Sanatan Dharma* more relevant to the modern world.

For the sake of this article, I would divide the needed reforms in two section:

One: Philosophical changes. **Two:** Social and cultural changes

Philosophical changes:

A- We consider Veda "*Apurishya*", that means no human being has composed it. It is the knowledge of God, by the God. The truth is, our ancient sages were inspired by the God to compose these verses and they have been collected over many years. It is also possible that many of the verses are missing. Several sages composed the Hindu scriptures over many centuries.

B - We must denounce any discrimination based on the caste system. *Manu Smriti* is an important book but we cannot follow everything written in Manu Smrti in literal sense. We should not stretch or twist the interpretation of the old text to please the modern critics. We should plainly say: "This idea is not relevant today"

C - Using the theory of incarnations, many self-proclaimed "*Avatar*" walk around in India. Innocent people worship them as the God. This is ridiculous! Hindu leaders do not want to upset some of the Samprdays because of the political or social reasons. How many gods do we need? Are we going to allow Hindus to remain divided in many denominations and worship every piece of stone? Constantly flourishing hero worship has no end!

The other part of the "*Avtar*" faith, that the God is going to come down and solve all our problems is being naive

D- Temples are important for Hindu faith but our faith is not temple-based. We believe in "*Achar permo dharma*" High philosophy must trickle down to spiritual growth and service to the millions of Hindus who are hungry and poor. "They are suffering because of their bad *Karma*" is not a right answer. "Lord Narayan will take incarnation and fix our problem" is not a correct attitude either.

E- We frequently say that *Moorti Pooja* is the first step towards Bhakti. When are we going to promote second or third step? Emotionalism and superstition are nourished through certain "right and wrong" that go with image worship. Overcrowding in many temples is based on a faulty idea that one can earn more *punya* by visiting a temple on *Purnima* rather than any regular day.

F- Adi Shankracharya had established four seats (*math*) in all four-corners of India. He tried to bring some organized structure to an unorganized religious tradition. Over the years, this structure has lost its influence. It is time to re-establish a committee, or a scholarly group that will speak for the Hindu Dharma with some authority and minimize chaos. In the past, every family had a "*Gore*"- a family priest who guided the members of the family from time to time. This connection is lost.

G- Ramayana and Mahabharata are great epics. Instead of enjoying the poetry, we have turned them into some religious texts. Miracles and stories described in the ancient books were meant to teach the common men in a form of storytelling. Some folks take it literally

H- We keep on praising our ancient past but ignore the present. Some of our claims are baseless.

I- Hindus believe that "Truth always wins"; but it is the absolute truth, not a relative truth. Non-violence is important but there are times when "just war" has to be



Hindu gods do not need gold and silver. Loading these temples with lots of money and precious metals is foolishness.

accepted.

J- Poverty is not simplicity. Enjoying life is not a religious or moral sin.

K- Based on theory of *Karma*, we need to act appropriately and not give up saying "our fate is unchangeable"

L- We praise "Self-realization" (*Atma-Gyan*) but this idea is over-glorified. It is not necessary to become a *sanyasi* or leave the family life to find spiritual knowledge. Celebes is also over rated. A person living as a householder can also find the *Moksha*.

M- We glorify non-violence but there comes a time, when destroying evil forces is essential to protect the innocent people. Shri Ram had weapons to destroy evil monsters. We worship Him for his skill and courage.

This is not a complete list, but I hope, you get the point. We must change our philosophical ideas based on old text or reinterpret them in modern perspective. This task should be done by a group of learned scholars and not by the self-proclaimed Guru or a leader of one or two denominations.

Social and cultural changes:

A- *Atma-Gyan* (self-realization) is praised so much that people forget that after this self-realization, one still has to perform the daily chores. Everyone has to eat, sleep, and do his/her duties.

B- Most Hindu priests do not bother to study other world religions. This must change. A modern teacher of Hindu faith must have some basic knowledge of Christianity and Islam, two most popular religions of the

world. These two western religions are monotheistic and some of their leaders are so overzealous that they believe that they must "save" Hindus by converting them. Hindu leaders need to understand their theology and their methods of spreading the power of their organization. We need to learn to counter this practice in a peaceful manner. Their service commitment and charity for education and health care is quite impressive, it is time, we put this principle in practice.

C- Hindu masses must understand that going to a temple or performing a ritual does not complete their faith-based practice. *Dharma* should be practice in day-to-day life.

D- Respect is different from worship. A saint should be respected,

but to put him on the pedestal at the same status as the God is diluting the devotion to the God. One must be selective and stick to one chosen deity.

E- We need unity, simplification and administrative system that will reduce the exploitation of the masses in the name of religion. Authority of the *Dharma* is so decentralized that there is no central authority. Hindu fundamentalist are about to kidnap the essential value of *Santana Dharma* -tolerance and harmony.

F- Hindu gods do not need gold and silver Loading these temples with lots of money and precious metals is foolishness. It promotes greed and creates a large sum of dead investment that hurts our economy.

G- Some denominations use public service as "publicity stunt" to collect more money. Community should ask pointed questions: "what % of the total collection was spent on charity?"

H- Be aware of self-proclaimed "Avatars". They are there to gain power, money and abuse the public faith.

I- There is no scientific evidence that fire ritual performed in a traditional sense brings rain. No need to pour lot of Ghee in the fire. Lord Shiva and the Shiv Lingaa does not need lots of milk. It is better to offer small quantity of this milk to the lord and then distribute the rest to the needy children.

J- False belief or excessive emotionalism is not *Bhakti*. God will be equally pleased whether you visit him on *Purnima* or on the *Amavasya*. God is the creator of all the days, how can he create a bad day?

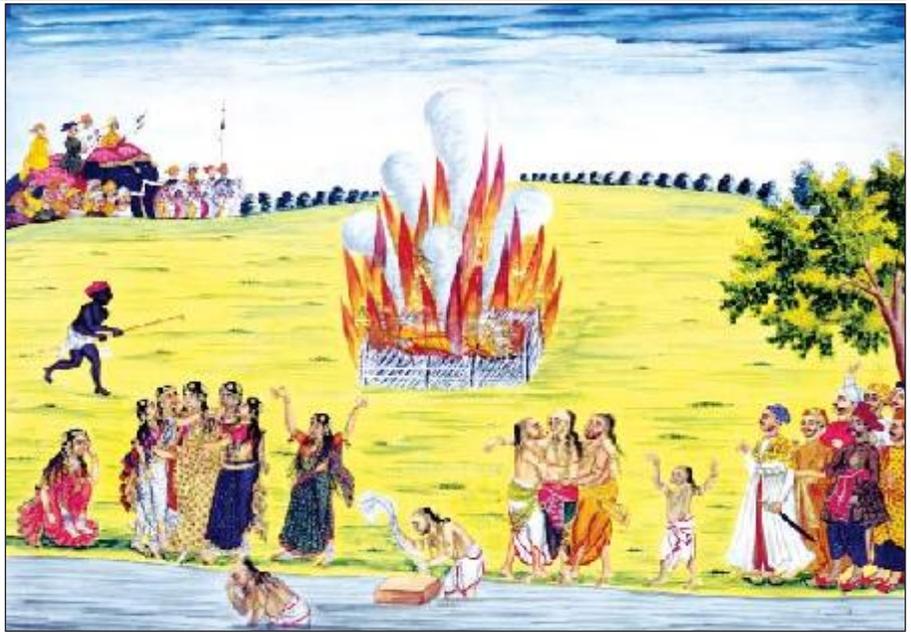
K- Social justice: cruelty and injustice in the name of the "*Varnashram*" *dharma* is still in practice. Political

election take advantage of this old, outdated system. Treatment of the women, particularly the widows is still very cruel and lack kind attitude and strong support for the needed change.

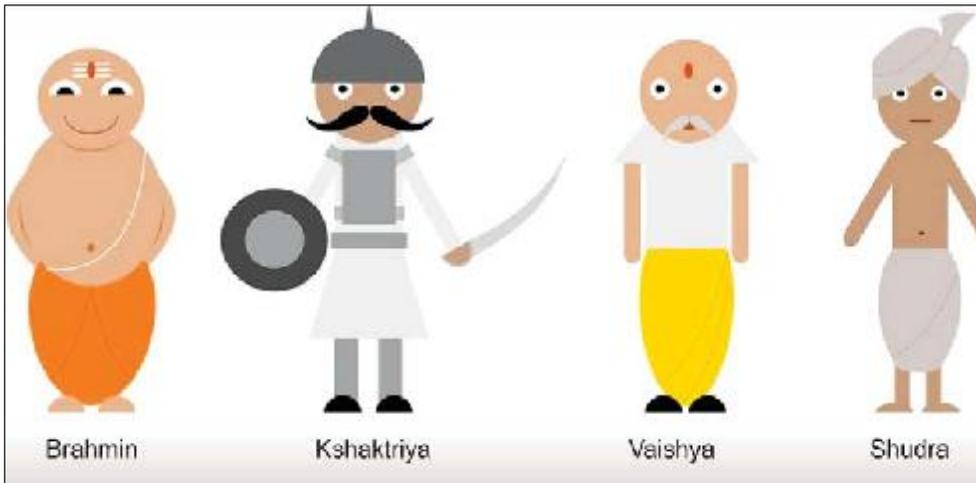
Ultimate *Guru* is within us. I believe it is time to wake up and face reality. *Dharma* is doing our duty and being kind to others.

Need for an International structure and authority:

While we admire the freedom and inclusive nature of Hindu faith tradition, we need a national or international committee that has some authority and clear guidance for the society. If a temple is cheating



It took many years to get rid of `Sati`



We must denounce any discrimination based on the caste system

the devotees and the managers and pocketing the public money for private use, this national body needs to speak up. Crowds of people visit many temples but they do not get basic facility like water, food and clean toilets. Such state of affair is unacceptable. For example, if the Kumbha Mela has excessive disorganization and chaos the national body of the experts need to intervene. We cannot afford to have our holy river Ganges get dirtier every year! Many self-proclaimed *Gurus* have sex candles. We need an internal check and balance system. Look what catholic faith is going through at the present. Celibacy is not natural and its value is exaggerated.

Summery:

Hinduism needs to be simplified. Truth about history and mythology must be told. We are afraid to offend the leaders of different *Samprday*, so we remain silent or inclusive. This creates multiple contradictions and

confusion. New generation wants logical, simple and honest religion. I am afraid we will fail to provide their needs. Yes, our ancient Vedic faith tradition is as good as any other religion but we need to change with time. Our ancient sages were wise and they thought "moderation" in the key to happy life. Life is to live, learn and love. Time has come to review our philosophy and practices.

People of Jewish faith and Islam have learnt to work with Christian leaders. We, the Hindus leaving in the West, must form the bridge to work with other faith traditions, but first clean our own house.

Hinduism is like an old palace that was great a long time ago, now it is time to clean it up and allow the old diamonds to shine! ◆◆◆

About the Author

Dr. Jayant Mehta,
based in Johnson City, TN, has authored many books and has published 100+ scientific papers over the years. He has won outstanding awards and recognitions in TN.
He also is an MA in Hindu Philosophy from the Hindu University of America.

The Flame of our Past Still Ablaze



A LOOK INTO THE THRIVING CULTURE OF THE HINDU-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

By Shreya Mishra

After spending eight years as a student enrolled in the VHPA BalVihar program, I became well-versed in the Hindi Language and Hindu Culture. I understood the context of my way of life, and now had an explanation to each festival, custom, and tradition my parents had instilled in me as a younger child. I decided to sit down with the teachers, administrators, and volunteers, who I had surrounded myself with for years, and speak about their backgrounds, and motivations for continuing to diffuse Indian culture.

What is BalVihar?

What was once a seven student class with the objective of teaching the Hindi language and Hindu culture has become a tremendous, highly recognized and dignified program that dedicates itself to the expansion of Hindu languages and cultures among newer generations of Hindus in America.

VHPA BalVihar describes themselves as an education program that is committed to educating, cherishing, and celebrating the Hindi language and Hindu culture. The Atlanta Chapter of BalVihar functions under the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, or World Hindu Council of America, an organization that abides under cherishing the beauty that is Hindu culture and identity.

Those who commit to teaching, organizing, and generally helping under BalVihar work on a voluntary basis. All teachers go through extensive training, ensuring their expertise and experience in their individual field of teaching. What motivates the volunteers is their sheer desire to enrich the knowledge of new generations of Hindu-Americans in Atlanta.

Defining the Importance of BalVihar in Our Community

In a survey conducted at South Forsyth High School, it was concluded that most students of any Indian origin can fluently speak a Hindu language of Indian origin; however, can only somewhat read and write. This is where BalVihar can help students truly flourish in Indian languages and, extend the depth of knowledge being spread across generations of Indian teens and young adults, in foreign countries.

Additionally, learning Hindi serves as a quintessential step to fully embracing Hindu culture, including exotic Indian poetry, scriptures, literature, and philosophy. Hindi is based on Sanskrit, the basis of language within India, and one of the oldest languages in the world.

In India, almost every state has its own unique language. While Hindi is the national language and is

The VHPA Atlanta Chapter Executive Board Members Say...

In order to further grow my knowledge on the core values and origin of BalVihar, I spoke to the Atlanta Chapter Executives about what they believed the importance of these organizations are in our community, and what motivated them to constantly support the mission VHP of America was about.

Smita Daftardar

Smita Daftardar is a volunteer at BalVihar that teaches students and helps run the program smoothly. Her eloquent philosophies about the importance of cultural diffusion can give insight on how BalVihar is substantially affecting the younger generations of Hindus in America.

"You can, to some extent, maybe absorb culture from your surroundings, you can probably understand some language by listening to it, but if you really learn the language, you have to have a formal education in that. That's where BalVihar comes in."



Manju Tiwari

Manju Tiwari has been with the organization for almost 27 years, painstakingly contributing her whole heart to spreading her culture and language to the younger generations of Hindus as a volunteer teacher at BalVihar. I spoke with her about why she believed BalVihar was crucial to the American Hindus in Atlanta.

"VHPA's BalVihar teaches the Universal Principles. These are good for humanity."



Shyam Tiwari

Shyam Tiwari is a highly dedicated member of the executive committee, and helps spread the message that the organization works to instill in Hindu-American families across Atlanta. He spoke on the importance of the incorporation of language to establish a base of culture, and self-identity in generations of Hindus in America.

"We are seeing [BalVihar] impact, where our children who got education in BalVihar became successful dentists, lawyers, doctors; their children are now coming back to BalVihar. That's how we see it getting propagated; they have the same value system, and they think it's a good idea to maintain the cultural heritage."



Jayant Daftardar

What started with a path for his children has now made Jayant Daftardar the President of the VHPA Atlanta Chapter. He spoke on his journey of finding a connection to his roots in America, helping his children truly know themselves, and finding an identity amongst their Indian peers. He wanted newer generations of Hindu-Americans to have a similar education as his in India, and he was able to achieve so with BalVihar.

"We have some parents whose children graduated a long time ago- maybe 6 or 7 years; but they still come here just to help the school run this program. That is our strength. Volunteers who work for the school are the strength of the program."



spoken widely throughout all parts of India, it is also in many other countries. This helps Indians become versatile language speakers; they have to adapt to the many languages spoken as they move across the country.

In order to fully understand why the BalVihar program is so important, Gopalkrishna Vishwanath, a retired Structural Engineer & language and internet/social media enthusiast, explains how, as a



South Indian, learning Hindi helped him communicate effectively in parts of his country.

"The whole of India outside your home state will seem like a familiar place and you will not feel like an outsider. I learned Hindi. It was a struggle initially because I started late but today I am so happy that I learned it well and recall with pleasure how advantageous it has been to me."

He explains that learning Hindi can benefit almost anyone, in any aspect of their life; whether that be building foreign relationships, or speaking to a fellow Indian from another state.

"If you are a person who needs to have mass contact (with millions) like politicians, marketing professionals, and most of them are not the elite English speaking 2 or 3 percent of our population, if you don't know Hindi, you are limiting your access to only those who know English and your regional language. Try selling an agricultural product in a village outside your non - Hindi speaking home state and see how serious a handicap you suffer from."

His views, alongside several statistics proving Hindi to be a global necessity, provide a link between Indians of all states and origins.

Discussing Language Diffusion with a Hindu-American at South Forsyth High School

As a means to understand the perspective of an Indian student living in the United States, I spoke to Sreenivas Yellayi, a junior at South Forsyth High School about the importance his mother tongue holds in his everyday life in another country.

"I learned Telugu at home by listening and speaking. [BalVihar] is important mostly because we need to be able to communicate and hold on to our cultural

characteristics from the past. Also, we need to be able to communicate with relatives and grandparents."

In a time where Hindi was unidentifiable in America, few brave individuals stood up for their culture, and began the diffusion of their language and essence of life to those who did not have context to their identity in their community. The respect, devotion, and pure love that the individuals at the World Hindu Council of America have for their origins are innumerable. Hindu culture and Indian Language has now linked generations of Indians to their heritage and rich history. Organizations like BalVihar have revolutionized the Hindu-American community in foreign countries, where young Indians can now proudly represent their culture, language, and essence of life to the world. ◆◆◆

About the Author



Shreya Mishra is a freshman at South Forsyth High School, and is exceptionally excited to be working on the journalism staff this year. She enjoys creative writing, opinion writing, and photography. Out of school, she is an extremely passionate dancer of 7 years, and an artist since she could write. Shreya has won many competitions for public speaking, and plans to grow her debating and speech-giving throughout school. When she grows up, Shreya wants to go into business marketing or journalism. She loves learning new things, and cannot wait to blossom as a writer in this year's Journalism class!

VHPA Balvihar Through My Eyes

By Kaamya Mehra

Throughout my years of being a student, and now a volunteer of VHPA's Balvihar program in Atlanta, Georgia, I have not only learned to speak, write, and read Hindi, but also have developed connections with individuals throughout the Hindu community in the past nine years.

As a volunteer teacher assistant, I have successfully learned how to teach, inspire, and lead energetic students that have a desire to learn more about their culture and traditions. While students primarily learn through the traditional classroom setting, Balvihar hosts various cultural events, such as the Annual Cultural Program and Diwali/Holi celebrations. In regards to the Annual

participants.

Recently at Shiv Mandir, the current graduating class of Balvihar attended the Gurudakshina Ceremony. In this ceremony or pooja, graduates sit in front of the teachers of Balvihar while thanking them and promising to maintain their knowledge of the Hindu culture and the Hindi language. This ceremony explains the responsibilities graduates have next year while being a teacher assistant at Balvihar. As a TA, new graduates have the opportunity to teach and encourage students to learn more while having fun.



Cultural Program, each class performs a play or a dance representing an important Hindu event or God. Along with the cultural program, the Diwali/Holi celebrations educate Balvihar students about the stories and lessons from these events in an interactive and engaging manner.

While becoming accustomed to specific customs of the Hindu culture, I was also given opportunities to benefit my academic career as well. For instance, the content we learn in Balvihar opens our mind to other cultures and concepts that others do not have the opportunity to experience. Additionally, by learning about Hinduism and its associated culture, individuals can gain advantages of understanding historical content in history, science, or language arts classes.

In regards to social events, this year, Balvihar in Norcross, Atlanta, hosted an educational and valuable Alumni Meeting in which graduated Balvihar students, VHPA members, and others presented and answered questions regarding the impact of Balvihar on their everyday lives. From college students to parents, Balvihar has had a positive impact on its community and

Based on the past five years, I feel that Balvihar and the Vishva Hindu Parishad of America have given me numerous opportunities to strive as an Indian-American student. From becoming proficient in the Hindi language to learning aspects of Hinduism like karma and dharma, I believe I and many other Atlanta-area students have and will continue to gain a significant amount of cultural knowledge and motivation from Balvihar. ◆◆◆

About the Author



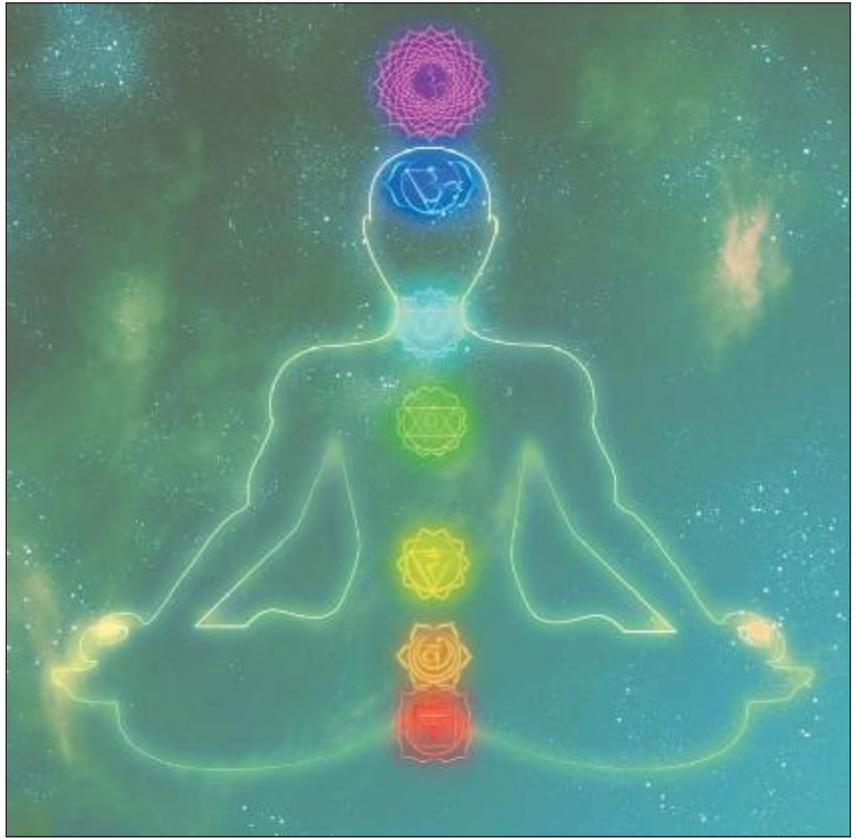
Kaamya Mehra,
a graduate of Atlanta Balvihar, is in
High School. She volunteered as a Teaching
Assistant for a year in Balvihar.

Secrets of the Five Pranas

Part-II

By Dr. David Frawley

(Pandit Vamadeva Shastri)



Prana and the Breath

Breathing is the main form of Pranic activity in the body.

Prana governs inhalation. *Samana* governs absorption of oxygen that occurs mainly during retention of the breath. *Vyana* governs its circulation. *Apana* governs exhalation and the release of carbon dioxide. *Udana* governs exhalation and the release of positive energy through the breath, including speech that occurs via the outgoing breath.

Yet the breath is only an outer aspect or function of prana, which represents the life-force overall, not just in the physical body but also in the subtle and causal bodies.

Prana and the Mind

The mind also has its energy and *Prana*. This derives from food, breath and impressions externally. *Prana* governs the intake of sensory impressions. *Samana* governs mental digestion. *Vyana* governs mental circulation. *Apana* governs the elimination of toxic ideas and negative emotions. *Udana* governs positive mental energy, strength and enthusiasm. The Five *Pranas* work upon the mind in ways a little different than they do on the physical body as their action is at a subtle level.

"On a psychological level, *Prana* governs our receptivity to positive sources of nourishment, feeling and knowledge through the mind and senses. When

deranged it causes wrong desire and insatiable craving. We become misguided, misdirected and generally out of balance.

"*Apana* on a psychological level governs our ability to eliminate negative thoughts and emotions. When deranged it causes depression and we get clogged up with undigested experience that weighs us down in life, making us fearful, suppressed and weak.

"*Samana Vayu* gives us nourishment, contentment and balance in the mind. When deranged it brings about attachment and greed. We cling to things and become possessive in our behavior.

"*Vyana Vayu* gives us free movement and independence in the mind. When deranged it causes isolation, hatred, and alienation. We are unable to unite with others or remain connected in what we do.

"*Udana* gives us joy and enthusiasm and helps awaken our higher spiritual and creative potentials. When deranged it causes pride and arrogance. We become ungrounded, trying to go to high and lose track of our roots.

Higher Yogic Aspects of the Five Pranas

The *Pranas* have many special actions in *Yogic* practices. On a spiritual level, *Samana Vayu* governs the space within the heart (*antar hridayakasha*) in which the true Self, the *Atman* dwells as a fire with seven flames, governs the central internal space or *antariksha*. *Samana*

regulates *Agni* with fuel, which must burn evenly . Without the peace and balance of *Samana* we cannot return to the core of our being or concentrate the mind.

Vyana governs the movement of *Prana* through the *Nadis*, keeping them open, clear, clean and even in their functioning. *Apana* protects us from negative astral influences and false teachers. *Prana* itself gives us the proper aspiration for our spiritual development.

Udana governs our growth in consciousness and takes the mind into the state of sleep and into the after death realms. *Udana* also governs the movement up the *sushumna*, including the awakening of the *Kundalini*.

The mind moves with *Udana Vayu*. This takes us to the states of dream and deep sleep. After death it leads the soul to the astral and causal planes. *Udana* is often the most important *Prana* for spiritual growth. It also governs *mantra*.

As we practice Yoga the subtle aspects of these *Pranas* begin to awaken. This may cause various unusual movements of energy in body and mind, including the occurrence of various spontaneous movements or *kriyas*. We may feel new expanses of energy (subtle *Vyana*), great peace (subtle *Samana*), a sense of lightness or levitation (subtle *Udana*), deep groundedness and stability (subtle *Apana*), or just heightened vitality and sensitivity (subtle *Prana*).

Working On Prana

Proper nutrition brings about the increase of *Prana* on a physical level. This also requires proper elimination. In Ayurvedic thought the *Prana* from the food is absorbed in the large intestine, particularly in the upper two-thirds of this organ, which is not simply an organ of elimination. For this reason *Apana Vayu* is the most important *Prana* for physical health.

The Vedas say that mortals eat food with *Apana*, while the Gods eat food with *Prana*. The mortals are the physical tissues. The immortals are the senses. These take in food via *Prana* itself. Right food sustains *Apana*. Right impressions support *Prana*. For this not only outer factors like contact with nature, but also practices like rituals and visualizations are important, as well as sensory therapies involving color, sounds or aromas.

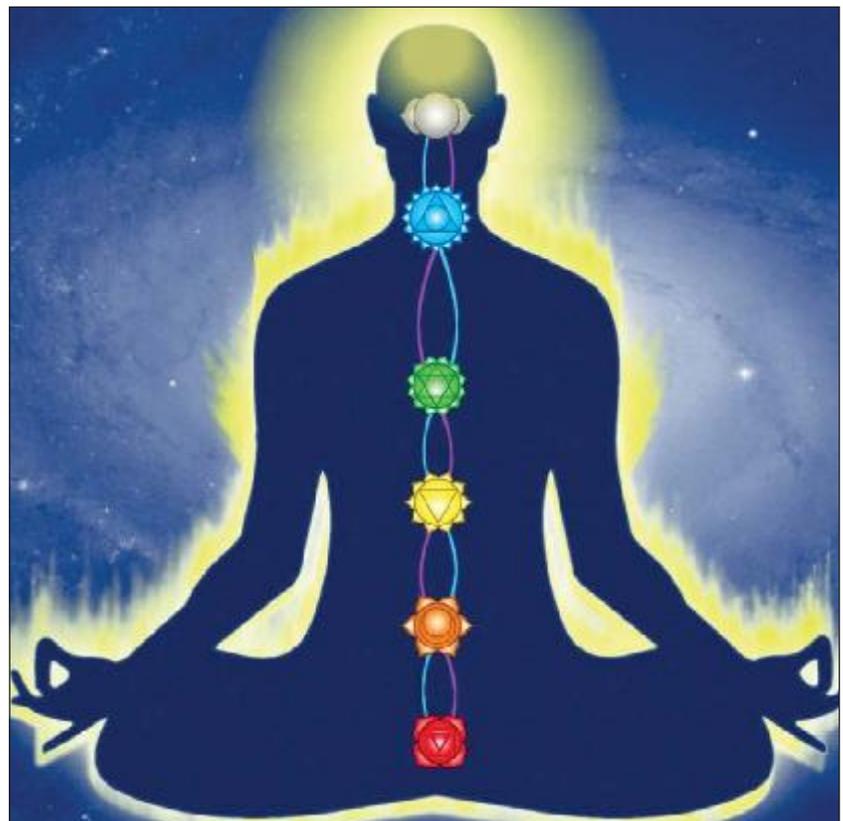
Pranayama

The main method for working on *Prana* is

Pranayama or Yogic breathing exercises. Yoga emphasizes purification of the body (*deha suddhi*) and purification of the mind (*citta suddhi*) as the means to Self-realization. For this reason Yoga emphasizes a vegetarian diet rich in *Prana* or foods full of the life-force and a mind rooted in ethical values like truthfulness and non-violence. An impure, toxic or disturbed body and mind cannot realize the higher Self. However the key to purifying body and mind is *prana*. For this purpose the main method is purification of the *nadis* or channels through which *Prana* flows (*Nadi-sodhana*).

While all *Pranayama* aids in this regard, the most important is alternate nostril breathing, which aids in the balance of the right and left *Prana* currents. According to the Yogic system the body and all of its channels follow a right or left predominance. The right side of the body is masculine or solar in nature. The left side is feminine or lunar in nature. The left or the lunar *nadi*, is *Kapha* or water predominant, and increases energy on the left side of the body. It aids in such activities as rest, sleep, relaxation. The right or solar *nadi* is *Pitta* or fire predominant and increases energy on the right side. It aids in such activities as digestion, work, and concentration.

Regular alternate nostril breathing is the most important method for keeping our *pranas* or energies in



awakening of the Kundalini कुंडलिनी जागृती

balance. It helps create the unitary *prana* necessary to sustain unitary awareness.

Another method is uniting *Prana* and *Apana*. *Apana*, which is aligned with the force of gravity, usually moves downward resulting not only in disease and death but in the downward movement of consciousness. *Prana*, on the other hand, tends to disperse upward through the mind and senses, as it is our opening to the energies above.

Yogic practices require bringing *Apana* up. *Prana* must be brought down to unite with *Apana*. This helps unite and balance all the *Pranas*. In doing so the inner fire or *Kundalini* gets enkindled in the region of the navel. *Mula Bandha* is an important practice in this regard. The goal is to balance our outer and physical *pranas* and awaken higher and inner *pranas* of deeper awareness.



Mantra and Meditation

Breathing practices work with *Pranamaya Kosha*. However the *Pranas* or energies in the mind can be dealt with directly as well. Color and sound (music) are important ways to direct energy in the mind. The best technique is *mantra*, particularly single syllable or bija mantras like OM, which create vibrations (*nada*) that can help direct energy into the subconscious.

Meditation itself, creating space in the mind, serves to create more *Prana* in the mind. When the mind is brought to a silent and receptive condition, like the expanse of the sky, a new energy comes into being within it that brings about great transformations.

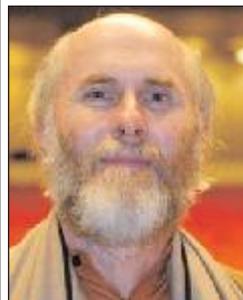
Indeed all the paths of Yoga are based upon *Prana*. *Bhakti* Yoga or the Yoga of Devotion brings about *Pranic* transformation by uniting us with the Divine Will and Divine *Prana*. All *Karma* Yoga or service is based upon alignment with the Divine Will as well. This also gives

us more *Prana*, not only to act outwardly but for inner development.

Classical Yoga or *Raja* Yoga is based upon the control of mental activities (*Citta-vrittis*). The vibration of the mind (*Citta-spanda*) follows the vibration of *Prana* (*Prana-spanda*). Therefore *Pranayama* helps control the mind. It also helps control the senses (*Pratyahara*) because it withdraws our awareness inward from the senses. *Hatha* Yoga itself is mainly concerned with *Prana* and even *Asana* occurs as an expression of *Prana*. Many great Yogis did not learn *Asana* through mechanical practice but were taught *Asana* by the power of their awakened *Prana*.

Even *Jnana* Yoga or the Yoga of Knowledge depends upon a strong will and concentration. Without a well-developed *Udana Vayu* it cannot succeed. In the Yoga of Knowledge the *Prana* of inquiry must be created, which is to inquire into our true nature not merely mentally but in all of our daily activities. This requires that inquiry occurs through *Prana* and not simply through the outer mind.

Indeed as the Vedas say we are all under the control of *Prana*. *Prana* is said to be the Sun that imparts life and light to all and dwells within the heart as the Self of all creatures. *Prana* in us makes us live and allows us to act. It is not the puny little ego, ascribing *Prana's* effects to its own power that really does anything. We must learn to be open to and welcome this greater force of *Prana* and seek to bring it into our life and action. This is one of the great secrets of Yoga. ◆◆◆



Dr. David Frawley
(*Pandit Vamadeva Shastri*)

D. Litt., author of several books, is a western born teacher or guru in the Vedic tradition. In India, Vamadeva is recognized as a Vedacharya (Vedic teacher), and includes in his scope of studies Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedanta and Vedic astrology, as well as the ancient Vedic teachings going back to the oldest Rigveda. Vamadeva is a recipient of the prestigious Padma Bhushan award, one of the highest civilian awards by the government of India, "for distinguished service of a higher order to the nation," honoring his work and writings as a Vedic teacher, which he received in March 2015.

Another Successful Year of Pre-Medical Externship

By Dr. Veena Gandhi, MD

EKAL Health Foundation for Rural India, completed Pre-Medical Externship 2018-19 on January 2nd, 2019 with great success in partnership with AAPI USA, EKAL Vidyalaya USA, and Arogya Foundation of India (AFI). 19 students from 19 universities of USA participated in this 12 day program during their Winter Break.

Medical lectures by medical college professors in medicine, surgery, pediatrics and community health along with hospital



rounds, gave the students exposure to the government hospital where free care to patients is given. They saw a lot of patients with tropical diseases, which they would not have seen in the United States. They also visited private nursing homes, which are mini hospitals owned by private practitioners where they saw and scrubbed in surgeries. Visiting community centers and talking to ASHA workers gave them an idea of medical care for the smaller communities and the people in remote and tribal villages.

The village medical trip was very educational, exposing the students to village culture and the prevalent medical diseases in Jharkand. The students enjoyed the afternoon short trips to local sightseeing and spiritual centers within the area. The trip to Summit Shikhar (Parasnath) was very rewarding.

We encourage all pre-medical students to take advantage of this great program, which not only strengthens their medical application but also connects them to the country of their heritage.

As Swami Vivekananda said - Connect the best of East to the best of West. ◆◆◆

Defining God: A Vedic Interpretation - I

By Gauri Shankar Gupta

Editor's Note: This is the first part of two part essay.

Existence of the Universe with all its diverse facets and millions of life forms has been the greatest puzzle of all times. The mysteries surrounding its origin, nature and the functioning have been a subject of immense curiosity and fascination since antiquity. Despite unprecedented advances in sciences, we still ask ourselves whether the Universe had an origin or a beginning. How did it come into existence? If it does have a beginning, what existed before the Universe came into existence? If nothing existed before its origin, how did it come into existence out of nothing? Will it come to an end one day and if so, then how? If it does come to an end where will it disappear? Is there a creator and if so who created the creator? Who regulates the functioning of this vast entity? These are mind boggling questions that have been agitating the minds of the humanity since times immemorial. Most intelligent as well as ordinary mortals have all engaged themselves in the pursuit of unraveling these mysteries of creation.

Several scriptures and religious texts address these questions in some form. The most profound and detailed explanations can be found in the Vedic writings, particularly the Upanishads. In fact, these puzzles of creation constitute the core of most Upanishads. Nevertheless, the readers might ask me as to why am I

digressing by addressing these issues in an article titled 'Defining God'. It is because the Vedic definition of God is inter-twined with these puzzles of our existence. Finding answers to these puzzles is almost synonymous to defining the God. In Vedic parlance God is not a Super Human sitting somewhere out there regulating the Universe, creating stars and planets, regulating birth and death and rewarding and punishing people sending them to the Heaven and the Hell. Instead the Vedas state that the Universe is merely a physical manifestation of God in various names and forms.

Whatever exists in the Universe is nothing but self-projection of God into the conditions of Time and Space. It is something like the ocean and the waves. Waves have no separate existence of their own. They arise from the ocean and then dissolve into the same ocean and cannot exist independent of the ocean. On the other hand, reward and punishment is the outcome of human actions something like the law of action and reaction. In Vedic writings this Ultimate Reality - the God or the Almighty has been referred to as 'Brahman' (ye'īe). Therefore, in order to define 'God' in Vedic parlance let us first understand the concept of 'Brahman'.

Vedic writings define Brahman as eternal, most subtle and all pervasive supreme reality which is the primeval cause and source of all that exists. Whatever appears in the manifested form emanates from Brahman and with

time dissolves back into Brahman. It's like constant flow of thoughts appearing from human mind and then dissolving back into the same mind. Thoughts and mind cannot exist independent of each other neither could the waves and the oceans stated earlier. Similarly, take the phenomenon of dream and the dreamer. During the course of the dream thousands of objects are projected on the mind by the same mind creating a dreamer and a dream world. During this state one fiber of mind becomes dreamer while another one becomes dream objects. Once the dream state is over the dreamer and the dream dissolve into one and the same; completely wiping out the duality created during the dream state. However, this truth cannot be realized so long as we are in dream-state. The moment we wake up we realize the truth. Another example given in the Vedic literature is that of a spider. A spider spreads a web around itself, lives in the web and then withdraws it back. Similarly, the manifested world emanates from the Brahman and dissolves back into the same Brahman. However, the Brahman remains undiminished and unaffected in the same way as the ocean despite projection of infinite number of waves and the mind despite projection of infinite number of thoughts and dream objects.

Linguistically, the word Brahman has been derived from the Sanskrit root 'brih' (ye') which means 'to grow great, to enlarge or to spread like a net. Hence Brahman literally means the one who has the power to grow infinitely without any limitations. According to the Taittiriyaopnishad, whatever reality is inexistence by which all the rest subsists, is Brahman. He is an eternal behind all instabilities and a constant which supports all mutations. He is hidden in all appearances and forms. Although I have used the word He, Brahman has no gender. He is neither male nor female. Since He is hidden in all appearances and forms, He is male in a male, female in a female, child in a child, bird in a bird and animal in an animal. In this sense Brahman is akin to space which turns into a house, a playground, a shopping mall, a factory, a theatre or a stadium depending on the structure and use. Space exists in all these forms as well as outside of these forms. Similarly, Brahman exists in all forms and appearances as well as outside of them.

Vedic writings define Brahman in a variety of indicative ways. These definitions are useful in understanding the overall nature of the Brahman. Each of these definitions serves like an arc used in geometry to arrive at an

unknown point with help of known points. Let us now have a look at some of these definitions that are spread over several Vedic texts.

Ishopanishad

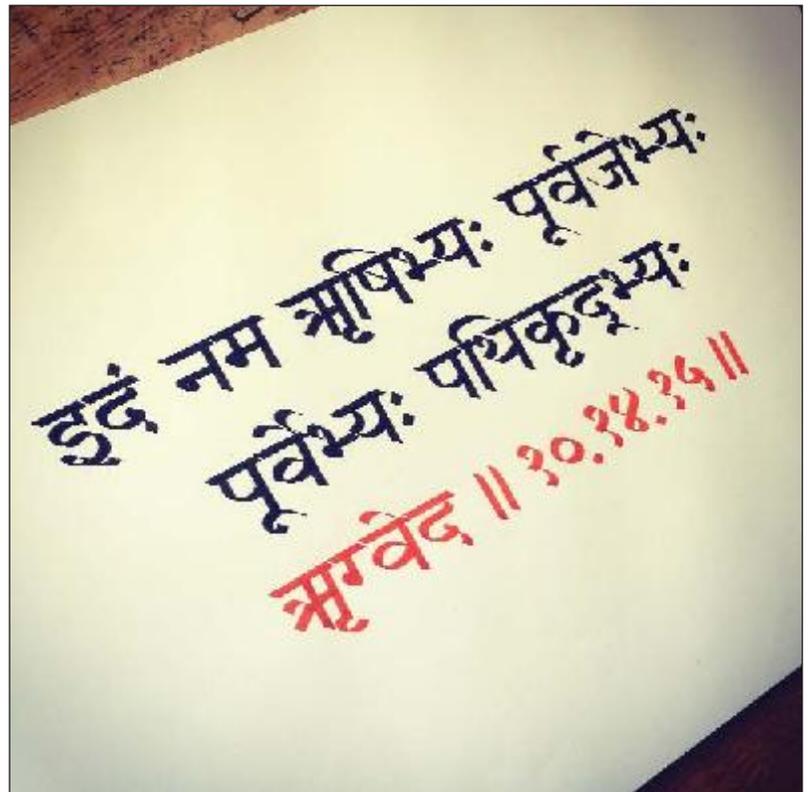
Om that is infinite, this is infinite;
Infinite has come out of infinite;
Take away infinite from infinite;
What remains is also infinite. (Preamble to Ishopanishad)

Whatever conscious and non-conscious that exists in this universe, is nothing but a manifestation of Brahman and is owned by Him. Keeping this in mind continue to live and enjoy in the spirit of renounced detachment. Since nothing belongs to you, do not have lust and attachment. (Verse 1)

He is one and static, still He is swifter than the mind. He is primeval and the source of all knowledge. Even the gods (meaning devata or sectoral powers like the Sun, the Wind etc.) could not understand Him. While static, He overtakes all those running. He controls those who supply the air and rain. He surpasses all in excellence. (Verse 4) He does not move still He moves. He is nearest to you still He is far away. He resides in everybody and everything still He is beyond the entire creation. (Verse 5)

Mundaka Upanishad

He is beyond intellect and understanding and beyond grasp. He has no color, no attributes, no eyes, no ears, no





hands and no legs. He is eternal, omnipresent, the subtlest of subtle, imperishable, primeval and source of all beings. (1/1/6) As the spider sends forth and spreads its web and then withdraws it back, as a large variety of plants and herbs grow on the Earth, as from every living human innumerable hairs spring forth from head and body, the same way everything arises in the Universe from the Brahman, the indestructible. (1/1/7) The immortal Brahman is in the front; that same Brahman is behind. The Brahman is on the left and the right as also above and below. The entire creation is Brahman alone. He is the best. (2/2/11)

Mandukyopanishad

He can be felt neither inside nor outside. He is beyond intellect. He cannot be transacted, nor can He be seen, nor touched. He has no attribute, nor can He be subject of thought or imagination. He cannot be explained nor can He be described. He is eternal, always calm, benevolent, all-pervasive and without any parallel. One can only experience His power through the Self. He is Brahman whom one should know. (Verse 7)

Kathopanishad

Although air exists everywhere in the Universe, it

takes the shape of different spaces and also exists outside those spaces; likewise, Brahman takes the shape of different creations and also exists outside those creations. (2/2/10) Brahman is like a tree whose root is upwards and branches downwards. He is pure and imperishable. The entire creation is dependent on Him and no one could go against His order (2/3/1)

Kenopanishad

There goes neither the eye nor speech nor mind; we know It not, nor do we know how to teach one about It. Different It is from all that are known and is beyond the unknown as well. o That which makes the tongue speak, but which cannot be spoken by the tongue. o That which makes the mind think, but which cannot be thought by the mind. o That which makes the eyes see, but which cannot be seen by the eyes. o That which makes the ears hear but cannot be heard by the ears. o That makes the breath breathe but cannot be breathed by breath. o He is Ear of the ear, Mind of the mind, Eye of the eye, Speech of the speech and Breath of the breath. (Summary Version of Part I of Kenopanishad)

Bhagvad Gita

With hands and feet everywhere; with eyes, heads,

and mouth everywhere; with ears everywhere in the Universe - He exists pervading all. (13/13) He exists outside and inside of all living beings, the moving and the non-moving. Being most subtle, He is incomprehensible by sense or gans. Although far, far away; He is near to all. (13/15) Although, He appears to be divided among all beings, He is unified and one, like space. He alone is the creator, the sustainer and the destroyer of all. (13/16) The earth, the water, the fire, the air, the ether, the mind, the intelligence and the ego - all together these eight constitute My (Brahman) separated material energies (apara). (7/4) There is another superior energy (para) of Mine which comprises the living entities (soul) who are utilizing the material nature. (7/5) All created beings have their source in these two energies. Know for certain that I am both the origin and dissolution of all that is material and spiritual in this world. (7/6) Based on the above writings and indicative examples taken from different Vedic texts let us try to put together the defining elements of Brahman/God.

Beginning and End

Brahman has neither beginning nor end. Anything infinite cannot have either beginning or end. The two are mutually exclusive. For a second, let us assume that the Brahman has a beginning. By the very nature of this assumption we are separating time and space from the Brahman because Brahman originated at X point in time and Y point in space. This assumption also implies that there was time and space even before Brahman since the Brahman originated at X Point in time and Y point in space. This gives rise to the question as to who created

them (time and space)? Was there another Brahman/God before? This will lead to an infinite chain of Gods back in time. Therefore, putting the origin of the Universe before that of Brahman/God is illogical and irrational. This is an assumption with inherent contradictions. Hence Brahman has neither a beginning nor an end. He is simply eternal. ◆◆◆

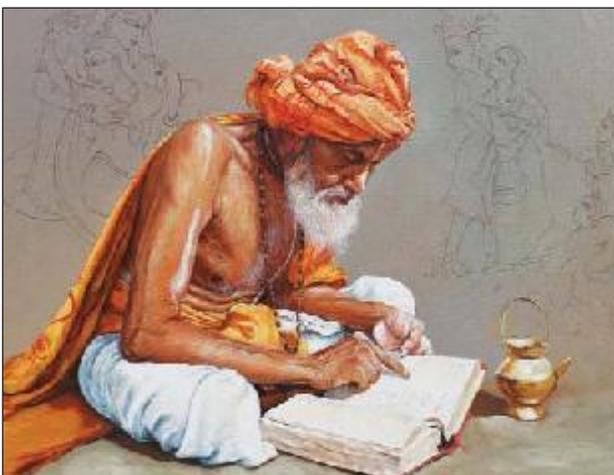
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About the Author

Gauri Shankar Gupta, former Ambassador/High Commissioner of India, is an author and motivational Speaker. After completion of Masters in Management, he served in banking sector for three years before joining Indian Diplomatic Service in 1981. As part of his diplomatic assignments, he served in Indian Missions in several countries, and also as Deputy Permanent Delegate of India to UNESCO. Shri Gupta is a writer and a poet. His books include *Mongolia: The Land of Blue Skies*, *Droplets and Chand Lamhe*, the last two being on poetry. His fourth book *Unraveling Mysteries of Life - Modern Science and Ancient Wisdom*. This book has also been translated in Hungarian, Czech, Romanian, Hindi, Spanish and Bhasha Indonesia. He has contributed a number of articles on foreign policy and spiritual issues in various journals. Some of his talks and speeches are available at YouTube and at his web page.
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The Importance of Protecting Our Gurus

Continued from page 33 forces myself. It is important for Hindus to demand better justice for our leaders who stick their necks out. My own policy is to give the benefit of doubt to the guru rather than to the media, and to put the



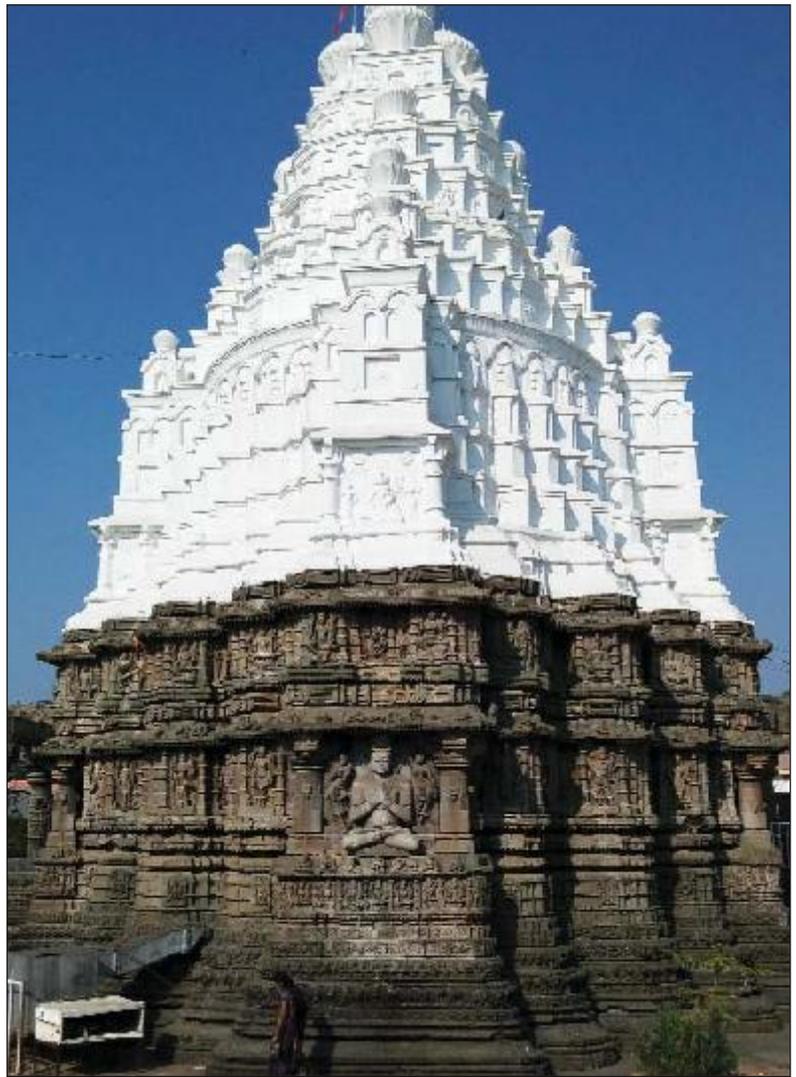
burden of proof on those making the allegations; this is exactly what the legal system requires. I do not want to accept the media's version at face value.

Most important of all, Hindus must stop being internally divisive. There is too much emphasis on trying to falsify another guru's philosophy, rituals and practices. We face existential risks and we cannot afford this intellectual "sport" to argue with each other on issues that are not as serious. I am disappointed at the lack of unity to stand up for one another in such dire situations. Most Hindu leaders run for cover in order to protect themselves selfishly, rather than being able to close ranks and take a principled stand against these breaking India forces. ◆◆◆

Source: <https://rajivmalhotra.com/library/articles/importance-protecting-gurus/>

Why Hindu Temples Don't Change their Architectures Unlike Churches and Mosques

By M T Saju, TNN



CHENNAI: Many churches and mosques across the world have changed their architectures over time, but most Hindu temples remain the same. Why? In most Hindu temples, according to veteran architect Mohan Hariharan, Hindus believe God resides there itself.

"For Hindus, God 'literally' lives in the temples unlike in the case of mosques and churches. He sleeps, eats and takes bath in the temple itself. It's difficult to change the existing structure. But things are different in other religions like Islam and Christianity where mosques and churches are a place to worship. It's the place mostly for congregation," said Mohan, who has been part of the team headed by veteran architect K N Srinivasan that designed many big movie theatres and factories in the 1970s and 80s in the south.

Mohan, who has visited many churches and mosques in the world, pointed out the structure of the Notre Dame du Haut chapel in France to prove his point.

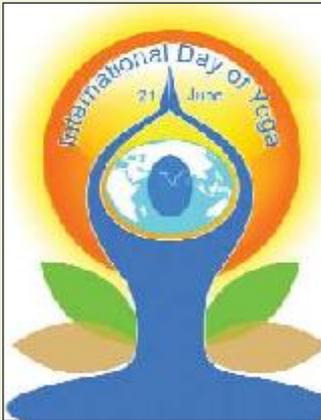
"It (Notre Dame du Haut) doesn't look like the usual chapel that you see for years. It was built by Franco-Swiss architect Le Corbusier (in 1955) in a very

accommodating style. The Blue Mosque in Istanbul was once a church. The New German Mosque has taken a different architecture. But when it comes to Hindu temples, they don't want to change, and they remain the same," he said, while speaking on "Architecture of gods, kings and mortals", tracing the path of architecture through the history of culture and civilizations at the monthly lecture held at the Tamil Virtual Academy here recently.

"The kings, however, have constructed beautiful palaces, forts and castles, all using people's money. Even the godmen and god women have their own architectures. The Hare Krishna movement, Osho's ashram in Pune, Brahmakumaris all have their own architecture. All godmen and god women have their own architecture. But the poor live in the slums," he said.

A couple of years ago, a man walked into a newly constructed building designed by Mohan. He told him that he was feeling some positive energy out there. Mohan literally 'checked' from which angle the energy was flowing. As a general principle, the cosmic energy

IGNOU Launches Certificate Program in Yoga



Ahead of the International Yoga Day, the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has launched a Certificate Program in Yoga (CPY). The course will begin from July 2019 session.

The course will be in English and anyone who has attained education up to class 12, irrespective of the stream, can apply. The course will be for six months and students will be given maximum of two years to pass the course. Candidates will have to pay a fee of Rs. 10,000 for the entire Program.

The Program will be offered through the Regional Centers in Delhi, Haridwar, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Jaipur, Ladnun, Chennai, Mumbai and Pune. The

Program will have 3 courses with 16 Credits.

S.B. Arora, professor, IGNOU, said that after studying this particular Program, the learner shall understand the basic principles and practice of yoga. He further added that the Program also aims to make the candidate aware about the history and the contribution of various Yogis in the field of Yoga and attain both physical and mental health through Yoga.

"Yoga is essentially a practice based on an extremely subtle science, which focuses on bringing harmony between mind, body and spirit. It is a very powerful means to achieve physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Yoga paves the way to discover the self, the external world and nature. It is an art and science for healthy living. Yoga has several benefits including education, health and stress management," said IGNOU in a release. ◆◆◆



Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/education/ignou-launches-certificate-programme-in-yoga-ignou-ac-in-5782952/>

Why Hindu Temples don't Change their Architectures Unlike Churches and Mosques

circulates everywhere.

"I didn't do anything to attract a particular energy. When we construct a house or factory, we make it to feel joy. It should look good. After all, it depends on how one looks at it. The perception matters a lot in architecture," said Mohan. "However, there are buildings and structures that give negative feelings, say for example the Arakkumalikai (house of wax described in the Mahabharata). It was made in such a way that it would melt in fire. There are buildings meant for such purposes."

Mohan had a destructive experience when he visited the Valley of Death, a site of Nazi German mass murder during the World War II, and a mass grave of Poles and Jews murdered in 1938 by the German forces, in Poland.

"At the same time, again it's our thinking that makes an architecture negative or positive. "Some renowned architects have made museums of concentrations camps. It's difficult to walk alone inside such museums. The architects want us to feel the same what the prisoners felt in the camps. Here architecture takes a different form," he said. The 'amalgamated' culture of today has affected architecture too. There are good and bad in scientific and environmental revolution and it's the same way in architecture too. Mohan said factors like climate, geography culture, religion, caste and socio-economic changes influence architecture.

"Scandinavian countries use wood widely, while mud and earth are used in the construction of houses in the deserts. Stone was once popular. Mahendra Pallava built his temples using only stone and brick. But today we use glass and steel widely. The global architecture is least bothered about climate change," he said. "We are yet to utilize the potential of bamboo which is widely available everywhere, and that's a tragedy" he added. ◆◆◆

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/why-hindu-temples-dont-change-their-architectures-unlike-churches-mosques/articleshow/69185260.cms>



Take Initiative

We often hold ourselves back, thinking that we cannot do a certain work. Many women refuse to learn how to drive on the highway, or put gas in the car. Why? Because they feel they cannot do it. They refuse to learn how to change a tire, because it's the husband's job. Many men refuse to take the initiative to cook a meal or do the laundry. Why? Because it is the wife's job.

Many times we see something that needs fixing, but we wait for someone else to fix it. We see work that needs to be done, and we say that someone needs to do it. We go to the neighborhood park and see litter strewn there. We express our disgust and wait for someone to pick it up. When we see something is not up to par, we say, "Someone needs to do something about it." Who is this someone? It is YOU.

Next time you see something that needs to be put right, set the wheels in motion. If you do not know how to do it yourself, find out how to do it. Seek help.

If there is some law that you feel needs changing, take initiative and try to get it changed. I like the attitude of a freshman I know. She has just started college. The first thing she noticed was that there is too much air conditioning in the dorms. She is planning to join the Students' Council and work on reducing the amount of air conditioning each building is using.

If you wish to fix or make improvements in your life, your family, your neighborhood, your campus, your city, your country or the world, you must take initiative.

Learn To Be Confident

When you look at someone who exudes confidence, you may think that he or she was born that way. It is a common misconception that some are born confident, whereas others are not. Confidence is not something like a melodious voice which you either have or do not have. It is an acquired skill. You can work on becoming confident.

Perhaps you are not very sure of yourself. If so, allow me to point out that you are probably overlooking some unique talent you have, such as playing the piano, mimicking others, or making family members laugh. And then there are certain tasks you may be performing very well. It may be driving, cooking, cleaning, swimming or coaching little league. Your confidence in performing these tasks arises due to having a high level of expertise in performing them. If you feel very confident cooking for 25 people at the drop of a hat, it is because you have plenty of cooking experience. If you



have been parallel parking your car for two years, you have become an expert in doing parallel parking and do it very confidently.

The more practice you have in performing a certain task, the more confident you will be while performing it. Therefore, identify the area in which you are not confident. Perhaps that area is public speaking. Suppose you have a presentation at work in a week, and you have zero confidence. What do you do? Do a lot of research on the subject of your presentation. Practice speaking in front of the mirror. Give the presentation in front of family members or a close friend. Visualize yourself giving the entire presentation in a filled room. Know your facts and figures. Leave nothing to chance. In short, prepare yourself well.

Next, visualize yourself being congratulated and patted on the back for an informative and interesting presentation. It has been proven that your mind starts

believing whatever you tell it.

Take the necessary steps to develop confidence.

Change Your Life

Are you feeling that life is a dead end street? Do you have a nagging thought that something has to change? If so, do something about it. Go ahead and change your life. Don't be afraid. As a child you were fearless. When learning how to walk you took a wobbly first step and fell down. You cried, but did not give up. You got up and took another uncertain step only to falter and fall all over again. You tried again and again until you started walking. You were not afraid then; why are you afraid now?

You may not remember the excitement you felt when you first learned how to walk, but you certainly remember the thrill you experienced when you learned to ride a bike without training wheels, or when you learned to float on your back, or when you learned how to drive. Why are you looking for excuses for not changing your life? Your mind is telling you: family and friends may not approve; you don't know what will happen out there; stick to what feels comfortable. In short, your mind is telling you that you may fail.

Fear of failure is the biggest fear humans have. It debilitates us and cripples us both physically and mentally. It can become so overwhelming that we opt for



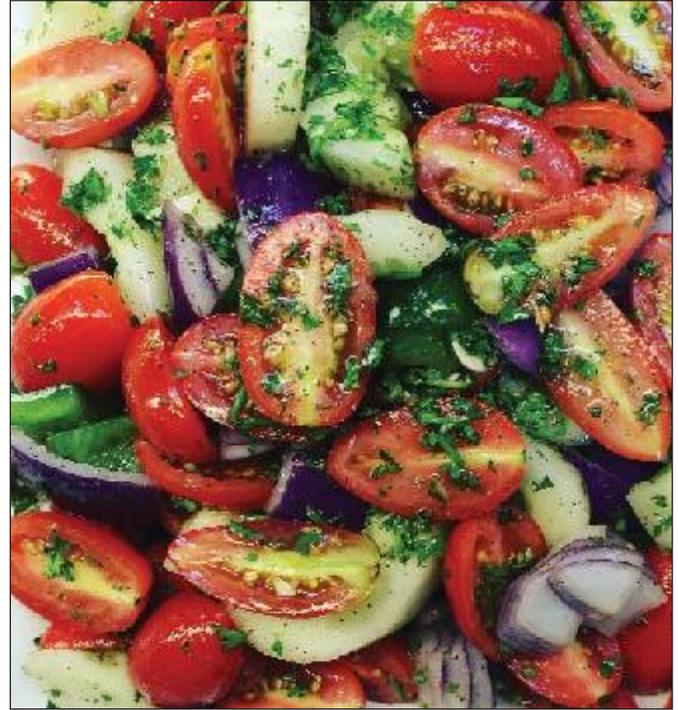
the same old thing that is not working rather than try something new. If you make up our mind to fail, you will never succeed, and if you decide to succeed, you cannot fail.

You are perhaps waiting for life to change by itself. It will not happen; you will have to make it happen.

Do it today; God is with you.

Be A Vegetarian

As children we eat what our parents feed us, but when we become intelligent enough to decide for ourselves, we do well to choose a vegetarian diet over a non-



vegetarian one. There are many excellent reasons not to eat meat, some of which are mentioned below

Logical Reason: We have so many vegetables, fruits, grains and lentils to choose from that there is no justification for eating meat. Vegetarians have a much greater variety than non-vegetarians. The only time it becomes alright to eat meat is when your life depends on it.

Ethical Reason: Birds and animals are living creatures that experience pain just as we do. It is unethical to kill these creatures for the sake of taste or just because we are accustomed to eating meat.

Physiological Reason: Our teeth are not designed to chew meat, nor are the intestines designed to digest it.

Natural Reason: Humans are not natural meat-eaters. Unlike other creatures such as lions, humans do not salivate at the sight of raw meat.

Health Reason: Our health, mental and physical, is affected by what we eat. Meat is simply putrid flesh, whose harmful effects far outweigh its benefits. Moreover, our mind is affected adversely by the impure food we eat.

So, eat wisely.



Visit www.radhamadhavsociety.org
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ASI Digs out 4,000-yr-old Sacred Chambers

Ongoing excavations at 4,000-year-old burial sites at Sanauli in Uttar Pradesh's Baghpat continue to enthrall archeologists as for the first time the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has unearthed underground "sacred chambers", decorated "legged cof fins" and fascinating artifacts in what is being claimed to be a first in the Indian subcontinent.

The excavation, which is continuation of the work started last year, is being carried out to understand the extension of burial site and also habitation area in relation with earlier findings.

The present excavation is being carried out under the direction of Dr . SK Manjul, Director, Institute of Archaeology, ASI, to understand the extension of burial site and also habitation area in relation with earlier findings, a senior ASI official said.

Sanauli is located on the left bank of River Yamuna, 68 km north-east of Delhi which brought to light the largest necropolis of late Harappan period datable to around early part of second millennium BCE.

Three chariots, some cof fins, shields, swords and helmets had been unearthed, pointing towards the existence of a "warrior class in the area around 2,000 BCE," said an official from the ASI.

These findings are being considered important to understand the culture pattern of the Upper Ganga-Yamuna doab. During excavation, the excavators have found copper swords, helmets, shields and chariots.

The excavators have also found rice and urad dal in pots, cattle bones, wild pig and mongoose buried along with bodies. "These may have been offered to the departed souls. We also found sacred chambers below the ground. After the procession, they put the body in the chamber for some treatment or rituals," he said. The excavation is being carried out at two different areas, the first in the area in continuation of 2018 excavation and the second in the area 200 m east of the former

In the first area, two burial pits and a sacred chamber of burnt brick were discovered along with burial goods.



In burial pit no. 9, one wooden 'legged coffin' decorated with steatite inlays having extended skeleton of a female oriented North-South, tilted 10° west is excavated. This burial pit contains evidence of decomposed bow, bone points, armband of semiprecious stones, gold bead and pottery including vases, jars, bowls and dish on stand systematically arranged towards north and eastern sides of the coffin, said the official.

An interesting find from this burial pit is the antenna sword placed near the head. Also, the pelvis of the skeleton is sinking in the middle indicating the process of decomposition of wooden base of the coffin. Other burial pit (no 10) includes extended female skeleton in disturbed condition. The burial goods include copper mirror, hairpin, channel, beads and pottery. Interestingly steatite inlays forming a figure of eight which is probably the lid of a vanity box found between two legs of the coffin in north. The coffin is also decorated with steatite inlays similar to coffin in burial no.9. Two big pots are placed under the coffin which could have contained food and other organic remains associated with the rituals.

Furnaces have narrow top and broad base with air ducts and mouth to regulate temperature. The nature of these furnaces suggests their long term usage.

The discovery of furnaces from the site indicates towards habitation activity of the period associated with the necropolis. The nature of burial pottery, coffins, antiquities such as antenna sword, pottery, etc. suggest a complex of late Harappan period. ◆◆◆

Source: <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2019/india/asi-digs-out-4-000-yr-old-sacred-chambers.html>

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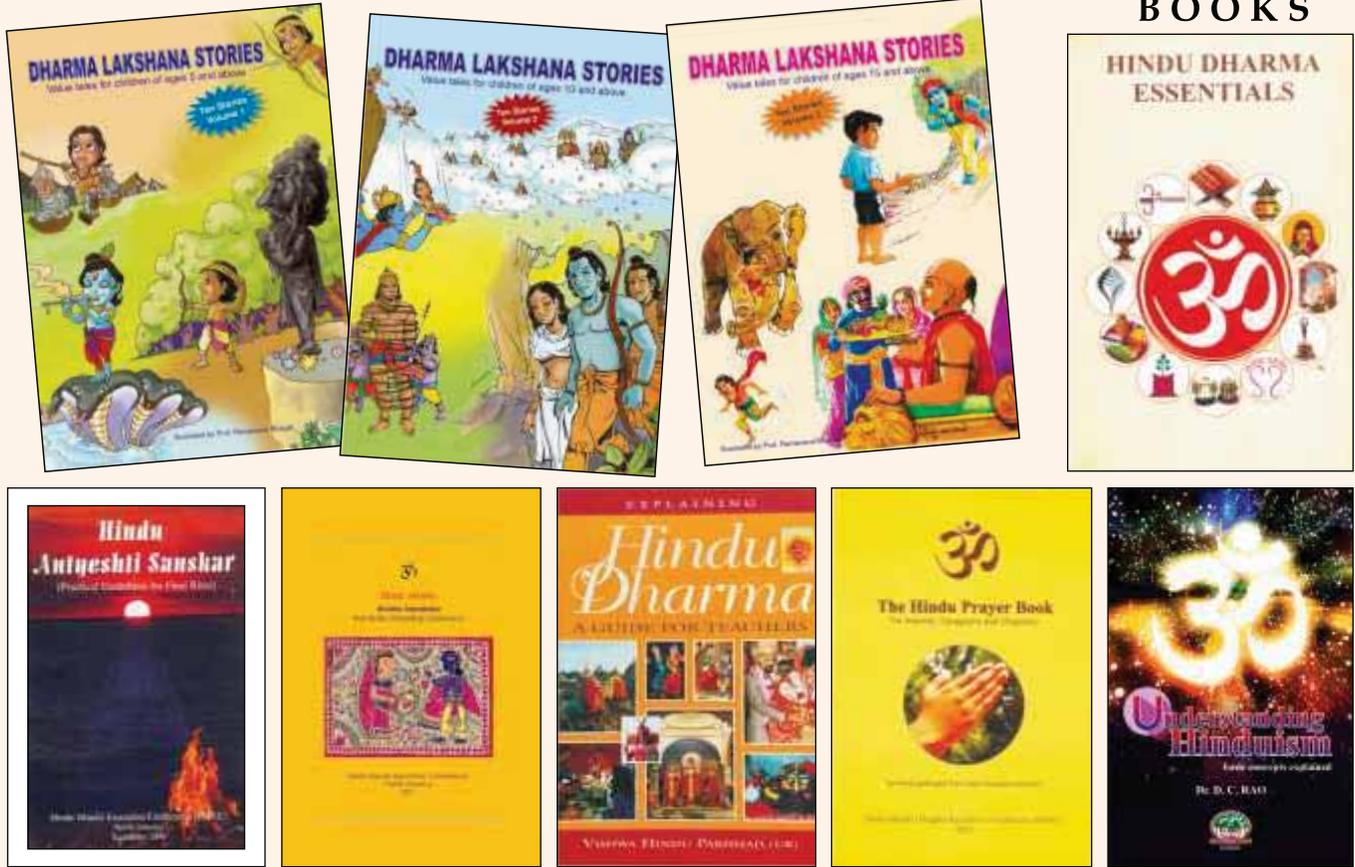
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Om, Asato Maa Sad Gamaya; Tamaso Maa Jyotir Gamaya Mrityor Maa Amritam Gamaya

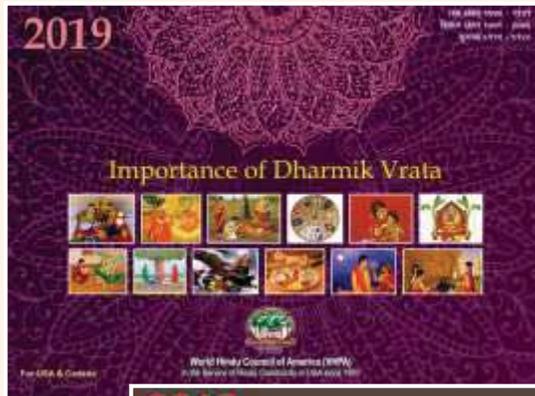
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