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No. 3
July - Sept 2011

HINDU VISHWA

Vishwa Dharma Digest

'Sita Sings the Blues' Exploring the Issue of Denigration



Also Read

- StartTalk Balvihar Atlanta Hindi Camp (Federally Funded) a Huge Success
- Pseudo-Secularity in the American Education System?
- A Call from Appalachian Trail by Hindu Americans
- The Power of a Choice

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To

Glimpses of Hindu Heritage Day

by Michigan Chapter
Aug 6, 2011 at Bharatiya Temple



VISHWA HINDU PARISHAD (World Hindu Council) OF AMERICA, INC.

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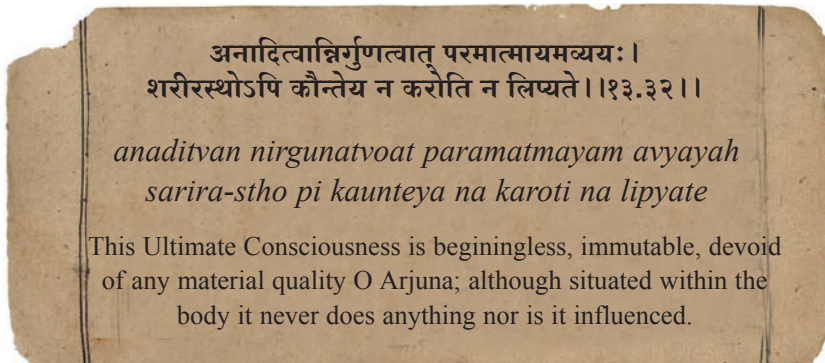
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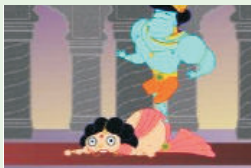
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'Sita Sings the
Blues'
Exploring the Issue
of Denigration



*By Mrs. Bhavna
Shinde Hurley &
Ankit Tiwari*

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Pseudo-Secularity in the American Education System?

Recently certain media (e.g., see websites under the Google with key-words: Tennessee school district Sharia) have reported about one or more public school-district(s) in Tennessee having included in their syllabus elements or reference of the Sharia – a part of the Islamic law code. This is a serious violation of the long-standing Federal policy, followed by all States, to be strictly secular and, therefore, not to include any ‘religion’-oriented material favoring any particular religion in their school-instructional material.

This is startling news, or should be. How could something like this happen in America? The implications may be staggering, even alarming. The American public at large, and especially the parents of the affected children, might, and should, vehemently protest such an arrangement, or even an attempt aimed thereat. At least the parents of the Hindu children in the affected area(s) should be encouraged by the (local Chapters of) the VHPA -- with or without concert with the local Interfaith organizations -- to register a strong opposition to such an occurrence.

The possible reasons for such a blatant deviation from the norm observed ‘religiously’ by the country as a whole – of maintaining a secular outlook in educational (and administrative) system, at least in principle – may include award of special funds, or undue overt or covert pressure, from some vested interest groups or sources: be it in the name of establishing scholarship(s) for the athletic program or cultural exchange or foreign language skills. May be the people concerned are unfamiliar or unaware of the contents, context or true significance of the Sharia; may be they are more concerned with the

immediate survival under the looming financial crisis than with the long-term repercussions of such a change. May be the higher authorities themselves bear a bias.

As Hindus, we naturally respect all religions; and this editorial should not be wrongly construed as a sign of disrespect to any religion. But any manifestation of religious intolerance or any effort toward domineering improperly, on part of anybody must be raised voice against, and effectively so. History stands witness that silent tolerance of unjustifiable inequity or intolerance ultimately leads to intolerable consequences. Hindus have been overly tolerant of injustice even in their own country, to the extent of being regarded by others as second-rate citizens or, worse yet, weak. Hindus have suffered beyond measure for centuries for their inherent benevolent and accommodative nature. The ‘No-specific-favor-to-a-particular-religion’-policy in the educational system has been there for good reasons. As inclusion in the school-syllabus of scriptural-level introduction to all major world-religions in a fair and balanced manner may be practically rather difficult, if not impossible; religious training and orientation is best left to the parents and other social and religious institutions, keeping the schools free from any controversial and volatile issues. If a concession is made for any particular religion, it is not only unfair to others, but also a wrong precedence that may be used to propagate the same ill-designed practice in other school-districts or regions. The net result may indeed be perilous for the educational system and society in a secular democracy. To safeguard the integrity of the system, parents and ‘town-hall meetings’ must protest such a bias. ■

StarTalk Balvihar Atlanta Hindi Language and Culture Camp

A Huge Success

On the very first day wary students eyed their teachers and teaching assistants during game time with appalled dismay as they demonstrated how to play kabaddi. However they soon overcame initial inhibitions and kabaddi became the sport of choice for a majority of the students for the next nine days of camp. The cafeteria echoed with loud cheering and taunts in Hindi as students learned how the sport is played in India by watching a number of video clips in class. Students also had the opportunity to play cricket and field hockey as part of this event.

Rising sixth graders to rising seniors, students from all backgrounds and requiring no prior knowledge of Hindi, were eligible to participate and become bicultural and bilingual in this camp. Students from as far away as New Jersey and North Carolina took advantage of this unique opportunity to learn a new language and venture into the varied and rich culture and traditions of India. The theme of the camp this year was 'India Through the Eyes of the Youth'. Earlier this year, Balvihar Hindi School of Atlanta, an educational program of VHP of America, received a federal grant to conduct a 10-day complete immersion



Morning Yog session at the camp

Hindi teaching program for 100 students in Atlanta. The camp was held from July 8th till July 17th 2011 at Berkmar High School in Lilburn, Georgia. Georgia State Senator Curt Thompson

Students learning to play Field Hockey

inaugurated the camp by lighting the ceremonial lamp. In his keynote address, the Senator highlighted the need for students to



A dance scene from the gala celebration



Mrs. Sandhya Bhagat with students during a skit

learn foreign languages in a global economy and urged them to take advantage of all such opportunities that came their

way. The Senator was also accompanied by Prof. Bhudev Sharma, a very well-known academic, community leader and noted proponent of Hindi. In his address to the parents, students and volunteers, Prof. Sharma equally laid emphasis on the importance of Hindi.

The entire program was split into separate modules over the ten days with the day starting with Yog for half an hour under the guidance of a certified instructor. From the moment they arrived at the sign-in desk at 9 AM until they left at 6 PM, students heard and spoke only Hindi.

Students were taken on a journey to the Commonwealth Games held recently in New Delhi. They learned to play ancient and modern games like Chess, Kabaddi, Cricket as well as India's national

game Field Hockey, which they played during the game time in the afternoon.

Students learned about the various classical music and dance forms of India on a simulated trip to the Southern city of Hyderabad. Colorful posters with the dances from various states were exhibited in the classes and student volunteers performed dances for the students. Some teaching assistants also choreographed a dance to group of interested students for performance during the graduation ceremony.

The food unit featured a food festival, where a scene of a live street market was created and students were given play money to engage in haggling and buying food products representing various regions of India. The ensuing drama was highly entertaining as students stretched their Hindi speaking abilities to try and negotiate the best deals possible as well as get a bite of the tasty food to sample.

Cricket time on field





A scene from a short skit “Haldi Kaa Doodh”



Mrs. Anita Houde (left) and Mrs Shefali Gupta (right) with students busy during lab hours

What Some of The Parents/Students Have to Say?

I wanted to thank you for a wonderful, successful camp, second year in a row! Sonali had a lot of fun and learnt so much too. She has been trying to talk mainly Hindi at home (even though it is broken Hindi and grammatically incorrect!) and I am trying my best to keep it up! I think the format of the camp was even better this year and was very efficiently run. Congratulations!! We are so glad to have you in our community! Best wishes and thanks!

■ **Shalini Subbarao**

Thank you for organizing wonderful Hindi camp! It was definitely a big success, everyone I talked with felt the same way. Ronak really enjoyed and even talked about attending next year! Few days ago on the way home he said, we played kabaddi and did not win any game but he had fun! He also said, best part is that none of us speak Hindi well, and we all laugh at each other.

But I know they were learning it. It was definitely educational and fun. I know now when Navaratra comes, he would be happy to go there as he may see few familiar faces. May be you may want to invite everyone weekend before it starts for fun Dandia function.

Thank you for your hard work in putting it together. Hopefully we will continue to get grants and more kids can get benefit of it. I may pull Pooja out of Kruti

camp one week next year and have her attend also.

■ **Meenaxi Dave**

Archish is having a fabulous time at the camp (contrary to what he was thinking before the camp began). He is actually, correcting me during our conversations in Hindi. The moment he sits in the car after pick up from camp, he talks non-stop about the camp for at least 2 hours, and I am not exaggerating even a bit :-) Here are few of his statements that have taken me aback in only last 3 days:

■ It was an amazing day today.

■ I want to continue going to the camp so I can improve my Hindi speaking skills. I will now be able to show off my Hindi to cousins there, when we visit India.

■ I am actually enjoying learning about the Indian culture.

■ Mom, you need to start talking to me in Hindi!

■ Now, I am really proud of Indians in the US.

■ I really-really need to make more Indian friends.

■ I wish we had Indians in our neighborhood that had kids my age.

■ Mom, you have no idea how much fun it is to play kabaddi.

■ BONUS - "Manju aunty's son is so cool. You should hear him speak Hindi fluently"

■ **Amrita Pandey**



Balvihar Camp team – volunteers, teachers, teaching assistants, administrators with Chief guest Dr. Surendra Gambhir



Students with Manju Tiwari (right), Program Director and Gautami Shah (middle), Federal Monitor

Mrs. Dolly Chatterjee (right) with her students wearing Sari and Pagadi



On a fictional trip to Mumbai, the fashion capital of India, students learned to drape a sari and also about different clothing and styles prevalent in India. Volunteer models were dressed by the class and paraded through the corridors to loud applause.

A field trip for a day to a dairy and a working farm presented students with a firsthand glimpse of processing, organic gardening, and raising animals. Most of the students availed the opportunity to enjoy hay ride as well as ride horses. In order to appreciate the architectural beauty of temples, students also visited the Swami Narayan Mandir in Lilburn.

The camp concluded with a glittering gala and carnival held on the last day. While enjoying popcorn and snow cones students and parents both could buy a variety of things from the vendors who had stalls set up for the event. Later, parents gathered in the auditorium to see students from each class perform a variety show. Students were able to demonstrate their grasp of the Hindi language. Each student was given a certificate to commemorate their completion of the course.

Dr. Surendra Gambhir, very well-known academic and a Hindi Professor from UPenn, presented a banner in Hindi welcoming visitors to Global Mall to noted Atlanta businessman Mr. Shiv Agarwal. The

banner was presented in appreciation for his continued support for this camp. Sabitha Venugopal thanked all the volunteers, organizations, local businesses and media personnel who helped make this camp a grand success.

Program Director Mrs. Manju Tiwari, assisted by Mrs. Kusum Khurana the President of the VHPA Atlanta chapter and others, attributed the success of the camp to the hard work and dedication of the team and all the parents. Apart from the teachers and teaching assistants who hailed from University of North Carolina, Emory and Georgia Tech and graduates of Balvihar, a number of volunteers worked tirelessly to make this camp successful. Volunteers helped with food service, set up the food market and helped organize the games each day.

Feedback from parents and students has been enthusiastic and overwhelmingly positive with most students eager to attend the camp again the following year. The federal monitors who came and reviewed the camp also gave it high grades and praised the involvement of the community in making it such a huge success for the second year in a row.

Parents mark your calendars now as plans are already underway to have another camp next summer. ■



Students singing national anthem with Sudarshan Khurana (from left), Shyam Tiwari, Kusum Khurana, Dr. Surendra Gambhir, Shiv Aggarwal, Sabitha Venugopal and Manju Tiwari (right most)

Letter to The Editor

Alexander Zinoviev's article "For India's Survival Hinduism Has To Prevail" (Vol. XXXX no. 2), in which he proposes that Hindus convert India's Muslims, strikes me as appallingly unrealistic. Such an attempt would make India's Muslim minority understandably feel besieged and would tear the country apart, hardening positions and making reconciliation impossible perhaps for centuries. Hindus definitely should make Hinduism appealing and offer it to everyone, everywhere, not to stop somebody else but from appreciation of its benefits. It is such a great tradition that that should not be difficult. But the religion must be not only preached but lived. Fear and hatred of Muslims is no part of Hinduism and should be emphatically disavowed. Every effort should be made to get Hindus and Muslims

together, neighbor to neighbor, and reduce their mutual antagonism with acts of patient generosity and good will. Why would anyone wish to join a religion whose membership was incapable of such an effort?

It will not matter how many Muslims there are in India if Hindus and Muslims are friends and want the same kind of country.

Some years back a wealthy Muslim was so impressed with the benevolence of the Harmilap Sampraday that he actually paid for the construction of a Hindu temple. There are plenty of Muslims who will respond with humanity and affection if treated well. Muslims are human beings, not some faceless menace!

The main thing must be fearlessness and love of everyone. Only that is a real argument for any religion. Hysteria and aggression can only be arguments against one.

*John W. Gibson
State College PA*

Become a Hindu to Marry a Hindu: Supreme Court

By Rakesh Bhatnagar

If a Muslim woman plans to tie the knot with a Hindu man she should convert before marriage otherwise the alliance could be declared illegal in the eye of the Hindu Marriage Act. This edict came from the Supreme Court on Thursday in case of an IAF officer who had appealed for divorce from a Muslim woman who also had two kids from her first marriage. She was a Hindu before her last marriage. The young officer had met the woman on board a flight to Hyderabad from Delhi. They got married at his native place in Rajasthan but the relationship soured and the IAF officer sought dissolution of the marriage on the ground that his wife was a Muslim at the time of marriage. The plea was accepted and the marriage was declared void but the woman produced evidence in a higher court that she was a Hindu before her first marriage and thus there was no violation of the Hindu Marriage Act.

http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_become-a-hindu-to-marry-a-hindu-supreme-court_1542622



Kerala Temple Treasure Shows India's legendary Hunger for Gold

By George Varghese K

George Varghese K argues the discovery of the 1-trillion-worth treasure from the secret chambers of the Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple puts the spotlight on a piece of forgotten history

The recent discovery of treasure worth nearly a trillion rupees from the bowels of the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram has brought to the fore what I call the state's 'golden' past. The death of TP Sundararajan, a former IPS officer who was instrumental in the opening up of the treasure vaults through a court verdict against the royal house of Travancore has added a tinge of mystery to the whole affair. Suddenly, there is this talk of "the curse of the treasure". Falling back on such irrational logic to explain away the news of a man's death makes no sense. However, mystery still remains as to why the temple became home to treasure, mostly in gold, of this magnitude and scale.

As per historian Fernand Braudel, the movement of this metal determined history. What is crucial is that all through history, gold has moved towards Asia, not away from it. According to gold expert Peter Bernstein, Asia is the sink of gold and once it enters this sink it never escapes. Within Asia, India is the preferred point of accumulation, gold experts say. From the studies of experts such as Frank Perlin, Gunder Frank and Fernand Braudel, it is clear that gold and silver move in opposite directions within India; gold moves southwards to accumulate in South while silver moves northwards. Though India's hunger for gold is legendary, its share in the world production all through history is a meager 1%. But the gold accumulated in this sink is more than 25,000 tons, almost one-sixth of the world's total. With last year's import of more than 1,000 tons, the passion for this metal goes unabated.

How could, in the near-total absence of a particular commodity, an object could be desired for? This is in total contradiction with the materialist-dialectical theory which presupposes the presence of an object in an



appreciable quantity to have any effect. Ironically, despite gold's negligent presence, the mythological origin of India occurs from the Hiranyagarbha, the golden womb. Perhaps this genetic myth is true of Kerala than any other region of the country. The productivity of the land in Kerala used to be measured in gold. Gold coins in ancient Kerala were called Rasi, one of the smallest coins found anywhere in the world. In the economic history of the world, Kerala had gained significance related to gold. In ancient civilizations one incontrovertible sign of imperial power was the right to mint gold coins. For centuries, this right was vested with the emperors. Except one vassal king - its logic is still a mystery - only the Roman emperor minted gold coins. From Julius Caesar to the fall of Constantinople in 1453 there were only two Roman gold coins current in the western world: the early aureus of Constantine. Solidus was the "dollar" of the western world. On the other side, other than the Roman emperor the only royal head to mint gold coins anywhere in the world was the Zamorin of Calicut (now Kozhikode in Kerala). This is recorded by Alexander Del Mar, the American economic historian. Of course, mystery coexists with a piece of history. The author teaches at Manipal Centre for Philosophy and Humanities

The author teaches at Manipal Centre for Philosophy and Humanities

A Call from Appalachian Trail by Hindu Americans

Vision Document for Hindu organizations, Temples and Educational Institutions, 2012 and Beyond



By Dr. Mahesh Mehta,
Vice President, VHP, Global Coordination

The title of this paper is for all Hindus to conduct a walk on the Appalachian Trail in 2012 to celebrate Swami Vivekananda's birthday connecting all interested in the vision of this program by joining in the walk for some distance. The walk may be further connected from Georgia to California depending on the participating organizations. It should be for all including non-Hindus who practice some form of Dharma practices like Yoga, meditation, non-violence etc. in their personal lives.

Message from an Unknown Monk from India

In 2012, millions of people all over the world will celebrate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda (Born on January 12, 1863) who brought the message of Vedanta to the West in 1893 at the Parliament of World Religions at Chicago. In those days India was under the British Rule and Indians in USA were almost non-existent. The Industrial Revolution had taken roots in England in the late 18th century and the clouds of the First World War had just started gathering in Europe pulling in the Western world in 1914.

The assembly of the Parliament of World Religions was thrilled by the less than five minute oration of an

unknown, 30 year old Hindu monk, Swami Vivekananda, from the land that Columbus set out to find in the land he actually discovered. To quote from Swamiji's message to the gathering,

“As the different streams in different places all mingle their waters in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee”

“Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful Earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization, and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now?”

But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.” .. Ironically after 108 years 9/11 happened

September 11, 1893.

Addressing the assembly as Children of Immortal Bliss he said, "Hindu believes that he is a spirit (Aatman). Him the sword cannot pierce-him the water cannot wet-him the air cannot dry."

September 19, 1893

India a Global Entity

On August 15, 1947, India became free from British rule, with a partition of secular India and Islamic Pakistan. The new rules of immigration under President Kennedy opened the doors for Indians to the USA. Today the USA has over two million Indians as residents and American citizens. The presence of

India and Indians is global now. The question is, what this new stream of immigrants has to offer to the continuously evolving cultural life of America?

Hindu Identity:

The immemorial stream of Hindu cultural life makes it difficult to give a short definition of a Hindu therefore only a short statement about Hindu identity can be considered appropriate. The statement also has to take into account the new global Hindu.

Here is a concise statement for further development.

A Hindu is an individual who's religious, cultural and family traditions are rooted in the Dharmic traditions having their roots in Bharat (Hindusthan or India). The person may be born in India or anywhere in the world who adores India as Mother Bharat. Hindus by and large subscribe to an integral world view, recognizing the presence of the Supreme Self (Divinity) pervading the entire cosmos including planets, nature, and all living species and prays for universal wellbeing.

Human Dilemmas

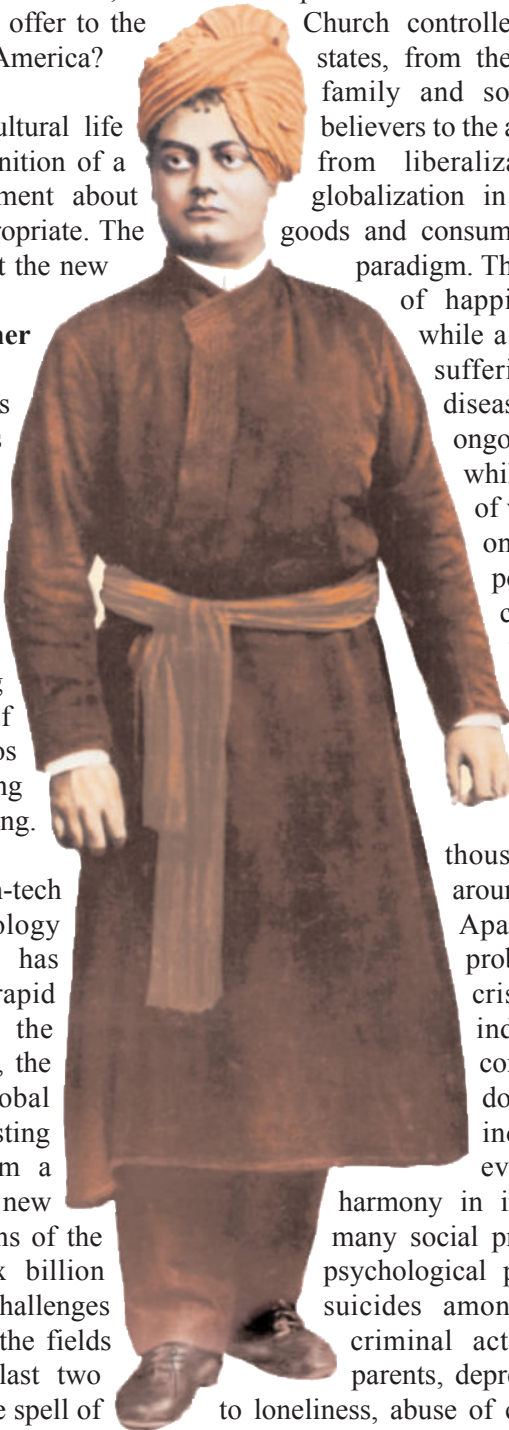
In the twentieth century, with the high-tech revolution and digital technology revolution, the global picture has significantly changed leading to rapid globalization of the world. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, the Cold War tension gone, the global leadership picture has changed, recasting the political map of the world from a bipolar to a multi-polar world with new fault lines along the major civilizations of the globe. Mother Earth with over six billion human beings is facing innumerable challenges while making significant progress in the fields of science and technology. In the last two centuries human societies are under the spell of the materialistic paradigm of life. In every walk of life following the Renaissance the fragmentary world view rooted in rational, materialistic philosophy is dominating all human endeavors. The political systems from serfdoms to monarchies, from dictatorships to democracies, the economic systems from state controlled to private ownerships, the business and trades from small family owned

operations to multinational corporations, the Church controlled kingdoms to the secular states, from the conservative to the liberal family and social institutions, from the believers to the agnostics to the atheists ideas, from liberalization to privatization to globalization in promoting production of goods and consumerism are all rooted in this paradigm. The human efforts are in search of happiness, harmony and peace while a large section of humanity is suffering from wants, hunger, disease and death. There is an ongoing search for world peace while there is continuous piling of weapons of mass destruction, ongoing efforts to reduce pollution while resolutions in conferences to reduce global warming. The ideals of pluralism, cultural diversity, human rights and individual freedom are talked about while the threats of global terrorism are taking lives of thousands of innocent people around the globe.

Apart from the macro level problems faced by humanity, the crisis has percolated at individual, family and community levels. The breakdowns in families in search of individual freedom and eventually the total loss of harmony in individuals have resulted in many social problems. The roots of many psychological problems like tendencies of suicides among youths, involvement in criminal acts of children with single parents, depression among the elders due to loneliness, abuse of children, women and elderly people are the crying challenges of our time.

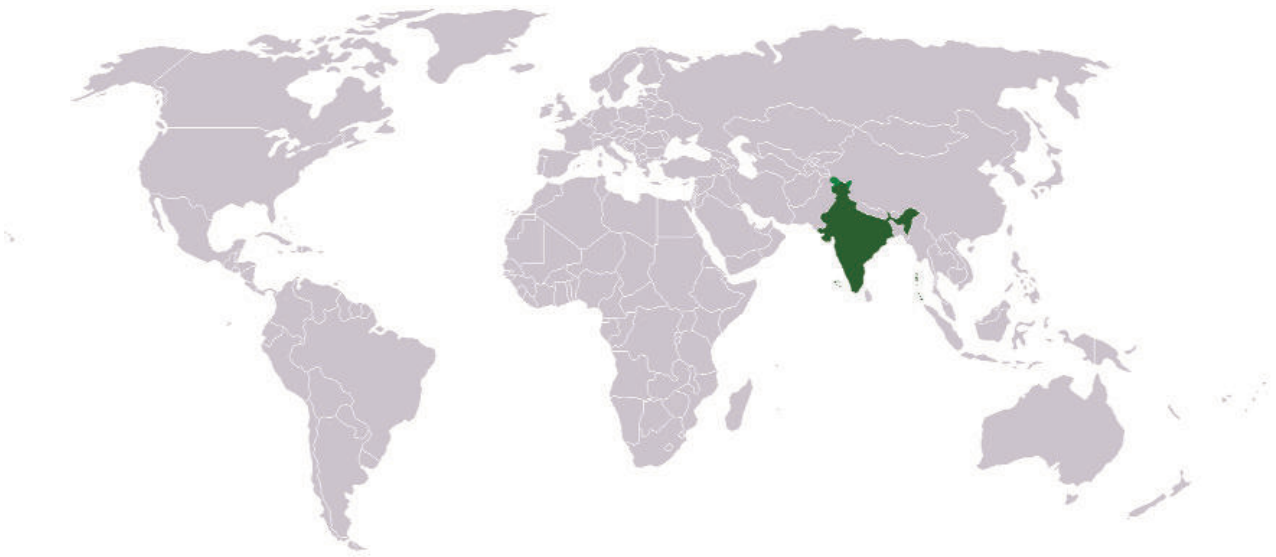
The lofty ideals of the Founding fathers of America; liberty, equality and fraternity appear to be dreams only looking at the global scenario. What is missing in the current world view of the global human being?

The roots of the rational thought originating from the times of Rene Descartes proclamation "Cogito ergo sum" and developing to the mechanistic model of the



creation by Newton giving rise to recognition only to the objective verifications of the Reality led to the prominence of science. The subjective experiences leading to the unfolding of the spiritual dimensions of human beings got ignored or at best got some secondary acceptance in the development of the systems developed to deliver fruits of human endeavors to the entire humanity. With the arrival of quantum physics, only the acceptance of objectivity and certainty of science is replaced by the subjectivity and probabilities in learning about Reality. This

higher potential for human consciousness, expand the inner boundaries to evolve into a spiritual being bringing the infinite consciousness within his reach. This possibility was explored by the ancient seers and sages of India and fortunately has continued to evolve till today as shown in the lives of some modern Rishis like Swami Vivekananda, Maharshi Raman, Maharshi Aurbindo and others. The current paradigm based on "outside-in" view of life is based on the understanding and interpretation of life as experienced by the five senses(sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch) and



development may allow the human mind to be free of a world view founded purely on materialism.

Next Phase of Human Evolution

Is there any further evolution of human species? If the current state of human race is an evolutionary outcome over millions of years, what can be the next phase of evolution? Human beings have developed as a living species from instincts to intelligence to intuition, from mere survival to the control of the surroundings and developed the power of rational thinking and using that power that makes him different from the rest of the animal species.

In the current phase of our civilization, with the power of technology and the resulting gadgets, it appears that one possibility is that human beings keep confined to the gadgets for fun only fulfilling him with greater speed, more information, but more locked up in oneself losing the abilities and even desires for human interactions. If he makes this choice, the current crisis may not be resolved but may become more threatening to the wellbeing of a large section of humanity.

Alternatively human being starts recognizing the

hence it is fragmentary and limited to body, mind and intellect of the explorers. The eastern paradigm based on "inside-out" view of life is rooted in the transcendental or integral view of life. This view is rooted in wholeness of creation and oneness of self. This is an all inclusive view in search of happiness. It is holistic and not homocentric. The presence of the all pervading infinite consciousness in the entire creation leaves no divisions as holy and unholy or sacred and secular. The infinite consciousness pervades through individuals, society, nature and Ishwar, representing the all pervasive, omniscient cause behind the creation in an ever expanding spirit. This paradigm makes the nature with its entire fauna and flora, animals and birds, mountains, rivers and oceans, and the entire cosmos holy.

This precise and powerful message of Vedanta was delivered in America in 1893 by the Indian visionary Swami Vivekananda. Now that millions of Indians will be celebrating his birth anniversary in 2012, let this message reverberate throughout America by the millions of heirs residing here. Let India with her ten-

thousand-year-plus history with an integral approach to life and a paradigm founded on the spiritual dimension of human being presented in Vedic period and in the USA with a few hundred years history of the scientific world view developed by eminent scientists join hands together to initiate the next phase of human evolution in this era.

Need Learning, Not Just Information and Teaching

The great challenge for the leaders today, particularly the leaders in the field of education is to take a closer look at the system of education. What are the primary goals of education of children and teenage students? The current systems are geared for individuals to compete in the world for professional excellence, successful careers, earning means of livelihood and keep looking at the outside world for fulfillment. The Vedic system of education, aimed at perfection of one's abilities and attaining full potential, not merely success in competition. Thus the Vedic education aimed at the innermost satisfaction of human beings - ethical, cultural and spiritual. Is such a system relevant in today's society? To initiate the new phase of evolution can the thinkers, philosophers, academicians and others interested in education introduce a relevant education system? Do we see the need for education not just to enhance standard of living but also the standard of life rooted in integral view of life?

Who are Hindu Americans?

The word Hindu is an identity those who believe in Dharma-traditions having their origin in the Vedas, the revelations about the Truth as experienced and expressed in words called Shruti. The Shruti was not composed or compiled by one sage but "Richas" or "Mantras" (hymns) uttered by many sages. The Truth

as expressed in Vedas is known as Sanatan Dharma meaning the Truth that is eternal and universal.

The Vedas originated in Bharat, (India) in the regions of seven rivers in North-west part of India. The people living in this region of rivers were known as Hindus and hence those who believed in, practiced or respected the revelations of Vedas came to be known as Hindus. Later with the arrival of European scholars, the word Dharma was translated as religion and the Dharma traditions were labeled as "Hinduism".

Later the Dharma traditions were practiced in many parts of Asia and Europe. Of the Hindu Americans about ninety percent are coming from India but Hindus from many other countries like Nepal, Thailand, and Caribbean nations are also among the Hindu Americans. Today over twenty five million Americans have adopted many practices of Dharma traditions like Yoga and meditation.

Sage Vyas compiled all these Shrutis in four books known as Rigved (the most ancient book), Yajurved, Samved and Atharvved. Vedas were composed in Sanskrit. The knowledge of Vedas is not easy to grasp as each Richa (hymn) has three meanings, a ritualistic knowledge, a knowledge of deity and spiritual knowledge. The real meaning becomes clear thru sounds of Richa and not by simple translations of

words; so much confusion has been caused by simple translations especially by the European scholars who had no deeper understanding of the Vedic literature.

The Basic tenets of Vedic Dharma (Sanatan , Arya or Hindu Dharma) are expressions of the inner explorations of the Rishis from which the seeds of Truth have grown like a Banyan tree (Vat Vriksha). The search is

ongoing and hence it can be called an open book of knowledge. The path that leads to the realization of Truth is called Dharma, the cosmic law or order or the law of life. Dharma takes in consideration the individual Aatman (Swabhava) to determine ones' personal path (Swadharma). The Right Actions (Karma) keeps the individual on the path of Dharma and hence the ultimate fulfillment.

The Rishis (seers) expressed the Truth as follows.

1. Ishavasyamidamsarvam - There is only One Reality call it Truth (Sat), Infinite consciousness (Chit),



Infinite Bliss (Ananda) pervading the whole creation.
2. Ekam Sat Viprah Bahudha Vadanti - This One Truth is known by different names.

3. Yasya Sarvani Bhutani Aatmanev Anupasyati

One who sees the same Aatman in every being

4. Sarve Api Sukhino Santu - Let all be happy.

It appears as if the realization expressed in number one leads one to the next one in number two and so on from first to the fourth. The essence of Vedic knowledge is that the individual self (Aatman) carries the holographic image of the universal self (Brahman). The Hindu psyche is deeply engraved with these words of the Rishis even till today. The macro picture of the society and the current Indian affairs may not lead an observer from outside to believe if Hindu Psyche still retains the Vedic teachings. But going below the obvious to the grass roots of the Indian society, one can feel the Hindu pulse still throbbing with the desire to unfold ones full potential from human to the Divine.

The Challenge to Hindu Americans

The current crisis faced by humanity at large is to evolve further from the species with reason, rationality and objectivity to compassion, subjectivity and spirituality. The current world order has to transform from econo-centric and consumerist world view to Dharma-centric world view. This transformation will allow human race to move from individual liberty to family and social harmony from homocentric to holistic life. The innumerable problems like climate change, global terrorism, and exploitation of Mother Earth will give way to a more harmonious living with global cooperation and not just global marketing. The search for happiness can be diverted from maximum consumption to maximum contribution with minimum consumption.

Let us not confuse this move with imposition from a higher authority to bring about an illusion of equality and fraternity among all. The proposed transformation has its roots in knowledge of the higher Truth about human nature. The Hindu Americans should accept this challenge to transmit the ancient wisdom from the Vedas to the education institutions and to all the political, economic, scientific, art and literary world. The Hindu Americans may have an obligation to tell Hindus in India to bring back the thirst for spiritual knowledge of their ancestors as an obligation to the world that they call a family. Hindu organizations, Hindu temples and Hindu educational institutions have to come together to define a course of action. The

evolution being a natural process cannot be planned by anyone but the process of education presenting such opportunities for a desired change can be introduced and executed by the torch-bearers of the Hindu culture. A change in the system of education has many obstacles but a change in the current activities of the organizations and temples, providing learning opportunities to children and youth can be introduced with a global outlook. Many organizations have some informal programs but need more concentrated efforts in right direction.

On the occasion of the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda let national level connectivity be provided to children and youth who would be the seeds needed for transformation.

The vision is to lift humanity to a higher state of consciousness about human potential. This vision is to lift us from a rut of chasing our own tails in the name of progress and prosperity, while in essence today it is moving with higher and higher speed in the same orbit of the world of material fulfillment.

In order to bring home the message of Dharma to the young adults, the college students, young parents and non-Hindus interested in Hindu culture, let the Hindu institutions organize workshops, seminars, or other forums to translate the vision of the Rishis in some practical, short term goals and objectives to nourish the values of Dharma in daily lives.

Notes:

Dharma is the law of cosmic order, a dynamic force that sustains life, allows growth and harmony among all. Thus the translation of Dharma as religion doesn't bring out its full meaning. The thread of Dharma runs common among Jains, Boudhas, Sikhs and Hindus. The modes of worship, rituals, scriptures and certain practices may differ but not in the essence. They all, along with many other traditions form one beautiful mosaic of Hindu cultural life.

Many non-Hindus have accepted practices like Yoga, meditation, non-violence and follow Dharma traditions. Hindus have always welcomed non-Hindus in Dharma tradition through marriage, personal choice or experiences.

Readers are welcome to share their views on the topic of Hindu identity and the role of Hindus in providing a new paradigm for the future of humanity.

Review of Report On SC/ST by Rakesh Bahadur

Equality and Inclusion: Progress and Development of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes in Independent India”

This report examines the important question of the status of the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes (SC/ST) population in India after Independence (August 1947), from social, economic, and legal aspects, with particular view of the equality of the SC/ST with respect to (wrt) non-SC/ST population. The development of the SC/ST people during the past decades has been highlighted, with comparison wrt non-SC/ST population, in order to assert that the former have achieved comparable development wrt the latter. Usually it is reported in the official publications and reports as well as in the media that SC/ST people do not have equal opportunities wrt non-SC/ST segment of the population; and that the SC/ST segment actually suffer a degree of discrimination and neglect – that the SC/ST people do not have the same privileges enjoyed by the non-SC/ST segment of the population and, hence have remained ‘backward’ even after Independence of the country. The author of this Report (Rakesh Bahadur) points out, however, that such conclusions are erroneous and often result from a misinterpretation of the data. In fact, the amount of data itself is considered inadequate, usually pertaining to just one year; whereas it is well known that social changes take much longer. Several years-worth of data must be collected and carefully examined and quantitatively analyzed to meaningfully study the social norms and evolutionary pattern of the SC/ST population. This Report even questions the very origin of the caste-system in the context of the SC/ST. The Manusmriti, by sage Manu, mentions only the four ‘Varnas’: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. Were there other ‘Smritis’ written addressing this subject? Just when and how such a large number of SC/ST came to be – asks the author of this Report. Could the term SC/ST have sprung up during the imperial period, under some overt and covert encouragement by the

foreign rulers – a conspiracy to induce division and disunity in the society, a part of their notorious “Divide and Rule” policy? Is there a hidden agenda of the Western Indologists, wonders the author.

In any case, this Report provides a comprehensive analysis of the basic issue of SC/ST in Independent India, including a summary of the results of earlier reports by various government ministries, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other sources and agencies.

Thus this Report attempts to present ‘verifiable and reliable data that is easy to grasp and (helps to) understand the ground reality that all Indians should be proud of.’ The current status of SC/ST population is described, together with an outline of their comparative development in their status after Independence. It is indicated that the discrimination and human rights violations are a product of lawlessness in India. The great deal of progress made in improving the status of the SC/ST, with the help of the policy of affirmative action, especial laws, and programs, is underscored.

Included in the Report is detailed data relating to high order of increase in the literacy rate during the 1961-2001 period among the various factions SC/ST under financial assistance for education program. This growth-rate follows fairly well the pattern of increase in the literacy rate of the general population (non-SC/ST.) The same is true of the drop-out rate, as evidenced by the data presented in great details for the period of 1990-2005. Detailed data is also presented about the growth of cases of higher education for the period of 1970-2006, showing ‘tremendous progress made by the SC/ST in this area. Numerical data and analysis regarding rate of crime (assault, murder, looting, rape, decoity, kidnapping and abduction, etc.) for the period of 1994-2000, as published by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB)*, is also presented in this Report, leading to the conclusion that the crime rate against SC/ST

(2000-2009) is less than 1% of the crime committed against non-SC/ST; and that the growth-rate of crime is higher for the non-SC/ST and lowest against Schedule Tribes (ST.)

In regard to human rights violation, the detailed data presented in this Report, for the period 1995-2008, indicates that cases against SC/ST are less than 2% of the total human rights violation cases.

Further, this Report presents fully detailed data (in total amounts in Rupees) on the economic development of SC/ST, as applicable to various Five-Year Plans during the period of 1974-2002. It is thereby noted that allocation of funding for the advancement of the SC/ST under the Central Sector has been made only during the Seventh (1985-1990) onwards.

representation of SC in jobs (Class I, II, III, and IV) for the period 1953-2008, for instance. Again, State-by-State detailed data is presented.

This Report presents the following data about the percentage distribution of the SC and ST populations within various religions for the 2004-2005 period*: A comprehensive list of constitutional and legal reforms and of the laws for such reforms pertaining to the SC/ST has been provided in this Report, including incorporation of a National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (NC-SC/ST) under Article 338 of the Constitution, in 1990.

On the whole, this Report indicates that the SC/ST population is making steady progress under various developmental programs, at a rate comparable to the

RELIGION	SC	ST	OBC	OTHERS	ALL
HINDUS	22.2	9.8	42	26	100
MUSLIMS	0.8	1.5	39	59.5	100
CHRISTIANS	9	32.9	24.8	33.3	100
SIKHS	30.7	0.8	22.4	46.1	100
JAINS	0	2.7	3	94.3	100
BUDDHISTS	89	7.9	0.4	2.7	100
ZOROASTRIANS	0	15.9	13.7	70.4	100
OTHERS	2	83.1	6.2	8.7	100
TOTAL	19.2	19.3	18.9	42.6	100

*Source: Sachar Commission, 2006

Considering the population below the line of poverty, for example, it is indicated that the percentage decrease in is such population (below the poverty line) is about 21%, 19.5%, and 18.5% for the Schedule Castes (SC), the Schedule Tribes (ST), and for the general population (non-SC/ST) as a whole, respectively, during the period 1983-2005. Thus, according to this Report, the pattern of variation of the decrease in the number of people below the poverty line for the SC/ST is quite similar to that for the general population. State-by-State data regarding poverty, as well as for rural and segment of the population, is also provided.

The constitutional status for reservation of seats for the SC/ST in Central and State governments is discussed in this Report. Data is presented on

progress of the non-SC/ST, in Independent India. The SC/ST enjoys especial privileges, equal opportunities, and human rights protection with respect to the mainstream population, as well. As per this Report, any conclusion to the contrary is the result of misinterpretation of the data. The comprehensive and detailed data presented in this Report establishes beyond doubt that the general status of the SC/ST segment of the population as a whole can be said to be quite satisfactory. ■

For the complete report visit:

www.docstoc.com/docs/90074351/Equality-and-Inclusion-Progress-and-development-of-Scheduled-Castesand-Tribes-in-Independent-India

★www.ncrb.gov.in

Nepal Rejects Ambitious Chinese Buddhist Venture

KATHMANDU: Less than a fortnight after a Chinese nongovernmental organisation announced its plan for what amounted to a virtual takeover of Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha in Nepal, Nepal's government on Thursday unceremoniously rejected it, saying it would not entertain any deal struck in a third country without the participation of the actual stakeholders.

“Nepal is the actual stakeholder”, said Modraj Dattel, spokesperson of Nepal's culture ministry that governs Lumbini, the town in southern Nepal that is the destination of thousands of pilgrims and Buddhist scholars worldwide, and a Unesco-declared World Heritage Site. “How can we own a deal struck in a third country without the formal consent of the actual stakeholder”

The unambiguous official rejection came after reports in the Chinese media earlier this month that a Hong Kong based NGO, the Asia Pacific Exchange and Cooperation Foundation, had signed a memorandum of understanding with the UN Industrial Development Organisation for a \$3 billion project to develop Lumbini into a "Buddhist Mecca", complete with hotels, an international airport and other tourism-related infrastructure.

“We had no formal intimation of the MoU and read about it in the media,” Dattel told TNN. “If UNIDO and the Foundation come to Nepal to implement their plan, we will not entertain it.” Alarmed by the reports, Nepal's foreign ministry held a meeting Wednesday to discuss the MoU and rejected it as a groundless plan that ignored the host country.

Since the announcement of the MoU, the Foundation has been under media glare in Nepal, which has been less than flattering. The Nepali media has specially highlighted the fact that the Foundation's members include Maoist chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda and his bete noir, ousted crown prince Paras Bir Bikram Shah.

The Chinese interest in Lumbini has been growing. The Foundation plan virtually tried to hijack an earlier, and more modest, scheme proposed last year by the Beijing



Zhongtai Jinghu Investment Company headed by former Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Li Debiao. The more upfront Beijing company held talks with the Nepal government for a Rs 8 billion construction project in Lumbini and was given the go-ahead to proceed with some of its components.

The new Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Yang Houlan, who assumed office last month, has already visited Lumbini and broached the subject of Chinese assistance for developing Lumbini in a series of meetings with Nepal's ministers and politicians. Even on Thursday, when the envoy met former Nepal prime minister Madhav Kumar Nepal, Lumbini was discussed, according to the statement issued by Nepal's media advisor.

The growing Chinese interest comes at a time Beijing is trying to bring religious institutions under its control. After appointing a Panchen Lama of its own, it has since then said that all reincarnations of Tibetan Buddhist leaders would have to be approved by the state, raising fears that the dragon means to choose a successor to the current Dalai Lama as well. Besides keeping Buddhist monasteries under tight surveillance, China is also seeking to control the church on its soil. While independent Christian leaders face persecution, arrest and being sentenced to labour camps, the state is, on the other hand, also appointing bishops, a move that has been rejected by the Vatican. ■

URL: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/Nepal-rejects-ambitious-Chinese-Buddhist-venture/articleshow/9395547.cms>

‘Sita Sings the Blues’

Exploring the Issue of Denigration



Sita Sings the Blues shows Rama abusing Sita



Hindus know Rama to be Perfection Embodied

Sita Sings the Blues is an animated film made in 2008 by an artist Nina Paley. The film depicts the story of the Ramayan mixed in with events in the life of Paley. Paley draws parallels between her personal experiences and those of Sita in the Ramayan. The film has met opposition from some in the Hindu community resulting in protests against screenings of the film at various places. These protesters claim that the movie is offensive to Hindus and denigrates their religion/culture. Dating the Ramayan, a text believed to be sacrosanct, is a difficult task; therefore, the time period of the Ramayan will be referred to as some time BCE (Before Common Era) as done in the movie. Since the divinity of the protagonists and the veracity of the events in the Ramayan have not been proven, the Ramayan shall be examined as an epic traditionally used to inform decisions about right and wrong. The Ramayan portrays Ram as Maryada Purushottam and one who is a perfect embodiment of righteousness. This is a profound claim to be noted and is cited by many as the reason for worshipping Shri Ram today, in the 21st century. Hindu Vishwa, in the true Hindu tradition of presenting different point of views, approached Bhavna Shinde and Ankit Tiwari to present their views on this issue.

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Why ‘Sita Sings the Blues’ Is Offensive

By Mrs. Bhavna Shinde Hurley

Recently, on the subject of Hinduism and its denigration, I was asked in a news interview if my 12-year-old son knows the Ramayana. I replied, “He knows it well enough to recognize that it is being denigrated in ‘Sita Sings the Blues’.” A couple of years ago, Nina Paley, a Jewish American lady from NY came out with an animation film ‘Sita Sings the Blues’ that draws parallels between her failed marriage and the sacred relationship between Lord Rama and Mother Sita. While Paley has played the “freedom of expression” card to show Sita in revealing clothes, using foul language and Lord Rama as an awful husband who mistreated Sita, Hindus worldwide have found almost each scene of the

film to be extremely denigrating of their revered deities and scripture Ramayan. Paley claims that the film is based on the original Ramayan composed by Sage Valmiki, however, it is actually a parody of the Ramayan. The film shows Sita singing about how she accepts Rama despite His shortcomings, whereas the Ramayan sings of Rama as the Maryada Purushottam, the supreme extent of Righteousness (Dharma), and describes Sita as the embodiment of devotion unto The Lord. Supposedly, Paley’s husband ended their relationship by email while he was posted in India, so she found solace in the Ramayana. Paley claims she could relate to Sita, as she feels that Sita too, was cruelly abandoned by her husband Rama! Paley has obviously failed to understand the Ramayan, which shows that Rama had to put His duties to

His subjects ahead of His love for His wife. Paley seems to forget that Rama had crossed the ocean and fought the mightiest of demons to rescue Sita. Rama was the perfect husband, who remained devoted to Sita alone, whereas He could have married many wives as per the customs of those times. Comparing the Hindus' revered Incarnation Rama and deity Sita with today's human beings steeped in lust and defects is misleading of Paley. Not heeding the protests of 1000s of Hindus and citing Hinduism Today's (!) article praising this film as an endorsement from the Hindu community is pure mischief. However, from the over 100 Hindus in San Jose who gathered on 6th August 2011

within a few hours of announcing a protest outside the Museum of Art there showing this film, from the over 1000 letters and phone calls received by Starlight Pavilion protesting their planned showing of this film in July 2011, to over 13000 Hindus joining Hindu Janajagruti Samiti's online protest campaign within a few days, it felt better. The film is offensive to all those, who have understood the Ramayana.

About the author

Ms. Bhavna Shinde Hurley is the spokesperson for Forum for Hindu Awakening.

'Sita Sings the Blues'

A conversation About Ramayan

By Ankit Tiwari

Nina Paley takes the story of the Ramayan, treats it like any other story and interjects it with contemporary parallels from her own life. The narration of the Ramayan is actually unscripted dialog between three Indians who casually narrate the main story and make offhand comments about the events in the story. These comments, the animations related with these comments and the overall bias of the movie in favor of Sita at the expense of Ram are the elements of the movie that offend some in the Hindu community. The film is a reaction to the unfortunate events in the artist's life resulting in the end of her marriage. After these events she found the Ramayan and found something in Sita's ordeal which she could identify with. She relates the story of the Ramayan to our lives. Her portrayals of supernatural events and the actions of characters are based on a world view informed by 21st century knowledge. The animations shown in the film are visual portrayals of the ideas and actions of the characters which are familiar to anyone who has ever watched a cartoon show.

After slaying Ravan Ram asks Sita to take an agni pariksha (trial by fire). A "normal" reaction to such a preposterous request would be, "What type of a person asks someone to immolate themselves?" It is argued that Ram knew that she was innocent or that she was protected by Agni and an illusory Sita was sent to Lanka which was sacrificed in the agni pariksha. The latter point does not appear in the Valmiki Ramayan so it is out of the context of this discussion. The former point about Ram knowing Sita's innocence is a startling one. Firstly, what if he was wrong and she was guilty? Most modern societies don't have laws

against adultery. Even if there was one, being burned alive is considered excessive. Secondly, it is said that Ram made her take this trial because he was a king and had to assure his subjects of her purity. Setting such an example only condones feelings of jealousy and suspicion towards one's spouse. Taking into account scientific knowledge of the psychological effects of suspicion and jealousy in intimate relationships this decision of Ram's could not be justified today. A modern subject would prefer their king to treat them like an adult and say that he trusts his wife.

One can easily pinpoint every incident in the film which could be seen as offensive and make an argument for it but such effort is unnecessary. Nina Paley has started a conversation about the Ramayan set in the 21st century which, interestingly enough, is the time period in which we all reside. Those who dissent with Paley's analysis of the story could present counter arguments justifying the actions of the story's characters; arguments could point out how these actions should guide the lives of modern people. A starting point could be arguing that if President Obama were in a similar state he should mimic the actions of the Maryada Purshottam. If the actions of the "perfect man" in the Ramayan cannot be morally justified today, they are of no use to us. We can have a BCE conversation about the nature of right and wrong or a 21st century one. However, this is only possible when people acknowledge that dogmatically holding something exempt from criticism, satire and analysis results in no conversation at all.

About the author

Ankit Tiwari, 23, an Aerospace Engineer from Georgia Tech, is an avid reader and a prolific writer. Ankit occasionally assists in editing books and essays.

Hindus, Sikhs May Face Worse Times In Future: Report



Islamabad The previous year was a bad one for Pakistan's minority communities including Muslims of various sects, Sikhs and Hindus due to threat to their lives by militants, according to a new report which suggested even worse times ahead.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's report said 418 Muslims of various sects were killed in terror attacks and about 25 per cent of Sikh families in the Orakzai tribal area were forced to leave their homes due to threats from Taliban.

It said 500 Hindu families from Balochistan province migrated to India due to threats to their lives and security.

The "State of Human Rights in 2010" report, which detailed attacks on the minorities, said: "All indications suggest that there are even worse times ahead."

The report said 418 people were killed in violence against different minority Muslim sects while suicide attacks on Muslims injured 628 people, including Shias.



Sikhs living in Pakistan's northwestern areas for centuries had to face trying times after the Tehrik-e-Taliban

Pakistan asked

them to pay 'jiziya' (a religious tax) or leave the area.

Around 25 of the 102 Sikh families living in Orakzai Agency were forced to flee their homes. They were able to return after the military carried out an operation against the militants.

A total of 500 Hindu families from Balochistan in southwest Pakistan migrated to India because of threats to their lives and security, the report said. According to Balochistan's director of the Federal Human Rights Ministry, at least 27 Hindu families from the province had sought asylum in India because of threats, It added.

The minority Ahmedi sect, which was declared non-Muslim through a constitutional amendment in 1974, lost 99 members to faith-based violence, the report said.

The report further said 64 people were charged under the controversial blasphemy law in 2010 and many of them were imprisoned.

A Muslim and two Christian men accused of blasphemy were killed in police custody, it said. Highlighting the abuses of the rights of minority communities, the report said there had been few positive developments with regard to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

"Extremist views grew more vociferous as voices for basic human rights and tolerance became more isolated in face of violence and intimidation," the report noted.

It said police were not doing enough to protect minorities from attacks and had even been accused of harassing or being complicit in framing false charges against them.

Presenting the report, HRCP chairman Mehdi Hassan claimed most human rights abuses were being conducted by government functionaries, including police.

"Under such conditions, who will ensure that the laws are being implemented?" he asked.

The report said prejudices of law enforcement personnel were believed to be a hurdle in effective protection of religious minorities in serious danger from the Taliban and sectarian militant groups.

HRCP secretary general I A Rehman said in most religion-based killings, the federal and provincial governments failed to even express sympathy with victims.

The report also highlighted the growing spread of hate literature and said even mainstream Urdu newspapers featured 1,468 news articles and editorials that promoted hate, intolerance and discrimination against Ahmedis.

Rehman contended that political parties had failed to contribute towards improving human rights conditions.

"They cannot even speak clearly on the issue because they are not true political parties, these are just brokers and rubber-stamps," he alleged.

The report further highlighted the government's weak response to misuse of the controversial blasphemy law and its flip-flop on calls to reform the law to prevent its misuse.

- The report also detailed the law and order situation, saying about 12,580 people were murdered and 581 kidnapped for ransom in 2010.

A total of 16,977 cases of kidnapping were reported.

- The HRCP held US drones strikes responsible for 957 extra-legal killings and said another 338 people were killed in police "encounters" or fake shootouts.

- A total of 1,159 people, included 1,041 civilians, were killed in 67 suicide attacks, the report said. Overall, a total of 2,542 people were killed and 5,062 injured in terrorist attacks.

- Target killings in Karachi claimed the lives of 237 political activists and 301 civilians, the report said.

- Another 118 people were killed and 40 injured in 117 incidents of target killing in Balochistan. The figures included 29 non-Baloch settlers and 17 members of the Shia Hazara community.

- The bodies of 59 "missing persons" - people detained without charge by security and intelligence agencies - were found in Balochistan.

- The report said there were 163 attacks on educational institutions while militants killed 22 teachers in Balochistan between January 2008 and October 2010.

- A total of 791 women were killed in the name of honor while 2,903 were sexually assaulted, with the maximum number of cases reported from Punjab province.

Observers have said that the PPP-led government had apparently shelved plans to review the law following the assassination this year of Punjab Governor Salmaan Taseer and Minority Affairs Minister Shahbaz Bhatti, who were gunned down for challenging the law. ■

URL: http://www.samachar.com/Hindus-Sikhs-may-face-worse-times-in-future-report-lepsPOffjbb.html?source=recommended_news

Hindus Celebrate Their Heritage At a Grand Mela In Marlborough, MA

Hindu Heritage Day 2011

22 May 2011

By Dr. Amit singh

ShivaShakti - Representation of Universal Wholeness

A modern-day nationalist thinker of India (Bharat), and a practitioner of his own thoughts and teachings, Shri Guru Golwalkar once stated, "Our youth must be made to feel proud of being born in the great lineage of rishis (learned sages) and yogis (adepts). If we have to live up to their legacy, we must live as Hindus, we must appear as Hindus, and we must make ourselves felt by the whole world as Hindus."

Close to 2000 Hindu Americans assembled at the Marlborough Middle School in Massachusetts on 21 May 2011 to celebrate the 15th Hindu Heritage Day (HHD). The Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA) organized the HHD. VHPA [<http://www.vhp-america.org>] is a national organization aiming to unite Hindus by instilling in them devotion to the Hindu way of life, to cultivate self-respect and respect for all people, and to establish contacts with Hindus all over the world. To mark this annual occasion, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Mr. Deval L. Patrick, as well as the

Mayor of the City of Marlborough, Ms. Nancy E. Stevens, proclaimed Saturday, 21 May 2011 as "Hindu Heritage Day." The Western calendar date is equivalent to Vaishakha Krishna Panchami of the Vikarami Samvat 2067 of the lunar calendar popular among Hindus. "Krishna Panchami" denotes the fifth day of a waning moon.

The theme of this year's HHD was "ShivaShakti -



Representation of Universal Wholeness." When the energy principle is passive, it is called Shiva. However, when it becomes active, it is represented by Shakti. For new attendees of the HHD, the "mela," akin to a typical country fair, was a surprise as it was unlike any event they had experienced elsewhere. They wondered how it could even begin to be managed. The mela was composed of three major

programs that ran simultaneously. First, there was a cultural program that ran for over three hours. Second, there were more than 40 booths in the form of a bazaar that one could visit and browse. Third, there was a food court where one could find the popular delights from the northern and southern regions of India. A nominal entrance fee of \$3 per person, exempting children 5 and younger, covered admission to the entire event. Almost all attendees had to seek a trade-off among the three options to attend and benefit from all the programs in the available time without missing



anything. An undercurrent for almost all of the people was meeting friends, some they had lost touch with. It became a juggling act on the part of each family to enjoy the available events. At the end of the evening, almost everyone wished that they had come earlier or had more time to do everything.

The cultural program featured more than 250 performing participants from 20-plus organizations. It allowed children of all ages to perform on stage. It was geared to be an open house program where the audience was free to go in and out of the auditorium as long as it was done discreetly without disrupting the performers or the attendees. The program brought together the work of the best music and dance teachers of the Boston metropolitan area. Overall, more than 25



lighting to run smoothly is a performance in its own merit perfected by a number of volunteers over the last several years.

While the cultural program ran in the auditorium, there was a virtual bazaar established in the corridors.



Two categories of booths or stalls were there. One was for-profit and sold merchandise from India not easily available in stores in the Boston metropolitan area. This category included garments, jewelry, books, nutritional supplements, and various decorative items. The second category of booths was of not-for-profit organizations offering information useful to the community at large. Contact information was available for various schools of yoga and meditation, VHPA camps, instruction in learning Sanskrit and Hindi, "Indian Circle for Caring," temples in the region, Math and Science teachers, "Ekal Vidyalaya," "Support-a- Child," and financial

performances were presented by those teachers. A highlight of the program was the Nepali/Bhutani community of Western MA performing bhajans in Nepali language, accompanied by a folk dance. Each item was professionally done, complete with appropriate costumes under the expert guidance of the teachers. It was with pride that the teachers presented their student performances and it was with wonder that the audience watched these presentations by the talented youth.

The cultural program also covered a special skit on Shiva-Shakti. It covered the story of Sati-Parvati and Shiva by tracing the events from the Daksha Yajna through the Shiva-Parvati Vivah.

At this point in the span of the 15-year history of the HHD, the demand for a slot in the program far outstrips the availability. The logistics of getting all of the participants ready in the green room, ensuring that the right computer disc is played for a respective performance, and getting the sound system and stage



services, to list a few. The mehndi (Henna) stall was very popular with young ladies regardless of their level of familiarity with the natural cosmetic of Bharat. There was a very well-attended stall of fruit drinks and masala chai popular with persons accustomed to taking afternoon tea. It took considerable time to navigate these booths as one ran across friends and time had to be taken to chat with several families. Without the HHD, many such friends often need an extra motivation to meet and greet. The increasing popularity of the HHD could be gauged from the large attendance despite May 21 being the first sunny day after a stretch of about ten days of raw, rainy weather. Such a rare sunny day easily pulls people in the directions of other outdoor attractions.



children born in this country, it was a "crash course" on the core concepts of Hinduism. There was yet another category of booths which provided hands-on activities for children interested in face painting, drawing, kite flying, and mehndi. The kite flying activity attracted the young and not so young throughout the day in sizeable numbers.

Besides the booths, the cafeteria was a common area

where one was certain to run into friends. It was crowded at all times. A prominent Indian restaurant, Dosa Temple (Ashland, MA), served the food. The fragrance of freshly prepared food wafted through the air as the kitchen staff worked non-stop to keep up with the demand for various items. One was reminded of weddings in India where such activity to feed a virtually unlimited number of guests is commonplace.

Behind the scenes, there were over 50 volunteers that worked, some of them over several

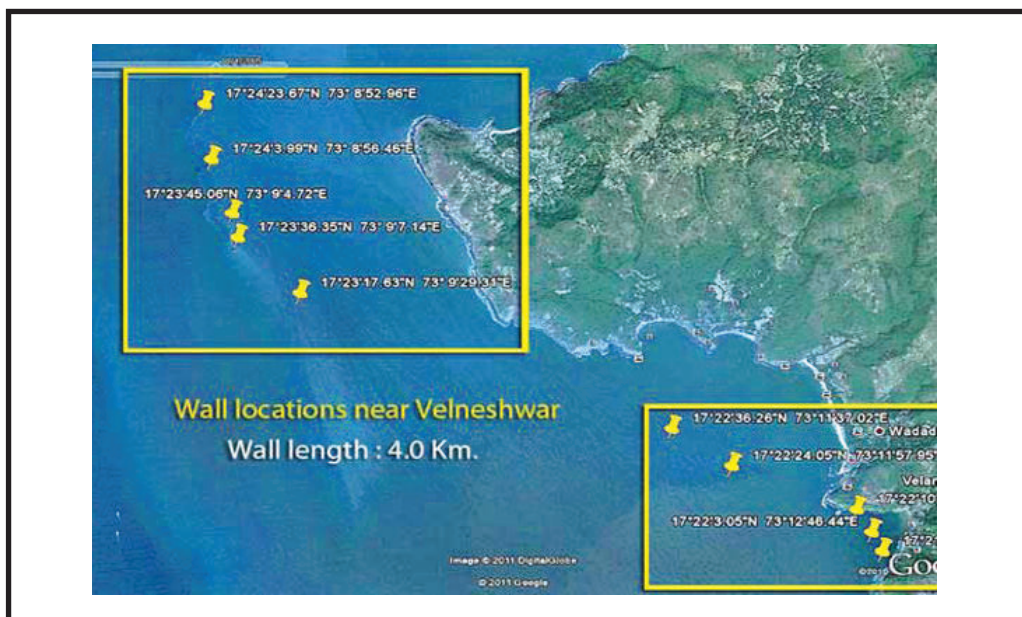


The hallway also featured two highly informative yet easy-to-understand exhibits. One was about the "Giants of the Bhakti Movement in Medieval India". It featured the biographies of saints whose selfless service helped Hinduism withstand the turbulence of the times. The other was about the "Significance of the First Ten Numbers in Hinduism". To many

months, to make the HHD mela possible and successful. Many of such volunteers have been working for organizing the HHD since its beginning in the Boston metropolitan area. If you are interested in participating in any segment of the HHD next year, please contact Mrs. Jaya Asthana at

jasthanah@hotmail.com or hhdhoston@gmail.com. ■

8000-year-old Advanced Civilization in Konkan Coast?



Did the Konkan coast from Shrivardhan in Raigad to Vengurla in Sindhudurga host a human habitat around 8000 years ago? Did that population have well-developed engineering skills? Was there a unique Konkan culture in existence in 6000BC? A new archaeological discovery, below sea level along the Konkan coast, could give answers to these questions. And explorers say the answer could well be a big 'Yes!'

Researchers have found a wall-like structure that is 24 km long, 2.7 meters tall, and around 2.5 meters wide. The structure shows uniformity in its construction. "The structure is not continuous throughout the 225 km from Shrivardhan to Raigad, but it is uniform," said Dr Ashok Marathe, professor, department of archaeology, Postgraduate and Research Institute, Deccan College, Pune. "It has been found three meters below the present sea level. It has been constructed on the ancient sand beach, which was taken as the base for the construction. Considering the uniformity of the structure, it was obvious that the structure is man-made and not natural." The joint expedition carried by Deccan College and the central government's department of science and technology, was in progress from 2005.

"We were actually studying the impacts of tsunamis and earthquakes on the western coast when we first found this structure in Valneshwar," said Marathe. "Then we started talking with the locals and fisher folks and we got news about more such structures below water."

Marathe added that, the uniformity also shows that the people who built it belong to the same culture from Shrivardhan to Vengurla.

However, deciding the age of the structure was done on the basis of sea level mapping.



"There have been extensive studies about the sea water coming inside the land," said Marathe. "The wall's base, that is ancient sand, is about six metres below the present sea level. Based on the calculations, experts from the National Institute of Oceanography found the age of the wall as around 6000 BC."

According to him, the sea was away from its present coastline in 6000 BC and this wall could have been an effort to prevent the sea water from coming inside the human habitat.

The discovery has raised a number of questions. How were these huge stones of Laterite and Deccan Trap variety transported to the coast? What exactly was the purpose

behind building the wall? If the date of the walls is true then is it from around the same time as the Indus Valley Civilisation? Why has there been no mention of this civilisation till now?

Marathe, who will retire in July 2011, has asked more people to come forward to take his work ahead and to try to find answer to these questions.



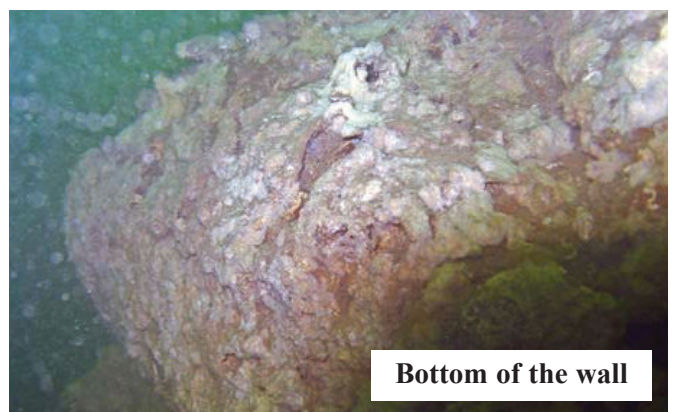
Top of the wall



Middle of the wall

In the wake of a number of power projects coming on the Konkan coast and the growing discontent about the projects, this discovery could prove vital. Marathe, though does not have much hope from the government mentioned that this, if studied properly could be a major chapter of human being's history. "It is now up to the government how they treat my finding," he said. ■

URL: http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/slideshow_photos-8000-year-old-advanced-civilisation-in-konkan-coast_1547920-7#top



Bottom of the wall

Atlanta Area Bhutanese Student Wins the Prestigious Gates Millennium Scholarship (GMS) Award

A conversation with Ram Siwakoti (RS)

Ram, Congratulations on being selected as a 2011 Gates Millennium Scholar. Can you tell us a little about yourself and your family?

RS: I was born in Bhutan but my family became refugees and they went to Nepal from Bhutan when I was 6 months old. Thus, I became a refugee when I was 6 months old. My father worked in whatever way he could and supported our family. We are three children. I have an older sister and a younger brother. In Nepal, I went to camp schools until 8th grade and after that I went to private schools on scholarship.

When did your family come to the US and what was it like to come from a refugee camp into an unfamiliar country and society? What challenges did you face and how did you try to cope with them?

RS: We came to the US on May 14, 2009. Our agency is International Rescue Committee, IRC. By the time we came to Clarkston, a suburb in Atlanta, GA, there were already Bhutanese families that came in 2008. Nonetheless, the immediate challenges we faced as a family were learning to speak English, finding jobs (for my parents), adjusting to a new culture, and different educational and health care systems of the US. We have been trying to overcome these challenges by working hard and by being diligent. Our agency, the International Rescue Committee has been very helpful. We also found support within our own community as well as from voluntary organizations like SEWA and volunteers from CDC, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

What kind of help and support did SEWA provide to you and your community?

RS: SEWA volunteers provided tutoring in English, social studies, US history and helped us enroll in SAT classes for high school students. They provided Bhutanese students with backpacks, Graphing Calculators and other essential school supplies. The Georgia Physicians of Indian Origin was one of the organizations that provided these supplies. These



services were provided free of charge and SEWA volunteers provided transportation to and from the Southern Polytechnic Institute and the Hindu Temple of Atlanta where the classes were held. The summer SAT classes helped me a lot and helped me to gain 200 more points the second time I took my SAT. Before the

SAT course my score was only 1540 and after the classes, my score went up to 1740. I am in the top ten senior list at Clarkston High School.

How did you hear about the Gates Millennium Scholarship (GMS) program? Did you apply for any other scholarships?

RS: I learned about GMS (<http://www.gmsp.org/>) from my High School ESL (English as Second Language) teacher. I also applied to POSSE scholarship (<http://www.possefoundation.org/>), Coca-Cola scholarship (<https://www.coca-colascholars.org/>), McDonald's Scholarship program (<http://rmhc.org/what-we-do/rmhc-u-s-scholarships/>), APIASF scholarships (<http://www.apiasf.org/>), Brandeis University scholarship program (<http://www.brandeis.edu/admissions/financial/scholarships>) among others.

What kind of scholarship is the GMS award? Did it benefit you immediately?

RS: It is a very comprehensive financial award that covers all the four years of my undergraduate education and also the expenses involved in my graduate studies, if I enroll in one of the eligible graduate studies. It will cover expenses not covered by any other financial aid I receive. There were 23,000 applications this year and out of those 1,000 were selected for this award. It is a rigorous selection process and I am very happy that I am one of the students selected. It took away the anxiety of

financing my college education. My parents, being new immigrants to this country, do not have the finances to support me through four to eight years of college and university study. I applied to good schools in Atlanta and also out of state. Because of the GMS award, I was accepted to the school of my choice, the Georgia Institute of Technology one of the foremost public universities in the country. It is in Atlanta and I will be challenged to excel there.

What do you plan to study after your undergraduate degree? What are your career goals?

RS: After Undergraduate studies, I plan to attend medical school and become a neurologist. In the summer of 2010, I spent some time as an observer with one of the physicians, who is a SEWA mentor and I also volunteered with SEWA organized medical camps for the Bhutanese community. This gave me a sense of what I wanted to choose as a career. I would like to work hard and become a physician. I have a special interest in Neurology because of a close

interaction with a family member who had neurological problems.

What about your family? What advise can you offer your younger brother and other students who would like to follow your lead?

RS: We are a close-knit family. Our grandparents also live with us. Like many in our community, my parents work in starter jobs in area chicken factories. My sister just returned from state of Kentucky Job Corps, having trained as a medical assistant. My younger brother goes to Clarkston High School and is in 10th grade. To my younger brother and other aspiring students I want to say, "...dream big and work hard. Convert challenges into opportunities, and you will be successful one day."

Thank you, Ram. Best wishes to you. ■

SEWA International is a non-profit service organization that works with communities in need. Atlanta area coordinators for the Bhutanese Empowerment Project are Swadesh Katoch and Surya Jilludimudi.

Make Milk Into Butter

By Siddheshwari Devi (Didi Ji)

Our mind is like milk, and the world is like water. The world is mixing with our mind throughout the day. The milk of the mind is being contaminated by the water of the world. The sights, smells, sounds, tastes and touch of the material world fill the mind continuously, rendering it more and more materialistic. What if we were to make milk into butter? The traditional method of making butter from milk is to first make curd by setting the milk aside without disturbing it. Put the milk of your mind away from the disturbances from others. Reflect in private. Think about what is real and what is unreal; what is important and what is trivial; what is permanent and what is temporary. Get in touch with your inner self, which is beyond flesh and bones.

When you remove the mind from the world and set it aside without disturbing it, it becomes calmer and more focused. Now the mind becomes like curd. To make the curd into butter,



you must churn it further. Churn the mind with further reflection and contemplation. In time the mind will become like butter. Now it will no longer become absorbed in the world. Just as butter floats in water, likewise, your mind will float in

the world without becoming absorbed in it. Now you will not get carried away with worldly thoughts.

Make milk into butter! ■

Visit www.radhamadhavsociety.org

The Power of a Choice

By Aneesh kashalikar

“Krr”, a nasty sound comes as the last breath of a person who acquired cancer through red meat. People who are vegetarian have a healthier heart and may live longer.

Vegetarianism is a symbol of non-violence which is beneficial for peace of the mind. Unlike other organisms humans have the power of choice. All humans should be vegetarian as it can make an individual healthy, influence their mind to a positive attitude, prevent the killing of animals, ultimately stopping violence. .

Do you want people to die? The Earth is already in chaos with destruction and poverty such as the earthquakes in Haiti, Chile, and Japan and typhoid disease in Africa. Cancer is laughing gloomily. The Earth gave humans and their ancestors, life, fed them with plants and supported them. The earth is in a way our mother as it nurtures humans with vegetation. Scientists and doctors have proven that red meat can give cancer to people and make them have unhealthy blood according to www.marksdailyapple.com/red-meat-study. If humans eliminate eating meat then their bodies will be free of unhealthiness and will also stop global warming.

Vegetarians are scientifically proven to have better health conditions than meat eaters. As shown in www.sixwise.com/Newsletters/2008/September/17/The-Pros-and-Cons-of-Being-a-Vegetarian.htm, vegetarians are fifty percent less likely to have heart disease, have a forty percent lower chance of having cancer, and have a stronger immune system than meat-eaters. Vegetarians are nine times less likely to be obese and on average live six to ten years longer than a meat eater. If you could be healthier and live longer by being vegetarian, is there a need to consume meat and take a risk of being obese? It's for your own personal good to be healthy and it's what many adults are trying to exemplify these days. If you become vegetarian, it is likely that you will reduce your fat and increase your lifespan. To feed the increasing human hunger, animals are raised on animal factories. It takes a lot more resources, including petro resources to produce equivalent amount of food from animals compared to vegetarian food, causing more green gas. Although vegetarian diet is generally healthier, they may lack protein or vitamin B12 easily available in meats. Vegetarians have to make sure that they get protein from

food like soybean, beans, legumes, and pulses. An individual can get soybean and other legumes or milk and milk based products neither of which requires animal slaughter. Is there a need to hurt other living beings when we don't need to?

Organisms rely upon their instincts to survive. Humans of course are an exception. We, the Humans of this planet have the will power to do anything. Why should we eat blood and flesh of other creatures to satisfy our hunger? Albert Einstein believed that eating meat was immoral and that a human could be healthy without killing animals. He said in the book *Sinfully Vegan*, “*A man can live and be healthy without killing animals for food; therefore, if he eats meat, he participates in taking animal life merely for the sake of his appetite. And to act so is immoral*”. *Many religions believe eating meat is not good for compassion, inner peace and soul.*

Humans have the power of choice and when we use it well, we can accomplish anything that we desire. To support vegetarianism an individual should start eating many vegetables and reducing portion of meat. Eventually the individual will acquire taste for vegetarian diet and will not feel any desire to eat meat. By being vegetarian the regular individual can prevent animal slaughter, keep the planet “green”, and will not commit an immoral action. To make sure this happen the individual can relinquish meat from their diet. ■

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For ages 12 and up: Continued from the Last Issue

Key Concepts of Hindu Dharma

Vedic Ideas About Creation

By Kamlesh Kapur

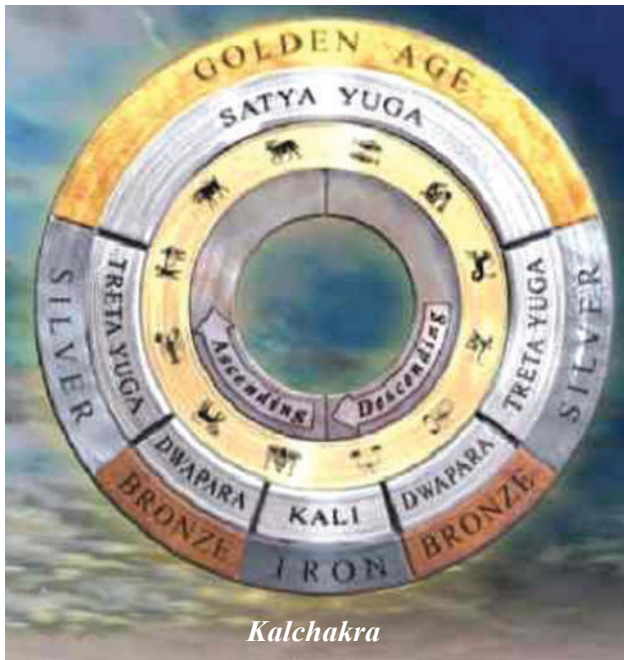
Assumption that the history of India begins with the Aryans' arrival in India and prior to that there were number of aborigines with diverse cultural identities is only an assumption. Many scholars in their anxiety and haste to put the age of Hindu Civilization later to the Greek Civilization have attempted to put the age of Rig Veda to 1500 B.C. In the absence of a debate and a discussion, this assumption misleads people. If Rig Veda goes back only to 1500 B. C. then the period of King Ram Chandra and several kings of Kuru dynasty of the Mahabharata- all have to be squeezed in between 2000 years as also the birth of Gautama Buddha and Mahavira. A more glaring instance of this myth is the Aryan invasion theory of India. Every text book of history starts with that myth which has no basis.¹ It is assumed as a geometrical maxim that Aryans ¹ were not Indians and they entered into India from some country other than India.

The question then arises as to where did they come from. Then the hunt begins and we are confronted with different theories about the original home of the Aryans and here the scholars are not agreed at all. We are presented with the theories of Aryan homeland from the Central Asian, Caucasian & Lithuanian, arctic and Germany as the original home of the Aryans. Even such a profound scholar like the late Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was so overwhelmed by the weight of western opinion that he too propounded his Arctic theory on the basis of the long drawn twilights indicated by some Rig Vedic verses on 'Ushas' and said that the Arctic Region was the original homeland of the Aryans. It has to be categorically stated that the Indian tradition as also the Vedic literature clearly supports the view that the homeland of the Vedic people- Aryas was Sapta Saindhava viz. the land covered by the River Sindhu (Indus) and six other



rivers of this region.²

“In short we are so dazzled by the scientific and technological advancement made during the last three or four centuries that we faithfully believe that ours is the most progressive era of our world history and the



human beings who inhabited our planet six or seven thousand years back were savages and primitive men. Our self-conceit makes us unable to realize that we are totally ignorant about the past beyond the aforesaid limits." says McGlashan So several civilizations have grown and blossomed and then faded away on our planet. We hear now of continental drifts; shifting of land masses breaking old continents and forming new ones. According to the geologists, Indian subcontinent is being pushed northwards at the rate of one fourth of a centimeter annually which is raising the height of the Himalayan peaks. No one knows the history of the people who lived on land that has now been submerged under seas. And we do not have records of distant pasts before various natural and ecological changes. For example, human remains dating millions of years back have been found in Africa. At that time perhaps, India was part of Africa and we have absolutely no other information of life in those distant days. It does not mean that some semblance of Civilization was not there.

Our beginnings- literary evidence

Vedas are the oldest books in the world. While the hymns were composed around 4500 BCE, compilation was done around 3100 BCE. Without these valuable books, we would be unable to know the correct beginnings of mankind. We must agree with Barbara Tuchman- an American historian,

"Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill. Without books, the development of civilisation would have been impossible. They are agents of change, windows on the world, lighthouses erected in the sea of time." In a later chapter, we will learn more about Vedas how they throw light on the geography of the subcontinent, the environment, the river systems, traditions, society, economy, astronomy and elaborate prayer ceremonies of those ancient times. Hindu memories, thoughts and traditions go back to their vision of the dawn of creation itself and the time when man first appeared on this planet. Hindus do not begin from any popularly known starting point of era such as B. C., A.D., Vikram or Shaka. They calculate their day from the beginning of the Kalpa itself viz. the start of Brahma's day. Every Hindu ceremony begins with the verse which traces time elapsed from the start of the Creation.

This verse is known as Sankalpa mantra- pledge to complete the sacred ceremonies (known as Yajna). Sankalpa verses- (the pledge before the yajna ceremonies) "Today, the first half of the second Prahar (part) of Brahma's Day in Vaivasvat Manvantra and Shvetvarah Kalpa in the land of Aryas in the holy Bharat-Khand (region of India) of Jambudweep (continent-Asia), in this state- charan (phase) of Kaliyuga (dark or iron age), in so and so Samvatsar (year), Month, Paksha (fortnight), Tithi (Lunar constellation), Day, I of such and such Gotra (lineage) and name..... pledge to complete this ceremony."

Kaliyuga began in 3102 B.C. which is a crucial and turning point in the human history on our planet. According to the tradition and Puranic literature of the Hindus, the Mahabharata War took place in about 3067 B. C. viz. about 36 years before the commencement of the era known as Kaliyuga (currently in the year 5111)- this happens to be the current era. In the Vedic calendar, the division of time is cyclical and the measurement is shown by the 60 years' cycle, each year with a name. The 60 years cycle repeats itself.

Summary

The beginnings of mankind move from survival to the heights of civilization and then these very civilizations self destruct. One cannot just arbitrarily

start with some invaders coming in some areas and beginning their struggle and eventually succeeding in establishing some kingdoms here and there. A proper beginning would be from the earliest beginnings of mankind.

So from the beginning of the Creation of life, there have been several peaks and declines of civilization which cover roughly 1 billion years. In fact skulls dated 300 million years old have been discovered. Whatever the cultural identities of the various communities were and how much contact was between them is beside the point. The main idea is that there were several civilizations during different epochs. Most early civilizations began in the regions with tropical climate where there were several perennial streams and hospitable natural environment and climate.

Concepts to understand

1. As elements composing the earth evolved, life on the earth also evolved. The dance of creation, transformation and destruction goes on continuously. Advanced level students may read about this phenomenon in Carl Sagan's book 'Cosmos'- pages- 244 and 258-259.
2. History of civilizations started millions of years back and came to be destroyed by natural causes and/or failings of societies several times over without leaving much by way of historical documents. Students may list a few of the natural events before the ice age which caused disappearance of most of the living things and erased all memory of it.
3. The five elements making up the composition of the earth also compose the creation.
4. Space denotes gravitation; air denotes kinetic energy, Teja or fire denotes radiation, Apah or water denotes electrical energy and earth denotes magnetic energy. All are powerful forces of nature.
5. Students may study the phenomena of Global warming. If it continues, it may end the coastal civilizations and cause serious changes in the life as we know it.
6. Nothing in the course of nature or creation is random or coincidental. Everything follows the cosmic law which creates a pattern of action and reaction.
7. The Universe according to the Vedas is well regulated; hence it is cosmos and not chaos.
8. Hindus have different names for Devas. These are not Hindu Devas. They are Devas for the entire creation- no part of the earth is left unhelped by the

natural forces and phenomena.

9. Hindu thought about evolution is not anthropocentric. Accordingly, "there has been no evolution from primitive to the modern. All human and subhuman species have lived side by side from time immemorial."³

Questions

1. Life began on the earth some 2 billion years back. Why do we assume that the creation started some 5000 years back?
2. In the light of the discussion in this chapter, giving an arbitrary time of creation may be considered the biggest hoax or a myth? Do you agree?
3. Is it ethical to promote myths as history?
4. Should we call the creation only by one name, when there are thousands of languages spoken in various parts of the earth?
5. Is there one way to name or describe the reality around us?
6. When you come to your school, is there only one way to reach it?
7. If people all over the world address their mother by various names, can we have only one name for the Supreme Being or His creation?
8. Between clever speeches and hard facts, which should be more creditable for writing of history?
9. Do Hindu beliefs have a scientific base? Students may use the book Cosmos by Carl Sagan- pages about Nataraja. ■

About the author

Kamlesh Kapur, a retired High school teacher, is an accomplished writer, an educator and an independent researcher of Vedic Studies. Her latest book is "Portraits of a Nation History of Ancient India".



1 It is named as Aryan invasion theory and yet it is given to the students as the undeniable, absolute fact, that too without supportive evidence except similarities of some words in various languages. Stuck in those earlier positions, recent excavations ARE NEVER MENTIONED even as an addendum to the theory

2 This topic is discussed in a later chapter.

3 The Study of Indian History and Culture, Vol. 1, by Bhishma publications

Highway to Happiness

By Dr. Babu Suseelan, Ph.D

Everyone wants to be happy. But life is full of suffering and illness, but people always look for happiness. Aristotle remarked "Happiness is the whole aim of man and end of human existence." As human being, we engage in life and seek happiness, even when it hurts.

In this ever changing world, what makes someone happy? Is it good health, money in the bank, modern computers, internet chatting, fame, a good family?

Happiness is not the absence of emotional misery, or knowing modern technology or lack of anxiety syndrome. Happiness is an art and science. It requires spiritual knowledge and effort. People think that happiness is important and they starve for it. If we speak about happiness in contemporary culture, we can undoubtedly say that modern civilization and the consumer spirit resulting from it are not conducive in the development of happiness. Modern science and technology has created a strange paradox. These modern gadgets may make our life more enjoyable, but these are certainly not a Highway to Happiness. While pursuing a vision of progress and improvement in human condition, modern technology and consumerism has led to increasing dehumanization, unhappiness, alienation and cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance occurs when human beings are confronted with new technology, new information processing or consumer products that contradicts what we know or believe. Cloud computers, fast information processing, and new communication system can be exciting. But they also can be a pain. Our world view, personal philosophy, and daily life can be challenged to the extent that people can be nervous and anxious. Modern technology has reduced our traditional wisdom into knowledge, knowledge into information and information into data and data can be used to manipulate and disorient us. There is no easy resolution to reduce cognitive dissonance. Spiritual knowledge and satisfying



our life transitional needs including need for affiliation and salvation (Moksha) is the only Highway to eternal Happiness. Ralph Waldo Emerson put it this way 170 years ago "Citizen must be brave in this endeavor and not fearful-fear always spring from ignorance". We cannot afford to be unhappy, anxious and fearful. There is no easy solution to our unhappiness, or look for easy road to reach Happiness. That's been tried before, and it doesn't work.

Today, People's love for humanity, search for happiness and spirituality became a rare phenomenon. Consumer society offer momentary pseudo-happiness and meaningless values. This throwaway culture has a profound influence on the character structure of modern life. New developments in modern technology force people to adapt to novelty, transience, and meaningless modernity. An increasing number of people cease to be independent and become dependent on modern consumer gadgets. The emphasis is on buying new products and an ever increasing number of unwanted goods. For several people, Happiness is the accumulation of modern gadgets. As a result people suffer from intrinsic

and extrinsic problems.

The basic reality is that possession of ever changing material goods is not going to make people happy. The basic reality lies in the totality of human existence. These modern consumer products offer a form of pseudo-happiness. Modern men are alienated from their own spiritual powers. They are deprived of all of their inner strength. Unhappiness and disappointment are bound to occur. And as a remedy people seek for new consumer goods, reach for drugs and or alcohol, and attend special training that offers pseudo-Happiness. And it sometimes happens in an unending cycle.

One can find Happiness from within. Make our Atman and Brahman our partner. Become one with our ultimate reality (Brahman). One may not see Brahman but acknowledging HIM will make our life happy. Happiness can be found in following our Dharma. It is rooted in science and based in a perception of reality that reaches beyond the scientific framework to intuitive

awareness of oneness of life.

When the concept of Happiness understood in the spiritual (Vedic) sense, as the individual (JIVA_ATMA) is connected to the cosmos as a whole (BRAHMA), one becomes HAPPY. The awareness is truly spiritual. This Hindu concept is holistic, spiritual and life affirming.

The Hindu perception is based on Hindu Dharma, and it is humanistic, realistic, and achievable. It also recognizes transcendental needs as intrinsic aspects of Human Happiness. It is right of every individual to pursue happiness. And the spiritual path is the only Highway to Happiness. ■



About the author

Dr. Babu Suseelan is a Professor in Clinical Psychology and the Director of Addiction Research Institute, Pennsylvania.

Duke University hires its first Hindu chaplain

Washington, Aug 11 (PTI) The prestigious Duke University in the US has hired its first Hindu chaplain, who will provide guidance to the Hindu students and represent the varsity at its faith council. Usha Rajagopalan began her part-time role at Duke on August 1. Rajagopalan is fluent in Hindi, Tamil and Malayalam and comes to Duke with degrees from Annamalai University and the University of Maryland. She has been leading Hindu worship services in the Triangle area and received the 2009 Kathryn Wallace Award in Community Service from the Triangle Community Foundation, a university statement said. "Hinduism, or Sanathana Dharma, is not a religion but a practice, a way of life," Rajagopalan said. "Deepening understanding of their inner world as they pursue their academic goals allows

Hindu students at Duke to receive a holistic education and to practice their Dharma or way of life," she said. Welcoming the appointment, the Duke Chapel Dean Samuel Wells said he welcomes Rajagopalan's perspective in campus conversations among different faiths. "I am proud to be part of a campus culture that builds up diverse faiths by bringing them into healthy dialogue and common enterprises with one another," Wells said. "This is a flowering of our university's longstanding aspiration to 'eruditio et religio' -- academic learning and embodied faith," Wells said. Founded in 1998, the Hindu Student Association at Duke organizes scripture studies, Hindu festivals and Hinduism Awareness Week. ■

www.deccanherald.com/content/182932/duke-university-hires-its-first.html

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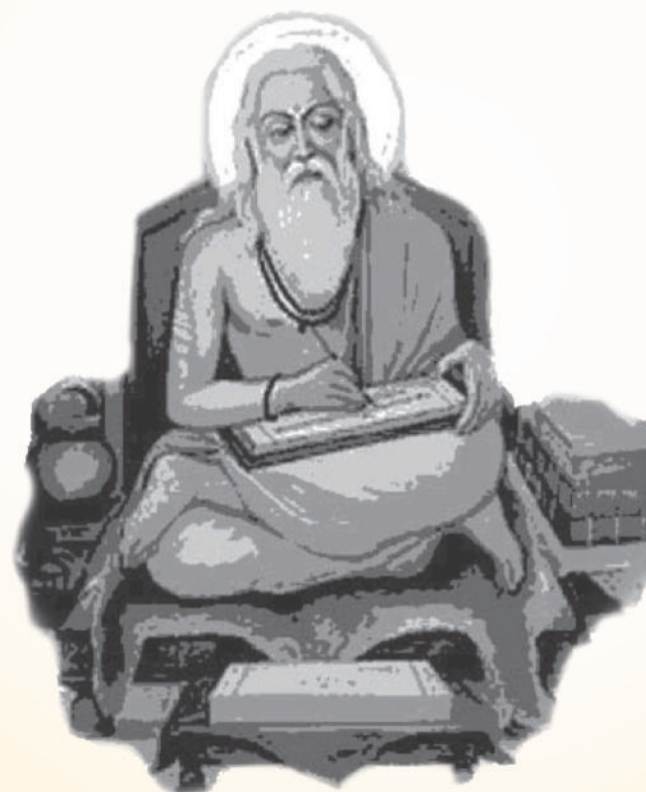
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