



Yugabda 5119
Shaka Samvat 1940
Vikram Samvat 2075

Vol. XXXIX

No. 1

January - March 2019

HINDU VISHWA

Vishwa Dharma Digest

KUMBH MELA

Beyond the Realm of Religion and Beliefs

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Houston, TX
PERMIT NO. 8376

Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America Inc.
P.O. Box 441505
Houston, TX 77244-1505





**World Hindu Council of America (VHPA)
proudly announces establishment of**

Endowment Fund



**Please create
your legacy by
generously giving tax
deductible donation
to support this
noble cause**

PURPOSE

**Build Hindu
Community
centers across the
USA to serve you
and your future
generations and
sustain
and propagate
Hindu heritage**

**The Centers
will provide -
Broad range of services*
(Educational, Cultural,
Spiritual and Seva)
to the community**



GOAL

**Raise \$10 million
by 2020
Initial pledge received
\$100,000**



*** Services :**

- Hindu Dharma Education
(Vedic scriptures, languages)
- Balvihar
- SAT classes
- Humanities
- Music
- Dance
- Library
- Yoga
- Festival celebrations
- Weddings
- Senior Center
- Community service

Donate Online at

<https://www.vhp-america.org/>

or

Mail check payable to **VHP of America**

Address : **P.O. Box 2009, Natick, MA 01760**

For donations from Retirement Distributions, Investment
Accounts, Life Insurance and other Non-Cash Assets.

Please contact:

Abhaya Asthana 508-314-6069 • Sanjay Mehta 412-251-9133

Umesh Shukla 908-240-7720 • Vimal Sodhani 973-476-3901

VHPA – In your service for the last 48 years

WORLD HINDU COUNCIL OF AMERICA (VHPA)

National Office:
P. O. Box 2009,
Natick, MA 01760

www.vhp-america.org

Tel.: 732-744-0851
office@vhp-america.org

Volume XXXIX

No. 1

January-March 2019

सर्वभूतेषु येनैकं भावमव्ययमीक्षते ।
अविभक्तं विभक्तेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि सात्त्विकम् ॥

भगवद् गीता १८-२०

*sarva-bhutesu yenaikam bhavam avyayam iksate
avibhaktam vibhaktesu taj jnanam vidhi sattvikam*

Bhagvad Gita 18.20

Understand that knowledge by which one undivided,
imperishable reality is seen within all diverse living
entities is in the nature of goodness.

Editorial Team

Managing Editor: Shyam Tiwari srtiwari@hotmail.com
Editor: Ronica (Rajranee) ronica@ronica.com
Jaipershad
Copy Editor: Sabitha Venugopal sabitha8081@gmail.com
Advisor: Dr. Abhay Asthana abhayaji@gmail.com

About the HINDU VISHWA

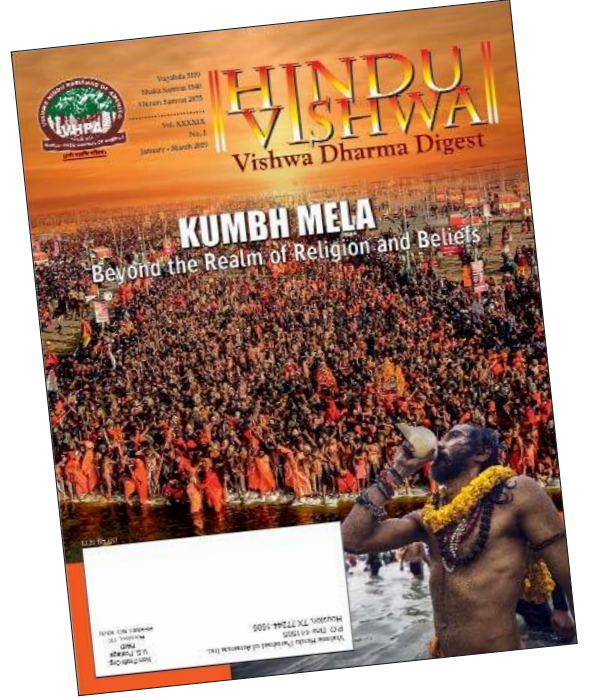
World Hindu Council of America (VHPA) publishes the Hindu Vishwa issue quarterly, except when combined with special publications. For subscription, please fill out the membership form on the last page.

For Advertising inquiries please contact:

Shyam Tiwari @ 7709622669 or email: srtiwari@hotmail.com

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

The views expressed in the articles presented in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the organization, officials, editorial staff or the donors. © Copyright 2019 World Hindu Council of America (VHPA). All rights reserved. No parts and contents of this publication may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of VHP of America, Inc.



Letter to the Editor

I sent an article on Gandhi and King, while publishing it in the last issue (Oct-Dec 2018), the editors of Hindu Vishwa added pictures. They made the article more attractive. Thanks to the editors. I received many commendations for the article.

Prabhakar g Joshi,
patron



Take a Look Inside ...

EDITORIAL

Kumbh Mela

Beyond the Realm of Religion and Beliefs



COVER STORY

Kumbha Mela Enriches Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Award Experience **P-4**

Close to 25 crore devotees visited Prayagraj Sangam for Kumbh, over one crore on Mahashivratri alone **P-6**

Experiencing the 'Living Heritage of Humanity' at the Kumbh Mela 2019: Separating Fact from Fiction **P-8**

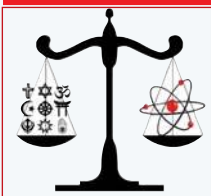
Kinnar Akhara, Group of Transgender Saints, To Build Ashram in Prayagraj **P-10**



VHPA Chicago Chapter Honors Its Longtime Patron **P-11**



What Science and Religion Can Learn From Each Other **P-12**



Maha Shivratri and Rishi Bodh Mahotsav **P-14**



Federal Court Unseals Records of California Department of Education's Religious Bias **P-17**

Is the Term Dharma Untranslatable? **P-18**



Nobody Should be Persecuted **BY a Faith P-22**

Tantra and Neuroscience Exploring the Connection **P-24**



Secrets of the Five Pranas Part-I **P-28**

United Hindu Identity, United Hindu Cooperation **P-32**



5,000-year-old Human Skeleton Found in Kutch **P-34**



Never Be Afraid to Apologize **P-36**

Ekal Foundation Awarded Gandhi Peace Prize **P-38**



Kumbh Mela

Beyond the Realm of Religion and Beliefs

I have been tasked with writing an editorial about the Kumbh Mela. Now, I have never attended a Kumbh Mela, but I did have the good fortune to visit India, on more than one occasion and also Varanasi. I follow this event each time it occurs with a hope that someday I will be able to attend. My excerpt comes from all the info I have followed about the Mela, from the internet, and from my own views of this event. I do hope that I will have the chance to attend the next Kumbh, but, let's leave this as an expectation for now.

I am certain that many of our readers are more knowledgeable about the Kumbh Mela than I am. I have followed this event each time it occurs, and am always astounded by the event itself, and, the attendance and support that is garnered. Historically, "the festival is the largest peaceful gathering in the world and considered as the world's largest congregation of religious pilgrims." (Wikipedia); It is deemed to be one of the most extraordinary gathering of humans on the planet and takes place only once in every twelve years.

The 2019 Kumbh Mela was termed Aardh Kumbh Mela and occurred in Prayagraj, in UP, during January 15th to March 4th. Prayagraj is one of the places in India where the Triveni Sangam, (the confluence of three rivers - Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati) occurs. This period is considered an auspicious period, and place, and, every twelve years, pilgrims, and visitors from all over the world flock to this site, to be a part of one of the world's largest pilgrimages, which attracts millions. There is a conviction that the bath in the sacred waters can cleanse all sins and attain liberation. Many come during the Kumbh Mela for the exceptional vibrations, attributed not just to the location, but also to the presence of the Naga Sadhus; and most important, the opportunity for cleansing in the Triveni Sangam! It was stated in the India Today news, that over two crore people were expected to attend the 2019 Kumbh Mela.

The site for the Kumbh Mela is rotated at holy places on four sacred rivers. These places are situated in different areas of the Triveni Sangam - Haridwar, on the Ganges

River; Ujain on the Shipra, Nashik on the Godavari, and at Prayagraj.

Attendees represent all sections of Hindu religious life, and, includes sadhus (holy men), hermits, and pilgrims, as well as non-Indians and non-Hindus, from all walks of life. Some of these sadhus, and now others, remain naked year round and are dominant at the Kumbh Mela. They are called Naga Sadhus. They are a particular group of Shaivite saints who reside in the Himalayan Caves, and come to visit the civilization only during the Kumbh Mela. They have unique characteristic features, and draw inspiration from Lord Shiva. Some of them can be seen holding tridents, crowned with human skulls.

Their physical appearance of naked, ash-covered bodies and matted dreadlocks resembling Lord Shiva comes from being Shaivites or "followers of Lord Shiva". Some consider Nagas to be the Purest and most Supreme Sadhus in India. It is believed that once they get into the water at the Kumbh, the water becomes pure, and, this is the key reason, why people visit Kumbh and have a bath in the holy water. A unique addition to Prayagraj Kumbh is Kinnar Akhara, a group of transgender saints, which exemplifies inclusiveness in the Hindu society.

If like me, you were not able to attend this very holy and significant event in 2019, our next chance will be 2022. So, what do attendees take away from being present at the Kumbh Mela?

Kumbh Mela is not just a gathering of devotees. It is a festival, a cultural retreat, a celebration of life over death, virtue over sins, and a celebration of divinity and spirituality. One does not have to be a follower of religion to attend. Prayagraj Kumbh Mela is an experience that goes beyond the realm of religion and beliefs. Just the sight of millions of devotees seeking holy blessing gives you a sense of spirituality, and diversity of culture and beliefs. This event was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2017 for its Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



Editorial



Kumbha Mela Enriches Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Award Experience



The Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha was bestowed with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award on the 23rd of January, 2019 in Varanasi, India in recognition of its community service in Guyana. The receipt of this award in Dharmic Sabha's 45th anniversary year evoked a great sense of pride, not only among its large membership, but also across the country. This was the first such award received by any organization in Guyana. From the perspective of the Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha, being pioneered by descendants of Indentured laborers who came and made significant strides, and contributions in Guyana, this award was phenomenal.

As I received the award from President Ram Nath Kovind on behalf of Dharmic Sabha, I wished fervently that all of our members who work tirelessly under the motto of "action thy duty, reward not thy concern" could have been there with me to share in this historic moment.

Founded by Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud on the 8th of January, 1974, Dharmic Sabha, the largest Hindu organization in Guyana has contributed in various spheres, and continues to lead the way in promoting

By Dr. Vindhya Persaud

Indian culture and Hinduism, while being actively engaged in social and community service. The programs provided include free healthcare through community outreaches, counselling and training of peer educators, awareness and interventional campaigns on suicide, domestic violence, alcohol abuse, work with women, youth and children, charity drives for the underprivileged, blood donation drives, hampers for the elderly, school supplies drives and bursaries for children, skills training for women and other community projects, a shelter (Bal Nivas) for children who are victims of abuse, a primary school for children and currently, the construction of another Primary and Secondary school complex.

Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha has also been responsible for promoting Diwali, Phagwah (Holi), and other festivals, at a national level. Our Diwali motorcade, a large procession of extravagantly illuminated vehicles, which attracts a mammoth crowd, is a one of a kind in the western hemisphere. The Dharmic Sanskritik Kendra is a training hub for pandits,

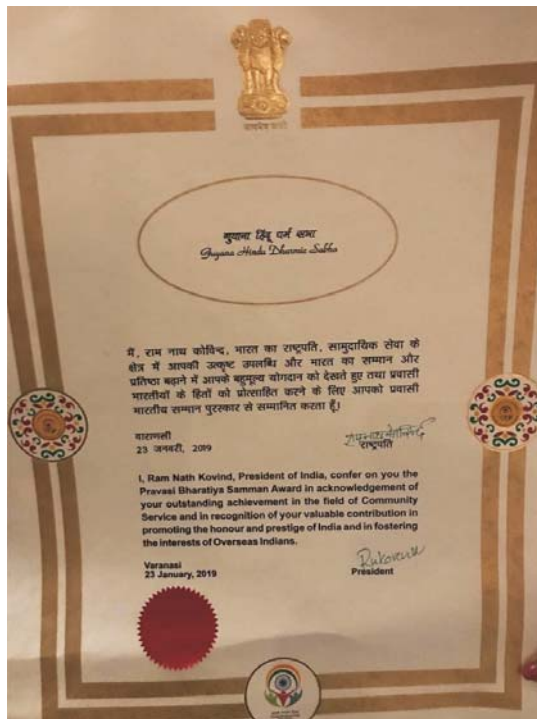


students of music, dance, Hindi, Sanskrit, Bhagvad Geeta, Ramayan and Indian vegetarian cookery. This has led to the production of iconic events involving hundreds of youths annually, notably Kala Utsav - Festival of Arts and the award-winning theatrical production Naya Zamana. Most of the programs are offered free and are open to anyone.

With this background, it was indeed a privilege for Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha to be one of 30 recipients of the highest award from the President of India, this year.

I also got the opportunity to meet and engage with several fascinating and service driven individuals from around the world, who are making tangible contributions in their countries. Our interaction with the President of India, Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, emphasized the importance India places on recognizing people, and organizations around the world, which positively influence and contribute in their countries or beyond.

While in India, a whirlwind tour allowed us to enjoy beautiful and sacred sites in Uttar Pradesh from where our fore parents originated. The beautiful aarti and boat ride along the ghat on that full moon evening in Varanasi, the oldest living city in the world, will forever be one of my most treasured memories. Our large contingent on the way to Prayag Raj visited a luxurious village set against the sparkling waters of the Ganges that offered modern amenities and a tasty vegetarian lunch. Although very hectic and intense, especially for the more senior members of the 5000 large Pravasi contingent, no one opted out of the mini pilgrimage at Prayag Raj, and the chance to dip into the confluence of the three sacred rivers; the sangam. It was a sanitized version of Kumbh Mela that left many of us wishing that we were actually going to see the mela in



all of its glory. A long train ride on the aptly named Pravasi Train, and we were back in Delhi to enjoy the Republic Day celebrations from a reserved vantage point. The celebrations based on the work and life of Mahatma Gandhi, featuring impressive military displays, float parades, and showers of flower petals and balloons on the thousands gathered were nothing short of magnificent.

I would like to thank all the members of the Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha for their strength and persistence in the face of challenges, over the years, and their dedicated work and contributions that allowed us to achieve 45 unparalleled years of service and growth. This Dharmic family which encompasses thousands of Guyanese and includes, over 100 Mandirs, is most grateful to the Government of India for this outstanding recognition that touched the hearts of all of Guyana. We will continue to serve all people with humility and without expectation, and remain dedicated to the concept of "Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam", the world is one family.



About the Author

Dr. Vindhya Persaud,
President of Guyana Hindu Dharmic
Sabha, Member of Parliament, Medical
Doctor, Television and radio host,
Director and Choreographer.



CLOSE TO **25 CRORE** DEVOTEES VISITED PRAYAGRAJ SANGAM FOR **KUMBH**, OVER ONE CRORE ON MAHASHIVRATRI ALONE

"Till evening, as many as 1.10 crore devotees have taken a dip in the Sangam area. With Mahashivratri's *Snaan*, so far more than 24.05 crore devotees have taken a dip during this year's Kumbh," Kumbh Mela Adhikari Vijay Kiran Anand said.

Even before midnight, devotees from different walks of life and parts of the country began to pour into Sangam city to take holy dip on Mahashivratri, the great night of Lord Shiva and the last bathing day in the one-and-a-half-month-long Kumbh Mela. Till Monday evening, more than 1 crore devotees had taken a holy dip in the Sangam area, officials said. The bathing ghats

brimmed with color in the morning. Late-night showers in parts of the holy city failed to dampen the spirit of the pilgrims. As the sun came out, devotees enthusiastically greeted the sun, while some offered obeisance to the Sun God with traditional 'Yoga asanas'.

"Till evening, as many as 1.10 crore devotees have taken a dip in the Sangam area. With Mahashivratri's *snaan*, so far more than 24.05 crore devotees have taken a dip during this year's Kumbh," Kumbh Mela Adhikari Vijay Kiran Anand told PTI. Till March 3, the number of devotees who had taken the dip during the Kumbh stood at 22.95 crore, an UP government official said.

As the visitors were heading towards the ghats, chants of 'Har Har Mahadev' rang through the air, albeit the occasional police announcement. Apart from other information, the police told the crowds about the lost-and-found center, which could also be seen from a distance by the installed, floating gas-balloon.



A delegation from West Bengal kept all its members together by telling them to follow the large saffron-colored flags. A group of visitors from Ajmer used rope barriers to keep its members together. "Despite showers, my friends and I walked towards the bathing ghats and took a dip," said Dhananjay Singh, who came from Lucknow, adding, "I consider it (the rain) to be a propitious sign."

Content, smiling faces at the Kumbh nagris tell us we managed the last day crowds well, an official said. With heavy rush on their minds, devotees began arriving at the makeshift kumbh nagris in Prayagraj even before midnight with chants of 'Bum Bhole' on their lips. UP Sugarcane Development and Sugar Mills Minister Suresh Rana took a dip in the 'sangam', and later visited the media center.

Speaking to reporters, Rana said, "When I was taking a boat ride after the dip, a sudden shower of petals fell on boatman. His spontaneous reaction was 'waah Yogi ji' (UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath). I was pleasantly overwhelmed by this." A UP government spokesperson said UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will participate in the 'Kumbh Samaroh Samapan Kaaryakram' (formal closing function of the mega event) tomorrow. He will felicitate the officials who have done exemplary work during the festival. UP Governor Ram Naik and Urban Development Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna are also likely to attend the program.

According to Hindu scriptures, Mahashivratri symbolizes the last holy bath of Kalpvasis, who spend the month of Magh - the period of austerity - in minimal means. Ashutosh Varshney, an astrologer who has set up a camp in Sector-6 of Kumbh Nagri, said, "Mahashivratri marks the culmination of the Kumbh and the prominent bathing days. This year, it fell on a Monday, the day dedicated to Lord Shiva, after a long time." "Also on this day, Lord Shiva got married," said Gunjan Varshney, who runs the Raam Naam Bank, where devotees deposit booklets after writing the name of Lord Ram.

Kumbh is one of the largest religious gatherings in

the world. It is held once in every 12 years. This time it began on January 15 on Makar Sankranti. There are six bathing dates. Of these, shahi snaans are held on Makar Sankranti, Mauni Amawasya and Basant Panchami. Parv snaans are held on Paush Poornima and Maghi Poornima.

Police and central para-military personnel have been in charge of the movement of people and vehicles and guiding them



towards the bathing ghats.

As the Kumbh approached its finale, the mega event etched its name into record books creating a hat-trick of world records, which were certified by the Guinness World Records, an UP government spokesperson said.

One of the records was most contributions made to a handprint painting in eight hours. The Guinness World Records certificate read, "The most contributions to a handprint painting in eight hours was achieved by Prayagraj Mela Authority, Government of Uttar Pradesh (India) in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh India on March 1, 2019." Another world record created was the largest parade of buses.

"The largest parade of buses was achieved by Prayagraj Mela Authority, Government of Uttar Pradesh (India) in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India on February 28, 2019," the certificate given by Guinness World Records read. A UP government official said, "The attempt in Prayagraj involving 500 buses covered more than 3.2 kilometers. It was held at NH-19 between Sahson toll plaza and Nawabganj toll plaza. This demonstrates the traffic plan, which worked very well during the mela with 20,000 police personnel being deployed." On March 2, the most people sweeping the floor (multiple venues) was achieved by Prayagraj Mela Authority, government of Uttar Pradesh, India on 2 March 2019.



Source: <https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/travel-tourism/close-to-25-crore-devotees-visited-prayagraj-sangam-for-kumbh-over-one-crore-on-mahashivratri-alone/1506159/>

Experiencing the 'Living Heritage of Humanity' at the Kumbh Mela 2019:

Separating Fact from Fiction

By Dhananjay Joshi

A combing operation is conducted to weed out unwanted elements from an area. In our digital age, when narratives are built from keystrokes causing a dissonance between what we hear and what we see, let us comb the Kumbh and separate the unwanted elements from the much-tangled hair of humanity.

The Kumbh I had heard of was very different from the Kumbh I saw.

The Kumbh I had heard of was supposed to be stiflingly crowded, stingingly filthy, starkly down-market and swarming with fake unwashed sadhus. So unspeakable it was, that only Indian government TV channels reported it. 'Civil society' was dismissive about it and regaled each other ridiculing the name change from Allahabad to Prayagraj.



The Kumbh spread over 7,907 acres

The tribute UNESCO paid to the Kumbh as the living heritage of humanity is what I saw at Prayagraj. It took us 78 man-hours to crisscross and soak-in the divinity spread over 7,907 acres.

There are no invites, no social media campaigns and no posts that attract the 5,00,00,000 pilgrims on just that one day of mauni-amavasya alone (incidentally the Kumbh is from 15 January to 4 March, 48 days in total).

The Kumbh is a sensory overload. Rising above the cacophony of sounds and sights, I saw a throbbing



vibrant mass of consciousness living the timeless ritual just as their ancestors had for eons before them. But this time, there was a difference.

This Kumbh was about making a difference. Making a difference to the humblest pilgrim. Making the humblest pilgrim connect with their self. Making the humblest pilgrim proud of their shared heritage. It was about giving the forgiving

pilgrim a clean and safe environment.

I saw the bogey of hygiene busted. Uniquely designed penta-urinals for men dotted every walkway. At a discreet distance were arrangements for women. I saw safai-karmacharis equipped with pressurized water hoses involved with their work. Thoughtfully named as 'swachchagrahi', they had a place they could call their own. For all 2000 of them, massive, clean, brightly lit and well-insulated dormitories ensured that these health workers took responsibility for their tasks with missionary zeal. Their decentralized teams toiled under a distributed leadership model working round the clock in geographically dispersed teams to keep the 200,000 toilets squeaky clean. And no, human waste does not



Clean waters

flow into the holy waters.

The Kumbh I had read about scared me into being wary of wading the filthy e-coli infested water.

The Kumbh I saw was equipped with massive sump pits that collected human waste. Automated trucks sucked this sludge into tankers that would ferry it to the nearest sewage treatment plant. At the Kumbh, I missed seeing the rodents and the roaches entirely.

The Kumbh I had read about, endlessly debated the quality of Ganga water and the money spent on it.

The dubki I did at the Triveni Sangam, was an experience that connected me to every individual in the world. The oneness with the thousands around me was calming.



Everyone did their bit to be eco-friendly. The phoolwalay at the ghats had radically innovated their flower baskets from plastic to hand-made paper boats. These take-away boats were laden with organically grown, locally sourced rose petals, soluble mud diyas with bee wax and a cotton wick completing the boat contents. At the Triveni Sangam, this age-old, yet perfectly biodegradable, offering was bestowed on the Ganga. Clear water from the Ganga was carried home by the faithful in transparent plastic containers.

From the anchored pontoons in the middle of the Sangam, the aged, the young, the differently abled and the enthusiastic descended onto the dubki platform under the watchful eyes of lifeguards on their bobbing life rafts. Every single pilgrim was wearing a lifejacket, the local boatmen ensured it!

Lips sent out silent prayers, tears streamed down faces, some shivered in the cold waters as they energized themselves with loud prayers. Hundreds of folded hands reached out to the heavens and one of them was mine.

The Kumbh I had read about narrated sordid tales of swirling unwashed masses jostling against each other. It warned me that women were not safe and to beware of inappropriate touches.

The Kumbh that I saw was full of families. Men, women, children, grandparents with headloads of their belongings, caring for each other, walking purposefully with devotion in their eyes. I roamed around at night, under the swathes of 40,000 LED structures that dotted the riverbanks, and felt safer here than in any city of the world. The voices of police personnel had gone hoarse, as they patiently gave directions and repeated instructions innumerable to even those that did not

understand them the first time. These handpicked teetotalers, non-smokers and trained policemen, were an example of a trained and a sensitized police force.

The Kumbh I saw, had 22 pontoon bridges that crisscrossed the mighty rivers. Each of these was unidirectional and crowd controlled to prevent any chances of a stampede.

The Kumbh I had read about, told me it was a religious gathering of Hindus. Inside the Kumbh, there would be Hindu zealots, fake babas giving fanatic talks, persistent priests pestering for puja.

In the Kumbh that I saw, small crowds gathered in the innumerable akhadas to listen to soothing voices that told them how to lead a simple life. They passed on

the age-old Indic wisdom of conquering greed, relinquishing ego and looking inward for the answers.



Sikh akhadas performing Seva

These were distributed knowledge centers exchanging best practices for leading a fulfilled life.

I saw Sikh akhadas performing Seva. Young turbaned men working enthusiastically at the langars, hauling heavy cauldrons to feed the

pilgrims. Guru Nanak Dev ji gave his aashirwad to all from the entrance to every such akhada.

In the Kumbh I saw, there were hundreds of foreigners, many of whom were interested in the living unbroken history of mankind. Others were there to see a show, a spectacle so intense that nothing in the world matched it.

Many young Indians were there too on a selfie spree. But there were also thousands upon thousands who were there simply because they believed in the wisdom of their ancestors. To them, continuity of civilization was far more important than trivialities.

I implore you to see for yourself 'the living heritage of humanity'. If you stand in judgement, you miss the exquisite layers of an ancient civilization's wisdom that wants to shyly reveal itself. If you immerse yourself, maybe you would understand a fraction of it.



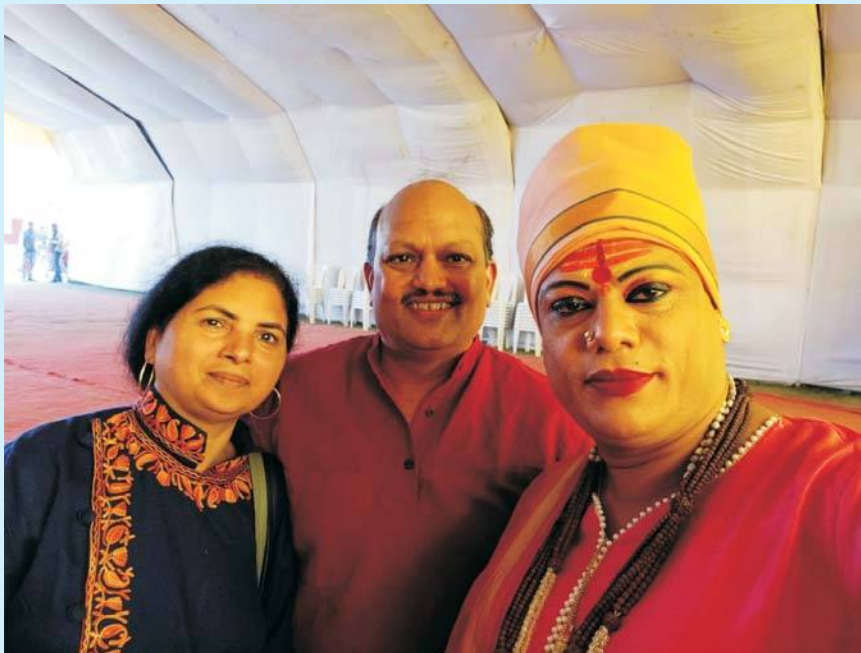
*All images courtesy of the author
The author is a former commander
of the Indian Navy*

Source: <https://www.firstpost.com/india/experiencing-the-living-heritage-of-humanity-at-the-kumbh-mela-2019-separating-fact-from-fiction-6169041.html>

Kinnar Akhara, Group of Transgender Saints, To Build Ashram in Prayagraj

The group, which had attended the Ujjain Kumbh in 2016, has taken part in the holy baths at the Kumbh Mela along with the other akharas. Kinnar Akhara had set up a camp at Prayagraj Kumbh and it attracted hundreds of thousand devotees daily. Kinnar Akhara, a group of transgender saints in Prayagraj Kumbh announced that it will set up an ashram in the city, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Culture, govt. of India.

"Transgenders were badly exploited in the



Srimati Manju and Shri Shyam Tiwari with Pithadishwar Pavitra Mai, Kinnar Akhara

of the Shahi Snan. Tripathi expressed gratitude towards the chiefs of Juna Akhara.

Kinnar Akhara had set up a huge camp in Sector 12 at Prayagraj Kumbh and it attracts hundreds of thousand devotees daily, according to the statement. This camp continued till Maha Shivratri. Traditional akharas leave the Mela after taking the third Shahi Snan on Basant Panchami.

society and even their parents were forced to live a disgraceful life. Transgenders have been part of Sanatan Dharm and they have been given respectful status in religious epics and Hindu scriptures. The Akhara has provided a forum to transgenders to pursue a dignified life with religious rituals. We will build an ashram at Prayagraj," Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Lakshmi Narayanan Tripathi, the chief of the Kinnar Akahara has been quoted as saying in the statement. He said the Juna Akhara, a traditional and powerful akhara, has given the recognition to Kinnar Akhara and has allowed it to be a part



VHPA Chicago Chapter Honors Its Longtime Patron

Editor's note: Shri Amrit and Shashi Mittal have been a pillar and patron of VHPA since 1971. The Chicago Chapter has honored him in March.

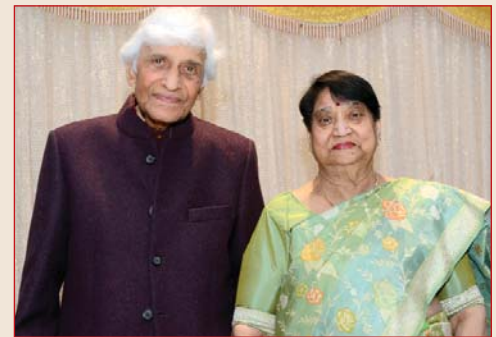
Amrith Lal Mittal was born March 22, 1935 in Barnala, Punjab, India to Shri Janki Das and Smt. Uttami Devi Mittal. Youngest of 6 with three older sisters and two brothers, at the age of 6 he lost father to medical complications. In 1944, at age of 9, while visiting Delhi, he attended an RSS Shakha and subsequently joined RSS. At same time his elder brother, Shri Kewal Krishan Mittal had joined Shakha in Barnala. Upon Mittalji's return to Barnala, the two brothers continued going to Shakha together.



In 1948, after Gandhiji's death, Gurujee Golwalkar was arrested by the Indian Government. Many RSS karyakartas who protested to the police about Gurujee's innocence, were arrested also including his elder brother Kewal Krishan Mittal. Once Gurujee was released, he came to Punjab and was received by many people at the railway

station, one of them being Mr. Amrit Mittal Ji. Gurujee addressed the group at a gathering, which Mittalji also attended. When Gurujee came to Chandigarh for the retirement function of Advocate Gupta, Mittalji had a chance to be there also.

Mittalji completed his Masters in History from University of Punjab in Patiala in 1959. He married Smt. Shashi Goyal on February 8, 1964 in Patiala, Punjab. He worked for Sahu Jain in their Marketing Department for over 10 years and worked all over Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. In 1971 August, Mittalji immigrated to Chicago, Illinois, and in September he began working with New York Life. His family joined him a year later and they have been residents of the Chicagoland area ever since. Mr. Mittal has three daughters, all married and settled in the US. Elder daughter Kumud and her husband Pawan Gupta have three children, Sonali, Pranav and Viraj. Sonali is already married. Anshu and Vishal Gupta have one son, Nikhil, and Angda and Dharmesh Goel have a son, Sanam and daughter, Reina. Shri Ram Swaroop Goyal, Shashiji's Chachaji, had been living in Chicago area since the 1950s and had started the Gita Society which later became the Hindu Society and today is known as the Hari Om Mandir of Chicago. Mittal ji is an active member of Rotary International Chicago, a Patron member of the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago, Shri Balaji Temple of Aurora, ISKON, Manav Sewa Mandir, Chinmaya Mission, and Vishwa



Hindu Parishad of America. MITTAL ji was invited by Mr. Raheja in 1974, together with Dr. Bharat Barai to establish Vishwa Hindu Parishad America Chicago Chapter.

He has raised funds for many causes, local, national and international, some examples of these are the Orrisa Cyclone, Gujarat Earthquake, many major US events such as the 1993 Vivekanand Centennial celebration, Global Vision Program and as recently as the World Hindu Congress this past year. The Mittals' have been associated with the Ekal Vidyalaya foundation since its inception and Mittal ji has donated over 500 schools to date. His donations were matched by New York Life.



Back in Barnala, Bharat, in their ancestral home, he has established a Women's Care and Education facility, in addition to establishing a girl's school. These institutions are supported and managed by Sewa Bharati Barnala Punjab. Last year, Mr. Mittal donated funds in honor of his brother Prof. K K. Mittal in Delhi, to hold a lecture series every year. He also supports research at Deen Dayal Institute of Research, Bharat. Most of all he regularly donates his time and heart to many worthy humanitarians causes and he is always ready to support any one in need. ♦♦♦

What Science and Religion Can Learn From Each Other

In an article in the Sunday Review of the New York Times (February 3, 2019) Professor David DeSteno offered his views on what Science can learn from Religion. I make the case below that such learning, if mutual, can be mutually beneficial. Both deal with tough questions: Religion seeks to know the meaning of life on this planet. Science seeks to explain the governing principles of natural and physical phenomena. Both strive to seek the truth in their pursuit.

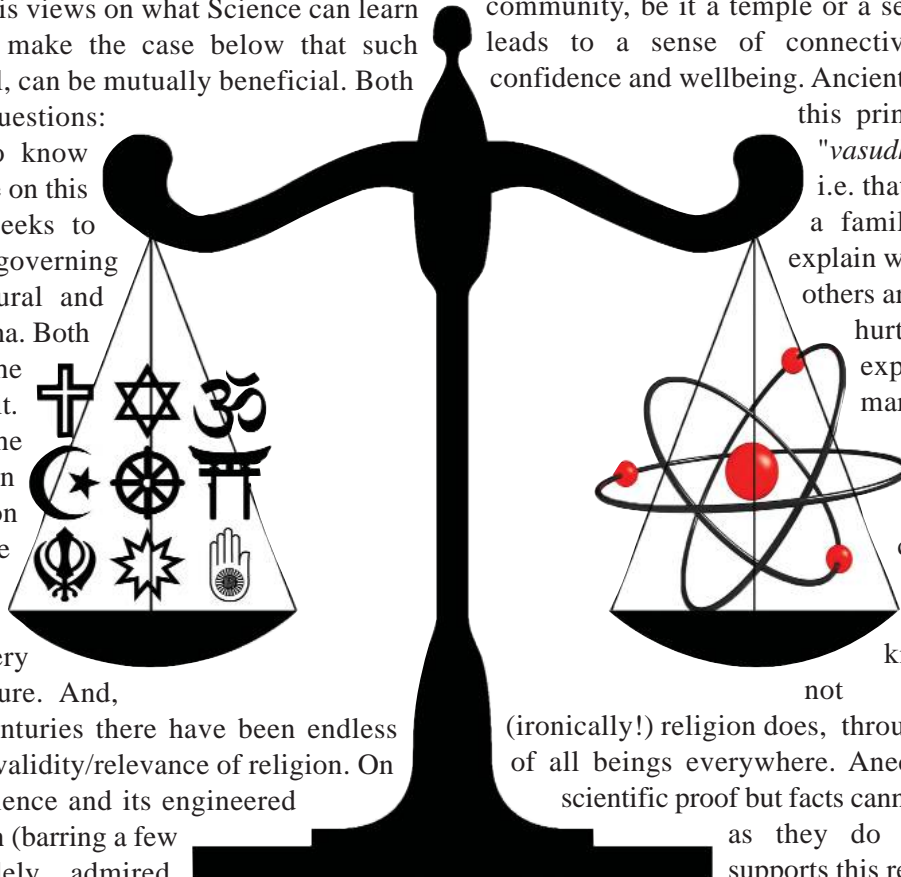
During the course of human evolution, religion and science have been subjects of study by our ancestors in every religion and culture. And, over these last centuries there have been endless debates about the validity/relevance of religion. On the other hand science and its engineered products have been (barring a few exceptions), widely admired, accepted and respected. Science depends on data, proof, consistency, and challenge, whereas religion is founded on belief systems. Millions of those who subscribe to a religion do not aspire for proof. They simply believe that there is a higher power to whom they can look to for guidance, inspiration and wellbeing because that is the family tradition, and presumably provides the comfort of being part of a community of believers. Rationality may be desirable, but lack of it does not interfere with their individual commitment to something that has an appeal for them, and allows them to participate, contribute and enjoy prescribed practices, rituals, celebrations and festivities.

Currently, there are ongoing debates that perhaps religious beliefs and practices may have some commonality with scientific views. For example scientific studies show that being an active part of a

By A.V. (Sheenu) Srinivasan

community, be it a temple or a service organization, leads to a sense of connectivity and promotes confidence and wellbeing. Ancient Hindus recognized this principle by declaring "vasudhiavakutumbakam" i.e. that the whole world is a family. Science cannot explain why I and millions of others around the world feel hurt, when bombs explode, in a crowded market place in faraway Paris, or Birmingham (atrocities committed in the name of religion), injuring and killing people we do not know, whereas (ironically!) religion does, through the connectivity of all beings everywhere. Anecdotal proof is not scientific proof but facts cannot be ignored either, as they do provide data that supports this religious principle. A

world-wide scientific study of this fundamental natural phenomenon which involves a large number of people in each country, could establish a solid basis and understanding, of the inevitable connection among human beings. Such a study must attempt to determine the extent of benefits in concrete terms: psychological, social and equally important, economic benefits of this most natural and real human impulse. This in turn, could help governments to develop policies that lead to mutual benefits and peace. Such a project can bring together science and religion with a common goal and interest. In modern times people are conditioned to expect an economic benefit in each proposal. A single example may be, for most folks, sufficient: How many trillions of dollars have we lost, and will most certainly lose, if we continue the current level of abuse of the planet? A rough estimate may suffice. E.g. the whole town of Paradise in



California was burned down. It is hard to believe, but we saw it. And what is its cost to Paradise residents, and society as a whole? Results of such scientific research can strengthen humanitarian programs.

There are of course the opposites. For example, Hinduism declares "*ekam sat vipra: bahuda vadanti*" i.e. "Truth is One and the wise utter it in different ways." - A declaration by ancient sages, and subject to interpretation, and even denial. Scientific truth on the other hand is seen as frozen, and not open to a variety of interpretations and expressions. Nevertheless, it's subjected to continuing verification. Newton's second law of motion, for example, which has been proven with analyses and data, cannot be stated in different ways, yet it continues to be explored in different contexts. "Love thy neighbor" makes no scientific sense and yet it can, as its opposite may affect mental health, safety and the wellbeing of neighbors and neighborhood. Charitable giving by cash or in-kind, is another such example which has no scientific basis and yet millions do give because of a belief system, as well as a humanitarian impulse. And Science can measure the benefits to society and help to strengthen/rationalize this impulsive action.

Science ushered in the industrial revolution with the sole object of making products that make our lives easier and more enjoyable. In the pursuit of this objective they built factories, spewing enormous amounts of pollution into the atmosphere, and disposed wastes into streams (The death of thousands of birds on the Dutch coast, as of this writing, is a tragic example). They mined coal to satisfy huge demands for energy, introduced fracking - sucking in natural gas from below the earth - upsetting a natural balance in the earth system. They designed schemes that urged people to want more and more, developed products that are not bio-degradable - all in the name of progress - leading to an unimaginable level of abuse of the planet. How wonderful it would have been if the developers had insisted on a single constraint: Do no harm!

The ancient Hindu sages developed a systematic approach to revere nature in all its magnificence, and to this day Rig-Vedic hymns are chanted in praise and worship of fire, water, wind, rain, streams and mountains. As a corollary Hindus worship trees, oceans and the animal kingdom. Native American Indians revered nature too. Why? Again, because of the concept that all of these creations are meant to co-exist without exploitation between species. There may not have been,



The concept of co-existence is that all the creations on earth are meant to co-exist without exploitation between species

(and I wish there were), a clear mandate that lack of such reverence would eventually lead to the point-of-no-return which we now face which is likely to drown whole cities, burn whole mountains, cause droughts and unacceptable levels of pollution. I wonder whether we would be in a better place now if scientific communities had paid attention to some of these religious mandates and understood the implications. Similarly I wonder about the outcome, if the ancients had spelled out more emphatically why we must respect nature, and the dire consequences of neglect. Religion can benefit from such a study.

In fairness it is important to acknowledge how science and engineering products undoubtedly save lives, cure diseases and make life more efficient and enjoyable. Barring a few exceptions, the end results of religious practices are almost always seen as satisfaction, peace, serenity, gratitude and joy. A scientific approach to measure these impacts can strengthen spiritual agendas.

Finally I would conclude that the emphasis may now be an extension of Professor DeSteno's observation where learning from each of these institutions can be beneficial to both as they evolve.

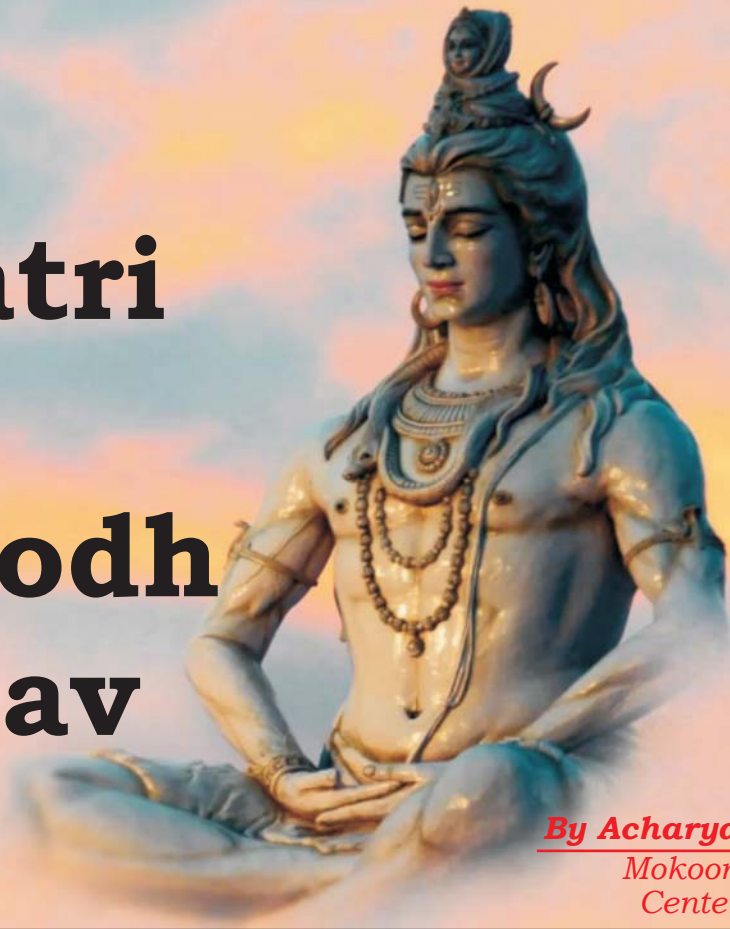


About the Author

Dr. Srinivasan,

long term U.S. resident, award-winning author; and director of the Vedic Institute of Connecticut, is a popular speaker on Hinduism with appearances in many venues: college campuses, libraries, churches and temples, and yoga and community centers. Best known for the Vedic (Hindu) and interfaith weddings he has conducted nationwide, he is also author of Hinduism for Dummies.

Maha Shivraatri and Rishi Bodh Mahotsav



By Acharya Bramdeo
Mokoonlall, Hindu
Center of Atlanta

Rishi Bodh is celebrated to mark the events in the life of young Mool Shankar, leading to his enlightenment (bodh), or the illumination of the intellect - the subtle faculty of the physical body. He left the well-to-do parental home, and led the life of an ascetic (*sannyasa*) as Svaamee Dayaanand Saraswatee.

He was not the first person, nor the last, to see rodents desecrating the offerings to the deity. That was, is, and will be a negligible incident to most of us. But, Mool Shankar's inquisitive mind triggered a quest for true knowledge. That thirst was quenched during the learning period, as a devoted student of Guru Virjaanand ji. Most of the laws of modern science, inventions, and etc., result from observations of small occurrences in nature, and, also negligible events to most of us, but yield significant leaps in improving the material aspect of life.

The teachings, writings and works of Maharshi Svaamee Dayaanand Saraswatee infused a new drive to improve the physical, spiritual and social conditions of mankind, and left indelible imprints on humanity, the right to self-rule; independence; education for all; equal rights, discrimination against women, the downtrodden; promote meritocracy and competences, and discard lineage, or pedigree-based privileges.

In the context of Maha Shivaratri and Rishi Bodh, the

following is a humble attempt to check our practices and be more mindful, so that we can be empowered, to awaken our third eye, attain bodh and be truly spiritual in our day-to-day life. Some of these practices include; Cleaning of temples, houses and prayer rooms, having special baths, fasting, and, removing shoes and sandals, before stepping into where puja or havan is to be performed.

Questions:

❖ Have we shed off the dirt from our mind and heart (centers of mental and emotional activities)? ❖ Are we ever watchful of our foods and drinks (*aahaar*), our thoughts (*vichaar*), and our conduct (*vyavahaar*)? ❖ Have we tossed out the duplicity in our life? ❖ Are there any skeletons in the cupboard? E.g., a glowing public life coupled with hidden facets of a so-called 'private' life?

Pre-prayer preparations include aligning our thoughts (*manasaa*), speech (*vaachaa*) and physical actions (*karmanaa*) on the path of righteous living (*dharma*).

Ringling of the bell: The clapper is always fixed inside the bell, which rings when the clapper strikes the inner edge of the bell. If it is fixed on the outside it produces an odd sound with little or no resonance.

Question: How far have we internalized and aligned

ourselves with the inner voice or the divine guidance?

Mana or *antahkaran*, the subtle faculty, is to the senses what the clapper is to the edge of the bell; self-control confers upon us a radiating personality, like the sound and vibrations from a ringing bell. The soul (*aatmaa*) is to *mana* what the jockey is to horse-riding; the key to happiness is in our hands.

Abhisheka (various substances used to anoint the deity)

Question: What does each of these substances symbolize?

Milk and ghee are *saatvic* and signify purity and piousness; Yogurt - prosperity; Honey - sweet speech; Sugar - happiness; Water - purity; Turmeric - health promoting; Bilva or Bael leaves - coolness; Vermillion - liveliness; Chandan (sandal paste) - fragrance; Flowers - scent & beauty; Rice, food grains & sweets - abundance of means, generosity & no extravagance; and Vibhuti (ash) reminds us of the final state of our body.

Aartee

Question: Are our *karmas* (actions), as fragrant as the camphor, dhoop, or incense lit for aartee?

We need to always be pure and humane. Others will feel the fragrance of our personality by our mere presence ...nobody needs to blow the trumpet.

Darshan

Question: Standing with folded hands, why do the eyes close without any effort?

Eeshvar (God) is simply conveying to the message in a subtle way: (i) Omnipresent (सर्वव्यापक - sarvavyaapak), I am present within and all around you; (ii) Omniscient (सर्वज्ञ - sarvajna), I have perfect knowledge of all your actions - mental, vocal and physical; (iii) All-merciful (दयालु - dayaalu), I am always guiding you towards righteous thoughts and deeds, but you are free to choose your way; and (iv) All-just (न्यायकारी - nyaayakaaree), I confer upon each living being the rewards of good karma (deeds) and the penalties for negative karma in due time. Therefore, we need to be prudent and exercise restraint.

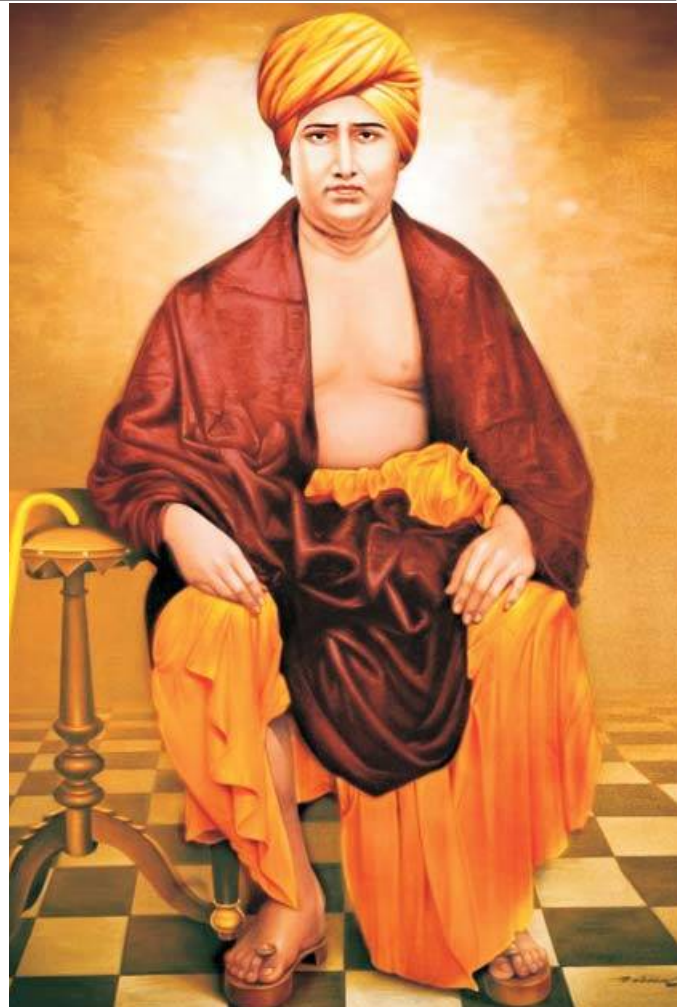
Char prahar puja

Question: Why four sessions?

The number four (4) stresses on the importance of the

❖ **The four purusharthas:** (i) righteous living (*dharma*), (ii) righteous earnings (*artha*), (iii) righteous enjoyment (*kaama*), and (iv) salvation or liberation from the cycle of birth and death (*moksha*) are to be realized, as the four objectives of human life.

❖ **The four aashrams** (i) student life (*brahmcharya*), (ii) married life (*grihastha*), (iii) retirement or transfer of the household responsibilities to the next generation & spiritual uplift (*vaanprastha*), and (iv) renunciation and



The teachings, writings and works of Maharshi Svaamee Dayaanand Saraswatee infused a new drive to improve the physical, spiritual and social conditions of mankind...

total dedication to the spiritual uplift of the self and others in society (*sanyasa*), by being truthful to our duties, and responsibilities at each of the four stages of life.

❖ **The four varnas:** (i) intellectuals (*braahmans*), (ii) rulers/politicians, law enforcement officers (*kshatriya*), (iii) businessmen and farmers (*vaish*) and (iv) manual workers (*shudras*) to be truthful, effective and efficient, in shouldering the respective duties and responsibilities in society.

Aachamana (sipping of water) & **Anga sparsha** (touching of various parts of our body with water)

Question: What does water represent?

Cool and refreshing: Water quenches our thirst. Life-sustaining: Human life is aquatic during the 9 months gestation period. The human body is 70% water. It is essential to agriculture, food production and to maintain the ecological balance of our planet - earth. Purification: Water is extensively used as a cleansing agent - bath, laundry, etc.

Transformation: Boiled rice, cooked bread cannot

be reversed to the original state.

Bonding: Cement and other aggregates in the construction industry. Water from two vessels mixed in a third one cannot be segregated back.

Peace: Ripples arise when a stone is thrown in a pond, but after a while the surface becomes calm.

Mantra chanting

Mindful of the chanting of *mantras*, the sound and vibrations promotes internalization - silencing of the mental and emotional activities, prompting us to be mindful of the meaning of the mantras ...sound therapy.

Lighting of lamp

Physical light dispels darkness. Likewise we need to put up all our efforts to move away from the darkness of ignorance towards the light of knowledge.

Some understanding of the relationships between the lamp, the ghee and the wick induces us to lead a balanced life: (i) The lamp serves as a vessel holding the ghee; (ii) Ghee is *sattvic* - stimulates purity, harmony, balance, energy, is wholesome, beneficial, fragrant, etc.; and (iv) The wick burns when it stays immersed in the ghee with a part outside, submerged the flame extinguishes.

Agnyaadaan

Fire produces heat through combustion. The heat sustains evaporation and sublimation of the ghee and samagree (mixture of medicinal, fragrant, sweet and nutritious herbs and substances) disseminating them as micro particles ...aromatherapy. The various colors of the flames are beneficial ...chromatherapy. The flames from the fire always move upwards, teaching us that our thoughts, speech and deeds should always prompt us and others to rise in life.

Samidhaadaan

The wood sticks placed in the fire pot (*havan kund*) integration themselves with the fire and become part and parcel of the fire (*agni-svarup*). It prompts to be virtuous (*dharmic*) in all aspects of life. The upward movement (*gati*) of the flames is also symbolizes upwards movement in life through acquisition of both worldly and spiritual knowledge (*jnana*), progress (*gamana*) and realization of the objectives of human life (*praapti*).

Oblations of Ghee & Samagree

Ghee and *Havan* saamagree, are offered as oblations to the fire. In a well-lit fire and aerated place, part of these ingredients are burnt to produce energy, and most of them evaporate and sublimates as vapors, and micro particles, spreading multi-fold their saatvic aspects.

A common example of this characteristic of fire is the aroma in the kitchen, when spices are added to hot oil while cooking; the pungent smell spreading over a large area, when a dried chili is put into fire; and the foul-smell

from burning garbage. Virtue is the fragrance of our personality, and immorality stinks.

Aashirvaad (blessings)

We have a keen desire to seek the grace of Eeshvar (God), and blessings from elderly and knowledgeable persons. Blessings work marvels only when we lead a righteous life. So, we need to put up maximum physical, and mental efforts, and shun laziness.

Shaanti paatha

While reciting the hymn for universal peace, we need to (i) connect each *shanti* with the corresponding word, (ii) feel each of the components of the Creation as a source of peace and (iii) pledge to be peaceful to them, i.e. respect nature and the laws of nature (the Creation)



... "do to others as you would like them to do to you". Then-and-only-then, the luminous bodies (*dyau*), space (*antariksham*), earth (*prithivee*), water (*aapah*), seasonal & annual plants (*oshadhayah*), perennial vegetation (*vanaspataya*); learned persons (*vishve-deva*) universe (*brahma*), all objects (*sarvam*) shall continuously (*eva*) bestow (*edhi*) peace (*shaanti*) upon us (*saamaa*).

We need to be change agents. First, change ourselves from within, and ...the world will change for us. Internal upgrade always yields enhanced performance for a better existence. Attentive to small events, moving ahead of these events, fine-tuning the discerning faculty of our mind, and coherence in thoughts, speech and deeds result in ...the awakening of the third eye ...Bodh.



About the Author



Acharya Bramdeo Mokoonlall

may be contact via email:

hinducenterofatlanta@gmail.com;

acharyabramdeo@gmail.com and

cell: 770-666-3435

Federal Court Unseals Records of California Department of Education's Religious Bias

Judge Charles Breyer has unsealed emails showing Department of Education officials soliciting and coordinating professors' anti-Hindu reports on 2016 drafts of the California-History Social Science Framework that were falsely presented as "public comment."

Tom Adams, the Deputy Superintendent at the California Department of Education, who has a history of working behind the scenes with professors who create anti-Hindu curriculum content, secretly contacted a group of professors with whom he had worked in the past. One of the professors, Jonathan Kenoyer of the University of Wisconsin, had co-authored a textbook the Curriculum Commission had rejected in 2005 for mocking Hinduism. Adams had then organized a group of professors who had not read this book to protest its rejection and used their protests to manipulate the State Board of Education into overruling the Commission's decision to reject the textbook.

The scheme by Adams to avoid the process for retaining experts as contemplated by California Department of Education regulation and secretly recruit professors who could be relied upon to provide content derogatory of Hinduism during the Framework adoption



process in 2016 was revealed through a subpoena on Kenoyer in the case of California Parents for the Equalization of Educational Materials (CAPEEM) v. Torlakson, No. 3:17-cv-00635, pending in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. The emails among the professors show they understood they were to use "smoke and mirrors" to address the input of Hindu groups and one of the professors recognized that "readers of our report can imagine that [the report] is meant to undermine the legitimacy of Hinduism as a religion (and Hinduism uniquely among religions, at that)." One comment that shows the hostility of the professors accuses Hindus of appropriating the Vedas, Upanishads and the Gita and calling it the foundation of Hinduism.

The emails had been filed under seal until Thursday, when Judge Breyer agreed with the plaintiffs and ruled that neither the Regents of the University of California nor Professor Kenoyer had shown "compelling reasons" to keep the records under seal. "This is an important ruling that rejects the notion that government officials and professors can hide behind the label 'academic freedom' and allows all Californians to better understand how their government develops the public school curriculum," noted Arvind Kumar, a board member of the Fremont-based CAPEEM. "Unfortunately, the emails reveal secrecy and doublespeak," he added.

The court made clear that unsealed records may well be relevant to the claims brought by CAPEEM and Bay Area parents that the Framework is derogatory to Hinduism, since they argue that state officials coordinated with the professors to provide reports on the curriculum was falsely construed as public comment. "We knew that the content of the Framework treats Hinduism differently from other faiths but the emails show the bad faith by the officials who created that content," said Glenn Katon, an Oakland civil rights lawyer representing CAPEEM and the parents. "This is another strong indication of the State's violation of the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution."

The Court has yet to rule on motions filed by both sides arguing they are entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The order and unsealed documents can be found <http://capeem.org/docs/OrderToUnseal.pdf>.



Editor's Note:

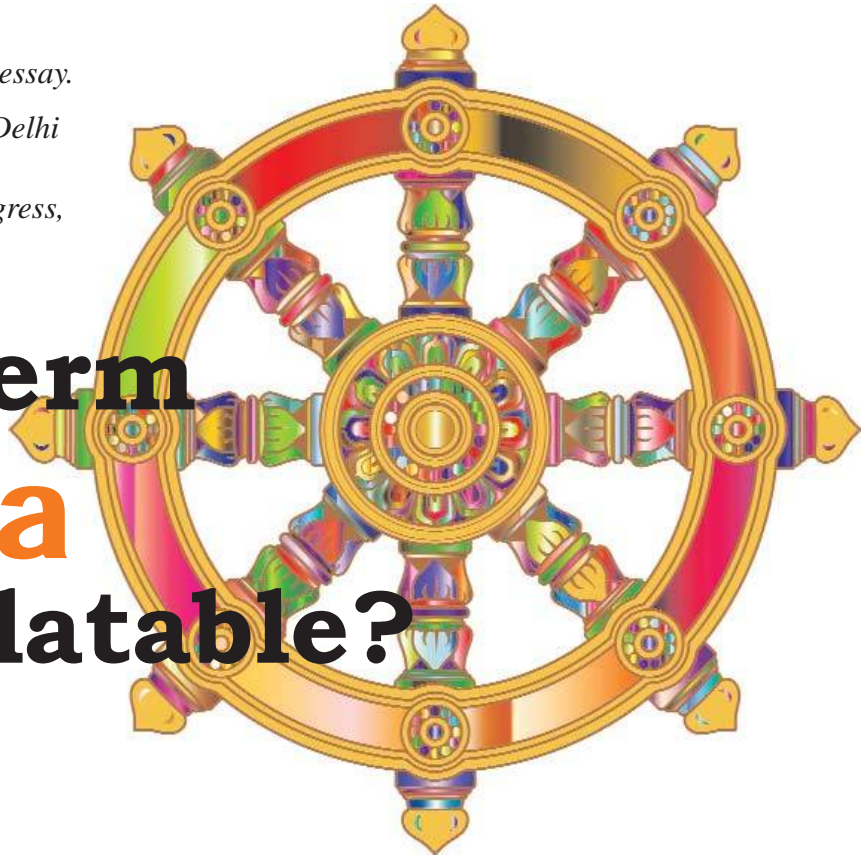
This is the second part of two part essay.

(First published in Prabodhan-2, Delhi 2018, Saradindu Mukherji, editor, released during World Hindu Congress, Chicago 2018)

Is the Term Dharma Untranslatable?

Part II

By Koenraad Elst



Religion

English has been taught to Indians mostly through mission schools, and has even more outspoken Christian connotations than it would already have acquired by a thousand years of Christian dominance in England. The result is that Indians entirely conceive of "religion" as a Christian term: a box-type system, to which you either belong or not, and of which you have to unquestioningly accept the items of belief, regardless of what science would say about them. It is a system to which you can convert, viz. by "burning what you used to pray to, and praying to what you used to burn" (as Clovis was told by his baptizer, 496). That is about as far away from dharma, in any attested sense, as you can get.

But religion has a pre-Christian meaning which would bring it already much closer to dharma. In Latin, *religio* originally had a meaning still enunciated by Cicero. It came from a verb *religere*, "to reread", "to verify", "to do something with utmost care" (just like in Hindi *dhyan se*), "to pay full attention"; exactly the way the word *regio*, "administrative zone", "province", is derived from the verb *regere*, "to administer". So, *religio* meant "scrupulousness", "full attention", and in fact it sometimes still has that sense in modern English: to do something "religiously" means doing it very carefully,

with utmost attention.

But with Christianization, religion became "belief system", or "set of truth claims about the divine". The Church father Lactantius wrongly analysed *religio* as a derivative from *religare*, "to bind anew", "to reunite". This perfectly fit Christian theology, which saw man as severed from his original closeness to God in the Garden of Eden through original sin, suffering from his separation from Him in this vale of tears, but now brought back closer to God by Jesus. (In India, there is a parallel dispute about the word *yoga*: pious types say it means "union" with the divine, sceptics say it merely refers to "yoking" the thoughts and "disciplining" the mind into focusing and becoming still.) At any rate, it is only after this Christian reading of religion has been pinpricked that an approximation with dharma can even be considered.

Law

In Chinese, the Buddhist term dharma in the sense of "the Buddhist system" (a combination of liberation-orientedness and a daily morality of compassion and virtue) is translated as *fa*. It carries through the Indian meaning of "the Buddhist way", but has not been chosen at random. It was selected for its already ancient



When Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to take up his svadharma, he doesn't mean some hyper-individual duty but the duty of his entire warrior caste, viz. to accept the challenge of battle

meaning of "law" or "method". And indeed, when you look at Buddhism from the outside, what you get to see is not so much the Buddhist doctrine but mostly the observance of the Buddhists injunctions. A very large part of the Buddhist canon is made up of prescribing a set of rules, a way of life deemed conducive to meditation and ultimately to liberation.

The translation of *Dharma Sastra* as "law book" is only approximative. It has excursions into cosmology and the religious sphere, and when dealing with human conduct, it is partly descriptive before being prescriptive. In turn, its prescriptions are partly a matter of general moral norms and only partly specific enforceable laws. These are moreover limited in reach, because the final word of *pañcayat* (village or caste council) decisions is also admitted, as well as the right of competent

specialists in council to introduce changes in the letter of the prescribed law all while maintaining its spirit. But the translation does have a basis in reality.

The *Manava Dharma Sastra* distinguishes between different levels of *dharma*. *Samanya* or *sadharaa* a *dharma* consists of "universal" do's and don'ts, paralleled in the religious sphere by some festivals and forms of worship in which everyone participates. The following ten prescriptions given by Manu have universal application: *dhuti*, "steadiness"; *kaama*, "forgiveness"; *dama*, "discipline"; *asteya*, "non-stealing"; *Sauca*, "cleanliness"; *indriya-nigrah*, "sense control"; *dhi*, "mindfulness" ; *vidya*, "knowledge"; *satya*, "truthfulness"; *akrodha*, "non-anger".

People with a Christian frame of reference, such as India's Nehruvian secularists, often make the comparison with the Ten Commandments, but this is superficial. The Ten Commandments are given on two stone tables. The second one contains practical injunctions: "Thou shalt not kill", "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife", etc. These do correspond to similar injunctions in the *Dharma Sastras* and have a similar intention, viz. guaranteeing a harmonious life in society. Moralists in both the Biblical and the Dharmic traditions might add that they also make for harmony with yourself since, in Baruch de Spinoza's words, "virtue is its own reward". They stem from the experience of the earlier generations: a society is successful (and an individual is more contented) if it abides by these rules, but falls apart if it does not. By contrast, the first stone table contains something unrelated: a brand-new theology, featuring monotheism, rejection of icons, and a taboo on uttering



Ten Commandments

the Yahweh's name. Apparently Moses tried to give more credibility and authority to his new-fangled theology by linking it with an old and widely respected morality, as if the latter logically followed from the former.

Other "lawgivers" propose variations on Manu's list, with synonymous or different virtues, but we get the idea. In fact, one of the possible translation of *dharma* is a generalization of these separate virtues as "virtue". The several virtues are synthesized in the Golden Rule, e.g. in the Mahabharata (*Santi-Parva* 167:9), adviser Vidura recommends to king Yudhisthira: "Study of the scriptures, austerity, sacrifice, generosity, social welfare, forgiveness, purity of intent, compassion, truth and self-control - these are the ten treasures of character. (...) Therefore, one should live with self-restraint and by making dharma the main focus, one should treat others as one treats oneself." This Golden Rule is found back also in the Tirukkural (316), the Padma Purana (19:358), and elsewhere.

Next to these general ethical rules, Manu acknowledges a *visesa dharma*, "special dharma", or *svadharma*, "own dharma": specific duties and taboos for every age group and class, paralleled in religion by specific festivals and forms of worship for every community.

Svadharma is rarely conceived as individualistic, the way Westerners would understand the term. It reminds them of Friedrich Nietzsche's maxim: "There is only one way in the world that no one can go except you. Don't ask where it leads. Follow it!" When Krsna advises Arjuna to take up his *svadharma*, he doesn't mean some

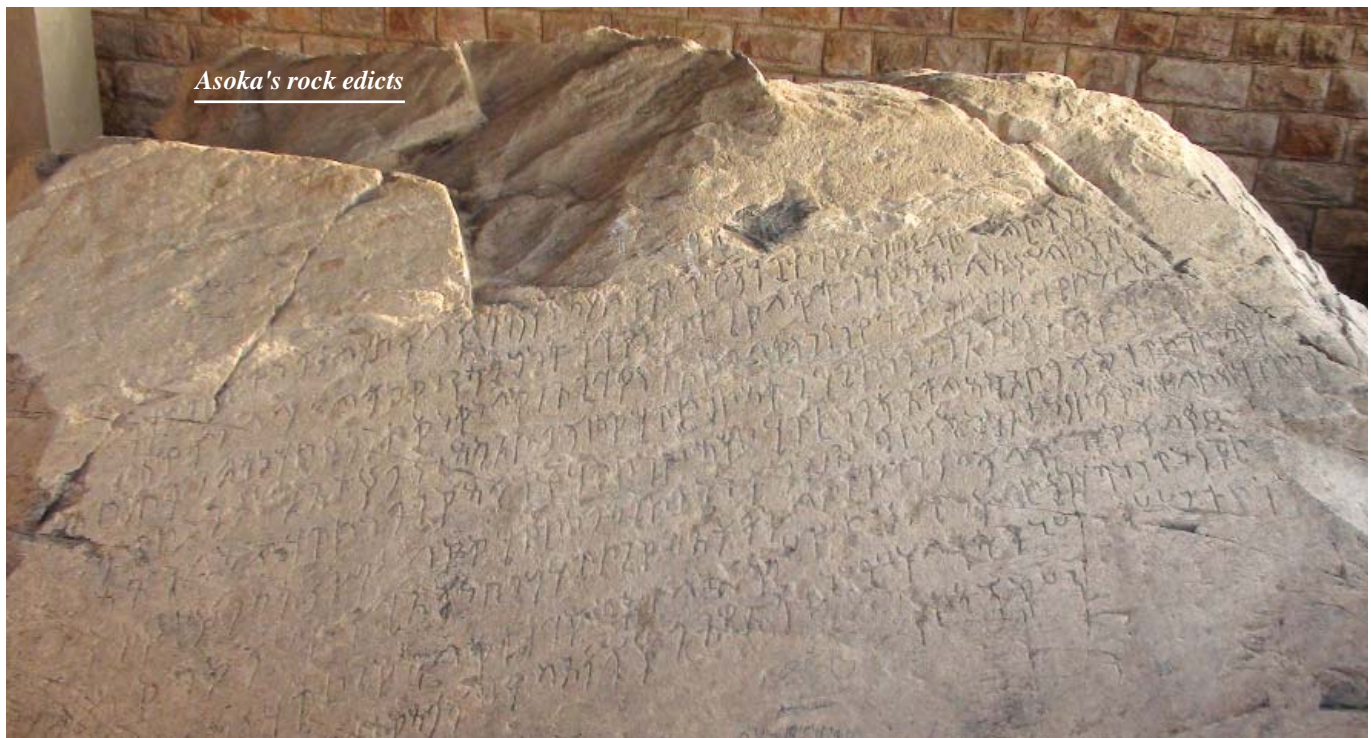
hyper-individual duty but the duty of his entire warrior caste, viz. to accept the challenge of battle.

Yet, Hinduism does have some very individual path stipulated for you. You and your siblings come from the same gene pool, had the same types of food, the same education etc., and yet your destinies can be very different. Ever since the Chandogya Upanisad introduced the notion of reincarnation, on which the doctrine of *karma* (roughly, ethical causality between incarnations) was superimposed, most Hindus will say that these individual destinies are the result of each brother's very individual itinerary through successive incarnations. So the weight of all your past incarnations with their unfinished agendas, their action-at-a-distance (*karma*) into the present, imposes a unique life-duty on you.

This may well be true, but is not what we mean by dharma, a notion that predates the doctrine of karma in its reincarnationist sense. Whether one believes or not in reincarnation, in an afterlife, or in God: the notion of dharma always applies. Indeed, dharma is secular par excellence: it is a common ground, a meeting-place between people of all persuasions.

A Greek equivalent?

In the case of Greek, Indians themselves have chosen a term translating dharma. Translation of Hindu terminology is not some colonial ploy, as many Indian chauvinists think. In one of Asoka's rock edicts (-258 BC) in Afghanistan, the Prakrit text comes with a translation in Aramaic and Greek. There, dharma is



Asoka's rock edicts

translated as *eusebeia*.

Eusebeia is derived from eu, "good", "in harmony with", "tending towards"; and sebomai, "to revere". Thus it means "awe for the sacred", "piety", a reverential attitude: the defining core of religion, even more fundamental than venerating gods. By extension, it also means "conduct pleasing to the gods", or to others above you, as in "filial piety"; and "spiritual maturity". Its opposite is dyssebeia, "mindlessness", "irreverence".

In certain contexts, however, it can also mean "right conduct towards others", both relatives and strangers; "public-spiritedness". It is then personified as wife of nomos, "law" in the strict juridical sense. So, it is both religion and ethics, like *dharma*.

A Semitic equivalent?

One of the best semantic approximations of *dharma* is the Semitic root *D-I-N*. In Arabic *din* means "debt", "obligation" (Sanskrit *rna*), "duty", "system of duties", "law"; but also "religion". Thus, Arabian Paganism is called the *din al-aba'ika*, "the ancestors' dharma". When Moghul emperor Akbar launched a newly minted religion, he called it *din-i-Ilahi*, "divine religion", symbolized by his newly built city Ilaahabad, "divine city" (called Allahabad by the British), on the confluence of the Gaaga and the Yamuna, symbolizing the synthesis of Hinduism and Islam.

The related Hebrew, however, has developed the term more exclusively towards the sphere of "right relation to others", "law". Thus, *din*, "to judge"; *dinah*, "judgment"; *dayan*, "judge".

Like with Christianity appropriating the term religio, Islam has appropriated the term *din*, as witnessed in names like Saifu'l-din (Saifuddin), "sword of islam". But as is well-known, Islam is both a doctrine-cum-worship and a political-juridical system. Thereby, and in spite of the ideological reorientation that Islam brought, it continues the combination of both dimensions that inhered already in the pre-Islamic term *din*.

A Germanic equivalent?

The same shading-over between devotion and a way of life is found in Scandinavian *trú* (Dutch *trouw*), as in *Asatrú*, "loyalty to the Aesir/gods", *Vanatrú*, "loyalty to the Vanir" (another class of gods, like in the early *rg-Veda* the *Asuras* next to the *Devas*), *Vortrú*, "loyalty to the early (customs)". These are names modern neo-Heathens give their own religion. It contains a certain worship of the ancient Germanic gods but also a code of conduct, largely of modern coinage, such as the list of "the nine virtues", another variation on the list of virtues

given by Manu.

In Britain, similar movements exist, also harking back to the ancestors' pre-Christian religion to the extent it can be reconstructed. They speak of truth, one of the meanings of *rta* and *dharma*, or rather its more romantic-sounding variation, *troth* (as in the Rolling Stones song: "I pledge my troth to / Lady Jane"). "The Troth" is how many neo-Pagans refer to their own religion. It mainly means "to be true", e.g. to one's give word, "loyalty", "being faithful", "solidity".

This word *trú*/true/*trouw* is related to trust, but ultimately derives from the same root as tree: Indo-European **deru*, whence Sanskrit *daru*. As an icon of robustness and solidity, the tree has come to be used figuratively. Semantically, this corresponds neatly with the term *dharma*'s connotation of "sustaining", "conferring a backbone". Nevertheless, its range of meanings does not entirely match that of *dharma*.

Conclusion

After examining a few foreign candidate-equivalents to the concept of *dharma*, we find that at least pre-Christian Greek and pre-Islamic Arabic approximate it very well, though still not perfectly, with Chinese and pre-Christian Germanic not far behind. Nevertheless, a perfect translation that could be introduced to simply replace the term *dharma*, remains elusive. For now, the best thing to do is simply to leave the word *dharma* untranslated.

We hope, nonetheless, that this failed attempt to find a perfect equivalent outside Sanskrit has had its uses. In particular, it should stimulate a rethinking of the distinction, but also the relatedness, between the religious and the ethical dimensions of human life. The one does not need the other, but man needs both.



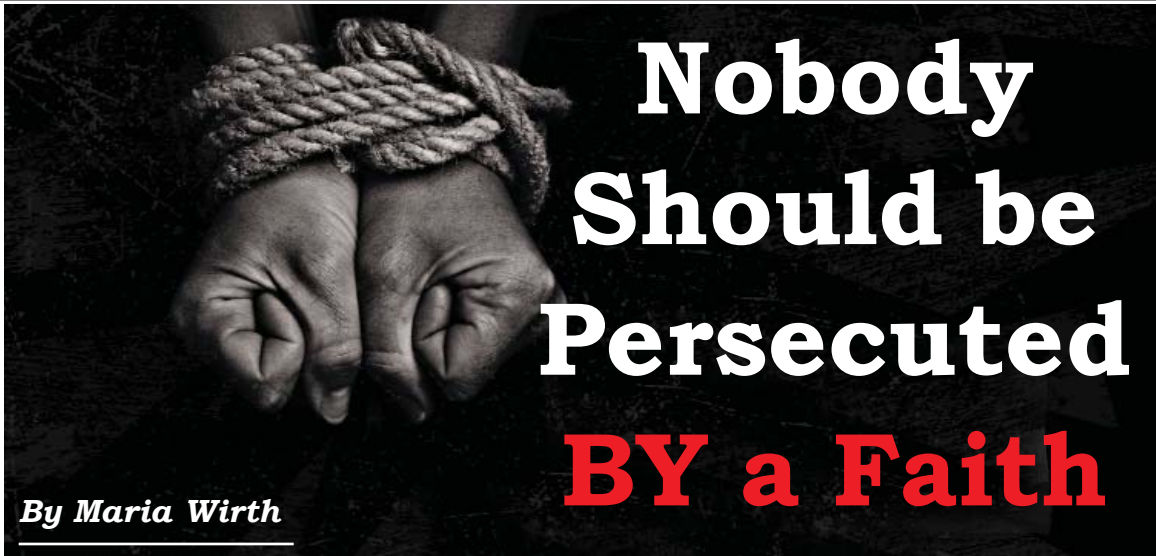
About the Author



Koenraad Elst,

a renowned Belgian Indologist, has written several books on Indian history and culture. He is best known for his writings on controversies in Indian history.

URL: <http://koenraadelst.blogspot.com/2018/09/is-term-dharma-untranslatable.html>



Nobody Should be Persecuted **BY a Faith**

By Maria Wirth

Media is not anymore about giving information. It probably never was. It is about influencing opinion to further the agenda of certain interests and lies are apparently an accepted tool. Lies are often disguised as surveys or even research. Nobody would believe lies if they were too obvious. Yet when a World Watch List for example by Open Doors in England gives out a ranking regarding the level of persecution of Christians in the world, and when nobody less than the British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt releases it (in January 2019) and tweets about it, the ranking acquires respectability and credibility, even if it contains plain falsehood. For example from now on, people who heard about this list will "know" that the level of persecution of Christians is extremely high in India, higher than Syria or Nigeria.

Now this list falls clearly under propagating falsehood in the name of an agenda. There is no other country where members of other religions are as safe as in India. Hindus always gave shelter to those who were persecuted in their homelands. Jews gratefully acknowledged that India is the one country where they were never persecuted. Syrian Christians under their leader Thomas of Cana (Thomas the Apostle did not come to India) were given refuge in the 4th century. Parsis came in the 10th century to escape the Muslim invaders in Persia. And in 1959, some 100,000 Tibetan Buddhist refugees fled over high Himalayan mountains and found shelter in India - only 12 years after the British had left India - a country that was one of the richest on earth when they seized power and one of the poorest, when they left.

Yet, now the British Foreign Secretary tweeted that nobody should be persecuted for their faith and obviously endorsed the ranking of India in the "extreme level" category at number 10 out of 50 countries.

Of course, nobody should be persecuted for their faith. Yet an important issue is overlooked. What is the reason for

persecution? Who is likely to persecute others for their faith?

Naturally it must be those who believe in an ideology which considers the faith of others as wrong and unacceptable. There are mainly three such ideologies - communism, Christianity and Islam, and all three are known for not only persecuting, but also killing dissenting voices in the millions.

Communism wants to stamp out religion as such as it considers them as a disease. **Christianity** wants to obliterate all other faiths except itself, and **Islam** has the same goal. It considers all others as false and unacceptable to their god. Both will not tolerate other faiths and therefore are likely to persecute them.

So the first countries on the list may indeed deserve their rank and indeed persecute Christians. North Korea due to its communism, and then right up to rank 17, all are Muslim majority countries with one exception. On rank number 10 is India with a Hindu majority.

How did India get in there? There seems to be an agenda to obfuscate and muddle the issue. Hinduism does not condemn other faiths as wrong and does not persecute others. It never has. It has the most liberal world view possible. Everyone has the right to seek his own truth, and his own connection to the source of his being.

So why is India ranked together with countries where indeed Christians are persecuted? Surely the compilers of the list must have reason to include India, won't they? Was there not a young American missionary killed by tribals in the Andaman Islands recently? And is this not brutal persecution?

Yes, it is true that he was killed. The young American was naïve. He knew that the Sentinelese tribe was fully cut off from civilization and hostile, and nobody was allowed to go there. Still he went, feeling he was called to bring the Gospel to them, as if they were in need of it. His superiors

should have warned him, but they rather encouraged a possible 'martyrdom'.

Yet this definitely cannot be called persecution of Christians. It was a defense against an unwanted intruder by tribals, who had earlier had bad experiences under the British colonial rule. It also cannot be called persecution of Christians, when villagers occasionally chased away missionaries who had come to convert. These villagers have every right to protest against their gods being called devils and being pestered to leave their ancient tradition. Did the Christian missionaries not cross decent human behavior by not respecting others' views, if those views are not harmful to anyone? Unfortunately, Christian missionaries are notorious for crossing decent human behavior and for putting out blatant fake news.

An example: Swiss friends were alarmed by a forwarded message they had got on 23 November 2018 and asked me if there was truth in it. It was in German and I translate it here in full:

SAD NEWS: Please pray! Urgent issue for prayer. Pray for the Church in India. Last night 20 churches were burnt down. And tonight more than 200 churches in the Olisabang province are meant to be destroyed. They want to kill 200 missionaries in the next 24 hours. All Christians hide in villages... Pray for them and send this message to all Christians whom you know the world over. Pray to God that He has mercy for our brothers and sisters in India. When you receive this message, pass it on urgently to other people. Please pray for the 22 Christian missionary families who have been condemned to be executed. Please pass on this message as fast as you can, so that many will pray!!!

With love

Joyce Meyer

A Google search shows that this message is circulating since 2010 and is a hoax. Even the province doesn't exist.

Would a persecuted religious group dare to spread such blatant, outrageous lies? Would it dare to have a detailed plan like the Joshua Project about how to convert maximum number of Hindus? So who is actually persecuting whom? Yet instead of condemning the devious agenda of the missionaries, the world accuses India of persecuting Christians.

Why?

The West knows that they cannot bully Islamic countries. But in India, which is a high target for conversion, there are enough western oriented Indians, who will happily toe its line and falsely accuse Hindus of persecuting Christians. In this way, Hindus and India get a bad image in the eyes of the world and Christians receive support and compassion.

Mainstream media has tremendous power to shape opinions. Churches have tremendous financial and political clout. Both obviously cooperate to portray Hindus as intolerant and hateful of other religions - absolutely contrary to facts. There is a third power that wants India to get a bad image the world over, at least as bad as its own image is. It is Pakistan, which is at rank number 5 in the list.

Intriguingly, not a single European or American country is among the 50 top countries where Christians are persecuted. But was there not a shooting in a church in USA? Have Christian refugees for example in Germany not been attacked by Muslim migrants? Does this not count as persecution? And are those French or German or Spanish or English citizens, who are randomly stabbed with a knife or blown up in a terror attack, not targeted for their faith? For not being Muslim?

We need to be clear. Those who are persecuted FOR their faith, are always persecuted by members of a different faith, which is rigid and dogmatic, and considers those other views as wrong - so wrong that they are ready to even cheat or kill to wipe this wrong faith out. Islam is one such rigid faith, as is Christianity.

So, in a tweet, I suggested to the British foreign secretary a slight change in his comment. Instead of "Nobody should be persecuted FOR his faith" I suggested "Nobody should be persecuted BY a faith".

Will he understand?



Maria Wirth

is a German and came to India for a holiday after finishing her psychology studies at Hamburg University. She visited the Ardhha Kumbha Mela in Haridwar in April 1980 where she met Sri Anandamayi Ma and Devaraha Baba, two renowned saints. With their blessing she continued to live in India and dived into India's spiritual tradition, sharing her insights with German readers through articles and books. For long, she was convinced that every Indian knows and treasures his great heritage. However, when in recent years, she noticed that there seemed to be a concerted effort to prevent Indians (and the world) from knowing how valuable this ancient Indian heritage is, she started to point out the unique value of Indian tradition.

***She may be contacted via email
mariawirth12@gmail.com***

Source: <https://mariawirthblog.wordpress.com/2019/02/07/nobody-should-be-persecuted-by-a-faith/>



Exploring the Connection

By Anand Venkatraman, M.D.

I know, I know - you're tired of people coming to you and saying ancient Indians had all the sciences figured out. I understand your point of view. I was in your shoes five years ago. I was a partisan of science who thought everyone in the world lived a backwards and hellish existence until the European "Enlightenment". But then I realized something - a lot of "modern" scientific discoveries actually have their roots in older traditions. The 2015 Nobel Prize in Medicine was awarded to a Chinese lady for her discovery of artemisinin, the best anti-malaria drug we have. Where did she find it? In a centuries-old text of Chinese traditional medicine. Aspirin, for years the best-selling drug in the world, was not dreamed up by a chemist from scratch - it was synthesized from the White Willow tree that was used as a folk treatment for fevers and pains even in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. The entire field of local anesthesia is based upon the discovery, by the Inca people of South America, that the leaf of the Coca plant had the power to dull pain.

So, in short, there is plenty of precedent to say that there might be something of value in traditional Indic

knowledge systems. As a neurologist, I have been drawn to the corpus of Hindu literature called *Tantra* over the last few years. I have come to the conclusion that *Tantra* contains a deep study of the inner workings of the human nervous system.

What is *Tantra*?

It's a hard term to define. One writer called it the "*Sadhana Shastra of Advaita Vedanta*", which is true but incomplete. *Tantra* is a Means to an End, basically. And the End is both worldly success and *Moksha*, not sterile asceticism.

So, if you want worldly success, how would you go about it? The Europeans settled upon an externally focused, rationalist approach, which they called Natural Philosophy. It germinated into what we call "Science". The Hindus, on the other hand, considered controlling their response to the world even more important than controlling the world itself. So, alongside the study of external nature, they made space for a detailed study of what lies within their body. Now, evolution has already provided a controller for the body - the nervous system. Therefore, the Hindus developed an extensive system that investigated how the nervous system worked, and "technologies" to control it.

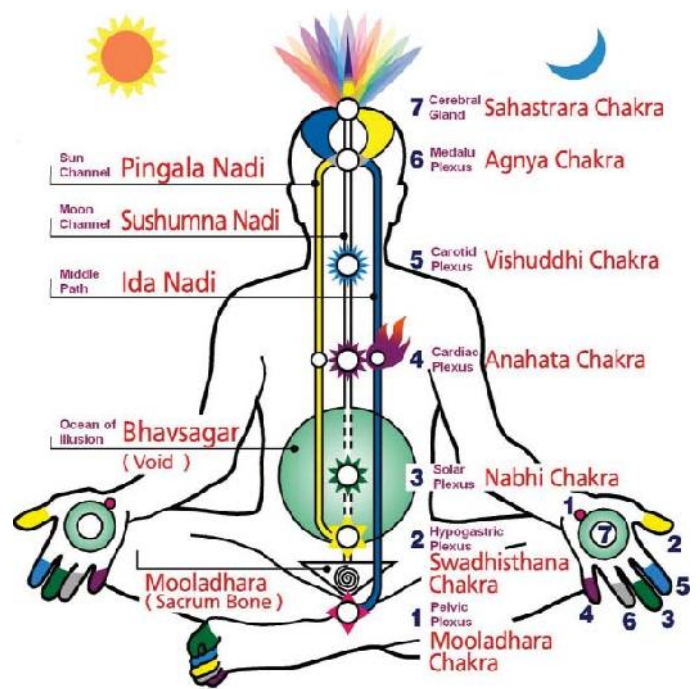
Given this orientation towards the nervous system and the body, *Tantra* is grounded in biology. This bio-centric worldview is the quintessence of the Hindu religion and therefore the *Tantric* tradition may be seen as the core of the Hindu way of life.

One may ask, if *Tantra* was an investigation of the nervous system, how come we don't have any major structure in the brain being identified by *Tantriks*? Well, for a simple reason. Western-derived, modern neuroscience studies the brain from a third-person standpoint. Meaning, the Western neuroscientist studies other peoples' brains.

The *Tantriks* studied their own brains. When you approach the *Tantric* texts in this way, a lot of things become understandable. *Chakras* and *Nadis* were not to be found on your patient, not to be found when performing surgery. They were to be found in yourself, when you closed your eyes!

Let me give you some examples of how *Tantriks* have anticipated some of the crucial findings of modern neurology. *Tantra*, in keeping with older Hindu texts like the Upanishads, states that there are two *Nadis*, the *Ida* and the *Pingala*, that run from near the ano-genital area to the head. The *Ida* is the cooling, "lunar", calming *Nadi*, and the *Pingala* is the hot, "solar", activating *Nadi*. They describe the *Chandra-nadi pranayama* when inhaling through the left, and the *Surya-nadi pranayama* when breathing through the right. Modern neuroscience has established that a large part of our body's function is controlled by the autonomic nervous system, which operates mostly beyond our conscious control. Similar to the two *Nadis*, the autonomic nervous system has two parts - the Parasympathetic causes cooling and calming, whereas the Sympathetic causes heating and activity. Both of these also course from the brain down the spinal cord. Indeed, there is now some evidence that nostril-specific breathing can lead to changes in autonomic function, with the left nostril more likely to cause calming effects, and the right nostril activating, sympathetic effects.[1, 2]

The concept of the *Chakras* is the next stage in the *Tantric* nervous system. Standard texts say there are seven *chakras*, arranged from the anus area to the top of the head. One simplistic way to interpret this would be that these chakras correspond to what in neurology is called plexuses, which are collections of nerve cells that lie next to various organs and control their functions. Indeed, similar in location to the *Anahata* or heart *chakra*, is the cardiac plexus; similar in location to the *Muladhara chakra* are the hypogastric plexuses which control defecation. But the *chakras* are not merely the anatomic plexuses. Each *chakra* refers to the internal

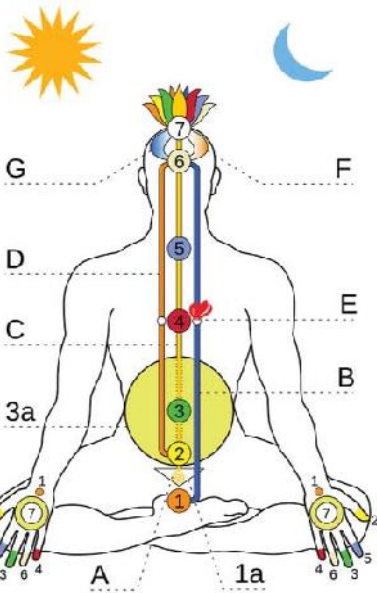


The Ida and the Pingala Nadis

perception of the working of those parts of the nervous system that controls specific organs. In *Tantra*, the *Anahata chakra* is supposed to be the seat of interpersonal relationships. And modern science has revealed that the parts of the nervous system that control the heart, including the heart plexus, are closely related to social behavior, especially with the trait known as interpersonal hostility.[3, 4]

Similarly, the *Muladhara chakra* is supposed to be the seat of security and groundedness, and if it is blocked, it may create problems with bowel movements, anxiety and depression. There is a growing body of research showing that Irritable Bowel Syndrome, where bowel movement is irregular, is linked to personality traits such as neuroticism, anxiety and high conscientiousness. The tone of the rectum and anus, which is controlled by the two branches of the autonomic nervous system, also predicted the reactivity of patients' brains to emotional words.[5, 6] Further evidence that there is something in that neurological control of the ano-genital area which is closely intertwined with that part of the brain that deals with these negative emotions.

The *Tantric* path is remarkable in that it is not merely a description of these structures, but also offers "technology" to correct errors. These *Tantric* technologies come in many forms, the most common ones being *Mantras*, *Mudras* and *Asanas*. Now, is a *Mantra* a normal phrase, like Happy Birthday? No, because a *Mantra's* meaning is not carried in its wording. If you translate a *Tantric mantra* into English, you don't retain its *Mantra-ness*. It's not the meaning of the words,



The Chakras in body

it's how it feels to say the syllables. The same is true of the *Tantric mudras* and *asanas*. These are used in private, not for conveying messages to a viewer. My contention is that the *Tantric Mantra, Mudra* and *Asana* are ways of communicating with subconscious nervous system, as opposed to normal language and gestures which are meant to communicate with others. The best demonstration of the effectiveness of these techniques was a recent paper that described how *Tantric* meditators in Tibet were able to raise their body temperatures so high, merely sitting in one place. Any doctor would have been convinced they had a fever.[7] And, they did this, purely through extreme control of their nervous systems!

The system that begins with the *Nadis, Chakras, Mantras* and *Mudras* culminates in the practice known as the *Sri Vidya*, the crown jewel of Hindu *Tantra*. It is an important part of the teachings of the Shankara mathas and a large number of modern spiritual traditions such as Transcendental Meditation, Art of Living and The Himalayan Institute trace themselves to Sri Vidya Upasakars. As some other scholars have begun to recognize, the *Sri Vidya* rituals involving the *Sri chakra*, visualizations and *Nyasa* (imagining the placement of mantras and images in various parts of the body) are likely to lead to a condition known as synesthesia. [8] This condition, though known for centuries, was never studied in detail, until it was popularized by the great neurologist VS Ramachandran. In synesthesia, two or more senses merge together in your perception - seeing the number 3 might trigger a sensation of seeing the color red, or hearing a certain name might trigger perception of a taste. Scientists know that a minority of people are born with synesthesia, but I think there is a good chance that intensive *Sri Vidya* practice can

Chakras

1. Root
2. Sacral
3. Solar Plexus
4. Heart
5. Throat
6. Third Eye
7. Crown

develop latent synesthetic tendencies. Synesthesia has been linked to greater creativity,[9, 10] and one study suggested there may be a link between synesthesia and the ability to generate "puns", a measure of verbal creativity and wordplay. [11]

I find this particularly fascinating, because one of the most prominent markers of Sanskrit literature, when compared to other languages, is the degree of wordplay and punning, and the use of metaphor. Of the so-called "Trinity" of Carnatic music, at least two were known to be *Srividya Tantra Upasakars*. [12, 13] The world's largest hedge fund, Bridgewater, was started by a man who says the biggest influence on his life is Transcendental Meditation, [14] derived, as noted earlier, from the teachings of a *Sri Vidya guru*. If we can come up with hard evidence that this practice enhances cognitive ability, then shouldn't teaching our youth *Tantric* meditative techniques be an important part of what we call "Human Resource Development"?

As I conclude, I would like to note that Western neuroscience is a marvel in its own right. However, *Tantra* comes at the nervous system from an entirely different perspective, and in certain ways is much more satisfying to explore, because it is personalized about your brain and your body. Of course, I don't think *Tantra* is the place to look for answers on how to cure a brain tumor. You should go to an allopathic doctor for that. But the buzz in places like Silicon Valley, MIT and Harvard is all about biohacking, human enhancement, and psychosomatic medicine. Tantra is the pulsating heart of all that. There are kids in Silicon Valley mixing up all sorts of supplements to hack their brains and bodies to make themselves smarter, stronger and sexier, which reminds me of nothing more than similar concoctions described in the Tantras. There is a company that sells a device called "ResPERate", which is basically teaching you *Pranayama* to reduce stress and hypertension. *Bharatiya* companies could be leading in all these fields. As the seat of this tradition for millennia, it is time that Hindus start mining their insights in a scientific manner.

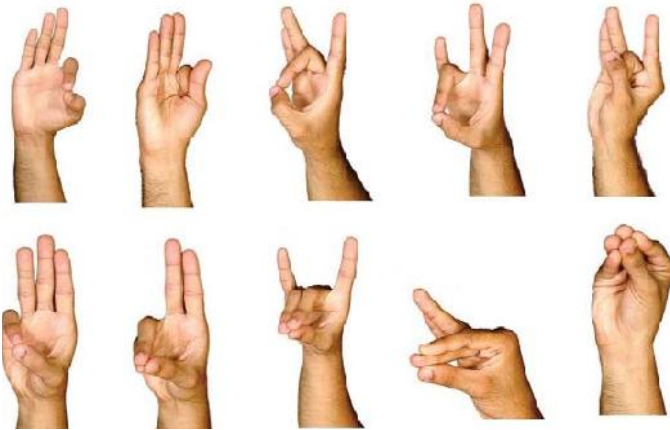
Apart from the monetary aspect, the study of Tantra from a scientific perspective may radically alter modern society's understanding of Hinduism. Tantra emphasizes the naturalistic aspects of the Hindu deities. When you read the *Tantric* descriptions, they seem to be suggesting that Saraswati is not a lady in the sky sitting on a lotus, she is the depiction of neural mechanisms that allow learning - the mechanisms that give one patience, memory and focus. Lakshmi is not some imaginary Goddess with fancy clothes and jewelry, she is the personification of the brain networks that allow one to secure wealth - the ability to hustle, to make deals, to

know how to take risk. And that's what the Tantras mean when they say "All the gods live within you". When brain MRI techniques get advanced enough, we might be able to image these networks and produce 21st century depictions of the Hindu deities.

(admittedly great) intellectual traditions, or come up with our own, based on our own unique historical development.



(Originally published in "Abhiyan, World Hindu Congress-2018)



The Mudras

There will, certainly, be strong opposition to any attempts to teach Tantra in medical colleges in India, so the smart way to do it, at least for now, is to just publicize the subject. And encourage doctors, scientists and bioengineers to seek out this knowledge on their own. We must decide if we are going to become a carbon-copy of the Western world, with wholesale mimicry of their

Dr. V R Anand

is a neurologist and native of Chennai. An MBBS graduate from AIIMS, New Delhi, he worked briefly at the National Brain Research Center before migrating to the US for advanced training, and he currently works at the hospitals of Harvard Medical School. Dr. Anand has always had a great interest in biology, and won a gold medal representing India at the International Biology Olympiad.

However, he was a staunch skeptic of traditional Indic knowledge systems, and often denigrated them in favor of modern science. This changed after a series of conversations with an American gentleman, a nurse in his hospital, who had used Tantric and Yogic techniques to cure his hypertension, depression, drug use and obesity. Dr. Anand is now utilizing the understanding of the brain generated by modern neuroscience to interpret Tantra, and hopes to use Tantric insights to trigger a new phase of neurological research and technology.

E-mail: vranand111@gmail.com Phone: 773-620-1778
(Boston, Massachusetts, USA).

References

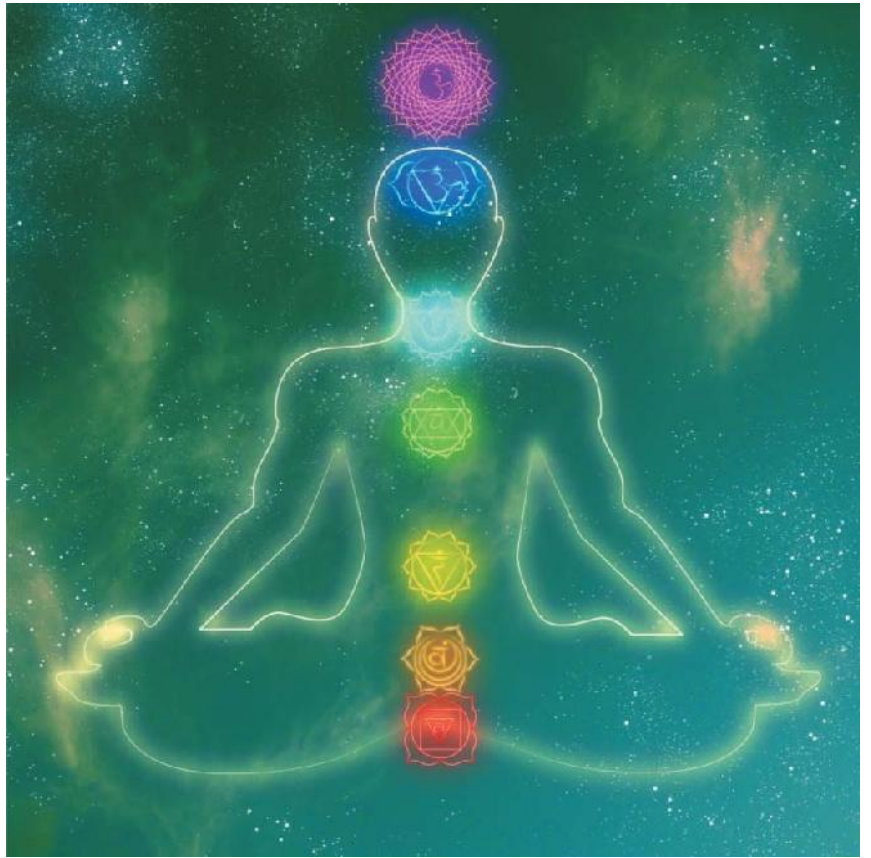
1. Telles S, Nagarathna R, Nagendra HR. Breathing through a particular nostril can alter metabolism and autonomic activities. *Indian J Physiol Pharmacol.* 1994;38(2):133-7.
2. Pal GK, Agarwal A, Karthik S, Pal P, Nanda N. Slow yogic breathing through right and left nostril influences sympathovagal balance, heart rate variability, and cardiovascular risks in young adults. *N Am J Med Sci.* 2014;6(3):145-51.
3. Sloan RP, Bagiella E, Shapiro PA, et al. Hostility, gender, and cardiac autonomic control. *Psychosom Med.* 2001;63(3):434-40.
4. Sloan RP, Shapiro PA, Bigger JT, Jr., Bagiella E, Steinman RC, Gorman JM. Cardiac autonomic control and hostility in healthy subjects. *Am J Cardiol.* 1994;74(3):298-300.
5. Blomhoff S, Spetalen S, Jacobsen MB, Vatn M, Malt UF. Rectal tone and brain information processing in irritable bowel syndrome. *Dig Dis Sci.* 2000;45(6):1153-9.
6. Blomhoff S, Spetalen S, Jacobsen MB, Vatn M, Malt UF. Intestinal reactivity to words with emotional content and brain information processing in irritable bowel syndrome. *Dig Dis Sci.* 2000;45(6):1160-5.
7. Kozhevnikov M, Elliott J, Shephard J, Gramann K. Neurocognitive and somatic components of temperature increases during g-tummo meditation: legend and reality. *PLoS One.* 2013;8(3):e58244.
8. Lidke J.
9. Domino G. Synesthesia and creativity in fine arts students: An Empirical Look. *Creativity Research Journal.* 1989;2(1-2):17-29.
10. Chun CA, Hupe JM. Are synesthetes exceptional beyond their synesthetic associations? A systematic comparison of creativity, personality, cognition, and mental imagery in synesthetes and controls. *Br J Psychol.* 2016;107(3):397-418.
11. Sitton SC, Pierce ER. Synesthesia, Creativity and Puns. *Psychological Reports.* 2004;95(2):577-80.
12. <http://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/on-thebanks-of-the-ganges/article19125440.ece>.
13. <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tpfridayreview/the-past-master-in-rhythm/article1994917.ece>.
14. <http://www.businessinsider.com/wall-street-trendtranscendental-meditation-2016-10>.

Secrets of the Five Pranas

Part-I

By Dr. David Frawley

(Pandit Vamadeva Shastri)



All that exists in the three heavens rests in the control of Prana. As a mother, her children, oh Prana, protect us and give us splendor and wisdom.

- Prashna Upanishad II.13

To change something we must alter the energy which creates it. This fact is true in the practice of Yoga. To bring about positive changes in body and mind we must understand the energy through which they work. This is called *Prana* in Sanskrit, meaning primary energy. It is sometimes translated as breath or vital force, though it is more than these.

While the subject of *Prana* is common in Yogic thought, and while different forms of *Prana* may be introduced, the subject of *Prana* and its different subtypes is seldom examined in depth. For this reason the entire science of *Prana*, which is vast and profound, is rarely understood. In this article we will look into this vast subject, that we might be awakened to the great expanse of *Prana* in all of its manifestations.

There is an old Vedic story about *Prana* that we find in various *Upanishads*. The five main faculties of our nature - the mind, breath (*Prana*), speech, ear and eye - were arguing with each other as to which one of them was the best and most important. This reflects the ordinary human state in which our faculties are not integrated but fight with each other, competing for their rule over our attention. To resolve this dispute they

decided that each would leave the body and see whose absence was most missed.

First speech left the body but the body continued though mute. Next the eye left but the body continued though blind. Next the ear left but the body continued though deaf. Mind left but the body continued though unconscious. Finally the *Prana* began to leave and the body began to die and all the other faculties began to lose their energy. So all they all rushed to *Prana* and told it to stay, lauding its supremacy. Clearly *Prana* won the argument. *Prana* gives energy to all our faculties, without which they cannot function. Without honoring *Prana* first there is nothing else we can do and no energy with which to do anything. The moral of this story is that to control our faculties the key is the control of *Prana*.

Many Meanings of Prana

Prana has many levels of meaning from the breath to the energy of consciousness itself. *Prana* is not only the basic life-force, it is the master form of all energy working on the level of mind, life and body. Indeed the entire universe is a manifestation of *Prana*, which is the original creative power. Even *Kundalini Shakti*, the serpent power or inner power that transforms consciousness, develops from the awakened *Prana*.

On a cosmic level there are two basic aspects of *Prana*. The first is the unmanifest aspect of *Prana*, which is the energy of Pure Consciousness that

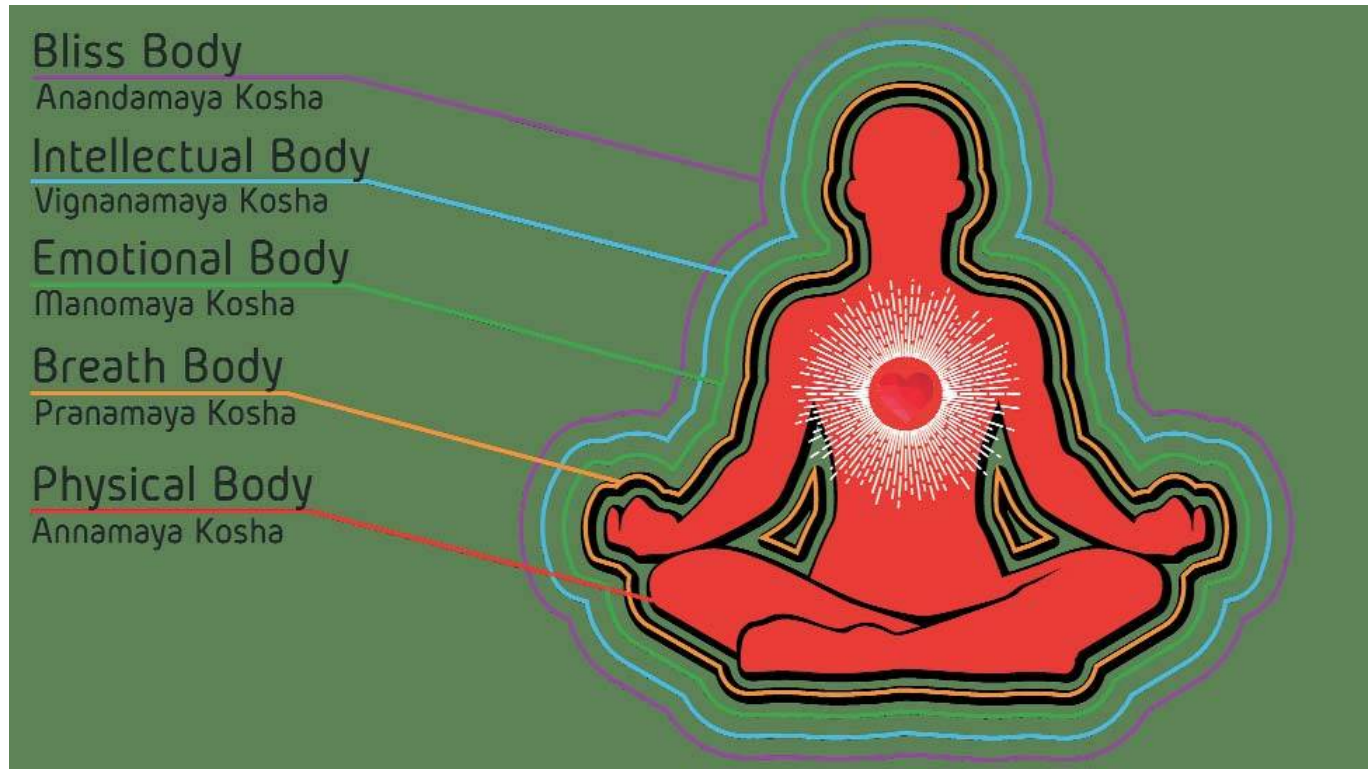
transcends all creation. The second or manifest *Prana* is the force of creation itself. *Prana* arises from the quality (*guna*) of *rajas*, the active force of Nature (*Prakriti*). Nature herself consists of three *gunas*: *sattva* or harmony, which gives rise to the mind, *rajas* or movement, which gives rise to the *prana*, and *tamas* or inertia that gives rise to the body.

Indeed it could be argued that *Prakriti* or Nature is primarily *Prana* or *rajas*. Nature is an active energy or *Shakti*. According to the pull or attraction of the higher Self or pure consciousness (*Purusha*) this energy becomes *sattvic*. By the inertia of ignorance this energy

to the element of ether. Through sound we awaken and feel our broader connections with life as a whole. On a subtle level *Prana* arises from the touch and sound qualities that are inherent in consciousness. In fact *Prana* has its own sheath or body.

The human being consists of five *koshas* or sheaths from the physical to subtle and causal principles:

1. *Annamaya kosha* - food - physical - the five elements
2. *Pranamaya kosha* - breath - vital - the five *pranas*
3. *Manomaya kosha* - impressions - outer mind - the five kinds of sensory impressions



becomes *tamasic*.

However even the *Purusha* or higher Self can be said to be unmanifest *Prana* because it is a form of energy of consciousness (*Devatma Shakti* or *Citi Shakti*). From the unmanifest *Prana* of Pure Awareness comes the manifest *Prana* of creation, through which the entire universe comes into being.

Relative to our physical existence, *Prana* or vital energy is a modification of the air element, primarily the oxygen we breathe that allows us to live. Yet as air originates in ether or space, *Prana* arises in space and remains closely connected to it. Wherever we create space there energy or *Prana* must arise automatically.

The element of air relates to the sense of touch in the Yogic system. Air on a subtle level is touch. Through touch we feel alive and can transmit our life-force to others. Yet as air arises in space, so does touch arises from sound, which is the sense quality that corresponds

4. *Vijnanamaya kosha* - ideas - intelligence - directed mental activity

5. *Anandamaya kosha* - experiences - deeper mind - memory, subliminal and superconscious mind

Pranamaya Kosha:

The *Pranamaya Kosha* is the sphere of our vital life energies. This sheath mediates between the body on one side and the three sheaths of the mind (outer mind, intelligence and inner mind) on the other and has an action on both levels. It meditates between the five gross elements and the five sensory impressions.

The best English term for the *Pranamaya kosha* is probably the "vital sheath" or "vital body," to use a term from Sri Aurobindo's *Integral Yoga*. *Pranamaya kosha* consists of our vital urges of survival, reproduction, movement and self-expression, being mainly connected to the five motor organs (excretory, urino-genital, feet,

hands, and vocal organ).

Most of us are dominated by the vital body and its deep-seated urges that are necessary for us to remain alive. It is also the home of the vital or subconscious ego, which holds the various fears, desires and attachments which afflict us. We spend most of our time in life seeking sensory enjoyment and acquisition of material objects.

A person with a strong vital nature becomes prominent in life and is able to impress their personality upon the world. Those with a weak vital lack the power to accomplish much of anything and have little effect upon life, usually remaining in a subordinate position. Generally people with strong and egoistic vitals run the world, while those with weak vitals follow them. Such a strong egoistic vital is one of the greatest obstacles to the spiritual path.

A strong vital or *Pranamaya kosha*, however, is important for the spiritual path as well, but this is very different than the egoistic or desire oriented vital. It derives its strength not from our personal power but from surrender to the Divine and its great energy. Without a strong spiritual vital we lack the power to do our practices and not fall under worldly influences. In *Hindu* scriptures this higher *Prana* is symbolized by the monkey God *Hanuman*, the son of the Wind, who surrendered to the Divine in the form of *Sita-Rama*, can become as large or small as he wishes, can overcome all enemies and obstacles, and accomplish the miraculous. Such a spiritual vital has energy, curiosity and enthusiasm in life along with a control of the senses and vital urges, with their subordination to a higher will and aspiration.

Yet *Prana* in various forms exists in all five koshas and is ultimately rooted in the *Atman* or inner Self beyond them. This *Atmic Prana* is the highest *prana* and grants healing and immortality of consciousness.

The Five Pranas

Pranamaya kosha is composed of the five *Pranas*. The one primary *Prana* divides into five types according to its movement and direction. This is an important subject in *Ayurvedic* medicine as well as *Yogic* thought.

Prana

Prana, literally the "forward moving air," moves inward and governs reception of all types from the eating of food, drinking of water, and inhalation of air, to the reception of sensory impressions and mental experiences. It is propulsive in nature, setting things in motion and guiding them. It provides the basic energy that drives us in life. Ultimately it connects to the

Purusha or the higher Self within.

Apana

Apana, literally the "air that moves away," moves downward and outward and governs all forms of elimination and reproduction (which also has a downward movement). It governs the elimination of the stool and the urine, the expelling of semen, menstrual fluid and the fetus, and the elimination of carbon dioxide through the breath. On a deeper level it rules the elimination of negative sensory, emotional and mental experiences. It is the basis of our immune function on all levels.

Udana

Udana, literally the "upward moving air," moves upward and qualitative or transformative movements of the life-energy. It governs growth of the body, the ability to stand, speech, effort, enthusiasm and will. It is our main positive energy in life through which we can develop our different bodies and evolve in consciousness.

Samana

Samana, literally the "balancing air," moves from the periphery to the center, through a churning and discerning action. It aids in digestion on all levels. It works in the gastrointestinal tract to digest food, in the lungs to digest air or absorb oxygen, and in the mind to homogenize and digest experiences, whether sensory, emotional or mental.

Vyana

Vyana, literally the "outward moving air," moves from the center to the periphery. It governs circulation on all levels. It moves the food, water and oxygen throughout the body, and keeps our emotions and thoughts circulating in the mind, imparting movement and providing strength. In doing so it assists all the other *Pranas* in their work.

The five *Pranas* are energies and processes that occur on several levels in the body and mind. However we can localize them in a few key ways. *Prana Vayu* governs the movement of energy from the head down to the navel, which is the *Pranic* center in the physical body. *Apana Vayu* governs the movement of energy from the navel down to the root chakra. *Samana Vayu* governs the movement of energy from the entire body back to the navel. *Vyana Vayu* governs the movement of energy out from the navel throughout the entire body. *Udana* governs the movement of energy from the navel up to the head

As a simple summary we could say that *Prana*



governs the intake of substances. *Samana* governs their digestion. *Vyana* governs the circulation of nutrients. *Udana* governs the release of positive energy. *Apana* governs the elimination of waste-materials.

This is much like the working of a machine. *Prana* brings in the fuel, *Samana* converts this fuel to energy, *Vyana* circulates the energy to the various work sites. *Apana* releases the waste materials or by products of the conversion process. *Udana* governs the positive energy created in the process and determines the work that the machine is able to do. The key to health and well-being is to keep our *Pranas* in harmony. When one *Prana* becomes imbalanced, the others tend to become imbalanced as well because they are all linked together. Generally *Prana* and *Udana* work opposite to *Apana* as the forces of energization versus those of elimination. Similarly *Vyana* and *Samana* are opposites as expansion and contraction.

How Prana Creates The Physical Body

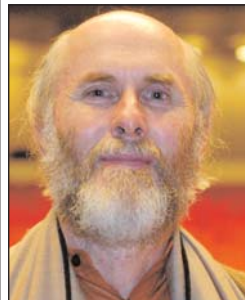
Without *Prana* the physical body is no more than a lump of clay. *Prana* sculpts this gelatinous mass into various limbs and organs. It does this by creating various channels or *Nadis*, through which it can operate and energize gross matter into various tissues and organs.

Prana Vayu creates the openings and channels in the head and brain down to the heart. There are seven openings in the head, the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and mouth. These are called the seven *Pranas* or seven *Rishis* in Vedic thought. *Udana* assists *Prana* in creating the openings in the upper part of the body, particularly those of the mouth and vocal organs. The mouth, after all, is the main opening in the head and in the entire body. It could be said that the entire physical body is an extension of the mouth, which is the main organ of physical activity, eating and self-expression.

Apana Vayu creates the openings in the lower part of

the body, those of the urino-genital and excretory systems. *Samana Vayu* creates the openings in the middle part of the body, those of the digestive system, centered in the navel. It opens out the channels of the intestines and the organs, like the liver and pancreas, which secrete into it. *Vyana Vayu* creates the channels going to the peripheral parts of the body, the arms and legs. It creates the veins and arteries and also the muscles, sinews, joints and bones.

In summary, *Samana Vayu* creates the trunk of the body (which is dominated by the gastro-intestinal tract), while *Vyana Vayu* creates the limbs. *Prana* and *Udana* create the upper openings or bodily orifices, while *Apana* creates those below. *Prana* however exists not just on a physical level. The navel is the main vital center for the physical body. The heart is the main center for the *Pranamaya Kosha*. The head is the main center for *Manomaya kosha*. ♦♦♦



Dr. David Frawley
(Pandit Vamadeva Shastri)

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

As we look at Hindus today, we have so many organizations that work for the sake of the Dharma traditions. We have such institutions as the RSS, HSS, VHP, HSC, HMEC, Kalyana Ashrama, or Swadhyaya, Iskcon, Gaudiya Math, the World Vaishnava Association, Rama Krishna Mission, Chinmayananda Mission, Vedanta Society, Self-Realization Fellowship and many others. And I am happy to say that I have worked with many of them or

By Stephen Knapp
(Sri Nandanandana dasa)

their invaders. So, we have to ask ourselves, are we going to continue the same pattern? Are we going to sit back and criticize others and what they have or have not done while we have yet to do anything of real significance? If we do, then there is no doubt that we, Hindus in general, are already finished. It is only a matter of time when we and the Vedic system will become so diminished that it will fade from the world, like other cultures that have been reduced to mere museum pieces. We have to rise above that.

So, it seems we still do not have a unified

United Hindu Identity, United Hindu Cooperation

still have friends in them. But some of these groups seem to be more exclusive than others. They may work hard for their own interests, yet these are often similar to the work and goals of other institutions. So, what if we were more united, more cooperative with each other? We know that there is strength in numbers. So how much stronger could we be if we could cooperate in a single force, at least when needed?

It seems that right now we cannot easily unite and become a strong federation, a powerful force that can determine the fate or future of India and the preservation of its Vedic culture. If anything, so many of these associations in India still fight with or are indifferent to one another and, thus, weaken each other to the point of becoming incapable of performing any worthwhile actions that will make a real difference for the unity and future of India and its traditions. More divisions mean more disunity. This means the less unity we will have for defending our culture.

This was the same sort of weakness of the past 1000 years when invaders came into India, sometimes few in numbers, but conquered and took over parts of the country without much resistance. It was this lack of unity amongst the princely states, and their inability to support each other or come to the aid of another, that allowed for such a poor defense system in which they could not repel

identity in which we can all work together. I was the president of the Vedic Friends Association for 15 years in which we are still trying to create such a united force here in America. Nonetheless, in my view, one of the greatest attempts to do this in India was the Acharya Sabha as organized by Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, which joined together over 200 spiritual leaders of the major *paramparas* and spiritual lineages to discuss the common issues that affected all of them, and then make plans on how to deal with such concerns.

So, in this regard we need to reach a singleness of purpose in which we feel that if any part of the Vedic tradition or any group is under attack or being challenged by outside forces, then we are all under attack, and we all must be ready to stand up for the cause. We should be willing to be a united force to be reckoned with, the kind that makes people think twice before persecuting or attacking any Hindus or any part of the Vedic tradition. But this is a call to be active. And many Hindus are not.

Once while giving a talk at a Krishna temple in Mumbai, I began discussing the need to be protective of our culture and try to elect those politicians who are pro-Hindu, or show why they should be pro-Hindu. So, I asked the audience of over 1200 people how many had participated in the last election. Not one hand went up. This is why some people ask whether Hinduism is

destined to become extinct. I hope not, but that depends on what we do. Which means we all have to be proactive.

If we were a stronger and unified force, politicians would know that they need to get our approval. They would take the needs of Hindus more seriously if they want our vote. They would not simply be concerned with vote bank politics that often cater to non-Hindus. Such strength would also mean there would not be the persecution of Hindus that often seems to be sanctioned by politicians in states such as Kerala or West Bengal, or love jihad as found in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere. They would know that Hindus will react and defend themselves, or even go after the politicians who neglect them or even work against them.



Some say that Sanatana-dharma means that it is eternal, so there is no need to worry. But that means they do not even know that Lord Krishna said in Bhagavad-gita (4.1-3, 7-8) that one of His purposes was to re-establish the Vedic traditions that had become lost. This lack of familiarity is a sign of such fading away of knowledge of the Dharmic culture, and the importance of understanding the part we need to play. Arjuna also had to fight for Dharma, so why should we not think that we also need to do something to protect Vedic Dharma?

India must remain the homeland of a thriving and dynamic Vedic tradition. This is essentially based on the universal spiritual truths and knowledge that can be applied by any person at anytime, anywhere in the universe, so they can reach their highest potentials. That is Sanatana-Dharma. If Hindus, Dharmists or Sanatanis, whatever name you want to use, can stand united, there is no threat we cannot handle. History has shown that. But history has also shown that when we are fragmented, then bits and pieces of our culture and even our Mother India get chopped off and taken away from us. This cannot go on.

Therefore, the need of the hour is to find the means wherein we can stand together for the cause of Sanatana-Dharma, the basis of our Hindu culture.

If we can do this, the youth would also be more proud

of being a part of something in which reasoning is sound, stable, and in which the participants, such as their parents, are not shy about sharing it or defending it. Nonetheless, the children have to be guided by proper training and association, and proper observance of Vedic traditions. This also is part of forming the proper samskaras in the minds of the children. And isn't this

what we are meant to do anyway? But for this to happen, the parents must also be educated in our Dharmic traditions.

We also need to realize that America is a prime location where we can work together for cultivating as well as protecting and preserving the Vedic tradition. Why? Because there is less emphasis amongst Indian Hindus on local ethnicity or caste. In

other words, it is easier to simply be an Indian Hindu or American Hindu rather than a Rajasthani Hindu, Maharashtrian Hindu, or Tamil brahmin, and so on, which thereafter can bring out so many distinctions. If we are going to become united, our identity should first start with being a Hindu, Dharmist or Sanatani: a follower of Sanatana-Dharma. Anything else can be added after that, no matter whether we are Indian, Nepali, Malaysian, Fijian, or from Mauritius, Bali, or America. We are first Hindus or Dharmists. In order to create greater cooperation and a powerful association, we need to have and accept a more unified identity. Then in that light, we can work together and assist each other for the Vedic cause, and form a united federation that can more powerfully take on any threats to our future. There is no reason why we cannot do that if we actually live by the spiritual principles of Sanatana-Dharma, and, thus, Think Collectively, Act Valiantly.



(Written for the 2nd World Hindu Congress in Chicago, September 7-9, 2018)

Visit www.stephen-knapp.com

Source: http://www.stephen-knapp.com/prasada_the_power_of_sacred_food.htm

5,000-year-old Human Skeleton Found in Kutch

RAJKOT: After two months of excavation, archaeologists have stumbled upon what they believe is a massive burial site dating back to the Harappan civilization, around 360km from Dholavira in Gujarat's Kutch district.

Archaeologists said

Highlights:

- ★ Archaeologists have found a massive burial site dating back to the Harappan civilization, around 360km from Dholavira in Gujarat's Kutch district.
- ★ Archaeologists said this site is 300 m x 300 m big with more than 250 graves out of which 26 have been excavated.
- ★ They found one full human skeleton that is around six feet in length, estimated to be around 5,000 years old.

establish the significance of this rectangular shape," added Bhandari.

First rectangular graveyard found

Suresh Bhandari, head of Department of Archaeology, Kutch University said: "The skeleton has been taken

The excavated skull



this site is 300 m x 300 m big with more than 250 graves out of which 26 have been excavated. They found one full human skeleton that is around six feet in length, estimated to be around 5,000 years old. The find has lent further credence to the possibility of big human settlement at this place.

Moreover, it is for the first time that burial sites in rectangular shapes have been found in Gujarat. The burial site is estimated to be 4,600 to 5,200 years old. "All the burial sites found in Gujarat till date are either circular or semicircular. We are trying to

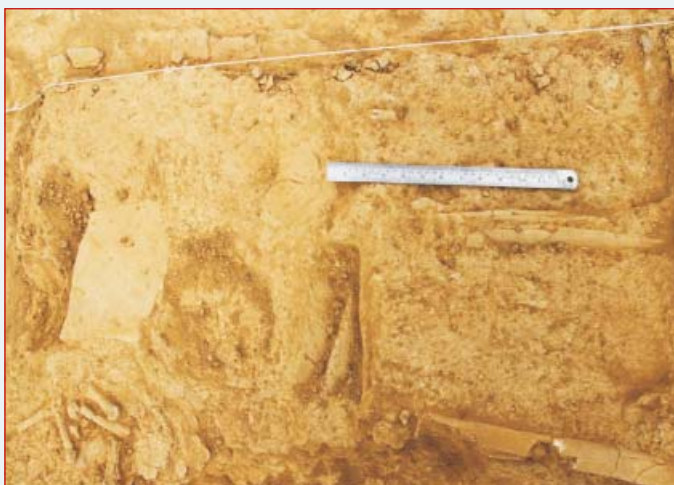


to Kerala University for determining its age, possible reason for death and knowing its gender."

The excavation was done jointly by the Kutch University and Kerala University near Khatia village of Lakhpat taluka. It's first time in Gujarat rectangular burial sites have been found.

According to faculty members, the burials are more or less rectangular in shape with sound wall rocks in the east-west direction. The head was placed in east and foot in the west. The biggest grave is around 6.9 meter while the smallest is around 1.2 meter.

Besides the human skeleton, animal remains have also been documented from the site. Artefacts like shell bangles, grinding stones, blades made from rock having razor sharp edges, rock beads have also been excavated from the site. All these will also be studied in detail to



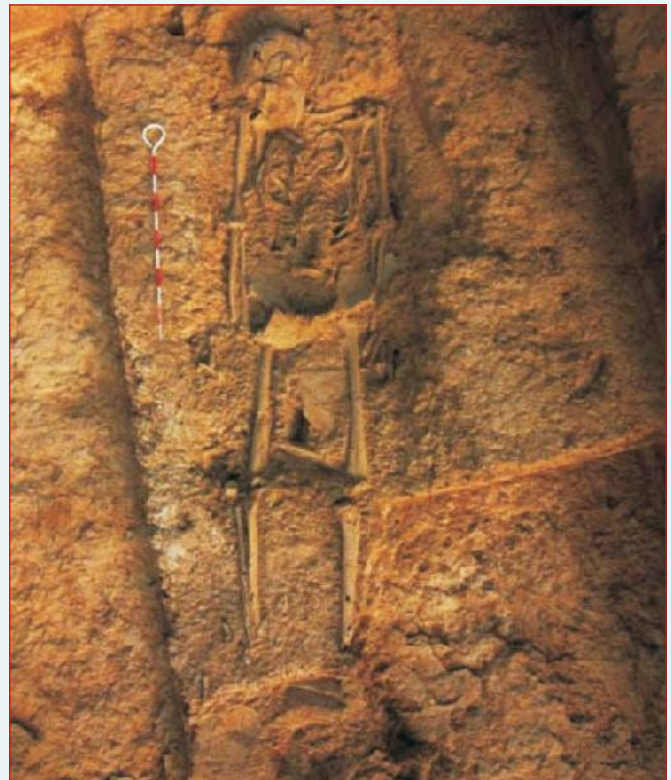
know the rituals and social deeds in the community during that time.

"Studies of the potteries as well as rock blocks will enhance our knowledge about the different techniques employed and the raw material used for



maximum 19 to a minimum three, placed near the foot. Archaeologists have said that these kind of vessels have been found in Amri, Naal and Kot in Pakistan, Nagwada, Chatrad Saheli, Moti Pipali of North Gujarat and Surkotda and Dhaneti in Kutch. Graves of children have also been discovered at this site.

"Geo-chemical analysis of



making them. The material excavated from this site will be studied at various laboratories in India to know the history of people living near Khatia during early Harappan period," he said.

The graves also contained pottery vessels with

all the excavated articles will be done but we can say with certainty that a human settlement flourished here," added Bhandari.



By Nimesh Khakhariya TNN

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/rajkot/5000-year-old-human-skeletons-found-in-kutch/articleshow/68367314.cms>



Never Be Afraid to Apologize

We only think we are perfect. The reality is that there we suffer from many faults. There are times when we say or do the wrong thing. When we realize what we have said, we feel the remorse. Feeling contrite is good, but we must go one step further. We must express the apology in words.

Apologizing is not easy. After all, you have to swallow your pride, and your ego does take a beating. The mind says, "You didn't make a mistake; there is no reason to lower yourself." However, making an apology is only proper and it is healing for the one who apologizes.



When should you apologize? Apologize once the situation has cooled down a bit. Once you have had a chance to figure out why you did or said the wrong thing. How should you apologize? Formulate the apology clearly in your head or on paper before uttering it. Be clear about what you wish to say, and apologize from the heart. There is a chance that your apology may not be accepted. If you ask whether or not it is worth it to

apologize in that case, the answer is 'yes.' The other person may not accept what you are saying, but you will derive great satisfaction in having acknowledged your mistake.

After all, your purpose in life is to improve yourself. The first few steps on the ladder of self-improvement are: to see your shortcomings, to acknowledge them and to work on getting rid of them.

Detach yourself from Detachment

The idea of detaching yourself from the world seems frightening and impossible. It brings about visions of the spouse and children sobbing bitterly and grabbing on to your neck, arms and legs as you cold-heartedly try to 'detach' yourself and make your way out the door. In short, the concept of detaching yourself is nothing short of a nightmare.

To understand and practice detachment, you must first detach yourself from the misconception of detachment. In order to truly renounce the word detachment, you must first renounce the very idea of renunciation.

Detachment means the absence of attachment, and attachment is of two types: love and hatred. Therefore, detachment from the world means neither loving nor hating the world you live in. Many think detachment to be hatred. But if you hate the world, you are still attached to it, and this defeats the purpose.

To detach yourself, attach your mind to God. Meditate on God lovingly. Your mind will gradually start

loving Him, and when the mind starts to focus lovingly on God, it will naturally detach itself from the material world. This is natural detachment. You will then live in the world very comfortably, performing your duty towards family all the while being attached to God.

No Fear, Just Love

The greatest relationship each one of us has is with



God. The essence of each individual is the soul, and all our relationships are only with the Soul of all souls, the Supreme Soul. Worldly relationships are temporary; our spiritual relationship with God is eternal. He was, He is, and He will always be our one and only.

To love God should come as naturally to us as breathing, but we are not easily falling in love with Him. We fear Him, and where there is fear, there cannot be love. Why fear the one who loves us so much that He gave us the greatest gift of human body? Why fear the one who enables us to see, hear, taste, touch and smell? Why be afraid of the one who gives us a mind to think with? Why be distant from Him who is so near that He lives inside of us?

Our fear of God stems from the fact that He is the Almighty. We find it difficult, even impossible, to relate to the Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent Lord. This is why we need to bring Him to our level. He is so great that He willingly comes down to our level. He willingly becomes a child for us. He is so loving that He willingly becomes a friend and beloved to us. Respond to that love by accepting Him as such.

Do not fear Him, Love Him.

Take a Walk

If you are looking for a perfect exercise, look no

further. Just walk. Walking is the best exercise and much more. There is no need for any gadget or equipment. It can be done anywhere by people of all ages. Over the years I have experienced many benefits from the simple act of walking, and have become an ardent devotee.

Walking exercises every part of the body. It is low impact; easier on the knees than jogging and running. You can walk fast, slow or retain a medium pace. But walking is no sissy either. If you wish to take it to the next step, you can attach weights to your ankles or hold them in your hands.

They who walk soon discover that this pleasurable exercise clears the head and defogs the brain. Do you have a problem? Go for a walk. Feeling down? Take a walk in the park. You will calm down considerably and the problem will not seem so serious. Not only this, the solution starts becoming obvious.

Walking is never boring. There is so much to think of and observe. But if you get bored, take your iPhone or iPod along. Put a spring in your walk by simultaneously listening to your favorite music. Enjoy your walk. And if you wish to hold a meaningful conversation with a person, go for a walk together in a natural setting.

Walking has been given more respect than other



exercises. Nik Wallenda 'walked' across Niagara Falls a few days ago. He did not run or jog. No. He walked. If you do not like a job or a situation, you never jog or swim away. You 'walk'. To understand the other guy, you need to 'walk' in his shoes. No need to sprint. You just walk in his shoes.

So.....take a walk....but please take your own shoes!



Ekal Foundation Awarded Gandhi Peace Prize

By Prakash Waghmare

Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation (EVF, Ekal), the largest global organization dedicated to integrated village development in rural India, was recently honored with the most prestigious national award in India for social work. On February 26, Ekal Abhiyan Trust (Ekal's umbrella Organization) was bestowed with International Gandhi Peace Prize 2017 for its contribution to education for rural and tribal children in remote areas pan - India, Rural Empowerment, and Gender and Social Equality.



★ Sri M. Jain receiving >
Gandhi Peace Prize
from President Sri
Ram Nath Kovind. In
the background Sri
Narendra Modi
★ Standees From Left -
4th Renu Gupta, 5th Y
Dr. Sudha Parikh
★ Shyamji Gupta
Getting 'Goyal Peace
Prize' <



This prize is conferred by the Government of India under the Chairmanship of Hon. Prime Minister, Chief Justice, leader of the largest opposition party and many others. The ceremony took place at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi and was

graced by the Hon. President of India, Ram Nath Kovind as well as Hon. Prime Minister Modi. M.L. Jain, a senior trustee of Ekal Abhiyan, received the award on behalf of Ekal from the President. This unique Honor carries a grant of Rs 1 Crore, a Citation and a Plaque to commemorate the distinction. This prize was instituted in 1995 on 125th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi to highlight his concept of 'Gram Swaraj Model'. In his laudatory message to Ekal, PM Modi commended Ekal's efforts to provide educational opportunity to children in tribal areas and rural empowerment.

Currently, EVF has been supporting 82,000 Ekal-schools across rural-tribal pockets of India and grooming almost 2.2 million children - more than half of which are girls. Ekal is empowering village folks, not only through adult education classes related to healthcare and environmental-issues, but also by preparing them for cottage-industries with skill-development training. At this year's Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Varanasi (India), Ekal Founder in Australia - Nihal Singh Agar - was honored with Pravasi Bharatiya Sanman Award by Hon. President Ram Nath Kovind. Nihal Singh-ji has also been a recipient of prestigious Order of Australia Award in 2015. During Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Ekal's Renu Gupta, who had

been a Board Member & Chairperson of Ekal-USA and Dr Sudha Parikh, who had been ardent supporter of Ekal Foundation received 'She The Change - Nari Udyami Award' for their exemplary service to the community. The honor was given by Beti Shiksha Foundation at an event presided over by the Governor of Uttarakhand, and also on March 1st, EVF Founding Member, Ma. Shyamji Gupta was felicitated by Kurukshetra

University with Goyal Peace Prize for spreading education in remote areas (of India). It must also be noted that Ekal serves people irrespective of caste, creed, religion and regions, and has presence even in conflict-ridden patches.

In the past, Ekal had been the recipient of several distinguished awards for its transparency of administration and innovativeness in its operations. One of the outstanding awards among them is the Hewlett Packard & India Today Trailblazer Award for its digital initiative for the villages. Ekal's progress and its innovative model have astonished not only the communities and donors alike, but also the entrepreneurs and social power-that-be. Last year, PM Modi gave a goal to Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation to establish 100,000 schools by year 2022 - the 75th Year Celebration of India's Independence. The way Ekal is rapidly marching, it is likely to reach this target way ahead of time in year 2020. For more information and to support EVF, please reach out to www.ekal.org ◆◆◆

VHPA - Executive Board (EB)

Samskar - Values

VP, Youth Programs	TBD	
Director, Bal Vihar	Manju Tiwari	msrtiwari@gmail.com
Director, Camps/Retreats	TBD	
Director, Youth Conferences	TBD	
Coordinator, Coalition of Hindu Youth(CHY)	Samir Asthana	samir.a@asthanalaw.net
	Preya Dave	preyadave@gmail.com

Prachar: Interfaith, Community & Government Relations

VP, Interfaith, Community & Government Relations	Sant Gupta	santguptava@gmail.com
Director, Newsletter & Monographs	Dr. Surendra Pandey	pandeysn@yahoo.com
Hindu Chaplaincy	Shama Mehta	shama.mehta7@gmail.com
Calendar & Government Relations	Sandip Shah	shahsanjay@hotmail.com

Prachar - Awareness, Media, Public Relations

VP, Awareness, Media, Public Relations	Dr. Ajay Shah	shahajay@gmail.com
Director, PR & Media	Utsav Chakrabarty	utsavc@gmail.com
Coordinator, PR & Media	Monik Mehra	monikmehra@aol.com
Coordinator, PR & Media	Nirav Patel	nirav440@yahoo.com
Director, American Hindus Against Defamation (AHAD)	Dr. Ajay Shah	shahajay@gmail.com

Prachar - Publications

VP, Publications	Shyam Tiwari	srtiwari@hotmail.com
------------------	--------------	----------------------

Sampark - Network

VP, Networking	Sanjay Kaul	sanjaykaul@hotmail.com
Director, Inter Organizations Communication	Dr. Umesh Shukla	umeshshukla123@gmail.com
Convener, Hindu Mandir Executives Conference (HMEC)	Dr. Vipul Patel	patelvipulk@gmail.com
Director, Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference (HMPC)	Sant Gupta (Acting)	santguptava@gmail.com
Director, Hindu American Vanaprasthi Network (HAVAN)	Vinod Gupta	vinodgupta2005@yahoo.com
Co-Director, Hindu American Vanaprasthi Network (HAVAN)	Kumar Dave	kdave@sbcglobal.net
Co-Director, Hindu American Vanaprasthi Network (HAVAN)	Dr. Chandra Reddy	gavvac@aol.com
Director, HWN (Hindu Women's Network)	Kusum Khurana	kusum30068@yahoo.com
Advisor, HAVAN	Arvind Patel	patelvipulk@gmail.com

Seva - Service

VP, Seva	Renu Gupta	renurajvanshigupta@gmail.com
Director, Support A Child (SAC)	Jayant Daftardar	daftardarj@yahoo.com
Director, Seva in America (SIA)	Mani Keeran	manikeeran@gmail.com
Director, Disaster Relief	TBD	
Advisor, Seva	Girish Gandhi	karnavati45@gmail.com

Finance

VP, Finance	Vimal Sodhani	vimalsodhani@yahoo.com
Treasurer (Advisor)	Jayesh Mehta	jayesh17@hotmail.com
Co-Treasurer	Anit Gupta	anitgupta@gmail.com
Co-Treasurer	Vasav Mehta	vasavmehta@gmail.com

Infrastructure & Organizational Functions

Coordinator, Training and Document Repository	Rakesh Kansara	rakeshkansara@yahoo.com
Co-Coordinator, Training and Document Repository	Toral Mehta	trexmehta@gmail.com
Co-Coordinator, Training and Document Repository	Geetika Tandon	plum@minutemanpress.com
Director, Technology	TBD	
Director, Membership	Raju Patel, TBD	purnayog108@gmail.com
Director, Office Matters	Gaurang Vaishnav	vicharak@gmail.com
Election Officer - Nomination	Nikhil Buch	nikhilbuch@yahoo.com
Election Officer	Dinesh Modh	nadi715@gmail.com
Joint General Secretary	Amitabh Mittal	amittal9@gmail.com
Joint General Secretary	Tejal Shah	tshahnj@hotmail.com
Organizing Secretary (NE)	Acting Sanjay Kaul	
Organizing Secretary (MW)	Sanjay Shah	shahsanjay@hotmail.com
Organizing Secretary (SE&S)	Sneha Mehta	snehajimehta@gmail.com
Organizing Secretary (WC)	TBD	
General Secretary	Sanjay Mehta	mehtassm@gmail.com
President	Dr. Abhaya Asthana	abhayaji@gmail.com
Advisory Board Chairperson	Jyotish Parekh	jporekh@sbcglobal.net



Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, Inc.
(World Hindu Council of America)

National Office: P. O. Box 2009, Natick 01760 Tax ID# 51-0156325
Tel: 732-744-0851 Email: office@vhp-america.org Tax ID# 51-0156325

VHPA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

(Fields marked with * cannot be left blank)

Salutation _____ *First Name _____ M.I. _____ *Last Name _____

Spouse's Name: _____ *Street/P. O. Box No.: _____

*City: _____ *State _____ *Zip Code _____

*Home Telephone: _____ *Email Address: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Work Telephone: _____

*Age Group 18-35 ☐ 36-50 ☐ 51-65 ☐ 65+ ☐ (Minimum age for becoming a member is 18 years)

Membership Desired: (select one)

- ☐ Patron \$1000 ☐ Life Membership \$500
☐ Primary Membership, Five years \$100 ☐ Primary Membership, Three years \$70
☐ Primary Membership, One year \$25

Please accept my Additional Contribution of \$ _____ for

- ☐ General Use ☐ Seva in USA ☐ Seva in Bharat ☐ Support A child
☐ Youth Development Programs ☐ Publications ☐ Media Outreach and PR
☐ Liaison with Hindu Mandirs & Hindu Institutions ☐ Hindu Awareness Yatra

I would like to be part of the mission to sustain and strengthen Hindu Dharma and traditions.
I believe in, practice and/or respect the spiritual and religious principles and practices having roots in Bharat (India).

Signature _____

Date _____

Check No. _____ (Check Payable to VHPA) OR Charge it to a credit card

(Name and address must match with that on the credit card, for using the credit card.)

Credit Card Name: ☐ VISA ☐ MASTER CARD ☐ DISCOVER

Credit Card Number

Month Year

Expiration Date

Security Code

Signature _____

Date _____

Mail to: VHPA, PO Box 441505, Houston, TX 77244-1505 Contact Tel.: 732-744-0851

P. O. Box 2009, Natick 01760

732-744-0851

OR

Become member using your credit card on our website: www.vhp-america.org

Institutional Membership is available; First year dues are \$201 (\$90 Initiation fee + \$111 membership).

Call 732-744-0851 or email to office@vhp-america.org for application form and more information.

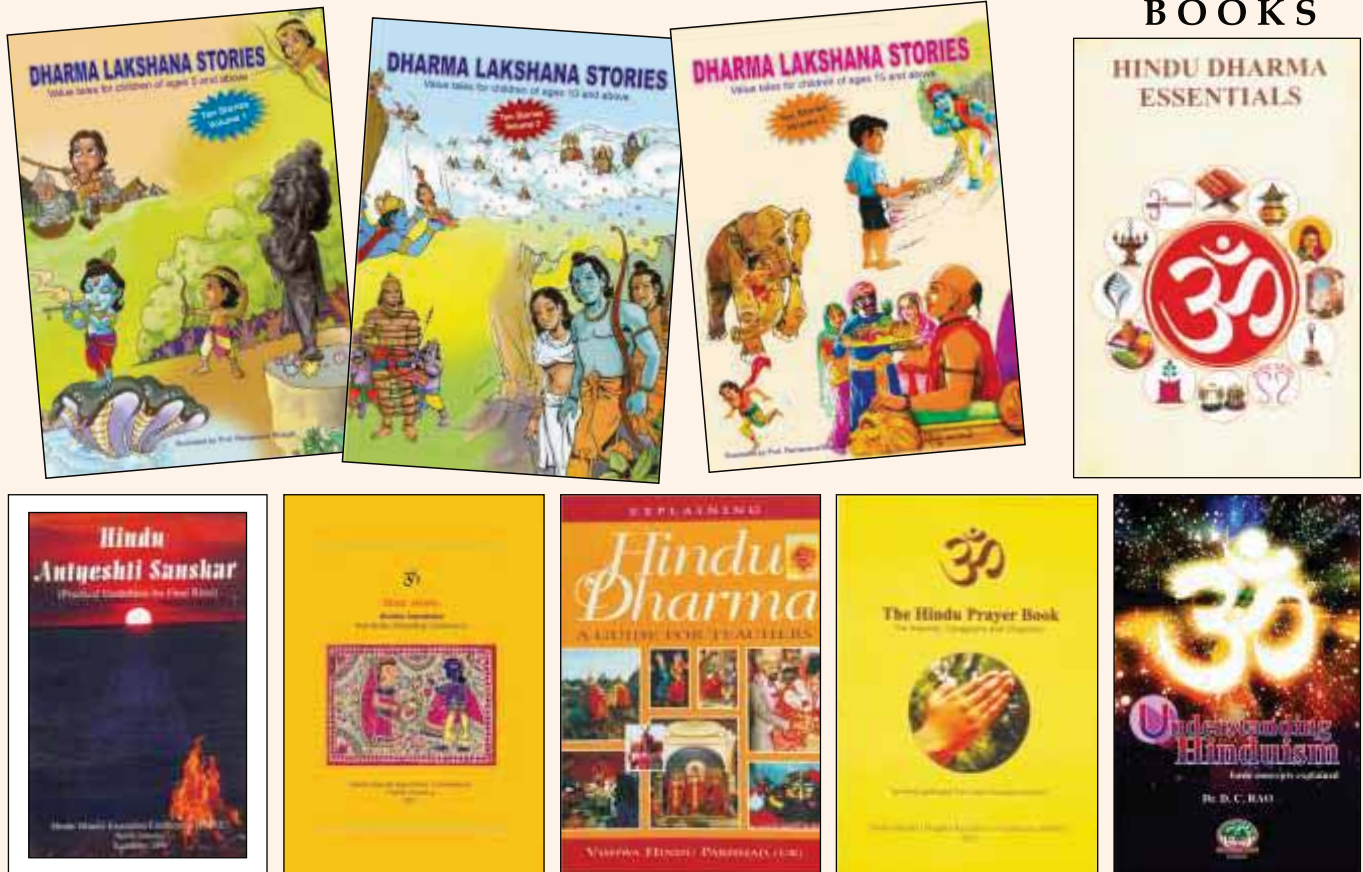
ॐ असतो मा सद् गमय । तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय । मृत्योर्माऽमृतम् गमय ।।

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

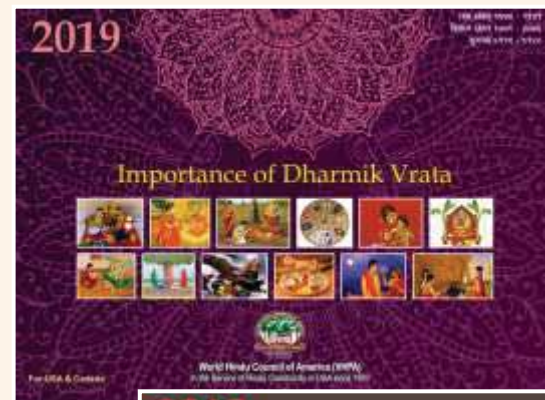
ॐ शांतिः शांतिः शांतिः

OUR PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS



Hindu Vishwa - a quarterly magazine



C
A
L
E
N
D
A
R



Available at:

World Hindu Council of America (VHPA)

National Office: P. O. Box 2009, Natick, MA 01760

Tel.: 732-744-0851

Email : office@vhp-america.org

Web : www.vhp-america.org



SUPPORT A CHILD (SAC)



A Way to Serve & Connect to Bharat \$250/year gift will provide:

Education | Lodging | Medical Care | Boarding | Samskara to a child

Many are waiting for your support | Internship program for students from USA



Send Donation to

VHP of America (SAC), P. O. Box 441505, Houston, TX 77244-1505

Email : renurajvanshigupta@gmail.com | Web : www.isupportchild.org | Phone : 513-860-1151

Build the life of underprivileged children of Bharat

An Educational Project of World Hindu Council of America (VHPA)