



WORLD HINDU COUNCIL OF AMERICA (VHPA)

National Headquarter:
P. O. Box 441505,
Houston, TX 77244-1505

www.vhp-america.org

Tel.: (281)496-5676
office@vhp-america.org

Volume XXXXVI

No. 4

October-December 2016

सर्वद्वारेषु देहेऽस्मिन् प्रकाश उपजायते ।
ज्ञानं यदा तदा विद्याद्विवृद्धं सत्त्वमित्युत ।।

श्रीमद् भगवद् गीता १४-११

sarva-dvaresu dahesmin prakasa upjayate
Jnanam yada tada vidyad vivrddham sattvam ityuta

Shri Mad Bhagavad Gita 14-11

When through the perceptual senses of the body
illuminating knowledge manifests; know that certainly the
mode of goodness predominates



To all the readers of Hindu Vishwa,

*I am privileged to be your Editor in the USA. In the shortest introduction I can provide, my name is **Rajranee Jaipershad, aka Ronica**. I was born and raised as a Hindu in Guyana, South America; migrated to Canada in 1973, where I studied for a degree in Computer Science at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario; and graduated in 1978. I worked at IBM Canada from 1974 till 1994 and then migrated to Florida where I now reside.*



I have worked with several IT firms in the USA, owned IT and Media businesses in the past, and served in several local hindu/indian organizations in Canada and Tampa. I am a co-founder of the Indo-Caribbean Golden Age Association in Toronto, an organization designed to provide seniors an opportunity to meet up, learn from each other, and spend quality social time with each other, at least once a month. By interacting with these seniors over two decades ago, and experiencing all their growing pains and problems associated with 'old age', or growing old, I vowed that I would do everything possible to become and always be a healthy senior citizen. I look forward to contributing to the Hindu Vishwa and hope that I can continue to enhance our beliefs in Hinduism.

Editorial Team

Managing Editor:	Shyam Tiwari	srtiwari@hotmail.com
Editor:	Ronica (Rajranee) Jaipershad	ronica@ronica.com
Copy Editor:	Sabitha Venugopal	sabitha8081@gmail.com
Assistant Editor:	Rachna Gupta	rgupta242@yahoo.com
Advisors:	Dr. Abhay Asthana	abhayaji@gmail.com
	Dr. Shardananda	prayagraj1952@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 at 770.962.2669 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 2016 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.

Take a Look Inside ...

COVER STORY

SAC Fundraising Across US Garners Overwhelming Support

P-18



On Aging Healthily

P-3

चीन में निर्मित (हिंदी कविता)

P-21



Vibrant Cincinnati Chapter's 25 Year Journey

P-4

Seva in America (SIA) Bridging Income Disparity with Education

P-22

Plan to Preserve and Promote Sanskrit

P-24

Role of Women in Society III: Women in the West

P-25



Spiritual Meaning behind the Srimad Bhagavatam Stories- Part II

P-6



My Visit to Magnificent Temples in Tamil Nadu

P-28

Challenging Western Universalism

P-10

Religious Evolution in 21st Century

P-32

Paths of Yoga

P-12

Madhya Pradesh Houses World's Oldest Rock Art

P-33

New Dawn at "Ekal Vidyalaya"

P-34



Eleventh Annual HMEC Held in Atlanta

P-14

Make Friends with the Present

P-36

Now, Yoga becomes Part of Nursing Curriculum

P-38

On Aging Healthily

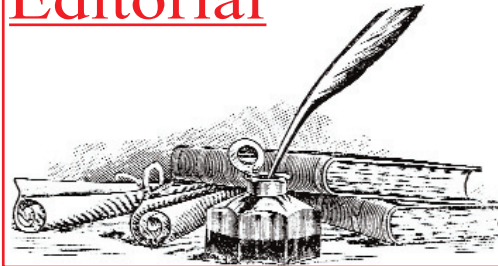
We all know "how time flies"! And, we also become so stressed out due to 'lack of time', that we sometimes neglect to take care of ourselves. Well, it doesn't have to be so!

You see, knowing fully well that I mustn't generalize, I have learnt that our individual quality of life is impacted by our own actions, and inactions (albeit, not ignoring destiny/karma) or, hereditary issues which may be unavoidable. These days, our daily routines can involve long hours of sitting, standing, or lying, which in itself, leads to various physical, mental and other health issues. I am no health expert, and I believe that destiny will ultimately prevail. But, I have learnt that if we neglect to care for our bodies, we risk the chance of severe, and even fatal bodily malfunctions, which can shorten our lifespan. So, no matter how old or young you are, or how busy you might be, unless health and other issues prevent you, make time to frequently stretch, move your body, eat sensibly, and rest/relax.

I find that as I grow older, I have an innate passion to age healthily, live as long as possible, and help everyone else do the same. So, to help you, I am sharing a few tips below, from my experiences and lifestyle changes, which has helped me to stay healthy and active. This involves eating healthy, focused breathing, walking, playing music, and doing yoga and other light exercises daily.

1: Eat Healthy: Yoga has taught me that food and drinks at room temperature are the best. Too cold or too hot quickly changes the temperature of your body and could cause adverse effects. I limit my intake of hot and cold drinks. Weight loss experts advise that we follow a balanced diet, and eat our heaviest meal during the day, and not just before going to bed. This

Editorial



allows the body to burn excess calories and you to maintain a steady weight. To be overweight can also be unhealthy. To be overweight and inactive is even worse.

2: Breathe Deep: The body needs oxygen to survive. Reserve 10-15 minutes each day for deep breathing. We are so

busy, that we rarely pay attention to our breathing. Air fuels our lungs and ultimately, every organ of our body. No matter how young or old you are, deep breathing via the nose is important and improves the flow of oxygen through your body. Isn't it amazing that we can survive hours, days without food, but only minutes without air?

3: Exercise in moderation: It has been proven that yoga and/or stretches at least once, each day for at least 10 minutes, will also add positive benefits to your overall health. Have you noticed that when you get off your bed in the mornings, your joints are sometimes 'stiff'? You can ease this by slow movement/walking and, as your body begins to 'move itself', engage in a few stretches. Surya Namaskar or variations to suit your ability, is a great way to breathe and stretch your body. A 10-15 minutes stroll daily, will also help to awaken and loosen your joints. Start a friends' group and walk/exercise!

To maintain a healthy body requires work. If you are not used to doing exercises or yoga, start by taking five to ten minutes, and do mild focused breathing, stretches, and, even meditation, whether it be sitting, standing or lying. As time goes by, with daily practice, your abilities will improve.

Set aside quiet time daily! Aim for a healthy life! Remember, everything in moderation. "Age is just a number"! **Good Health to All!**

PS: If you are under a Doctor's care, please consult your Doctor prior to following any suggestions above.



Vibrant Cincinnati Chapter's 25 Year Journey

A small seed sown 25 years ago to promote the Hindu values and culture in Cincinnati has flourished and grown up into what we know today as the VHPA Cincinnati chapter. Despite various ups and downs, many a times its face changed, priorities changed but the chapter moved forward surely, and it is stronger than before.

In first few years, the progress was very slow. It stayed at that stage for quite some time, but from 1997 onward it started growing. Our Balvihar classes had almost 60-65 students at some point. Class for children from older age group (11-16 years) was known as Hindu mind study group and younger children's class (5-11 years) was known as Balvihar. I am very proud to say that the kids who grew in this surrounding, are all doing very well today. This is the true success of our hard work.

After watching this progress, other children also joined. Now the class has changed and is a very

energetic youth group. They meet twice a month on Saturday morning and do all the fun activities.

Our support to Ekal program is very strong ever since we started bringing the music program. For last few years, our chapter has been sponsoring around 200-250 schools per year. It is a great cause and people are coming forward to help. It is very important to note that some schools have been sponsored by our children who grew up in this group.

We also have taken a calendar project from last year. Some of the children are taking interest in researching and writing the information in it. It's a very proud moment for us.

Cincinnati chapter children's camp is going very well with the help of Hindu Temple of Greater Cincinnati. About 60-65 children attend this camp. They learn Surya Namaskar and meditation, how to perform Ganesh Puja, the importance of doing Puja and so on. They also learn some shlokas and bhajans with the meaning. For fun



they do some art activity as well as some games and storytelling.

"Support a Child" initiative is taking its roots now. For the first time after many years, we have sponsored 62 children from our chapter. We had a great program from Aditi Bhagwat, Sushant Jadhav and Harshada Jambekar. It was beautiful dance drama depicting the story of Radha, Krishna and Meera. We arranged this dance program with the help of Hindu Women's Network.

Chapter started Hindu Women's Network about three years ago with a mission to cultivate Hindu women's three great abilities - "Shakti, Seva and Sadhana" for empowering self and others, social contribution and spiritual enlightenment.

The goals of the Hindu Women's Network are:

1. Invoke मातृशक्ति (Matru-Shakti) that resides in women for instilling self esteem and self respect.
2. Create Seva Bhavna and offer support to women and family in need.
3. Cultivate Hindu values and wisdom in daily living.
4. Empower each other with positive purpose by sharing knowledge and expertise.
5. Balance our day today life with today's modern women with work, home and children activities.

In three years since its inception, we have organized 10 seminars. About 35/40 women plus volunteers attend these seminars. More and more women are willing and coming forward to help.

As seva, some of the volunteers teach twice a week to Nepali and Bhutani children. It is being done on an on-going basis for more than five years. The children get help with their school homework as well as English, Math, Science and we also teach them cleanliness.

The Cincinnati chapter has monthly meeting every fourth Friday of the month. Potluck dinner makes it easy. There is no pressure on anyone. It brings us closer and develops deeper bonding with each other. When new people come in, they feel welcome and want to stay here. Everyone is here for a similar objective of preserving and nurturing Hindu values.

Renu and Arun Gupta sowed the seed of this Chapter almost 25 years ago, and today they can definitely say this line by Majhrooh Sultanpuri.

Main akela hi chala tha janib-e-manzil magar,

Log saath aate gaye aur karwaan banta gaya

मैं अकेला ही चला था जानिब-ए-मंजिल मगर,

लोग साथ आते गये और कारवां बनता गया

Seva in America (SIA)



On November 13th, VHPA along with HSS served hot home cooked meals to homeless in Berkeley, CA and distributed clothes and essential supplies. Please let us know if any chapter would like to do this type of Seva in America.

Atlanta Chapter volunteers distributed blankets to homeless people in the city of Atlanta on Thanksgiving day.

On behalf of VHPA Atlanta Chapter, these murtis were donated to Bhutanese temple by Ragu and Sabitha Ji.



Spiritual Meaning behind the **Srimad Bhagavatam** Stories- Part II

By Umesh Gulati, Ph.D.

Sri Krishna was about 12 or 13 years of age; He was then much younger than many of the cowherd boys and girls. He was also exceptionally charming, and appealed to the heart of every cowherd girl. Everyone was mad after Him. There was a shrine of goddess Katyani in their beautiful village, who was celebrated for her infinite grace, and mercy toward her devotees. On one auspicious day, these cowherd girls went to the shrine and each of them inwardly prayed to the goddess Katyani to have the charming son of Nanda as her husband, and took the vow of fasting that whole day before her, and worshipping her with flowers and offerings.

In the evening, after fulfilling their vow, they all came in a group to the Yamuna River to refresh

themselves in its cool and limpid water. So, with that intention, they took off their clothes, kept them upon the bank, and went into the water. They bathed and played in the water a while, and in the darkness of twilight before the sunset, they came out of the water and went to get their clothes. But alas, their clothes were nowhere to be found. They looked here and there until one of them saw that her beloved for whom she had fasted the whole day had taken all their clothes and was now sitting on the branch of a tree!

In shame all the cowherd girls quickly rushed back to the river and begged Sri Krishna to return their clothes. They told him that the night was approaching and they didn't want to be delayed lest elders should rebuke them for being out for so long. At this the great charmer of the cowherd girls replied:

"I know, O girls, why you have fasted today, for nothing can be hidden from my view; and to test your love toward me I have done this unseemly deed, for which I hope, you will forgive me. It is not mere playfulness that has induced me to take your clothes away from you, but an intense desire to teach you what it is to love. Love is complete self-forgetfulness. A lover should be so much filled with his or her beloved, that he or she should not have any other idea in his or her mind. How can the fear of shame, or scandal find any place in such a lover? Love is fully unselfish, and therefore has nothing to do with carnality. I hope that you may be blessed with such a divine love toward Me."

What Sri Krishna says above about true love, makes it clear that so long as we associate ourselves with our own self, our body (male or female), our name, caste, or race, etc., true love remains elusive from us. In true love, fear and shame also have no place; in such a love there is no sense of "I" and "mine." Where there is fear, shame, selfishness, pride, and so forth, there is no love but mere talk.

There is another way of looking at what Sri Krishna did. It is a custom in India that the final act of



becoming a monk requires that a person enter a river or lake, leaving his clothes behind. When he comes out, his clothes are gone, and his guru gives him new *geruva* or yellow cloth. The removal of the person's old clothes symbolizes taking away the person's superimpositions, or *Upadhis*, in Sanskrit. Then giving him the new yellow cloth indicates his renunciation of this world and joining with the Lord. That is what Sri Krishna also did when He took away the cowherd girls' clothes.

When Sri Krishna played on His flute, the cowherd girls forgot everything; unconscious even of their own bodies, they ran to Him drawn by His great love. Once Krishna, to test their devotion to Him, said, "O you pure ones, your duties must be first to your husbands and children. Go back to your homes and live in their service. You need not come to Me. For if you only meditate on Me you will gain salvation." But the shepherd girls replied, "O you cruel lover, we desire to serve only you. You know the scriptural truths, and you do advise us to serve our husbands and children. So let it be: we shall abide by your teaching. Since you are in all, by serving them we shall serve you also."

There upon Sri Krishna, who in the words of sage Shuka, is Aptakamah and Atmaramah, i.e., has no want, or is perfect, and finds sole enjoyment in His self alone, divided himself into as many Krishnas as there were cowherd girls, and danced and played with them. Each girl felt the divine presence and love of Sri Krishna. Each felt that she alone was the most blessed. Each one of them felt the love for Sri Krishna to be so self-absorbing that she felt herself one with Him. Nay, knew herself to be Krishna.

This incident in Sri Krishna's life goes by the name of Raaslila. There are critics who find a great flaw in Sri Krishna's character during this portion of His life. But they commit a great mistake in assuming that He was like one of us, and classify Him as human. On the other hand, His devotees believe that the cowherds of Vrindabana were the most blessed people and wish they were one of them. Truly has it been said that those who meditate on the divine love of Sri Krishna, and upon the sweet relationship between him and the cowherd girls, become free from lust and sensuality, and immortal.

As an example, we wish to refer to one incident





from the life of Meerabai, one of the greatest saints of the fifteenth century Rajasthan. We believe that the location of this happening was in Vrindabana also. Meerabai was a princess but had abandoned her court life to seek the company of saints. One day she wanted to see Sannyasi Sanatana Goswami, a disciple of Sri Chaitanya. But the Goswami refused to receive her because she was a woman. Her reply brought the Goswami humbly to her feet.

"Tell the master," she said, "that I did not know there was any Male in the universe save God (Sri Krishna). Are we not females before Him?" (This is a scriptural conception of the Lord as the only Positive Creative Principle, or Purusha, His creation being nothing but a passive Maya, or prakriti). Besides, if a true devotee of Sri Krishna meditates on Sri Krishna and the sweet relationship between Him and the cowherd girls of Sri Brindabana, sensuality cannot even enter his or her mind or thought.

Swami Vivekananda, after returning from the West in 1893, where he had gone to attend the World's Parliament of Religions, dittoed the sentiments and rationale of what Meerabai had said to Sanatana Goswami.

"Ah, the most marvelous passage of his life, the most difficult to understand, which none ought to attempt to understand until he has become perfectly chaste and pure-that most marvelous expansion of love, allegorized and expressed in that beautiful play at Vrindaban, which none can comprehend but he who has become mad with, and drunk deep of the cup of love! Who can understand the throes of the love of the Gopis-the shepherd girls-the very ideal of love, love that wants nothing, love that even does not care for heaven, love that does not care for anything in this world or in the world to come? ..."

"The historian who records this marvelous love of the Gopis is one who was born pure, the eternally pure Shuka, the son of Vyasa. So long as there is selfishness in the heart, so long is love of God impossible; it is nothing but shop-keeping. ..."

"Oh for one kiss of those lips! Oh whom you have kissed-his thirst for Thee increases forever, all sorrows vanish, and he forgets love for everything else but for Thee and Thee alone. Ay, forget first the love of gold, and name and fame, and for this little trumpery world of ours. Then, only then, will you understand the love of the Gopis, too holy to be attempted without giving up everything, too sacred to be understood until the soul has become perfectly pure. People with ideas of sex, and of money, and fame, bubbling up every

minute in their hearts, daring to criticize or interpret the love of the Gopis!"

"That is the very essence of the Krishna incarnation. Even the Gita, the great philosophy itself, does not compare with that madness. For, in the Gita the disciple is taught slowly how to walk towards the goal. But, there is the very ecstasy of enjoyment, the drunkenness of love, where disciples and teachers and teachings and books, and even the ideas of fear of God and heaven-all three have become one. Everything else has been thrown away. What remains is the madness of love. It is forgetfulness of everything, and the lover sees nothing in the world except that Krishna, and Krishna alone, when the face of every being has become a Krishna, and his own face looks like Krishna, and when his own soul has become tinged with the Krishna color. ... That was the great Krishna!

(Cf. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, v.3, 257-59). "

We love to read again and again Swamiji's poetical description of the divine love between the human soul and the Soul of our souls that Sri Krishna is, and wonder if we would ever be able to cultivate such madness and yearning for the love of God. For that is the basic condition of realizing Him and having His vision. Even Swamiji himself in the beginning was critical about this kind of love, and in fact, doubted the historicity of this divine play; he even expressed his doubts to Sri Ramakrishna during one of his visits to the Master. Sri Ramakrishna said in reply, "Very well, let us take for granted that there was never any one called Radha and that some loving Sadhaka [devotee] had an imaginary conception of Radha's personality. But while picturing that character, the Sadhaka, you must admit, had to lose himself completely in Radha's mood, and thus to become Radha. It is thus true that the play at Vrindabana was thus enacted in the outer world also." (Cf. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, 259.)

Of course during the course of his association with Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda had been completely transformed, from being an agnostic to a saint. But first we would like the readers to distinguish between what is called a "fact" and what is "real." If a thing is not historical or not a fact, it can still be real, depending on the capacity of the writer and director of the play to direct the performers what and how to say. That is what Sri Ramakrishna meant when he said that one has to develop a Radha's mood to understand the divine pangs of love of the gopis.

Finally, to conclude the series of postings on



Srimad Bhagavatam, I would inform the reader of the way Sri Ramakrishna himself realized not just God, but the vision of Sri Krishna Himself. I'm sure the reader wouldn't even believe that that is possible; for no one but Radha alone if she reincarnates can achieve that feat. But that is exactly what happened.

The Vaishnava scholars have identified "five moods"; manifestation of any one of these is necessary to realize God. They are: Santa (placid attitude), Dasya (a servant's attitude), Sakhya (comradely attitude), Vatsalya (parental attitude), and Madhur (conjugal attitude). Sri Ramakrishna picked the last mood to experience the vision of Sri Krishna. Obviously, one can say that while it may be somewhat possible for a woman to have that kind of mood to realize her male Ideal, Sri Krishna, as the mid-seventeen century Indian woman by the name of Aandaal did, it would be utterly impossible for Sri Ramakrishna to do so. But the doubters forget that Sri Ramakrishna was an unusual person.

Sri Ramakrishna's renunciation of lust, greed, shame, fear, and aversion was no less than Buddha's or Shankara's, or of any other saints for that matter. Besides, he was born actor to create reality from imaginary. Being equipped with his natural gifts just mentioned, he asked his disciple and proprietor of the Dakshineswar temple complex, Mathur Babu, to get him the necessary objects to create the madhur-mood. Accordingly, Mathur Babu was glad to adore the Master with a precious saari, skirt, a gauze scarf and a bodice. He also decked him with a wig of long hair and set of gold ornaments. What we think we become! Dressed and adorned this way, the Master became so intensely identified with the mood of Krishna's lovelorn women votaries of Braja, that his male consciousness totally disappeared from him. His thoughts, words and movements began to resemble a woman's in every respect. It is said that the Master was in that woman's attire for six months, with his mind absorbed in the feeling that he was the spiritual consort of God.

As the Master's awareness of God as husband became perfected and intensified, he experienced the grace of Sri Radha, the supreme Lady of Braja, and was finally blessed, shortly after with the holy vision of Sri Krishna, the embodiment of love. The Master himself said to Swami Saradananda, the author of Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master, that he was quite lost in the thought of Sri Krishna at that time, and sometimes regarded himself as Krishna, and regarded all beings as forms of Krishna. Once, he plucked a flower and

"came to us with his face beaming with delight and said, " The complexion of Sri Krishna, whom I used to see then (at the time of practicing the Madhur Bhava), was like this."

There is one more vision of Sri Ramakrishna worth recording. One day during the period when he was practicing the madhur-bhava, he was listening to a reading of the Bhagavata in front of the Vishnu temple. He went into ecstasy and had a vision of Sri Krishna. He saw that a beam of light like a cord came out of His feet and touched the book; from there it touched the Master's heart and remained simultaneously touching all the three of them for some time. From there arose a firm conviction in his mind that although the three, the scripture, the devotee and the divine Lord, appear as different entities, they are one and the same thing, the manifestation of the same reality. "The three-the Bhagavata (the scripture), the Bhakta (the devotee-himself) and the Bhagavan (the divine Lord)-are One and the One is the three," he used to say.

Sri Ramakrishna once said, "Sri Krishna is the Purusha, Shrimati (Radhika, the Divine consort of Krishna) is His Shakti, the Primal Power. What is the meaning of Yugal Murti, the conjugal images of Radha and Krishna? It is that Purusha and Prakriti are not different. Purusha cannot exist without Prakriti, and Prakriti cannot without Purusha. It is like fire and its power to burn; one cannot think of fire without its power to burn, and one cannot think of fire's power to burn without fire. Radha's complexion is golden; so Krishna wears yellow apparel. Krishna's complexion is blue, so Radha wears a blue dress; she also has decked herself with blue sapphires. In other words, there is inner and outer harmony between Purusha and Prakriti" (The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, 667). ■

About the Author

Umesh Gulati, Ph.D.,
Professor Emeritus

based in Durham, NC, is a Vedantist, and a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. He has regularly published articles in Vedanta Kesari from Chennai and Prabuddhabharata from Kolkata, and also in Vedanta magazine from England. Lately he also published articles in Marg magazine. After receiving Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Virginia in 1967, he joined East Carolina University in Greenville, NC the same year and retired in 1999.

Challenging Western Universalism

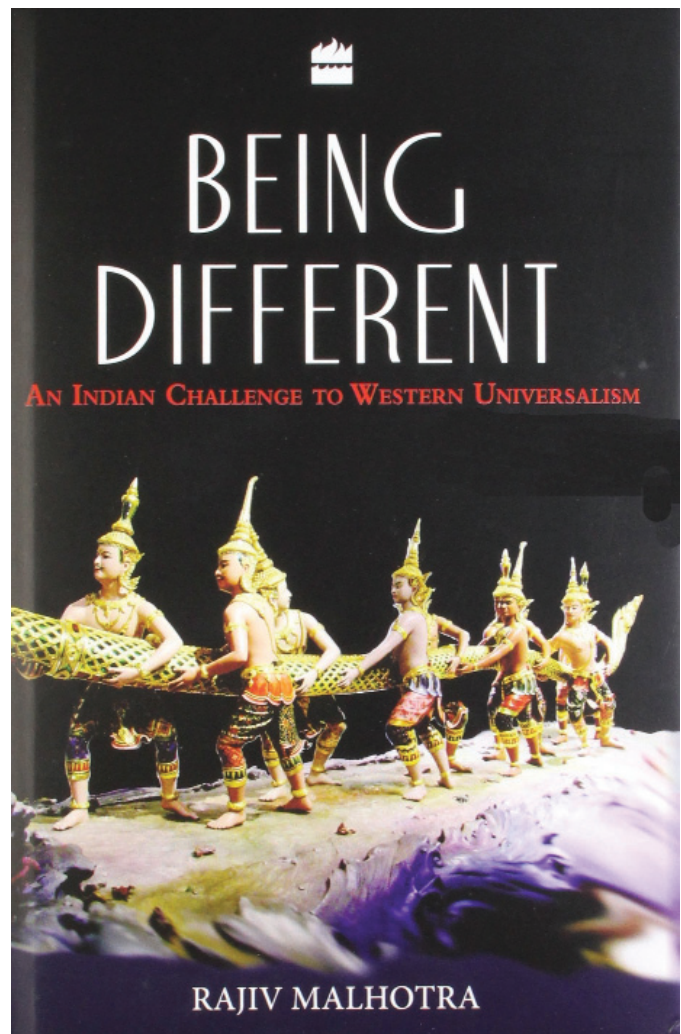
By Rajiv Malhotra

One of the most important objectives of my book *Being Different*, 'An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism' is to refute Western claims of universalism. According to these claims, the West is both the driver of history and the ultimate, desirable destination of the entire world. The West purportedly provides the ideal template to which all other civilizations and cultures must contort, be pruned, trimmed or reconfigured to fit, or else be eliminated or side-lined by some means.

Of course, universalism cannot be Western, Chinese, French or any other. That would only be a particular culture's perception and experience of the world. The phrase "Western Universalism" is an oxymoron and I use it to highlight the hubris of this mindset. Rather than view own culture as one that is the product of the unique history, geography, climate, myths, sacred literature, religion, empires and conflicts of ethnic groups, and tribes of the North-Western hemisphere, (a group that comprises less than 20% of humanity, and is shrinking), it assumes that its knowledge systems, epistemologies, history, myths and religions should be the norm for all of the world's peoples!

This mindset neglects the unique trajectories and lessons learnt by other civilizations which in turn have been affected by their own geographies, histories (in many cases dating far beyond Western history), religious and spiritual traditions. The unique experiences of different cultures are not always inter-changeable. Yet the West, so certain that the shape and direction of world history should lead to Western goals - be it salvation or secular progress - tends to superimpose own cultural paradigms, often through force, upon other cultures.

Ensnared thus in the driver's seat, with its undeniably ethnocentric blueprint of what the world



should look like, the Western collective ego has embarked on scores of missions - religious and secular (colonization), to bring about this Westernization. When such attempts collide with contrasting and contradictory worldviews, the response has been one of many tactics - acculturation, religious conversion, colonization, isolation, disparagement, genocide and appropriation.

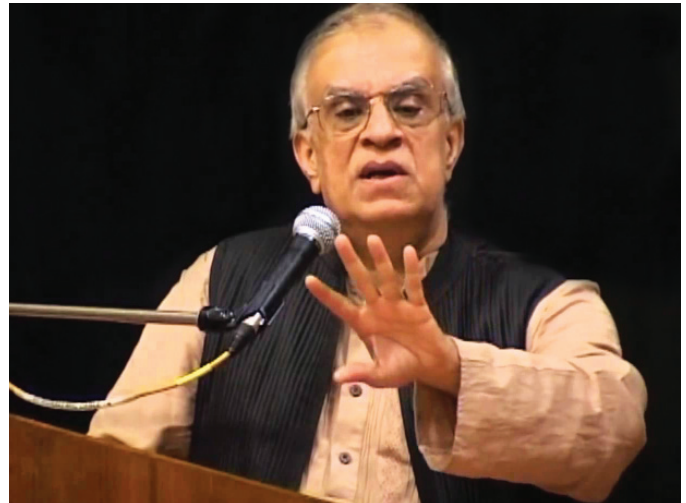
In *Being Different*, I challenge this Western penchant of universalizing its own norms.

I've explicated some key differences between the West and Indian civilization, and I offer that these differences, once acknowledged rather than obliterated, could bring new paradigms for solving the pressing issues of our time.

What matters most in this process is that Western identity must remain perpetually at the helm of human affairs, own grand narrative further strengthened at each encounter, and the rest of the world only the frontier for it to play out its manifest destiny. The cultural fruits of other civilizations are appropriated, seen as useful, destined to fit and enrich the western template, but the cultures themselves are left uprooted and barren, their coherence and fecundity shattered. When the unity of a culture is thus broken or select few parts taken, possibly refurbished and plugged into a Western taxonomy, that act is nothing short of systematic dispossession and an act of cultural genocide.

There are many reasons, beyond the scope of this write-up, which are further discussed at length in my book, for the grand claims made by the West to justify its pre-eminent place in the world. Both Hebraism (the Judeo-Christian heritage) and Hellenism (the Greek heritage), with their emphasis on duality and binary values, have contributed greatly to Western identity and supremacy. The search to define, fortify and aggrandize identities and legacies was also a result of the conflict and competition among rival European tribes and ethnicities. Until the relatively recent coalescing of all Europeans as "Westerners" (where the "rest" became the other), competition and enmity was fierce among groups such as the French, the Italians, the Germans etc., for cultural and civilizational clout. In fact, Hegel, the German thinker and philosopher who has had a far reaching impact on Western identity, did so through his attempts to initially construct an identity for the Germans, who had lost out in the pecking order to the French and Italians in the initial rounds of such nationalistic identity construction. He emerged as one of the most towering figures of European thought and developed a powerful and influential philosophy of history, which included the past, present and future of all civilizations represented in a single, linear template.

According to Hegel, there is a World Spirit (Weltgeist) that journeys through a series of stages until it reaches the highest form of self-realization. This spirit evolves from lower to higher forms as nations of the world, placing the various nations at different stages of evolution. He declared his template to be universal and on such a universal template, history has moved from East to West, with Europe as the penultimate end of universal history. Asia (Near-East) was the beginning and India, in his world view, had "no history" at all. According to Hegel, only the West had been endowed



with reason and is thus entitled to be in the driver's seat as part of God's plan, destined to be the central agent of world history.

A good deal of Western identity has been based on such racist and ethnocentric views, leading to later justifications of colonization and conversions. Hegelian views concerning India's "lack of history" are at the root of much of the past dismissal of India and they shape attitudes toward India even today. Hegel blinded the West to the parochialism of its supposed universals and consolidated the discourse on what was wrong about India. The degree to which Western scholarship has been influenced by his linear theory of history (including many Marxist and humanist accounts of history and the various philosophies built on such accounts) is truly amazing. Hegel's theory of history has led to liberal Western supremacy, which hides behind the notion of providing the "universals". These European Enlightenment presuppositions became embedded in academia, philosophy, social theories and even scientific methodologies. Later on, these influences formed Indology and haunt South Asian Studies today.

In *Being Different*, I challenge this Western penchant of universalizing its own norms. I've explicated some key differences between the West and Indian civilization, and I offer that these differences, once acknowledged rather than obliterated, could bring new paradigms for solving the pressing issues of our time. ■

Source: <http://rajivmalhotra.com/library/articles/challenging-western-universalism/>



Paths of Yoga

By Dr. D.C. Rao

The Sanskrit word Yoga is derived from the root yuj, similar to the word 'yoke.' In the spiritual context, yoga is that which helps one unite with Supreme Consciousness. The ultimate goal of spirituality in Hinduism is to become aware of the Divine presence everywhere, at all times, in oneself, in every other human being, and in the whole of creation. Hindus may seek to connect with the Divine as an all-pervasive Consciousness, Brahman, or as a presence that dwells within one's heart or as the Personality of Godhead. Recognizing that persons have varying spiritual understanding, physical and intellectual capacities and even interest in the Divine, Hindu scriptures offer a variety of spiritual paths or yogas to help all seekers progress toward this goal, each in their own way. A key component of all yoga is to transform the mind, making it clear and calm; the techniques vary among the different paths of yoga.

Karma Yoga: the Yoga of Action

Actions commonly reflect personal preferences, and are undertaken to seek personal gains or to benefit those to whom one is attached. Spiritual evolution requires that all actions, including speech and the thoughts that lead to actions, are unselfish and derived from a dedication to the common good. The path of Karma Yoga is about being engaged in purposeful action without any expectation of personal reward, here or in after-life, and achieving freedom from fear and sorrow. The components of this path are:

1. Doing one's duties willingly, cheerfully and with love. This helps overcome conflicts and reduces avoidable stress.
2. Surrender the fruit of actions to God. Recognize that the outcome of one's actions is determined by forces beyond one's control. Give God the credit for successful actions.
3. Do good because it is the right thing to do. Offer all actions as contributions to nature's cosmic flow presided over by God. Act as an instrument of God.
4. Acknowledge that the power to act is itself a gift from God and gratefully surrender all actions to God.

Raja Yoga: the Yoga of Meditation, the 'Royal Path'

Raja Yoga is the systematic practice of precise

techniques to become aware of one's internal energies, make the mind clear and calm, and know the Self. This path consists of eight steps.

1. Exercising specified disciplines in daily life.
2. Cultivating and refining internal awareness.
3. Physical postures to improve health and gain awareness of internal energy flows.
4. Breathing exercises to access the nervous system and bring clarity to the mind.
5. Turning the mind inward, away from the distracting influence of sense organs.
6. Making the mind one-pointed in concentration.
7. Focusing the mind in meditation.
8. Achieving Samadhi, a super-conscious state of mind that leads to intuitive wisdom and direct experience of the Self.

This path requires good health, discipline and a dedication to regular practice.

Jnana Yoga: Path of Knowledge, Vedanta

Practitioners of the path of knowledge strive to realize the Self by removing ignorance about our essential nature, our relation with the world around us, and the origin and destiny of the universe. The basic technique used on this path is seeking the Truth through deep intellectual enquiry and vigorous debate.

The first stage is the study of scripture, mainly the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Brahma Sutras, along with commentaries and expository texts by learned teachers.

The second stage is sustained reflection on the messages of these scriptures and efforts to resolve doubts about their meaning.

The third stage is use of meditation to fully internalize the distinction between Pure Consciousness, the eternal, all-pervasive, changeless and blissful Reality and all the rest that is ephemeral and the product of the mind.

The conclusions of Vedanta are fully accepted only when the statements in scriptures are found to be consistent with reason and the seeker's own direct experience. This path requires a high degree of intellectual rigor, the capacity for patient reflection, a burning desire for liberation and the ability to detach from sensory pleasures in order to concentrate on spiritual enquiry.



Bhakti Yoga: the Yoga of Devotion, Love of God

The essence of Bhakti Yoga is intense love of God, characterized by constant remembrance and an unconditional desire to serve God in both mortal and celestial realms. On this path, devotion is its own reward and the practitioner renounces all other desires, even the desire for moksha, liberation. All desires and emotions are directed toward God and the devotee loves God with as much intensity as others might love sense pleasures or worldly possessions. In brief, the devotee rests his/her mind and heart in God and consecrates all actions in service of God. The main steps in the path of devotion are:

1. Guard against bad habits that pollute the body and mind;
2. Seek the company of other devotees; listen to and sing about the glories of God;
3. Chant God's name, worship God and remember God incessantly to purify the mind;
4. Serve all beings with humility and in an attitude of submission to God's glory;
5. Cultivate an intimate relationship with God as a dear friend, as a child or as a lover;
6. Be open to God's grace by which alone one attains supreme devotion;

The scriptures urge devotees to go beyond mere ritual worship and stress the importance of serving others. The best devotee is one who sees God dwelling in oneself and in all beings; and all beings dwelling in oneself and in God.

Tantra: Esoteric, All-embracing Path

The central theme of Tantra is that the entire universe is one indivisible whole as a manifestation of the Divine Mother, the inseparable union of Pure Consciousness (Shiva) and primordial energy (Shakti); and that one who has pierced the secrets of the universe can attain all goals, both spiritual and material. The focal point of tantra is worship of the Divine Mother in all Her aspects, both creative and transformative. Declaring that each human being is a microcosm embodying the entire universe, tantric practitioners seek to master their own mind, senses and body as a means of knowing the universe. Tantrics see the Divine in and through every experience; and use every object and experience in the world as tools for spiritual growth.

Practitioners embrace a very wide variety of practices including the use of sacred sound, sacred designs, sacred gestures, sacred objects, gems, astrology, alchemy, ritual sacrifice, fire-offerings, prayer and meditation. Building on the techniques of Raja Yoga, advanced methods are used to mobilize the infinite

energy that dwells dormant within oneself. When these practices are employed for personal gain and transgress ethics and morality, they cause fear and revulsion. When the goal is spiritual, the path of tantra is systematic, comprehensive and effective.

The Yogas are Complementary: Far from being mutually exclusive, the various paths of yoga are strongly complementary. A Hindu spiritual seeker typically draws on more than one path in practice. Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga have been described, respectively, as the two wings and the tail of a bird in flight. Karma Yoga is recognized as powerful in purifying the mind, and a necessary foundation for all spiritual practice. Each path contributes in its own way to the achievement of spiritual goals. Further, these paths converge at the culmination of spiritual practice. A deep practice of the path of knowledge leads to the flowering of devotion; and the deep practice of the path of devotion leads to the emergence of knowledge.

Above is part of a larger collection of essays written by Dr. D. C. Rao and published by the Hindu American Foundation. The full e-book is available at <http://hafsite.org/hinduism-101/recommended-reading-hinduism>.

About the Author

Dr. D. C. Rao

retired from the World Bank in 1995 to pursue an intensive adhyatmic education and practice. He is a Trustee at the Chinmaya Mission, Washington D.C. and actively associated with the Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy at Honesdale, Pa. He is a member of the Assembly and former President of the Inter Faith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, where he has contributed to work on Strengthening Teaching About Religion (STAR) for several years. He has degrees from the University of Mumbai, India, Cambridge University, U.K., and a Ph. D. in economics from the University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A.



Eleventh Annual Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference Held in Atlanta

The eleventh HMEC was held in Atlanta, Georgia at the Holiday Inn (Roswell) from September 16 to 18, 2016. The first HMEC conference was held in Atlanta. After a ten-year journey to many parts of North America and the Caribbean, the conference was again held this year in Atlanta successfully. The conference sessions were well received by delegates from USA, Canada, Caribbean, Mauritius and India.

There were over 25 Grand Hosts and Co-Hosts of the conference mainly from USA and Canada. Some 200 adult and youth delegates drawn from over 70 organizations and 5 countries participated in the conference.

The theme of the conference was: Awareness and Awakening: The Future Role of Hindu Mandirs and Institutions. HMEC 2016 provided a platform for stakeholders like mandirs, other Hindu organizations, pundits, gurus, teachers, sanyasis, scholars, activists, and practitioners and non-practitioners to celebrate, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the state of Dharma in North America and the Caribbean and come up with strategies and action plans.

In the inaugural session on Friday, 16 September, a moment of silence was observed in the memory of Shri Pramukh Swami Maharaj Ji. A great thought leader and

inspiration to the masses; he dedicated his life to the spiritual upliftment and selfless service of society by exemplifying, "in the joy of others, lies our own." Paramacharya Sadasivanatha of Hinduism Today presented the Hindu History and Megatrends in America. Subsequent action items will be worked on actively leveraging multimedia, which was followed by a pictorial Journey through Spiritual India shared by Robert Arnett. In his inaugural address, Swami Pratyagbodhananda of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam spoke on, 'The Future Role of Hindu Mandirs and Institutions.' Amol Yadav and Lauren Valentino of Duke University shared their experiences and connected gyan yoga to youth ambassadorship. Ami Parikh from Vatsalya Gram, India spoke passionately and called all to seek within. The session ended with blessings from local priests.

Since its inception, HMEC has bred many worthwhile projects and initiatives. A summary was presented to share progress with the audience. Among them were: HMPC (Hindu Mandir Priest Conference), WHC 2018 (World Hindu Congress), SDS (Bhagvad Gita Sanatan Dharma Scholarship), Publication of Sanskar books, Gita Distribution, HAVAN (Hindu American Vanaprasthi Network) and Hindu Seva Diwas. The launch of the Vrat book was the main highlight this



year.

A number of parallel sessions were held to cover large number of important and relevant topics. The titles included:

1. Stressful Challenges in Modern Hindus
2. Respect for/Emphasis on Education of Rituals
3. Atlanta Area Hindu Temples
4. Enlightened Leadership in Temples
5. 2nd Generation Parents: Raising Children in Sanatan Dharmic Way in the West
6. Temples as Learning Centers
7. Challenges and Opportunities with Current Programs
8. New Age Approach and Resources
9. Challenges of Hindus Growing up in Diaspora

Additionally, there were three workshop sessions for the Youth and Young Adults, designed and conducted by the Young Adults: Self-Improvement Through Shaastras Workshop, Explaining Dharma - Answering Tough Questions about Hindu Dharma, Ask Me Anything - Guest Speaker Series.

Tweets from CHY (Coalition of Hindu Youth) can be viewed at [#HMEC2016](http://www.twitter.com/chynetwork)

At the Saturday Sept 17th evening Gala Dinner and Cultural program, Consul General of India Mr. Nagesh Singh praised the efforts of HMEC towards bringing Hindu Institutions on one platform.

In closure, the eleventh HMEC deliberated on the following resolution:

"It is hereby resolved that HMEC will establish 'HMEC Sanatan Dharma Seva Ratna' award in the honor

of Poojya Swami Dayananda Saraswati. in 2016/2017:

1. Hindu Seva Day - Seva in America will focus on 4 key areas: education, society, welfare and the environment. HMEC appeals to the Mandirs and Institutions to sign up and be part of the team or choose a particular project to work on.

2. Hindu Mandir News Letter will be created to disseminate information that is timely and relevant to all subscribers. It will promote unity while highlighting the diversity of the mandirs and institutions and be a medium for thought leadership.

3. A Visitor's Guide for Mandirs will be designed for the use of mandir visitors with the intent to simply share religious and cultural significance of the mandirs and the practices.

4. Shared resources add consistency to the core teachings of our Dharma and therefore, common Bal Vihar resources will be created for accessibility, conformity and accuracy.

5. HMEC approved the formation of a committee to work on 'HMEC Sanatan Dharma Seva Ratna' award.

6. Analyze and publish results of Mandir Survey launched by Hindu Student Council.

Mandir representatives from Indianapolis, IN announced the hosting of HMEC 2017 and welcomed everyone to participate. The concluding thoughts were delivered by Swami Nikhilananda of Radha Madhav Dham, Austin, TX.

Testimonials

"HMEC was an important experience that was eye opening towards the inner workings of a temple. I am







honored that HMEC allowed me to intern and be a part of this unifying conference." **Nina Jain, Hindu Temple of Central Indiana youth group, IN**

"HMEC offered me knowledge and intellectual debate on several aspects of growth of Hindu Dharma. It was refreshing to get feedback from young adults." **Devyani Desai, Hindu Temple, Tampa, FL**

"Enriching experience and was very good networking opportunity. Overall it was well planned conference." **Rajubhai Patel and Bhikhubhai Patel of Ambajee USA Shree Shakti Mandir, Atlanta**

"For me HMEC is a re-union of my extended Hindu family. Like in the past, 2016 conference was enriching and fulfilling for me, wife and son. We look forward to next conference in Indianapolis". **Sudershan Pasupuleti, Shiv Shakti Temple, Edinburg, TX**

"This, my eighth HMEC gathering, was proof that practice makes perfect. More importantly, the many voices spoke of a one vision for the future of Hinduism in America, a vision that year-by-year the determined HMEC members are manifesting into reality, turning talk into small triumphs." **Paramacharya Sadasivanatha, Hinduism Today, Hawaii**

HMEC

The vision of HMEC is to be the network of Hindu Organizations for effective leadership generation to generation in North America. Representatives from Hindu temples meet to deliberate and solve issues collectively. This conference provides a great opportunity to community leaders to learn from each other and ultimately grow as one community. The 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.

For more information on VHPA, please write to vhp-office@vhp-america.org or visit www.vhp-america.org



SAC Fundraising Across US Garnerers Overwhelming Support

The VHPA organized a classical dance show called "Krishnapriya - A Divine Love Story", to raise awareness for its various activities and to raise funds for its SAC (Support A child) program. The shows spanned thirteen cities and started on Sept 9th and ran through October 8th.

Krishna and his divine 'leelas' have always been the source of inspiration for artists, painters, musicians, and dancers. His divine love for his foster mother Yashoda, friend and lover Radha, sakhi Draupadi and devotee Meera is beautifully described in scriptures, tales and

stories. "Krishnapriya" is a glimpse of this divine love that bound Lord Krishna with these four 'nayikaas'. Presented through the medium of Kathak and folk dance, "Krishnapriya" featured Aditi Bhagwat, Sushant Jadhav and Harshada Jambekar as the lead dancers. "Krishnapriya" was conceptualized and produced by Aditi Bhagwat.

The shows were promoted by advertising on ZeeTV and opened with its first performance in the city of Cleveland, Ohio. The residents of the city responded with great enthusiasm and SAC received enough pledges to support 62 children on opening night. Mrs. Renu Rajvanshi Gupta, the national coordinator of SAC and the chief guest of the program articulated that the mission of the SAC is to provide education (up to high school), boarding, lodging, medical care and Samskara (values) to the children of under-privileged background from different parts of Bharat. World Hindu Council of America (VHPA) started the SAC program in year 1985. These children both boys and girls, are selected from remote areas of Bharat and come from very under privileged backgrounds. Some are orphans with no family to care for the while others are children of sex workers. Through the SAC these children receive good high school education, that help them then get trained in technical skill and some even attend college for earning advanced degrees like Ph. D. and MD. Today, many of these children are working as teachers, engineers, doctors and other professionals.

The SAC program provides a way to all of us to connect with our roots in Bharat said the event organizer Dr. Adityanjee, a Cleveland-based psychiatrist and geopolitical strategic expert well known for his social and philanthropic activities. While talking to the hall filled with Cleveland community members who gathered to support the cause, Dr. Adityanjee said that if we want to see a peaceful world without conflicts, the change needs





to start with us and we can achieve this goal successfully by ensuring that no child is left behind due to lack of resources. The cost of supporting a child, who has lost his or her parents to terrorism, human trafficking, poverty or any other ailments, is less than a dollar a day.

There can't be a better gift than giving a child the gift of education especially when many children in Bharat are waiting for our support, said Prof. Rama Jayanti, a renowned marketing Professor at CSU, who also extended her hands of support to the cause. For



\$250 a year one can make a difference in the life of an underprivileged child, this speaks a lot about the effective organization management. There are several organizations working for similar cause but SAC is special because they have minimal operating

cost and more than 90% of money goes to support the actual cause.

Since it was the auspicious day of Navratra Sthapna, several families decided to adopt a girl child. Several



local dance school gurus also participated in the program and showcased their student's talent during the event. Families are free to choose the child of their choice from their specific region of interest in Bharat. The pledges, donations and support were still pouring in during and after the event day, but so far sponsorship for 62 children was pledged during the Cleveland fundraiser.

This great start was emulated by all the cities and more than 1500 guests attended the shows. The total money raised was enough to support 500 additional children through the SAC program. All the donations whether they were one large sum of \$50,000 from one patron or ticket purchases by hundreds of others are greatly appreciated and help us achieve our goal. Given the overwhelming support and encouragement, SAC plans to bring such shows to the US each year.

With the help of reputed service organizations like Sewa Bharati, Sewa Dham, Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Kalyan Prathishthan and many more, the SAC team has selected more than 28+ hostels/schools and institutions from 18+ different states. These children will stay in the hostels and will get education at accredited schools. Along with the quality education, children will receive medical aid, healthy/nutritious food, school supplies, clothing and housing. These children will also get opportunities to learn, music, art, sports and

Samsakara (values).

Under this program the donors are connected directly to their supported child and every year, a progress report of the child with the child's photograph, details of parents, class, name, percentage of marks secured, performance etc. will be delivered to the donors' address in the US. Moreover, donors will be able to meet and write to the child through SAC. Several families have chosen this option to provide best gift to their son or daughter. Internship programs are also available in SAC projects in Bharat and we encourage sponsoring families to visit the supported child during Bharat visit, said Dr. Sudesh Agarwal. We owe the success of this program in part to the tireless and timely effort of all our coordinators and volunteers across the US. Looking ahead the SAC is planning to have 18 shows in September and October next year. Currently, the SAC takes care of 1600+ children and it will no doubt continue to grow. ■

Support A Child (SAC)

Eradicate Illiteracy and Bring Happiness to the underprivileged Children in Bharat

P.O. Box 441505, Houston, TX 77244-1505 Tel.: 281-496-5676

Email: SAC_office@vhp-america.org

website: www.sacusa.org

Federal Tax ID Number is 51-0156325





चीन में निर्मित

कवि डॉक्टर ओम अरोड़ा

Now a days, if you go to any store to buy any article, murtis, clothing, furniture, tech stuff etc. invariably you will find one common source of origin printed on it and that is ``made in china''. This poem is based on that observation.

कुदरत ने कैसा खेल किया
कुदरत ने हम को चीन दिया
बना निकम्मा दिया हमें
सब हुनर हमारा छीन लिया

उत्तर दक्षिण पूरब पश्चिम
जहाँ जहाँ मैं देख सका
इस दुनिया की हर शैय पर
था चीनी ठप्पा लगा हुआ

सस्ते सस्ते के चक्कर में
अपना मस्तिष्क गँवा डाला
भर लिया जंक से घर अपना
घर जंकयार्ड बनवा डाला

कपड़े-लत्ते आ गये चीन से
खेल खिलोने भी आए
आ गये फोन, निनटेंडो (Nintendo) भी
सब चीनी ठप्पा लगवाए

अंडी-बंडी पर छपा चीन
चड़ी पर भी चीनी ठप्पा
मिट गया निशाँ यूएस-यूरो का
मैं खोज रहा चप्पा चप्पा

जिस कुर्सी पर बैठे नेता
उस पर भी चीनी चिन्ह लगा
हर देश-देश के झंडे पर
था चीनी कपड़ा चढ़ा हुआ

राम कृष्ण आ गये चीन से
बाबा शिरडी के भी आए
देख घनी बिक्री चीनी
सब मिल बाबा के गुण गाए

जा पहुँचे चंदा पर चीनी
अपना अधिकार जताने को
जा खोज रहे वो जन जन्तु
अपना व्यापार बढ़ाने को

संभव है इक दिन नव शिशु भी
सभी चीन से आएँगे
हँसना रोना हो गया चीनी में
मिल चीनी राग सुनाएँगे

बेच माल सस्ते में सब
क्या चीनी ने फंदा डाला
बिन हथियार बिना धमकी
सब को आधीन बना डाला

मैं सोच रहा असमंजस में
जाने भविष्य कैसा होगा
इस चीनी के बंधन से
कैसे आजाद जहाँ होगा

About the Author

Dr. Om Prakash Arora, MD,
based in metro Atlanta, is a General Surgeon. He has
been writing Hindi poems since his early school days. He
may be contacted via email omparora@bellsouth.net



Seva in America (SIA)

Bridging Income Disparity with Education

By Rai Chowdhary

In the land of the world's economic powerhouse, a historic high number of about 2.5 million children are homeless. Hard to believe? It's true - according to a study by National Center for Family Homelessness quoted in Nov. 2014. This is alarming to say the least.

One could blame the capitalists, the selfish interests, or do something. Harish Kotecha, an immigrant who escaped the brutal regime in Uganda decades ago decided on the latter. He founded Hindu Charities for America (HC4A) to fight the plague of growing income disparity via giving back to the community and country that had accepted him with open arms.

Introspection germinates the Idea

Reflecting on what helped Harish prosper in his adopted homeland (US), he realized it was his education, and the warm welcome and company of friends made a key difference. Further, looking around and studying others who had succeeded - it was clear that education, and societal support mattered the most. That laid the foundation for HC4A's mission: "Bridging Income Disparity with Education."

The First Step in a Thousand Mile Journey

Established in Austin during early 2010, HC4A

became a 501(c)(3) non-denominational charity organization in May 2010. Its inaugural event in August, assisted by volunteers from the Indian community, raised funds to support students of Round Rock Independent School District. Supplies and backpacks were distributed to students in the National School Lunch Program.

With the conviction that every disadvantaged child must be able to continue his/her education journey, HC4A aims to support students across Texas in short term, eventually going nationwide. The type and means of support could vary from school supplies to scholarships and more, as needed.

Major Milestones Crossed with more Ahead!

2011 saw further progress as HC4A touched the lives of 300 disadvantaged youth in Austin. Cathy Requejo, Program Manager of Homeless Education and Learning Program commented, "The Hindu volunteers were awesome! In the present environment of budget cutting, this donation is most welcome."

In 2012, as the city of Bastrop, Texas, was recovering from a devastating wildfire that ravaged the area the past year, much aid had come in. However, several areas still needed attention. HC4A worked with the Texas Homeless Education Office to study the unmet needs of Bastrop schools. Two areas were identified:

Replacement of library books lost due to the fire, and

Replenishment of non-insured funds for Bastrop Independent School District's homeless students

Teaming up with SEWA International, HC4A energized the local Indian-American community and addressed these needs. Reina Gallagos, Parent and Homeless Facilitator, Adelaida Olivares - Principal, Lost Pine Elementary Campus, and librarians of beneficiary schools were very grateful for the donations.

Engaging Across Cultural Organizations and Expanding Outreach

Social bridges and cultural events lay foundations for friendships through



interactive participation and mutual respect. HC4A's collaboration with organizations beyond the Indian diaspora commenced in 2012. Teaming up with Jewish Community Center, they setup a fundraising event during May. The Ismaili community participated graciously by placing donation boxes at their members' business locations. Nearly 800 students in Austin and Manor school districts benefited.

Education opens doors to better careers, however, it is a lengthy process. According to a 2012 report by The PEW Research Center, poorest Americans (57%) are in their prime working years. The corresponding number in 1959 was 42%. Something was amiss.

For decades, Indian American organizations and individuals have contributed and supported local institutions. HC4A inspired them to take a different path - one that puts people on a faster career track via Vocational Training. This helps the individual, and, builds the skill base our country needs. Now HC4A had a two pronged approach - a strategic one, for long term effects, and a tactical one, for quicker results. Over \$25,000 was allocated for such scholarships to students in the Austin area during 2014.

Making Giving Fun and Creating Efficiencies

While giving is a noble undertaking - if it can be made fun, the joy doubles. This comes out loud and clear in the messages from Manor ISD's staff, the smiles of students, and HC4A team's contagious enthusiasm. The Manor ISD students expressed their gratitude by learning, and performing an Indian dance for the audiences at the school. HC4A together with the Jewish Community Center have also been holding an annual dinner/dance/fund raising event for several years.

To stretch the dollars, HC4A started buying supplies direct from manufacturers. This enabled procurement of supplies at lower costs, and reaching a larger student population. Entertaining and fun events attracted bigger audiences. Increased efficiencies enabled the two organizations support over 1000 students from Austin, Manor, and Del Vale ISDs in 2015.

HC4A's records, as of August 2016 show a quantum jump in contributions for the year. \$23000 worth of supplies were distributed to some 1400 students, and about



From left : City Mayor Steve Adler (Austin TX), Manor ISD Superintendent Royce Avery, Mayor Rita Jonse (Manor, TX) and HC4A VP Dinesh Vakharia

\$45,000 in scholarships was awarded for vocational training. The organization has made remarkable progress, thanks to Harish's leadership, the volunteers, community members, and allied organizations.

The Road Ahead

From its humble beginnings in 2010 HC4A has steadily expanded its reach in the Central Texas area. The team envisions going nationwide; it has a long and ambitious journey ahead. One that will enlighten and inspire communities nationwide, and create a brighter future for students. For this purpose, it has setup good support structures (a well-functioning board) and governance (CPA on board to help with accounting matters).

With a will of steel, HC4A's march continues, remembering Robert Frost's words: "The woods are lovely, dark, and deep. But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep."

About the Author

Rai Chowdhary

is an entrepreneur, angel investor, and author. His latest book "Do-Magic with Your Life" inspires everyone to create and live their Dreams; it describes a step by step process to making it happen.

Photo Credits: Rama Tiru, TiruGallary.com

Sources:

★ www.hinduismtoday.com/blogs-news/hindu-press-international/hindu-charities-for-america-donates-school-supplies-to-disadvantaged-children/10330.html ★ <http://www.hinducharitiesforamerica.org/images/HC4AMedia/2010%20Sept%20-%20Austin%20South%20Asian%20Article%20-%20Hindu%20Charities%20for%20America.pdf> ★ <http://hinducharitiesforamerica.org/images/HC4AMedia/2011%20may%20-%20aussoasian%20kick%20off%20article.pdf> ★ https://issuu.com/todo_austin/docs/vol_iii_iss10 ★ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEtxMoYIZ6k> ★ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/01/13/whos-poor-in-america-50-years-into-the-war-on-poverty-a-data-portrait/> ★ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PmlZZ7JBMQ> ★ <https://youtu.be/NTnu2iKiRkd> ★ HC4A information and financial records provided by Harish Kotecha



Plan to Preserve and Promote Sanskrit

By *Shrinivas Tilak*

Part one of my review of *The Battle For Sanskrit* by Rajiv Malhotra (HarperCollins 2015) in *Hindu Vishwa*, discussed Rajiv Malhotra's fair and faithful presentation (Purva paksha) of Professor Sheldon Pollock's allegations that Sanskrit is dead, politically motivated, and socially oppressive. The follow up article presented spirited and energetic refutation (Uttara paksha) of Professor Pollock's (hereafter Pollock) thesis by Rajiv Malhotra (See January-March, April-June 2016 issues of *Hindu Vishva*). In Part Three (Siddhanta) I elaborate Rajiv Malhotra's well thought out and crafted plan to preserve and promote Sanskrit (along with sanskriti and dharma).

Transforming armed-chair mouse clicker to Intellectual kshatriya

In the Siddhanta section of *The Battle For Sanskrit*, Rajiv Malhotra (RM) reflects on how every civilization faces existential challenges from time to time, and how adherents must consider and develop ways to maintain its viability, as they struggle to meet these challenges. In the Indic context, this has been a healthy process forcing Hindus to devise ways of keeping Sanskrit, sanskriti, and dharma (hereafter Sanskrit) afloat. In our times, however, RM feels that a tipping point has been reached where those opposed to Sanskrit have begun to dominate the discourse from the outside so overwhelmingly, that Hindus, defenders of Sanskrit from within, are on the verge of capitulating. In order to ensure the survival and then revival of Sanskrit, Hindus need to assemble and put into operation what RM calls a 'home team' of intellectual kshatriyas (see below) to represent their views collectively in their encounters/debates over Sanskrit with Western academics and Indologists like Professor Sheldon Pollock and others.

Building the 'Home Team' of intellectual kshatriyas

RM's concept of intellectual kshatriya centers on the well-known traditional adage that a true scholar is one who acts on one's convictions (yah kriy?v?n sa pa??ita?). Indeed, RM's latest book is written to transform "mouse clicking armchair" Hindu thinker of today into an intellectual Kshatriya (IK; male/female activist) committed to the cause of Sanskrit. The 'home team' of

RM's dream would consist of those who would work toward seeing Sanskrit flourish as a living entity in India and beyond. Toward that objective he suggests establishing chapters of home teams on campuses in the USA (and over time across the world) from where IKs will challenge negative assessments of Sanskrit, define its vibrant presence, and lay out a grand framework for a glorious future. They would dispassionately, yet aggressively defend the Indic civilizational ethos preserved in Sanskrit, without the fear of being branded communalist or fundamentalist.

Making of the intellectual kshatriya activist

Retired Hindu academics and current graduate students will be charged with recruiting, formation, and training of IK volunteer activists on behalf of home teams to maintain active presence on US campuses in collaboration with Indian students' organizations. Activities will involve (a) collecting course outlines on Sanskrit related courses offered and assessing them for fair and balanced treatment of the subject matter; (b) establishing ongoing relationship with reference librarians and monitoring those who order and acquire books on Sanskrit and related topics; (c) attending lectures by 'experts' on Sanskrit and raising relevant questions; (d) attending defenses of dissertations on Sanskrit and related topics by doctoral candidates; (e) writing critical reviews of books on Sanskrit and related topics for amazon.com, and other booksellers on the internet. ■

About the Author

Shrinivas Tilak

(Ph.D. History of Religions, McGill University, Montreal, Canada) is author of *The Myth of Sarvodaya: A study in Vinoba's concept* (New Delhi: Breakthrough Communications 1984); *Religion and Aging in the Indian Tradition* (Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989); *Understanding karma in light of Paul Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology and hermeneutics* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge, revised, paperback edition, 2007); and *Reawakening to a secular Hindu nation: M. S. Golwalkar's vision of a Dharmasapeksa Hindurastra* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge, 2008).

Contact Dr. Tilak at shrinivas.tilak@gmail.com

Role of Women in Society III: Women in the West

By Nidhi Anilnath

The Western world comprises of present day Europe and North and South America. While North America was colonized only about two hundred years ago, Europe has a long history that can be traced to ancient times. Indigenous civilizations in North and South America can also be traced back to thousands of years, but a lack of written documentation makes it hard to truly understand their society in ancient times.

The role of women in Ancient Greece can be summarized by this quote from Thucydides, a historian from the 5th century BC. 'The greatest glory for women is to be least talked about among men, whether in praise or blame.' Women were essentially under the guardianship of their father, until they married, which then transferred their guardianship to their husband. Girls married when they were barely in their teens and had no political rights. While they moved freely in society, their identity was dependent on the men in their lives.

Women could enter in to trade, however the limit of value placed on the trade was less than a measure of grain. That is pretty much just sustenance for poor women in society. In marriage, women were not treated as equal but they did have some freedom to divorce and get back any property that was part of their dowry. However, they needed the permission of their father or male guardian to file for divorce as they had no political standing in society. Aristotle, just like Confucius, thought women created a lot of turmoil in society, and were essentially evil creatures.

Education for girls was essentially dependent on the economic status of their family. Girls from well to do families were educated just like the boys by private tutors. However, most girls were taught basic reading,



writing, weaving and some rudimentary understanding of money. This, despite the fact that people in Ancient Greece venerated their Goddesses, and respected priestesses and let their words influence political decisions. We have all heard of the women oracles of Delphi in various stories and the respect accorded to them.

Celtic women on the other hand had a lot of freedom and equal rights under the law. Queen Boudicca of the Iceni tribe led her army against the Romans in circa 60 AD, and though she was defeated, she is immortalized



by a statue in Central London that is a testament to her courage. Women were trained in fighting and taught to handle weapons just like boys. This could have been due to necessity due to many invasions, but women also were accorded property and political rights that were not common in other parts of Europe at that time. Divorce was fairly simple and women who were divorced were not looked down upon by society. In fact, polygamy and polyandry seem to have been prevalent during ancient times.

One of the first civilizations in the Central America was the Olmec civilization. In this society, women had two main purposes: preparing food and tending to the needs of children. While boys were educated to hunt and trade to support their future families, girls were kept at home to learn how to do all the household jobs and how to take care of their future families. Women were responsible for sewing and harvesting and taking care of the corrals for the civilization's domestic animals, in order to aid their husbands. In a society that was patriarchal, women were subordinate to their husbands and males in their families. A man had the right to choose his own bride and bring her to live with him and his family after their marriage. If the marriage resulted in a divorce, the father of the bride had the choice of who should be her second husband. Although women did not have much say in their own life choices, they made a huge impact on their families' lives.

The same could be said of the Chavins of Peru and other tribal societies of the time. Although most of the roles did stay the same from the time period of the Olmec civilization to the European colonization, there were a couple of changes that allowed women to make a difference in more than just their families: in their society. Depending on where a family lived, women had different roles to play to support their societies. Women living in rural towns began doing productive work such as spinning, weaving and churning; whereas, women residing in cities would serve as nurses or seamstresses. Some women became midwives and a group of women known as "Feme Sole Traders" established their own businesses. These businesses were the first to be created by women and be fully supported by their town councils.

By the 5th century, Europe had organized itself into four groups; Romans, Christians, Germanic and Jewish people. By the 8th century, the Church was becoming powerful and started issuing a number of edicts that impacted the role of women in society. However, the kings and chieftains continued to influence daily life and the role of women remain largely unchanged till the end of the Middle Ages in 1500. They ran the households



and did all the cooking and household chores or if they were rich they directed servants who did all the work. The aristocratic women who were married to monarchs or nobles did their best to influence society through their husbands and sons. Education was still not the focus for most women, however with the establishment of nunneries, women who entered convents had the opportunity to become well educated.

Life began to change in Europe after the cultural revolution of the 18th Century that was brought about by the rise of the middle class after the Industrial revolution. Women in the middle class started helping their families by performing duties outside of the house and menial work. Aristocratic women however, still remained restricted to their role within their households as society still did not embrace working women with open arms. Towards the latter half of the century, women like Mary Wollstonecraft started becoming vocal in their demand for women's rights in various parts of Europe. Catherine the Great of Russia has staged a coup and taken over as Empress thus radically changing the traditional role assigned to women. Colonization spread



the same views far and wide, thus slowly bringing about change in societies across the globe. The Victorian era ushered in by the ascent of Queen Victoria to the throne in 1837, saw changes in the lives of women. Noble women were now expected to be educated in modern languages, music, drawing and needlework. These women took pride in being accomplished outside of managing their households. Poor women however worked alongside their husbands and children in mines and factories to make ends meet. Women still did not have the right to vote or equality in marriage and still suffered domestic abuse without any legal recourse.

As the Europeans began to colonize the Western world, there was a belief that if gender roles were firmly established, they would help maintain a strong family structure. During the initial colonization, family ties were extremely important as all institutions such as government, church and community were made up of families. By the age of thirteen, all girls were expected to take part in all of the tasks performed by adult women. In colonial society, women were told to maintain household order, to take care of children, to prepare food, to encourage faith in religion, and to be subordinate to men.

By the end of the 19th century, women across Europe and America has started speaking up against societal issues like domestic violence, alcoholism and slavery. Women also started demanding vociferously the right to vote. By the end of the century, women in Europe and America had won the right to inherit and own property independent of their male relatives. They also began to dabble in occupations that were once only attempted by men. Women dressed up as men to go to war and wrote under a pseudonym in order get their work published. Among these women were women like Harriet Tubman, Susan B. Anthony, and Ellen Shallow Richards who all fought for what they wanted and believed. Their bravery in breaking the stereotypes of society was inspirational to women all over the world.

The dawn of the 20th century, saw the abolishment of slavery and voting restrictions based on gender and more women were able to make their mark on their society as well as the world. Women started attending universities and expanding in to professions like medicine and teaching that were once closed to them. With the start of World War 1, women had to help run factories and keep up with their household chores as young men went off to war. This permanently changed the perception that women were only suited for

household chores. From the Olmec civilization that emerged in 1200 BCE to modern day society, the role of women has been constantly changing and growing. Although women make up 50.4% of the western world, there are still many gender stereotypes and limitations that women face.

The fight for gender equality in the western world has been fought forever even though the world knows the Women's Suffrage Movement in 1848 as the official beginning of this fight. There have been many victories granting women more chances to take various roles in society, but there are many more hurdles yet to conquer. By the end of the 1900s, the 19th amendment was passed and most women had begun going to school for a proper education. Grace Hopper, a Ph.D. from Yale, was one of the earliest computer programmers; Katharine Hepburn was a four-time Academy Award winner for best actress. All these women began to change the way the world looked at the capabilities of women; people started understanding that women are as capable as men are in the working world.

Now, women are as vital a part of society as they were during 1200 BCE, but they have the option to do what they want in society. Women can be doctors, teachers, politicians, or actors; girls have the freedom to become whatever they want to be. Society has evolved to a position where women are as accepted as men. One of the presidential candidates is a woman, herself. However, even though women are accepted, there is still a gap between the value of the roles accomplished by a woman versus one accomplished by a man. There have been studies completed as recently as 2015 that have proved that female full time workers make only 80 cents for each dollar that a full time male worker would make. Their fight for equality is far from over but progress is continuously being made. ■

About the Author

Nidhi Anilnath is a senior at Northview High school in Georgia. She is a very talented dancer who also excels in academics. She teaches young girls Bharat Natyam while still performing at various events herself. She is an avid traveler and has visited numerous countries learning from each culture.



By Sabitha Venugopal

My first glimpse of Brihadeeshwarar Temple in Thanjavur was in the evening of a bright blue summer day. My family undertook a trip to visit this UNESCO World Heritage Site and the largest operating Hindu Temple complex in the world. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and was built in the era of Raja Raja Chola I in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. Our first glimpse of this magnificent 216 foot tall temple tower left us awe struck. The blue sky served as the ideal backdrop for this truly spectacular piece of architecture that serves as a reminder of man's ingenuity and devotion to God.

From across the street we could see the imposing walls surrounding the whole complex. Once we walked to the entrance we saw the long walkway leading to the inner sanctum. The Tower itself is monochromatic and is not as colorful as other temples in the state. The



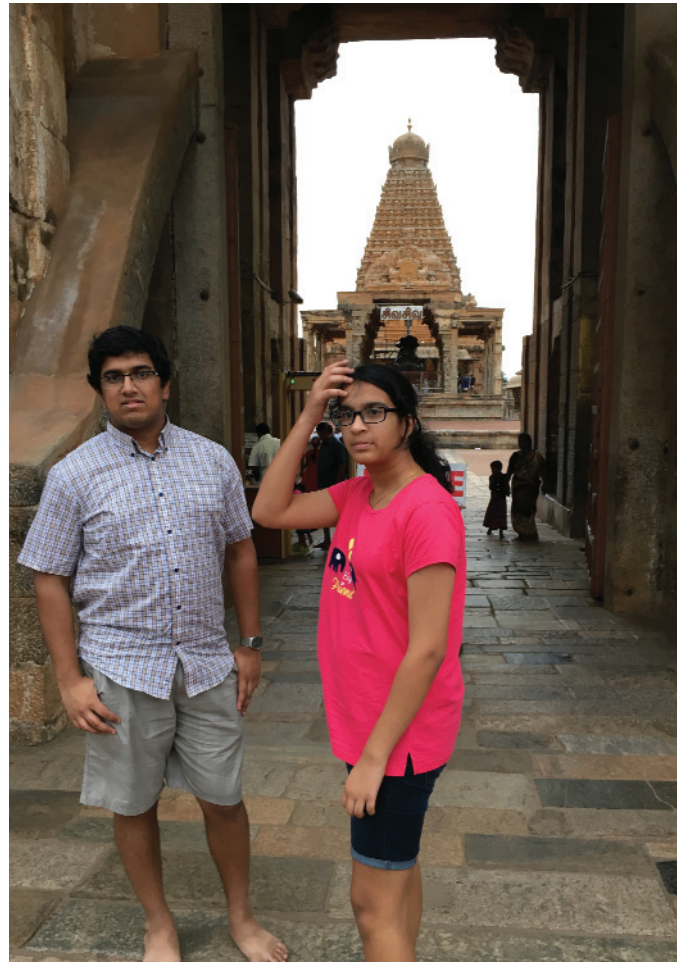
My Visit to Magnificent Temples in Tamil Nadu

granite stones however gleam as the light from the setting Sun hits them. It is said that the temple does not cast a shadow at noon on any day of the year. One wonders how the ancients created their architecture so perfect that it aligned with the rays of the Sun, has withstood earthquakes without tipping or tilting even a little over a thousand years and still supports the massive kalasam atop the tower, which is estimated to weigh around 80 tons.

The modern walkway is made up of cobblestones, and as we walked in, the first thing we saw was a statue of Nandi in black granite facing Lord Shiva. This figure is said to be carved out of one massive black granite rock and is 12 feet tall and 16 feet long. The granite shines with a thick coating of oil that conditions the stone and protects it from the elements. This statue is not the original Nandi but is said to be a gift from the Maratha rulers in the 16th century.

We completed our circumambulation of Nandi and then proceeded to the inner sanctum (Karuvarai in Tamil). The karuvarai is itself a mini temple whose walls are carved with many sculptures. Enclosed within its walls is the imposing 12 feet tall Shiva Lingam, the main deity. Around the lingam is the golden seshnaag that is spread out as if guarding the Lord. Since it was late evening the temple was very calm and peaceful, we received blessings and Prasad after the evening archana and aarti and started our pradakshina around the temple. As we walked slowly, we realized that we were probably walking in the footsteps of millions of other devotees who have followed the same path since the temple opened its doors in 1010 AD. It brought home to us that we as Hindus from India are truly blessed to have ancestors who left behind such a strong testament to their faith.

This temple is one of 70 temples built by Raja Raja Chola I, and successive rulers continued to add shrines



to this temple. Raja Raja Chola and his family also endowed a lot of gold and jewelry to the temple. His son continued this tradition and built another magnificent temple dedicated to Lord Shiva at Gangaikondacholapuram. Another descendent Raja Raja Chola II built the Airavateshwara temple in Kumbakonnam. Together these three temples are called the Great Living Chola Temples and are all UNESCO world Heritage monuments because of their outstanding creative achievement in architecture.

As we walked around the complex we saw other deities carved on the outer walls of karuvarai like Surya and Chandra. Each figure whether it is the deity or animals or asuras is elaborately detailed and the beauty still stands as proof of the abilities and dedication of the skilled artisans and sculptors of that time period.

Our next stop was the temple town of Kumbakonnam on the banks of the Cauvery River. We were there to visit Oppiliappan Temple, our family diety. The temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and is counted as one of the 108 Divya Desams of Lord Vishnu, 105 of which are in India, Saligramam in Nepal and the other two are Thirupar Kadal (Ocean of milk where Lord Vishnu resides) and Vaikuntam. Records do not indicate when

Lord Oopiliappan temple



the temple was consecrated, but the temple is mentioned by the Tamil Azhwar saints in the Divya Prabbandam from the 6 to 9 century AD.

The story goes that Sage Markandeya came to Thiruvinnagaram, the town where the temple is located, and started his penance and prayers to Lord Vishnu. His desire was to be blessed with Goddess Lakshmi as his daughter who he would then give in marriage to Lord Vishnu, thus making the Lord his son in law. After a thousand years, Goddess Lakshmi did take the form of a baby and appeared under a Tulsi plant. This is the actually site where the temple stands. Sage Markandeya was overjoyed and raised Goddess Lakshmi as his daughter. When the girl was still an adolescent, Lord Vishnu appeared before Sage Markandeya as an old man and asked for her hand in marriage. The sage responded that his daughter was too young and had still not even mastered the art of cooking with salt, to which the Lord replied that he would take what his daughter made as the best food, even it had no salt. The sage recognized Lord Vishnu in his disguise and offered his daughter in marriage to him. To this day, the offering in the temple is made without salt to respect Lord Vishnu's vow to accept unsalted food.

Lord Oopiliappan is considered to be the elder brother of Lord Venkateshwara in Tirupati. So traditionally, any prayers or promises made to Lord Venkateshwara can be completed here as well. It is interesting how even Lord Vishnu in his various forms is portrayed to have a family and siblings, and the





principles of respecting your elders is enshrined in the practices of the various temples.

We made it in time for the first worship of the day at 5:30 AM and got the privilege to witness the Viswaroopa darshanam. This signifies the Lord being serenaded with the Suprabhatam to wake him up and he greets his devotees before his ritual bath and decorations. A milk cow representing Kamadenu is brought before the Lord for the morning offering and the temple elephant trumpets her call to signify the end of this darshan. When the trumpet sounds, devotees know that the inner sanctum will be closed until the priests perform the morning rituals before the next darshan. It was a wonderful experience where we could observe all the proceedings without the crowds and jostling that happens later in the day.

The elephant also goes on a pradakshina around the karuvarai before blessing children in exchange for coins or bananas. It felt like we were part of a procession as we followed the elephant Bhoomidevi (named after Goddess Lakshmi) around the temple. The temple walls are covered with murals showing all the 108 Divya Desams. It was a learning experience for the family as my father in law took the time to explain the significance of each place to all of us. It is said that Vaishnavas

should all endeavor to visit the 106 Divya Desams at least once in their lifetime. In today's environment we can of course do this over a few years because of the various transportation options that are available to us. I wonder how people in the olden days completed this massive pilgrimage, how many had the financial and physical ability to undertake the journey and how many truly were able to successfully complete it.

The temple has shrines dedicated to Lord Rama, Krishna and Hanuman which we visited as well. One long corridor also has murals of the 12 Alvars who are Tamil poets who modern scholars say lived from the 5th to the 10 century AD. However, traditionally the belief is that they lived many thousands of years before that. One of the Alvars depicted in the murals is a woman named Andal. She is said to have merged with Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ranganatha in the Srirangam temple. A number of stories are told in Tamil literature about Andal's devotion to Lord Vishnu and her words are repeated as shlokas by devotees to this day.

Despite what we say in our everyday life about the value of women in Hinduism, to go to this ancient temple and see a woman being revered as one of the greatest saints showed our children that facts do corroborate our narrative. My daughter was especially moved to know that the tradition of strong learned women in Hinduism stretches back thousands of years and is not something that is a recent fad to make the religion politically correct. I think whether she remembers any of the rest of our trip or not, this is one thing that will leave a lasting impact on her and will help her in maintaining her faith as she grows up in the United States. ■





Religious Evolution in 21st Century

By Chaplain Manhar Valand

Religious evolution is based on ignorance in 21st Century. Hindu-phobia, in particular, occurs due to such ignorance.

Religion defined as belief in -

existence of supernatural ruling, creator, universal spiritual nature, exists forever, various systems of faith or regulated devout worship, matter of consciousness.

Evolution defined as -

a process of opening, developing or refining, movement according to plan, divine order of perfection.

Hinduism: Hindu Dharma, 'Sanatan Dharma' Eternal truth. Way of living.

Better words correctly elicit great reactions of curiosity. Thoughts of ancient seers, Vedic philosophy, recorded awe inspiring cosmic unity, soaring visions, hard for the West to grasp, with an unreserved respect for Truth, and other religions.

Sanatan (eternal) Dharma is as simple and also as complex, based on context. In 20th Century, in philosophical parlance, the term ontology is introduced by Kant for Western metaphysics. However, Abrahamic faiths usurped it to critique the whole Indian traditions of much older Eastern religions. Scholarship of Vedic period is negated because ethnic religions are complex, full of contradictions, and driven by superstitions. Historically, seers (risis), evolved souls, and realized masters asked many questions. Beguiled Western thinkers find this hard to answer! Thought itself is questioned. Does it have a name, form, sound, or symbol? What is thought? Is it a wave? When does it begin and end, if there is a gap between thoughts, what is existence! Thoughts empirically define existence.

I am Ram, Mohan, or Radha, happy, sad, thirsty, hungry, young, rich, Indian, poor, American, etc. But I am never complete. When one is whole or complete! Despite scores of introductory books on Vedanta, close contact with the West since 1893 in North America, and Europe since 16th Century, a coherent understanding of dharma is yet to emerge. Awake! Arise! In deep sleep you are blissfully ignorantly happy. However, while awake BE aware of inherent never ending joy. Do not beware. No fear. Promoting such an understanding is the aim of this brief essay to address the critical reader, who seeks an authentic resolution of the opposing views.

East versus West on evolution in 21st Century

The goal is to resolve in the readers mind, so as to acquire a clear understanding of fundamental concepts. This explains core beliefs, and practices based on philosophy that the entire creation emerged from, rests in, and will dissolve into the One Source. All Beings and that, experiencing the connection with the Source, anyone can be free of sorrow.

Once this core of 'Knowing' is understood, it becomes clear that all contemporary faiths offer limited practices to merely present the religion as a catalog of beliefs. They even present array of bewildering or misleading practices ad infinitum. All living beings want and seek happiness. Why? Has the deadliest poison of conversion destroyed this means for seekers to search for answers and arrive at truth? Who is to blame, the East, or West? Barriers for all seem insurmountable. The inherent nature of existence is to seek that knowledge, to free you to give ultimate happiness. Vedic upanishadic texts thunder of this truth. Tat tvam asi: "You Are That," Seek it. This experience is extremely subtle beyond time and space. Realizing this truth requires a direct, intuitive personal experience - the result of spiritual practice unique to the needs of each individual. Therefore, Dharma, offers a very wide range of practices to choose from. Individual spiritual aspirants are guided by a spiritual master, or a guru.

Versions: Eastern and Western thinking differs on key point. East says we are one with the Ultimate, but don't know it.

West says we cannot BE One with the Ultimate, but only come into relationship with it.

Two points of view may in fact BE closer together than we think.

Dr S. Radhakrishnan, late President of India, in his Oxford lectures in that famous book '*Eastern Religions and Western Thought*' defines religion and toleration as '*Toleration is the homage that finite mind pays to the inexhaustibility of the infinite.*'

Vedanta

About the Author

Chaplain Manhar Valand,
an ex-Governing Council member of VHPA, is based in
Atlanta and may be contacted through email or phone
valandm@aol.com / 770 626 8848

Madhya Pradesh Houses World's Oldest Rock Art: Experts

The petroglyph rock art at Daraki-Chattan (hillock) near Bhanpura in the Mandsaur district, Madhya Pradesh, is the 'world's oldest rock art' and is almost two to five lakh years' old, according to experts.

The successful expedition from November 2 to 23 this year for securing scientific dates for the world's earliest rock art was led by Rock Art Society of India Secretary General Professor Giriraj Kumar along with Australian scientist Robert G Bednarik.

Bednarik is the topmost rock art scientist in the world and convener of International Federation of Rock Art Organizations (IFRAO), according to Kumar.

As per our findings, this rock art at Daraki-Chattan in Bhanpur area of Mandsaur district is the world's oldest so far and is about 2-5 lakh years old, claimed Kumar, who is also Professor in Rock Art Science at Faculty of Arts in Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra.

Some of the over 530 cupules on a wall in Daraki- Chattan cave were found during research in the area which began as early as 2002, he said.

Besides we have also found hammer stones which were nearly 5 lakh years old during our research in the area, Kumar claimed.

Giving details about the project, he said, The field work for the project has just been completed in Mandsaur region of Madhya Pradesh. Its purpose was to secure samples and data to establish the age of the petroglyph rock art at Daraki-Chattan, one of the two Indian sites that feature the oldest rock art known in the world.

To succeed in this complex task, the project involves the participation of several researchers from India, Australia and Europe. It has been known for some years that this rock art, consisting of petroglyphs in a quartzite cave, is among the oldest ever found in the world, but so far the full age of this find has remained elusive to the scientists, he said.

Stressing the need to protect this ancient art form

which is yet to be fully protected, Kumar has held discussions about the future of the region that is very rich in early archaeological evidence, with Mandsaur Collector Swatantra Kumar Singh and MLA Chander Singh Sisodia.

A tourist center is being established at Gandhisagar



on river Chambal near the small town of Bhanpura.

Professor Kumar and Bednarik suggested that to attract international visitors, the tourist center must have something that is unique to India, if not in the world.

The Bhanpura region is rich in rock art heritage and has paleo channel of its own kind and the Daraki-Chattan, hence establishing a Stone Age museum at this location will become the centerpiece of the development.

This museum, certainly unique in India, and in its proposed form unique in the world, would attract considerable international tourists to the region. The museum's key exhibit would be a precise replica of the cave with the ancient rock art, while the cave itself will never become accessible to the public. This is to protect this irreplaceable cultural heritage for all future, the two scientists suggested.

The project was supported by Indian Council for Historical Research (ICHR) and the Australia India Council, Canberra.

New Dawn at ‘Ekal Vidyalaya’

By Prakash Waghmare

Ekal is pulling all stops on village development in India and adopting ground-breaking methodology in the way it operates in rural-tribal areas'. That's the profound message that came out of Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation's (EVF) recently concluded "International Conference" in Orangeburg, NY. This three day conference, meant for national committees of USA, India, Canada and other countries, was convened not only for brain-storming sessions to critically assess the progress made so far, but also to charter EVF's course for 2017. Until now, 'Ekal' (as it is popularly known), had targeted 100,000 villages as its 'goal' for integrated development.

Now, Ekal wants to reach out to all 600,000-plus rural/tribal areas in India. Considering it is already in 62,000 villages, this was inevitable. Another reason for this ambitious undertaking is that it has picked up tremendous momentum in recent years in terms of enterprising entrepreneurs joining its fold everywhere with innovative ideas and actively pursuing various rural projects. At the conference, Himanshu Shah, CEO of 'Shah Capital' and 'Mohan Wanchoo', CEO of 'EC Info systems' each pledged \$100,000 to \$200,000 per year, for the next several years to uplift rural lives. Inspired by PM Modi's 'Swachh Bharat' initiative, Ekal's 'clean environment' pilot project is already making its mark in some rural and tribal areas. Moreover, water

conservation, organic farming, cottage industries that could empower young girls and women-folks are in full swing in most of the villages. There are 53,000 Ekal schools in operation throughout rural India that benefit 1.5 million children - half of which are girls. Lalan Sharmaji, Village Development Field Director for "Ekal-India", presented numerous examples of Ekal Alumnus, with full details, who have distinguished themselves by obtaining prestigious district and state-level jobs, after graduating from Ekal schools. There are plans under way to carry out impact-studies by collecting and analyzing data on all Ekal alumni. It is widely known that Ekal renders all assistance irrespective of one's caste, creed and religion and its overhead is just 10%. What is more! When Ekal-Team met PM Modi this year, he not only applauded Ekal Vidyalaya's efforts all across rural India, but also, termed it as an extension of 'Skill India' campaign.

Bajarang Bagraji, CEO of 'Ekal Abhiyan' (umbrella Orgz of 'Ekal'), unveiled an ambitious plan of multifaceted development of villages for 2017 at this Conference. According to him, 'Ekal will add 5,000 new schools specifically in conflict-zones and enhance the quality of training by resorting to digital technology. For youths, five more 'Ekal-on-Wheels' digital training-vans are being added, bringing the total of such facility to 9. Each of these 'modern-technology' labs have capacity to train 5,000 youths each year. He further added that 'Anemia', which is so prevalent among rural women-folks, would be expressly addressed in 300 villages and soon a pilot project of 'tele-medicine' would be started in Bengal.

As for agro-projects, 15,000 nutritional gardens and 25,000 acres of organic farming are being added next year. Currently, a 'Gramothan Resource Center' (GRC) at 'Karanjho', Jharkhand is the only encyclopedic information 'citadel' for villagers to learn modern techniques. It caters to 100 surrounding villages, directly benefitting 100,000 rural folks, and indirectly, affecting almost one million people. Bagraji elaborated that 11 such 'GRC's are under way for next year.

The Event-Committee, headed by Dilip Kothekar and

Ekal team with PM Modi ji

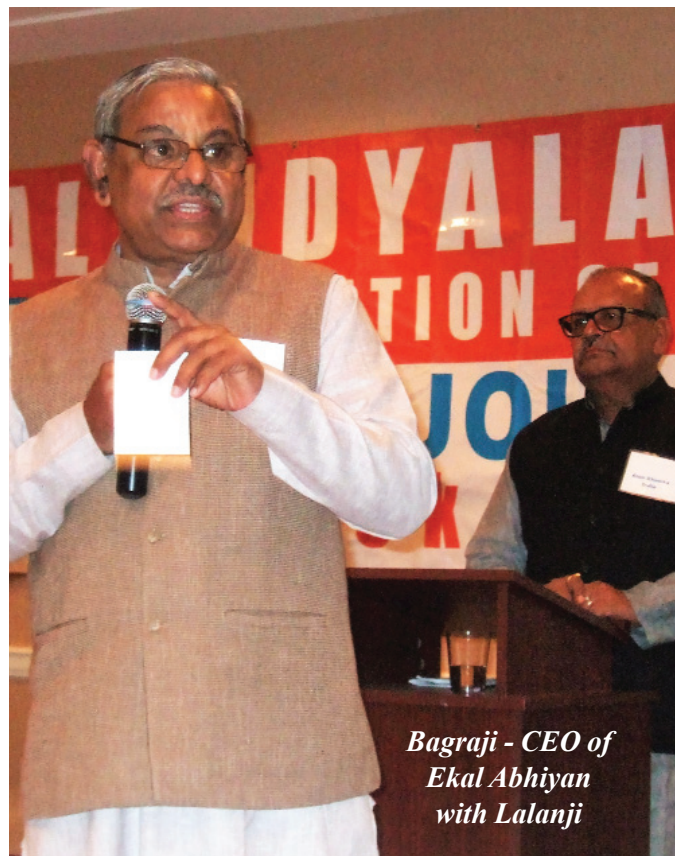




National Conference 2016

Prajna Khisti, is taking a departure from engaging Bollywood 'Song & Dance Troupe' for annual 'Fund-raising Concerts'. For the first time, an innovative group of a dozen talented Artists from Ekal-villages will be presented in most amazing one-of-a-kind entertainment program consisting of regional folk-songs & dances of India, skits from Ramayan-Mahabharat, folklore episodes etc. Currently, they are all being guided and trained by the best professionals in stage performances. Ekal believes this pioneering effort to bring ordinary but talented, village-folks to the forefront of this continent in 60-plus Ekal events will promote their ethnic artistry and will give them consistent patronage at national and international level.

Starting with this conference, Ekal-USA is entering into 'Social-Media' arena with vengeance. The technology-savvy team, headed by Akshay Joshi includes Avinash Agarwal, Vinita Dogra, Arti Aggarwal and Sheetal Gupta. It will be guided by Prashant Shah, a new member of Ekal-USA 'Board of Directors' and shall be advised by Prakash Waghmare and Ranjani Saigal, as necessary. In short, there is new dawn at 'Ekal Vidyalaya' on every level. ■



*Bagraji - CEO of
Ekal Abhiyan
with Lalanji*



Make Friends with the Present

By Siddheshwari Devi (Didi Ji)

We are accustomed to being somewhere else rather than being in the here and now. While eating our meal we watch T.V. Consequently, we don't appreciate what we are eating or realize how much we are eating. While talking on the phone we take the opportunity to check our email, or read the newspaper. Afterwards, we cannot remember the conversation we had for ten minutes. In a meeting, many perfect the art of doodling. While driving, some like to take a nap; which has been proven to be a bad idea.

People go on a vacation with the view to enjoy the present. But the vacationer is often focused on the future. While on the beach, he is thinking about where to have lunch. While having lunch, he is thinking about checking out the museum. While others 'ooh' and 'aah' over the precious blue vase from the Ming dynasty, he is counting the number of postcards he should be buying for friends and family. While mailing postcards, he is thinking about where to take the family to dinner. While having dinner, he is thinking about sleeping. While packing for home, he and his family are making plans for the next vacation.

We are either burying our head in the past, thinking

about 'how good it was back then,' or worrying about 'what's going to happen in the future.' Don't tell the present, but it seems that we don't seem to like it very much. We liked it fine in the past when it was the future, and we will like it in the future once it has turned into the past, but we don't care much for it right now.

Someone has said, "The past is history, and the future is a mystery. But the present is a real gift."

Think about it, and make friends with the present.

Invest spiritually

The stock market has been very volatile lately. So have investors' fortunes and anxiety levels. Under these circumstances, people typically compare notes about their investments and investment bankers. They take stock of what has been working for them and what has not. They seek advice and decide whether they should make adjustments in achieving their financial goals or stay the course.

One thing to remind ourselves under these circumstances is the investment that really counts. All the material wealth accumulated in an entire lifetime will be left behind once you leave the world. It will be of no use to you then. The only thing that will matter at that time is the spiritual investment you have made in the present life.

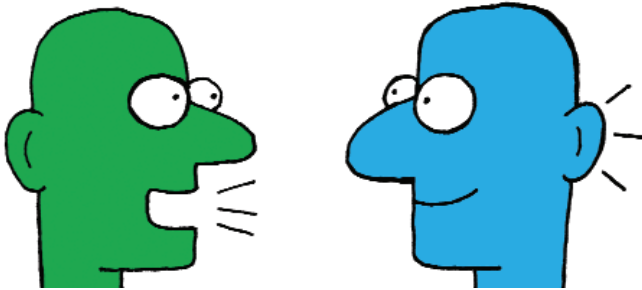
Financial investments, based on imperfect knowledge, are risky. You may make money, or you could lose all of it. But there is absolutely no risk involved in spiritual investments. You can be absolutely sure of bountiful returns. Yes; spiritual investment requires sacrifice and perseverance. Yes; the return on your spiritual investment may be slow. Yes; it may take a long time to gain maturity. Yes; there are trials and hardships along the way. But in the end your investment will multiply many times over.



The time to invest spiritually is right now. Invest heavily in the form of daily self-inquiry and spiritual practice. Then wait for the sweet returns.

Communicate effectively

Whether it is of a business nature, within the family or with the Divine, every relationship thrives on communication. Due to poor communication skills we lose out in many important ways in life. Therefore, it is important to understand what others are saying and to get our message across clearly.



Start with listening. Listen carefully to what the other person is saying. Focus! Do not be distracted. If you have not understood what has been said, ask for the words to be repeated. We don't always hear what has been said. The game called 'Telephone' is highly amusing because the original message often becomes completely distorted. The message starts out as, "The rain in Spain falls mostly on the plains." After being heard by 12 people it ends up as "There is no rice on the plane."

Communication involves more than just words, of course. If a person is speaking very loving words but avoiding eye contact he will not be believed. Eye contact is very important. Other mode of communication is a smile. A simple smile! People recommend their doctor or dentist to their friends not necessarily because she is the most qualified but because of the reassuring smiles she gives, and the way she makes every patient feel.

A little pat on the back, a reassuring smile and sympathetic words are a very important part of effective communication. However, they must be genuine. When we try to see the Divine in all creatures, it is not difficult to speak genuinely. Then we can communicate kindness and forgiveness most effectively.

Communicate with your children

A man wanted to buy his son a birthday present but could not find anything that his child didn't already have. I suggested that spending time with his son would be the

best gift he could give. The man said, "That I don't have."

Children need time and attention from their parents in order to flourish. As parents you must communicate with your children. Show them that you love them and care for them. Don't always lecture to them; listen to them. Put away some special time for your child. And when you promise your child you will do something together, honor the commitment.

Humans are supposed to be the smartest creatures, yet we act very foolishly at times. Many people work so many hours in a week that they have no time for their children. Ask them why they are working so hard, and they will tell you they are doing it for their kids. The same kids for whom they have no time! It makes no sense.

And then I meet many people who introduce their children to me in a very strange manner. "Didi Ji, meet my irresponsible son, who gets up very late on the weekend, and who doesn't do his homework on time, and who speaks rudely to his mother, and who refuses to attend your lectures" Ouch! How flattering an introduction this is! At this point I am as embarrassed as the child. This wonderful introduction is followed by, "Please straighten him out and teach him how to be a good kid."

No doubt you will need to reprimand your child from time to time. However, there are many times the child



needs to be praised also. Acknowledge your child's accomplishments; make a big deal out of them. Your child deserves it. And when you reprimand her, be fair. Don't say, "You never listen to me." This is not true, and the child will be frustrated. It would be fair to say, "You are not listening to me, and I am wondering what's going on. Talk to me."

It's not easy being a parent, but it's also not easy being a child. ■

Now, Yoga becomes Part of Nursing Curriculum

Yoga has now become part of the nursing curriculum at the Mahatma Gandhi Medical College and Research Institute (MGMCRI) under the Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth (SBV).

The Centre for Yoga Therapy, Education and Research (CYTER), SBV, which had pioneered the incorporation of Yoga concepts in the MBBS curriculum two years ago and later for dental education, has now introduced slightly modified modules on the therapeutic potential of the practice of attaining body-mind harmony for nursing students.

Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani, CYTER Deputy Director, said that although the curriculum content was largely similar for all streams, there were minor modifications. If MBBS students were taught about how Yoga could complement modern medicinal interventions in the management of lifestyle disorders such as diabetes or hypertension, nurses would learn more about those aspects of yoga that help patients recuperate from illness.



Students of dental sciences are exposed to Yoga concepts more as a self-care tool in addressing postural problems, he added.

The Nursing College has included Yoga Therapy in the BSc Nursing curriculum with students receiving 90 hours of Yoga Therapy training through CYTER during the three-year course. The first batch of 100 nursing students are due to complete the 45

hours of Yoga classes during their first year. The batches would undergo 30 hours of Yoga classes in their second year and 15 hours of exposure in the final year, Professor Bhavanani said.

K. Renuka, Dean, Nursing Faculty and Principal of Kasturba Gandhi Nursing College, stated that it was a first that all medical, dental and nursing students of a medical university were receiving regular training in Yoga.

In fact, CYTER hosted the 6th Foundation Day on the theme of 'Introducing Yoga in Nursing Education'.

Addressing the meet, SBV Vice Chancellor Professor K.R. Sethuraman reminded nursing students of their vital role in healthcare as the primary caregivers for patients and stressed the importance of Yoga in their personal and professional lives.

Professor N. Ananthakrishnan, Dean, Allied Health Sciences, Professor A.R. Srinivasan, SBV Registrar, Vijaya, Yoga educator from Gitananda Yoga Society of Berlin, Germany, Professor VN Mahalakshmi, Vice Principal, MGMCRI, Professor Madanmohan, CYTER Director and Meena Ramanathan, Yoga therapist were among those who took part in the event.

A book on 'Yoga Practical Notes', compiled and edited by Sri G Dayanidy, lecturer at CYTER, was released on the occasion. Educators from MGMC & RI, KGNC, CMTER, and ICYER at Ananda Ashram, Yoganjali Natyalayam and Pondicherry Yogasana Association also attended the events.

Professor Bhavanani pointed to the need for a holistic integration of modern and traditional systems for the best possible outcomes in patient care. "It is imperative that advances in medicine include the holistic approach of Yoga to face the current challenges in healthcare. The antiquity of Yoga must be united with the innovations of modern medicine to improve quality of life throughout the world," he said.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/puducherry/Now-Yoga-becomes-part-of-nursing-curriculum/article 16437461.ece>



VHPA - Executive Board

Samskar - Values

Coordinator, Coalition of Hindu Youth(CHY)

Samir Asthana

Preya Dave

Director, Bal Vihar, Camps, Youth Prog

Manju Tiwari

Prachar - Awareness

Director, PR & Media

Utsav Chakrabarty

Director, Inter Organizations Communication

Umesh Shukla

Director, American Hindus Against Defamation (AHAD)

Ajay Shah

VP, Publications

Shyam Tiwari

Sampark - Network

Convener, Hindu Mandir Executives Conference (HMEC)

Vipul Patel

Convener, Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference (HMPC) , Interfaith

Sant Gupta

Director, Hindu American Vanaprasthi Network (HAVAN)

Kumar Dave

Arvind Patel

Director, HWN (Hindu Women's Network)

Kusum Khurana

Seva - Service

Director, Support A Child (SAC)

Renu Gupta

Director, Seva in America (SIC)

Mani Keeran

VP, Seva

Girish Gandhi

Finance

Treasurer

Jayesh Mehta

Treasurer

Anit Gupta

Treasurer

Vasav Mehta

VP, Finance

Vimal Sodhani

Infrastructure & Organizational Functions

Director, Technology

Srinivas Bolisetty

Director, Membership

Dhaval Joshipura,

Raju Patel

Director, Office Matters

Gaurang Vaishnav

Election Officers

Dinesh Modh,

Nikhil Buch

Organizing Secretary (NE)

Sanjay Kaul

Organizing Secretary (MW)

Amitabh Mittal

Organizing Secretary (SE&W)

Sneha Mehta

Organizing Secretary (WC)

TBA

General Secretary

Sanjay Mehta

President

Abhaya Asthana

Advisory Board Chairperson

Jyotish Parekh



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

National Office: P.O. Box 611, Iselin, NJ 08830 Tax ID# 51-0156325
Tel: 732-744-0851 Email: office@vhp-america.org www.vhp-america.org

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

Signature _____

Date _____

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