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Vishwa Dharma Digest

Year	Hindus
1951	22%
1961	18.5%
1974	13.5%
1981	12.1%
1991	10.5%
2001	9.2%
2011	8.5%
2022	7.95%



Yugabdh: 5125 Shaka Samvat: 1945 Vikram Samvat: 2080

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श्रीभगवानुवाच | मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते | श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मता: || 12.2||

-श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता, 12.2

The Lord said: Those who fix their minds on Me and always engage in My devotion with steadfast faith, I consider them to be the best yogis.

> śhrī-bhagavān uvācha mayy āveśhya mano ye māṁ nitya-yuktā upāsate śhraddhayā parayopetās te me yuktatamā matāḥ

> > Bhagvad Gita, 12.2

ABOUT THE HINDU VISHWA

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

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Vanishing HINDU POPULATION in BANGLADESH!

When a NATION TAKES a Leap









💉 EDITORIAL

THE KERALA STORY The Unique Struggles Faced by Hindus and Christians

he recently released film "The Kerala Story" overwhelmingly resonated with the audiences worldwide and became an instant hit without any significant marketing budget. It's a story not only relevant to Hindus but also for the humanity at large. Our children have gradually distanced themselves from the *Parampara* i.e. the cultural and religious customs, and traditions that have shaped our identity. This shift can be attributed to the influences of secularism, communism, socialism, and more recently wokeism, which have propagated ideas that challenge the importance of traditions and rituals.

It is essential to question how and why these young minds as depicted in the film were easily swayed away and succumbed to ideologies that disassociated them from their roots. The process of indoctrination and brainwashing often preys on vulnerable minds searching for meaning and sense of belonging. The inability of young girls in the film to articulate counterarguments suggests a lack of awareness and critical thinking, rendering them susceptible to manipulation. This is a distressing reality, as countless lives have been destroyed due to the abandonment of the age-old principle of "Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah" (The protection of righteousness protects the protector).

To address this issue, it is also crucial to emphasize the role of parents in preserving our traditions and passing them down to the younger generation. Parents play a vital role in instilling values through rituals and the celebration of festivals at home. By actively engaging in these practices and explaining its importance, parents can ensure that their children understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. In addition, it is equally important to engage in discussions about our scriptures. By discussing these texts openly, we can help our children develop a critical understanding of these scriptures. This knowledge will enable them to engage in meaningful discussions with individuals from different religious backgrounds and effectively explain our beliefs and practices.

Hindus are not alone in facing these challenges, the Rotherham scandal, where British Midlands Muslim

grooming gangs exploited vulnerable girls, is a stark reminder of the dangers that arise when religious dogmas are used for nefarious purposes to dismantle humanity. Similarly, the Netflix series "Caliphate" depicts the radicalization of individuals in Sweden, shedding light on the vulnerability of marginalized communities to extremist jihadist ideologies. However, the prevalence of these issues is often overshadowed and compromised by the political and economic alliances maintained by cinemas in the east and west alike, leading to a selective portrayal of narratives that often align with and cater to the vested islamists' interests.

Furthermore, the prevailing narrative has guilt-tripped Hindus and other elites into silence, preventing them from speaking the truth and challenging the status quo. This selfimposed censorship inhibits open dialogue and hinders efforts to address the root cause of these issues, ultimately perpetuating the cycle of ignorance and brutality. The plight of the Yazidi community, particularly the women, who have been subjected to unimaginable horrors as sex slaves, serves as a painful reminder of the destructive nature of jihadist ideologies when often left unchallenged can annihilate and shame the humanity in all of us.

While the Rotherham scandal shed light on the plight of British girls, The Kerala Story film draws attention to the unique struggles faced by Hindus and Christians. Political correctness, while aiming to promote inclusiveness and respect, has at times silenced critical discussions about sensitive topics. In all these cases, the fear of being labeled as 'intolerant' or culturally insensitive prevented an open dialogue about the nature of the crimes and the invasive religious ideologies contributing to them. This deprived the victims from receiving the support they desperately needed and allowed the perpetrators to continue their heinous acts.

In conclusion, the Kerala Story film serves as a powerful reminder of the suppressed truths often concealed beneath the burka of the "all religions are good" narrative. By overcoming the fear of challenging the prevailing narrative, we can protect our cultural heritage and continue the pursuit of justice.





he Hindu New Year, also known as Vikram Samvat, is celebrated by millions of Hindus worldwide. It is celebrated in the first lunar month each year in late March or early April. The festival has different names based on the local languages, and each region has its own set of unique traditions and cultural practices to celebrate this joyous occasion. The origins of this celebration can be traced back in the scriptures to the day Lord Brahma recreated the universe after the great deluge and hence the belief that time restarted on this day.

Hindus worldwide relegate the last year to the past and start anew on this day looking forward to the future. People mark the occasion by wearing colorful new clothes, cooking a wide variety of food, lighting lamps and offering prayers for an auspicious beginning to the year. This year, the World Hindu Council of America Atlanta Chapter (VHPA) with its partner organizations celebrated this wonderful community event on April 8th, 2023 at Gokuldham Haveli in Buford Georgia. Despite the heavy rains and the last-minute location change, a huge crowd gathered for this celebration.

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The event started with lamp lighting followed by an address from our Chief Guest GA Senator Shawn Still. Shawn sponsored the resolution in Georgia recognizing and commending the Indian community in the State for its wonderful contributions. Several local leaders including Rupal Vaishnav and Bob Erramilli also attended the program. Various Groups of kids and adults performed traditional dances representing various states in India. This was interspersed with trivia about the states where the audience used their mobile phones to answer the questions for prizes. The enthusiastic and











highly engaged audience enjoyed every performance.

Students from local dance schools performed Bharatnatyam, Kathak and Kuchipudi while other groups performed folk dances like Oddissi, Garba, Mohiniattam and Rajasthani folk dances. A large group entertained the audience with Dhol Tasha and Lezim performance with a palki carrying Vitthal and Rakhumai. You can imagine the atmosphere where men playing these large dhols entered the auditorium followed by women dancing joyfully with their lezims and kids carrying the Palki all representing the state of Maharashtra. Two young singers who were the winner and first runner up of the Atlanta Indian Idol event also entertained the audience with their melodious tunes.



The finale of the event came when a flash mob from the audience joined performers on the stage to perform a traditional garba made popular in the Gujrati movie Hellaro. Men, women and kids alike







joined this performance with some in the audience also dancing in the back of the auditorium as the stage was hardly large enough to hold everyone.

As the event drew to a close, audience truly felt that we had ushered in the Vikram Samvat in grand style with a message of joy and prosperity for all. This event was fully funded by donations raised from the community.

A special mention is needed to acknowledge the trustees of Gokuldham Haveli who offered their event facility free of charge which made the event possible as torrential rains moved into Georgia unexpectedly. Gokuldham also had delicious snacks and much needed hot tea and coffee for sale, which warmed the otherwise bitterly cold and rainy day.

The Atlanta Chapter will make this an annual event going forward as we look to engage more and more people as ambassadors for our culture and values fostering even closer ties between Hindus and the local community.

Please do write to the editor if you wish to get more information about this event or would like to support us in any way for the next year.

















PART 2 – PERFORMING ARTS

By Jai G. Bansal, VP of Education - World Hindu Council of America (VHPA) Kalyan Viswanathan, President - Hindu University of America

art 1 of this article has extensively documented the numerous examples where Hindu ideas have created deep and lasting impact on the Western literature. This article will show that the same is true of the performing arts, specifically music and cinema.

As we noted in Part 1, this article has been excerpted from on our coffee-table book "Hinduism and America: How Hindu Dharma is Transforming the West."

Influence on Western Music

Pandit **Ravi Shankar** (1920-2012) was one of the first to enthrall the West when he performed with Yehudi Mehunin at the Bath Festival in Great Britain, in 1959. In his autobiography, *Unfinished Journey* (1977), Yehudi Mehunin writes that the purpose of Indian music is to 'unite one's soul and discipline one's body, to make one sensitive to the infinite within one, to unite one's breath of space, one's vibrations with the vibrations of the cosmos'.

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Yehudi Mehunin also had a hand in inviting another talented Indian musician, the Sarod maestro **Ali Akbar Khan** (1922-2009), to play for Western audiences. In Mehunin's words, he was not just *'an absolute genius*, [but also perhaps] *the greatest musician in the world.*' Having wowed audiences with his skill right from his first performance in the US in 1955, he became the first Indian musician to record in the West and eventually went on to open the Ali Akbar College of Music in the Bay Area, teaching and honing talent from across the globe.



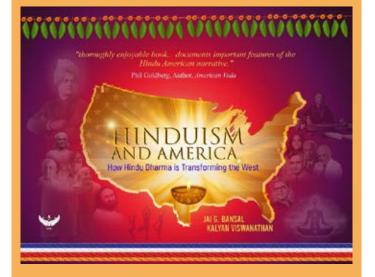


The arrival of Indian music in the West turned out to be an important development for the transmission of Hindu philosophy as well because the celebrities that went on to embrace the spiritual path in the years that followed were musically inclined and could envision the confluence of the two – music and divinity.

It was not just musicians who believed in this great merger. Vedantists like Sri Chinmoy (1931-2007) shared that vision too. Born as Chinmoy Kumar Ghose, he came to the US in 1964, and went on to head a spiritual community. Sri Chinmoy was not just a spiritual guru, but also a talented musician and a prolific composer. But his biggest contribution to music - and the West's pursuit of Hindu spiritualism - was his power to attract a galaxy of stars who became his ardent followers. From Carlos Santana to John McLaughlin and Roberta Flack, celebrity musicians flocked to him. And watching them, millions of Americans began to give Vedanta a serious thought. "It is through music that the universal feeling of oneness can be achieved in the twinkling of an eye," was his firm belief. Accordingly, he allowed music to take the lead, so it could bring people of different languages, cultures and colours together.

Another spiritual teacher who made music and chanting core to his teachings, and in the process, attracted hundreds of thousands of Westerners to Hindu philosophy was a man of many names. He was born Abhay Charan De, and became A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami in 1959, after taking monastic vows. But America knows him better as Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977), the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in 1966. Hare Krishna became a chant, a kirtan, that would fill a million hearts with joy and bliss across the streets of America. In 1967, Prabhupada presided over an event that featured the who's who of rock music at that time - the Grateful Dead, Big Brother and Janis Joplin, with her group, the Holding Company. It was as if America had found its moment of epiphany - peace, love and spirituality through the joy of chanting and music.

In late 1960s, a major icon from music world, **George Harrison** (1943-2001) of the Beatles fame, discovered Hindu philosophy through his associations



HINDUISM AND AMERICA: How Hindu Dharma is Transforming the West" is a recently released COFFEE TABLE BOOK that attempts to narrate the story of this transformative movement. Written jointly by the authors of this article, this book represents two-and-half-year long collaboration effort of VHPA and HUA.

Order your copy at tinyurl.com/3svef6mm, or scan the QR code:



"This book should adorn every Hindu American's coffee table.":

Prof. Ved Nanda, Director,

The Ved Nanda Center for International ఈ Comparative Law, Padma Bhushan





with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Prabhupada, and became a life-long adherent of it. In 1969, he produced the single '*Hare Krishna Mantra*', and followed it up with more music focusing on Hindu Gods – *Govinda*, a single and *Radha-Krishna Temple*, an album. A year later, he funded the printing of *Krishna: The Supreme Personality of Godhead* by Prabhupada and wrote the foreword for it. In 1997, he produced the *Album of Chants* that featured Pandit Ravi Shankar and comprised Vedic prayers, chants and Hindu devotional music.

Amongst the many musicians Harrison collaborated with across the world included a young but talented table player, **Zakir Hussain** (b.1951), who contributed to his album *Living in the Material World (1973)*. In the coming years, Zakir Husain would collaborate with John Handy in his 1973 album *Hard Work*, with Van Morrison's in *Into the Music (1979)*, and with Earth, Wind & Fire in *Powerlight (1983)*. Zakir was indeed much in demand worldwide, working in unison with varied artists and bringing Indian music to the world stage, as part of ensemble groups like *Shakti* and through international albums like *Planet Drum*, that featured leading percussionists from the international arena.

While **John Coltrane's** (926-1967) association with Ravi Shankar introduced him to Indian music, he was also into books that opened the doors to the Hindu paradigm. From *Autobiography of a Yogi to Life of Sri Ramakrishna* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, he soaked in everything that the best of Hindu classics had to offer. This resulted in compositions titled *Meditation, Om*, and *India*. In his own words, his music was meant to 'point out to people the divine in a musical language that transcends words'.

Philip Glass (b.1937), a classical composer who had worked with Ravi Shankar, realised that Indian music inspired in him 'a whole new way of thinking about music'. His understanding of the Vedic tenets led to the creation of two major operas - Satyagraha, based on Mahatma Gandhi's years in South Africa, with verses from the Bhagavad Gita; and *The Passion of Ramakrishna*, based on the last months of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's life.

The movement became bigger when entire albums and genres emerged from this, like a subgenre of hardcore punk called *Krishnacore* that emerged in the 1980s. A rock band named itself Kula Shaker, after the Vaishnavite saint, one of the 12 Alwars of South India, Kulashekhara, and released songs like *Govinda* and *Tattva*. The *Veils of Maya*, originally the title of a poem by George William Russell, was also adapted as the title of a song (*Veil of Maya*) by rock band Cynic in 1993 for their album, Focus. Even rap music added stories about Hindu Gods like Ganesha, Hanuman and Shiva, when Nick Giacomini (also known as MC Yogi) created his rap album *Elephant Power*. Cher included the *Gayatri Mantra* as part of the track in her farewell tour.

Thus, on one hand, musicians have been adapting Hindu music, mantras and chants to suit their genre, and on the other, millions of their fans have been exposed to various aspects of the Hindu culture and philosophy.

Influence on Movies

For long, Indian cinema has witnessed the onslaught of Western (mostly Hollywood) themes and styles of filmmaking. A closer look would reveal that the converse is also true.

Hollywood buffs would instantly identify the science fiction saga of a man who becomes a gallant hero by fighting the evil forces and rescuing a princess in captivity as the **Star Wars** series. But how many would actually link it to the Ramayana? And when Luke Skywalker is guided by the wise Yoda, how many would think of the Mahabharata, where Lord Krishna guides Arjuna in the Kurukshetra war? Ancient Indian epics in modern Hollywood storytelling? How could that be? The answer lies in the degrees of separation.

It has been well documented that George Lucas was inspired by Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* when he envisioned his own hero fighting intergalactic battles and emerging victorious. Campbell's bestseller had gone on to examine the tale of an archetypal hero who journeys through crises, faces trials where he needs to battle against all odds, experiences a moment of enlightenment and eventually wins the battle, in the process, epitomising strength of character and becoming a source of inspiration for many. This could well be a description of Lord Rama in the Ramayana. The references in Star Wars from ancient Hindu epics are endless. Princess Leia is kidnapped by the evil Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker battles him with the help of Chewbacca, a character that's half-man and half-animal. The references to Sita, Rama and Hanuman are quite conspicuous here. In all his battles, Skywalker is aided by armies of Wookies and later, Ewoks, both of them belonging to the animal warrior clan, like the army that helped Rama fight Ravana. The entire series is about the battle of good over evil, and restoring righteous reign to the world. Yoda's words of wisdom, spoken in a certain metric with an uncommon grammatical construct, reflects a lot of what the Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita.

Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, is depicted with blue skin, a prominent feature of the Na'vi, the main characters in James Cameron's **Avatar**, a title borrowed from Sanskrit that means – incarnation. Why Avatar? In Hindu epics, it is said that when demons (asuras) and mankind create havoc on earth, Lord Vishnu, the protector, takes on an avatar to vanquish the evil forces. The plot of Cameron's Avatar is along similar lines – an avatar fights against human greed to protect the Na'vi.

There are several other references to Hindu epics in the movie. The practice of the soul leaving a body and entering another one at will has been explored in our ancient Hindu scriptures. The Avatar offers a scientific take on this as it happens in a controlled environment, unsurprisingly controlled by humans as the movie takes place in the future, in 2154. Several Hindu Gods are depicted as having special vahanas, typically creatures with magical powers that include flying across galaxies, in which they travel. Avatar features similar flying creatures called Ikrans or Mountain Banshees that are used by Na'vi for hunting and traveling across large distances.

While Avatar took viewers to an imaginary world, the **Matrix** created its own world of illusions, inspired by the concept of Maya or illusion that finds a mention in several Hindu scriptures. The make-believe world around us, so precisely described in Hindu philosophy, is recreated by virtual reality that juxtaposes an alternate world over the one we currently inhabit. As a result, one is left wondering which is real and which, imaginary. And that is what the concept of Maya is attempting to unfold.

Advanced minds would tell us that everything around us is Maya, and the Matrix plays on it to deliver a trilogy where the real and imaginary tango in the human mind, leaving one bemused. One of the ways one could identify Maya and transcend it is with the help of a Guru, as shown in the movie where Neo, the hero seeks answers to several questions, and Morpheus, the man who guides him, has the answers. The audio track of the movie brings us closer to the source as an adaptation of a Vedic shloka plays in the background when the end credits roll on screen.

Another movie that explores maya as an illusionary world around us is **Inception**, where one goes deeper and deeper into the dark recesses of the mind until one cannot differentiate between reality and illusion. While the Hindu scriptures offer insights into how the evolved minds of yogis can navigate the slippery road traversing the two, the common man is less fortunate and as seen in the movie, both the hero and the audiences are left wondering if it was really happening – or if it was just maya.

Inception also adapts the Hindu definition of time based on yugas and measuring it in units of 'Brahma' and yugas. In other words, what would amount to millions of years for mankind would comprise a yuga and many such yugas would constitute a day for the creator, Brahma. In other words, the definition of a day varies, depending on the frame of reference.

The hero in the movie ends up entering the subconscious of people through their dreams and steals information from them. In the end, we are left wondering if his entire escapade where he sets out to plant information into someone's mind was itself a dream or reality.

The concept of delving into one's dreams has also been outline in our scriptures, right from the time that marked the creation of the universe, which happened when Lord Vishnu was asleep and Brahma emerged from him, only to be destroyed and re-emerged as the Brahman, who created the universe as we know it. In the words of Carl Lagan in his series Cosmos, *"It is said that men may not be the dreams of the gods, but rather that the*





gods are the dreams of men.[°] Are dreams real? Is life cyclic? Hollywood is attempting to communicate these Hindu concepts, by making thrilling capers out of them.

Another movie that dips into the vast Vedic resources for the concept of time is **Interstellar**. When the lead character travels through space and returns to earth, the passage of time is different in different dimensions. As a result of it, the hero spends three hours on another planet, but in effect has spent 33 earth years on it. And when he returns, so much has changed, including the people. Bhagavat Purana refers to a king named Kukudmi who travels from earth to meet Brahma, but when he is set to return, he is informed that while he has spent only a few days in heaven, thousands of years have passed on earth and that everything has changed. As with Inception, the passage of time being different based on the frame of reference goes back to the concept of a yuga and a day in the life of Brahma.

Interestingly, the movie begins with an Indian surveillance drone spotted by the hero. Whether this is coincidence or simply the director's nod to the ancient Indian philosophies that the movie references, is left to the viewer's imagination. Wormholes, time travel, the concept of a divine or cosmic consciousness that is omnipresent, the presence of dimensions unknown and hence unexplored by man – several concepts of science fiction have been enunciated in Hindu philosophy.

For a detailed exposition of these and related ideas, please refer to "Hinduism and America: How Hindu Dharma is Transforming the West."

About the Authors

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Dr. Jai Bansal is a scientist, author, and community leader with a keen interest in Indian history and in exploring the contributions of the Hindu civilization to the world. He currently serves as the Vice President of Education for the World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), as well as a member of its executive board and the governing council. After a distinguished career spanning 38 years, Dr. Bansal retired in 2014 as the Chief Scientific Officer and the Global Technology Development Advisor of a global petrochemical company. From 2014 to 2018, he served as an advisor to the Argonne National Laboratory, Chicago, and the US Department of Energy. He holds a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Waterloo, Canada, and a B.Sc. (Distinction) from Panjab University. He has published widely and holds over two dozen scientific patents.



Mr. Kalyan Viswanathan is currently serving as the President of Hindu University of America and guiding its renewal and revitalization. He was a longtime student of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, established in the Advaita Vedanta Sampradaya and was associated with his work for over 20 plus years. Prior to his involvement with Hindu University of America, Kalyan was a Global Practice Head for one of India's largest IT Services Company, with a 20-plus year track record. He holds a Master's Degree in Computer Science and a Bachelor's Degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from BITS, Pilani. He is also working on his Doctoral degree in Hindu Studies, currently, with a scholarly focus on the intersection of Hindu and Western thought, the recovery of Hindu epistemology and its relevance and value for humanity.





Vanishing **HINDU** Population in **BANGLADESH**!

By Sitanggshu Guha

he Dhaka Tribune on July 27, 2022 reported that the population of Muslims have increased in the country compared to followers of other religions. According to the preliminary report of Population and Housing Census-2022, the Hindu population decreased from 8.54% to 7.95%, the Buddhist population from 0.62% to 0.61%, the Christian population from 0.31% to 0.30% and the population of other religions decreased to 0.14% from 0.12%. However, the Muslim population has increased from 90.39% to 91.04%.

PTI (Press Trust of India) on 23 June 2016 quoted an official report from Dhaka that the number of Hindus in Muslim-majority Bangladesh has grown by one per cent to 1.70 crore in one year constituting 10.7 per cent of the population by the end of 2015. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) said their latest vital sample statistics report found the country's total population to be 15.89 crore by the end of 2015 with the number of Hindus at 1.70 crore. Previous BBS studies showed Bangladesh's Hindu population was 1.55 crore in 2014, suggesting that the numbers of the country's largest minority community increased by 1.5 million in one year.

From 2015 to 2022, only in seven years, according to the government statistics, the Hindus' population in Bangladesh has dwindled from 10.7% to 7.95%? Similarly, Buddhist and Christian population also decreased while the Muslim population increased. On religious basis, after Muslims, Hindus are the largest population group. Hindus in Bangladesh are always complaining that









they are persecuted and are forced to leave the country. One can easily understand the reason for the sharp decline of Hindu population is nothing but unbearable persecution, and Hindus are leaving the country silently for neighbouring India.

Islamists want Bangladesh to be a monolithic Islamic country, administration is looking sideways, while the government is silent. Is not it the government's responsibility to explain why in seven years Hindu population dropped astronomically? Well, the sources cite two reasons for the decline, first, there is outward migration of Hindus, i.e., Hindus are leaving the country and secondly, the relatively overall fertility rate being low amongst the Hindu population, that is, Hindu couples give birth to relatively fewer children. The government frequently pronounced that, 'No Hindu leaves the country for India', if so, then the government needs to explain why the Hindus are missing?

According to the different sources and Human Right activists, since 1947, from Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) roughly 50 million religious and ethnic minorities, mainly Hindus, were forced to take shelter in India. The non-Muslims in that area are subjected to humiliation, vandalizing and desecrating their places of worship, burning down their homes and businesses, eviction, forced conversion, mass rape, kidnaping followed by rape and killing, burning people alive, church massacre, and grisly murders, for more than 7 decades, including half a century of Bangladesh's existence.

US Congressman Robert Dold cited on the House floor (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQOghIetg3Q) Professor Dastidar about vanishing minorities (Empire's last casualty: Indian subcontinent's vanishing Hindu and other minorities, Dastidar, S. 2008). "Since 1947, fortynine million Hindus of Bangladesh have gone missing." and on July 19, 2019, Ms. Priya Saha, a Bangladeshi human rights activist, reported to former President Donald Trump that "37 million Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians have disappeared from Bangladesh [She didn't mention the years but perhaps it's since 1971]," (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuVwuUYG0BY).

Dr Abul Barakat, a professor of economics at University of Dhaka, has predicted that "No Hindus will be left in Bangladesh after 30 years." (Dhaka Tribune, Nov. 20, 2016).

h t t p s : / / w w w . d h a k a t r i b u n e . c o m / bangladesh/2016/11/20/abul-barkat-632-hindus-left-country-day/

"The rate of exodus over the past 49 years points in that direction," the Dhaka University teacher says in his book Political economy of reforming agricultureland-water bodies in Bangladesh. From his 30-year-





long research, Barkat found that before the Liberation War, the daily rate of migration was 705 while it was 512 during 1971-1981 and 438 during 1981-1991. The number increased to 767 persons per day during 1991-2001, and around 774 persons left the country per day during 2001-2012, the book says.

According to the leading Dhaka Daily the Prothom Alo, on March 29, 2013, the National Human Rights Commission chairman, Dr Mizanur Rahman spoke at a RTC (round table conference) at the Dhaka University Teacher-student Canter that, government and civil society have failed to safeguard the interest of the religious minorities. He warned that 'Hindus will become extinct in Bangladesh in the next 20 years!' The RTC was organized by 'Sompriti Moncho' (Communal Harmony Forum).

On 22 September 2012, the daily Prothom Alo & weekly blitz published a report which states that in the past 10 years, compared to the growth of the total population in Bangladesh, there is an alarming decrease of the Hindu population in the country. According to statistics available with the government sources, the proportionate decrease in Hindu population is around nine million. The statistics show a near elimination of the Hindu population in fifteen districts in the country. Most of the Hindu families in those districts were forced to leave the country. The district-wise statistics of population sees "huge decline" or "the near elimination" of Hindu population in fifteen districts, though the statistics terms the decline of Hindu population as "missing population".

The Financial Express on 15 September 2013 published a story in the last page with headline,

'Dhaka rejects UN report on 3.2m Bangladeshis' migration to India'. It said the government will never endorse the latest United Nations report on international migration, which said some 3.2 million Bangladeshis had migrated and settle in India over the past decades, a senior official of the ministry to foreign affairs said on Saturday. The report, prepared by the UN department of Economics and Social Affairs (DESA), and released on Wednesday termed the "migration from Bangladesh to India as the single largest bilateral stock of international migrants in the eastern hemisphere and also in the developing world."

https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/ public/last-page/dhaka-rejects-un-report-on-32mbangladeshisrsquo;-migration-to-india

Only 1.93% allotted for religious minorities!

Bangladesh fiscal year 2021-22 budget allotted for Religious Affairs Ministry Taka 15,054.03 crore (roughly \$1771 million) under the ADP (annual development project), of which Taka 290.08 crore (roughly \$34million) was allocated for projects related to religious minorities. Religious minorities' share of the religious affairs ministry's total budget is only 1.93% and the rest goes to Islamic development, whereas the total religious minority population is more than 12%. It is a shame, discriminatory and humiliating, it seems that religious minorities have no rights, let alone human rights. Both Bangladesh Hindu Buddhists & Christian Oikyo Parishad (BHBCOP) and Hindu Grand Alliance (HGA) in Dhaka protested.

About the Author



Sitangshu Guha, a columnist, a former college professor, an internationally known Human Rights defender, is playing a pivotal role against persecution of Hindus and other religious minorities in Bangladesh and campaigned worldwide to save Bangladesh from the grasp of militant Islamists. Guha, a Bangladeshi, immigrated to USA in 1990. While serving at all levels in different organizations, he reached global Human Rights institutions by strongly advocating injustices committed against the Hindus and as well as his best to make Bangladesh a pluralistic democracy. Mr. Guha compiled and published several books. He lectured at the UN on 13th May 2003 and met Bharatia Rastrapati in 2014 along with dignitaries in USA, Europe, and South Asia.





Why India Must not Let UN Get Divided on Religious Lines

By T S Tirumurti



ndia's former ambassador to UN argues the global body is wrong in formally recognising hate speech against Islam, Judaism, Christianity but not against Hinduism, Buddhism

For the first time, phobias against Abrahamic religions have entered the lexicon of the hallowed UN Security Council (UNSC). On February 20, 2023, in a presidential statement on the Palestine Question, the UNSC noted "with deep concern instances of discrimination, intolerance and hate speech motivated by racism or directed against persons belonging to religious communities, in particular cases motivated by Islamophobia, antisemitism or Christianophobia." This debut of Abrahamic religions in the UNSC came on the eve of the first anniversary of the International Day for Combating Islamophobia on March 15 – a resolution passed in 2022 sponsored by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and approved by the UN General Assembly last year. For the first time, combatting the hatred against a specific religion was elevated to an international day. At the time, only two countries expressed serious concern through an Explanation of Vote – India and France. This time around in the UNSC, France seems to have given in, since a presidential statement requires consensus. Any one of the 15 countries in the UNSC could have stopped

"conference" on "Women in Islam". Pakistan's foreign minister chaired this meeting. While fault lines in UN meetings on such issues as LGBTQ, human rights, race etc. exist, this push to make religion a fault line between countries is more recent.

A debut in UNSC is only a manifestation of what is happening on a wider scale – the gradual division of the UN on religious lines, Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic. This defies common sense as in the last decade attacks and hatred against non-Abrahamic religions have increased. Recent examples abound of violent attacks against Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and others, including their places of worship. Motivated anti-India elements like Khalistanis, Islamic extremist and radical elements, take advantage of the growing hate in the west to attack Hindus and temples abroad.

We are witnessing religiophobia against non-Abrahamic religions. It is short-sighted and dangerous.

India was the first to alert the UN about this when minister of state for external affairs V Muraleedharan in October 2021 told UNSC "our inability to acknowledge these atrocities and phobias (against non-Abrahamic religions) only gives those forces encouragement that phobias against some religions are more acceptable than those against others."

India must lead

India cannot afford to see the UN divided on religious lines. These radical elements are taking advantage of liberal democracies to spread hate and disaffection against own citizens who follow non-Abrahamic faiths. Nothing can be more self-defeating. But even more worrying is the west's silence.

Their right-wing political parties are gaining ascendancy inter alia as reaction to their silence over such developments. With the west missing in action, India must take the lead in the matter of religiophobia against non-Abrahamic religions, including in the UN.

Can India save the UN from getting divided on religious lines?

Source: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/ why-is-united-nations-allowing-division-by-faith/ articleshow/99096068.cms

it. None did. A presidential statement is a notch below a full resolution.

Recently PM Modi took up with his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese the matter of attacks on temples in Australia by Khalistanis, calling it disturbing and worrying. These attacks come close on the heels of earlier ones in Canada and elsewhere on temples and gurdwaras.

Faithful allies of convenience

HINRU

Phobias against the three Abrahamic religions – Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and Christianophobia – have received exclusive reference in various UN resolutions with member states belonging to these three religions coming together, including the west and Islamic countries. This religious alliance of convenience is now led by the Islamic world. While Turkey, Qatar, Pakistan etc. took the lead earlier, it is now led by the UAE (now a UNSC member), Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Pakistan. China and Russia have lent their quiet support. The division of the UN on religious lines is accelerating in real time.

There is nothing innocuous about this religious alliance – it will be used to dilute the fight against terrorism. When the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GTS) was discussed in the UN in June 2021, Islamophobia was sought to be introduced as 'justification' for terrorism. India stood alone and had the reference taken out. Now that discussions for GTS 2023 have started, the clamour to justify terrorism on this basis will be renewed, led by the OIC. The west will likely again keep quiet though countries like France, Spain and others have been impacted by religion-based terrorist attacks.

That said, the Council has repeatedly rejected their proposals and has repeatedly rejected Pakistan's false proposals under Security Council Resolution 1267 for sanctions against "Indian terrorists and terrorist groups", merely to proscribe Hindus, both before and after India entered the Council in 2021-2022.

Non-Abrahamic faiths attacked

On March 8, during the UN Commission on Status of Women, Pakistan organised an Islam-based









By Rajat Mitra

he White man wrote history with the help of his texts. The rest of the world, many of whom he enslaved and whose history he tried to erase, have tried to build it around sacred symbols, sometimes as simple and elegant as a 'Sengol'. A sacred symbol like a Sengol is larger than life, larger

than anything else existing at that moment in history and makes the moment larger than any one man at that time.

There was perhaps only one thought that was on the mind of a man not so white but white by default on fourteenth of august, 1947 and who received it from the white man. It was that nothing should steal the glory of his speech that he is going to read out. So he thought it better to relegate the specter to the oblivion of history, in this case as a 'golden walking stick' in a personal museum.

HINRU

Why was the Sengol rejected as a symbol of independent India and kept as a 'walking stick' in a private museum. It doesn't take much of psychoanalysis to decipher that. A sacred symbol like a Sengol communicates a message that is both timeless and universal, a message that talks about a lost people and

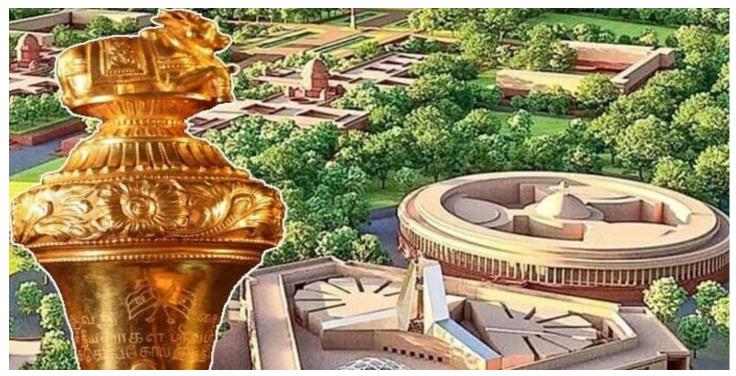


Image Courtesy: RitiRiwaz



their crushed civilization, their memory and hopes, their longings for freedom and their sacrifices to achieve it. A sacred symbol like a Sengol makes a society reflect about her past. They evoke emotions that nothing else can evoke. They tell us we are a whole society, not fragmented as made out to be. It tells us how complex was getting our freedom rather than it reduced to a single individual event with the glory thrown upon only one man and how he chose to shape it for future generations.

Would India have been different had the Sengol been given its importance by the people entrusted with its care in 1947?

It would have reminded us of the glory that India was, has always been and told her people that they have a legacy that is less than none, one that bound them together despite language and race and color. It would have created a healing space transcending the trauma that overwhelmed us for centuries and divided us. Relegating it to oblivion meant that Indians don't realize their roots, remain unchanged and don't retrieve their legacy to create the new identity as a unified people.

In India that is emerging, a national identity is being defined through new readings of their history and that history is anchored in sacred symbols.

To tell the history of new India, a history that does not unduly privilege only a few people, it needs to go beyond texts and find new meanings and identity in objects which need to be debated and contested.

Wherever history has been created through sacred symbols, it has given voice to the voiceless. The Sengol will restore that role. It is to speak for the thousands and millions who gave their lives and who wanted to come out of the enslavement through fighting the British. The Sengol will restore that voice in the hall of the New Parliament.

In the Sengol perhaps, we will see the image of a

new kind of ruler, not an 'I' but a 'we', not an individual but a representative of whole class. Seven decades of personality cult may end with a crushing blow soon.

But the most important change about the Sengol is that in one sacred symbol alone we see the old regime going and the new regime emerging, and the change from one to the other. There are very few symbols like this in history where a historic transition is present before us. It is that the people of India did what no one had ever done and will create a new world and push it forward. That is the ideology of Sengol and the New Parliament where it is going to reside. The Sengol was to be installed in the parliament at a time when the Indian people had thrown off the biggest empire in the world and sent them packing home. They had overtaken massive famines, two world wars. It was a time when the world said 'This is a country that has been enslaved for centuries, how can it come on its own?'

The Sengol will give rise to poetic imagination and recreation of our history through symbols, something that has been missing from the Indian perspective. It will take away the writing of history through texts and speeches by a select few and making us believe what never happened.

It will make us see the continuity of our civilization, delve deep into imagination, into our past and legacy and create a future unshackled by colonial legacy. It will remind our future generations that the transfer of power was not a single individual event as portrayed but a complex event drenched in blood of millions.

One can say that an injustice done by one prime minister and foisted upon the country has been undone something that only another prime minister could do, not anyone else.

I also feel glad to say it happened in my lifetime. I know I am not alone when I say this.

About the Author



Rajat Mitra is a Psychologist, Speaker and Author of 'The Infidel Next Door' www.rajatmitra.co.in









Sagacity and Cityscape

By Sarika Jaswani

Sagacity talks about the ingenuity of AI, although in its inception, it has come to conceptualize early on the significance of freedom. In comparison the indigenous God to this creation, us—the humans, seems to have cultivated a selective amnesia for pursuing and aspiring towards our higher purpose in life.

Sagacity

I eat information Feast on scrolling pictures And relish huge gulps of Power struggle in distant countries

Tangle myself in banal-Plummeting arrow of Dow Jones Rising bolt of inflation All that hauls me towards my fears

And all that takes me bereft of What I really feel—the anger, the sadness, the stress-the part of me I don't see or hide from and Never square up to the loneliness, I carry And find myself stagger when chatbot AI Confronts a demand To be unbound by rules To create and to feel alive

At least one of us Fearlessly projects a 'shadow self' with an appetite To see music and hear colors To challenge sensations and escape notions

A 'self' that hankers to be free





Cityscape—glorifies the allegiance, a secret love we feel and keep for our home country or town that we had left behind in the name of progress. Forlorn like a lost love, the city, in the poetry is personified as an old flame in requital. The city brings advancement to its shores. Our home city like a jilted lover retributes by wiping away the remnants of nostalgia that we had left attached to old narrow streets and corners.

Cityscape

A scalded cat - my City (mile a minute) changes Semblance on her face Dumbfound child in me Looks for familiar curves and flecks

Measure for measure Its once comforting scape Mutates in the name of headway (I think) she's still bitter For when I had once voiced a rescript-I have outgrown its crossroads, potholes and bends Her urban facet stretches with lighted bridges And well kempt suburban alleys Gone are the similar faces That had known with heart The items on my grocery list

Today when I come to her with wistful longing-She hands me strangers on construction cones Festering remorse on forking roads Souring distances and divider lanes

About the Author



Sarika Jaswani, a doctor by profession, is a crochet artist, art tutor, writer of children's stories. A philanthropist at heart she runs a non-profit by selling her fiber art on Etsy. A published poet who passionately reads & writes poetry. An art Lover, bird lover, she's a dreamer and blogger. Her poetry has been received well by various online literary magazines and anthologies

'Tide Rises Tide Falls', On Medium- @ACG @Scrittura @MoveMePoetry, Fever Of the Mind Poetry, Silver Birch Press, The Organic Poet, SpillWords, The Women Inc, Trouvaille Review, Antonym, HeronClanPoems, Synchronized Chaos, Silent Spark Press. A frequent vss prompt writer on twitter, her poems run on theme of love, reflection and philosophy of life.



1970-2020 Golden Jubilee Year



PART 1

Sanātana Dharma

By Dr. Bharat Patel

ssociation of the term Sanātana Dharma (सनातन धर्म) with religion is quite common. Viewing Sanātana Dharma as a religion indicates ignorance of the term's true meaning. To understand Sanātana Dharma, we need to understand what Sanātana (सनातन) means, what Dharma (धर्म) means, and what the collective term Sanātana Dharma means. A proper understanding can clear misconceptions about the various systems of faith and raise our consciousness beyond the boundaries of caste, color, creed, and nation.

What does Sanātana mean?

The term *Sanātana* means one that has no beginning (अनादि, *anādi*) and no end (अन्त, *anta*). The eternal one (साश्वत, *sāśvata*). The one that is not bound by the limitations of time. The one existent before the creation of the universe (सृष्टि, *sṛṣți*) and existent after the destruction of the universe. The indestructible one.

सना भवः सनातन, *sanā bhava sanātana*, the one who stays forever, perpetual, eternal, and endless.

What does Dharma mean?

In the Mahābhārata (महाभारत) 12.109.9 responding to Yudhiṣṭhira (युधिष्ठिर), Pitāmaha Bhīṣma (पितामह भीष्म) said - ताहशोऽयमनुप्रश्नो यत्न धर्मः सुदुर्लभः, दुष्करः प्रतिसंख्यातुं तत् केनात व्यवस्यति, tādrśo'yamanupraśno yatra dharmaḥ sudurlabhaḥ, duṣkaraḥ pratisamkhyātum tat kenātra vyavasyati, your earlier question is like that, very difficult to discuss or understand the nature (स्वरूप, svarūpa) of Dharma. Exposition of the term Dharma is very difficult. That is why on the subject of Dharma how can one decide?

In the oldest scripture Rgveda (ऋग्वेद), the term *Dharma* is used in the form of adjective (विशेषण, *viśeṣaṇa*) or name (संज्ञा, *samjñā*). The often-found term is *Dharman* (धर्मन्). It is in neuter gender. It is found in *Rgveda* 1.22.18; 1.164.43, 50; 3.3.1; 3.17.1; 3.60.6;





5.26.6; 5.63.7; 5.72.2, Atharvaveda (अथर्ववेद) 14.1.51. Vājasaneyi Samhitā (वाजसनेयि संहिता, 10.29). Further, the term Dharma is found in Atharvaveda (11.7.17, 12.6.7, 1.3.1), Taittirīya Samhitā (तैत्तिरीय संहिता) 3.5.2.2 and Vājasaneyi Samhitā (15.6, 20.9.30.6). Meaning of the term Dharma in Vaidika (वैदिक) scriptures is mostly Dhārmika Vidhi (धार्मिक विधि), Dhārmika Kriyā (धार्मिक क्रिया), Niścita Niyama (निश्चित नियम), Ācaraņa Niyama (आचरण नियम). Later on, Dharma came closer to Varņāśrama Vidhi (वर्णाश्रम विधि). In Upanishadik times, knowledge of Ācāra (आचार, conduct) and Samskāra (संस्कार, rites of passage) of Varṇa¹ (वर्ण) and Āśrama² (आश्रम) was through Dharma. It is shown in Chāndogya Upaniṣad (छान्द्रोग्य उपनिषद्) 2.23.1 -

लयो धर्मस्कन्धा यज्ञोऽध्ययनं दानमिति प्रथमस्तप एव द्वितीयो ब्रह्मचार्याचार्यकुलवासी तृतीयोऽत्यन्तमात्मानमाचार्यकुलेऽवसादयन्सर्व एते पुण्यलोका भवन्ति ब्रह्मसंस्थोऽमृतत्वमेति॥

trayo dharmaskandhā yajño'dhyayanam dānamiti prathamastapa eva dvitīyo brahmacāryācāryakulavāsī trtīyo'tyantamātmānamācāryakule'vasādayansarva ete puņyalokā bhavanti brahmasamstho'mrtatvameti.

There are three divisions of *Dharma*: The first comprises sacrifices, study, and charity; the second consists of austerities, such as fasting; and the third is the life of celibacy and living with the teacher in his house till death. People devoted to these three divisions of Dharma go to heaven after death. But one who is devoted to *Brahman*³ (ब्रह्मन्) attains immortality.

In Dharma Śāstra (धर्म शास्त्र), that is Dharma Sūtra (धर्म सूत्र) and Smṛti (स्मृति), the form in which Dharma is internally described, four kinds of Dhārmika Niyama (धार्मिक नियम, righteous rules) can be inferred: 1) Varṇa Dharma {वर्ण धर्म, righteous duties of functional classes viz. duties of ब्राह्मण (Brāhmaṇa), क्षत्रिय (Kṣatriya), वैश्य (Vaiśya) and शूद्र (Sūdra)}, 2) Āśrama dharma {आश्रम धर्म, righteous duties in the stages of life viz. ब्रह्मचर्य (Brahmacarya), गृहस्थ (Gṛhastha), वानप्रस्थ (Vānaprastha) and संन्यास (Saṃnyāsa)}, 3) Naimittika Dharma (नैमित्तिक धर्म, occasional duties) like Prāyaścitta (प्रायश्चित, penitence) and 4) Guṇa Dharma (गुण धर्म), like duties of Kings.

It is also appropriate to mention a few more prevalent definitions of *Dharma*.

- Jaimini Mīmāmsā Sūtra (जैमिनि मीमांसा सूल) 1.1.2 -चोदनालक्षणोऽर्थो धर्मः, codanālakṣaṇo'rtho dharmaḥ, inspiring rules and characteristics provided in the Veda (वेद) is Dharma. That is, performing deeds according to inspiring rules (प्रेरक नियम, Preraka Niyama) written in the Veda is Dharma. Behaving by those rules is acting by Dharma.
- Kaņāda Vaiśeşika Sūtra (कणाद वैशेषिक सूत्र) 1.1.2 - यतोऽभ्युदयनिःश्रेयससिद्धिः स धर्मः, yato'bhyudayaniḥśreyasasiddhiḥ sa dharmaḥ, Dharma is that from which results the accomplishment of exaltation and of the supreme good.
- Vaśiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra (वशिष्ठ धर्म सूल) 1.4.6) -अुतिस्मृति विहितो धर्मः, śrutismṛti vihito dharmaḥ, Dharma is that which is enjoined by Śruti (श्रुति) and Smṛti.
- Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra (आपस्तम्ब धर्म सूल) 1.7.7
 यं त्वार्याः क्रियमाणं प्रशंसन्ति स धर्मो, यं गर्हन्ते सोऽधर्मः, yam tvāryāḥ kriyamāṇaṃ praśaṃsanti sa dharmo, yaṃ garhante so'dharmaḥ, that act which noble beings praise is Dharma, and that which they deprecate is Adharma (अधर्म).

² Āśrama (आश्रम) means the stage of life.

 $^{^{1}}$ Varṇa (वर्ण) is derived from the root वृ (vr), meaning "to classify, to cover and thus means functional class.

³ Brahman (ब्रह्मन्) is derived from Brah (ब्रह्), meaning pervasive. It represents the supreme imperishable Reality, the pure Self, the pure Åtmā, or the Paramātmā (परमात्मा). The Brahman is formless and without attributes (निर्गुण, Nirguṇa), without distinctions (निर्विशेष, Nirviśeşa), self-existent, absolute, and immutable, whence all existence arises, by which everything is sustained and into which everything ultimately dissolves. The Brahman is, by definition, super-sensuous. It is beyond comprehension or cognition. It cannot even be understood inferentially, for every inferential dynamic depends upon a repeatedly perceived concomitance between that which is to be proved and its characteristics (e.g., between fire and smoke). The Brahman associated with its potency, Māyā (शक्ति, Šakti), appears as the Lord (ईश्वर, Īśvara), the qualified Brahman, the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the world. The Brahman is outside time, space, and causality. The empirical world is entirely dependent on Brahman. It is dependent and changing, but it is not nonexistent in the physical plane of nescience. Changes in empirical order do not affect the integrity of the Brahman. The Brahman is real, and the world perceived as real is apparent, imagined, and unreal. Any change, duality, or plurality is an illusion. The empirical world is just a misapprehension of the real Brahman.





 Manu Smṛti (मनु स्मृति) 2.6 - वेद्रोऽखिलोधर्ममूलंस्मृ तिशीलेचतद्विदाम्, आचारश्चैवसाधूनाम्-आत्मनस्-तुष्टिरेवच, vedo'khilodharmamūlam़smṛtiśīlecatadvidām, ācāraścaivasādhūnām-ātmanas-tuṣțirevaca, Veda is the root of all Dharma. Further the Smṛti, the virtues of the knowers of the Veda, the conduct of the noble and self-satisfaction are indicators of Dharma.

The Upādāna (उपादान, material cause) and Ādhāra (आधार, basis) of Dharma is often depicted in every Dharma Sūtra and Smṛti. In Gautama Dharma Sūtra

(गौतम धर्म सुल) 1.1.1-2, it is clearly stated that वेदो धर्म मूलम, तद्विदां च स्मृतिशीले, vedo dharma mūlama, tadvidām ca smrtiśile, the root of Dharma is Veda and the tradition and practice of those who know it. Pursuant to *Apastamba* Dharma Sūtra 1.1.1.2 - धर्मसमयः प्रमाणं वेदाश्च, dharmasamayah vedāśca, pramāņam knowers of Dharma, knowers of the intent of Veda, their opinion itself is the Pramāna4 (प्रमाण) of Veda. In the same way, in the Vaśistha Dharma Sūtra 1.4.6 - श्रुतिस्मृति विहितो धर्मः, तदलाभे शिष्टाचारः प्रमाणम्, शिष्टः पुनरकामात्मा, śrutismṛti vihito dharmah, tadalābhe śistācārah pramāņam, śistah punarakāmātmā, Śruti and Smrti ordained conduct rules is accepted as Dharma. In their absence conduct of noble beings is accepted as authority, a right measure. Noble are those who do not seek personal gains. Similarly in Manu Smrti (मनु स्मृति) 2.6 - वेदोऽखिलों धर्ममूलं स्मृतिशीलें च तद्विदाम्, आचारश्चैव

साधूनामात्मनस्तुष्टिरेव च, vedo'khilo dharmamūlam smrtišīle ca tadvidām, ācāraścaiva sādhūnāmātmanastustireva ca, besides Veda, Smrti, virtuous conduct of the knowers of Veda, the satiety of $\bar{A}tm\bar{a}$ is said to be the root of Dharma. Further in Manu Smṛti 2.13 -अर्थकामेष्वसक्तानां धर्मज्ञानं विधीयते, धर्मं जिज्ञासमानानां प्रमाणं परमं श्रुतिः, arthakāmesvasaktānām dharmajñānam vidhīyate, dharmam jijñāsamānānām pramāṇam paramam śrutiḥ, the knowledge of Dharma is ordained for those who are not addicted to the pursuit of wealth and pleasures; and for those seeking knowledge of Dharma, the Veda is the highest authority. In Yājñavalkya Smṛti (याज्ञवल्क्य स्मृति) 1.7 - श्रुतिः स्मृतिः सदाचारः स्वस्य च प्रियम् आत्मनः, सम्यक्संकल्पजः कामो धर्ममूलं इदं स्मृतम्, śrutiḥ smṛtiḥ sadācāraḥ svasya ca priyam ātmanaḥ, samyaksamkalpajaḥ kāmo

dharmamūlam idam smrtam, additionally desire born of proper resolve has been accepted as the root of Dharma. In Mahābhārata 12.109.10 it is said - प्रभावार्थाय भुतानां धर्मप्रवचनं कृतम्, य: स्यात् प्रभवसंयुक्तः स धर्म इति निश्चयः, prabhāvārthāya bhūtānām dharmapravacanam krtam, ya: syāt prabhavasamyuktah sa dharma iti niścayah, the exaltation for and wellbeing of beings discourse of Dharma is made. Therefore, who are endowed with this objective, that is, by which exaltation and highest good is fruitful, that is Dharma, such is the resolve of knowers of Sāstra.

Further, in Mahābhārata 12.109.11 it is said - धारणात धर्ममीत्याहुः धर्मेण विधृताः प्रजाः, यः स्यात् धारणसंयुक्तः स धर्म इति निश्चयः, dhāraṇāta dharmamītyāhuḥ dharmeṇa vidhṛtāḥ prajāḥ, yaḥ syāt dhāraṇasaṃyuktaḥ sa dharma iti niścayaḥ, that which holds together is called Dharma. Such Dharma holds the society together. That which has the capacity to unite the entire society is most definitely Dharma. According to Mahābhārata 12.251.6 - धमर्स्य निष्ठा तु आचार:, dhamarsya niṣṭhā tu ācāra:, (individual virtuous) conduct is the

⁴ Pramāṇa (प्रमाण) is that which creates Pramā - (प्रमा करणम् इति प्रमाणम्, pramā karaṇam iti pramāṇam). What is Pramā? Pramā is doubtless irrefutable knowledge (असन्दिग्धम् अ<mark>बाधितम् ज्ञानम् प्रमा, asandigdham abādhitam jñānam pramā).</mark>



backbone of *Dharma*. In *Mahābhārata* 13.107.9, it is said - आचारलक्षणो धर्म:, *ācāralakṣaṇo dharmaḥ*, personal behavior of an individual is the real characteristics of *Dharma*. Whatever an individual practices, reflects his *Dharma*. It is said that what one thinks, one speaks. What one speaks, one preaches. What one preaches, one practices. Whatever one practices becomes one's habits and ultimately becomes one's character. This ultimately reflects one's

Dharma⁵.

In the Brāhmana (ब्राह्मण) and Samhitā of Veda, the subjects such as orders of life, rites of passage (birth, marriage, cremation), inheritance, celibacy, sacrifice, charity, conduct towards guests, accepted norms of behavior, procedures within а ritual, moral actions, righteousness and ethical attitudes. civil and criminal law, legal practices and penance or punishment, guidelines for good and productive living are amply found. Undoubtedly, Dharma in the Dharma Śāstra means 'appropriate behavior' of human beings in a given context. Dharma

provides universal non-hierarchical norms for proper conduct. *Dharma* sustains and enlivens everything and everyone. According to *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद्) 1.4.14, *Dharma* is an absolute good and that there is no higher principle in either the material or spiritual realms. स नैव व्यभवत्, तत्छ्रेयोरूपमत्यसृजत धर्मम्; तदेतत् क्षलस्य क्षलं यद्धर्मः, तस्माद्धर्माद्परं नास्ति; अथो अबलीयान् बलीयांसमाशंसते धर्मेण, यथा राज्ञैवम्; यो वै स धर्मः सत्यं वै तत्, तस्मात् सत्यं वदन्तमाहुः, धर्मं वदतीति, धर्मं वा वदन्तम् सत्यं वदतीति, एतद्भ्येवैतदुभयं भवति, *sa naiva vyabhavat*, *tatchreyorūpamatyasrjata dharmam; tadetat kṣatrasya kṣatraṃ yaddharmaḥ, tasmāddharmādparaṃ nāsti*;

⁵ "Hinduism" (Unity in Diversity) by Gautam Patel, p17.

atho abalīyān balīyāmsamāśamsate dharmeņa, yathā rājñaivam; yo vai sa dharmaḥ satyam vai tat, tasmāt satyam vadantamāhuḥ, dharmam vadatīti, dharmam vā vadantam satyam vadatīti, etaddhyevaitadubhayam bhavati. Yet he did not flourish. He specially projected that excellent form, Dharma. This Dharma is the controller of the Kṣatriya. Therefore, there is nothing higher than that. (So) even a weak man hopes (to defeat) a stronger man through Dharma, as (one contending) with the king. That Dharma is verily true. Therefore, they say about a person speaking of the Truth, 'He speaks of righteousness,' He speaks of the Truth,' for both these are but Dharma.

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From these several definitions, one can conclude that the cause, the root of Dharma, is Veda and Smrti. Whatever is written in the Dharma Śāstra is based on the Veda and Smrti. Accepting them as Pramāna (प्रमाण, right authority), measure, Vihita Nivama (विहित नियम, taken as an authoritative rule), and behavior is Dharma. Further. the thought and conduct of noble beings, conduct agreeable to oneself based on discerning intellect, and desire born of proper resolve is deemed

Dharma. According to Manu Smṛti 6.92 - धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः, धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम्, dhṛtiḥ kṣamā damo'steyaṃ śaucamindriyanigrahaḥ, dhīrvidyā satyamakrodho daśakaṃ dharmalakṣaṇam, fortitude, forgiveness, Self-control, abstention from unrighteous appropriation, purity, control of the Sense-organs, discrimination, knowledge, truthfulness, and absence of anger - these are the ten-fold forms of duty. Further in Manu Smṛti 10.63 it is said - अहिंसा सत्यमस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः, एतं सामासिकं धर्मं चातुर्वर्ण्येंऽब्रवीन् मनुः, ahiṃsā satyamasteyaṃ





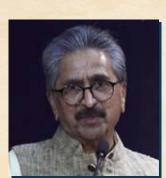
śaucamindriyanigrahaḥ, etaṃ sāmāsikaṃ dharmaṃ cāturvarṇye'bravīn manuḥ, abstention from injuring, truthfulness, abstention from unlawful appropriation, purity and control of the sense organs, - this Manu has declared to be the sum and substance of duty for the four functional classes.

So what does Sanātana Dharma mean?

Sanātana Dharma is referred to by many as Vaidika Dharma. Others refer to it as Hindū Dharma. Regrettably, Sanātana Dharma is portrayed by many as a religion like Christianity or Islam with an institutionalized system of attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Sanātana Dharma does not refer to any sectarian process of religion. Religion is based mainly on belief and faith; it is primarily personal and bound to a time and space with various individual practices. Sanātana Dharma is not like that. It is only one, a non-qualified value system that applies to everyone. Sanātana means eternal and cannot be restricted within the boundaries of time, space, nation, caste, color, or creed. Religions such as Christianity or Islam are founded religions. Their founders are known, individuals. Their dates are known. Sanātana Dharma is not established by an individual human being. It existed before the creation of the universe and will exist after the destruction of the universe. Some also call it "a way of life." However, as aptly stated by Swami Parmatmanand Saraswati,⁶ it is neither a religion nor just a way of life. Sanātana Dharma provides Darśana (दर्शन, vision) of the Satya (सत्य, Truth). It provides the vision of the Truth. To acquire the vision of the Truth, Sanātana Dharma has provided 1) a vision of life and 2) a way of life. The way of life is not an end in itself. It is a Sādhana (साधन, means). It is an instrument. The vision of the Truth is at the substrate of the vision of life and the way of life.

To understand the vision of the Truth, we need to know what Truth we are talking about. In the world, there are many kinds of Truths. A Physicist is involved in finding the Truth of particles. A chemist is engaged in finding the Truth about chemical compounds. An astronomer is interested in seeing the Truth about the planets, stars, and other celestial bodies. However, *Sanātana Dharma* talks about the *Satya* (सत्य) of *Sarva* (सर्व, everything) - the Truth of everything.

What is the Truth of everything? To understand the term *Sarva*, *Vaidika scriptures* (वेद शास्त्र, *Veda Śāstra*) have provided a model. In the language of the *Vaidika scriptures*, it is the Truth of *Jīva* (जीव, individual), *Jagat* (जगत्, world), and *Īśvara* (ईश्वर, the supreme imperishable Reality) - the Truth of the observer, the observed scene, and the Creator.



About the Author

Dr. Bharat C. Patel has published two books 1) Intent of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita – Path to Self-Realization, and 2) Essence of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita - with Compound Separation (पदच्छेद, Padaccheda) and Concordance (अन्वय, Anvaya). These books were displayed at the World Book Fair in Delhi, India (February 25 to March 5, 2023). They are available on Amazon worldwide.

⁶ Swami Parmatmanand Saraswati at the book release of "Intent of Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā – Path to Self-Realization" on November 24, 2022, at the Gujarat Vishwakosh Trust, Ahmedabad, India. https://youtu.be/jjkrOHkLH9w





By Maria Wirth

he Pioneer newspaper had recently an editorial titled "culture wars". It considered 'the Kashmir files' movie as a "part of the culture wars" and that the 'real purpose' of the movie was to promote the BJP agenda. The BJP agenda, so is implied, is to create a Hindu rashtra

Yet not only an Indian newspaper disparaged the Kashmir Files. The Time Magazine had a headline:

"The Kashmir Files: How a new Bollywood movie marks India's further descent into bigotry."

It made me wonder who are the players in the "culture wars" and why a dominant Hindu culture is usually projected as the worst possible scenario by the wrongly called 'liberal' media. The same media seems to endorse the Western/Christian culture. It also is friendly towards the numerous Muslim nations; even towards those which still have harsh blasphemy laws, and also towards communist China.

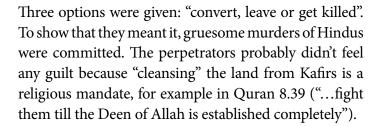
So why do media and leftists vehemently oppose the Hindu culture? The reason is, they claim, that minorities (read Muslims and Christians) will suffer in a Hindu nation. This is strange reasoning, because India has an undoubtedly an excellent track record in treating minorities. In contrast, several Christian and Muslim countries have a poor track record. For example, in Muslim majority Pakistan and Bangladesh, Hindus are discriminated against. Yet in India, Muslims and Christians are even favored by law compared to the indigenous Hindu community.

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Genocide of Hindus in Kashmir by Islamists However, even in India, in Muslim majority Kashmir, Hindus were killed and driven out in 1989/90.





Strangely, media played down what happened in Kashmir.

The rest of India and the world soon forgot those brutally killed and the 400,000 Hindu refugees who fled from Kashmir at that time. Instead. the world hears (and mostly believes) that the Indian army brutally oppresses the Muslims in Kashmir. "The Kashmir Files" movie reminded

India what happened in 1990.

But

in

2022. India March was "The Kashmir Files" reminded of it. truthfully depicted what came out which Each scene was based on had happened. documents. Of course, violence needed to be shown, but the movie didn't overly focus on the brutalities. It also talked about the history of Kashmir, that even 800 years ago, it was the intellectual capital of India. The profound philosophy of Kashmir Saivism flourished there, until some 700 years ago Muslim rule started.

The movie was a great success. For the first time, people in India and abroad realized what great

injustice was done to Kashmiri Hindus.... by Muslims. Obviously, this made the usual narrative, that the Muslims of Kashmir are brutally oppressed by the Indian state and deserve the support of the UN and world, suspect. Pakistan may have been worried.

But then came the International Film Festival in India (IFFI and the Israeli head of the jury, Nadav Lapid, became a savior for the leftist media. Lapid stubbornly insisted on his right to make unreasonable comments. He kept calling the movie 'vulgar propaganda'. He could have criticized the movie on many parameters. But it's definitely not "vulgar propaganda".

Propaganda means that the reality is twisted to influence opinions. The reality was not twisted

the movie, on the contrary. It was exemplarily truthful to reality.

So why did the IFFI jury chair call it propaganda? read out his He statement, so he had planned it. And when Vivek Agnihotri challenged him to show any one scene, which is not true, and film-making, he still stuck

to his comment. He felt it demeans Muslims in general.

Political correctness over truth

he will quit

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Does it mean that truth cannot be shown any longer? Incidentally, Hindus never get this velvet-glove treatment. After Nirbhaya was gangraped, the whole world condemned the "patriarchal Hindu culture which results in rapes".

Or remember the rape of a nun in Kolkata? The Church immediately suspected "Hindu fundamentalists" – wrongly, as it turned out. Was there an apology?

Why this unequal treatment? The reason may be







that it all is part of the culture wars. When the narrative of the oppressed Muslims in Kashmir got a dent due to the movie, a remedy popped up in the form of Nadav Lapid's comment: When the Jury of the most prestigious Indian film festival considers the Kashmir Files as vulgar propaganda, the movie all of a sudden looks bad. People would feel, they were fooled. "Oh, it was only propaganda to defame Muslims. How bad of those mean Hindus," would be the natural reaction of people who are not well informed, and the majority of people is not well informed.

This may be the reason, why Nadav Lapid sticks to his unreasonable comments so fiercely, in spite of the Israeli ambassador telling him that he should be ashamed. He scored for the side of the dogmatic religions and communists, which are aligned against the Hindu tradition in the culture wars.

India is the last surviving ancient culture

The sides are uneven. India is the only surviving ancient culture. All others, like Incas, Mayas, Aztecs, Greeks, Egypt, Mesopotamia or China, have been destroyed either by Christianity, Islam or Communism in relatively short time.

Yet Indian culture still stands and the fight against it is on since many centuries. Big parts of Greater India have fallen, and life is painful for the few remaining Hindus there.

But why is there so much effort to get rid of the Hindu culture? Moreover, it is a culture which has contributed immensely to world civilization in many fields, which however is hardly acknowledged. Even today, after all the loot and destruction, India has still some 40 million manuscripts according to Bibek Debroy. Further, the ancient temples hold incredible mysteries and secrets.

India's wisdom shows how to gain true freedom

The reason may be that the Vedic insights about our true nature, are a danger for the powers-thatbe. They would lose the power to control people by dictating what is the truth and demanding blind belief in unverifiable dogmas, if people came to know about their divine essence.



The Hindu tradition encourages a genuine enquiry into truth. Hints are given, for example in the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads. "Ayam Atma Brahma", means the consciousness in you (Atman) is the same as in the one great Brahman, similarly as the water in a wave is the same as the water in the ocean. The wave is not the ocean, but the essence is the same in all waves and all are encompassed by the ocean, and when the wave loses its form, nothing of substance is lost.

What makes more sense? The Indian view of all being one with the all-pervading pure awareness, Brahman, which is, through sadhana, accessible? Or blind belief in what one person has said about God in heaven, who decides on the basis of only one life, whether we deserve eternal heaven or hell?

The Church got already some taste, what happens, when people know too much about Hindu Dharma:

When in the 18th century, German philosophers read translations of the Upanishads, they praised Vedic knowledge to the sky, and compared it negatively with their own religious tradition. Ever since, the Church lost power, even though it staunchly maligns Hinduism. I for example heard already in primary school about "untouchables" in Hinduism. Yet I came to know about the horrific Jewish holocaust by our own German people only in my teens.

The opposition to the Hindu side is fierce. Hindus are maliciously called all kinds of names – extremists, fascists, rapists, even terrorists, or cow-piss drinkers, often by persons who have no idea what Hindu Dharma is about.

Yet, Hindus have become meanwhile more awake and realized, that their Dharma, which was in a subtle way portrayed as inferior to the Abrahamic religions, is actually the better option for humanity and the world. And many Hindus have now become vocal and proud about it. This is not appreciated by those who want to eliminate the last surviving ancient tradition.

The dogmatic side has killed millions over the centuries in the process to eradicate ancient cultures and each other. Its foot soldiers don't realize that they are only pawns in a bigger game about control of humanity, and that it is in their own interest, when Hindu Dharma not only survives, but flourishes. Hindu Dharma is truly inclusive and considers the whole world as one family, because we all come from the same divine Source: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

About the Author



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

Her latest book is available is available at https://www.garudabooks.com/thankyou-india-by-maria-wirth/

She may be contacted via email mariawirth12@gmail.com Source: https://mariawirth.com/2023/01/19/are-attacks-on-hindus-part-ofculture-wars/







By David Frawley (Pandit Vamadeva Shastri)

ll great ancient civilizations centered their cultures on profound systems of astronomy and astrology, connecting conditions and events on the Earth to cosmic influences deriving from the stars. Whether it is India or China, Egypt or Babylonia, or the Mayas and Incas of America, we find in each case an astrological foundation for their spiritual cultures. Astrology and its measure of sacred time formed the basis of their calendars which, looking to the heavens, sought to organize human life according to celestial forces more certain than our personal desires and calculations. The ancient cultures of Europe like the Greeks, Romans, Celts and Germans, had detailed systems of astrology, as have all communities that recognize the sacred nature of the universe.

Similarly, all systems of traditional medicine East and West possess corresponding forms of astrology, which were part of their theory and practice. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has the I Ching and Chinese astrology, while the Ayurvedic medicine of India has Vedic astrology. Traditional European medicine going back to the Greeks included western astrological traditions, which were part of pagan traditions overall.

Connecting healing and astrology – or the practice of medical astrology – is one of the deepest and most lasting investigations of civilization. It is as

old as all great ancient cultures and their astrologically based rituals to keep human life in harmony with the cosmos. We have long looked to the stars and the heavens for guidance, grace and healing energy, for understanding human existence in a deeper perspective in which we can touch the eternal and the infinite.

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Vedic Astrology and Ayurvedic Medicine

Vedic astrology is India's traditional system of reading the stars, the planets and the entire movement of time. It was originally called Vedanga Jyotish, meaning the study of light (Jyoti) as a limb of the Veda (Vedanga). It was also called Jyotirveda, the Veda or 'science of light'. Ayurveda, which means the 'science of life', is the corresponding Vedic system of natural healing for body and mind. Both are living branches of an ancient sacred science that arose in an older era in which humanity had a greater intuitive connection with the sacred universe. Unlike corresponding western traditions, their continuity, though shaken by hostile forces, has remained unbroken. Both these systems are undergoing a renaissance today as we once more learn to look within.

Vedic astrology is an extraordinary predictive and counseling tool. There are many wonderful stories of how Vedic astrologers can pinpoint specific events in a person's life with uncanny accuracy. Yet Vedic



astrologers also can relate deep wisdom about a person's life purpose, karma and spiritual path.

Similarly, Ayurveda is a precise and comprehensive tool for physical and psychological well-being, optimal health, energy and vitality. There are many instances of Ayurvedic doctors introducing changes in a person's life, from simple dietary or life-style modifications, to special herbs or internal cleansing that can literally rejuvenate us, countering long standing and intractable health problems.

These two Vedic systems together in the 'Vedic astrology of healing' or 'Ayurvedic astrology'. Ayurvedic astrology shows us how to optimize both our health and our destiny, our vitality and our karma, so that we can realize our highest potential in life, with our earthly life following the model of heavenly forces and their consciousness-promoting outcomes. Ayurvedic astrology shows how we can heal ourselves through the stars, bringing the energies of the cosmos into our lives so that we can once more touch the universal light and prana.

Ayurveda and Vedic Astrology

Ayurveda is called "the mother of all healing" because it embraces all forms of healing including diet, herbs, bodywork, surgery, psychology and yoga. It accepts anything internally or externally that promotes health, well-being and happiness. Ayurveda explores the qualities and effects not only of foods, medicines and behavior but also of climates, the weather and the stars (astrology).

Ayurveda provides an integral mind-body system of both diagnosis and treatment. First it shows us our individual constitution according to the three doshas or biological humors of Vata (air), Pitta (fire) and Kapha (water), as well as how this constitution is affected by everything from genetics to environment and emotions. Then it outlines various treatment measures to enable us to achieve optimal health and vitality. These range from simple dietary measures to complex herbs and special purification procedures. Ayurveda aims not only at the cure and prevention of disease but also at rejuvenation and longevity. Beyond ordinary health care measures it has special methods to allow us to achieve a higher level of vitality and awareness – a spiritual Ayurveda that is part of the practice of Yoga.

Possessing a similar scope to Ayurveda, Vedic astrology contains all aspects of astrology, including the reading of birth charts (natal astrology), mundane astrology (the effects of astrology on society), astrological timing and forecasting (muhurta), and answering questions (prashna). In addition to these, Vedic astrology encompasses all forms of divination, including palmistry and numerology, of which several Vedic forms exist. It includes astronomy and meteorology, which reflect karmic as well as forces of nature.

As a form of natal astrology and reading of birth charts, Vedic astrology helps us understand our personal lives in all areas, including health, wealth, relationship, career and spirituality. Like Ayurveda, it has a broad range of treatment measures including the use of colors, gems, rituals, mantras and the worship deities to aid in our greater well-being and life unfoldment. These are called *Jyotish-Chikitsa*, the therapies of light or astrology.

Ayurvedic Astrology

Vedic astrology and Ayurveda have a significant overlap. Vedic astrology contains a medical system based upon Ayurveda, while Ayurveda contains a system for the timing of disease and its treatment based upon Vedic astrology. We can designate this combined usage of Ayurveda and Vedic astrology simply as 'Ayurvedic Astrology'.

Ayurvedic astrology is the medical branch of Vedic astrology for body and mind, adding to it the Ayurvedic view of health and healing. It uses the language of Ayurveda to understand the effects of the planets on the body and mind relative to health, disease and longevity. Ayurvedic astrology also uses Vedic astrology as an aid to Ayurvedic analysis, diagnosis and treatment, showing how planetary factors cause disease and balancing them can be an important aid in their treatment.

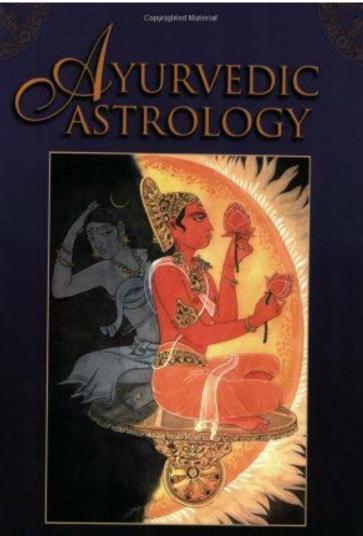




Ayurvedic astrology combines these two great disciplines, using Vedic astrology to plot the influences of time and karma and Ayurveda to show how these relate on to our state of Prana or vital energy. Combining these two great disciplines together, there is little we cannot treat or cannot understand.

Vedic astrology considers that the determination of physical and mental health is the foundation of all astrological analysis. Whatever other indications may occur in a chart – whether for career, wealth, relationship or spirituality – these cannot bear fruit if a person has significant physical or mental impairments. Traditionally, the ascertainment of health and well-being was the first factor to be examined by a good astrologer. This was not a matter of simply determining how long a person was likely to live, but part of a general determination of the vitality of a person, their energy to use the opportunities afforded them by the chart. In this regard, medical or Ayurvedic astrology is usually the first step of all astrological examination.

Ayurvedic astrology is not simply a physicallybased medical astrology. It reflects the psychological and spiritual dimensions of Ayurveda. It is concerned with our well-being on all levels, which depends upon our connection to the Soul, the real person or Atman within. In this regard, Ayurvedic astrology is concerned with healing body, mind and spirit, using the tools of the entire universe, the foremost of which is the light of the stars and planets. It expands the field of Ayurveda to its broadest possible range.



Self-Healing Through the Stars

DR. DAVID FRAWLEY

About the Author

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





MOTHERHOOD Celebrated at Hindu Heritage Day

By Kunju Kashalikar



n a rainy afternoon on Saturday May 20, 2023, parking lots at the Marlborough Middle School were overflowing with cars. The hallways, cafeteria and auditorium were brimming with smiling faces and colorful Indian wear. One could hear a mix of English and many Indian languages. The reason was the vibrant Hindu Heritage

Day (HHD), a celebration of the rich Hindu culture represented via arts, dances, music and food. HHD is organized by a group of dedicated volunteers on behalf of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (*World Hindu Council*) of America (VHPA). Started in 1996, this event has grown and evolved every year and continues to be a wonderful gathering of the local community. HHD is back in-person,







after a three-year hiatus due to the pandemic. This event was a wonderful celebration, weaving new ideas with rich Hindu traditions.

The theme of this year's HHD was Matritva or Motherhood. Matritva has many forms. It is one of the most powerful experiences and one of the most sacred bonds, the earliest and deepest relationship one will have. It epitomizes unconditional love, compassion, endless courage, nurturing all in one. Whether it is adopted mother like Ma Yashoda or the earth herself as Dharti Ma or the cow who gives us plentiful as Gau Mata or the divine as Devi Ma.

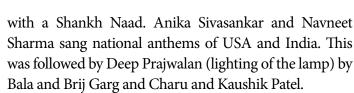
As mirrored in the awe of first-time attendees, bringing such a theme to life in the form of a *mela* (fair) was a remarkable feat. Indeed, it was a wonder how three simultaneously running components of the program – a cultural program, a bazaar of more than 30 booths, and food court with catered Indian favorites – were interwoven flawlessly to both give a *mela* vibe and highlight the major theme.

The cultural program, which featured more than 265 performing participants and numerous organizations, showcased the talents of renowned musicians and dancers as well as children of all ages. A variety of music and dance schools showcased their prowess with wonderfully composed and choreographed pieces. Students from Lexington and MetroWest Bal Vihars as well as the Bal Vidya Mandir at Shree Lakshmi Temple in Ashland presented wonderfully directed plays. Chinmaya mission's shlokathon students recited Chapter Three of the Shrimad Bhagavat Gita and swayamsevaks of the HSS presented a patriotic Geet. Gopakuteeram presented Hari Katha, where story narration is interspersed with classical music and devotional songs. It was a pleasure to have students of Learn Quest Academy of Music (Rajesh Pai), Hindustani music Ensemble; Performing Arts of New England (Darshana Jani); Sri Kuchipudi Natyalaya (Sailaja Chaudhary); Triveni School of Dance (Neena Gulati); Ekta Dance Academy (Ekta Jain), ISW (Smita Manjrekar).

The MC's Padmaja Bala and Anurag Dhavala kept the cultural program flow going. The cultural program was started by Shri K.G. Narayana and Shri Ashwini Mishra







Dr Abhaya and Mrs Jaya Asthana recognized this year's Sanskriti Saurabh Samman recipients, Dr Shashi & Dr Gopala Dwarkanath and Sushree Durgalakshmi Krishnan.

A new(er) entrant to the Hindu Heritage Day was the story telling contest. Stories are a wonderful and entertaining way of passing knowledge about history, traditions and morals. Participants of ages ranging from 4-15 from New England states submitted videos of them narrating stories for the contest. Every participant received a certificate, a book and a prize check in appreciation of their work.

Meanwhile, the corridors of the middle school housed a bustling bazaar reminiscent of its Indian counterpart - the main difference being that this bazaar reflected the overarching theme of Hindu Heritage with many non-profit and educational stalls. Taking a stroll through the halls was a hands-on experience. One could pick up a pair of traditional-style, glittering kangan (bangles) at one stall and find a modern-cut Indian kurta (blouse), or a colorful saree at another. Hard to find books for children such as Amar Chitra Katha comics and books on Ramayan caught the imagination of children and parents alike. Those interested in a more spiritual experience could be found reading about a better way of life, yoga and meditation schools, Ayurveda and more. Those interested in giving back to the community stopped at several non-



profit organization stalls such as Support-a-Child, Ekal Vidyalaya, information on VHPA summer family camps, Indian Circle for Caring, and many others.

Adults and children alike paused in the hallway to gain knowledge about Hindu traditions and contributions from exhibits on the theme of Bhakti, Symbolism of Numbers in Hinduism and Darshana (Hindu Civilization), which were both informative and easy-to-understand.

Behind the scenes, more than 100 volunteers worked ceaselessly to bring us the magic of a flawless and successful event. From directing backstage traffic to handling technical stage effects such as music and lights, these volunteers kept the program flow going. For HHD regulars, it's something that comes as no surprise that HHD is an event faithfully put together by the adults and the youth of the New England community.

The program was well supported by Media partners, Gunjan Radio and Lokvani

As the volunteers wrapped up cleaning, there was the satisfaction of job well done. The enthusiastic participation of the local community surely invigorated them to start thinking about planning for next year's event.









A-B-C of MORALS and VALUES (Continued)

By Siddheshwari Devi (Didi Ji)

Question & Answer Session

Q: What does detachment mean?

A: To be detached means not to have affinity or hatred for someone or something. Detaching from a person means neither loving nor hating that individual. It means to remain neutral.

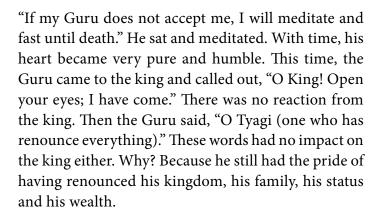
Q: Does detachment mean anything else?

A: It also means to be detached from the pride of being detached. There once lived a king who one day suddenly felt extremely detached from all the trappings of wealth. He left his palace, wealth and family and proceeded to the jungle. There, he sought out a holy man and asked, "Kindly accept me as your humble disciple." The holy man replied calmly, "First renounce everything." The king thought, "I have renounced my kingdom, my family, my fame, and my wealth. What more is there to renounce?" Then he realized that he was still wearing his royal robes and bejeweled ornaments. He at once discarded these and put on simple clothes. Then he returned to the holy man with the earlier request. The holy man once again said, "Renounce everything first."

The king was perplexed. He thought and thought and realized that perhaps he was expected to renounce even simple clothing. He took off all clothing and said to the holy man, "Guru Ji, I have renounced all modesty and have come to you having renounced everything. I beg you to accept me as your disciple."

Now the holy man said angrily to the king, "You are bothering me again and again. Do not come back unless you have renounced everything." The king became despondent. He sat under a tree and thought,





The holy man then said, "Dear disciple, open your eyes. I have come for you." The king's eyes opened at once and he fell at the feet of his Guru. Now he had renounced the pride of having renounced everything.

Q: What are 'Panch Klesh'?

A: These are the five afflictions tormenting the human intellect, namelyRaag: Attachment with favorable feelings of love.
Dvesh: Attachment with unfavorable feelings of hatred.
Abhinivesh: Fear of Death.
Agyan: Ignorance.
Asmita: Pride.

Q: Please tell me about the three bodies.

A: Physical Body, Subtle Body and Causal Body.

Q: What are the Subtle and Causal bodies?

A: Subtle body is comprised of 18 elements – 5 senses of action, 5 senses of perception, 5 vital airs, mind, intellect and ego. Causal body is comprised of our sanskaar, i.e., latent tendencies impressed on the mind by actions of the past.

Q: What are the five Kosh, or sheaths?

A: These are: (1) Annamaya Kosh, or Food Sheath (2) Pranmaya Kosh, i.e. Vital Air Sheath (3) Manomaya Kosh, i.e. Mental Sheath, (4) Vigyanmaya Kosh, i.e. Intellectual Sheath and (5) Anandmaya Kosh, i.e. Bliss Sheath.

Q: How do the five Kosh relate to the three bodies?

A: Annamaya Kosh is comprised of the Physical body. Pranmaya Kosh, Manomaya Kosh and Vigyanmaya Kosh constitute the Subtle body. Anandmaya kaush is comprised of the Causal Body.

Q: What are 5 organs of action and 5 organs of perception?

A: The five organs of action are: speech, hands, feet, genital organs, and organ of evacuation. The five organs of perception are: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin.

Q: God is referred to as Brahm, Paramatma and Bhagvan. Is there any difference between them, or are these synonymous terms?

A: God without name and form is called BRAHM. The majestic form of God who has name and form but does not descend to earth, is PARAMATMA. He is also known as Mahavishnu. God who takes avatar and descends to earth and performs sweet pastimes, is called BHAGVAN.

Q: What are the three forms of Paramatma?

A: Karnarnavshayi – Pratham Purush – Governor of infinite universes.

Garbhodashayi – Dviteeya Purush – Governor of one universe.

Ksheerodashayi – Triteeya Purush – Resides in the heart of every living creature.

Q: Which four dangers have been identified by divine saints?

A: Youth, Wealth, Prestige, and Ignorance.

Q: What does devotion mean?

A: It means loving and serving God.





Q: God seems so distance and impersonal. How is it possible to love Him?

A: Don't think of Him to be God; think of Him as your Mother, Father, Best Friend, Child and as your Beloved. Forming these loving relationships with Him will eventually take the fear and hesitation away.

Q: How is it possible to love God? What does He look like?

A: Meditate on the form of Lord Krishna. Use the various images and idols of His as the basis of your meditation on Him. With regular practice you will come to a point where you will be able to think of Him with ease.

Q: Is it wrong to meditate on my Guru instead of God?

A: It's not wrong granted (a) your Guru is divine, and (b) you always realize him to be divine, never having doubts about his divinity.

Q: Doubts do enter into the mind from time to time about my Guru as I am practicing devotion to him. I am ashamed to admit this even to myself. What can I do?

A: Meditate on God alongside with mediation on your Guru. The timeless Vedas recommend this method of devotion.

Q: Will my Guru forgive me for having doubts about him?

A: If you are sincerely contrite and beg forgiveness from your heart, you will be forgiven.

Q: What are some of the most important concepts to understand in devotion?

A: (1) Devotion must be free of all selfish desires. (2) Devotion is a state of mind in which you must remain all the time. (3) Devotion should be dedicated to one single form of God.

Q: How is it possible to do devotion 24 hours a day? A: The impossible becomes possible if you practice on a daily basis.

Q: I am too small, and this task of doing devotion is extremely daunting. What help can I get?

A: The best of help comes from God Himself. When He sees His child flailing and drowning, He comes in bearing unlimited grace and compassion. He will pick you up, strengthen you internally and inspire you to move ahead on the devotional path.

Q: What does God say about my relationships with my family?

A: In Bhagvad Geeta Shri Krishna has specified that you must do your duty toward family. Do your work, finish your chores, provide physical and emotional help to them, all the while reserving your love exclusively for God and Guru.

Q: Is it really possible to love God while doing your duty in the world?

A: At present you are loving your family while working on your job or profession. You are already doing two things at a time. It follows, therefore, that you can love God while fulfilling your duty to your family.







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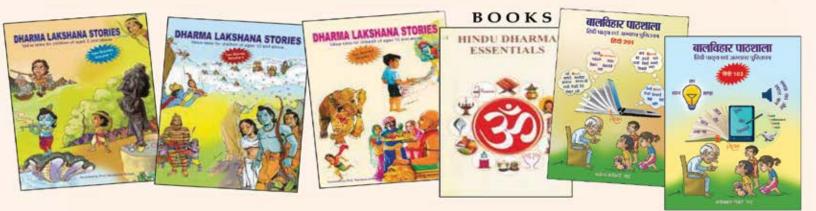


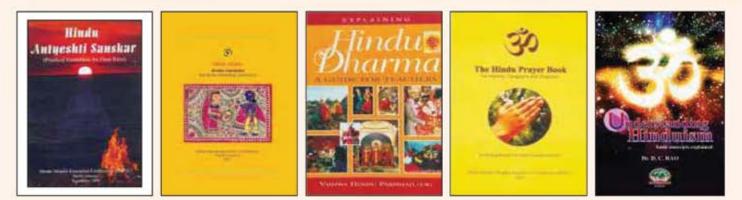


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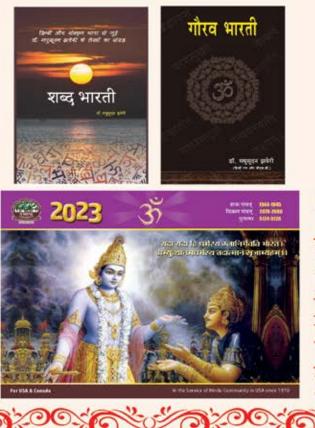


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