

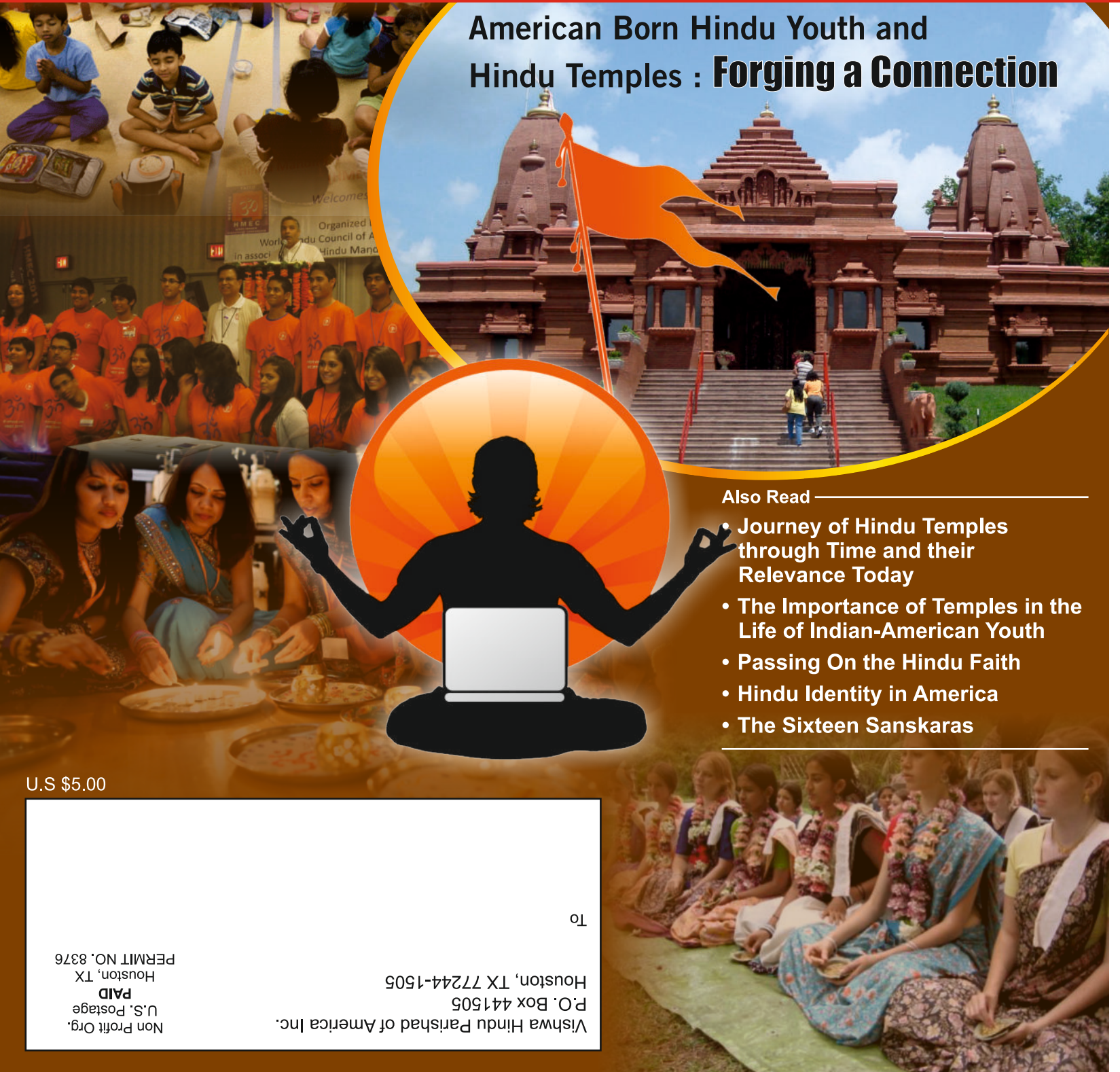


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No. 1
Jan. - Mar. 2014

HINDU VISHWA

Vishwa Dharma Digest



American Born Hindu Youth and Hindu Temples : **Forging a Connection**

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- Journey of Hindu Temples through Time and their Relevance Today
- The Importance of Temples in the Life of Indian-American Youth
- Passing On the Hindu Faith
- Hindu Identity in America
- The Sixteen Sanskaras

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To

Glimpses of Eighth Annual Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference



Dada Vasvani Opening remarks



Session on Seva



Hindu Encyclopedia Preview



Bal Vihar Children Performance



Sanatan Dharma Scholarship Awards

WORLD HINDU COUNCIL OF AMERICA (VHPA)

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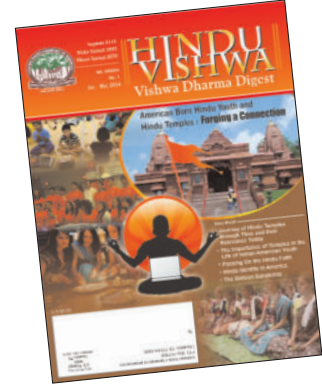
No. 1

January - March 2014

अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः ।
प्राणापानसमायुक्ताः पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम् ॥१५-१४॥

*aham vaisvanaro bhutva praninam deham asrith
pranapana-samayuktah pacamy annaim catur-vidham*

Enacting as the fire of digestion, I entering into the body
of every living entity digest the four types of foodstuffs by
the auspices of the incoming and outgoing life breath.



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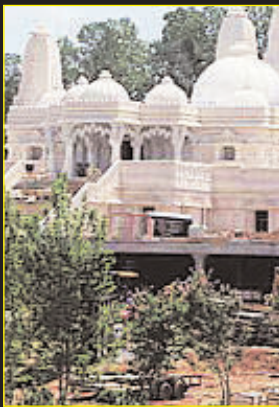
World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), founded in 1970 and incorporated in the state of New York in 1974, is an independent, nonprofit, tax- exempt and volunteer-based charitable organization serving the needs of Hindu community in USA. It aims to build a dynamic and vibrant Hindu society rooted in the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

The views expressed in the articles presented in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the organization, officials, editorial staff or the donors.

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C O N T E N T S

American Born Hindu Youth and Hindu Temples: Forging a Connection



Religious observance is declining in the US. There is a big task how to ensure that Hindu youth born in the United States remain active in their faith. A study has been done in this regard. Some eye opening facts have emerged...

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Scenes From an Indian Mela

At the conclusion of Hindu Mandir Executive's Committee (HMEC) Conference in August 2012, in Fremont near San Francisco, California, a general 'Hindu Mela' was organized by the Indian community in the nearby city of San Jose. An incident that took place in the Mela and captured this Editor's attention. Although not earth-shattering in nature, and, in fact, a commonplace occurrence, deserves mention, as a way of sharing the same with the Hindu community, both here in the USA, and even more so in India.

The Mela, as usual, featured a large number of booths, including a few stalls by the local Indian Christians. In these booths, young Indian Christian men – volunteers – had stacks of many publications of various sizes and shades, in English and in Hindi. These books and booklets unabashedly mimicked Hindu scriptural language and phraseology to publicize Christian beliefs – making them quite like a parody due to their distorted and laughable presentations, linguistically and content-wise. This was apparently being done to lure general public – Hindus and others – to the Christian faith.

It is well-known that, in India, many television channels engaged in exhorting Christianity among poor and uneducated masses deliberately and elaborately broadcast ambiguous and misleading talks by ministers and evangelists trying to project Christianity as a faith similar or even related to Hinduism. This is a planned effort to confuse the naïve audience and to camouflage their proselytizing campaign amongst the so-called 'backward' classes of Hindus. Thus the words 'Yeeshu' and 'Ishwar' are intermingled, and a Christian Geeta is propounded. This is a pure case of deceptive and what can be viewed as fraudulent practice. Such trends and tactics are only growing with time. The 'literature' in the said booths in the Indian Mela was only a small reflection of this widespread practice.

Should Hindus protest against such 'under-cover' operations of the proselytizing groups? We Hindus of course believe in freedom of religious choice and expressions and in the age-old tradition of inclusiveness. But misuse of this freedom through unfair, dishonest, and misleading propaganda is something to raise our voice against. A fraud in the arena of religion is as grave as in any other arena – something that the Constitution of India is not likely to condone.

It was interesting – even exhilarating – to watch young Christian volunteers swear vehemently about Jesus Christ and Christianity being the "only way," while some senior Americans, now devout Hindus, trying to enlighten them with the concept of Inclusiveness inherently enshrined in Hinduism. Is a degree of vigilance on part of Hindus called for here? ■

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Message from the VHPA President and General Secretary

*Adarniya VHPA members,
Sadar Namaste,*

Atlanta



Boston



Pittsburgh



In its journey of 42 years VHPA has sincerely served the Hindu and non Hindu community in America through the efforts of its members. During these four decades many dedicated office bearers have contributed towards achieving VHPA goals. These VHPA officers could fulfill their duties only with your support and trust.

In the recently concluded GC meeting in Michigan on Nov 15-17 the election of new officers (sevaks) was another milestone in the journey of VHPA. This election of new officers was a passing of batons and blessings. All of you have honored us with the responsibility of the General Secretary and President. As previous office bearers did, we will continue to seek your blessings, guidance, and suggestions to fulfill our sacred responsibility towards 'Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah.'

Attached is a status report of VHPA Programs and Projects (2013 milestones and 2014 plans).

We need your help in growing our membership base and enlisting additional life and patron members. Further, if you, your family members or friends want to contribute towards any of the programs and projects, you can send your tax deductible donations payable to VHPA to the address given below. You can choose to pay online via www.vhp-america.org by selecting 'VHPA growth/activities' under Donation.

We all can request and convince younger members of our families and friends to take part in VHPA programs and projects. This will ensure sustenance of our mission in time to come.

Dhanyavad and Hari Om,

Abhaya Asthana

President

Sanjay Mehta

General Secretary

1110, Grouse Dr

Pittsburgh PA 15243

Over 250 adult and youth delegates representing over 85 Mandirs (Temples) and Hindu organizations, from across the world, attended the eighth annual Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference (HMEC) held from September 20 through 22, 2013 in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. The eighth HMEC was co-hosted by a record 44 Hindu temples and Hindu organizations from across Canada and the United States.



Eighth Annual Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference

Travels to Canada

The program consisting of 23 sessions with 115 speakers and moderators was meticulously composed by a national program committee assisted by a team of over 25 experienced and committed Temple executives from across the US and Canada.

Addressing the participants by videoconference, Swami Dayananda Saraswati of Arsha Vidya Gurukul, PA said, "This get-together is bound to create better bonds and good networking among the people connected to the Hindu Mandirs across America and Canada." Swami Pratyagbodhananda from AVG stressed that religious thoughts should lead to practicality and spirituality and not dogma. Twenty sadhus and sadhvis (spiritual guides) attended the gathering. The conference was inaugurated by Pujya Dada Vasvani Ji who spoke about being proud of our rich Hindu heritage. The editor of Hinduism Today, Paramacharya Palaniswami, addressed an important topic of 'Hinduism in America - Promise and Perils.' Sri Sri Ravishankarji of Art of Living Foundation and Dr. Pranav Pandya of Gayatri Pariwar addressed the conference via video messages and spoke about propagation of scientific aspects of Hindu rituals and practices and the role of the mandirs. Swami Parmeshananda of Bharat Seva Ashram who is a Hindu representative in the United Nations spoke about how to bring Hinduism onto the world stage.

Mandir issues were at the forefront of the discussion. Swami Shantananda of Chinmaya Mission stressed educating our youth and children on our faith, culture, values and their active participation in temple management. It is the mandir's responsibility to instill pride and spiritual greatness of Vedic knowledge. HAF's young lawyer Harsh Voruganti shared the upcoming



Opening Session

changes in R1 visa regulation, building bridges with the local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to ensure safety and security. Varsha Rengesh of Bhartiya Temple, MI shared what has worked well for them for their outreach and seva programs that are not just limited to Hindus but serve the entire local community.

Members from Coalition of Hindu Youth (CHY, www.twitter.com/chynetwork) led the youth session. Youth discussion was focused on taking small steps to make positive changes in our Mandirs, while keeping the long-term goal of networking in mind. They identified that culture, peace, curiosity and sense of community are some of the reasons why youth come to Mandir and requested Mandir executives to focus on creating an environment for youth involvement and empowerment. Varun Khanna, who is doing his Ph.D. in Sanskrit at Cambridge University, spoke about the need for the Hindu community to support Hindu Studies in universities. Sanatana Dharma National Scholarships for youths in USA and Canada were presented at the conference by Tej Tandon of Om Temple, MA. A number of activities and thoughts on advocacy of issues pertinent to the Hindu community were presented. While describing the accomplishments of "Common Seva Divas across all temples," in which more than 80 temples conducted blood donation drives in memory of 9/11, Ms. Luz Rodriguez of Washington, DC described the need for bone marrow registration drives through the temples. The Hindu Chaplaincy Initiative was also discussed in detail at

this conference.

In addition to the books on Vivah Samskar and Antyesti Samskar that are already published, HMEC plans to release Simantonnayan samskar and a Vrat manual for young couples in coming year. Vishal Agrawal of Hindu Temple of Minnesota led the discussion on how to share and exchange various Bal Vihar and youth program materials among temples in North America. The role of Vanaprasthi Network (HAVAN) and Priest Network in enhancing operation of Temples and institutions was discussed. Dr. Lakshmanan of Sringeri Temple of Brampton led the discussion on the common by-laws for temples. Dr. Doobeyji of Vishnu Mandir inaugurated the gala dinner that was organized in Ram Mandir for all delegates and invited guests of the conference. ●

The eighth HMEC deliberated on the following 4 resolutions:

- ▲ Set up a Dispute Resolution Council to resolve & mediate disputes and conflicts related to NA Mandirs.
- ▲ Denounce Indian Government interference in Hindu Mandirs in India to preserve their sanctity.
- ▲ Mandirs to develop strategies & implementation plans to Secure and Protect Hindu Mandirs in America.
- ▲ Assist Hindu Health workers against treatments such as vaccines, etc. with non-vegetarian ingredients.



Delegates Group

Distinguish Yourself

By Siddheshwari Devi (Didi ji)

An ambitious student chooses to put in extra hours studying in order to distinguish herself from all her peers and be at the top of her class. A committed athlete forgoes parties and late night TV to spend time at the gym in order to represent his country in the Olympics. An employee volunteers to take on an extra demanding project and puts in several overtime hours to ensure that he is recognized by his boss as a dedicated employee. In all of these cases, people are working hard and sacrificing short term interests in order to realize long term goals. Not only do they understand the importance of distinguishing themselves from their peers, but also of working diligently to do so.

Let 2014 be the year in which you apply this extremely



important trait that you already possess, and use it to enhance your inner life. Sacrifice short term comforts and work diligently on your spiritual growth. Use this time to gain answers to the most important questions of life: Who am I? What is the goal of my life? How can I reach my goal?

Take on this extra extremely important project of spending time to know yourself and your mission in life. Sacrifice small pleasures in favor of genuine happiness which is attained by the select few who pursue it. Put in all the extra hard work that you can to make sure that your efforts do not go unrecognized in the eyes of the only one who matters: God.

Untether the Boat

There once lived some men in a coastal village, and they were all drunkards. Having alcohol as the common factor amongst them they had become good friends. After an evening of drinking, these men spontaneously decided to go on an adventure. They rented a rowboat and decided to go on a long journey



to another village, which was also situated on the river. They started rowing the boat and did so all night long. In the morning, their intoxication had mostly worn off. One amongst them rubbed his eyes and remarked loudly to others that the village they had reached looked exactly like their own. They all rubbed their eyes, looked around and agreed. Another man overhearing their conversation recognized them as local drunkards and told them that they were still in their own village. They said, "That is impossible. We rowed the boat all night long; we should have reached our destination by now." The man explained to them, "You fools! You were rowing the boat all night but you did not untether it. The boat is still tied to the shore."

There are many people in the world who are actively following some spiritual discipline or the other. They may be dedicating as much as two or three hours daily for devotional practice. They should be experiencing inner benefits. In fact, they deserve to see inner results, but they do not, and they wonder why. The reason is that although time is being spent and physical effort is being made to practice devotion, yet the mind is firmly attached to the world. They are rowing the boat, but the boat is tied to the shore.

The mind must be thinking of God during the recital of prayers, performance of rituals, bathing in the holy rivers, chanting of hymns and singing of devotional songs. If the mind is tied up with the world and you are making great physical efforts in devotion, do not expect to reach the kingdom of God.

Use Knowledge Wisely

Knowledge is power, and the knowledge possessed by humans far surpasses the knowledge possessed by other creatures. If this power is not harnessed properly, an individual may spiral downwards with great speed. There are many sins - stealing, telling lies and harming others, to name a few - and humans commit these sins in a way that no other creature can. A dog may steal a piece of bread, but in plain sight. A monkey may grab something from your hands with great agility, but it will not sneak into your house

Continued on page 40

By Dr. Nalinakshi Rangala

Hindus worship the Divine in various forms to find peace and happiness. Temples (mandir) were placed on hilltop, caves, perennial rivers, or waterfalls where the sacredness of all creations in Nature can be felt. The Tamil word Muruga refers to the beauty of Nature, and Lord Muruga or Subrahmanya is a favorite among the Hindu deities. In the Ramayanam, Valmiki described that Rama worshiped Lord Siva at Rameshwaram on the beaches of the southern shores of India.



Journey of Hindu Temples Through Time and Their Relevance Today

Among early Sanskrit scriptures Brihat Samhita (505-587 CE) describes temple plan, the temple construction is prescribed in the Shilpa Shastras, and the modes of worship in the Agamas. The Divine is invoked into the deity bringing sanctity at consecration of a temple. The temple architecture, customs, and traditions differ in different parts of India. Worship etiquette is full of symbolism. The flag post of the main Deity, the 'Dwaja sthambham,' is erected at entrance of temples with a 'bali peetam' next to it where one leaves behind all negative thoughts before entering for worship. All life is respected and it is common to see stray cows, monkeys, and birds congregate at temples. For countless generations Hindu temples have played a major role in the Hindu way of life, providing certain stability in social and personal spiritual life and happiness.

► Outside India

Hindus migrated across the oceans in search of economic opportunity, and carried with them their cultural heritage. In Cambodia's Angkor Vat (Khmer), King Suryavarman II built the largest Hindu temple complex (see picture) in the world, in the early 12th century. Hindu temples of ancient Java, Indonesia, resemble South Indian temple style and include Javanese art and architecture. This is seen in the 9th century Javanese Trimurti temple of Prambanan. In Bali, the Hindu temple Pura is an open-air worship place within enclosures of intricate designs, the layout arranged per hierarchy of sacredness resembling the "Trimandala" concept.



Outside of South Asia, the British Empire transported many Hindus as indentured laborers to Africa and the Caribbean. Their descendants have their own places of worship.

► In the United States

Even though American intellectuals (Thoreau, Einstein and others) found value in Hindu teachings, Hindu presence was virtually absent in the US apart from isolated sojourns during the 19th century. Swami Vivekananda addressed the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 in Chicago, and lectured on Vedanta for two years in several cities in the United States. In 1902, Swami Rama Tirtha visited the US lecturing on the philosophy of Vedanta. However, the Bellingham riots in Washington on September 5, 1907 epitomized the low tolerance in the USA for Indians and Hindus. Despite such events, some people including professionals stayed and worked in the US. In 1920, Paramahansa Yogananda came as India's delegate to the International Congress of Religious Liberals held in Boston.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 opened the doors to Hindu immigrants, mostly educated professionals needed in the medical and engineering industries. Young graduates from India seeking much needed post graduate education and research facilities during the years following India's independence were welcomed. These young men and women had come away from a nurturing environment where spirituality is part of daily life; then followed merchants and religious workers to help support this young community.

During the 1960s, Hindu teachers had found resonance in the US counter culture. A number of 'Neo-Hindu' movements happened including the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) founded by Swami Prabhupananda, and teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The Vedanta Society established few fellowship centers in the USA as early as in 1906, but they were not formal temples. Many Hindus used to gather in church basements or school halls for cultural and spiritual fellowship.

The new wave of Hindu immigrants felt the need for their own place of worship, and an initiative was taken under the leadership of a few community leaders like late Sri C.V. Narasimhan of the UN. The Hindu Temple of Flushing New York was first built;

soon followed by Venkateswara Temple of Pittsburg, and later, Sri Meenakshi Temple of Houston in 1979. Currently, in North America alone there are about 565 temples including Jain and Sikh temples in about 44 states.

► Why so many mandirs?

The Hindu population of USA has become the world's eighth largest. The US Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report 2004 found some 1.5 million adherents of Hinduism, 0.5% of the total population. 10% of Asian Americans are followers of the Hindu faith.

► Hindu presence is here to stay.

American Hindus have the highest rate of educational attainment and household income, (also tend to have lower divorce rates), among all religious communities. 48% of American Hindus hold a post-graduate degree. According to a study by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life in 2012, 48% of American Hindus have a household income of \$100,000 or more, and 70% make at least \$75,000, which is highest among all religions in United States.

Misinformation may continue to challenge us in schools, colleges and work places, as a misunderstood minority, sapping self-confidence amongst our young. However, favorable changes are noticeable.

In September 2000, a joint session of the US Congress opened with a prayer in Sanskrit, Hindi and English, read by Venkatachalapathy Samudrala, to honor the visiting Indian Prime Minister Atal Bahari Vajpayee. Ohio Congressman Sherrod Brown had taken this historic initiative by requesting the US Congress Chaplain to invite the Hindu priest from the Shiva Vishnu Hindu Temple in Parma, Ohio. A Hindu prayer was read in the US Senate on July 12, 2007, by Rajan Zed from Nevada. In October 2009, President Barrack Obama lit a ceremonial Diwali lamp at the White House to symbolize victory of light over darkness.

Describing the hundreds of mandirs found throughout the United States, scholar Gail M. Harley observes, "The temples serve as central locations where Hindus can come together to worship during holy festivals and socialize with other Hindus. Temples in America reflect the colorful kaleidoscopic aspects contained in



Hinduism while unifying people who are disbursed throughout the American landscape."

Over a century ago, Swami Vivekananda addressed a young audience in Madras, India:

"Children of India, I am here to speak to you today about some practical things, and my object in reminding you about the glories of the past is simply this. Many times I have been told that looking into the past only degenerates and leads to nothing, and that we should look to the future. That is true. But out of the past is built the future. Look back therefore as far as you can, drink deep of the eternal fountains that are behind, and after that, look forward, march forward and make India brighter, greater, much higher than she ever was....Your forefathers underwent everything boldly, even death itself, but preserved their religion. Temple after temple was broken by the foreign conqueror, but no sooner had the wave passed than the spire of the temple rose up again."

Should we build majestic Mandirs?

Mandirs, hospitals, and schools, all have their respective and essential role in society. Historically, Hindu kings and other wealthy people built and supported mandir complexes in towns and villages. In addition to religious services, the mandirs provided shelters to pilgrims and fed the poor, especially in times of need and during natural disaster. As centers for intellectual and artistic life, throughout history of Hindu civilization, mandirs

were the most significant patrons of superior architecture, intricate stone-carving and sculpture, metallurgic science in the making of murtis out of special alloys, painting, many crafts and the performing arts of classical music, devotional dance and dramas. Temple complexes often included libraries and educational activities. Thus the culture of India is strongly rooted in the public mind through generations with mandirs having played an essential part of Hindu life.

What about the future of these modern day Hindu Mandirs?

Many ancient Hindu temples and great libraries sustained destruction in the past thousand years by invaders.

Proselytization and coerced conversions continue to cause tremendous loss to Hindu way of life. Yet Hindu culture has survived centuries of assault. Understanding and appreciation of the great Hindu heritage is essential. Curbing any internal conflicts, Mandirs can provide focal points of learning and living a Dharmic life of self-discipline, mutual respect, service and compassion towards all.

About the Author

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By Asha C. Srinivasan
Shipman, Ph. D.

Recent reports by the media suggest that religious observance is declining in the United States. Though still representing a small percentage of the religious landscape (0.4%) in America, the Hindu population is increasing through immigration, and the majority of Hindus are in the 30-49 age brackets

Pew Research Religion & Public Life Project. Available at religions.pewforum.org/. Accessed 8/12/13



American Born Hindu Youth and Hindu Temples: Forging a Connection

Those of us who have been highly involved in Hindu Temples in this country often discuss how to ensure that Hindu youth born in the United States remain active in their faith. Here I present the results of a study assessing Hindu identity perception among Hindu youth, their involvement in Hindu cultural and religious activities and the types of programming that Hindu youths think Temples should offer for their generation. The findings can be applied to any Temple in the United States and hopefully this paper will spur the development of more audience-appropriate Hindu youth programming.

In March 2003 under the auspices of the Sri Satyanarayan Temple in Middletown, CT, a colleague Madhu Reddy and I surveyed Hindu youth ages 13-30 regarding their religious affiliation and relationship with the Temple. Over the course of the previous year we had worked with several dedicated volunteers to create a Hindu Sunday School for children grades K-12. The Sunday School opened its doors in 2002 to great enthusiasm from the local Hindu community. At the same time we wondered if we were doing enough to attract youth to our Temple. Many of us had observed that few teens and young adults (ages 13-30) attended programs at the Temple. I had always been involved with the Temple because my parents were co-founders so my attachment could easily be explained. Yet, even as a 30 year old, there were few among my age cohort.

For about a year I engaged Hindus of all ages outside the Temple as well as on site regarding this situation. It was excellent practice as I



worked through my PhD in Anthropology! This qualitative research indicated that the Temple could do much more to attract youth who later might continue to live in the nearby region and support the Temple throughout their lives. So we decided to launch two ventures: 1. a Hindu Youth Conference in the spring of 2003 to provide a semi-structured environment for young Hindus to discuss Hinduism as it related to their lives and 2. a survey, which will be discussed in this paper. The survey was built on my informal interviews and conversations with Hindu community members and formal training in survey-making acquired at the University of Connecticut.

The key issues addressed by the survey included:

- Aspects of cultural identity – how youth envisioned themselves with respect to their religion and culture
- The kinds of functions youth currently attend at the Temple
- Input on programs that would attract more youth to the Temple

The surveys were mailed out using Temple mailing lists as well as made available at the Temple and at the Youth Conference. Surveys were returned anonymously; most were filled out at the Youth Conference. The analysis was done using 47 surveys (20 males: 27 females; 34 ages 13-18, 7 ages 19-24, 6 ages 25-30). The number of respondents over 18 was far smaller than the number of respondents aged 13-18 making tests of significance more of a challenge, particularly if respondents skipped questions. However some small but significant differences were identified between age groups and between male and female respondents.

● Cultural identity

Overall, the survey respondents preferred to self-identify as Indian-Americans rather than use labels such as Hindu, Indian, Hindu-American, or South Asian. Interestingly females, more significantly, self-identified as American than did their male counterparts. In terms of feeling naturally drawn to Hindus (Q2), 60% answered affirmatively. Older respondents (ages 19-30) were more inclined to socialize with other Hindus than those in the youngest age bracket, possibly because they no longer lived at home and miss the familial social ties from their younger days. Further, 87% willingly self-identified as Hindu on forms requesting religious affiliation (Q3). These findings

suggest a keen desire by these respondents to blend in with the prevailing American culture combined with a strong affinity towards their familial cultural and religious background.

The next question (Q4) asked respondents about the traits defining a Hindu. The choices were gleaned from the qualitative research conducted the previous year. As Figure 1 shows, belief in God, prayer and respect for other religions top the list for all age groups.

Figure 1.

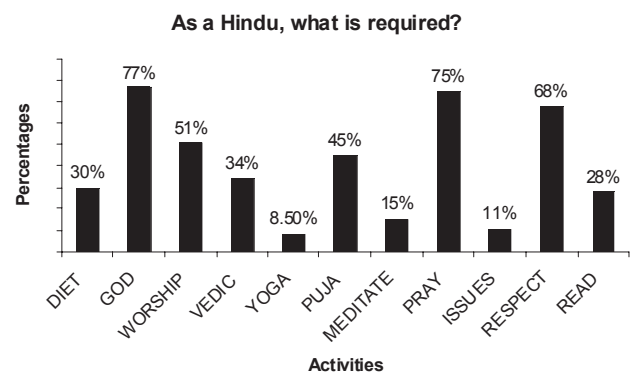


Table 1, below, provides the answers in percentage for each age group. All three age cohorts highly endorsed belief in God, prayer and respecting other faiths as a marker of Hinduism. The younger two cohorts also agreed that participation in religious rituals through going to the Temple and doing pujas was important, while the oldest cohort judged those activities less so.

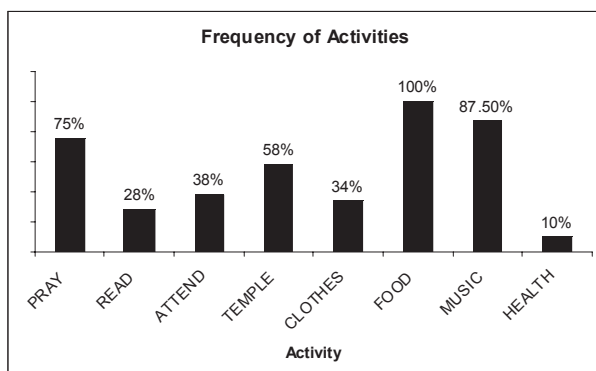
Table 1. Percent agreement with each section of Q4.

	13-18	19-24	25-30
Vegetarian Diet	26	43	33
Belief in God	79	71	67
Go to Temple	56	43	33
Follow Vedas	41	0	33
Do Yoga	12	0	0
Do Puja	50	43	17
Meditate	12	29	17
Pray	79	71	50
Promote social Issues	9	0	33
Respect other faiths	62	71	100
Read religious texts	26	43	17

Beliefs and Practices

While the previous question asked what Hindus ought to do the next question (Q5) and Question 9 asked respondents to rate how frequently they actually engaged in some of those activities associated with being a Hindu and how frequently they participated in specific Temple activities. Figure 2 indicates the frequency by which respondents as a whole engaged in the activities listed in Question 5. The responses were condensed into two variables: fairly often (daily, once a week, several times a week, once every few weeks, monthly) and rarely (never, only at festivals, during times of stress). Thus, for example, 75% of the respondents reported that they pray fairly often.

Figure 2.



In comparing Figures 1 and 2 the variable prayer stands out because of its perfect correspondence regarding what Hindus think they ought to do and what these young Hindus are actually doing. Prayer is both an individual and social activity; capable of being done at home or alongside others at a Temple. A cardinal Hindu belief is that the connection with God is direct; anyone can individually pray to and be heard by God. For many busy young Hindus this is quite appealing as they can even conduct their morning prayers in the car on the way to work!

Though few respondents consider following a strict vegetarian diet requisite to being Hindu, all enjoy Indian meals on a fairly frequent basis. A majority of respondents also listen to Indian music fairly frequently. Food is a basic human requirement, yet for most people it is also a salient cultural marker, particularly in India where the cuisine varies regionally. Moreover, Indians very much enjoy sharing food with family members and guests whether for a simple meal at home or at a wedding.

There were a few significant differences among age cohorts and the sexes. Females reported going to the

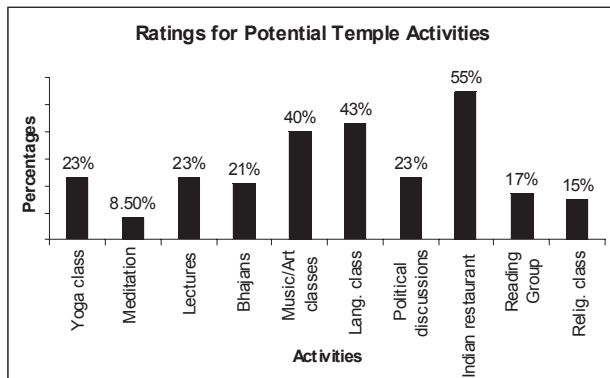
Temple for archanas and wearing Indian clothes much more frequently than their male counterparts. Indeed, anyone attending a Temple in the US cannot miss the difference in attire between the sexes. The men and boys usually wear western pants and shirts (and sometimes shorts and jeans) while the women and girls wear colorful saris or salwar kameez, bangles, flowers in their hair and bindis.

The main differences between the 13-18 and 19-24 groups concerned participation in organized religious activities. Members of the younger cohort go to the Temple and to Hindu festivals significantly more often than the older set. The younger respondents also pray more frequently – significantly more than both older cohorts report. More frequent attendance at religious functions by the youngest respondents might explain this finding. Though most 19-24 year olds are currently not attending Temple functions, they show a significant interest in attending lectures on Hinduism at the Temple. These findings support the hypothesis that led to the creation of the survey to begin with: older teen and young adult Hindus rarely visit the Temple. Once they leave the family fold for college and beyond, their attention is drawn away by school, work and other activities. They may be able to maintain their religious practices in college. In fact, 59% of those in college reported that they are able to do so. Ritual observance becomes harder for the simple truth that most college campuses are far from any Hindu temple. Interestingly it was the 25-30 year old cohort that reported going to the Temple the most frequently. Although there were only six respondents in this cohort it suggests that these young Hindus, finished with their education, early on in their career, likely starting their own family and perhaps living away from their natal home, see the Temple as a resource and connection with their culture.

● What the Temple could and should offer Hindu youth

Questions 10 and 11 addressed the types of activities that would attract young Hindus to the Temple. Figure 3 reports the findings from question 10. Respondents were simply asked to mark which programs, if offered by the Temple, they would likely attend. By far the most tantalizing potential enticement to the Temple was an Indian restaurant, providing further evidence of the centrality of food in Indian culture. Also highly rated were classes in music, art and languages. Notably, female respondents particularly favored yoga, music and art classes while the 19-24 year old cohort highly endorsed classes on Hinduism.

Figure 3.



Question 11 asked an open-ended question regarding how the Temple could promote Hinduism to students and young adults. Remarks about education were the most common. Specifically respondents suggested classes tailored to youth that explained the meanings behind the rituals conducted at the Temple. Though most respondents were familiar with at least one Indian language, they did not understand Sanskrit, the traditional liturgical language and felt frustrated that they could not follow what was being chanted during the pujas. In addition the respondents suggested classes about more general aspects of Hinduism including mythology, the Vedas and the origins of Hindu festivals. Many felt they lacked a voice in Temple programming and that their needs and interests were not being met. In analyzing these responses and considering the survey responses as a whole, it seems these youth – and by extension most Hindu Youth born in this country – could benefit from the creation of a Youth Seva Circle at the Temple. This group would be charged with creating and coordinating programs specifically addressing the interests and needs of the local Hindu youth. These young Hindus could also establish a lending library with books on Hinduism that are specifically written for Hindu youth (many of these exist now!) and devise a lecture series inviting local Hindus whose work or avocation the group finds enticing. They could also program a special time at the Temple akin to a coffee house where young members might informally

share their talents in Indian music, poetry, dance, etc. The Youth Seva Circle could exist semi-independently of the other Temple governance groups with the appointment of an “advisor” who also serves elsewhere in the Temple’s governance structure. At the same time, a member of the Youth Circle could be invited to serve as a liaison with one of the other governance groups and thereby available to maintain a cohesive, transparent understanding of Temple programming goals. In order to attract the widest possible age range of youth program participants, the Youth Circle would have to consist of a wide range of age groups itself. The creation of such a body in every Temple would send the message to the Hindu youth that their voice is more than welcome – it is vital – to ensure that Hindu Temples remain an enduring resource for Hindu culture and religion in the United States.



About the Author

Asha Shipman holds an MS in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Connecticut. She currently serves as the Hindu Student Life Advisor at Yale University.

By Smita Daftardar

Diwali is one of the most important festivals celebrated with gusto by the Indian community worldwide. The thriving Indian community of Atlanta is no exception to this festival fever, and the World Hindu Council of America (VHPA) Atlanta continues to provide a public platform for the enthusiasts who love to celebrate the Festival of Lights with their extended family of compatriots.



CONGRESSWOMAN TULSI GABBARD

Joins VHPA Diwali Celebration at Centennial Park

VHPA, Atlanta chapter hosted its annual Diwali Celebration the "Festival of Lights" a free public event celebrating the rich cultural diversity of India, on Oct 27th, 2013, at the iconic Centennial Olympic Park in Downtown Atlanta. The event saw an attendance of about 1500-1700, attracting patrons as well as curious tourists and passers-by. The daylong event started with the traditional prayers recited by students from VHPA Balvihar Hindi School and a beautifully choreographed Ganesh Vandana by the talented Bharatnatyam student Yumin Shivdasani. VHPA Atlanta Chapter President Mrs. Kusum Khurana welcomed the attendees and lighted the ceremonial lamp. This was followed by almost 5 hours of nonstop entertainment - melodious songs and spectacular dances. Like every year, the cultural program was designed to showcase the rich performing arts of India: traditional, contemporary, fusion, classical, folk, Hindi films - you name it! The variety presented by the artists transported the audience from the streets of Mumbai to the lush fields of Punjab, from foot tapping Tamil songs to soulful strains of Rabindra Sangeet. A group of young kids from Cobb Balvihar performed a dance on "Rang De Basanti", which was followed by a traditional fast Bhangra by another group of young children, trained by Shri Vishal Sharma, former captain of the UGA Bhangra team. The volunteer teachers of Balvihar (Cobb) presented an impromptu dance, greatly appreciated by the organizers as they waited for the scheduled artists to appear! Kalaivani Dance and Music Academy students performed a traditional Bharatnatyam piece and a fusion dance to the music of "Talking Drums", which got an encore due to popular demand. The talented ladies from Ananda dance group performed a fast paced fusion dance, and a lively Bhangra, the irresistible beats prompting many in the crowd to join in the dance on the green lawns of the park! Mahek Shah of

*Congresswoman Tulasi
gabbard with VHPA Atlanta
Team and Community Leaders*



Mahek Dance academy and Aadithya Prem, talented Bharatnatyam dancers well known to the community, presented beautifully choreographed dances. One of the dances, a duet, summarized Ramayan's story, the music for which was done in a rare raga called Suposhini. The other dance, a solo by Aadithya, was a fusion of Thaye Yashoda and summarized the story of Krishna killing Kaliya. A Bharatnatyam solo by Mahek's 6 year old daughter got a huge round of applause! Sagnika Mukherjee presented a three dance medley set to Rabindra Sangeet, her elegant footwork, fluid movements and facial expressions beautifully in sync with the melodies, making the dance seem almost effortless! In between the colorful dances, the audience got to enjoy melodious songs from some great local artists. The amazing father-daughter duo, Shyam Gupta and high school sophomore Vidushi Gupta, presented a highly entertaining medley of songs, depicting a range of moods. Sarayu Narayan, another high school junior, with her honey sweet voice did justice to popular



Kusum Khurana Presenting Bouquet and a book to Tulasi Gabbard



songs like "Mere Dholana Sun..." Indian Idol contestant Swati Mishra, a talented vocalist and instrumentalist, brought the house down, rather, up

on the stage, with her lively rendering of latest Hindi film numbers, with members of audience joining her on stage to rock to the beats! Volunteers from Balvihar Shri Raman Shivram and Shri Nishith Oza took everyone down the memory lane with beautiful tributes to the legendary Manna Dey, who passed away recently. The audience were treated to some great duets and solos in Hindi, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu by DJ for the event, Srinivas Durgam and his singing partner Bhanusree, who sang the song "Gumsum" from movie Paa in five different languages! The program was efficiently emceed by the talented and witty Sabitha Ragunathan, a member/volunteer of VHPA, Atlanta Chapter and copy editor of Hindu Vishwa magazine. The Festival of Lights program was graced by two



Swati Mishra Singing with Children

illustrious guests, Shri Rudi Webster, a famous cricket player, author of numerous books and current Ambassador to US from Barbados and Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, representative from Hawaii and the first Hindu member. Mr. Webster's address especially reminisces of Sachin Tendulkar and received an enthusiastic applause from the cricket crazy Indian audience. Tulsi Gabbard's presence had an electrifying effect on the crowd, with her greetings of "Jai Shri Krishna" from the podium, and talk of Geeta and Karma Yog in her address!! Notably, Ms. Gabbard, a practicing Hindu and a vegetarian, is the youngest legislator ever elected in the history of Hawaii and the youngest woman elected to state office in the nation.

Every year, volunteers of VHPA, Atlanta Chapter come together to plan the Festival of Lights and, with the help and support of the community, are able to bring a quality program for everyone to enjoy. The success of any event depends on a variety of things. In Rancharitmanas, Goswami Tulsidasji describes "Ram Janma" in these words:

जोग लगन ग्रह बार तिथि सकल भये अनुकूल

चर अरु अचर हर्षजुत राम जनम सुखमूल ॥१९०॥

Meaning that all factors: the time, day, date, positions of planets & stars, all became favorable, so that the auspicious event bringing universal happiness, "Ram Janma" could take place. While the significance of Ram Janma is hardly comparable to the Festival of Lights conducted by mere mortals, and not even remotely being attempted, the analogy does hold! All factors crucial to the success of the program turned favorable: generous donations from sponsors, logistical support from volunteers, presence of talented artists, an appreciative audience and last but not least, the blessing of a beautiful sunny autumn day from heavens above!! A program of this magnitude won't be possible without sponsors and donors and VHPA, Atlanta Chapter would like to extend sincere thanks to all major sponsors and donors for the Festival of Lights: Shri Shakti Mandir with their generous donation of food for about 2000 people, and many other businesses and individuals who contributed not only cash but provided prizes for raffle drawing, and other necessary items. Also, a group of young and energetic students from Georgia Tech belonging to Sigma Phi Epsilon provided a much needed critical help in setup and in ferrying heavy food items by taking time off their busy weekends.



*Congresswoman Tulasi gabbard with
VHPA Atlanta Team*

By *Nirmala Shukla, M.A.*

Sanskaras are religious ceremonies to purify the mind and body of a person. Sanskara literally means purification, refining, polishing, etc. It seems that the Sanskaras were originally social and cultural ceremonies of a family and later their main purposes became refining the mind and body of a person to perfection. The Sanskaras were gradual training in spiritualism. It was a way in which active life could be lived side by side with spiritual realization.



The Sixteen Sanskaras

The sixteen Sanskaras are: (1) *Garbhadhana* (conception), (2) *Punsavana* (causing birth of a male child), (3) *Simantonayana* (hair- parting), (4) *Jatakarma* (birth ceremonies), (5) *Namakarana* (naming ceremony), (6) *Nishkramana* (first outing), (7) *Anna-Prashana* (first feeding of grain), (8) *Chudakarana* (tonsure), (9) *Karnavedha* (ear piercing), (10) *Vidhyarambha* (starting of studies), (11) *Upanayana* (thread ceremony), (12) *Vedarambha* (beginning of Vedic study), (13) *Keshanta* (shaving of head), (14) *Samavartana* (end of studentship), (15) *Vivaha* (marriage), and (16) *Antyeshti* (last rites).

Out of the above the first three are prenatal Sanskaras, the next six are childhood Sanskaras, and then the next five are educational Sanskaras the fifteenth one is the Sanskaras signifying entrance of life of a householder and the last one is after one dies.

■ ■ **Garbhadhana** (Conception of a child): In Sanatan Dharma, procreation has been the main purpose of marriage. The rite through which a husband and wife unite to procreate offspring is Garbhdhana. This is done at a very auspicious moment in consultation with the family astrologer. Through this Sanskara one wished to produce the best possible progeny with the religious serenity, which they believed would consecrate the would-be child.



■ ■ **Punsavana** (Causing birth of a male child): This is a rite by which a male child was produced. The Vedic hymns recited on the occasion wish for Puman or Putra (son). The Sanskara should be performed when the moon is on male constellation. This time is regarded as favorable for producing a male issue. One should insert three or



four drops of juice of a Banyan tree in the right nostril of the pregnant woman for the birth of a son. Inserting Banyan tree juice was a device meant for preventing abortion and ensuring the birth of a male child. In the opinion of Sushruta, the Banyan tree is supposed to have the properties of removing all kinds of troubles during pregnancy.

■ ■ Simantonnayana

(Hair parting): The third Sanskara of the embryo is Simantonnayana. That rite in which the hairs of a pregnant woman were parted was called Simanta. The purpose is partly superstition and partly practical. People believed that a woman in her pregnancy is subject to attacks of evil spirits and enhance some rite to be performed to ward them off. The religious intention of the Sanskara is to bring about prosperity to the mother and long life to the unborn child. The ceremony should be performed in the fourth (preferable), sixth or eighth month of pregnancy.



■ ■ Jatakarma (Birth ceremony): The birth of a child is a very happy occasion in a family. It is imperative that the mother and child are protected from any danger. Since ancient

time man wanted to ensure that his child is born free of any problems and that child and the mother remained healthy. The most common ceremonies after the birth of a child are celebrated on the sixth day and the tenth day. The sixth day celebration, called the Shasthi is the day when all the relatives and friends come to house, bless the child and get hair cut, shaving and massage from the family barber. On the tenth day there is a feast to celebrate the arrival of the new member.



■ ■ Namakarana (Naming ceremony): The Hindus realized the importance of naming a person suitably and so made the custom of naming a person a ceremony. Brihaspati said, "Name is the primary means of social interaction, it brings about merits and is root of fortune. From name man attains fame.

Therefore, naming ceremony is very praiseworthy".

The ceremony is performed on the tenth or the twelfth day after the birth of the child. To get rid of the impurity caused by the birth, the house is washed and purified and child and mother were bathed. After performing the preliminary rites, the mother covering the head of the child with new cloth wetted his hand with water and hands the baby over to the father. After this, offerings are made to the Gods. In consultations with the family priest, the child's name is established.



■ ■ Nishkramana

(First outing): Every important step in the progressive life of the child is a festive occasion for the parents and the family, and is celebrated with appropriate religious ceremonies. The child since birth lived only in one part of the house and his innocent eyes are exposed only to the people around him. But soon the universe of the child is to be expanded. So there is a need to introduce him to the outside world. However, life outside of the house is not free from natural and supernatural dangers. Therefore, for the protection of the child, Gods were worshipped. To do this, the father takes the child out and exposes him to the sun. The time for performing this Sanskara varied from the twelfth day after birth to the fourth month. The Sanskara implied that after a certain period of time the child must be taken in fresh air and from there the practice should be continued. It also emphasized in the budding mind of the child that this universe is a sublime creation of God and should be duly respected.



■ ■ Annaprashana

(First time grain feeding): A child is not able to digest food other than his mother's milk for the first four to six months after birth. Feeding the child with solid food is the next important stage in his life for a faster growth. The



child gets his new teeth just around this time. This ceremony is performed with some religious touch, through the Annaprashana Sanskara.

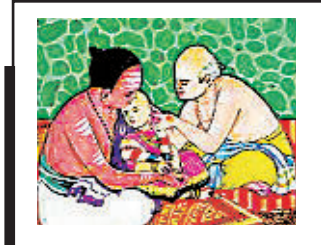
■ ■ Chudakarana

(Tonsure): Chudakaran is a religious ceremony as old as the Vedic period, consisting of wetting the hair, prayer to the raiser, invitation to the barber, cutting the hair with Vedic verses and wishes for long life, prosperity, valor and even progeny of the child. The purpose of the Sanskara as prescribed in the scriptures is the achievement of long life of the child. According to Sushruta, "shaving and cutting of hair and nails removes impurities, gives delight, prosperity, courage and happiness". Charaka says, "Cutting and dressing of hair, beard, nails gave strength, vigor, vitality, life, purity and beauty". The ceremony takes place at the end of the first year or before the expiry of the third year.



■ ■ Karnavedhana

(Ear-Piercing): Piercing body parts for wearing ornaments was popular among ancient peoples all over the world. In the case of ear piercing, it was ornamental in origin, but later on proved to be useful and was given a religious coloring for emphasizing its necessity. Sushruta says, "Ears of a child should be pierced for protection from diseases and for decoration". The ceremony is performed in the sixth or seventh month after the birth. The child is seated facing east and given some sweets. Then the right and the left ears are pierced.



■ ■ Vidyarambha

(Beginning of formal education): When the child is prepared to receive education, the Sanskara is performed to mark its beginning, and alphabets are taught to him. The ceremony is



performed in the fifth or the seventh year but surely before the Upanayana ceremony.

When it is Uttarayana (the sun in the northern hemisphere), an auspicious day is fixed for performing the Sanskara. The child is required to bathe, be anointed and decorated. Then Vinayaka, Saraswati, Brihaspati and the family god or goddess were worshipped. Homa is offered to the gods. The teacher faced the east, the child faced the west and the teacher chanted the mantra, which means, "Salutation to Ganesha, salutation to Sarasvati, salutation to Brihaspati and salutation to Narayana and Lakshmi". After this, "Om namah Siddhaya" or salutation to Siddha is chanted. Then the child worshiped the teacher, and the latter made the child read thrice what was written. The child presents clothes to the teacher, makes three circumambulations round the gods and seeks everyone's blessings.

■ ■ Upanayana

(Thread ceremony): "Upanayana" literally means "taking one near (the teacher)". With the ceremony the teacher initiates a young boy to take a vow to seek

knowledge for the rest of his life. By virtue of this ceremony the initiated was ranked as "dvija" (twice born). After this ceremony the young boy becomes a full Brahmana. The yajnasutra or sacred thread with three strands remind him constantly of three properties of the Brahman, namely, Sat, Chit and Ananda. It also reminds him to rise above the three Guna, namely, Satva, Raja and Tama. He is also supposed to remain a Brahmachari (celebrate seeker of Brahman) until his entry to the Grihastha ashrama. The Sanskara is performed between the ages of eighth and twelfth year.



■ ■ Vedarambha

(Beginning of the Vedic study): This Sanskara was started late in the Mahabharat period when the sage Veda Vyasa required different families to learn Vedas and preserve their shakhas



(branches) by committing to memory.

■ ■ **Keshanta** (Shaving of beard): It is a Sanskara, which consecrated the first shaving of a student's beard. It was accompanied by the gift of a cow to the teacher and gifts to the barber. The Sanskara was performed at the age of sixteen years and marked the arrival of youth of the student.

■ ■ **Samavartana** (End of studentship): This marked the end of student life. It also meant returning home from the ashrama of the guru. A student had two choices after this. Either he could get married and lead a family life or live the life of a sanyasin (renunciate). In the beginning the ceremony was like a modern convocation function. The student had to ask the permission of his teacher to end his student career and then offer him gurudakshina (gift to the guru).



■ ■ **Vivaha** (Marriage ceremony): It is the most important Sanskara in the life of a person. The Vedic seers had established four ashramas, namely, (1) Brahmacharya, (2) Grihastha (householder's life), (3) Vanaprastha (retired life) and (4) Sanyasa (life of renunciation). Married life is essential to perpetuate the family lineage and for the growth of personality. Marriage is a family affair rather than a personal one. That is why all the close relatives assembled to celebrate the marriage in the family. A regular marriage provided a life-long companionship to a person.



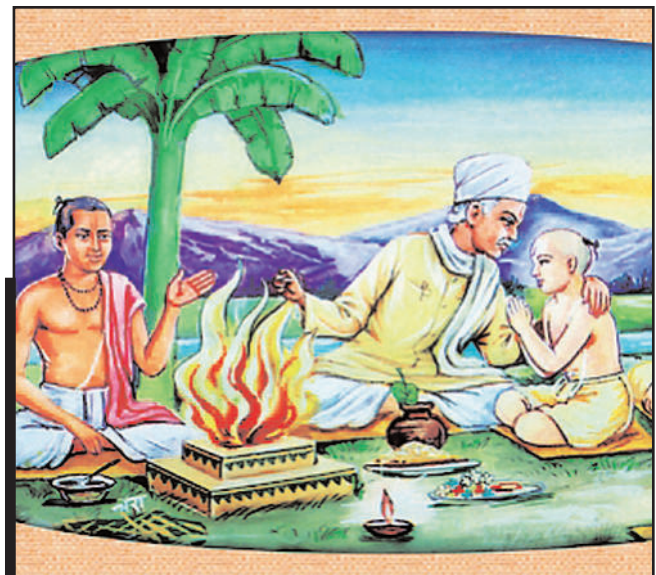
In the past, an utmost care was taken in selecting a bride or a groom, because the best possible progeny was desirable and, therefore, physically, mentally and morally fit match was necessary, as the children inherit the good or bad qualities of their parents.

■ ■ **Antyeshti** (Last rites): This is the last of the Sanskaras, but is of as much importance as the earlier ones. There were many factors that brought into existence the rites and ceremonies on the

occasion of death. The first one is the value of life in the next world, which is higher than the present one. The Antyeshti Sanskara is performed with mantras and prayers to make the way to the heaven.



A formal farewell address is given to the deceased. All the relatives and friends assemble for the funeral ceremony and other rituals, particularly on the tenth day and the thirteenth day after death. On the tenth day all the assembled near and dear ones take a bath together to cleanse them. On the thirteenth day, there is a feast in memory of the heavenly soul. The whole process of this Sanskara eases the pain of the family when other relatives also come to share the grief.



About the Author

Mrs. Nirmala Shukla, a Fremont, California resident, is a social worker and a retired Computer Scientist. She has been involved with the Fremont Hindu Temple from the very beginning. She has published many poems and articles on Hinduism in various magazines, and a book entitled *Smritiyan*. She has served as the Chapter Director of World Hindu Foundation.

By Yumin Shivdasani

From reciting prayers and singing bhajans to learning about our marvelous religion, temples play a huge part in the day-to-day life of Indian-American youth. In America, Hindus are surrounded by American culture and customs. Even though we Hindus accept all religions as long as their one true path leads to God, it is still important to teach kids about our religion and culture and pass it on through the generations. This is where our purposeful temples come in, as they offer a place for Hindus to pray to their deities regularly, partake in festivals and celebrations, and teach kids about the true meaning of this wonderful religion.



The Importance of Temples in the Life of Indian-American Youth

The most obvious and common use for temples is praying to our deities and performing keertans, poojas, etc. Since we live in a country in which there are various religions, it's important for children to practice Hinduism and learn our religion to preserve our past and honor our heritage. The Hindu temples also offer a serene area to meditate. They serve as a meeting place for the community to gather and practice Hinduism together. Our mandirs provide a place where children can connect to our religion and flourish in it. In a world without our mandirs, Indian-American kids wouldn't have a place they could visit regularly and pray to the god of their choice. Mandirs give everyone a chance to practice Hinduism, and in this way kids can follow in their parents' footsteps.

Another importance of mandirs in our lives is that it gives us a place to celebrate countless Hindu festivals. Several temples organize events in which we can relish in our true Hindu lives. We watch, captivated and excited, as bright yellows, reds, and greens, cartwheel





all over the world to give lectures in mandirs, which children can attend. They teach everyone about the essence of Hinduism and explain the epics like the Ramayan and the Mahabharata, whose stories are engraved with universal morals. The Hindu children listen to the prayers the priests chant and the bhajans they sing. They listen to the Ramayan and Bhagvat Geeta verses being chanted. The children understand from

into the sky from firework after firework high over the hundreds of diyas lit during Diwali, the festival of lights. This symbolizes overcoming the dark ignorance in our world and celebrating the goodness in everyone. On Holi, we smear colors onto our friends' faces and pour water over their heads, listening to the endless echoes of laughter around us and we join in, giggling, forgetting enmity and making friends in the festival of colors. We deck ourselves up in bright, colorful clothes and jewelry, grab our dandiya sticks, and dance for hours on end with our partners during all nine nights of Navratri, when the goddess Durga Ma killed the demon Mahishasura. We would not be able to celebrate the festivals and take part in the celebrations that make us true Hindus if the mandirs around us did not arrange them so we could enjoy ourselves on these memorable holidays. Most importantly, it once again lets kids connect with their heritage and participate in the Hindu festivities each year, even though they live almost 8,400 miles away from India!

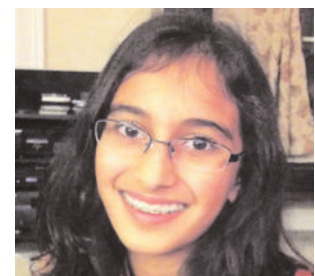
Lastly, temples give American-Indian kids an opportunity to learn all about Hinduism and really grasp the meaning of this beautiful religion. Children watch others performing poojas and chanting bhajans, and from them they learn. Their parents help by showing them how to hold the aarti plate and take it in a circle around the deity, teaching them prayers that they can recite in the mandir to the murtis, and instructing them on how to meditate while sitting in the temple. Kids also absorb much from the learned priests, as the priests are constantly active in the mandir, always offering their devotion to God. Priests and gurus come from

priests and devotees that when doing a pooja, you must treat the statue of God as your special guest. You first bathe the murti, and then decorate it with flowers and light incense sticks for fragrance, then you sing songs to God to entertain Him, and finally you offer Him food which you then accept as prasad. These rituals show American-Indian kids what being a Hindu is all about and encourage them to do the same wholeheartedly.

These are just a few of the many ways temples influence American-Indian kids' lives. Through our mandirs, kids can connect to Hinduism and realize that there is much, much more to being a Hindu than what you can see on the surface. Without temples and their many services, there would be far less Hindus in America today, but thanks to the dedication of our priests and other volunteers who work in the mandirs, not to mention all the generous people who donate their money and time, we Hindus can continue to enjoy our rich heritage every second of every day.

About the Author

Yumin Shivdasani, a sixth grader based in Atlanta, likes reading, Piano, Badminton, & Bharatnatyam. She is learning Hindi language and Hindu culture at VHP of America, Atlanta Balvihar.





US actress Goldie Hawn speaks with French Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard during a session at the World Economic Forum in Davos on January 23, 2014



US Actress Goldie Hawn Gets Davos Meditating

Davos, Switzerland: If the million-dollar deals, schmoozing and champagne receptions begin to get a little stressful, the billionaire movers and shakers at Davos found a way to inner peace on Thursday with a session on meditation. But this being the World Economic Forum in Davos, where celebs and world leaders rub shoulders in cushy conference rooms, it was no ordinary meditation panel, but one led by Oscar-winning US actress Goldie Hawn.

And despite the hotly awaited speech by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani taking place at the same time, the 68-year-old star had no trouble pulling in the punters, with delegates queuing round the corner to get in and many turned away disappointed. After French Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard, resplendent in orange and blue robes, had led the assembled global elite in a calming moment of relaxation, Hawn spoke of her meditation for children project which she said had "caught her by the bellybutton."

Hawn said that after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, "realising that the world had truly changed forever and our children were going to inherit a world that I didn't think they had the tools to handle", she decided to help children harness the power of their minds.

Her foundation has introduced meditation exercises in schools across five continents and she said the participating children were "just flourishing". "Let's put the humanity back into the classroom," urged the actress best known for her comedy roles. In between short pauses for meditation, the Davos participants - many sitting on the floor for lack of space - heard from medical researchers on the benefits. Professor Richard Davidson from the University of Wisconsin presented research showing that people who had undertaken a meditation course were found to have a higher immunity to influenza and a higher tolerance of pain. Studies had also shown that introducing meditation at a young age gives children greater self control and leads to fewer criminal convictions in adulthood, Davidson said.

Haakon, Crown Prince of Norway, was among the satisfied customers.

"I went to a session like this a few years ago and that's what I find interesting about Davos, you can do a whole lot of different things," he told AFP.

"This is not the sort of thing I get to do on a regular basis."

Hawn told the global elite that the Davos focus should be on society and how people interacted with each other.

"We have to create equanimity; we have to listen to each other. We have to care deeply, collectively, about our society as a whole, otherwise we will create a world not worth living in," she said to applause.

"We have the power, we have the capability, we have the gift and god gave us the tools so let's use them."

Source: www.samachar.com/US-actress-Goldie-Hawn-gets-Davos-meditating-obxrLChabda.html

By Padma Kuppa

Being active in the temple community, along with what we have done outside the house of worship, has provided my children the essence of what it means to be Hindu.



Passing On the Hindu Faith

I was recently at a Hindu American Foundation event where I was surrounded by people of many ages and backgrounds, and was excited to discover that someone else had grown up without a temple, just like me! Growing up as a Hindu in the United States in the '70s meant that learning about the faith was something done at home. I was one of two "brown" children in my suburban Long Island public school, where I had to explain my mother's strange clothing (a sari), and the even stranger markings on our foreheads (bindis), that earned me the nickname "dothead" from my fourth grade crush.

The young people in our midst were surprised and could not imagine life without a temple nearby for celebrating holy days and making connections to the community of faith. Fortunately for them, the generation above mine—mostly immigrants from India—could not imagine raising children without a temple; thus, several hundred temples have been built in the United States over the last several decades, serving as learning centers and places of worship for a community that includes immigrants and "Americans" who have adopted the faith as way of life that embraces pluralism.

When I became a parent nearly eighteen years ago, I realized the importance of having a temple nearby, in order to educate my children in the aspects of the faith that I could not, with my limited knowledge of Sanskrit or understanding of the rituals that mark the milestones of a Hindu life. When we moved our young children to Michigan fifteen years ago, seeking a home near the local Hindu temple was a no-brainer. The annual temple calendar that came with the membership dues typical of American Hindu temples, served as a way to "keep" the holidays, as there are days almost every month to celebrate this deity or that. The treats made as part of the rituals and celebrations helped decide what Indian foods I became adept at making, amidst the tacos, pasta, and pizza in our typically South Indian vegetarian diet. The aunties and uncles I found at the Temple became the elders that bless our children on auspicious occasions, serving as the extended family in the absence of their grandparents hundreds or thousands of miles away. The Sanskrit, religious education, and classical arts classes that my children took at the temple, as well as the selfless service they provide to the community, have been a key part of their faith formation; they learned the yoga of gnana and karma (knowledge and action) along with the bhakti (devotion) gained from participating in various religious rituals, raising their voices to sing or chant in unison.

But as a family, we have also lived our faith in what we do outside the temple, working for social justice and non-violence. I follow the path of dharma (justice) and seek shanti (peace) as a community activist working for interfaith understanding and advocating for the rights of those who have no voice. After all, parenting is something done by example. I believe that being active in the temple community, along with what

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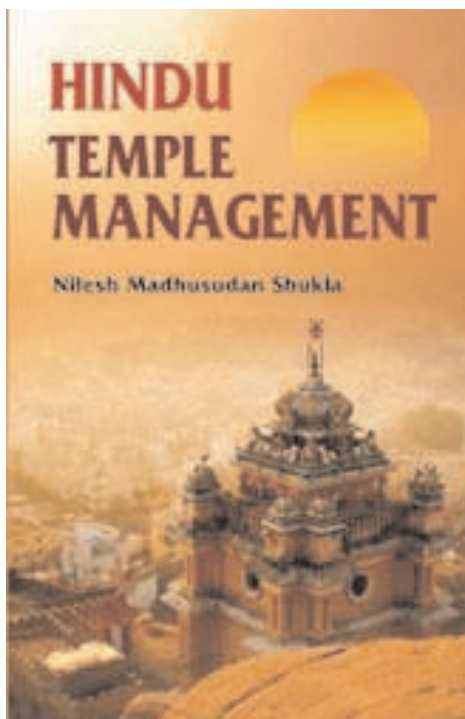
Hindu Temple Management

**Temple Management is a fine art.
Its manager is no superman,
but shouldn't he be? How to?**

Hindu Temple Management, a new book by Nilesch M Shukla, presents some ideas to address the common set of concerns voiced by temple administrators. A common concern that is of foremost importance is the lack of interest and participation of young people in temples. This is not unique to Hindus but is a concern that is widely shared by religious leaders across the globe. Engaging the generation that is young and dynamic which is used to the instant gratification that comes from being connected to a wide pool of resources through the Internet is not an easy challenge. However, Nilesch Shukla has some ideas that can provide what this target group needs to keep the spirit of temples and Hinduism alive and flourishing in the years to come.

A story of Kaashi (Varanasi) recounted in the book is significant for the temple managers. In order for every temple to be like Kaashi, the most valuable part of a temple manager's role would be a strong involvement in community outreach and development. Temples are not just a piece of real estate or a monument or a community center. The followers of Hinduism derive physical, mental, cultural and spiritual sustenance from their temples. Most importantly they are God's homes and then everything else. Having this conviction and considering presiding deity of the temple as the boss, no temple manager could ever let himself fall prey to irresponsibility, dishonesty or laziness at work or leave the premises in filth and disrepair. A good manager understands that he is responsible for carrying out the social and spiritual aspects of God's work. There are many ways a temple manager can engage the community, such as, through discourses, volunteering opportunities and educational classes. Providing the community with the ability to host different types of events will also bring people to the temple more often.

Interfaith communications, understanding others and making others understand Hindus and Hinduism is also a major responsibility of temples in the prevalent multi-faith, multi-cultural societies. This can however, be complicated as every temple manager does not have clear ideas about other religions and their tenets. Hindu temples and its managers should evolve inter-faith protocols, tailored to each religion and its festivals.



Temples and communities are subject to laws of the country they are in. The temple manager is not expected to be a trained lawyer himself but should possess basic legal knowledge to stay clear of any misconduct. He must keep himself well acquainted with all those regulations that are necessary to run his temple, pay taxes and observe the state's prescribed book-keeping guidelines. Additionally, a working knowledge of other civil laws that affect community will make the temple an entity in good standing in the community.

Apart from this, never forget that the temple manager is also running a functioning enterprise. The temple employs a number of people including priests, cleaners and administrators and has customers i.e. its devotees, volunteers and the community at large. Managing communication, payroll, maintenance and accounts is by itself requires a super human. A tall order? Certainly, but made a shade easier with some great ideas from the author.

Hinduism by its very nature evolves over time and has the flexibility to adapt to the changing needs of its followers. Any problem faced by temples today can therefore be overcome by some thoughtful corrections that follow the principles of Santana Dharma.

This book with its myriad ideas and stories will be



a good start to revolutionize the way we manage temples and the way we perceive them. However, it is certainly not intended to be the last word and readers are therefore welcome to participate in knowledge exchange via dedicated

email: htm2013@rediffmail.com or [blog hindu-temple-management.blogspot.ca](http://blog.hindu-temple-management.blogspot.ca)

*"Hindu Temple Management" is hard-bound and has 164 pages (155+ix). It is published by Global Vision Publishing House, New Delhi. It can be purchased by contacting publisher: **Global Vision Publishing House, Website** www.globalvisionpub.com*

(Continued from page 25)

we have done outside the house of worship, has provided my children the essence of what it means to be Hindu. As they grow and leave the home, I hope that they along with their peers will continue to support the needs of the faith community by supporting the temples we have built and to serve the world we live in by promoting pluralism.

Note: This article is part of a special Patheos Symposium, Passing on the Faith: Teaching the Next Generation. (Patheos.com)

Padma Kuppia

About the Author

(padma.kuppia@gmail.com) is a writer, IT professional, community activist, wife, and mother working to build a more pluralistic society within a Hindu and interfaith framework. You can also read her blog *A Balancing Act*, at padmakuppia.blogspot.com. The views represented in this column are not a reflection of the views of any organization of which she is a part. Her column, "Seeking Shanti," is published on alternate Thursdays on the Hindu portal (www.patheos.com/Hindu)



By Archana Jyoti

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has discovered a rare 'ancient mint city' of 7th to 10th Century at Majra in the Haryana's Rohtak district that may get wiped out soon because of the rapid ongoing real-estate construction activity at the site.



ASI Stumbles Upon a Rare 'Ancient Mint City' in Haryana

With the excavation at the site yielding over 31 coin moulds and ten crucibles besides pottery in just one day itself on Sunday, the ASI is all set to write to the State Government to temporary halt construction activity in the region so as to enable it to unearth the valuable ruins before they are demolished. There are sufficient evidences which show that the site was particularly used for minting coins of various metals during the period ruled by King Mihir Bhoja of the Gurjar Pratihar dynasty, Indo-Sassanian dynasty and Shahi dynasty during 7th to 10th century.

"However, unfortunately, the ongoing heavy construction activity at the site is all set to damage the remnants of this important dynasty," said Dr B R Mani, Additional Director General of the ASI, a premier organization for the archaeological researches and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation. Dr Mani along with the ASI team had visited the site on Sunday and recovered over 31 coin moulds, ten min crucibles used to pour melted metal in the moulds and remains of bigger crucibles used for melting metals.

He said that Haryana Government will be requested to issue order to halt the construction activities at some identified area at the site so that it can salvage more leftover historical items before they get demolished. In fact, thanks to the three huge electricity towers erected at the site that the region is still spared from getting demolished.

"The three towers have proved lucky for us as most of the artifacts that have been recovered from the mound have been explored below these towers at an area of 100X100 meters. We are hoping to recover more from this area," said archeologist expert Manmohan Kumar who was instrumental in intimating the ASI about the historically important remains.

"The excavation holds importance as this would shed more light on the history of the periods of Gurjar Pratihara, Indo-Sassanian and Shahi Dynasties. In Mihir Bhoja time Gurjar Partihara Dynasty was at its zenith and peak of prosperity. He was undoubtedly one of the outstanding political figures of India in ninth century and ranks with Dhruva and Dhampala as a great general and empire builder.

Dr Mani added that as a matter of fact, it is not possible to seek permanent ban on construction at the site and declare it as excavation site of national importance. "We can only salvage the leftover artifacts from the site."

Source: www.dailypioneer.com/nation/asi-stumbles-upon-rare-ancient-mint-city-in-haryana.html

By Anand Ramnarine,
M. D.

In many respects, living in America is not easy for Hindu kids. They spend majority of their waking hours in the public school system amongst peers that put the greatest premium on fitting in. Fitting in however, is not quite easy as Hindu youth often live with different rules than their peers. Furthermore, during high school, a time of tremendous change both physically and emotionally, many feelings develop within these youth that they are not sure they can share with their parents.



Hindu Identity in America

Most kids don't understand a lot about their religion, and find services in the temple tedious and repetitive as they grow up. However, by the time they go to college, a few of them truly begin to examine and explore their religion. These students become involved in Hindu student councils, sponsor religious celebrations like Diwali, practice yoga, organize bhajan sessions and study the shastras. Through these associations, they reaffirm or for some affirm a Hindu identity for the first time.

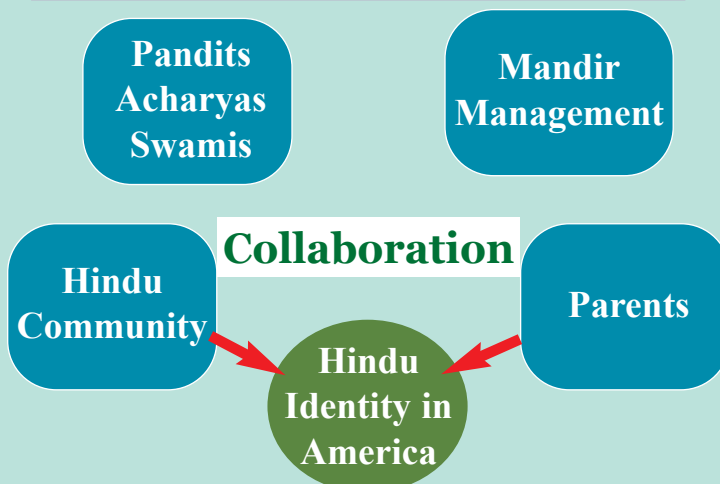
Just a generation or two ago, our sacred traditions were directly passed from the older generation to the youngsters in the home. It was not uncommon to find a household consisting of three generations living under one roof. Children learned bhakti and shraddha of their heritage by observing their elders within the household. Most families in olden days lived in villages and towns with well established Ashrams and Mandirs that were central to the daily lives of the community.

As people left their homelands and immigrated to America, families were separated mostly with the older generation staying behind. The Hindu family was now faced with the challenges of being a nuclear family where children rarely able to witness the ancient rituals and traditions of previous generations within their homes. This is further complicated by parents lacking the time or the knowledge to pass on the much needed traditions to the kids. Where can our children and their parents turn to for guidance and instruction so that the great tradition and values of Sanatan Dharma can once more be instilled within the next generation?

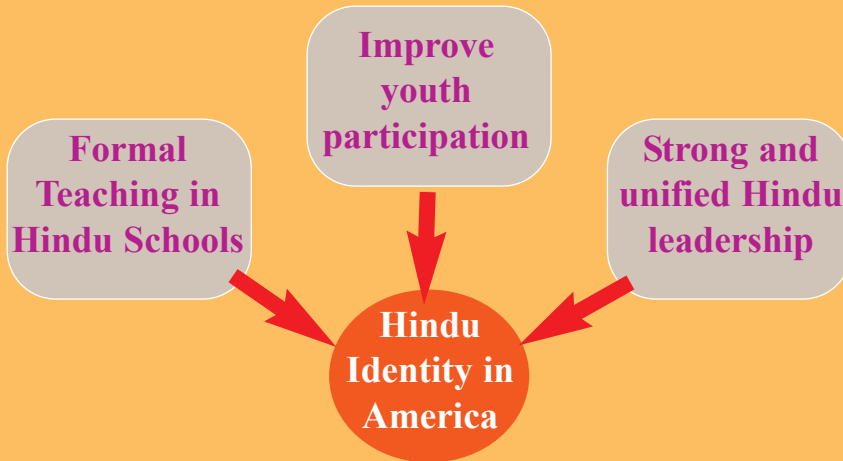
Hindu identity can be developed in our youth in America through the combined efforts of the Hindu community, and the mandirs.

Encouraging youth participation during temple and community activities, classes to educate and creating a strong and unified Hindu leadership that our youth will respect are a few ways. The most integral step should still happen in the home at an early age. Our children need to be formally taught about their dharma before they become exposed to the outside world where they will be inundated by Western values. Hindu preschools and schools need to be created with a well developed curriculum based on the teachings of our shastras - children will be taught Sanskrit, yoga, sangeet, nritya, and our values.

Hindu Identity in America



Hindu Identity in America



values. It is here where our children will once again be able to learn in an environment under our terms - with an emphasis on our traditions and values. This will instill in young kids a sense of pride and identity that will help them participate in our mandirs and grow up with a firm understanding of Sanatana Dharma. They will not easily succumb to the temptations and challenges faced during the formative years.

Both the temple management and Pandits must be reminded of the importance of youth participation as a means of developing these virtues. Pandits or Acharyas must sensitize themselves to the presence of youth and their way and level of thinking. They ought to include more pertinent sermons and lectures that touch on the issues that our youth face. Many teenagers become frustrated due to the lack of understanding of rituals, bhajans, mantras, shlokas and other aspects of Hindu practice that belong to our rich heritage. In this generation, the "why?" is more important than the "what?" or the "how?"

Generations ago, learning Hinduism occurred through a natural diffusion that was present in the environment. Unfortunately, such an environment is not yet present in the United States. It is thus incumbent on those who teach Hinduism, to make sure that whenever any aspect of Hinduism is taught, the meaning and practical importance of it is also taught. By constructively engaging them in an environment that provides the meanings behind the great philosophies, practices and ideals that make up Sanatana Dharma, we will take great strides forward

in making sure that Hinduism in America will not only last for successive generations, but be able to grow and proudly expand. Lastly, Hindu youth identity in America can only be solidified once a unified and national Hindu voice has been created. Today's Hindu youth face a constant struggle trying to resolve the contradictions between two large forces - Western influence and their Hindu values. Hindu Mandirs and organizations must provide the platform and provide the resources for communicating Hinduism through local, state

and national activities and festivals. These organizations need to continue to work together in order to gain greater recognition and better resources for our community. As future Hindu youth grow up in America, they will feel included and accepted in this diverse society. They will no longer have to compromise their traditions and values in order to forge an identity. Despite all of the challenges facing our youth today, there is hope. Hindus must always remember that we possess the greatest asset that must be tapped into - the teachings of Sanatan Dharma; which are vast, deep, ancient, inexhaustible, timeless and ever-adapting reservoir of wisdom. With the combined efforts of the Mandirs and parents along with the support of the community we can envision and create an environment that will be able to instill a Hindu identity.'

This paper was presented at the Second Hindu Mandir Priests Conference (Surya Narayan Mandir, Queens, NY, May 2013)

About the Author

Dr. Mityanand Ramnarine is the Vice President of Surya Narayan Mandir and a member of Surya Narayan Seva Outreach Sang, an initiative of the Mandir. A Board certified in Emergency and Internal Medicine, he is an attending Physician of Emergency Medicine at North Shore-LIJ Medical Center E-mail: emedram@gmail.com

By Satya Kalra

How to Change Your Behavior One Step at a Time

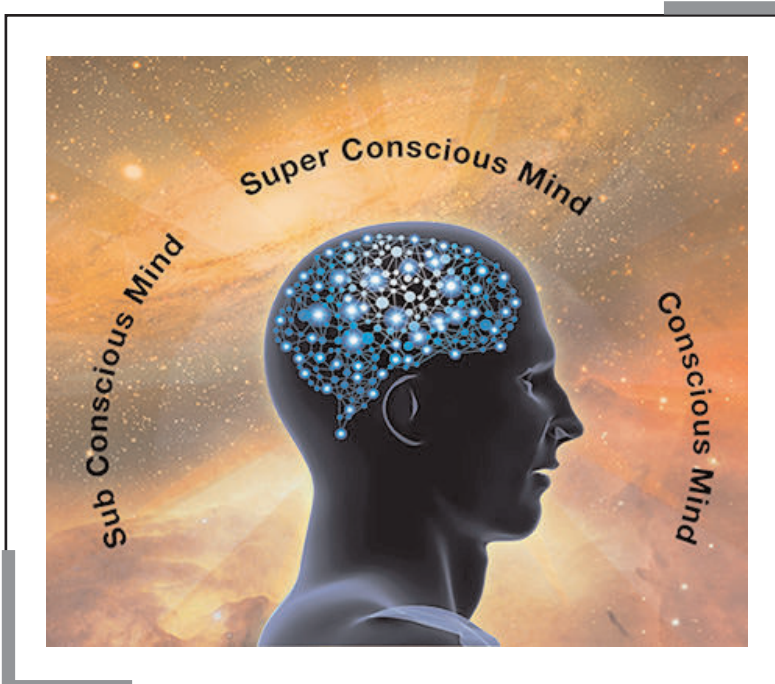
Have you ever tried to change a behavior or habit, only to find yourself disappointed and dissatisfied when you weren't successful? Do not worry, you are not alone. I was one of you. I had undisciplined eating habits. Fortunately, I was able to change these habits when I learned the secrets to making positive change. I want to share these secrets with you, so you can apply these transformation techniques to some of your habits you might want to change, such as smoking, dieting, even negative thought patterns and any other undesirable behaviors. Most of the time changing a habit (self-transformation) is not a quick fix. It requires reprogramming of the mind, which takes place at the subconscious part of the mind. Therefore, it is important to understand the function and process of the mind, especially the subconscious mind.



The Secret of Self-Transformation



Human mind has three parts: conscious mind, subconscious mind and Super Conscious mind. The conscious mind is responsible for logic, reasoning and all the voluntary action with awareness such as reading, listening, writing, speaking etc. Anything we learn for the first time is also an action of the conscious mind. The information we receive from reading, listening and learning



are recorded in our subconscious mind, the second part of the mind.

Therefore, you must be very careful about your actions, which will program your subconscious mind and also determine your attitude and the quality of your life. It is like a chain reaction or domino effect. If you always think negative things will happen, this will cloud your judgment, and everything that happens will seem negative. People get into the habit of thinking: "Why does this always happen to me? Why do I deserve this?" However, it is the way your conscious mind perceives the situation that creates the negativity, and it keeps you in a cycle of negative thinking and missed opportunities.

Conscious mind is the gateway to subconscious mind.

The sub-conscious mind is the mind of the imagination. It is a storehouse of our learned behavior, beliefs, feelings and memories. It is like a disc with our old data/information-

Sanskaras. It is responsible for all of our involuntary actions, heartbeat, breathing rate, etc. Based upon the information saved by previous actions, we automatically respond and do things without thinking about them (auto responses).

For example, when we first learned to drive a car, we had to consciously think where to put each foot and how to use each new control. As we develop our driving skills our subconscious mind takes over and we become so proficient that we can drive, navigate, listen to music and also talk on the phone at the same time!

The language of the subconscious mind is feelings (pain, pleasure, hot, cold), emotions (anger, frustration, happiness, sorrow) and images. Our subconscious mind cannot distinguish between thoughts that are created by physical events or imaginary events. It doesn't have the power to reason and analyze. It interprets our thoughts literally.

"Subconscious mind is the gateway to Super Conscious mind."

Super-Conscious Mind is the third part of the mind. It

is the spiritual part of the mind.

It is also called

Supreme

Power/Energy,

God, Almighty,

Higher Mind,

Higher Self,

Higher

Intelligence,

Universal

Intelligence,

Universal Mind,

Universal

Consciousness,

Supreme Consciousness, Brahman and more... The

scientific community refers to it as "The Unified Field" or "Infinite Field of potential within."

It does not matter what label it is given. What really matters is that this is the only force that both science and spirituality have acknowledged as the mastermind for all the creations in the universe. It holds the power to create any conceivable outcome.

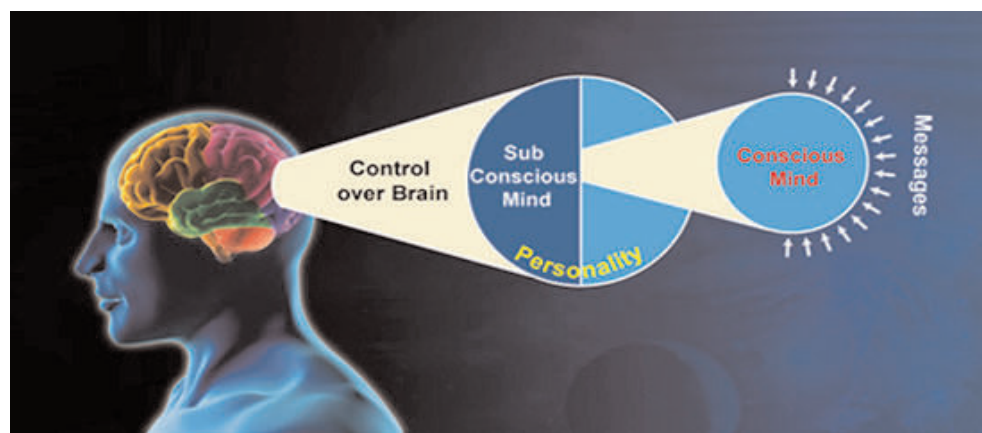
It has no boundaries or limitations in its power to create, from the infinitely large to the infinitely small, from the microscopic to the greatest of the universe.

It is described the following way:

- It consists of all things in the past, present and future.
- It is omniscient and omnipresent.
- It encompasses all things, both the seen as well as the unseen.
- From the emotional perspective, the super conscious mind contains all feeling and emotion such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control as well as fear, sadness, turmoil, anger, greed and resentment. It consists of all individual consciousness.

Both parts of the mind conscious and subconscious work together to establish the connection with the super conscious mind, which is the ultimate source of unlimited power. When conscious and subconscious mind have any conflict, then the Super Conscious mind resolves the conflict, brings the harmony and takes care of all good things in our life that we aim for.

Once we understand the function of the subconscious mind, we can also understand why we behave



differently. We cannot change because we are stuck in old ways, and our subconscious mind doesn't know how to change.

Process of change:

The process requires all the three parts of the mind. Therefore,

- Take action with awareness and conscious efforts. This is the function of conscious mind.
- Take action at subconscious mind with positive feelings: The change has to take place at the subconscious level with respect to one's behavior or habits, unwanted emotions or feelings. It can

be changed only through subconscious programming, through meditation, sending auto-suggestions and creative visualization to the subconscious mind. This must be done in a very relaxed state of mind.

7-Steps to make a change:

▲ **1.** Know the change you want to make or habit you want to change (ask yourself what behavior, emotions and feelings I want to change or what I wish to do differently-Make a list). Make the commitment to change. For example, I became aware of my unhealthy eating habits and made the conscious decision to change them.

▲ **2.** Put conscious efforts to change and support it with action and practice it during the day. Replace a negative activity or thought with a positive one. This will also change your "auto-response." When I decided to change my eating habits, I made a conscious effort to change by creating a meal schedule and list of the foods that I could eat each day.

▲ **3.** Relax your body (Yoga, Pranayama-Breathing exercises).

▲ **4.** Relax your mind and Meditate. Meditate when you don't know what else to do. I used meditation techniques when I had a craving for certain foods.

▲ **5** Give messages or affirmations to your subconscious mind for the change you want to make within yourself. Affirmations must be in positive terms rather than negative. For example: I will eat healthy food vs. I will not eat junk food; I will get up early in the morning vs. I will not sleep late; I will do yoga and meditation every morning, etc.

▲ **6.** Pray to Supreme Power and thank Him for His guidance and help, and let go...

▲ **7.** Self-introspection, self-evaluation and practice

Continue to practice until you have accomplished the change you want to make (A 30 days daily spiritual planner to help you with this process and keep you on track is available to down load from www.pathtoanandam.org).

Performing actions with awareness at a conscious level will bring some but slow and temporary

change, however, combined with relaxation, meditation and affirmation (positive and motivational messages), and prayers will bring faster and everlasting change.

Here both parts of the mind, conscious and subconscious are the part of the body (science-matter) and Super-Consciousness is Supreme Energy (Spiritual Mind).

Change: Conscious mind- Subconscious mind - Super Conscious mind (Spiritual mind)

Finally, have patience because transformation of habit is not a quick fix but a slow, steady and gradual process. As Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, "One attains peace and tranquility of mind little by little through practice. (Gita.6.25)"

About the Author

Satya Kalra is a self-empowerment, self-transformational and happiness coach, spiritual guide, international speaker and author of six spiritual books.

Following a divine call, Satya left the helm as a CEO in the

biotech industry after serving for 35 years and founded a non-profit organization-Path to Anandam. She teaches how to be happy, self-transform and live the lives to the fullest, through-7-Steps.



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By Hiro Badlani, M.D.

Hindu Temple is verily the foundation of Hinduism. For Hindus, visits to temples and holy places (Tirtha Yatra) are one of the five essential spiritual practices (Panch-yajna). Along with reading the holy scriptures (Swadhya), uttering God's name (Japa), worship (Puja), and performing rituals (Charya), visiting the temple is considered as a very necessary spiritual practice (Sadhana). A Hindu is ordained never to outgrow the temple; however high his or her spiritual journey has reached.

Hindus continue to visit the temple-to pray, to worship, and to be divinely inspired-till the end of their lives.



Youth Involvement in Hindu Temples of North America

There are now over 800 Hindu temples in U.S.A. and Canada. Most of these have been built in the last 3-4 decades, after the liberalization of immigration rules. The people who built these temples worked hard and mobilized resources through many sacrifices to accomplish these amazing tasks. These people, at least most of them, are now ready to retire and may not want to do the same hard work and exert as much they did earlier. Hence, a significant portion of these onerous responsibilities will fall on the present day Hindu youth. The question is, "Are the Hindu youth fully prepared for this mega task?" The question may even be better framed, "Have we, the seniors, prepared and groomed the Hindu youth adequately for this gigantic challenge?"

We often hear the senior executives of Hindu temples complain that the youth are not taking much interest in the temple activities and are not coming forward to serve in various jobs. We also are aware that the Hindu community is a leader in the education sector. This has been possible only because of very thoughtful and meticulous planning of parents. We may need the same effort and planning in grooming the Hindu youth. We may wishfully hope that they will learn and take the responsibility when the time comes; but what if they do not? Nothing in fact comes on a platter. The truth is the more ready they are, the better they will perform.

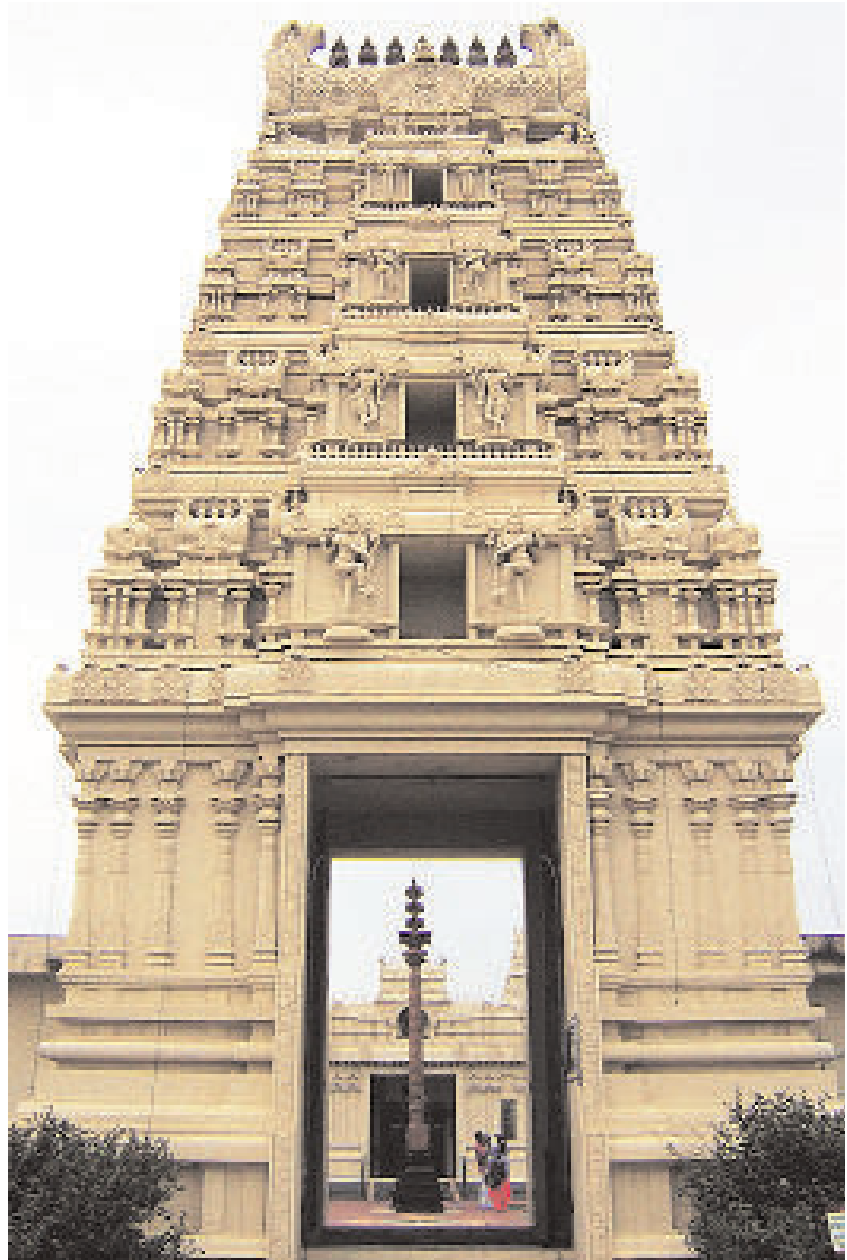
It is now well recognized that the best teacher is one who can bring out all the good out of a student without pointing out his faults and weaknesses. Today's youth are very sensitive and independent-minded. Many seniors may have a history of severe verbal and even physical abuse in their own time. Now things are different; tact, patience, love and respect are the new ways. Even the pet trainers insist that we should treat the pets with respect and gentleness; our youth as human beings deserve more.

We must do everything possible to motivate the youth to take responsible positions in temples. Some posts may be completely reserved for the youth; these may be preferably

filled by nomination by the rest of the elected members so the youth are not discouraged if they contest and lose. The promising candidates amongst the youth may be picked up by the senior members and encouraged and guided to learn all the techniques methodically. Alas, some very senior members would not quit their chairs till almost the end of their life. Once in the executive committee, these youth members ought to be listened to attentively; their suggestions and proposals should be implemented as far as possible. Any blunt remarks and discouragement will alienate them seriously and even permanently. Youth also have the big advantage of newer technology, modernity and speed of performance; these can be of tremendous benefit in the long run.

Use of English may be accepted in preference to Hindi or any vernacular Indian language. Often because of this one reason, many a youth stop coming to the temples altogether. We may respect all Indian languages and use them as reference languages; we may also try and get their best works translated into English for our future generations. Any sentimental over-attachment would prove impractical in the long run; we may even look at what is happening in India as regards the use of English. A book of Bhagavad Gita is always a book of Hindu religion whether translated in English or other languages.

Undoubtedly the youth too must come forward and do whatever it takes to be fully prepared for this task ahead. Even as the seniors may take the initial step, the final responsibility shall always remain with the



youth to uphold the torch. They may also realize that the big achievements of the Hindu community in America in various sectors-education, medicine, science, technology, etc., and low crime rate, family bonding-are closely linked to the high moral traditions of ancient Hindu religion. Temples are the foundation pillars of our religion. Neglecting the temples may amount to weakening and dislodging

these very foundations. How aptly Swami Vivekananda said, "Neither politics nor military power, not commercial supremacy nor mechanical genius furnishes India with that backbone, but religion; and religion alone is all that we

have." Neglecting the spiritual teachings of the religion and running blindly after the sensual and material objects will be as the old saying goes, "throwing away the gold and collecting the dust!" It is therefore in the best interests of the youth that they accept the religion and temples sincerely and diligently. It has been one of the greatest challenges for Hindus living outside of India to integrate and adapt themselves to different cultures. Hindus may be ready to adopt some of the good virtues and strong qualities of other cultures, while not abandoning their own heritage.

The number of Hindu Chairs at American universities has been steadily increasing. These will be very useful as guiding centers toward integration of Hindu community with the mainstream American society. Hindu youth may also start to visit some of the advanced places of worship belonging to Hindu religion or other faiths. Visiting major temples and planned meetings with many saints, swamis and other temple organizers will broaden their religious outlook considerably.

It is now estimated that more than 30 per cent of weddings in Hindu community are inter-religious and inter-ethnic. Hindu temples must be geared to receive and welcome with open arms such new spouses of Hindus. They may not change their faith but may visit as accompanying spouses. The temple settings, sitting arrangements, food distribution, and many other small and big aspects of temples may be looked into and modified as suitable. The future decades may be challenging for Hindus in many ways. Hindus must not fear or pull away from the new world of technology. Instead, they must use the same to



enhance and adorn their spiritual and religious pursuits. Hindus would do very well to build ultramodern, hygienically superior and finely comfortable places of worship, where they may spend most of their spare time in search and practice of higher values of the Divine. Hindus must also adopt the modern ways of life in other social and secular activities to their great benefit. They must learn punctuality, speech economy, and many other similar exercises that would impart an avant-garde image to their spiritual and secular projects. Hinduism has always been a dynamic religion. American philosopher J. B. Pratt made the following relevant remarks, "The reason for the immortality of the Vedic religion of Hinduism is that while retaining its spiritual identity, it has been changing its outward form in accordance with the demands of the time; and particularly it is the only religion which has been able to meet the challenges of science, which governs the thought and life of the Modern age."

Trust begets trust. May our worthy seniors take the first important step and induct the youth with big responsible authority. May our youth respond with equal sincerity and commitment, May the Supreme Lord bless us all and we march forward on this spiritual path in peace and harmony.

About the Author

Dr Hiro Badlani is the author of Hinduism: Path of the Ancient Wisdom www.hinduismpath.com. He lives at Los Angeles and can be contacted at hgbadlani@aol.com, Phone 562-865-5880

जीवनसाथी

कवि : डॉ. ओम प्रकाश अरोरा

आ गई कहाँ तुम देव लोक से, अपना अस्तित्व मिटाने को,
बँध गई तनिक कच्चे तागों से, पल-पल साथ निभाने को।
बढ़ गये कदम सहमे-सहमे, मन में इक दृढ़ विश्वास लिये,
बन दुल्हन आ बैठी मंडप में, जय माला दो हाथ लिये।



कर साक्षी अग्नि और समूह, एक अडिग प्रण ठान लिया,
बिन सोचे समझे अनजाने, जीवन साथी मान लिया।
सप्तपाद, कर आलिंगित, यह कैसा अभियान किया,
सात जन्म के बंधन का, तुम ने ही तो आह्वान किया।

संकल्प बद्ध कर्तव्य निहित, तुम ने जीवन संचार किया,
बन स्नेह, त्याग की इक प्रतिमा, सब को आँचल में ढाल लिया।
बन भार्या, सर्वस्व समर्पित कर, अपना दायित्व निभाने को,
सुख चैन किया अर्पित तुम ने, इस घर को स्वर्ग बनाने को।

मातृ-शक्ति बन तुम ने ही, तार स्नेह के फैलाये,
मानवता और भद्रता के, नव-गीत तुम्हीं ने सिखलाये।
संस्कृति और सभ्यता का, हर पल तुम ने आह्वान किया,
हर गण को देव, समझ तू ने, इस गृह को सम्मान दिया।

हूँ कृतार्थ, हूँ ऋणि तेरा, जो प्यार जताया है तू ने,
हर पल का हूँ मैं आभारी, पल साथ निभाया जो तू ने।
तप, त्याग तेरा, करुणा तेरी, तेरी आस्था के समक्ष,
साधना, श्रद्धा मेरी अर्पित तुम को, हूँ नत-मस्तक हूँ नत-मस्तक।

About the Author

Dr. Om Prakash Arora, MD, based in metro Atlanta, is a General Surgeon. He has been writing Hindi poems since his early school days.

Archaeologists recently revealed they had uncovered a wooden structure, surrounded by an open-air courtyard that dated from 2,550 years ago and was situated directly beneath a brick temple built three centuries later to venerate the birth of the Buddha.



Discovery of Earliest Buddhist Temple in Nepal

The uncovering of the long-buried shrine and courtyard, believed to have hosted the tree under which the Buddha was born, provides the clearest evidence ever of when Prince Siddhartha Gautama walked the Earth and began outlining his pathway toward enlightenment and Nirvana.

The earliest Buddhist chronicles all record that Queen Maya Devi gave birth to the Buddha in the mystical Lumbini Garden, but none provides a clear-cut date for the event.

British archaeologist Robin Coningham, who led the international team that excavated the structure, said in an interview that there is a good reason for conflicting chronologies of the Buddha's birth and life: "Writing in South Asia didn't really spread until about 300 BC." That means details of the Buddha's life and teachings were passed down orally for centuries before being written down.

That led to present-day estimates on the Buddha's birth that have varied between 800 BC and 400 BC, he said.

But now, the discovery of the earliest shrine at Lumbini, and the use of leading-edge dating technologies to calculate its age, have led Coningham and his team to determine the temple was built around 550 BC.





Buddha's birthplace, believed to be in Nepal, marks the origin of Buddhism [Getty Images]

"Ritual activity [at the shrine] could have commenced either during or shortly after the life of the Buddha," Coningham and nine other scholars state in an article published in the December issue of the British journal *Antiquity*.

Remarkable find

Unveiling evidence confirming key details of the Buddha's nativity narrative and timing might ultimately be rated as one of the century's most remarkable archaeological finds.

Barbara Moffet, a spokesperson at the National Geographic Society, which helped support the excavation of what could be the world's very first Buddhist shrine, said, "It's not every day that we discover something that opens a window on the birth of a major world religion."

The Washington, DC-based group filmed key discoveries made during the unearthing of the shrine, and will broadcast a documentary, "Buried Secrets of the Buddha" in February on National Geographic Channel.

Coningham, a professor at Durham University in the United Kingdom, said as archaeologists from Britain and Nepal set out to explore the ancient shrine at

the center of Lumbini's Sacred Garden, an unending stream of Buddhist monks and nuns from around the world circumambulated the site, chanting prayers over the emerging temple. He spent three years excavating the Lumbini shrine, which had been buried beneath an entire sequence of later temples, working alongside some of Nepal's leading archaeologists, headed by Kosh Prasad Acharya, former Director General of the Department of Archaeology in Nepal.

Finding new pieces in the puzzle of the origins of Buddhism 25 centuries ago via this simple wooden temple marks "a really important finding in the study of Buddhist archaeology," said archaeologist Keir Strickland, who co-authored the study,

"The earliest Buddhist shrine: excavating the birthplace of the Buddha, Lumbini (Nepal)." used by local Hindus, who also go there to celebrate," he added.

Coningham, who has become over the past weeks perhaps the world's best-known archaeologist, said the team leading the exploration of the ancient temple and nearby sites is scheduled to release a comprehensive book on its findings, titled "Excavations at Lumbini," in 2014.



Source: www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/12/buddha-birthplace-discovered-nepal-20131210104114734178.html

Harvard Scientists Have Proof Yoga, Meditation Work

Scientists are getting close to proving what yogis have held to be true for centuries - yoga and meditation can ward off stress and disease. John Denninger, a psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School, is leading a five-year study on how the ancient practices affect genes and brain activity in the chronically stressed. His latest work follows a study he and others published earlier this year showing how so-called mind-body techniques can switch on and off some genes linked to stress and immune function. While hundreds of studies have been conducted on the mental health benefits of yoga and meditation, they have tended to rely on blunt tools like participant questionnaires, as well as heart rate and blood pressure monitoring. Only recently have neuro-imaging and genomics technology used in Denninger's latest studies allowed scientists to measure physiological changes in greater detail. "There is a true biological effect," said Denninger, director of research at the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital, one of Harvard Medical School's teaching hospitals. "The kinds of things that happen when you meditate do have effects throughout the body, not just in the brain." The government-funded study may persuade more doctors to try an alternative route for tackling the source of a myriad of modern ailments. Stress induced conditions can include everything from hypertension and infertility to depression and even the aging process. They account for 60 to 90% of doctor's visits in the US, according to the Benson-Henry Institute. The World Health Organization estimates stress costs US companies at least \$300 billion a year through absenteeism, turnover and low productivity. Denninger's study, to conclude in 2015 with about \$3.3 million in funding from the National Institutes of Health, tracks 210 healthy subjects with high levels of reported chronic stress for six months. Unlike earlier studies, this one is the first to focus on participants with high levels of stress. The study published in May in the medical journal PloS One showed that one session of relaxation-response practice was enough to enhance the expression of genes involved in energy metabolism and insulin secretion and reduce expression of genes linked to inflammatory response and stress. There was an effect even among novices who had never practiced before. In a study published last year, scientists at the University of California at Los Angeles and Nobel Prize winner Elizabeth Blackburn found that 12 minutes of daily yoga meditation for eight weeks increased telomerase activity by 43 percent, suggesting an improvement in stress-induced aging.



Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/26288574.cms?intenttarget=no>

Continued from page 7 in the dead of night to do it. A human, on the other hand, can steal money that is safely locked up and guarded heavily. This is because our knowledge is far greater.

Knowledge is necessary in the performance of not only good deeds, but also misdeeds. The more knowledge, the more capacity there is of doing something good. Being blessed with greater intellectual capacity gives us the responsibility of using it wisely. Saints have said that there is no life quite like the human life. This statement can be interpreted in two ways. One



interpretation is that there is no life quite as wonderful as the human life, since humans can reach God using knowledge that is given to them. The other interpretation is that there is no life quite as dangerous as human life, since there are dire consequences of knowledge which has been misused. It is completely up to us to decide whether we want to live according to the first or the second interpretation.

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