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Apr. - Jun. 2014

# HINDU VISHWA

## Vishwa Dharma Digest

**FREEDOM OF SPEECH:**  
**Should it Really Become a Legal Issue?**  
**Dinanath Batra, Media and Freedom of Expression**

Also Read

- The Portuguese and the Goan Inquisition
- The Development Mantra and IDRF
- Third Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference: Report



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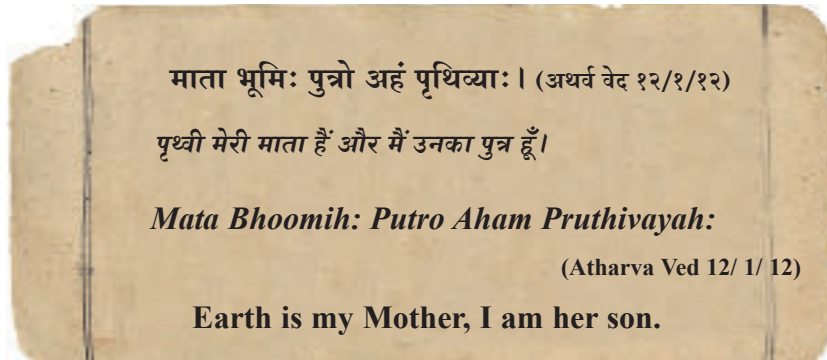
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## C O N T E N T S

### Freedom of Speech

Should it  
Really  
Become a  
Legal  
Issue?

EDITORIAL

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MEDIA  
AND  
FREEDOM  
OF  
EXPRESSION**

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# Freedom of Speech

## Should it Really Become a Legal Issue?



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Gleaning through numerous posts and news articles after Penguin Books withdrew from India "The Hindus: An Alternative History" by Wendy Doniger, vagaries of vociferous voices are obvious and are mostly one-sided sans objectivity, fairness, and any due consideration for the Hindus' point of view, often without delving deeper into the merits of the very case that led to eventual withdrawal. The debate could have been more productive if this impasse was analyzed objectively, particularly to resolve the matter amicably without an unyielding and one-way demand for withdrawal. Instead, the arguments for withdrawal of the book were mostly based on heavy bias and personality clash. This ultimately led to a lose-lose situation. In fact a case like this only devolves into a legal issue because of improper incorporation of rational dissent. The implicit debate could even be labeled as a deprivation of the freedom of expression, from the point of view of some who could claim that it represented Doniger's scholarly inquiry, no matter how absurd or unacceptable in the eyes of some others'.

Time and again, when Hindus raise voice against an issue of deliberate or inadvertent misrepresentation, vilification-campaign, mischaracterization, and malicious writings concerning Hinduism in the academia and in the media, the overall quality and pattern of public discourses are usually below the mark. Consequently, such voices are dismissed as right-wing and reactionary. Absence of a balanced consideration of other points of view, or of a willingness to engage the opposing parties in a constructive and open-minded debate, eventually yields a negative outcome from the standpoint of a proper resolution of the objections. In fact, such type of dissent on part of the Hindus ends up into an outright rejection of the original objection itself. Originators of such objections are even termed as Hindu fundamentalist, right-wing extremists, and so on.

Traditionally, Hindus themselves have always respected varying points of views on issues related to every aspect of their religious practice, and invited critical appreciations and mutually respectful discourses. This is in stark contrast with the followers of other faiths where a mere adverse expression can raise global hue and cry causing horrific violence around the globe, resulting in much loss of lives and damage to properties. In fact, a Hindu scholar would lose credibility instantly if he ran away from debate when challenged by another. However, today the so-called Hindu scholars in the West not only run away from debate and discussion, but also tend to direct all their might against those who challenge them. The question is: Are Hindus accorded the same type or level of acceptance and respect as their counterparts in the Abrahmic faiths when it comes to liberalism and freedom of speech pertaining to religion? This may be the reason why, despite the façade of taking a high moral ground on the free speech issue on part of some factions, dissenting Hindu voices are often tacitly regarded as unworthy, or even vehemently suppressed outright.

As has been the trend in the past, despite numerous explicit objections from many Hindus, the matters involved usually attract little favorable attention on part of

the wider audience. Could it be due to a lack of serious consideration for the Hindus' point of view on themselves? Ironically, anything and everything written with a vested interest against Hindus or denigrating Hinduism is immediately conferred as reflecting an expression under freedom of speech. Yet Hindus themselves are not permitted to enjoy such a privilege - to express anything in the garb of free speech. Many times Hindus are not allowed even honest dissent. On the contrary, all such criticisms are readily shoved under the rug; and the people raising genuine objections are called names. Even if Hindus write something about their own faith, they are attacked by the vested interests engaged in malicious, anti-Hindu campaign against them. In such a case, the people with vested interest come to be deemed as de-facto as well as de-jure spokesperson in the anti-Hindu community.

Commonly, books, media-writings, debates, discussions, conferences etc. involving people with various points of views are expected to yield positive outcomes as well, by virtue of the implicit freedom of speech. But,

unfortunately, in most cases, such lofty occasions offer this revered freedom only to a select few; and they seem to actually end up curtailing freedom of speech instead. Freedom of speech becomes irrelevant if it is applied selectively only to a few chosen people while others' freedom is suppressed with the aim of confining the focus on a particular derogatory narrative about Hinduism. Anyone expressing dissent against such an unfair trend is sort of ostracized for life, thereby putting pressure on everyone to fall in line with the projected narrative. Such type of exile is imposed by the self-proclaimed proponents of free speech; essentially to bar alternative views the opportunity to 'gain legitimacy.' This type of lop-sided 'freedom of speech' the world can live happily without. Hindu theological traditions openly allow differing points of view. Thus, freedom of speech comes naturally to Hindus. For a Hindu mind, therefore, it is never about freedom of speech per-se, but about fairness in freedom of speech when dealing with a dissenting voice against denigration and caricaturing of their faith or against any faith, for that matter. ●

## **The first World Hindu Congress to be held on November 21-23, 2014 at New Delhi**

**The first ever World Hindu Congress, organized by World Hindu Foundation, is scheduled to be held on November 21-23, 2014 at Hotel The Ashok, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-110021. Hindu activists, academicians, industrialists, businessmen, parliamentarians, legislators, media personalities, leaders and representatives of various Hindu organizations, temples, associations and institutions are being invited to attend this historical World Hindu Congress-2014.**



The number of delegates is limited to 1500, of which foreign delegates are limited to 750. The theme envisioned is the Hindu principle of *Sangachchhadhwam Samvadadhwam* from Rig Veda, which means "Step together, express together". Despite Hindu society being a billion strong in population currently, Hindus are facing serious challenges from all directions in many countries. The main purpose for the World Hindu Congress is to provide a global platform for Hindu society to deliberate and formulate solutions to the myriad challenges being faced by Hindus throughout the world and to devise workable and tangible solutions that can be implemented. The congress aims to take the movement for Hindu solidarity to the next level. "This task needs to be undertaken with a single minded focus of rebuilding the spiritual and material heritage of Hindus," said Swami Vigyananand of the World Hindu Foundation. "While the first World Hindu Congress is primarily organized by the World Hindu Foundation, all Hindu organizations, associations and institutions from around the world are encouraged to participate and are most welcome to become partners in making this event great success," Swami Vigyananand said.

Under the World Hindu Congress, there will be several conferences held. These include: The Hindu Economic Conference, Hindu Youth Conference, Hindu Women Conference, Hindu Educational Conference, Hindu Organizational Conference, Hindu Political Conference, Hindu Media Conference. Following the first World Hindu Congress, future Congress will be organized every four years in different countries. For more information visit [www.worldhinducongress.org](http://www.worldhinducongress.org) or email: [info@worldhinducongress.org](mailto:info@worldhinducongress.org)



Over 30 Pundits and 50 adult and youth delegates, representing more than 25 Mandirs and Hindu organizations, attended this year's conference.

The 3rd HMPC was hosted by Durga Temple, Fairfax Station, VA, from May 29 - 30, 2014. The Theme of the conference was 'Role of Temple Priests in 21st Century'. The conference was organized into seven sessions, and the topics were consistent with the HMPC's objective.



## Third Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference (HMPC) Held in Virginia

**S**ustainability and Advancement of Sanatana Dharma by making the modes of worship meaningful and relevant to the younger generation of Hindus. The seven sessions were: Inaugural Session, Bal Samskaras, Open Forum, Priests-Management-Devotees, Roles of Priests not associated with Mandir and other topics, Education & Training, and concluding session. Deep Prajjwalan, Sri Ganesha Atharvashirsha by all priests formally opened the conference. The convener, Sant Gupta and the President of Durga Temple, Srilekha Palle delivered the welcome address and conference goals and objectives. Ekatmata Mantra led by Abhaya Asthana followed by Vandana by Durga Bal Gokulam Children led by Madhuri Prasad set the tone for the rest of conference. Emcee for the evening Navin Kadakia of Pittsburgh thanked The World Hindu Council of America (VHP of America) for providing the leadership for such an

important event.

Sri Ronur Murali Bhattar, Chief Priest, Hindu Temple of Minnesota prepared the keynote address on 'Importance of the Role of Mandir and the Pundit in a community'. Since Pundit Ji could not attend the conference, V. Shanmugasundaram delivered the briefing. He highlighted the intertwining relationship between the temple infrastructure and the temple priest. He emphasized that the priest should act as a servant leader, earn respect by their knowledge and wisdom. Pundit Hirday Sharma presented the history of Durga Temple and highlighted how they overcame the difficulties encountered during the early years of the development cycle. While pundit Ram Hardowar briefing focused on the issues from the stakeholders' point of view, Dr. Anju Preet and Rashel Bajaj presented young adult and youth perspectives respectively. Swamini Sarvaananda discussed Hindu Chaplaincy in the US, the role of Priests and the methods to





**STUDIED LECTURES,  
INTENSE DISCUSSIONS &  
APT ATTENTION  
MARKED  
THE CONFERENCE**



maximize the benefits to the devotees.

On Friday, May 30th 2014, the event began with Kirtan, and Bhajan led by Pundit Shanti S. Sharma of Durga Temple. Moderated by Kusum Taneja, the subject of Session two was Bal Samskaras and its importance for sustaining these processes.

Considerable discussions took place regarding the consistency and tailoring of these samskaras to suit the context and at the same time preserve the intent of these great traditions. Samskaras discussed were: Namkaran, Annaprashan, Aksharambha and Upanayan, and Vivaha samskara.

The Session three, a round table question & answer session, moderated by Kamlesh Kapur. Questions/ Concerns had been collected previously through a survey. A list of selected questions was given to all attending priests. Majority of priests responded with thought provoking perspectives. There were the constructive interactions among the priests and the devotees.

The session four moderated by Hari Bindal focused on the triad namely Priests, Management and Devotees. Some of the topics discussed during this session include Hindu Chaplin in University Setting, preservation Of Bharatiya Sanskriti through Samskrit presented by Samskrit Bharati, the disconnect between the next generation of Hindus and the temple traditions, and the Scientific and Symbolic significance of Hindu Rituals.

The issues pertaining to independent priests, not affiliated with any specific temple were addressed in session five and moderated by Shankar Iyer.

The Session six, moderated by Amar Persaud addressed priests' education & training. The presenters highlighted the need for equipping the priests with techniques and knowledge through education and training to meet the emerging needs. In the session seven, concluding session of the conference, Sanjay Mehta presented the summary and action plan.

Alok Shrivastava of Rajdhani Mandir, VA thanked all the delegates, volunteers and the organizers for a successful 3rd Hindu Mandir Priest Conference (HMPC).

*Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference (HMPC), an initiative of World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), grew out of Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference (HMEC). The mission of HMEC is to provide leadership to the Hindu-American community by promoting program activities to nourish, protect and sustain Hindu Dharma in North America through Hindu Temples.*

### The following action items were identified:

- Develop a mechanism to build constant communication amongst priests to share experiences and best practices.
- Structure Orientation: Organize English language and Communication workshop for priests.
- Community Counseling: Chaplains and priest coupling - Develop a program to define how priest and chaplains can work together in addressing counseling need of the community.



In a ground-breaking discovery led by an Indian-origin palaeoclimatologist, researchers have found that a 200-year-long monster drought nearly 4,200 years ago doomed the Indus Valley civilization in present Pakistan and northwest India.



# 200-year-long Drought Wiped out Indus Valley

**B**ased on isotope data from the sediment of an ancient lake, the researchers suggest that the monsoon cycle, which is vital to the livelihood of all of South Asia, essentially stopped there for as long as two centuries to wipe out the Indus Valley civilization -- also known as the Harappan civilization.

"The Indus Valley was characterized by large, well-planned cities with advanced municipal sanitation systems and a script that has never been deciphered. But the Harappans seemed to slowly lose their urban cohesion, and their cities were gradually abandoned," explained Yama Dixit, a palaeoclimatologist at University of Cambridge.

The team examined sediments from Kotla Dahar -- an ancient lake near the northeastern edge of the Indus Valley area in Haryana -- that still seasonally floods. The team assigned ages to sediment layers using radiocarbon dating of organic matter.



In various layers, they collected the preserved shells of tiny lake snails which are made of a form of calcium carbonate called aragonite. The team also looked at the oxygen in the aragonite molecules, counting the ratio of the rare oxygen-18 isotope to the more prevalent oxygen-16.

Kotla Dahar is a closed basin, filled only by rain and runoff and without outlets. During drought, oxygen-16, which is lighter than oxygen-18, evaporates faster so that the remaining water in the lake and, consequently, the snails' shells, become enriched with oxygen-18.

The team's reconstruction showed a spike in the relative amount of oxygen-18 between 4,200 and 4,000 years ago. The data, published in the journal *Geology*, suggests that the regular summer monsoons stopped for some 200 years. According to Anil Gupta, director of the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology in Dehradun, this work fills a gap in the geographic record of ancient droughts.

But large questions still remain. "What drove this climate change 4,200 years ago? We do not see major changes in the North Atlantic or in the solar activity at that time," he said.

Source: [www.deccanherald.com/content/389730/200-year-long-drought-wiped.html](http://www.deccanherald.com/content/389730/200-year-long-drought-wiped.html)



# VHPA Programs and Projects

## 2013 Milestones and 2014 Plans

### Samskar and Youth



Launched Sanatan Dharma Scholarship (Coalition of Hindu Youth - CHY).  
Organized and supported Bal Vihars in various cities.  
Started new Bal Vihars Rhode Island and Atlanta.  
Camp and Bal Vihar alumni database creation is in progress (CHY)  
Organized and supported Camps in various cities.  
Book store is a constant source to meet perpetual demand of various books: Calendar, Hindu Dharma, Vivah, Antyeshti, Hindu Prayer book for Caregivers, Bhagvad Geet.

Redesign online book portal/store.  
Standardize Balvihar Curriculum manual in partnership with other temples and groups.  
This project will leverage enormous experience of VHPA BV volunteers in organizing and teaching in BV and youth camps.

### Seva

New website for Support a Child (SAC) launched.  
Number of children supported increased to 1000+  
SAC Zee TV Advertisement  
SAC charity cricket tournaments in OH and DC.  
Support our Troops Musical Program in Pittsburgh.  
Disaster Relief fund: Uttarakhand, Pakistan Hindus, Bangladesh Hindus.

Sevapedia website is ready to be launched - Networking various seva initiatives across the country.  
Help Bhutanese brothers establish Hindu centers in North America.  
National Hindu Seva Day.  
Support Green Movement - GYAN.  
SAC promotion.  
Enhance Seva Network.

## Sampark Network

### 2013 milestones

Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference (HMEC) in Toronto  
Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference (HMPC), NY  
Hindu American Vanaprasthi Network (HAVAN), TX, IN, CA  
Hindu Women's Network (HWN), ATL  
Govt. Relations - Communication with law makers.

### Upcoming milestones / developments - 2014

HMEC, FL  
HMPC, VA  
HAVAN, VA  
HWN, TX  
CHY retreat, IN

## Prachar Awareness

### 2013 milestones

Hindu Vishwa quarterly magazine.  
Hindu Calendar.  
Prayer book for Caregivers.  
Position papers.  
Press releases on various Hindu issues.  
Swami Vivekananda 105th Birthday grand celebration, Chicago.

### Upcoming milestones / developments - 2014

Hindu Vishwa News Digest  
Media Adv. - Digital  
Hindu App for smart phone contest  
Threads Conference  
Hindu Awareness Yatra  
Support World Hindu News project.



## Office

### 2013 milestones

New version of VHPA website released.  
Reserve Fund - Outreach.  
Membership drive - New members added.  
Annual Audit.

### Upcoming milestones / developments - 2014

Enhance website.  
Revise VHPA kit.  
GC Elections - Electronic.  
Update membership database with offshore help.  
Patron and life members liaison.



By Ashok Sinha

On April 16, 2014, there occurred in India a momentous event: The Prime Ministerial candidate from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2014 Loksabha (National) Election, Shri Narendra Modi (NaMo) filed his official nomination in the holy city of Varanasi. The vast, enthusiastic, and effulgent procession of people on the streets of Varanasi was simply unprecedented. NaMo had been on the election campaign trail for many weeks. Throughout this period the entire country and the world had been reverberating and resonating with the sound of one particular word (shabda) more than any other: **DEVELOPMENT (VIKAS).**



## The Development Mantra and **IDRF**

**T**his word, "Development," sets another resonance in the hearts of the Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in USA as they recall the saga of one organization set in motion some twenty five years ago. With many luminous milestones in the wake of an evolutionary dream, cast in the backdrop of the harsh ground-realities in our country of origin, we briefly pause today to pay homage to this organization and to its vanguard leader. We take a moment to outline its progression and its procession. Such a bird's eye-view, the celebration of a journey through the years, with many a human drama and accomplishments in the face of stubborn obstacles, enriches every traveler and every turn involved.

The name of that organization is INDIA DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF FUND (IDRF), and the name of the leading dreamer and captain writing its success-story is Dr. Vinod Prakash (ViPr).

The mantra of "development" runs in the veins and enlivens the hearts and brains of both NaMo and ViPr. Another link joining the two souls comes to mind that simultaneously, and even curiously, connects the two figures and deserves our felicitation today. Notwithstanding the oceans of separation between their fields of action and scales of influence, there is a lowest common multiple (LCM) in terms of their Karmic field. Their concern has coincidentally touched upon the same land: Gujarat. One of the most memorable moments in IDRF's history was when it provided relief and rehabilitation to the victims of the earthquake that shook and devastated



*Amina Bibi, a farmer in West Bengal, increased her income six-fold with IDRF's microcredit program. She's one of 500 women in this program!*

Kutch, Gujarat on January 26, 2001.

Here we intend to sing a bit of well-deserved praise of IDRF, mainly to introduce the younger Indian Americans to IDRF and breathe a great deal of hope and promise into the future life-dreams of the newer generation of NRIs. And, again, we can hardly resist the temptation to emphatically underline its counterpart, NaMo's dream of "Development." It fills the hearts of the youth of the entire nation of India with a sanguine hope and a passion to be active partners in the work that lies ahead: a holistic march to build a better India for generations to come.

It is not my purpose here to enumerate all IDRF's adventurous projects undertaken in pursuit of its root-mission - to genuinely serve the poorest of poor, in the fields of education, healthcare, women's empowerment, anti-corruption,



*These vanvasi (tribal) girls from the Northeastern states are getting quality education and the confidence to excel in the classroom, the field, and the workplace!*

*IDRF provides them with a free education at a CBSE-accredited school.*



*Sita Devi, an anganwadi worker in Bihar, stood up to corruption. With training from IDRF's program, she held a social audit and recovered funds for her anganwadi (childcare center).*

ecofriendly development, and post-disaster rehabilitation. IDRF has helped emancipate the downtrodden across India, from Arunachal Pradesh in the east to Gujarat in the west, and from Jammu & Kashmir in the north to Tamil Nadu in the south. Countless girls and boys, women and men, have benefitted tremendously from the programs which IDRF has designed with utmost care and dexterity. Their numbers will continue to rise with the passage of time. All these programs are executed by very dependable local NGOs. A complete list is best provided in IDRF's annual reports and financial statements sent to people and organizations, including VHPA (and available online at [www.idrf.org](http://www.idrf.org)). The main focus for us, as IDRF's well-wishers, is to inspire new hearts and minds - regardless of their age - to carry on the torch that ViPr lit twenty-six years ago. At the same time, however, it would not be out of place to mention here a few moments of uncommon joy for India's underprivileged.



Following the cliché 'a picture is worth a thousand words,' we present the readers of Hindu Vishwa with a few worth-illuminating pictures that speak volumes about IDRF. So, here they are - just a few clippings from the vast album chronicling the bright instances of IDRF's work and its impact.

Such instances have been gratifying experiences for Dr. Vinod Prakash and his sahgharmini, Mrs. Sarla Prakash, who has shared the responsibilities and hard work that the austere mission of IDRF entails, from day one. The demanding endeavors and the courageous endurance of this illustrious NRI couple in the face of numberless obstacles and hardships continue unabated.

It is a cruel irony of fate that in the course of this heroic journey, Dr. Vinod Prakash has suffered a



***IDRF's eco-friendly water harvesting program has provided clean water and irrigation to 30,000 people in Gujarat - while providing employment to thousands.***



***An exceptional NRI partnered with IDRF to start a school in his native UP village 25 years. Today, children from 25 villages, from humble backgrounds, attend the school and ace their exams.***

devastating personal injury: the loss of his eyesight. Yet his tapasya in service of the poor, unprivileged, and destitute in India, continues without the least loss of spirit or vision. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he is, in fact, comparable to that ancient sage, Bharatiya Rish-Muni, who performed the Yajna of service unflinchingly throughout his life, and who brought forth gems that, like a divine boon, could light the way for multitudes of people in days to come, to lend their hands in the true tradition of Yajna. So, as we await the actualization of the hope and promise of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and of others ("Achche Din Aane Waale Hain"), we take a moment to salute our own ViPr, Dr. Vinod Prakash, and his dharma-patnee, Mrs. Sarla Prakash, for all their immaculate and fruitful vision and relentless efforts. We wish to lessen the pain of the loss of ViPr's own eyesight, in spite of which he continues to carry the torch, inspiring our NRI youth and others to join the marathon of vikas. I hope these photos inspire the Indian American community to help IDRF put power - not charity - in the hands of the underprivileged.



By Dr. Jayant Mehta

Ishtadevta★, literally "chosen deity" in Sanskrit finds a prominent place in apparently polytheistic religion such as Hinduism. Upanishad repeatedly advocated monotheism but multiple manifestation of One God was misinterpreted as polytheism. In meditation a person attempts to focus on one idea or an image. If one tries to worship Lord Shiva, Vishnu, Durga and Rama, all at the same time, how difficult it would be to concentrate on any one of them? How good is a prayer without concentration or deep commitment to the object of worship? Idea of Ishtadevta in this respect is very crucial.



## Spiritual Journey through Ishtadevta

**S**wami Vivekananda in a lecture in 1893 at the International Congress of World Religions, held in Chicago, discussed both dualism and non-dualism of Hindu philosophy. At the end of his talk someone asked him, "Swami, you are talking of one God, but Hindus worship millions of gods. How do you explain that?"

Swami said, "Yes we have 330 million gods. I

wish we had a few million more. I would like to give you a god too, so you can keep Him as your own."

Rig Veda says, "There is one God; scholars know it by different names."

Water is called pani in Hindi and aqua in Germany. In a laboratory it is two molecules of Hydrogen and one molecule Oxygen! The element is same.

Multiple gods are different manifestations of one God. Mr. Smith may be the CEO of his company, but he is at the same time a father to his son and a husband to his wife. Regardless of your idea on use of images, multiple ideas of God can create confusion. One cannot stand on across road for a long time. You must accept one of the many ideas and start the journey. That selected idea or Image is Istadevta.



**There are certain basic rules to selecting the Ishtadevta.**

**They are listed below:**

- The god should be a valid god in that he or she should possess certain virtues. You select your particular god based on what virtues appeal to you. If you would like a playful and charming god you might select Krishna. If you like Gyan (Knowledge) with detachment, you would select Shiva. Lord Krishna asked Arjuna to worship goddess Durga before he entered the battlefield.
- Once you have selected your Ishtadevta, stick to him or her. Do not keep on changing. Once you have dug a hole, go deep enough till you find water. If water is 40' deep, it is better to dig one hole 40' deep than 10 holes that are 4' deep.



- Do not be overwhelmed by the task. The ocean is vast. To appreciate that, you need to start at some point in the seashore, take your boat and start sailing to appreciate the infinite nature of the sea.
- Do not insult or find fault with other gods or Ishtadevtas of other faiths. You are seeking love and kindness and such thoughts do not have a place there.
- Ultimately, this Ishtadevta will become the supreme Brahman. At that time do not hesitate to release this personal god. To see the infinite, one has to let go the limitations of the finite. When you are in a house you need a window to see what is outside. Once you have gone outside and

climbed the peak of a mountain, you no longer need the window to see what is around you. Remember, you are not forsaking the personal friend in your Ishtadevta. The infinite and your chosen deity have become one.

I think this idea of chosen deity is very useful to me. I hope it helps you in your devotional practice. One may ask: Can this concept work for a monotheistic religion?

I think the answer is in the affirmative. As long as the monotheism does not believe in exclusivity, this concept will be useful to say Christians and Muslims too. A Christian will take Jesus Christ as the Ishtadevta, but instead of starting with the entire idea of God he or she will start with some aspect of Jesus. Let us take Jesus as a teacher or baby Jesus as your Ishta. Through meditation and other methods of worship we can deepen our devotion. To sustain our faith, this "personal" should become real to us. Listening and reading from the scripture is a good practice. Sincere prayers, devotional music, certain rituals and meditation are well known methods of devotional practice. This concept of Ishta, facilitate such practices. It is difficult to swallow 16" large pizza in one piece. So we make small slices. Once you digest this pizza, the shape and size of the slice dissolve! Eventually all the valid methods lead to ONE eternal truth and reality; which is God. Trinity of the Christ, Father and the Holy Spirit become one.

Another option is to use a selected prayer or a paragraph from a scripture or a good book. Use this selected words repeatedly as you concentrate on the meaning. Select the verses that you like the most. This is almost like taking up a Mantra meditation. Recitation of these verses will act like an Ishtadevta. In the time of crisis this may serve as your best friend.

I feel this concept of Ishtadevta is very practical and a good way to embark on one's spiritual journey.

Rivers of all religions and beliefs ultimately end in the ocean of silence. ●

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★ *Ishtadevta*=chosen deity of an individual, *Kuldevta*= family deity, *Gramdevta*= Popular deity of the town, *Sthandevta*= presiding deity of the place of worship.



*By Mansi Tewari*

Did Indraprastha, the capital of the kingdom of Pandavas, as mentioned in the Mahabharata epic, exist around what we today known as Purana Qila (Old Fort) in Delhi?

Historians and archaeologists have long believed so, even though it could not be ascertained.



## ASI hopes to unravel Mahabharata link at Purana Qila (In Delhi)



Now, an excavation that is underway at the site can possibly bring out the truth and shed light on that era.

Earlier, there have been indications that this site was related to the era of Mahabharata.

So there is a possibility that once we excavate further will find some evidence," said Vasant Swarnkar, superintending archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Delhi circle.

The clue that ASI members are looking for to establish the link is painted grey ware (PGW). "PGW is a pottery type that archeologists associate with the Mahabharata period. It is grey pottery painted with geometric patterns in black. Excavating 1.5 meters more is expected to expose the lowest cultural settlement that was there," Swarnkar said. This also means that it would take one more month of excavation to find any such evidence. Though the earlier excavations at Purana Qila had failed to find any link to Indraprastha, this time the ASI is hopeful of making a breakthrough.



*ASI officials have dug up 18 trenches of 5X5 meter each.*



The ongoing excavation at site began in mid-January and in the last three months, ASI team has found a rare 12th century sculpture of Vishnu, a seal in terracotta from the Gupta period, pottery typical of the Kushan and Gupta periods, terracotta human figurines, ivory pendants, human figurines, a Gajalakshmi tablet and structures from the Mauryan period and copper coins.

So far, the ASI has excavated an overall cultural deposit of 10 meters in the complete area of 30X30 meters.

Calling it a "life- time opportunity" for anyone interested in witnessing excavation, Swarnkar said he saw a huge response with people coming from places as far as Chandigarh and Bhopal to see the site. "It was a pleasure to see that a place that is a hub for couples was flocked by children and families in the last two days," he said.

The ASI has dug in a slopping surface behind Sher Mandal, located at the right extremity of the Qila, and found a history spanning 2300 years.

"I had never been to Purana Qila before. However, this time it was the excavation that got me interested. I enjoy History and this will give me a lot more understanding of different dynasties," said 13-year- old Monya Krishna, a student of Class 8.

## RAPID FIRE

### About the excavation at Purana Qila

This was the third excavation in Purana Qila after the one ASI did in 1955 and in 1969-73. This excavation has been one of the largest excavations where we found presence of artifacts from all the eras in the same area, dating back from 4th century BC to 16th century AD.

### On opening the site for public

We wanted Delhiites to witness an excavation site where they could get an opportunity to see the history

being unearthed in front of their eyes. The response has been huge and in just two days, we saw over 17,000 people visit the site. However, our team had to slow down the work and we could not do much work for two days. But this was for the public.

### On an open excavated site

So far, there is no open excavated site in Delhi. We are planning to make a glass pathway over the excavated structure and open the site for public round the year which the public can view at any given point in time. However, this will take over a year to be implemented.

### On upcoming excavation

Next excavation will be at the Red Fort for the Mehtab Bagh. Excavation will be carried out in an area measuring more than 70X70 meter (4,900 sq m). The excavation site might bring out the original layout of the Mughal Garden, water channels, system of the fountains and the water channel. ●

Source: [indiatoday.intoday.in/story/asi-hopes-to-unravel-mahabharata-link-at-purana-qila/1/356653.html](http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/asi-hopes-to-unravel-mahabharata-link-at-purana-qila/1/356653.html)



*The Archaeological Survey of India, which had opened its excavation site at the Purana Qila to the public on Friday marking the World Heritage Day, extended the exhibition till Saturday owing to the rush.*

World Hindu Council of America (VHPA) organized a membership appreciation day on Sunday, April 27 at American Legion Banquet Hall in Newton. This event was organized to thank members and supporters who have associated with VHPA by coming to its programs or supporting its activities, and enriched this organization with their tireless energy, love & dedication. The event was designed to share with the members the vision, mission and details of current national programs that are in place to serve our community in this country and to get valuable insights from the members to enhance the quality of our programs and seek help in sustaining our values and tradition in the generations to come.



## Membership Appreciation Day Held in Boston, MA Chapter

**O**n behalf of VHPA's Boston and Merrimack Valley Chapters, this event was organized by Sanjay & Bela Kaul. It turned out to be a lovely get-together of like-minded members of Hindu community in Boston area. The ambience was beautiful. A large chandelier in the middle of a spacious ball room with decorated tables, flowers, Natraj idol, and tastefully decorated stage for musicians and little children greeting guests by applying kumkum tilak created a warm atmosphere. Our culture and values of reverence to elders, affection for families and young children was evident in the manner Shri Sanjay Kaul conducted the program and introduced the main speaker Shri Abhaya Asthana (National President of VHPA) and the musicians who participated in the cultural segment of the evening. The evening festivities began with lighting of the ceremonial lamp by Smt. Ragini Mehta wife of the founding patron of VHPA Shri Mahesh Mehta. This was followed by recitation of Ekta Mantra by Vani Sharma and Preethi Ganesh. Sanjay Kaul started with a brief description of VHPA and the purpose of











the program. He introduced the office bearers of the two chapters of VHPA. The program started with a beautiful melody presented by little Ms. Sunshine, ten year old Sachi Badola, disciple of Smt. Shuchita Rao, who has a voice that holds a great emotional and expressive appeal. In the likeness of an accomplished singer, Ms. Badola's melody effortlessly captured the sincerity and earnestness of the lyrics as they appeal to the Lord in "*Prabhu Tum Antarayaami, Dayaa Karo, Dayaa Karo Hey Swaami.*" Sachi stole everyone's heart with her talent.

The next presentation came from Smt. Shuchita Rao. Words fail us, as we try to describe the beauty of Shuchita's sweet voice and the breathtaking climaxes of her lovely renditions. Shuchitaji gave a poised and melodious performance. Her music segment had traditional khayal, taraana and devotional compositions of Hindustani classical music preserved and propagated through the centuries from hands of one master musician to another. Tabla by Shri Nitin Mitta and harmonium accompaniment by Shri Rohan Prabhudesai brought out the best in the artists and were well appreciated by the audience. As the evening progressed, Dr. Abhaya Asthana came up on the stage with the message that the whole event was geared towards. His power point presentation elaborated the mission and objectives of VHP in America, expressed in our four pronged mission of prachar, samaskar, seva and sampark. To connect is the essence of our work. We bring together people of all colors, all hues, and from all regions Kashmir to Kanyakumari, Gujarat to Assam. He stressed the urgency for the Indian American population to establish a fund that will sustain VHPA's programs for all age groups. Abhayji's speech highlighted

various measures taken by VHP in the recent past to assist the underprivileged in India as well as victims of natural disasters such as tsunami, hurricanes and earthquakes around the world including here in the USA. Abhayaji showcased VHPA's achievements. His lecture was a treat for our ears and a matter of pride for the Hindu community.

Ajay Kaul was invited to sing a song from film Agneepath. This was followed by the thoughtful poetry of Sunayana Kachroo which focused on national integration.

Later in the evening came a transcending experience as Shri Anurag Harsh, an accomplished Classical Hindustani Singer took the stage and performed Raga Malkauns.

The name "*Malkauns*" is derived from "*Malava Kaushik*," an old melody that finds mention in Sangeet Ratnakara of Sharangdeva. The current swaroopa of the raga that Anurag performed is conjectured to be around 300-400 years old. In this pentatonic audava-audava raga often called the Nrip of all Hindustani Ragas, Anurag tried to evoke via Dhvani Sadhana, the feeling of Nada Brahma for the attending shrotagan (audience). Using the Kirana gharana style of deep adhyatmic chanting Anurag presented excerpts of five distinct khayals in various tala and layas developed by his Guruji to allow the listeners to forget their day to day worries and for a short period, be completely at peace and completely unified with Bhagvan's divine truth, the feeling of divine bliss, in the form of mellifluous '*Naad Brahma*' or the sound divine. All khayals except for the Tarana at the end were his Guruji Pandit Bhimsen Joshi's. Anurag ended his performance with a self-composed Tarana in 16 beat time cycle also known as Teen Taal.

The artist introduced the raga gently to the audience, romancing each note, playfully showing its different facets. The evening unfurled slowly as the beautiful notes lilted and played to the gentle beats of the tabla.

Gradually the romance picked passion, the beats from the Tabla built a hedonic tempo and the artist improvised beautifully as he let his voice marry the complicated rhythms from the Tabla and harmonium. They were a breathtaking trio (Anurag, Nitin Mitta & Rohan Prabhudesai) that left the audience with an awe inspiring experience and renewed its love for Hindustani classical music.

The whole evening was a visual and aural treat in every respect. At the end, Sanjay Kaul thanked the audience for their participation and then all the presenters were recognized for their talents and contribution. The program ended with Bhojan Mantra. And of course not to forget the sumptuous food to top off the soirée.

By Dr. Naresha Duraiswamy

**Cambodian history illustrates the interplay of economics and ideology in defining the fate of a nation. A vibrant South East Asian empire that selectively adopted Indian civilization norms and institutions expanded over a 1,300 year period before it witnessed a steady 700 year decline.**



## Destiny Thwarted: Two Thousand Years of Cambodia

(April 3, 2014, Colombo, Sri Lanka Guardian)

**T**he Indianized Khmers and their predecessors were the foremost power in mainland South East Asia between the first and thirteenth centuries of the Common Era (CE).

Hinduism and later Buddhism flourished. The Khmer empire included the southern half of what is today Vietnam, North East/North Thailand and Laos. It stretched to the borders of Burma and the Malay peninsula. The civilizational interplay of Cambodia and classical-era India should be of interest to any student of Hindu history.

The early kingdoms of Funan, Chenla and Champa in the first millennium of the common era were the precursors of the Khmer empire. The Cambodians adopted Indic traditions in the 1st century CE via the maritime trade centers in what is today Vietnam. These ports were situated on the lucrative trade routes between India, the Indonesian archipelago and China. The Hinduized Kingdom of Funan, reportedly established by the Brahmin Kaundinya, dominated Indo-China between the first and sixth centuries CE. There were trade links with the Gupta Empire and later the Pallava Kingdom. Indonesian influence was significant. The Shaivite and Vaishnavite Hindu traditions had left their imprint.



The Khmer subsequently moved up the Mekong river in part to avoid Indonesian naval domination. The expansion of irrigated wet rice agriculture complimented the earlier maritime trade.

Authoritarian kings legitimized their rule using social concepts borrowed from India. Jayavarman II unified the Khmer in 802 CE forming the Angkor Empire. Having declared himself a Devaraja or God King, he embarked on military conquest. A succession of strong kings followed until the 1200s CE. The consolidation of the state was linked to the economic surplus and religion. There were huge investments in irrigated agriculture, temple construction and the military. Periods of tumult alternated with empire-building. Cambodia traded with India, China, the Indonesian archipelago and Mon dynasty Burma. An era of unparalleled prosperity had emerged.

**Civilizational Momentum:** Kampuchea was a hydraulic civilization. A centralized bureaucracy administered a vast irrigation network. The King's control over water resources and the agrarian surplus resulted in immense wealth. Successive rulers invested their resources in a huge and expensive campaign of construction, one that was legitimized by Brahmanic ritual. The capital of Angkor may well have been the largest pre-industrial city in the world with an urban area of 1,150 square miles and a population of a million. This was a time when the biggest towns in Christian West Europe did not exceed twenty five thousand residents. Angkor may have also been the world's busiest city at that time situated at the center of a vibrant overland and riverine trade network.

The temple of Banteay Srei, dedicated to the God Shiva and constructed in 967 CE by a courtier to King Jayavarman V, was noted for its intricate three dimensional stone carvings depicting scenes from the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Suryavarman commissioned the construction of Angkor Wat in 1112 CE in honor of the God Vishnu. This remains the largest religious structure in the world to this day. The artistic workmanship is sophisticated with scenes from the battle of Kurukshetra, the Battle of Lanka, the Churning of the Ocean of Milk, and the Battle between the gods and demons carved on its wall panels. The Hindu epics were portrayed in stone, literature, theater and dance. The temple towers dominated

the surrounding countryside flanked by irrigated paddy fields, palmyra palms and banyan trees. The assimilation of Indic concepts stimulated the Khmer people. It was a time of civilizational efflorescence where new traditions and ideas were adopted. The ruling dynasties were Hinduized. Cambodia adopted Indic traditions of administration, aesthetics, architecture, calendar, court ceremony, economy, jurisprudence, literature, religion, statecraft and theater. The Dharma Shastras, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Shaivite Tamil hymns left their imprint. The Khmer alphabet was derived from the Pallava grantha script. The Cambodian new year coincided with the start of the Hindu solar calendar.

The Khmer empire reached its zenith in the 12th century CE. It annexed neighboring states and controlled mainland South East Asia. It dominated the South China Sea. In 1181 CE, Jayavarman VII adopted Mahayana Buddhism and commissioned the construction of the Bayon in nearby Angkor Thom dedicated to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshwara. The Mongol army invaded soon thereafter. Kampuchea was able to buy them off with its enormous wealth. But its military prowess had begun to decline.

**Change and Cataclysm:** The unceasing military campaigns and the expensive program of temple building and public works led to a fiscal deficit. The increased taxation drained the peasant population. Deforestation linked to increased rice cultivation and construction undermined the irrigated agriculture economy. It silted the man-made water ways and disrupted the complex irrigation system. The land witnessed an ecological and infrastructure breakdown. The elaborate court ceremony centered on the Brahmanic concept of the God King or Deva Raja had exhausted its capacity to provide meaning to a tired people. The Khmer populace adopted the simplicity of Theravada/Hinayana or southern Buddhism in 1295 CE under Indravarman III. Sinhalese influence was felt at a time when Sri Lanka itself had come under attack from Magha of Kalinga. The Pali canon supplanted the Sanskrit texts. Buddhist iconography was retrofitted into parts of Angkor Wat at a subsequent date. Sri Lanka helped transform Cambodia into a Theravada Buddhist land. Was this loss of Hindu civilizational momentum due to the disruption of trade and



intellectual links with India given the Turkic invasions of the Indian south? Or was it due to the start of the gradual Islamization of the ports of Sumatra and peninsula Malaya on account of Bengali, Gujarati and Arab traders in the aftermath of the Chola decimation of the Sri Vijaya maritime confederacy? Or were there other factors at play? Had Hinduism lost the capacity to renew itself in changed South East Asian circumstances?

What is clear however is that this civilizational shift coincided with Cambodia's period of terminal decline. The dark ages had commenced. The Thai in the west and the Vietnamese in the east annexed large swathes of Kampuchean territory. The Thai annexed the present North East Thailand and Laos. Thailand, unlike Cambodia, had become a vibrant power with its adoption of Theravada Buddhism in the 13th century CE once again under Sinhalese influence.

While the Thai also assimilated the Hinduized Khmer classicism, they continued with their incursions, plunder and annexation of Khmer territory. The Thai state sacked the Cambodian capitals in 1432 and 1594. Tens of thousands of Khmer peasants, scholars and artists were marched back to Thailand

as slaves.

The Vietnamese meanwhile expanded southwards to incorporate what it today the southern half of Vietnam and the Mekong Delta, originally Khmer. The much reduced Khmers became pawns in a Thai-Vietnamese chess game. Thailand and Vietnam agreed to a joint suzerainty of Cambodia in 1845.

Cambodia was relegated to a backwater. It continues to be overshadowed by its two more powerful neighbors whose policies helped define its sad history in the 1970s and 1980s when millions perished. The Khmer often retreat into an anti-Vietnamese and anti-Thai xenophobia as witnessed in the recent emotive dispute over control of the classical-era Shaivite Hindu Khmer temple of Preah Vihear on the Thai border.

One only hopes that the 700 year period of decline will reverse itself and Cambodia were to reclaim its past grandeur and enlightenment. May Vishnu of Angkor Wat revive that deeply fractured and traumatized land.

*Source: [Www.Srilankaguardian.Org/2014/04/Destiny-Thwarted-Two-Thousand-Years-Of.Html](http://Www.Srilankaguardian.Org/2014/04/Destiny-Thwarted-Two-Thousand-Years-Of.Html)*



By Dr. Smita Daftardar

# Atlanta Balvihar

## Annual Cultural Program Enthralls Kids and Parents Alike

**B**alvihar Hindi School, the culture and language school run by World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), Atlanta Chapter, recently held its Annual Cultural Program at Berkmar High School. There were over 200 participants kids from the two branches of Balvihar, Cobb and Gwinnett County Balvihar. The program showcased the varied talents of not just the students, but also the teachers, parents and volunteers who put together their most creative ideas to produce a colorful and entertaining program. The Balvihar cultural event is an annual tradition that gives students a chance to express themselves artistically, build public speaking skills and learn about the rich history and culture of India outside of a traditional classroom setting. Every year the program is based on an educative theme related to India, this year the dual theme being "Inspirational Youth Personalities of India and Folk Dances of India." In the past, themes have been "History of India", "Hindi Literature", "Nav-Ras", "Children's Literature" and "Ram-Leela," among other things. The vibrant theme of this year allowed for some great plays, interspersed with a variety of folk dances from all corners of India.

Kusum Khurana, President VHPA, Atlanta Chapter inaugurated the program by lighting the ceremonial lamp. The opening prayers were presented by the students of the graduating class. The cultural program took off with a Bharat Darshan Jhanki, presented by youngest students of Balvihar, the 4-5 year olds dressed in traditional Indian outfits from different regions, to the tune of the famous song "Aao bachchon tumhe dikhayen....." This was followed by a series of plays and dances based on famous youth characters from the Puranas as well as characters from Indian history and folklore, each character representing the cultural values that are revered in Hindu Dharma and Indian society. The characters of Luv-Kush, Bhakt Prahlad, Dhruv, Shravan Kumar, Bhakt Andaal and Shishya Aaruni were brought to life by the kids with well rehearsed dialogues and ingenious stage props and backdrops. While Luv-Kush handled an almost life size replica of the horse from Ashwamedh Yajna, the portrayal of Shravan Kumar carrying his aging parents in straw baskets gave an equally realistic picture. The flawless narration of Dhruv's story and the soulful acting by the student artists was greatly appreciated by the audience. The pure and innocent devotion of a little girl "Goda" was presented most effectively in the play Bhakt Andaal. Most importantly, the





moral of each story, be it the courage of Luv-Kush, the devotion of Prahlad and Andaal, the tenacity of Prince Dhruv, the concept of ideal son Shravan or the ideal student Aaruni, was conveyed in a powerful audio-visual mode, to the young students sitting in the auditorium as well as the students enacting these roles. What better way to instill cultural values in our children and to protect and preserve our culture. The program continued its journey into the history and culture of India with a couple of historical plays:

Chandragupt Maurya and Chanakya, and Jhansi Ki Rani. The plays were enacted very well, highlighting the leadership qualities of a young Chandragupt and the fearlessness and patriotism of Jhansi ki Rani Lakshmi Bai. Jhansi Ki Rani got a huge applause, especially on the emotionally charged famous lines "Main apnee Jhansi nahin doongee!" These enactments, while giving valuable lessons in history to the student body in the audience, created nostalgia for most adults, a reminder of their good old school days back in India. While the older students presented the plays, the younger students contributed to the cultural evening with folk dances from different regions of India. The entertaining collection of performances included a dance on the famous Kashmiri folk song "Bhumro, Bhumro...", a beautiful garba, and the age old traditional dindi and lezim dance from Maharashtra. A fast paced Rajasthani Holi dance had the crowd clapping and of course the undisputed king of all dances, the bhangra, was enjoyed by all. A dance on the sweet and melodious Vraj-Bhajan "Chotee- chotee gaiyya ..." depicted the beloved Bal-Krishna, playing with Gop-Gopis. On a slightly different note was a dance on AR Rahman's Bharat Humko Jaan Se Pyara hai, which unfailingly invokes a sense of pride and love for the homeland of India. Another great item was the theme song of Project Green Hands of Tamil Nadu, which was first sung on World Environment Day, 2004. The little kids dancing with painted earthen pots drove home the importance of planting trees and caring for them. A short dance drama based on a Tamil folk lore, of an old woman who thinks the Sun rises because of her rooster's call, was enacted most enthusiastically by a group of students. The costumes and the village scene complete with huts and an old fashioned brick well, made the scene quite authentic. Last but not least, the grand finale was the marching of all students, teachers and volunteers onto the stage, to the tune of Vande Mataram. The vote of thanks was presented by



Madhav Katdareji and Surindar Dharji, coordinators of Gwinnett Balvihar and Cobb Balvihar respectively.

The program was emceed by the students of the graduating class, as is the tradition of Balvihar. A most notable fact was that the backstage, props and curtains were all managed most efficiently by recent graduates of Balvihar. These student volunteers ran a perfectly coordinated backstage team, their duties including getting the correct group of artists on stage on time and escorting them back to their seats after their performance, which is quite a challenging job, with 16 different items and children ranging from 4 year olds to high school teenagers. The teachers and parent-volunteers helped with the rehearsals and making of the realistic stage props. The dedicated team of volunteers of Balvihar and of course the supportive parents made this event a great success.

The annual cultural program of Balvihar, nearly 25 year old tradition in Atlanta region, is an essential part of the school's curriculum. Participation is mandatory for all students and each student gets his/her share of the spotlight on stage. This plays a vital role in building confidence among students, improving proficiency in speaking Hindi and learning to work as a team. The cultural program presented by each class is integrated with the class syllabus. Student learning continues as they practice their items, be it vocabulary through the songs or reading through the dialogues. The outcome of this cultural event aligns most effectively with the overall goal of the Balvihar program, to teach Hindu culture & values and the Hindi language, to children. However, the invaluable fringe benefits of such programs are the real-time lessons on team-work, working for a common goal and stepping up to the occasion, which even the most professional team-building event can only simulate.

*Visit [www.balvihar.org](http://www.balvihar.org) for the latest info and pictures.*



By Siddheshwari Devi  
(Didi Ji)

## Do not Blame Others

The mind is preoccupied with the person we detest just as it is with the person we love dearly.

The reality is that the mind is engaged as much by hatred as by love. The one who is thought of by the mind due to any type of attachment - be it love or hatred - is bound to stamp a strong impression on the mind.

If that is a worldly person, we will attain material results, and if the personality is divine, the result will be divine.



### Satisfy your craving

Siddharth was a prince. At his birth astrologers predicted that he would either be a great king or a great sage. The king did not want the prince to renounce the world and become a sage, so he asked the astrologers for advice. They instructed the king to keep the prince away from ever seeing old age, disease and misery. The king arranged it so that the prince would be surrounded by joy and happiness. One day, however, Siddharth was taking a ride on his chariot when on the way he saw a feeble, sickly old man, bent over and taking the support of a walking stick. The prince was shocked. He asked the chariot driver, "What is this I see?" He was gently told about old age and disease, and also that everyone suffers from them.

A while later, they came upon a funeral procession. Now Siddharth was introduced to the phenomenon of death. The prince was devastated to know that everyone must face death one day. Returning to the palace, he became aloof and pensive. In an effort to distract Siddharth, the king got him married. But even a wife and eventually a son could not distract Siddharth. The flame of renunciation burnt brightly within the heart of the young prince, and one night, he quietly stole away in search of answers to the questions that were tormenting him. The young Siddharth did not stop searching until he became the enlightened one - the Buddha.

King Dashrath was a valiant king. One day while he was gazing at his reflection in the mirror, he saw a few gray hair on his head and realized that old age was fast approaching. He therefore decided that it was time to hand the kingdom over to his eldest son and retire to the forest to practice devotion.

Dashrath was a king and Siddharth was a prince. Despite being in possession of great material wealth, they realized that wealth and things that can be purchased with wealth do not satisfy the soul. The material world brings satisfaction to the material body, but only God can satisfy the craving of the soul. Satisfy the craving.

### Body is the servant of the soul

Body and Soul are very different from one another. While the body is made of flesh, bones and other material elements, the soul is a divine entity; a part and parcel of God. Body receives satisfaction and nourishment from the material world. Soul seeks nourishment from God and devotion.

We are a combination of body and soul. Body is the servant, while Soul is the master. All the parts of our body are constantly striving to serve their master. Eyes try to see all the beautiful things, people and places of the

world only for the purpose of pleasing the soul. Ears try to hear all the beautiful sounds the world has to offer with the view to make the soul happy. Likewise, the tongue wishes to taste all possible delicacies for the sake of the soul. Skin desires the touch of everything soft because it is attempting to make the soul happy. Nose desires to inhale various fragrances available in the world.

Although the body is constantly attempting to please the soul using things of the material world, it does not succeed in its efforts. Things of the world certainly bring temporary happiness but fail to satisfy the soul permanently.

The knowledgeable individual takes care of his body and performs his duty towards family and society, and at the same time he feeds the soul by worshiping God. For the sake of the soul he looks beyond the material world and makes inquiries in order to know and love the all-pervading Creator.

### Do not blame others

When life is moving smoothly, we pat ourselves on the back and take all the credit. When things are not going well, we shift the blame on others. We attribute our problems and failures to loved ones, friends, neighbors, teachers, co-workers, acquaintances and even God. The finger that points to others should be pointed towards ourselves. If everyone else is to be blamed for our problems, then what part are we playing in our own life?

Humility is a virtue and arrogance is a vice. Due to arrogance we shift the blame on everyone and refuse to admit our own shortcomings and mistakes. Due to our ego, we are not able to move on the path of self-improvement. If you think you are perfect, you will not find anything to improve on. You will not be able to get out of the habit of always identifying someone else as the culprit behind your difficulties, challenges and misfortunes.

Even criminal behavior is being blamed on television, internet, childhood trauma, alcohol, drugs and on countless other excuses. The murderer or the rapist is not at fault; it's the fault of the shows and movies that he watched. The would-be criminals are encouraged because all they have to do is to shift the blame on something or someone.

Develop a humble attitude and stop your mind when it tries to see faults in others. When you see your faults, you will take steps to correct them. Even baby steps are important in the big scheme of things. Stop playing the blame game and take ownership of your own life.

### Understand Attachment

We generally relate attachment to only affinity or affection,

but never to hatred or malice. However, the precise meaning of the word attachment is the 'unity of the mind with a person or an object'. If you love someone, your mind becomes engrossed in the thought of that person. But the same is true of hatred or enmity. If you have strong feelings of hatred for someone, your mind will become extremely attached to that person.

Suppose a mother is greatly attached to her son. She feels that she cannot live without him. All day long her mind is constantly engrossed in the thoughts of her son. She is continuously thinking of the way he looks, talks, smiles, plays and behaves.

This is an example of extreme love. What happens in hostility? There too, the mind remains constantly busy with the thoughts of the enemy, his defects, his unpleasant face, the damage he has done, and the way he can be harmed.

Thus, the mind is preoccupied with the person we detest just as it is with the person we love dearly. The reality is that the mind is engaged as much by hatred as by love. The one who is thought of by the mind due to any type of attachment - be it love or hatred - is bound to stamp a strong impression on the mind. If that is a worldly person, we will attain material results, and if the personality is divine, the result will be divine.

### Pointers for aspiring devotees

Always remember that God is giving you His grace at all times

- Do not seek company on the godly path; become accustomed to traveling alone.
- Do not become angry at those who put road blocks on your path; God is using them to test your inner strength.
- Keep an eye on pride; it will try to sneak into your mind again and again.
- Be proactive; do not wait for someone to tell you to serve.
- If you fall down on the path, shake off the dust and start walking again.
- Always try to experience the omnipresence of God.
- Ask forgiveness genuinely and resolve not to repeat the offence.
- Do not clutter your mind by talking or thinking about trivial matters.
- Be humble enough to accept good advice.
- Never surrender to feelings of discouragement and despondence.
- Develop a strong desire for selfless service. ●

Visit [www.radhamadhavsociety.org](http://www.radhamadhavsociety.org)  
Email: [s\\_didi@radhamadhavsociety.org](mailto:s_didi@radhamadhavsociety.org)



Several Hindu academics and scholars suggested for a dialogue with Penguin and Doniger to apologize and to rectify the factual errors and remove the unwarranted sexuality and distortions from the book. Even an online petition was submitted to Penguin and another one to AAR (American Academy of Religion). Letters were also written to the White House Interfaith section headed by Rev. Dubois. Doniger was also invited to a round table panel on her book during the annual conference of Association of Asian Studies (AAS) on March 31-April 2, 2012 held in Hawaii. But she declined it and made comments to one Hindu academic that: "I have moved beyond the Hindus." Neither fatwas nor any crusades were undertaken as characteristics of disagreements by other faiths.



## Dinanath Batra, Media and Freedom of Expression

**T**he self proclaimed sentinels of the Indian republic and abroad have invented an issue of so called freedom of expression. The issue is of so called 'ban on the books' by the convener of 'Shiksha Bachao Andolan' Dinanath Batra. "Who is Dinanath Batra? What is RSS?" yelled one 'nation wants to know' anchor. It is a 'silencing of liberal India', declared another intellectual in print media. There were plenty of programs all over the media, print as well as electronic on this issue. Strangely, none of them invited either Dinanath Batra or the publishing houses involved; inviting them would have exposed the shallowness of their allegations.



Yet the arguments were farfetched. For example, the publisher Orient Blackswan claimed to put the 'Communalism and Sexual Violence: Ahmedabad Since 1969' under 'review' because of perceived threats, legal and otherwise, to the publication and its staff, because Dinanath Batra sent a notice to them about another book "From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India" by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay. Taking this claim of 'perceived threat' as gospel truth, the media channels started the war cry of 'freedom of expression in danger'. They claimed although Dinanath Batra may be within his legal rights, still what he is doing is harmful to freedom of expression, that people like him should put their argument separately than objecting legally to the books, that Indian laws are outdated and harmful to freedom of expression and particularly section 295A, which prohibits freedom of expression as per international standard as claimed by Penguin publishers.

On this background let's analyze the case of Dinanath Batra versus Penguin publishers and 'The Hindus: An Alternative History' by Wendy Doniger.

### Dinanath Batra

Many people who meet Dinanath Batra have been impressed by his energy, dedication to his cause and more important, his open mindedness for debates and discussions. Dinanath Batra is primarily campaigning



against distortions and factual errors in the school and college textbooks. One very gratifying instance, he says, was removing the reference to Bhagat Singh as a terrorist in a textbook; the opposing counsel for NCERT was the lawyer Prashant Bhushan, a worthy opponent. To him, Wendy Doniger's book in itself is not important. But when a person who writes with bias against Hindus is acclaimed as an authority on Hinduism it is certainly a matter of concern. (As quoted in Wikipedia)

## Wendy Doniger and School of Divinity

Wendy Doniger is frequently certified as an 'authority' on Hinduism by the self declared sentinels and intellectuals of India. She is, to quote from the official website, "Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions; also in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, the Committee on Social Thought, and the College" in the University of Chicago, School of Divinity.

## What is the School of Divinity?

In this school there is a faculty of seven people (all distinguished scholars) for the study of the Bible, seven for the 'History of Christianity', eight for the study of 'Christian Theology', two for 'Ministry and Religious Leadership'. So out of 56 'distinguished' scholars, 24 are devoted for Christianity. Then there is a subject 'Islamic Studies' with the faculty of eight people, a faculty of four for 'History of Judaism'. There is no section for Hinduism. Wendy Doniger is part of a 10 people team for the study of 'History of Religions'. So Hinduism just falls under history of religions. From the alumni, many are active as pastors and priests in churches.

The titles of Wendy Doniger's book are like 'Siva: The Erotic Ascetic', 'Tales of Sex and Violence: Folklore, Sacrifice, and Danger in the Jaiminiya Brahmana'. It is noteworthy that the titles of the books on Christianity, Judaism and Islam published by the school of divinity are quite neutral like 'American Christianity', 'The Jews in the modern world', 'Biblical text and texture', 'approaching the Quran' etc. There is no 'eroticism in early Church' etc., all this is reserved for Hindus only.

## Attempts of dialogue and debate

Wendy Doniger has been constantly challenged and invited for discussion on her views by many, and she has consistently refused it, writes Dhriendra Shah.



Several Hindu academics and scholars suggested for a dialogue with Penguin and Doniger (through direct letters to Doniger and also the President of University of Chicago) to apologize and to rectify the factual errors and remove the unwarranted sexuality and distortions from the book. Even an online petition was submitted to Penguin and another one to AAR (American Academy of Religion). Letters were also written to the White House Interfaith section headed by Rev. Dubois. Doniger was also invited to a round table panel on her book during the annual conference of Association of Asian Studies (AAS) in March 31-April 2, 2012 held in Hawaii but she declined it and made comments to one Hindu academic, "I have moved beyond the Hindus." Neither fatwas nor any crusades were undertaken as characteristics of disagreements by other faiths. A scholarly letter campaign by Hindu intellectuals bore fruit when the NBCC refrained from giving her the NBCC award for her book.

Earlier, Microsoft Encarta (defunct now), pulled Wendy Doniger's article on Hinduism after investigating complaints that the article had a racist tone, thanks to a scholarly intervention by Sankrant Sanu.

## The criticism of Wendy Doniger's book

Wendy Doniger claims in an interview that nobody has taken specific objections to her book. To quote Aditi Banarjee, 'Doniger's refusal to address her critics only worsens as the interview proceeds. When asked why Hindus object to her writings, she flippantly replies, "You'll have to ask them why. It doesn't seem to me to have much to do with the book. They don't say, look here, you said this on page 200, and that's a terrible thing to say. Instead, they say things not related to the book: you hate Hindus,

you are sex-obsessed, you don't know anything about the Hindus, and you got it all wrong. "

In fact as early as 2009 Vishal Agarwal has pointed out chapter wise blatant errors in her book. Aditi Banerjee, a practicing attorney in London and also co-editor, "Invading the Sacred: An Analysis of Hinduism Studies in America" (Rupa & Co., June 2007), Abhinav Prakash Singh Doctoral Scholar in Economics, JNU, Anand Mathur, Dhriendra Shah, Pramod Pathak all these people have done a pointed criticism of her work, but she has not answered any of them.

### **The publishing houses**

Penguin and Orient Blackswan are claiming themselves victims along with Wendy Doniger. In a statement issued over the Wendy Doniger's book, Penguin says, "Penguin Books India believes, and has always believed, in every individual's right to freedom of thought and expression, a right explicitly codified in the Indian Constitution. This commitment informs Penguin's approach to publishing in every territory of the world, and we have never been shy about testing that commitment in court when appropriate. At the same time, a publishing company has the same obligation as any other organization to respect the laws of the land in which it operates, however intolerant and restrictive those laws may be. We also have a moral responsibility to protect our employees against threats and harassment where we can. The settlement reached this week brings to a close a four year legal process in which Penguin has defended the publication of the Indian edition of The Hindus by Wendy Doniger. We have published, in succession, hardcover, paperback and e-book editions of the title. International editions of the book remain available physically and digitally to Indian readers who still wish to purchase it. We stand by our original decision to publish 'The Hindus', just as we stand by the decision to publish other books that we know may cause offence to some segments of our readership. We believe, however, that the Indian Penal Code, and in particular section 295A of that code, will make it increasingly difficult for any Indian publisher to uphold international standards of free expression without deliberately placing itself outside the law. This is, we believe, an issue of great significance not just for the protection of creative freedoms in India but also for the defense of fundamental human rights".

The hypocrisy is obvious. Penguin insinuates that there was a threat to their employees without giving an iota of proof. If the threat was real one, would Penguin have dared to declare in the same statement that the book is still available to Indian readers through Internet?

### **Penguin's legal battle**

It is interesting to see when these companies have fought and when they have retreated.

In 1996, the British author David Irving filed law suit against American author Deborah Lipstadt and her publisher Penguin Books in an English court, claiming that Lipstadt had libeled him in her book 'Denying the Holocaust'. Lipstadt had accused him of deliberately misrepresenting evidence to conform to his ideological viewpoint. English libel law puts the burden of proof on the defense, meaning that it was up to Lipstadt and her publisher to prove that her claims were substantially true.

Lipstadt hired British lawyer Anthony Julius while Penguin hired libel experts Kevin Bays and Mark Bateman of media law firm Davenport Lyons. Cambridge historian Richard J. Evans was hired by the defense to serve as an expert witness. Evans spent two years examining Irving's work, and presented evidence of Irving's misrepresentations, including evidence that Irving had knowingly used forged documents as source material. Upon mutual agreement the case was argued as a bench trial before Mr. Justice Charles Gray, who produced a written judgment 333 pages long in favor of the defendants, in which he detailed Irving's systematic distortion of the historical record of World War II.

This shows that international publishers including Penguin fight when they are sure about the accuracy of their content.

### **Publishers withdrawing books**

On the other hand, there are multiple cases where publishers have withdrawn books when they found that the content has fatal errors.

### **Books withdrawn for inaccuracy**

❖ In 2013 Authentic Media publications withdrew the book 'Taming the Tiger'. The statement said, "The publisher of 'Taming the Tiger' is withdrawing the book and relevant resources from sale. Authentic Media made the decision after an inquiry into evangelist and founding Director of Avanti Ministries

Tony Anthony concluded that parts of his book, which claims to tell his story, were fake."

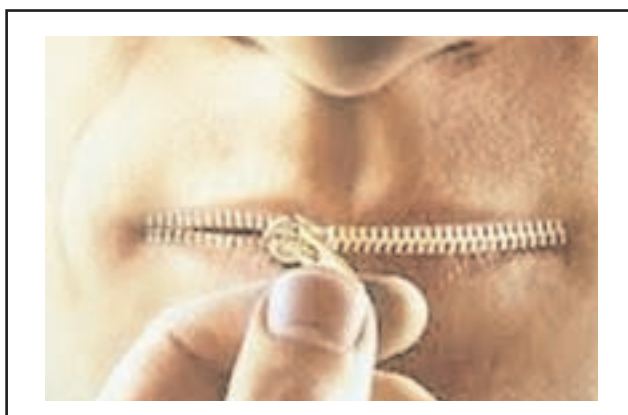
❖ In year 2012 citing a loss of confidence in the book's details, Christian publisher Thomas Nelson withdrew the publication and distribution of the bestseller, "The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson". The controversial book was written by Texas evangelical David Barton. The publishing company says it's ceasing publication because it found that "basic truths just were not there."

❖ In year 2003 publisher Little, Brown withdrew a book about the creation of the atomic bomb after four authors complained that more than 30 uncredited passages in it were identical or nearly identical to passages in their works. Michael Pietsch, the publisher of Little, Brown, said the company had taken the unusual step of recalling the book, "Pandora's Keepers: Nine Men and the Atomic Bomb," from bookstores because "after speaking with the author, we agreed there were errors in the book that justified withdrawing it."

We can find many such examples which show that the decision to withdraw a book is almost without exception linked to the loss of confidence on the part of publisher about the accuracy of the content. With the resources available to such publishing houses, it is never difficult for them to fight legal suits. That's why the Penguin statement says, "we have never been shy about testing that commitment in court when appropriate." Is Penguin, after four years of legal battle, convinced that it is not appropriate to fight this case because of inaccuracies in content? But perhaps it is shameful for them and to Orient Blackswan to admit that when it comes to issues related to India, they are not as careful about accuracy of content as when releasing books in Europe and US. It is easier to blame Indian law, the section 295 A etc.

### What does Section 295 A say?

Section 295A in the Indian Penal Code says, "Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of [citizens of India], [by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise], insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term



which may extend to 4 [three years], or with fine, or with both."

Penguin and the self appointed liberals are claiming this clause as repressive of freedom of expression. Actually, it has been tested very rarely in the Court. But when it has been tested, the deliberations in the Court Judgment very clearly show that it is very difficult to use it as an oppressive measure. Therefore, insult or attempt to insult the religion or religious belief when made with an intention, which must be deliberate or malicious, of outraging the religious feelings of a class of citizens of India, then only the provisions of Section 295A would be attracted. The outrage to religious feelings or insult to religion or religious belief if made unwittingly or carelessly or without any deliberate and malicious intention, the same would not come within the purview of Section 295A IPC.

In short, the entire emphasis on the section 295A is 'deliberate and malicious'. After fighting the legal battle for four years, did Penguin come to the conclusion that it will be conclusively proved that the intention was 'deliberate and malicious'? And yet they are saying freedom of expression is in danger? On what count media and so called liberal intellectuals are accusing Dinanath Batra? As far as law is concerned, he is within his legal rights. As far as debate and discussions are concerned, Wendy Doniger has consistently declined it. The claims by publications of possible persecution are baseless. Dinanath Batra's entire struggle so far has been in last 10 years. So there is no question of favor of government. Evidently, media has been relentlessly yelling against Dinabath Batra and nobody has pressurized them or curbed them. Then, where is the danger to freedom of expression? ●

<http://www.newsgharati.com/Encyc/2014/6/9/Dinanath-Batra-Indian-media-and-freedom-of-expression.aspx#.U52QwpSSzHQ>





## VHPA Celebrates Shri Narendra Modi's Election as the Prime Minister of India

**On Sunday** May 18, World Hindu Council of America (VHPA) had organized an event in Staten Island to celebrate the phenomenal victory of Hon. Shri Narendra Modi as the new Prime Minister of India and to wish him and his government, all the success deserved for the future of its citizens. The event took place at the local Hindu Temple to a capacity crowd and was supported by various organizations and people of various nationalities, including Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi. Overwhelming response from the community on a short notice represented not only the new dawn in the democratic history of India but also, importantly, the synergy of the electorate revolution that had taken place back home.

Dr. Ila Sukhadia, the President of N.Y. Chapter of VHPA and the emcee of the event welcomed the gathering and fondly touched on the personal friendship that her late Husband, Dr. Jitendra Sukhadia and she had all these years with Shri Narendra Modi popularly referred as Narendrabhai and how thoughtful it was of him to console her through a letter when her husband passed away. Shri Arvind Sant who as a college lecturer taught Narendrabhai, informed the gathering how Narendrabhai had worked his way up to graduation by simultaneously working at a bus-depot canteen and studying on borrowed books. Arvindji also reminisced about his days as senior karyakarta (volunteer) of Rashtriya Sayamsevak Sangh (RSS) guiding Narendrabhai in the administration of local RSS Karyalaya (office) and how he soon made it more efficient by adopting modern means, unlike him. Prakash Waghmare, former member of VHPA Governing Council, talked about his relationship with Narendrabhai that had started more than 25 yrs ago and reaching its peak at the U.N.O. sponsored 'Millennium

World Peace Summit' in the beginning of this century. Prakashji, also elaborated an anecdote about Narendrabhai's political inspiration - Swatantraveer Savarkar - which showed his down-to-earth humility. Prakashji said, "In Pune, Veer Savarkar's legendary book 'The Indian War of Independence-1857' was to be republished and the event committee wanted a comparable iconic personality as the Chief Guest for this event. The committee could not think of anyone appropriate from the State of Maharashtra itself. They unanimously wanted Narendrabhai, the Chief Minister of Gujarat for the occasion. When they approached him he politely emphasized that it was the committee that was honoring him by inviting him and not the other way round. He promised that not only he would come but suggested that there should be a procession with Veer Savarkar's book riding on the crest of an elephant. As per promise Narendrabhai, came putting aside his busy schedule as Chief Minister and led the entire procession on foot." Mr Suman Kalia, an active member of the Staten Island community, spoke about the awe-inspiring developmental track record of Narendrabhai as the Chief Minister and the peace and prosperity of Gujarat. He expressed confidence that Modiji would bring good governance in the whole country. Smt. Asha Vaishnav, who is the President of N.J. Chapter of VHPA, commended Shri Gaurang Vaishnav and Shri Girish Gandhi, who in their private capacity, had gone to India to educate the electorate for their right-to-vote and the difference it could make in their lives by exercising it. According to her, Narendrabhai personified people's aspirations, hopes and frustrations to have scandal-free administration. Dr. Kokila Modi, whose husband Dr Mukund Modi had started Overseas Friends of BJP organization in USA, ruefully wished that her husband was alive to see 'this victory of the people, by the people, for the people.' Shri Arun Joshi and Parveen Sharma talked about Narendrabhai's personal charisma and all-encompassing election theme which triggered election results resulting in a majority. Besides short speeches the event was interspersed with patriotic songs and concluded with *Rashtrageet* and lunch.

By *Stephen Knapp*  
(*Sri Nandanandana Dasa*)



[Excerpt from the book  
"Crimes Against India  
And the Need to Protect  
its Ancient Vedic  
Tradition" by Stephen  
Knapp]



## The Portuguese and the Goan Inquisition

Unfortunately, the challenges that India had to meet were not merely with the Muslims. Others also came to India with less than respectful intentions. The Portuguese arrived as early as 1498 via the ocean route discovered by Vasco-da-Gama via the Cape of Good Hope, when Constantinople came under Arab control. Goa came under the Delhi Sultanate in 1312. Then in 1370 they had to surrender it to Harihara I of Vijayanagara. The monarchs of Vijayanagara ruled over it until 1469. Then it passed on to the Bahmani sultans of Gulbarga. Then the rule went to the Adil Shahis of Bijapur, during which time the Muslim pilgrims embarked on their journey to Mecca from Goa. After that, the Portuguese arrived. Europe had always been interested in India, especially for trade purposes when it became obvious how much India had to offer, especially in regard to spices, textiles, and other oriental and commercial products. The Portuguese Vasco de Gama was graciously received by the zamorin, the Hindu king of Calicut who granted him permission to build warehouses for the goods he was trading. However, the Hindu tolerance was exploited by the Portuguese who wanted an increasing amount of facility for their purposes, and that all trade with the Muslims be abandoned. The attempt at establishing a base in Bengal was quickly stopped by the local Sultan, Jahangir, who killed 4,000 Portuguese at one time. Thus, the Portuguese had to go elsewhere and went to the western coasts. In the first decade after the Portuguese came to India, they exhibited horrible atrocities, including burning Arab ships that carried not only cargo, but also men, women, and children to the haj, chopping off noses of unarmed fishermen, bombarding port cities on the Malabar coast, forcing the conversion to Catholicism of the women and daughters of the defeated men, and also changing the temples and mosques into Catholic churches. The natives of the area went to the sultan of Gujarat who brought assistance from Egypt and Turkey for a naval attack on the Portuguese at Chaul in 1507-08. However, the Portuguese viceroy, d'Almeida, arranged a large fleet and brought a mighty victory in 1509 against the Muslim fleets at Diu. In 1510, Afonso de Albuquerque captured the island of Goa and the surrounding territories on the west coast of India from the Sultan of Bijapur and made it the capital of the Portuguese eastern empire. Goa was a strategic location, and from there the Portuguese could supervise Malabar, control the pilgrim traffic to Mecca, as well as the general trade to Egypt, Iraq, and Persia, including the East Indian spices at their source. However, the Portuguese irked some of the Mughal rulers because of the toll they took on the trade from the port of Surat. They deeply felt that no faith need be kept with an infidel. It was from this period that the word *feringi* (lit. *farangi*, *frank*) acquired influence



*“Saint” Francis Xavier worked feverishly to convert as many Hindus to Christianity as possible, and baptized as many natives as he could*

and popular usage.

Some of the Muslim rulers, such as Akbar, were a little fascinated by them and gave them freedom to preach their message, and the New Testament was translated into Persian. But it has been noted elsewhere that Akbar gave the Portuguese preacher, like Xavier, little opportunity for religious discussion when they came to talk with him. And the power over the Indian seas was always in dispute between the Portuguese and the Muslims during the 16th century, as was the superiority of Christianity and Islam, which became more intense.

However, the Portuguese did not provide a favorable impression of any religion that was said to be brought by the "Prince of Peace", Jesus Christ. They would go without bathing for months, and be under the influence of alcohol at any time, and would show violence toward unarmed people, women, and children for any reason. They were the epitome of barbarism.

An interesting but totally self-serving policy was one that Albuquerque encouraged, which was that of mixed race marriages. His idea was to develop a population that was Portuguese in blood and Catholic in religion, but who would be committed by taste to Portuguese settlements, and, thus, form a self-perpetuating garrison. This formed the race that has become known as Luso-Indians and later

as Goans. Though they are Indian in blood, they still look somewhat Western and are usually Catholic.

The Portuguese were soon followed by European rivals like the French, Dutch, and British. The rivalry that appeared between the Dutch and English resulted in the start of the Dutch East India Company that worked primarily in Southeast Asia and Indonesia (known to Europeans as the East Indies), and the British East India Company, which had to settle for "second-best", which was India.

It was in 1538 that General Ignatius de Loyola in Rome, upon the request of the King of Portugal, sent missionaries to the orient. To answer the call, Francis Xavier, later known as "Saint" Xavier, went to Goa in 1542. Though he started his preaching projects on his own, he also later laid the foundations for the Inquisition in Goa, similar to that of Spain and Portugal, where he had experience in persecuting thousands of Jews and Muslims.

"Saint" Francis Xavier worked feverishly to convert as many Hindus to Christianity as possible, and baptized as many natives as he could, and exploited the impressionability of children as much as possible. He once wrote in a letter to the Society of Jesus, "Following the baptisms, the new Christians return to their homes and come back with their wives and families to be in turn also prepared for baptism. After all have been baptized, I order



that everywhere the temples of the false gods be pulled down and idols broken. I know not how to describe in words the joy I feel before the spectacle of pulling down and destroying the idols by the very people who formerly worshipped them." He went on to say that even children "... show an ardent love for the Divine law, and an extraordinary zeal for learning our holy religion and imparting it to others. Their hatred for idolatry is marvelous. They get into feuds with the heathens about it, and whenever their own parents practice it, they reproach them and come off to tell me at once. Whenever I hear of any act of idolatrous worship, I go to the place with a large band of these children, who very soon load the devil with a greater amount of insult and abuse than he has lately received of honor and worship from their parents, relations, and acquaintances. The children run at the idols, upset them, dash them down, break them to pieces, spit on them, trample on them, kick them about, and in short heap on them every possible outrage."

This is how Xavier taught the children to behave toward their own heritage. He did this in Quilon, and this was after the Hindu King of Quilon had respectfully received him and benevolently given him a large grant of land and other resources so he could build churches for his religion. What a way to pay back the respect and liberality the King had shown him.

Once when some Hindus had been baptized as Christians, Xavier heard that they still were worshiping deities in their homes. He went there and ordered the hut to be burnt to the ground as a warning of what would happen to others if they did not follow the Christian tenets and resorted to their old ways. This was but an example of "Saint" Francis Xavier's violent form of evangelism. All this proselytizing by Xavier was but to further the Portuguese imperialistic designs, since he was under the protection of the Portuguese King who wanted to expand in power and influence in the region. What better way to do that than to first expand the religion and Western values through the area, which would make it easier then to expand the kingdom. It is a method that is still used today.

Though "Saint" Francis Xavier has been given much respect in India, with many schools named after him, his real intention of coming to India was to uproot "paganism" or Hinduism, and put an end to the ancient Vedic traditions. And he did whatever he could to do that. Francis Xavier was especially vicious towards the Brahmanas, and once said if there were no Brahmanas in the area, all Hindus would accept conversion to our faith. (From Atrocities on Hindus by Missionaries in Goa, by V. Sundaram) Xavier,

who was made a saint by the Church for his activities, boasted of having destroyed "hundreds of Hindu temples" by himself, and "miraculously" converted people by the thousands. But how miraculous this was can be seen in the following descriptions:

M. D. David, author of Western Colonialism in Asia and Christianity, writes: "...A particularly grave abuse was practiced in Goa in the form of 'mass baptism' and what went before it. The practice was begun by the Jesuits and was initiated by the Franciscans also. The Jesuits staged an annual mass baptism on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul (January 25), and in order to secure as many neophytes as possible, a few days before the ceremony the Jesuits would go through the streets of the Hindu quarter in pairs, accompanied by their Negro slaves, whom they would urge to seize the Hindus. When the blacks caught up a fugitive, they would smear his lips with a piece of beef, making him an 'untouchable' among his people. Conversion to Christianity was then his only option."

Others found conversion politically useful, like the fishermen of Tamil Nadu who sold their souls to Christian priests in exchange for the protection of the Portuguese army against their Muslim neighbors. However, the deal was not completely voluntary. Those fishermen who refused to convert were attacked on the Malabar coast by the Portuguese navy. Entire fishing boats were set ablaze, as their women and children helplessly watched from the shores. Those fishermen who jumped into the water to save their lives, were either bayoneted or shot dead.

To fuel hatred of the newly converted Christians against the Hindus, the Portuguese would spread many false stories. One referred to Thomas the apostle, who was said to have landed in India in 52 CE at Cranganore on the Malabar coast and established the first church later known as the Syrian Church. In 68 CE, St. Thomas was allegedly martyred near modern day Chennai (Madras) and a large cathedral there now is said to house a basement crypt containing the relics of St. Thomas. However, there is controversy with evidence that St. Thomas never went there. Also, in the cathedral of St. Thomas at Chennai (San Thome Cathedral Basilica) there is also a painting that shows Thomas praying while he is being stabbed to death with a lance by a Ramanuja Vaishnava Brahmana wearing Vishnu tilak (forehead mark). It is interesting to remember that the Shree Vaishnavas and their tilak did not come into history until the 11th century, almost 1000 years later. Therefore, this shows the deceitfulness in their stories and conversion tactics. There was little if any conversions based on the purity of their teachings, but they instead had to rely

on spreading lies and treachery, and even savagery to make converts to their religion, as we will soon see.

At least from 1540 onwards the Portuguese destroyed all the Hindu temples in the area, over 300 of them, and stopped all Hindu worship and even the popular traditions that were not directly connected with the religion. From studies by Dr. K. V. Paliwal, President of the Hindu Writers' Forum in New Delhi, as presented in his book, *Atrocities on Hindus by Christian Missionaries in Goa*, many of the churches that were built in Goa were constructed on top of the remains of Hindu temples that were destroyed by the Portuguese.

It was in 1560 that the King of Portugal sent the first inquisitors to India after the request of the preacher and Hindu hater Francis Xavier. This was the start of the compassionate and merciful Goan Inquisition that tortured and killed many thousands of Indians who merely followed the traditions of their culture. This was the real change in the presence of the Portuguese when, being intolerant in religion, they introduced the Inquisition with all its horrors. "Inquisition" was the Court established by the Catholic government for search of and for punishing heretics. This justification for cruelty, mercilessness, and corruption was called the "Holy Office". It had been established in Spain in 1481 and in Portugal in 1541. Thus, it was set up in Goa in 1560 through 1774, and 1778 to 1812. This was regarded as barbaric and totally cruel and unjust from the Indian standpoint. And it was not only directed at Hindus, but also in their rough handling of Syrian Christians of Malabar to secure their submission to the Catholic faith.

The laws enforced by the Inquisition in 1560 were many and demanded such things as the prohibition of the use of Indian musical instruments and Indian songs during marriage ceremonies, the use of betel and pan, and the distribution of food to poor people in honor of some deceased person. Other prohibitions concerned the harvest festivals, cooking rice without salt, fasting on the holydays, on Wednesdays, full moon and new moon, or bathing before entering the kitchen for preparing the meals. They also ordered all the coconut trees and tulasi plants to be uprooted from all gardens. All those who disobeyed the orders of the Inquisition were subject to horrible punishments. More than 2,000 people were burned alive, and many more tortured.

Over time they established many more laws to stifle the Hindu population of the area in many ways. For example, in June of 1557, the King D. Joao ordered that no Government Official should utilize the services of the Brahmanas or other infidels and contrary to this, the Official will lose his job and the Brahmana will become captive and lose all property. All jobs must be given to Christians and not to Hindus. This was to make the Hindus

completely helpless and, more or less, slaves.

On April 2, 1560, the Viceroy ordered that the Brahmanas should be thrown out of the island of Goa and the lands and fortresses of the King of Portugal. On November 27, 1563, a law was passed to the effect that all Hindu physicians, carpenters, blacksmiths, and shop keepers were asked to sell their property and leave the Portuguese territory. On April 3, 1582, a Royal Decree was re-issued that no Hindu, regardless of his status or condition, should hold any public office. All Christian officials were forbidden from utilizing the services of any Brahmanas or Hindus. Later, on March 13, 1613, and again on January 31, 1620, laws were enacted to impose a ban on the performance of all Hindu rites and ceremonies, including marriages.

Additional demands included that all Hindus were obliged to assemble periodically in churches to be lectured by the priests about the inferiority of their religion. The poor could not be fed nor ceremonial meals distributed for the peace of the souls of the dead. No rituals could be performed on the 12th day after a person's death, or on moonless or full moon days. There could be no fasting on the Ekadashi days. Hindu men could not wear dhotis, even in their own homes. And women could not wear cholis. However, Hindus embracing Christianity would be exempt from land taxes for up to 15 years. But no one should bear any Hindu names. A most blatant abuse of power by the clergy was the order that all orphans could be baptized as Christians, which lead to the kidnapping of numerous orphans, and the establishment of many Christian orphanages.

Various repressive measures were also adopted to suppress the knowledge of Vedic Dharma and the culture of Hindus, and exterminate the indigenous literature in Marathi, Konkani, or any local dialect. Special officers known as *Qualificadores* were appointed to examine the books published by the Hindus before they were printed, and care was taken to see that they contained nothing against the Catholic Faith. A list of prohibited Hindu books was maintained. According to the Holy Inquisition Manual, it was a crime to possess and read the prohibited books. All Sanskrit and Marathi books, whatever may be their subject matter, were seized and burnt on the suspicion that they might deal with what they called idolatry.

So much harassment was felt by the Hindus that they abandoned the city in large numbers, refusing to stay in a place where they had no freedom, and were liable to be imprisoned, tortured, or put to death for worshiping according to their ancient tradition.

The Hindus of Goa were shocked to see that the God of Christianity was more cruel than the God of Islam, or the dictates of Mohammad. Thus, deserting Goa for the lands of the Muslims seemed a brighter future, though they had received nothing but trouble from the Muslims.

After all this, an order was issued in June of 1684 that eliminated the Konkani language, and for dealing toughly with anyone who still spoke the local language. It was compulsory to speak Portuguese only. All symbols of non-Christian sects were destroyed and all books in the local languages were burnt. The Archbishop living on the banks of the Ethora said in a lecture that, "The post of Inquiry Commission in Goa is regarded as holy." Thus, the Indian ladies who opposed or resisted the sexual advances of the assistants of the commission were put behind bars and then forcibly used by them to satisfy their carnal desires. Then they were burnt alive as opponents or heretics of the established tenets of the Catholic Church. So harsh and notorious was the inquisition in Goa that word of its brutality and horrors reached Lisbon, but nothing was done to stop its increasing barbarity. Those who were fortunate got away with being banished from Portuguese territory. The less fortunate had their property seized and auctioned, the money used for furthering the conversion processes of the Church. And the least fortunate were brutalized and killed, or forced into slave labor in the galleys of the ships that transported loot from India to the Portuguese coffers.

The Goan inquisition is regarded as the most violent ever executed by the Portuguese Catholic Church. It was basically a holocaust inflicted on the Indian people. The inquisition consisted of a tribunal, headed by a judge sent from Portugal, along with two assistants or henchmen. The judge was answerable to no one but Lisbon, and handed down judgments in whatever way he saw fit. The inquisition was conducted in a palace called the "Big House." This had been the residence of the Portuguese Governors of Goa until 1554. This had been refitted to accommodate 200 cells for prisoners, and instruments of torture to inflict all kinds of pain on the "heathens and pagans," Hindus, and force "the true and merciful religion" of Christianity on those who resisted it. All interrogations were conducted behind closed doors, but the screams of agony of the men, women, and children could be heard from the streets, even in the middle of the night, as they would be brutally flogged, beaten, burned, or even slowly dismembered in front of their relatives.

Since the prisoners of the "Big House" were separated from one another, it took only four guards to oversee them. Those who died in the jail were buried there, only to be later exhumed and taken with the prisoners condemned to death to be burnt during the next auto da fe, which was a ritual fire held by the priests to burn all things considered sacrilegious. The prisoners were kept in silence, and anyone who complained, or even prayed to God loudly, ran the risk of being whipped by the guards.

Prisoners were brought in after witnesses had reported on them of crimes they had purportedly committed, often times with the witness implicating innocent people while under the threat of torture, or to save their own lives. These so-called crimes were often some kind of blasphemy against Christianity, or impiety, idolatry, necromancy and witchcraft, or anything against Christianity. For these "crimes" they would often be burnt alive at the stake, but only after much torture. If they confessed to their crimes, they were shown Christian mercy by being killed first by strangulation, and then burnt after death. These torture sessions were also efficiently watched by Christian priests. What verifies this history is the recorded orders issued by a succession of Portuguese Viceroy and Governors, as well as the prosecutors of that time, which give details of the horrors committed in the name of Jesus Christ.

Some of the tortures included having your arms tied behind your back and being strung up by your wrists. You would hang there for hours, only to be suddenly dropped down near the floor, which would quickly pull your arms back to dislocate them out of the joints. There was also the water torture in which you are forced to lay across an iron bar and ingest water without stopping, causing the iron bar to break one's vertebrae and cause vomiting and asphyxia. Sometimes in that condition the stomach would be beaten with sticks so badly when filled with water, the stomach itself would burst. Torture by fire was being hung over a fire to be roasted alive with your feet coated with animal fat which would ignite and burn the feet. All these were done until the victim confessed. Then they would be taken to their cell to suffer until it was time for their execution. Other instruments included a metallic glove in which the hand would be roasted over a fire, and other tools for breaking one's legs and shins, disemboweling a person on the rack, sharp knives for cutting the ears off of one's head, or instruments that would tear a woman's breast from her body, and so on. All such being the ways to taste the mercy of Christianity and feel remorse for not having converted. (From Atrocities on Hindus by Missionaries in Goa, by V. Sundaram)

Also, the famous writer of the 19th century, Alexandre Herculano, wrote in his book, *Fragment About the Inquisition*, how no one was excused from the tortures of the Inquisition: "... the terrors inflicted on pregnant women made them abort... Neither the beauty or decorousness of the flower of youth, nor the old age, so worthy of compassion in a woman, exempted the weaker sex from the brutal ferocity of the supposed defenders of the religion... There were days when seven or eight were submitted torture."



Paul William Roberts, in *Empire of the Soul, Some Journeys in India*, writes about the methods of the Portuguese Inquisition: "Children were flogged and slowly dismembered in front of their parents whose eyelids had been sliced off to make sure they missed nothing. Extremities were amputated carefully, so that a person could remain conscious even when all that remained was a torso and a head... Those subjected to other diabolical tortures could also be counted in the thousands and the abominations continued until a brief respite in 1774... The evil resumed, continuing, almost incredibly, until June 16, 1812. At that point, British pressure put an end to terror (with) the presence of British troops stationed in Goa." It was the British who put pressure to end the terror of the Inquisition, and the British troops in Goa enforced it. The palace of the Grand Inquisitor, called the "Big House," was demolished and no trace of it remains today, which might remind someone of the inquisition and the tortures that went on inside, which had originally been requested by "Saint" Francis Xavier.

The alarm caused by news of the Goan inquisition reached Lisbon, where the Archbishop of Evora at the Cathedral church in Lisbon said in his oration in June of 1897: "The Inquisition was an infamous tribunal at all places. But the infamy never reached greater depths, nor was more vile, more black, and more completely determined by mundane interests than at the Tribunal of Goa, by irony called the Holy Office. Here the inquisitors went to the length of imprisoning in its jails women who resisted their advances, and after having satisfied their bestial instincts there, ordering that they be burnt as heretics." (From *The Hindus and the Portuguese Republic*, Priolkar, pp174-175) Dr. Trasta Breganka Kunha, a Catholic citizen of Goa, had written: "In spite of all the mutilations and concealment of history, it remains an undoubted fact that religious conversion of Goans is due to methods of force by the Portuguese to establish their rule. As a result of this violence the character of our people was destroyed. The propagation of Christian sect in Goa came about not by religious preaching but through methods of violence and pressure. If any evidence is needed for this fact, we can obtain it through law books, orders and reports of the local rulers of that time and also from the most dependable documents of the Christian sect."

From all this we can plainly see that the Goan Inquisition by the Portuguese Catholic Church was nothing less than a sustained war against Hindus and the Vedic culture itself. Nonetheless, they could not see the demise of Vedic Dharma. Presently, there may be few references in modern or school history books to the violent and treacherous ways

that the Catholics used in their attempt to destroy and triumph over the Vedic tradition of India, and though this silence is maintained by secular historians, the history of it still exists for us all to remember, and to honor the lives of all those men, women, and children who, under the threat of torture and death, refused to give up their culture. Just as the Jews say in regard to their own holocaust, this chapter of Indian history should not be forgotten in order to make sure that it never happens again, and so we do not forget the value of the Vedic traditions and Dharmic culture that adds to the profound history of India and the high caliber of character of its people.

Looking back at the history of the church, the Vatican has apologized for the agony inflicted on Galileo, who was right all along. Thus, we can access that it is time that the Vatican also convey its apology for the Goan Inquisition. In fact, should they not give some reparation for all of the damage they did and the horrors they inflicted on so many people? Nobody knows exactly how many citizens were killed or tortured by the Portuguese in the name of Christ, but it would be likely to run into hundreds of thousands. After reviewing how much cruelty Christians have used to establish their religion, or even force it on others in all parts of the world, is there much wonder why some people like Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) observed, "Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards humanity. What has been the effect of coercion?" Or why the Irish author Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) commented, "When I think of all the harm the Bible has done, I despair of ever writing anything to equal it." Even Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*: "I had started disliking Christianity. This was not without any reason. Those days Christian missionaries used to stand in a corner near the High School in Rajkot and used disgraceful words against the Hindus and their Gods/Goddesses. I could not bear this." In fact, not only Gandhi, but no self-respecting or decent human being can bear to hear about the atrocities committed in the name of Christianity. For anyone to allow, encourage, implement, or condone such cruel and brutal treatment of others is surely a sign of insanity. What kind of religion could this ever be when such violence and cruelty could be allowed or endorsed for its cause as we find in the Goan Inquisition? And still, the techniques used by Christians as observed by Mahatma Gandhi remain an important method of their preaching and conversion work to this day.

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## Indians, Asians fast becoming politically relevant in US: Report

**WASHINGTON:** With Indians and other Asian-Americans and Pacific-Islanders growing in number at a fast pace, people of colour will be in the majority in the US by mid-century, according to a new report. They are also quickly reaching the critical mass needed to be politically relevant, says the report from the Centre for American Progress and AAPI Data on how the growth of this group will affect a variety of key policy areas from immigration and education to healthcare and the environment.

With the Indian-American population shooting up 76 per cent in the first 12 years of the 21st century, Indian-Americans numbering 3.34 million are already the third largest Asian community in the US, after people from China and the Philippines.

The top six groups - Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean and Japanese - account for 85 per cent of all residents, the report noted.

"While this shows a fair amount of national origin concentration, it nevertheless represents a decline from 89 per cent for these top six groups in 2000, as smaller Asian American groups have grown disproportionately in the last decade," noted authors Karthick Ramakrishnan and Farah Ahmad.

Chinese are still by far the largest group of Asian-American population with 4.1 million (22 per cent), Filipinos come next with 3.59 million (19 per cent) followed by Indians with 3.34 million (18 per cent) in the third place.

But with the growth rates for other national origin groups changing faster during this decade, Indians and Filipinos, for example, are now about equal in size. As many as 56 per cent of the Asian-American population lives in the top five states of California, New York, Texas, New Jersey and Hawaii, the report noted. The largest concentration of Indian-Americans is in three States - California (19 per cent), New York (12 per cent) and New Jersey (10 per cent).

Hindus (51 per cent) are in majority among Indian-Americans, followed by Christians (18 per cent), Muslims (10 per cent), Sikhs (5 per cent), Jains (2 per cent) and Buddhists (1 per cent).

Some smaller groups such as Bangladeshi-Americans grew at an exceptional rate - 177 per cent - between 2000 and 2010.

### Other highlights:

- The fastest-growing states for Asian Americans are Nevada, Arizona, North Dakota, North Carolina and Georgia, where the populations more than doubled between 2000 and 2012.
- About 55 per cent of Asian Americans prefer an activist government that provides more services than a smaller government that provides fewer services.
- Asian Americans are among the most open to diversity when compared to other racial groups.
- About 69 per cent of Asian Americans consider themselves environmentalists, some 30 percentage points higher than the national average.
- About 58 per cent of Asian Americans support a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.



Source: [timesofindia.indiatimes.com/nri/us-canada-news/Indians-Asians-fast-becoming-politically-relevant-in-US-Report/articleshow/34167755.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/nri/us-canada-news/Indians-Asians-fast-becoming-politically-relevant-in-US-Report/articleshow/34167755.cms)



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