

July - Sept. 2014

# HINDU VISHWA

Vishwa Dharma Digest

# The Vehicle of Culture

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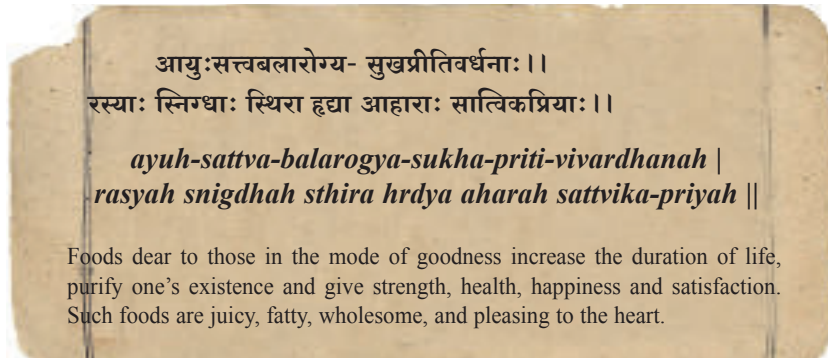
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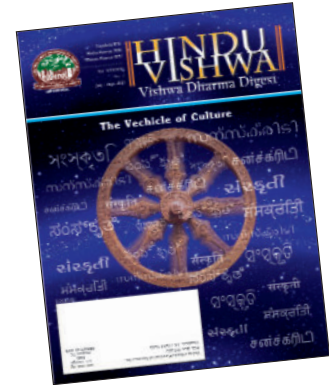
Volume XXXXIII

No. 3

July- September 2014



Foods dear to those in the mode of goodness increase the duration of life, purify one's existence and give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, fatty, wholesome, and pleasing to the heart.



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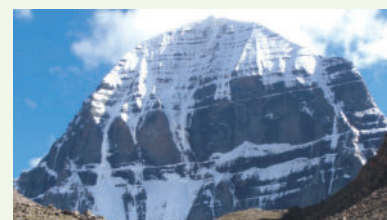
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# The Vehicle of Culture

**I**f one were to determine a single factor or agency that acts as the key to convey and propagate the soul of culture of any people or nation, the unequivocal answer would be language. Can one even imagine an attempt to truly understand the soul of the Sanaatan (Hindu) Dharma without an intimate knowledge of its scriptures which are almost exclusively in the Sanskrit language which, therefore, is the ultimate vehicle that has conveyed our pristine and unique culture and value-system across the world and millennia? Indeed, translations in other languages are available and have helped in this process, but their limitations are apparent by the observation that there is hardly any western language that is completely equivalent to many a basic word in Sanskrit: Dharma, for example.



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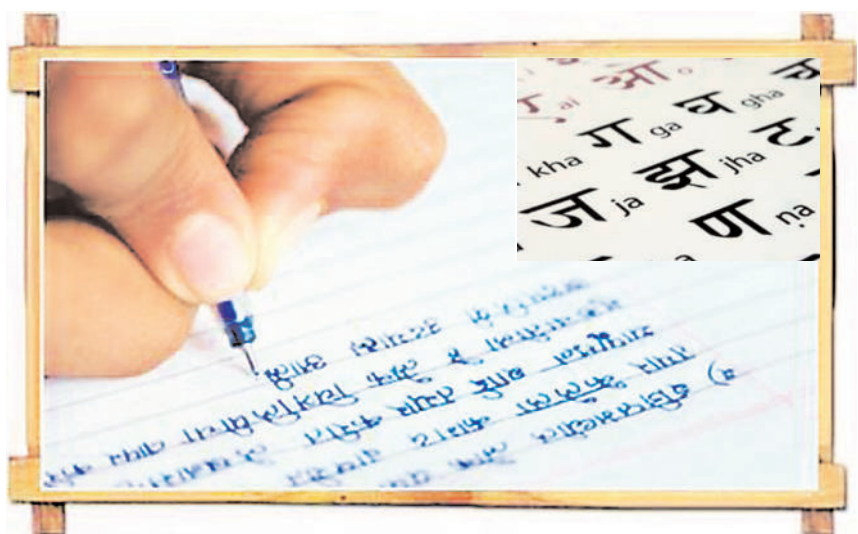
Having stressed the ingrained role and utility of a language, let us come to the present situation vis-à-vis culture and language in India, and overview the pertinent panorama. Though Sanskrit is not in vogue as a commonly spoken language, it is the latent springboard of some 15 regional languages and numerous dialects of the present-day India; among them Hindi with Devanagari script (and numerals in International Form) designated as the National Language by the Constitution of India in 1949 (Article 348, Part XVII\*.) Use of English was provisionally allowed to continue for 15 years thereafter (i.e., up to 1963) for the Supreme Court, High Courts, Acts, Bills and similar other official purposes. However, even after 67 years, use of English has continued unabated in legislative, Judiciary, and Executive branches of government, as well as in the various other arenas of the national life, and surprisingly, not due to an arbitrary action of any government official, but it is in accordance with the provision of the Indian Constitution sub-clause (a) of clause (1) of article 348, which mandates use of English in Supreme Court. And English is also mandatory in High Courts unless a State seeks and is granted permission to use a regional language. So the obvious and only way to unequivocally authorize the use of one or more Indian languages in the Supreme Court is to amend article 348 of the Indian Constitution. After the amendment the clause (1) of article 348 of the Indian Constitution should state, "All proceedings in the Supreme Court and in every High Court shall be in at least any one Indian language in addition to the English language."

Barring the difference of opinions in use of Hindi and its subsequent acceptance as a national language of India by all, it goes without saying that language is a crucial vehicle not only for official (government and other) uses but also to preserve and propagate in its purest possible form various cultural, social, educational, spiritual, as well as scientific and technological exchanges, norms, value-systems, conventions, and future advancement on national and international

level. English is a legacy of the British imperialism and colonialism in India and elsewhere in the last few centuries. There is no reason why Hindi and other regional languages are not advanced to take its intended supreme place in India as early as possible and practical, in the 21st century. Indeed sustained efforts need to be made by India and the Indian Diaspora for the UNO to include Hindi in its list of official languages. Hindi, after all, is the language of a sizeable fraction of humanity on this planet, compared to several other official languages of the UNO. In addition, fullest opportunities for the application and development of other regional Indian languages in terms of official usage, technical development (for instance, academic instructions, electronic communications in the social media), etc. must be appropriately pursued in a just manner to preserve and enrich the respective cultural and literary heritage. This will ensure that every limb of the nation would retain and nourish its cultural identity without conflict under an open federal policy satisfactory to all States, smooth and efficient functioning of the nation at various (microscopic and macroscopic) levels, and a stable internal political situation.

As the NRIs in the USA and as the VHPA community here, what must be our role in this very important question at this juncture of history? We must endeavor to support the idea, effort, and legislation for a balanced and progressive development of Hindi the National Language, as well as of other major regional languages of India, for strengthening the country's inherent, unique virtue of 'Unity in Diversity.' This is, in essence, the only proper way to preserve, and encourage continued development of India and its rich cultural and literary lineage and heritage in all its multifaceted splendor and glory, which under the powerful leadership of PM Narendra Modi, India is well-poised for. At stake here is preservation and advancement of our cultural, spiritual, and religious identity as a nation as a whole, and no less. ■

*En.wikisource.org/wiki/Constitution\_of\_India*



## Hindu Women Network Meeting Held in Cincinnati

**C**incinnati Chapter of VHPA facilitated the initial Hindu Women Network meeting in the West Chester Library on July 20th 2014, Cincinnati. The meeting was attended by more than 40 women and was kicked off by Leena Dixit with a speech on our rich history and background. Hindu Women Network has a simple mission of how to empower Hindu women in USA at the local and national level, by fostering Sewa (service), Soham (personal and spiritual development) and Sadhana (Samskaras - values) in the family and in the society following the great traditions of Hindu Dharma as well as modern achievements of the world. With a focus on Hindu Women's personal, spiritual and social growths, following topics were covered.

**1) Interact, share and learn from each**

**other for empowerment of Hindu women:** Women shared their perspectives in small group discussion settings.

- 2) Hindu Women's role in home, society and with herself:** When women are busy and get pulled into different directions, Neelam Jaiswal and Vijaya Chaturvedi in their presentation introduced the concept of "Big R" that shows how women can build healthy relationship with themselves.
- 3) "Crucial Conversation":** An interactive session on handling difficult situations in daily life Shobha Patel and Neelam Jaiswal talked about the importance and need for crucial conversations. For

*Continued on page-8*



*By Rashel Bajaj*

Presented at the 3rd  
Hindu Mandir  
Priests' Conference,  
Durga Temple, VA,  
May 29-30, 2014



## A Beautiful Legacy Fabricated by my Temple

**M**andir, sacred, prasad, pooja, prayer - all beautiful words with beautiful significances. These words felt like marbles in my mouth when I had just started gaining knowledge on the meaning behind spirituality and the purity which emerges, but now, these are second nature, for visiting the temple resembles visiting my second home. However, the journey to form the relationship that I now hold with the temple took nine years-nine years of shlokas and bhajans learned, nine years of deducing the valuable lessons found in the Mahabharata and Ramayana, and nine years of finding me, finding the true Rashel. *"Rashel, come beta, jaldi aao, sablog wait kar rahen hai,"* (Son come quickly, everyone is waiting) my caring mother said with a smile as she took my hands in her own. *"Par mama, humlog yahan par kyun hain. Kya karenge yahaan par?"* (But mother, why are we here? What will do here?) I asked, quite confused at the current happenings. A six-year old naughty, curious, and loving Rashel walked down the halls of the Durga Temple in wonder and amazement of the calmness and purity that it contained. The calm and serene tones which paint the exterior of the temple truly painted my heart in exuberant colors, and all of a sudden, I had experienced a thrill that I hadn't before, the thrill of attending a temple and performing a puja with the assistance of the caring panditjis. Nine years ago, I

was touched by the kindness and devotion that everyone showed at the temple towards their prayers, especially our panditjis, and ever since, I have begun to recognize them as an icon, their qualities serving as a mirror image of what I want to have - those who have always stood on the path of justice and truth. Their teaching and actions have provided as an inspiration to be able to present myself with confidence and dedication to any task I perform. However, most importantly, their teachings have taught me to be kind to all. Throughout my beautiful journey, memories cloud my inner camera like a spot that will not budge; happiness and laughter overlap my joy like a protective layer of kindness. Over time, a legacy has been crafted, woven, mended, and bent by the panditjis, creating a realm of bliss that has, and never will be, matched. Truly, it is their hand on my head that has made it possible for me to achieve the heights that I wish to see, touch the stars whose sensations I wish to feel, and soar beyond the heavens. I now realize that the sayings which adorn the home and heart of every temple and individual are true "Our family is a circle of strength and love. With every birth and union it grows. Every crisis faced together makes the circle stronger." My blessed family at the temple truly represents such an adage, always welcoming new members and never forgetting those who have woven behind a garment of memories to keep sacred and safe. I recall that

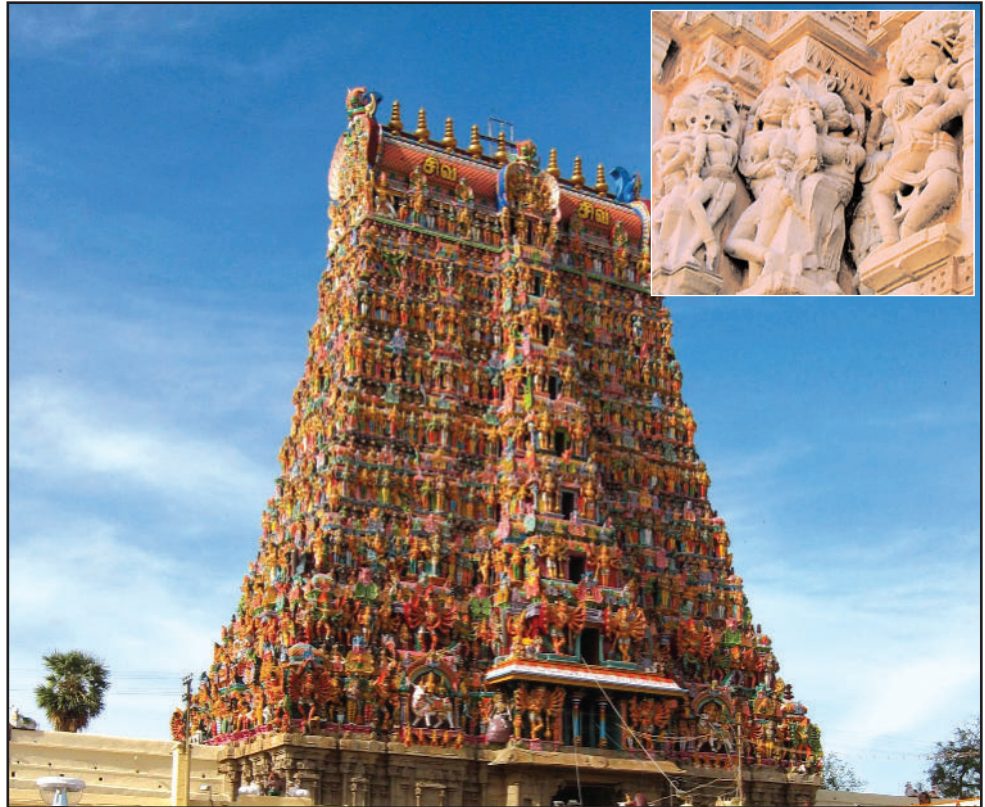


during one of my initial visits to the temple, I was experiencing a stir of emotions, as I had been enrolled into the Balgokulum program and was quite excited that I would also have the opportunity to visit the temple like my cousins in India. However, after receiving the various books and reading texts, my enthusiasm unfortunately took a nosedive and plummeted downwards, and was nervous going into the first shlokas and bhajans class. That day though, I met an inspirational and kind priest who was willing to converse with a timid me, and that made a world of a difference. Now, I can honestly say, if that priest hadn't made that first step to converse and make me feel more comfortable in a fresh environment, then I most likely would have not evolved into the individual that I am today.

Having attended the Balgokulum program for a number of years and being a part of the Network of Indian Youth (NIYV) group, I have had a plethora of experiences. Building off of this, I gained more interest in the temple, and from the perspective of a youth, have noted a few points that can possibly be implemented in order to cultivate and foster a new channel of energy at the temples around the area.

For instance, dwelling in the United States while most of my family primarily resided in India was difficult to adjust to, for in moments of celebration and sorrows, I could not talk as freely to them, and is still a struggle that I battle with daily. However, most of all, I miss my grandparents, the epitome of love, success, care, and family for me. Truly, each relationship fabricated over strands of delicate conversations and feelings woven holds a sacred designation in our lives, providing the emblem of hope and knowledge when the circumstance grapples us by the chains of the evils of mankind.

Through the web of weavings, the most mesmerizing, loving, and memorable relationships is one of a granddaughter to her grandparents, those individuals



who are fond of both, the talents and the flaws, the dreams and the nightmares. I wish to reignite a program at the temple where seniors and the youth can form meaningful bonds and share a relationship that might not be present in their daily lives. For example, I often see the seniors sitting in the prayer hall while I am receiving prasada, which reminds me of my grandparents and the memories that we have shared, and I truly wish to start a dialog. I remember once that I was conversing with a senior who was interested in the Mahabharata book by Balgokulum, and we had a heart-warming conversation about its contents and events, and he shared a few perspectives that had never crossed my mind. The smile never left my face, nor his, and we both truly enjoyed talking to each other on a common foundation, which is what I hope to obtain by reigniting this club. Perhaps we could have the priests, parents, and youth join in, and truly promote the third-first generation relationships. Both sides of the spectrum can benefit by having the youth teach the seniors how to use technological items and tasks, such as checking emails and sending pictures, and the seniors provide emotional and spiritual support by participating in a dialogue and answering any questions that the youth may have. In addition, I am aware that many youth are able to speak Hindi, but not write or

read it, and it would be a great benefit to them if the seniors could pass on their knowledge and teach them. In addition, we can also have the priests be more involved at a local youth level by speaking at schools and colleges on their International Day festivals and heritage days. This would not only introduce a more personal touch to the event, but also benefit those Indian children who are not very familiar with our temples. For instance, at some schools, there are cultural clubs, which are meant to foster more Indian recognition amongst students, and hope to make the current generation more aware about the culture which we hold so dearly. Our priests are very knowledgeable, and I am sure that the students would benefit greatly if they were to hear their inspirational words. There are also various events and festivals that occur at various temples around the area where the priests can share their vast amount of knowledge, which will truly benefit the society! After schools camps can also be hosted, where spiritual matters would be discussed. Honestly, I am so glad that I have individuals such as them who are there to guide me. I know that as a child, Balgokulum and visiting the temple regularly truly helped to bring me closer to my Hindu culture, and it would be wonderful if others could benefit as well. Once, on my robotics team, there was a fellow girl who went to church every Sunday, and no matter whether we had meetings on Sunday mornings, she would always keep church as her top priority, a quality which I truly admired. Going to church was more than just a visit, it was truly where she spent a majority of her time. Through various dances, skits, singing competitions, and plays, she always mentioned to me how worthwhile her visits were, and I was quite intrigued by the work that she used to do there. In

addition, she also used to perform outreach activities, which as a youth, would be beneficial to introduce to our temples as well, where there could be more involvement and all-round development as an individual.

In addition, a program which I believe should be implemented at the temple is a mentor-mentee relationship between the priests and the children, which parties would benefit from. I know that as a youth, it is always reassuring to have a supporting hand on our heads, and I wish to create such a relationship amongst a wider audience between our inspirational priests and us. I would like to conclude with an important message to ponder - truly, how can the ideas mentioned be implemented and applied in our daily lives? How can we, as part of the Indian community in America, go about spreading our ideals and positive influence while maintaining integrity and ensuring a balance between our personal lives and work/school commitments? As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others," and with support, I know that the destination is not far. Our panditjis: The legacy that you have so delicately crafted, and still are, will not be forgotten. With your support, I wish to touch the twinkling stars, burn the sensation within me to go urge, explore beyond my dreams. Thank you for being the candle that lit up my life, and I hope that together, we can carry on this legacy! Their hand on my head has made it possible for me to achieve the heights that I wish to see, touch the stars whose sensations I wish to feel, and soar beyond the heavens. Through their guidance, I will be a shining star, leaving behind a legacy of my own, theirs' entwined with mine. ■

## Hindu Women Network Meeting Held in Cincinnati

*Continued from page-5* in this busy life, it is hard to have even normal conversations. They presented ideas about when and how to carry out these crucial conversations in a timely manner.

### 4) Practicing Spirituality in the Daily Living:

Nirali Shah, in her presentation, talked about the importance and various ways of practicing spirituality in daily life.

This meeting lasted for four hours and based on the response of the participants, it was decided to have such meetings on an ongoing regular basis once every four months. ■

**Shobha Patel wrote a very thought provoking poem relevant to this discussion and also useful to everyone.**

*Dialogue from an egoistic stance is tainted from the start  
So make sure whatever you say comes from your heart  
Our ego has selfish motive and puts its own interest first  
EGO tends to twist argument, puts dispute in every word  
Do self check of your intention, is it positive and pure?  
To make the crucial conversation meaningful for sure  
Do have that dialogue, even it is the hardest thing to do  
It would improve relationship and in long run benefit you*



*By Faiza Mirza*

I wanted to tell my mother that I love her and that her safety was all I had in mind when I converted. I wanted to tell my father to keep my sisters safe. I wanted to tell my brothers to leave the country whilst they still could. I wanted to say much more but their silent pain and suffering made me wish if only I wasn't born a girl, if only I wasn't born in Pakistan, if only I had the right to be myself and practice my faith without being herded into a religion that I failed to comprehend, if only I could make them all understand that there is just one God for all, if only I could give us all an identity that we rightly deserve.



# Memoirs of a Hindu girl

**I** grew up in fear - every face around me depicted nothing but fear. I am sure that the first expression on my parents' face on my birth as a female child born to Hindu parents living in Kandhkot would have been that of fear also. Why did I bring so much fear into the lives of my parents? I grew up always wondering what is it about me that continues to terrify. But I always drew a blank. How naïve I was.



Before I knew it, the time to attend school had arrived. School was comfortable; however, there were times when I felt like an outsider, finding it difficult to gel in with rest of the majority. Perhaps the snide remarks and incidents of discrimination led me to believe that I am not one of 'them'. Of those incidents, I still vividly remember no one eating with me and refusing to sip from the cup I drank from.

Home wasn't very different either. My mother asked questions about my life at school and otherwise looking for answers that would somehow relinquish her from the unknown fear. Afraid to disappoint her, I realized very early in my life that my mother could not be my confidant.

Growing up was not easy.

And then it happened. The fears of my mother and many Hindu mothers like her materialized. I went out to one of the largest markets of Kandhkot and was abducted by a man I knew very well. He was none other than the guard who was responsible for safeguarding our temples.

Knowing his face well prompted me to sit with him in his car without protest, however, instead of taking me to my house he turned to an alley that I wasn't too familiar with. Scared and unsure about what lay ahead I started screaming just to hear my abductor scream louder and threaten me. Astonished and unable to comprehend the gravity of the situation I sat still until it was time to step out of the car to a small house which looked abandoned.

We entered the house to find a large room devoid of any furniture and other bearings except for a carpet that covered the floor. I was made to sit down on the floor.

Uncertain about what was going to happen to me; my mind raced

with thoughts of the recent news of the abductions and forced conversions of Hindu girls. I sat there shuddering. The realization struck me and I could see my entire life in front of me in kaleidoscope. My mother's fears, my father's warnings, the alienation I felt, the yearning to be a part of the circle of friends, the search for a confidant, a friend.

My worst fears were reaffirmed when a man wearing a turban entered the room to teach me about a religion which I grew up hearing about, however, felt no urge to practice or embrace. He kept sermonizing me for hours but was unable to get me to listen to him, realizing that he left asking me to ponder about the true religion.

His departure did not ignite any fire for eternal glory inside me but only made me wonder why did my parents not relocate to another country when they had the chance to do so? Why did they continue to live in fear waiting for the inevitable to happen instead of making a move to safer pastures? And, what made me think that I am any different from countless girls who are forced to change their faith?

Each passing day appeared to be more and more surreal. The ritual of preaching continued for days, I lost track. Eventually, when preaching did not do the trick, my abductor threatened me.

The routine ranging from threats to persuasion and from glorifying the paradise to the wrath of God for non-believers only made me wonder: Do we not all pray to the same God - a God who is manifested in nature, colors, happiness and love? Why would he punish me for being a Hindu?

Somewhere along this relentless persuasion, came that horrifying threat of harming my family - I gave in. My approval followed a small ceremony in which I was forced to embrace Islam and later married off to the man who will always be remembered as the 'messiah' who for saved me from the unknown territory of sin and infidelity I was treading on.

After the ceremony, instead of receiving blessings for a happy and prosperous life ahead, I was immediately escorted to a local court where a Muslim magistrate declared my conversion and marriage in accordance with the law.

The news of my conversion and marriage to a Muslim man spread like wildfire. I dreaded the moment of meeting my parents. I never wanted to

see pain and agony on their faces let alone be the reason for all their grief. Sure enough, one look at my mother made me yearn for my own death.

I wanted to tell her that I love her and that her safety was all I had in mind when I converted. I wanted to tell my father to keep my sisters safe. I wanted to tell my brothers to leave the country whilst they still could. I wanted to say much more but their silent pain and suffering made me wish if only I wasn't born a girl, if only I wasn't born in Pakistan, if only I had the right to be myself and practice my faith without being herded into a religion that I failed to comprehend, if only I could make them all understand that there is just one God for all, if only I could give us all an identity that we rightly deserve.

Looking at all the faces that once seemed familiar; I wondered: who am I?

I am one but share the pain of many. I am Rachna Kumari, Rinkle Kumari, Manisha Kumari and the many more Hindu girls who will be forced to convert in Pakistan. I am the fear of their families and the agony that they undergo. I am the misery of those girls who die a little every day for the injustices done to them.

I am a minority living in an intolerant society. ■

*Source: [www.dawn.com/news/743595/memoirs-of-a-hindu-girl](http://www.dawn.com/news/743595/memoirs-of-a-hindu-girl)*





By Sarfraz Ahmad, PhD

**Introduction:** Hindi is an Indo-European language, spoken mainly in Northern/Central India. The Constitution of India (Article 348, Part XVII) designated Hindi as the 'RastraBhasha (National Language)' in 1948, as it is the language of a majority of Indians. It is the official language of the Union (RajBhasha) along with English provisionally accepted for the Judiciary (Supreme Court, High Courts) and Legislative and Executive branches of the government (Acts, Bills, etc.) for fifteen years of transition period. Part of the language is continuum of the Indic family, bounded on the Northwest and West (by Punjabi, Sindhi, Gujarati), in South (by Marathi, Konkani), in Southeast (by Oriya), in East (by Bengali), and in North (by Nepali). Hindi also refers to a standardized form of Hindustani (Khariboli) that emerged as the standard for literary and other common purposes, as a widely accepted successor in the linguistic evolution from Sanskrit, to Prakrit, to Pali, prevalent in India millennia ago..



## Hindi Literature and Women Writers: A Brief Historical Perspective

**T**he name Devnagari is given to an Indian alphabet system (literally, 'Dev,' divine; 'Nagari,' of the civilized or urban), developed from an earlier script called Brahmi, -11th century, originally developed to write Sanskrit, later adapted to write Hindi, and also many other languages of Northern India.



In regards to etymology, its origin can be traced back to Sanskrit word Sindhu. In their Avestan language, Zoroastrians pronounced Sindhu as 'Hindu', which referred to the people who lived near and/or across the Sindhu River as 'Hindu' (home as 'Hindusthan', simplified as 'Hindustan'). Thus the Sanskrit word Sindhu in its Avestan form became Hindu (for Indian people), Hind (for Indian country), and Hindi (for Indian language). This was passed on to later languages like Pahlavi and Persian, etc.

**\*\*Categories of Words in Standard Hindi:** **Tatsam** (borrowed from Sanskrit to enrich vocabulary, mostly nouns and adjectives), **Ardhatatsam** (borrowed from Sanskrit during Indo-Aryan stage), **Tadbhav** (inherited words from Sanskrit, which have undergone sound changes), **Deshaj** (not borrowings, usually onomatopoeic words), and **Videshi** (borrowed from non-Indo-Aryan sources).

**Socio-linguistic Hindi:** The main categories are: Shuddha Hindi, Dakhini, Rekhta, and Urdu. The term Hindustani is coined for a hybrid of Hindi and Urdu. It may broadly be categorized as: Western Hindi (Khariboli, Braj Bhasha, Haryanavi, Kannauji, Bundeli), Eastern Hindi (Awadhi, Bagheli, Chhattisgarhi), Bihari (Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Sadri), Pahari, Rajasthani, and Malwi, etc.

**The Hindi belt (at least with the official language of the states) is:** Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. The non-Hindi regions are mainly: Bamaia (Khariboli, but influenced with Marathi, Gujarati), Dakhini (similar to Urdu, with fewer Persio-Arabic words), Kalkatiya

(influenced with Bengali, Bhojpuri), and North-Eastern including Arunachal (influenced with tribal dialects). Variations of Hindi are also currently prevalent in many other regions of the world, resulting from migration of people from India over centuries. For example, Hindi outside the Indian subcontinent is predominant in the following regions: Tadj-Uzbeki (in Uzbekistan region, from Indian immigrants from 13th century, based on the Hindi dialects Braj, Haryanvi, Rajasthani); Mauritian Hindi (based on Bhojpuri with French influence); Sarnami Hindi (a form of Bhojpuri with Awadhi influence); Fiji Hindi (a form of Awadhi); Trinidad Hindi (based on Bhojpuri, in Trinidad & Tobago); South African Hindi (based on Bhojpuri); and Chinese Mandarin (Tibetan borders, spoken by traders of Lhasa, etc.).

### Hindi vs. Urdu: Aik Bhasha - Do Likhawat, Do

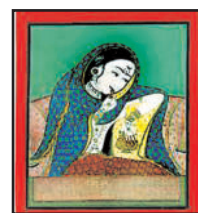
**Adab:** The difference primarily is the way it is written. While Hindi (written in *Devnagari* script), draws its vocabulary with words from Indo-Aryan Sanskrit, Urdu (written in *Nasta'liq* script), draws heavily on Persian and Arabic vocabulary. For commons, it's the same as Hindustani (e.g., Bollywood, Media, etc.). In conservative circles, it is portrayed as two separate languages. Scholars believe that it is only the Persian script that separates Urdu from Hindi. Non-religious history show that Hindi and Urdu, being two different names of the same language, originated from 'the ancient Middle-East farmers, who migrated to India long ago'.

**Historical Background:** A few important/key historical facts about Hindi are worth mentioning here: 750 BCE (Gradual emergence of post-vedic Sanskrit), 500 BC (Prakrit texts of Buddhist and Jains originated), 322 BC (Brahmi script inscriptions by Mauryas in Prakrit), 250 BC (Classical Sanskrit emerged), 100 BC (Sanskrit gradually replaces Prakrit in inscription), 400 (Apabhramsha in Kalidas's Vikramorvashiyam), 769 (first Hindi poet - Siddha Sarahpad 'Dohakosh'), 933 (first Hindi book - 'Shravakachar of Devasena'), 1100 (Modern Devnagari script emerges), 1283 (Khusro's pahelis and mukaris, uses the term 'Hindavi'), 1645 (Shahjahan builds Delhi Fort, local language termed Urdu), 1886 (Modern Hindi literature starts - 'Bhaaratendu Period'), 1913 (first Hindi movie - 'Raja Harishchandra', by Dadasaheb Phalke), 1931 (first Hindi talking movie - 'Alam Ara'), 1930's (Hindi typewriters), 1949-50 (Hindi accepted as the 'official language of the Union of India'), and 1985-

present (Devnagari word processor/software).

**Women Writers in Hindi:** In the vast Hindi literature, even in spite of male dominance in the Indian society and literature, immense volume of high-quality contributions have been made by women. This applies to all of the trends and historical periods (that is, *Bhakti-Kaal* or the Devotional Period; *Reeti-Kaal* or the Lyrical Period; and *Aadhunik Kaal* or the Modern Era), as delineated by Raamchandra Shukla, the Great Historian of Hindi Literature ('Hindi Saahitya ka Itihaas'). A few prominent examples in this context are mentioned below.

● **Amrapali (Ambapali):** Born in circa 500 BCE, Amrapali was a royal courtesan (or Nagarvadhu) of Vaishali State of ancient India. She finds mention in the old Pali texts. She was contemporary to Buddha. She eventually accepted Buddhist faith, and remained an active supporter of the Buddhist order. The Amrapali Van built by her is said to have Lord Buddha himself as a guest and served as a monastery for Buddhist monks.



● **Mirabai (1498-1565):** She was a queen in the Rana dynasty, famed Rajput rulers. She was famous for her melodic Hindi and Gujarati poems. She was married to crown prince of Mewar, but renounced her royal status, composing and singing songs in the praise of Lord Krishna to whom she was highly devoted to, even from her childhood. She wrote some 1,400 compositions, mostly in Rajasthani and Braj Bhasha. She is referred to as one of the best loved poets of the Bhakti Movement.



● **Subhadra Kumari Chauhan (1904-1948):** She was born in Allahabad as orthodox Rajput. She wrote fine inspirational poems related to equal rights for people of different casts/religions. Notable is the ballad on Queen of Jhansi Lakshmi Bai (one of the leading participants of the First War of Independence against the British in 1857-58). Her public involvement started in 1923 through national politics. She was a great friend of Mahadevi Varma, another great Hindi poetess. She was married to Lakshman Singh Chauhan, and





became the first woman Satyagrahi (participant in the nonviolent Civil Disobedience Movement of Mahatma Gandhi against the British) in the country; and was jailed twice in 1940, 1942, along with her daughter Sudha. Her famous poems are: Mukul (1930), Bikhre Moti (1932), Unmadini (1934), and Seedhe Sade Chitre (1946).

● **Homvati Devi** (1906-1951): She was born in Meerut. She lacked formal education. She was married to Dr. Chranjilal and began writing in 1939; her first story, read at Nauchandi Mela, brought her fame. Her debates greatly influenced the course of Hindi literature. She wrote mainly on such aspects as "women's sentiments", "eye for detail", "feel for every day pain", and "unexpected joys", etc. Her notable contributions are: Apna Ghar (1935), Circa (1935), Swapna Bang (1948), Nisarg, and Ardh.



● **Mahadevi Verma** (1907-1987): She was born in Farukhabad (UP) in an orthodox Hindu family. She was a great Hindi poet, painter, feminist, nationalist, and philosopher. She belongs to the top-ranked Chhaya-Wadi (Impressionist) group. Her work is full of emotional themes, particularly the sadness of separation (Viyog). She established various Vidyapith's based on nationalist/Gandhian ideals; organized Kavi-Sammelan (Literary Congregation for Poetry Recital); and also edited the Hindi Magazine "Chaand." Her notable poetry books include: Neehar (1930), Rashmi (1932), Neeraja (1934), Ateet Ke Chalchitra (1941), Deep Shikha (1942), Smriti Ki Rekhaen (1943), and Lacchma. In 1983, she received the prestigious Bharatiya Jnanpith Award.



● **Kamla Chaudhry** (1908-?): Born in Lucknow, she has been a Fiction writer (1930's, 40's), and also actively involved in national politics. Her well-known writings are: Ankhe Khuli, Surya, and Sadhna Ka Unmaad; and short stories: Unmaad (1934), Picnic (1936), Yatra (1947), and Bel Patra. She also wrote humorous poems.



● **Amrita Pritam** (1919-2005): She was born in Gujranwala, now in Pakistan, and moved to Delhi after Independence in 1947. She is famous for poetry

in Punjabi and prose in Hindi. She was the daughter of a devotional poet Kartar Singh (Piush), and her daring themes were on women's struggle for independence and autonomy. Her notable works include Thandiyan Kirnan (1935), Kaala Gulab (1968), Rasidee Ticket (1976), Aksharon Ki Chhaya Mein (1977), Kachche Akshar (1980), and Khari Dhup Ka Safar (1983); and the novels Erial (1968), It Sit Anita (1964). She received many awards including Sahitya Academy Award (1953) for 'Sunhere'; and Jananpith Award (1973) for 'Kagaz Ke Kanvas'.



● **Shivani (Gaura Pant)** (1923-2003): She was born in Rajkot (Gujrat). She was a prolific and widely read author with feminist voice. She was highly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and Ravindra Nath Tagore; studied at Santiniketan (established by Tagore) of Calcutta University. Known for fiction writings and quiet, warm humanism, she also wrote for children. She was also fluent in Bengali, Gujarati, Sanskrit, and English languages. To her credit, she wrote more than 50 books including 13 novels, 11 collection of short stories; her major works being: Pushpahar (1969), Kariye Kshima (1971), Prayas, Aparadhini (1974), Gavaksh, Gainsa (1977), Darya (1978), Kishnuli (1979), Manik (1981), Dadee, and autobiographical works on life at Santiniketan.



● **Sudha Chauhan:** Born in 1924 at Jabalpur, she earned her B.A. degree from Nagpur University and M.A. degree from Banaras Hindu University. She is a well-known writer and active participant in India's Independence Movement. Her famous works include "Mila Tej Se Tej" and children's poetry.

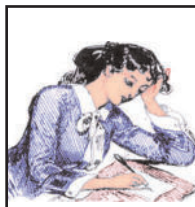


● **Mannu Bhandari:** Born in 1931 in Ajmer, she is influenced by her father, Suksampath Bhandar, a well-known scholar of Hindi dictionaries compiler. Her first story "Main Haar Gayi" became very popular. Her husband Rajendra Yadav is also a writer, publisher, critic, and a colleague. She was Lecturer of Hindi in Calcutta (1952-64), and later at



Miranda House, Delhi. Her famous works include novels Ek Inch Muskan (1966), Mitro Marjani (1967), Aap Ki Bunti (1971), and Mahabhoj (1979); and short stories Yeh Sach Hai Aur Anye Kahaniya (1974), and Meri Priya Kahaniya (1977).

● **Rajee Seth:** Born in 1935 in Nowshera, she later moved to Delhi. She started writings at childhood, with publication of numerous poems, stories, essays, reviews, memoirs, and travelogues, starting in mid-1970's. She earned English & Hindi literature degrees. Her first story is "Samanantar Chalte Raho" (1974). Her other works include novels Tatsam (1983), and Uska Akash (1975); and short stories: Andhe Modh Se Age (1979), Tisri Hatheli (1981), and Yatra Mukht (1987)



● **Manjul Bhagat** (1936-1998): She was born in Meerut (UP) but grew up in Delhi. Her famous novels are: Ladies Club (1976), Anaro (1977), and Begaane Ghar Mein (1978). Her famous short stories are: Gulmohar Ke Guche (1976), Atmhatya Se Pahle (1979), and Safed Kavwa (1986). Her English translated stories "The Search and Other Stories (1982) and Bebeji (1985) appeared in Femina.



● **Mehrun Nisa Parvez:** Born in 1944 in Bastar (MP), she is a rebellious writer; her first short story was published in 1963 in weekly Dharmyug. She writes stories about exploited/suffering people. Her famous stories are: Adam aur Avva (1972), Galat Purush (1978), Akash Neel (1978), Antim Chadhai (1982), and Ayodhya Se Wapasi (1991). Her controversial works include Gardish (1977) and Talaq. Her famous novels are: Ankhon Ki Dahliz (1969), Uska Ghar (1972), Korja (1977), Akela Palash (1982), and Pasang (2004). Among the many accolades, she received Padamshree (2005).



● **Mrinal Pande:** Born in 1946 in Tikamgarh (MP), she studied English and Sanskrit literatures, ancient Indian history, and Archeology. She is trained in Classical Music/Visual Arts and is also a renowned journalist. She worked on fast-paced dialogue, humor, and women issues (novels, plays), and writes for radio and television. She researched in Hindi-Parsi theater (late 1990's), worked as Editor of Vama

(a women's magazine). She served at National Commission on Self-Employed Women. Her famous short story are: in Dharmyug (1976), Darmiyan (1977), Shabdavedi (1980), Ek Neech Tragedy (1982), Ek Stri Vidageet (1985), and Hum Safar. Her notable musical comedies are: Jo Ram Rachi Rekha (1980) and Chor Nikal Kar Bhaga (1985). Her collections include: The Subject is Woman (1991), Daughter's Daughter (1993). That Which Ram Hath Ordained (1993), Devi (2000), and My Own Witness (2001). ■



## About the Author

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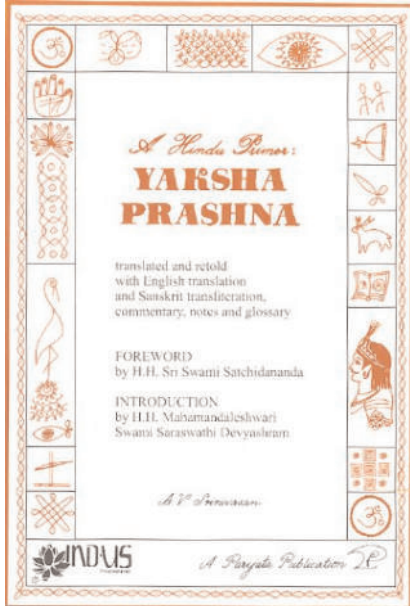
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## Book Review

By Ankit Tiwari



# A Hindu Primer: Yaksha Prashna

**A**fter having lived in the United States for decades Dr. A.V. Srinivasan decided to publish A Hindu Primer: Yaksha Prashna as a tutorial for parents teaching Hindu philosophy basics to their children. The focus of the book is a passage in the Aryana Parva of the Mahabharat which takes place during the Pandavas' exile. The Pandavas are approached by a brahmin whose tools for performing havans were entangled in the antlers of a stag. The Pandavas start searching for the tools but their search is in vain. After the search, Yudhisthir instructs Nakul to search for nearby sources of water. Nakul finds a pristine lake which he bends down to drink water out of. Suddenly, he hears a voice commanding him that the lake's water cannot be drunk without answering the voice's questions. Nakul ignores this warning and drinks the water and immediately dies. Subsequently, each of Yudhisthir's younger brothers approaches the lake and Nakul's fate befalls upon them. Lastly, Yudhisthir goes to the lake and agrees to answer questions of the voice, who introduces himself as Yaksha. The third edition of the book was released in 2014 and focuses on 79 out of the 122 total questions of Yaksha deemed relevant to the younger generation.

The riddles touch upon numerous topics and range from simple ones requiring one-word answers to those requiring more complex explanations. These question-answer pairs are presented with the original Sanskrit text, a transliteration to English and English translations. Along with these basics the text includes commentary on the questions and answers along with summaries of the main lessons of the passages. These commentaries are where the book excels. Some of the answers seem as if they are total non sequitur to the riddle asked. One such example is, "What causes the sun to set?" The answer given is, "Dharma." Initially, this looks to be an odd answer for a question which asks about a well explained natural phenomenon. However, further explanation shows that the series of riddles concerning the sun are also an allegory for the transformation of an individuals' atman and its journey throughout spiritual life. Without these explanations and contextualization this thought-provoking part of the Mahabharat would be completely inaccessible to audiences.

The book features a useful glossary including common Sanskrit words, Mahabharat characters and basic terms used in Hindu philosophy. A transliteration scheme and pronunciation guide is also provided. An appendix containing a full list of the 122 Yaksha riddles without the answers is also included to be used for independent study and research. A Hindu Primer: Yaksha Prashna is a useful guide to a deceptively insightful part of the Mahabharat and Hindu philosophy. Familiarity with the subject matter could easily be used by parents or members of the younger generation of Hindu diasporas to begin forays into the depths of Hindu philosophy. Thanks must be given to Dr. V.S. Srinivasan for shining a light on what could be considered a hidden gem of thought.

*Book is easily available at various online stores.*

# प्रतिशोध

कवि : डॉ. ओम अरोड़ा

Note:

This poem was written in 1962-63 during China war. A soldier begs permission from his mother to go to the frontline to seek revenge/retribution.

दो विदा आज कर कमलों से, प्रतिशोध चुकाने जाऊँगा,  
कर रक्षित अमर सुहाग तेरा, पुरखों की आन बचाने जाऊँगा।।

वह देखो आज हिमालय माँ, सा बना निरीह पुकार रहा,  
कुछ हो विचलित रणभेरी से, शौर्यता मेरी ललकार रहा।।

नीफ लदाख पावन भूमि, है मुक्ति को कराह रही,  
रक्षा स्वतन्त्रता के लिये वही, बलिदान को आज पुकार रही।।

पिस दानव से मानवता ने, है छत्रपति आह्वान किया,  
मै त्रास हरूँगा मानव की, राणा का सा प्रण ठान लिया।।

यह सिंचा तिरंगा खूनो से, यह कभी न झुकने पाएगा,  
लाखों सिन्दूर मिटे चाहे, यह तो यूँ ही लहराएगा।।

वन्दे मातरम् के हर नारे पर, रण चंडी सी प्रलय मचा दूँगा,  
जय हे, जय हे की हर पुकार लाखों को यम पहुँचा दूँगा।।

पर एक चाह माँ रही मेरी, मैं रण भूमि में काम आऊँ,  
सेनाएँ जिस पथ से निकले, रजकण उस पथ का हो जाऊँ।।

जब विजय तुंदुभी बोले वो, मैं साथ उन्ही के हो लूँगा,  
कर लेना माँ स्वीकार मेरी, जय-जय, जब छिप कर बोलूँगा।।

*Dr. Om Prakash Arora,*

*MD, based in metro Atlanta, is a General Surgeon. He has been writing Hindi poems since his early school days. He may be contacted via email [omparora@bellsouth.net](mailto:omparora@bellsouth.net)*



*By Jayant Mehta*

**Abstract:** This article explains the need to keep our 'Theology' more fluid or less rigid. Hindu

Dharma is ancient and therefore needs reforms from time to time. All religious traditions need honest review and revision as the time and place change. While the foundation remains stable, flexible attitude is vital for all the religious or spiritual traditions. Author of this article Dr. J. Mehta, based in Johnson City TN, is a professor of Medicine and a lifelong student of comparative religion.



## Theology: Let it Flow like a River!



**A**ll the ideas of gods, God or divinity, are conceived in human mind; therefore, all such ideas have an element of human mind. Most mystics, who have felt the presence of divine, generally remain quiet. In later years, their disciples write the volumes of literature that become "scriptures". As time passes by, people call these revelations a "word of God". It becomes very hard to challenge these books. Imperfect work is presented as "perfect." Such scriptures become "the truth". Is this a relative truth or the absolute? As time passes by, these scriptures become powerful tools to spread fear, gain power, and exploit society. The moment we depend on words or try to define "God", we limit his/her infinite nature. Ancient sages of India; therefore, described God by: 'Neti-Neti'- not this-not this. Sufis and Christian mystics, e.g., Meister Elkhart said the same thing. If horses were to think of God, their God will be a large, powerful horse!

Wholesome nature of God is hard to comprehend by our limited mind. So we are forced to use words or symbols no matter how imperfect. Hence we should not look down upon those who use words, symbols, or images. People of the Western faith worship "words" like those of eastern faith worship icons, images, and



symbols. 'Formless' Brahman has to take some 'form' in our mind. Be aware that the tools are not a final product and road map is not the destination. God is the ultimate reality and everlasting truth. While the scientific search for spiritual insight must continue, today's problem of material world cannot be ignored either. History books remind us of what happened to Egyptian and Greek gods when people got too preoccupied with icons and ideas of afterlife.

Scholars have tried to divide human ideas of God in several sections: Monotheism, Polytheism, Henotheism, and Pantheism. Some say that the whole universe is God and we are part of it. Upanishads say that the God is wholesome and His creation is wholesome (universe) but the Brahman is beyond the universe.

All the rivers ultimately meet one ocean. Similarly all religions lead to the same God. Some use the path of devotion, others contemplation. Therefore, to say that "my way" is the only way or 'my god' is the only real God, is a sign of ignorance and perhaps arrogance. Water is called 'pani' in India and 'aqua' in Germany, but is still same substance. There is only One God, known by many names.

Freedom to explore "truth" is a basic human right. Faith is a personal matter. Anyone who proselytizes is offending this right. "Imposing one's religious idea on others is unethical and constitutes a form of violence", said Swami Vivekananda.

Religion was meant to bring law and order. There is an overlap between social laws and religious traditions. Spirituality on the other hand is a tool to explore inner peace and love, ultimately leading to God. Organized religions have led us to separation, wars, and exploitation. When power, lust, and wealth corrupt religion, and leaders start fighting for the franchise right of God, there would be chaos, war and cruelty in the name of God. No wonder most religious authorities resist new ideas and the science. They want to deny any truth or authority that comes from outside their self-created narrow frame. Whether it is theory of creation or new understanding of the universe, first reaction of all religions is to denounce new ideas. As time passes, our ideas change. Human idea of God and morality also go through evolution.

Take an example of Hinduism, which is an 8,000

year old way of life. Hinduism is like an old palace that has not been renovated in a long time. Caste system leading to human cruelty is not consistent with basic theory of Vedas. If Vedas believe in Atman (God within) how can a 'shudra' become unholy? Shudra came from the Purusha's feet, hence he is holy! The ill treatment of lower caste people, widows, blind rituals, excessive waste of public resources in "image worship", multiple gods and exploitation of ignorant masses on the name of religion,...all these must change. Hinduism needs a major revolution. Hindus have remained a target for religious conversion for centuries. Hindus talk about one God, but their practice is full of many gods. Even the human Guru is worshiped as God by some denominations. Many denominations elevate their founder to the level of God by creating the stories of miracles and claim of divine incarnation. All these need to change. I am using Hinduism as an example only.

Need for reform applies to other world religions, including Islam and Christianity. Bishop Spong's book "Christianity must change or Die", makes a good reference on this subject. All organized religions must improve with time. No religion can be above humanity and its principle ethical values: kindness, human dignity, and justice for all. Spirituality is empty without love and selfless services to the humanity. Philosophy should not turn us into an egocentric, self righteous, society. Islam under the threat of blasphemy rejects any criticism or open discussion. This is hurting the growth of silent majority who practice peaceful Islam. Women are kept away from education and new scientific discoveries in the name of religion. While the Western faith traditions do not like images used by some of the Eastern faiths, please remember that we all use symbols in some form or fashion. Hindu image worship is different than the idol worship as described in the Hebrew history. A picture or "word" is a symbol that carries a meaning. For example, the word "chair" is not the chair, but we need this word to describe a chair.

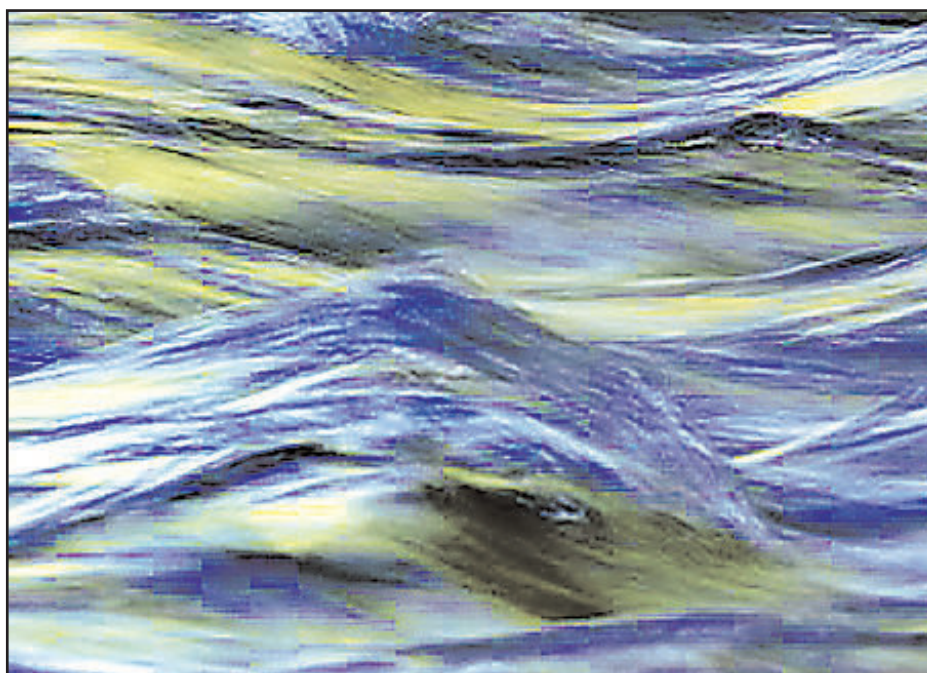
When a Hindu uses "Istadevta- a chosen deity, he makes some personal changes in the popular idea of God. He creates his own window to see the vast sky. It is a good start. At the least, the devotee is not lost between many gods. We must

not laugh at him. Prayers, rituals, hymns, and Mantra, all these are methods to wake up the inner consciousness. We like to humanize God before we can see Him in the eternal, universal form. Every object we see is through our own layer of previous experience and preconceived notion. So it is very difficult to see any object or an event as it is. Our perception of reality is distorted. In any religion or sect, individual idea of God will have some variations. This diversity will have to be accepted.

Over time the idea of God goes through changes.

Jehovah of modern Jews may not be as angry or jealous as He was many centuries ago. Agni, Varuna, Vayu and Indra, gods of Vedic time have been replaced by Shri Krishna, Ganesha or Shri Rama. Rudra became Lord Shiva. Female deities have become popular at times also. Goddess Durga and Laxmi take special importance during certain Hindu festivals. Christian idea of God and heaven has also changed over the centuries. Virgin birth was popular even in Greek times. Why the kind Lord needs the blood of His son to forgive the rest of us, who are also His children? In current Hindu practice, temple worship has become very popular. Yes, temples are important, but what happened to the small shrines at home and simple meditation? Do we need to spend millions of dollars on these expensive temples and churches? Do we need to load them with so much gold? Why such a big gap between Sunday morning and daily practice of Dharma? Many such questions will have to be answered.

Both in religion and politics, "books" and leaders should not have unlimited power. Allow people to think freely. Organized religions, want people to think in a set structure. In reality, God is everywhere and in our heart too. Look for His guidance inside, not just outside. Any fraction of religion that teaches violence, intolerance, or exploitation, should be challenged by the silent



majority. Faith does not mean denial of reality. Freedom to think and explore different paths to find the "truth" are as essential as the religion itself. In coming years, religion will have to change or die. Empire built on lies, illusive ideas, and unethical practices, can't last forever. We need a bold child, who will declare, "Emperor has no clothes". Perhaps our inner voice is that child! Let us think outside the box. Let the idea of God flow freely like a river in search of the sea.

Most religious traditions are based on certain belief systems including theology, cosmology, and ideas about creation, death, heaven, and hell. The foundation stone of course is certain moral values that include truth, honesty, love, and kindness. Founders of all religions have emphasized the need for morally right conduct and universal brotherhood. World peace is not possible unless there is peace amongst the nations. How can the nations be at peace if our religions are not at peace? To bring about this harmony and peace we need understanding and open dialogue. We also need to decentralize the power. Scriptures and religious leaders should stop intimidation and old fashion techniques of creating fear and guilt in the mind of the devotees. Interfaith peace is based on honest discussion and flexibility that includes mutual respect. Unless we keep our theology free from the artificial walls, we cannot grow any inter-faith dialogue to bring world peace. ■

Following the successful first Regional HMEC of 2013, the 2nd Regional Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference was held on July 26, 2014 in Anaheim, California. Gayatri Chetana center hosted the Conference in conjunction with its 5th anniversary celebration for three days from July 25 to 27th. All temples of Southern California and leaders of associations attended the conference. Dr. Chinmaya Pandya, Vice Chancellor of Sanskrit University, Haridwar, India was the chief guest and more than 300 people attended his lecture on first day. He inspired trustees of temples and other attendees about humanity, education, spirituality and importance of Sanskrit language in our life being Hindu. Swami Ishwaranandaji of Chinmaya mission, California was another speaker and Swamini Kalini Devi of Maha Kali Temple of California taught about "Yoga Mudra".



## Second Regional HMEC Held in Southern California

**T**he conference started with chanting of the national song 'Vande Matram' followed by Gayatri mantra and prayer - 'Sarva mangal mangalye...' by Kumari Priya Kumar, Khushbu Nadasia and Mili Nadasia, creating a holy environment with blessings from Dr. Chinmayaji.

Speaking on the occasion Prof. Keshav Patel, convener of Regional HMEC of S. California said "At the HMEC Conference at San Jose, two years ago, when I suggested about holding a Regional HMEC to strengthen Hindu unity and create harmony among Temples of that area, it was unanimously accepted. Last year during HMEC at Toronto (Canada) when I reported about success of Regional HMEC, many delegates were so inspired that at least five state-delegates showed their willingness to hold Regional HMEC in their states. That is like one lamp lighted by another and sequence goes on."

"One of the greatest achievements of Regional HMEC is that many of the temples that are not able to attend national conferences can attend regional conferences in their area and carry out responsibilities assigned by the national organization. The achievement of Regional HMEC can be outlined as the follows:

- Regional HMEC enables outreach to maximum number of Hindu families through Hindu Mandirs.
- It also enables to sustain values of Hindu Dharma and Vedic culture.
- It strengthens Balvihar and other youth activities.

Every temple celebrates "Navaratri Mahotsav" on their premises, but many other activities are coordinated jointly. For example, Diwali Mela, Kite festival, Holi, and Rath Yatra, this becomes the responsibility of one temple while other temples pitch in to help.



*Dr. Chinmayaji, Vice Chancellor Sanskrit University, Haridwar, Q & A session*





*Sri Kaushik Patel, Trustee, Gayatri Chetana Center, Anaheim addressing conference delegates*



*Swamiji speaking about necessity of Hindu Unity and Hinduism*

Thus temples come closer to each other and unity is strengthened. This year Rath Yatra was hosted by Hindu Mandir of Irvine; Eleven-day long Ghanesh festival by Sanatan Dharma Temple; Holika festival at the beach and color festival was celebrated by Iskcon temple. We noticed increase in youth involvement at all these events", concluded Prof. Keshav patel.

"I'm very much impressed on selection of prayer three beautiful girls sang. We see that in our Hindu prayers we are praying not only for us but for happiness of all mankind as well as for all living beings on the earth. Our religion is not conservative but has broad vision and universal ideology. "Vedic philosophy and principles are not limited to a particular community but for humanity, truth and applicable to universe." said Sri Kaushik Patel, trustee of Gayatri Chetana Center.

"If we want to save and sustain Hindu Religion and Vedic Culture, we must teach 'Gita and popular shlokas to every student." said Mr. Kamalesh Patel, representative of Radha Raman Vedic Temple, Placentia.

"The best results we have achieved by having the R-HMEC Conference as I experienced being a

volunteer is that temples have come closer than before, cooperatively helping each other. As Irvine Mandir celebrates 'Rath Yatra' we are now getting ample gathering and cooperation from different Temples" said Sujata Kopparam who is also a member of VHPA.

Mr. Mahesh Bhatt, Raju Patel, Dr. Oza, Mr. Samir and many other delegates expressed their views about necessity of Hindu Unity, Indian culture and involvement of youth in Temple activities.

The afternoon was devoted to general discussion and question-answer session with the leaders present. Dr. Chinmayaji answered questions, and gave his opinion on how to present Hinduism. He also talked about Sanskrit University activities and its development.

**Lastly, it was unanimously resolved that:**

- Every Hindu Mandir/Temple must place a symbol of "OM" at the entrance of the Temple, as decided last year.
- National HMEC may be requested to decide correct design of 'OM' and get it done for Temples.

Mr. Sameer who was also youth convener of this event and Gayatri Chetana Center gave vote of thanks to all. ■



*By Siddheshwari Devi  
(Didi Ji)*

## Birthday Present for a Teenager

**Dear teenager,**

Today is your birthday and I want to give you something. This something cannot be worn; it's not clothing or jewelry. It cannot be eaten; it's not pizza, candy or cake. It cannot be spent; it's not money. You cannot play games on it or text your friends with it; it's not a gadget. The present I wish to give is more precious than all of the above. The words below are my gift to you.

- Being popular is not going to mean anything when you grow up. Do not stress yourself about popularity.
- Do not try to be like everyone else. You are unique. There is no one like you.
- Scholastic achievement is going to count for a lot in your life. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. It will be the difference between a life of struggle and an easy life.
- Friends are not more important than parents. They never were and they never will be.
- Make a vow to never smoke, drink or do drugs. Treat your body as a temple which must be kept clean.
- Do not use foul language.
- Never allow anyone to abuse you. There is never a valid reason for abusive behavior or for tolerating it.
- If you do not respect yourself, no one will.
- Respect your parents, grandparents, elders and all teachers.

**Happy Birthday!**



### Lessons from Children

A newborn child is unable to express his feelings. He feels hungry and thirsty; he experiences pain and sickness, but he is unable to express his feelings. He can't talk or even gesture. He does not recognize his own mother. His is such a pitiable condition, and yet he does have a trick. The trick is to cry whenever he needs something. When her child cries, the mother is able to guess that he must be hungry or thirsty or that he needs a diaper change.

However, the mother is not all-knowing. She may sometimes misinterpret the baby's crying. The baby may be crying due to indigestion and the mother may feed him more milk. But God is our all-knowing Mother who never makes mistakes. If we cry in front of our Divine Mother genuinely, She will give us what we need. There is no question of misinterpretation.

The newborn teaches that we must cry for our Divine Mother and She will come running. When the child grows up, he is instructed by his mother that when the neighbor comes to visit, he should tell her that his mother is not at home. The child nods his head and when the neighbor comes over, he does as he is told to do. He tells her that his mother has told him to tell her that his mother is not at home. Instead of telling the neighbor that his mother is not at home, he adds that his mother has instructed him to say that she is not at home.

Such is the innocent nature of a child; a nature that would serve us well on the path of devotion.

### **Humility is the Foundation**

God detests pride and loves humility. A saint has said, "When I was filled with pride, God did not enter my heart. Now that God has entered my heart, pride has disappeared. The narrow path of love can accommodate either pride or God, but not both."

A tiny blade of grass teaches us the great lesson of humility. As we walk we place all our weight on grass. What does the blade of grass do? It bends down even further. It does not protest; it does not retaliate. As we step away from it, it becomes normal once again. Someone may step on you also by insulting you. He may call you foolish, ignorant, selfish, greedy, or something worse. Do not retaliate. Do not get angry. Instead, accept your shortcomings. Realize that the critic is benevolent and that he is only helping you by pointing out your faults.

If you excel in some area, do not take full credit for it. Do not forget that self-effort is not the only factor in your success. The grace of God is absolutely necessary for you to succeed.

Accept your weaknesses, and give heartfelt thanks to God for your virtues. Humility will increase little by little.

As you walk on the path of devotion, never forget that humility is the foundation on which the palace of devotion is built.

### **We all Desire the Same Thing**

We are all unique individuals, desiring different things in life. Even so, there are some desires that are common to each one of us. Regardless of gender, nationality, color, religion, age, height, weight, level of education, financial status and political views, we all desire happiness, immortality, knowledge, freedom and power.

We seek happiness through all our actions. We eat, sleep, laugh, cry, stand, sit and sleep just so that we may become happy. We want to receive happiness; this is why we talk to others. This is the reason people marry and even divorce. Happiness is the reason we get out of bed every morning and go to sleep at night.

We also want immortality. Although we are aware of our own mortality, we secretly plan on never dying.

Similarly, we desire knowledge. With this goal in mind, we read books, newspapers, journals and magazines. We also browse the internet and observe others.

And who can deny that we desire power and freedom? Millions have given up lives for the sake of freedom; many have risked life and limb to gain power.

When we look deeply at the five desires of every individual, we come to understand that they can be reduced to just one: Happiness. We desire immortality for the sake of happiness. Knowledge is dear to us because we expect it to provide us with happiness. Freedom fighters are truly fighting for happiness, not for freedom. And power is also dear to us because we expect it to make us happy.

Happiness is what we all really want. ■

*Visit [www.radhamadhavsociety.org](http://www.radhamadhavsociety.org)  
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## Date of the Mahabharata War using Planetarium Software

Prof. Narahari Achar's  
answer to debates

**T**he first presentation of determining the date of the Mahabharata war using Planetarium software was made thirteen years ago in 2001 at the International

Conference in Montreal. The software could project the view of the sky at any time at any place. At that time the software did not have search capabilities. Yet the software could be used to discriminate and select from a plethora of dates from about 4700 BCE to 400 CE for a possible date of the war.

A set of astronomical data from Udyoga Parvan were chosen as benchmark data and if they could be reproduced on a given date proposed by a scholar, that date could be considered a candidate and rejected if the data were not reproduced. Four works by the following scholars, with the dates proposed by them in parentheses were chosen for this purpose: Kochhar (955 BCE), Sidharth (1131 BCE), Sengupta (2449 BCE) and Raghavan (3067 BCE). It was shown that the benchmark data could be reproduced only for Raghavan's date and no other. A few more random checks with dates other than the four chosen also yielded negative results. It was proposed that 3067 BCE could be considered as the date of the war.

Subsequent work has shown that the astronomical information in Bhimaparvan (which has been severely criticized by all scholars) can be interpreted in a consistent manner provided most of the astronomical references corresponded to comets and not planets and that a unique date of 3067 BCE for the war results. These results were presented at the seminar on the date of the Mahabharata war held at the Mythic Society in Bangalore in 2003.

This work is based on the astronomical information found in the epic itself and does not depend on any other outside information.

It uses the concepts of अभिधा *abhidha* लक्षणा *laksana* and व्यञ्जना *vyañjana* to properly understand the meanings of words such as *graha* and in so doing it is shown that the astronomical references are consistent and not contradictory as was alleged previously. A unique date is derived as the date of the war and there are given copious illustrations of star maps generated by the planetarium software. Many criticisms that have been hurled at this work have been shown to be of not much significance. ■



Read on... [www.scribd.com/doc/238194696/Date-of-Mahabharata-War-using-planetarium-software](http://www.scribd.com/doc/238194696/Date-of-Mahabharata-War-using-planetarium-software)

*By Anupam Trivedi*



# Kailash Yatra Breaks all Past Records

**G**iving a reason for officials to smile, more than 900 pilgrims have visited Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) this year, setting a new record of sorts. The yatra is an annual affair which passes through Uttarakhand and goes till Kailash Mansarovar in TAR under China.

The 18th batch of the yatra left from Pithoragarh for its destination on Wednesday. This is the last batch and with this batch, total number of pilgrims has reached 909, breaking all past records since 1981.

The pilgrimage to Kailash Mansarovar is considered one of the difficult pilgrimages. On the Indian side, beyond Malti, pilgrims have to trek the route on foot. The last station on the Indian side is Liphulekh pass.

After last year flash floods, the rains ravaged roads, a foot trek and damaged a bridge at Kimjyoti in Pithoragarh district. Last year, owing to the adverse situation, the yatra was suspended midway.

Although the yatra began on June 12 through an old route but later the administration decided to move pilgrims through an alternative route. Despite odds, the yatra went on successfully.

Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam (KMVN), the nodal agency that conducts the yatra in Uttarakhand is elated at its success this year. KMVN also promotes tourism activities in the region.

"Though there were apprehensions, we are glad that the yatra broke past records. We feel this will send positive feedback across India," said Deepak Rawat, managing director of KMVN. Rawat said KMVN hopes to witness a boom in tourism.

The ministry of external affairs handles the annual Kailash pilgrimage.

Kailash yatra dates back to 1981 when India and China agreed to start the pilgrimage. There were no restrictions on the movement of pilgrims to Kailash Mansarovar till 1962 war. Post war, relations between the two nations soured and as a result the yatra was cancelled. ■



A review and update of a controversial 20-year-old theory of consciousness published in *Physics of Life*

Reviews claims that consciousness derives from deeper level, finer scale activities inside brain neurons. The recent discovery of quantum vibrations in "microtubules" inside brain neurons corroborates this theory, according to review authors Stuart Hameroff and Sir Roger Penrose. They suggest that EEG rhythms (brain waves) also derive from deeper level microtubule vibrations, and that from a practical standpoint, treating brain microtubule vibrations could benefit a host of mental, neurological, and cognitive conditions.



## Discovery of Quantum Vibrations in 'Microtubules'

### Inside Brain Neurons Corroborates Controversial 20-Year-Old Theory of Consciousness



**T**he theory, called "orchestrated objective reduction" ('Orch OR'), was first put forward in the mid-1990s by eminent mathematical physicist Sir Roger Penrose, FRS, Mathematical Institute and Wadham College, University of Oxford, and prominent anesthesiologist Stuart Hameroff, MD, Anesthesiology, Psychology and Center for Consciousness Studies, The University of Arizona, Tucson. They suggested that quantum vibrational computations in microtubules were "orchestrated" ("Orch") by synaptic inputs and memory stored in microtubules, and terminated by Penrose "objective reduction" ('OR'), hence "Orch OR." Microtubules are major components of the cell structural skeleton.

Orch OR was harshly criticized from its inception, as the brain was considered too "warm, wet, and noisy" for seemingly delicate quantum processes. However, evidence has now shown warm quantum coherence in plant photosynthesis, bird brain navigation, our sense of smell, and brain microtubules. The recent discovery of warm temperature quantum vibrations in microtubules inside brain neurons by the research group led by Anirban Bandyopadhyay, PhD, at the National Institute of Material Sciences in Tsukuba, Japan (and now at MIT), corroborates the pair's theory and suggests that EEG rhythms also derive from

deeper level microtubule vibrations. In addition, work from the laboratory of Roderick G. Eckenhoff, MD, at the University of Pennsylvania, suggests that anesthesia, which selectively erases consciousness while sparing non-conscious brain activities, acts via microtubules in brain neurons.

"The origin of consciousness reflects our place in the universe, the nature of our existence. Did consciousness evolve from complex computations among brain neurons, as most scientists assert? Or has consciousness, in some sense, been here all along, as spiritual approaches maintain?" ask Hameroff and Penrose in the current review.

"This opens a potential Pandora's Box, but our theory accommodates both these views, suggesting consciousness derives from quantum vibrations in microtubules, protein polymers inside brain neurons, which both govern neuronal and synaptic function, and connect brain processes to self-organizing processes in the fine scale, 'proto-conscious' quantum structure of reality."

After 20 years of skeptical criticism, "the evidence now clearly supports Orch OR," continue Hameroff and Penrose. "Our new paper updates the evidence, clarifies Orch OR quantum bits, or "qubits," as helical pathways in microtubule lattices, rebuts critics, and reviews 20 testable predictions of Orch OR published in 1998 - of these, six are confirmed and none refuted."

An important new facet of the theory is introduced. Microtubule quantum vibrations (e.g. in megahertz) appear to interfere and produce much slower EEG "beat frequencies." Despite a century of clinical use, the underlying origins of EEG rhythms have remained a mystery. Clinical trials of brief brain stimulation aimed at microtubule resonances with megahertz mechanical vibrations using transcranial ultrasound have shown reported improvements in mood, and may prove useful against Alzheimer's disease and brain injury in the future.

Lead author Stuart Hameroff concludes, "Orch OR" is the most rigorous, comprehensive and successfully-tested theory of consciousness ever put forth. From a practical standpoint, treating



brain microtubule vibrations could benefit a host of mental, neurological, and cognitive conditions."

The review is accompanied by eight commentaries from outside authorities, including an Australian group of Orch OR arch-skeptics. To all, Hameroff and Penrose respond robustly.

Penrose, Hameroff and Bandyopadhyay will explore their theories during a session on "Microtubules and the Big Consciousness Debate" at the Brainstorm Sessions, a public three-day event at the Brakke Grond in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, January 16-18, 2014. They will engage skeptics in a debate on the nature of consciousness, and Bandyopadhyay and his team will couple microtubule vibrations from active neurons to play Indian musical instruments. "Consciousness depends on anharmonic vibrations of microtubules inside neurons, similar to certain kinds of Indian music, but unlike Western music which is harmonic," Hameroff explains. ■

**Source at:** [www.elsevier.com/about/press-releases/research-and-journals/discovery-of-quantum-vibrations-in-microtubules-inside-brain-neurons-corroborates-controversial-20-year-old-theory-of-consciousness?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%20hash.1IacGkwa.dpuf](http://www.elsevier.com/about/press-releases/research-and-journals/discovery-of-quantum-vibrations-in-microtubules-inside-brain-neurons-corroborates-controversial-20-year-old-theory-of-consciousness?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%20hash.1IacGkwa.dpuf)



*By Adity Sharma*

# Lokayata: Hinduism's Brand of Atheism



**T**oo often, people with at best a perfunctory understanding of Hinduism equate it with spirituality. Self-styled

Indologists do not help by portraying Hinduism as a stuffy and antiquated set of rules laced with an overdose of ornate rituals. What many fail to realize is that a multitude of schools of philosophical thought also stemmed from Hinduism, and represent an inseparable part of its corpus.

These philosophies were not spurred by superficial and unyielding practices, but were born out of lengthy debates and counter-debates. Whether it was Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, or the universal teachings of Vedanta, polemicists theorized and then endeavored through debates to prove the validity of their assertions. One philosophy that was birthed by such lively debates was Lokayata, or Hinduism's brand of atheism.

## ● What is Lokayata?

Lok (world) and ayata (prevalent) believed that there are four elements: air, water, earth, and fire. A world where things had to be felt by the human senses in order to be considered true was one of the defining tenets of

Lokayata. The doctrine did not believe in a soul, let alone transmigration. Similarly, it repudiated Karma, Moksha (liberation), and reincarnation. Lokayata emphasized that it was the evolution of mankind's intellect that had given rise to religion and other schools of philosophical thought rather than supernatural forces.

There is some dispute as to the founder of this brand of Hindu atheism. Some believe that Brihaspati, who is quoted in the text *Sarvasiddhantasamgraha*, was the earliest proponent of Lokayata. This text advised the sagacious ones to enjoy the pleasures of life, and engage in real world pursuits such as political administration, trade, and agriculture. Moreover, the wise were exhorted to shun rituals, and concepts that could not be verified by scientific inquiry.

Agita Kesakambali, another atheist philosopher, was a senior contemporary of Buddha. Texts by Kesakambali have not survived. But modern interpretations of Kesakambali state that deeds of altruism and beneficence lead to nothing. In other

words, everyone, according to Kesakambali, dies without distinction between the good or wicked. This is not to say that people should cease being charitable, only that whether a person treads a path of goodness or evil death does not discriminate.

Moreover, the Lokayata doctrine unabashedly rejected inference as a means of building a case for metaphysical truth. This was the case because, according to Lokayata, inference is derived from an inference, and that inference is further derived from another inference. It was believed the hierarchical order of inferences could lead to an ad infinitum regression.

Early proponents of the philosophy steadfastly believed in the limits of human knowledge, and faith did not play a part in accepting or rejecting a premise. Only the perceivable was real, and anything beyond that was moot. Another aspect to the perceivable was pleasure. Pleasure was something Lokayata philosophy embraced whole heartedly.

### ● Lokayata's Divergence with Traditional Hindu Philosophy

A major distinction between traditional schools of thought in Hinduism and Lokayata is the notion of elemental forces such as thunder, lightening, or gravitation as being active. While both traditional Hinduism and Lokayata doctrine agree on these elements being an active force in the universe, they were at odds over whether these elements were alive. Lokayata's proponents asserted that these elements were not conscious, and hence did not move about to accomplish a fixed purpose. The cosmos displayed apathy towards human whims and actions and hence played no role in determining their destiny.

Another difference between Lokayata and mainstream philosophies in Hinduism is the notion of internal perception, namely the mind as having an independent role. In traditional Hindu philosophy, the mind is given a powerful role in perception for achieving spiritual heights.

Essentially, an existence with reason, and without God, without good or evil, and without heaven or hell, was the primary ingredient in Lokayata doctrine.

### ● Balance vs. Imbalance

The atheism that took roots in Europe in response to zealous religiosity had its own rigidities and dictated a complete denunciation of Christianity and the Church. These contrary ideas began to

emerge during the Enlightenment era, and sped up during the latter part of the 20th century. This disillusionment with faith became so pronounced that currently many people in Western Europe identify as atheists.

On the other hand, proponents of Lokayata also had serious disagreements about some of the spiritual beliefs that formed the bedrock of Hinduism, but they did not patently reject the teachings of scriptures such as the Vedas. This is significant because unlike the Western explorations that erected barriers between theism and atheism, Lokayata strove to maintain a wholesome balance. It did not explicitly ostracize ritualistic practices simply because they represented a spiritual path. Instead it focused on seeking scientific explanations.

### ● Is Lokayata Still Relevant?

The Hindu brand of atheism suffered setbacks and criticisms, but it can never be separated from the large umbrella of Hindu philosophical thought. In fact, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who coined the term for the political and cultural philosophy of Hindutva (Hinduness), did not want to have religious rituals performed for his soul. This wish did not cast him outside the ambit of Hinduism. His opponents would do well to remember that when they level unfounded charges of Savarkar's Hindutva being incompatible with the Hindu religion.

Lokayata, like many philosophies in Hinduism, did not sprout tyrannical roots. It did not become too popular. This obviated a rigidifying of any one philosophy. Instead, the preferred method throughout ancient India's history was to debate and attempt to gain widespread acceptance by defeating an opposing philosopher. This system of public discussions and deliberations prevented dogmatic practices from gaining a stranglehold. So, whether the Vedas or the Lokayata, ancient Indian sages propounded encompassing and variegated paths for the people to choose from. This liberality allowed Hinduism to survive through the many trials and tribulations since primordial times. ■

*The author is a student at St. John's University, New York*

*Source: [www.vijayvaani.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?aid=3316](http://www.vijayvaani.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?aid=3316)*



*By Stephen Knapp  
(Sri nandanandana Dasa)*



# Politics and Leadership in the Vedic Way

**I**n applying the Vedic principles to our lives, the way we view politics and the system of leadership we choose will also be affected. There will be certain standards that we will want to maintain. When people who are not spiritually inclined, such as those who are atheistic, enter politics and become leaders by hook or crook, the whole atmosphere becomes increasingly covered with nescience and confusion. Such politicians may pose as having affiliations with some religion, but this is often done with a motive of getting in favor with people for the purpose of acquiring votes. Their real agenda is often hidden away and revealed much later. With such politicians in charge, beneficial programs meant for helping the poor or assisting with educational systems or the environment, often become reduced, cut back or are under-funded. Such funds that could be used for the benefit of the taxpayers are then diverted toward military development with the promise that it will make everyone more secure. Not knowing the duty of a good leader, such politicians engage in threatening and fighting with one another at the expense of the common people's well being. Then in their distress, society may take spiritual life more seriously as they search for ways to find peace and solutions to their problems and help from God.

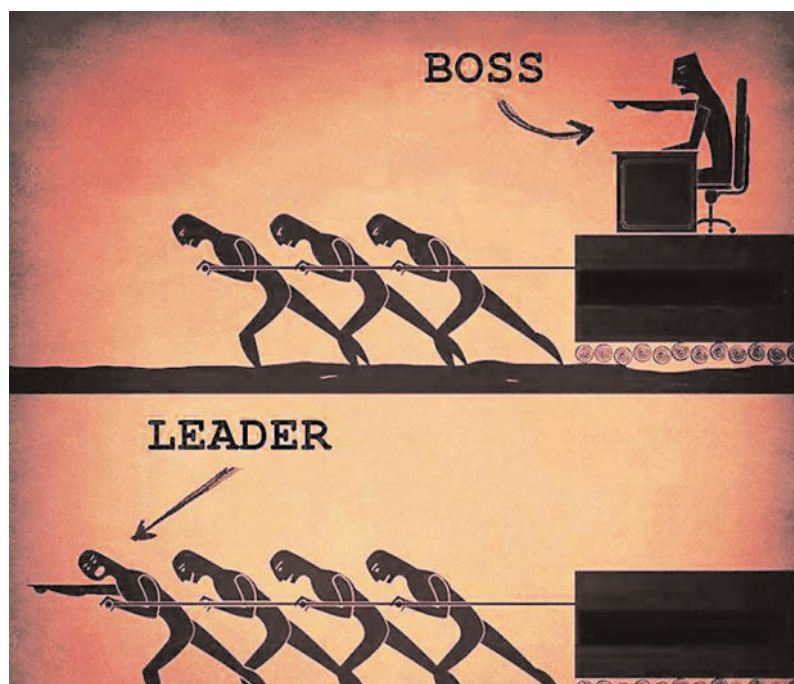
These unqualified politicians then mislead people by saying they are providing a brighter and more secure future through military engagement, but the damage done through such violence and destruction often leads to increased expenditures and years of difficulties that are spent recovering from wars and rebuilding what was damaged or destroyed. If society elects such political or religious leaders, they will not experience the relief and bright future they wish for. Such a leader is building a stone boat that is bound to sink along with everyone that follows him. Thus, he and his supporters create a dark future for everyone. In this way, they create hell on earth and are bound for hell after death. When determining your choices you must consider your own future, not merely in this present life, but in the hereafter as well.

We can see in this world that there are those who lead people down the road to trouble. They present their untried and unbalanced theories as if they are providing definite answers to problems, but their inner rebellious nature, revolutionary ideas, or plain stupidity, often merely increase the difficulties we already have. These disruptive thoughts arise in the minds of those who are

already so discontent, envious or foolish. But how can happiness arise from discontentment? They plant their ideas in the minds of others who are also restless and dissatisfied, and then try to gain influence. We have seen this happen in the world of politicians as well as in various religious organizations many times, and thus misguided people become all the more ill-advised. It leads us farther away from a peaceful and divine life. It prevents us from reaching the real goal of human existence. We often become ever more trapped in a world of divisions. Then our consciousness focuses on our differences rather than on spiritual unity, and thus the world weakens into a planet of chaos.

Many civilizations on the planet that have prided themselves for being advanced are not genuine civilizations. This means that they are not as civilized as they think. A true civilized society will hold love, compassion, cooperation, wisdom, and freedom as its basis and foundation, and not mere technological, economic or military superiority to dominate others. This sort of emphasis in advancement does not solve all the problems of life. It does not promote true peace in the world, nor does it make a society truly civilized. It mostly perpetuates the differences between the members of society as well as the selfish idea that the privileged can control all situations by the notion that might is right, and thus continue to dominate the weak.

Society must pick a true leader, and not merely elect the lesser of the evils among the candidates running for office. But, they must know what is a real leader. A real leader must also know the Universal Spiritual Truths. Then such a leader can make programs that use a foundation that is universally applicable to everyone. In this way,



the leader must use a complete philosophy for his or her politics. Otherwise an imperfect leader will not be able to create an ideology that is acceptable to everyone, but he will continue to speculate on what might work and suggest ideas that are untried, untrue and that continue to create confusion. This goes on while hiding the real agenda, which is often to trick people into working hard to pay large amounts in taxes that are funneled away from truly benefiting the people and the planet. If the leader is a fool, the government becomes a fool's paradise.

A real leader must be ethically fit and strong in order to subdue disturbances properly. Before a leader can affect the world, he must take care of things locally, in his own domain. He must first curb whatever sufferings his own subjects and citizens endure. They are supporting him, it is their taxes he is overseeing, and thus they should be the first to reap the rewards of proper leadership and government funding. So first, all thieves, rapists, kidnapers, murderers, and dacoits of all kinds must be stopped and apprehended. This will help create peace for all honest citizens. Also, programs that benefit the people, such as securing employment opportunities, natural resources and the environment, must be established or people will lose hope for the future.

Dishonest miscreants and criminals in society flourish because of cowardly and impotent heads



of state. If such leaders cannot manage their position properly, criminals make use of the situation to terrorize honest citizens. But, when heads of state are strong enough to curb all sorts of criminals in any part of the country, then they will not be able to flourish. When miscreants are punished in an exemplary and immediate manner, then good fortune follows. Crime goes down, the expense for law enforcement decreases, and then the citizens in general do not need to live in fear. This will affect their confidence in government and the way they contribute to the country. However, when laws are passed that protect criminals and force honest citizens to become incapable of defending themselves, or where law enforcement is slow and ineffective, then thieves and rogues become prominent in society due to an incapable government. Such a country soon becomes a dangerous place in which to live. Misfortune is then bound to follow.

Thus, a leader's priority is first to his or her land and citizens. Only after his own area is secure and beneficial programs are firmly established should there be any engagement for large expenditures or military action outside of defending his own jurisdiction, beyond his borders, and only then if such military ventures do not unnecessarily tax the economy. Once local problems are solved and adjusted, the leaders and people will have a stronger base from which to tackle challenges and difficulties in other parts of the world. If a ruler or government is effective in curbing crime in its own country, keeping the citizens free from disturbances of cheating businessmen, corrupt politicians, terrorists, thieves, etc., by virtue of such a strong leader, he can more easily collect taxes. More citizens will be honest and willing to pay. However, if a leader or government cannot protect the citizens from such dacoits in public or government affairs, such an ineffective leader should not be so ostentatious as to think he deserves the right to continue to collect heavy taxes from his subjects. If the leader is ineffective and allows criminals to occupy his jurisdiction, then he will share in the reactions of the evil deeds that are conducted under his regime, and his future will become very dark. Thus, a bad ruler perpetuates the spoiling of the whole country.

What is worse is when rogues themselves are elected

to office. Then such cheaters, taking advantage of their situation and position, will enjoy life by living off the high taxes that are taken from the citizens. Or, they will engage in political or financial intrigue that will put large profits into their pockets at the taxpayers' expense. This in turn makes the people more dishonest by trying to hide their income from being taxed by crooked politicians. Then, as this criminal mentality spreads, trickling down from the politicians, the whole country becomes increasingly corrupt.

The hierarchies and regimes that operate according to self-serving methods that are in fact vicious and unjust, especially toward honest people, cannot remain in place. The ultimate force of Truth in the world will see them fall sooner or later. We must bring forth the power of transformation, not by force or manipulation but by genuine concern and spiritual love.

However, it is not enough that leaders try to provide peace through military domination or force. There needs to be funds that will support educational projects that will spread genuine spiritual knowledge that can invoke a real change of consciousness in humanity at large. This does not mean simply to spread a particular religion, but to spread that spiritual information that can be applied by anyone, anywhere, regardless of religious affiliations. By providing the means for a genuine change of consciousness, and an uplifting growth in perceptivity of our spiritual unity, there can be peace by the deliberate choice of society as opposed to mere military might. There can be harmony through intellectual and spiritual growth. Otherwise, real peace will not be possible. It will only be a strained peace since the underlying cause for disunity and trouble remains, waiting for the opportunity for conflict to break out again.

Naturally, there may be times when military force is needed to put an end to unnecessary conflict or to subdue criminals, but it can never be a means to lasting peace.

Our disrespect toward one another is nothing but a reflection of our disrespect toward God, or at the very least our disconnection from God. Whereas the more our relation with God is established in a mature manner, the more we can see God in everything and everyone. In such a state of mind, war, being a vehicle in which we try to kill as

many of the enemy as possible, is like blaspheme in itself. As we continue to lose our connection with God we lose our moral values, our civility, our care and concern for each other, and then the basis for quarrel and war escalates.

The point to understand is that the elite or criminally minded who live at the expense of others will never bring forth or promote the will of God, especially if it means a change in their own status quo, position, wealth, influence, etc. They will never reflect the unconditional love of God on others but will relentlessly devise the means for manipulation and exploitation of the weak. However, we can change whatever elitist structure there may be, not by ordinary revolution or militant activism, but by merely choosing to not participate in it and by selecting the path of light and love. This is an alternative based on spiritual realization and recognition of the Divine in all beings. The polarization between good and evil will bring forth the distinctions of harmony and balance for those who choose such a path, and darkness and torment for those who choose selfish methods. The path of truth and love has always prevailed in spite of the trials that may have to be endured to reach the goal.

A ruler should be the representative of perfect morality. He should exhibit exemplary behavior in his actions, directions and speech. Thus, as it is most beneficial for society in general to work toward spiritual advancement, so it is also beneficial for a ruler to work in ways that enhance his or her own spiritual development. He or she should see to it that everyone has an equal opportunity to do the same. This is proper leadership.

Furthermore, proper leadership should arrange things in such a way so there is cooperation between God, nature and humanity. If we act in a way that pleases God, then He will oversee us and supply what we need. But, that also means we should respect and honor the blessings the Supreme has given us and continues to give us, and exhibit thankfulness by honoring and cooperating with nature. Thus, we will not spoil or overuse our natural resources, and there will be harmony between humanity and all aspects of nature. If our land is full with natural assets, the nation and world can be economically well to do. If we do

not honor our resources, or if we spoil them through pollution, or overuse them through bad management, there will be scarcity and high prices. This gives way to apprehension, fear and difficulties for people who must conduct their lives at increasing expense. Thus, the economic status of the country and the confidence of the people will begin to plummet. This is why there must be proper cooperation between God, mankind and nature, which is another aspect of understanding the principles of Vedic culture.

If people cannot progress spiritually and see things according to such universal Vedic standards, they will not make any advancement toward the higher goal of human life. This is beyond moralistic principles and is the foundation of real spiritual perception and realization. It is a duty of the government that the facilities are provided so this can go on nicely. Thus, if any fanatics from any religion become terrorists toward another spiritual path, and make things difficult for all, the ruler should apprehend such fanatics immediately and make arrangement for such people to have minimum access to their jurisdiction. Such a consideration may be unfortunate, but it is nonetheless necessary to establish and maintain peace for the honest citizens, and those who sincerely try to advance spiritually.

Also check Purpose and Function of Government According to Mahabharata for more information on this topic. ■

**This article and more information at  
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By Koenraad Elst

On 23-26 July 2014, the European Association for South-Asian Studies (EASAS) held its biannual conference in Zürich, Switzerland. More than 150 participants came mostly from the EU and South Asia (including my first-ever acquaintance from the Maldives), with a delegation from the US (including someone originating in North Korea, a country exotic even to Orientalists), and a few from China, Japan and Australia. It was very well-organized down to the details. The different sessions of a panel took place consecutively and formed a natural whole.



## South Asian Conference in Zurich: Hinduphobia Galore



**T**he atmosphere was quite relaxed and cheerful. It has been different at one time. The last time I participated, Leiden 2006, it was a veritable anti-Hindu hate-fest, with panels devoted to the "problem" of Hindu nationalism, of history-rewriting etc. These conferences are long in the making and are influenced by the atmosphere of the preceding two years. So, the usual anti-Hindu animosity was limited, though we shall see that in subtle form, and once very openly, it was still present.

### ● Against classical studies

Most topics had nothing to do with "Oriental Studies", i.e. classical studies pertaining to the Orient. Once a very influential branch of philology, it is now in full retreat, with chairs closing down, parallel to the decline in learning about and sheer knowledge of Sanskrit in India itself.

Sanskritists present confided to me that they were desperate for a job. It could have been different, for Chinese and Japanese studies are flourishing, even their classical section, but then their governments are watchful and dynamic in this matter. India, by contrast, is still dining out on the centrality it once held (watch Hindu websites celebrating over the nice things Arthur Schopenhauer, William Faulkner or Romaine Rolland once said about Hinduism, not noticing that this was very long ago) and not doing anything to maintain its position in academe nor even to counter the control of the India chairs by its declared enemies.

The importance of classical studies lies in the very importance of the subject itself, but also in the continued importance of classical references in modern Indian politics and culture. I was to find this out myself in the panel on "divinization" in which I spoke.

I read a paper on Vasistha, the Vedic seer presiding over the unlikely victory against the "Ten Kings". He was given one of the Vedic hymns, which are normally only devoted to the gods. Here was a classical subject, continuous with a tendency pervading the entire Hindu culture till today, of extolling exceptional men and women and treating them as gods. In passing, Vasistha mentions the "asikni visha", the "dark people". All translations known to me

explain that these are the "dark aboriginals" against whom the invading white Aryans did battle. Very likely, the expression is a pun (of which Vedic poetry contains numerous examples, no doubt including some unidentified ones), meaning effectively "the people from the Asikni river". Other verses specify that the Ten Kings came from the Asikni (Chenab) river, attacking eastwards to the Parushni (Raavi) river where the battle took place. "The dark one" is a normal name for a river-example, the Thames in London or the Demer in our town of Diest both mean "the dark one", both names being cognate to Sanskrit *tamas*.

Mind you, the Ten Kings came from the west, while the Vedic Aryans lived deeper inside India, and many details unambiguously identify them as predominantly Iranian. Thus, many names used by them or for them are known from Iranian, not from any Indian "aboriginal" language. The few other Vedic instances of people being called "dark" have satisfactorily been explained by the leading Sanskritist Hans Heinrich Hock as applications of the universal equation "light = good, dark = evil", even attested in African languages. The systematic mistranslation of "dark people" etc. as "the dark-skinned aboriginals subdued by the white Aryan invaders and their caste Apartheid" for almost two centuries is one of the grossest mistakes in scholarship, and extremely rich in consequences. How this knowledge of ancient writings still affects modern Indian politics was brought home to me by a fellow panelist, a young woman from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi. As so often, she was a Bengali Brahmin (judging by her name) yet took up the cause of the "toiling masses" and called them indigenous because she had swallowed the anti-Brahmin version of history. She was clearly unnerved that I had uprooted the supposed Vedic evidence for "white Aryan racism against the dark aboriginals" so effortlessly. As my reference to Prof. Hock shows, I was not saying anything unorthodox in this case: among the (admittedly very few) specialists, it is the new consensus that the first Veda translators projected the then-common racial views onto the Vedic testimonies. But those flawed and prejudiced views about Aryan invaders defeating and then oppressing the "dark aboriginals" have a long life in history textbooks and the received opinion.

A few hours later, the JNU scholar read her own paper, starting out with the curt information that the

population she studied belonged to the "dark aboriginals" oppressed by the "Aryan invaders", and that Shiva was a "non-Aryan god". Her paper, pitting belief in "Shiva the lazy peasant" against belief in "Dharma the Healer", was interesting enough, and would have remained standing without this erroneous framework of Vedic racism. But such is the level of hate-driven anti-Hindu animosity that is spoon-fed to these young scholars and to the public in general. Such politically motivated theories promoting caste struggle can only flourish in a climate of utter ignorance. This explains why both in India and in the West, the Left has been agitating for at least half a century against the teaching of history and of classical languages. If successful, this campaign would lock the next generations into the present and make them more available for modern struggles. And as indeed it has been largely successful, we do effectively have a young generation ignorant of ancient history and susceptible to casteist and anti-Brahmin fairy-tales, even presenting these as "scholarship" at academic conferences.

### ● "South-Asian" studies

Nowadays, such conferences are filled with what amounts to "sociology of modern South Asia", with lots of "gendering", "othering", "claiming cultural spaces", "negotiation of categories", "politics of imagining" and "knowledge constructs".

In general, sociological studies tend to be very superficial and irrelevant, dressing up sheer barroom talk in jargon and then declaring the conclusions scientific.

In the case of Indian ideologies, for instance, political campaign slogans become summaries of "theories" pretending to be "scholarly" and hence authoritative because of their footnotes, while being in reality quite devoid of the prime characteristic of scholarship, viz. objectivity. Far from being disinterested, such studies work mainly to undermine Hinduism and buttress fashionable ideologies like anti-Brahmanism, lower-casteism and feminism.

Thus, there was a panel on Indian Christianity in which all the papers, one way or another, served the Christian side in the anti-conversion polemic. Many people including India-watchers would not even be aware that there is a polemic going on here. In this case, one around the Hindu Nationalist claim that "Christianization entails Westernization", an effect which they as nationalists find even worse than the conversion itself. There was nothing wrong with the



contents of the papers, though. For instance, on enculturation and Westernization, I learned that already in the 18th century, missionaries advocated enculturation while Indian converts wanted Anglicization.

But imagine somebody proposing a panel in which every single paper would field for the Hindu side. The organizers probably would have disallowed it, or at least they would have asked for somehow presenting both sides of the story. In the present case, however, they probably didn't even realize that something was unbalanced. After all, Hinduism means injustice and superstition; therefore modern scholarship cannot help being anti-Hindu in its conclusions.

This is because on the one hand, the anti-Hindu prejudice is so prevalent that even non-political people will help keeping a pro-Hindu out while letting an anti-Hindu in; and on the other, because the Hindus themselves have utterly failed to groom their own scholarship, mostly because they have never understood its importance.

However, history is moving on. The battle against Hinduism and the criminalization of Hindutva have succeeded so thoroughly, that a new generation has grown up with little involvement in this struggle. With the decline of clear ideologies, Hindu-bashing has become diffuse and less intense. It is vaguely assumed that Hindu activists are evil and their worldview ridiculous, but this is rarely thematized anymore.

## ● Aurangzeb

The panel on the bad reputation of the Moghul emperor Alamgir, better known as Aurangzeb, and how contemporaneous sources nuanced this picture, was organized by Prof. Heidi Pauwels, whom I used to know at Leuven University in our student days but who is now teaching Hindi literature in Seattle.

Prof. Pauwels had said in her introduction that Aurangzeb is being demonized. This is entirely true,



though with different implications than she thinks. Numerous Hindu writers do indeed hold him up as an example of cruelty and fanaticism. Yes, he did lock up his father and execute his brother to wrest the succession to the throne from him. Not so nice, but not all that exceptional in dynastic histories. If his rule had been benevolent, he would on balance have received a positive evaluation from his subjects and from the historians. Generally, his personal life could give rise to such a positive evaluation; vide the nuanced 1912 book by Jadunath Sarkar (dubbed a "Hindu communalist historian" by the Marxists) about the history of "Aurangzib". But most Hindus only know about his public policy, especially his persecution of Hindus, his attempts to militarily suppress Hindu rebellions, and his demolitions of thousands of Hindu temples. Since these acts resulted from the Islamic doctrine, a correct critique of Aurangzeb's policies would have focused on Islam. These "demonizers" are only being politically correct: they avoid blaming Islam, but since the facts are too clear and undeniable, they explain these by putting the blame on the person Aurangzeb. In some cases, this is a deliberate exercise in opportunism, but more often, people have interiorized this puerile worldview of blaming persons rather than the beliefs that drive them. One can compare this to a development that took place at the time of the Zurich conference: the conquest of north-western Iraq by ISIS, or the self-styled "Islamic State" or Caliphate. When the ISIS activists themselves posted videos of their demolitions, decapitations, rapes and other cruelties, Western commentators fell over each other to dub them "crazy". But they were by no means crazy; they justified their actions with reference to Islam. Since these commentators have a holy fear of blaming Islam for anything (that would be "Islamophobia", God forbid!), they have no remaining option but to blame the undeniable facts on the personality traits of these Islamic militants.

## ● Hindu majoritarianism

In the titles and abstracts of this august gathering, most non-specialist people would look in vain for signs of anti-Hindu animus. Indeed, a lot of speakers genuinely didn't think of it. Well, there was a session as well as many other papers on the poor hapless Indian Muslims but none on the terrorized Bangladeshi Hindus, and nobody noticed anything amiss. By contrast, the keynote address by Professor Ratna Kapur (Jindal Law School, Delhi, and

Harvard) was all about demonizing every Hindu resisting the annihilation of Hinduism: "Belief in Law. The Politics of Secularism, Religion and Hindu Majoritarianism in Indian Constitutional Law". First off, she noted as a general societal fact that "religion has come out of the closet", citing as example that India uses religion as a tourist attractor. In fact, for as long as modern tourism exists, religion has been a tourist attractor to India. The place of religion in the Indian public sphere hasn't substantially altered since Mahatma Gandhi's days. Where a real change is in evidence and religion has effectively "come out of the closet", is in Europe. Secularism originated as an anti-Church and anti-obscurantist position and therefore counted as progressive and leftist. But now that the leftists are crawling ever deeper before their ever more numerous Islamic voters, their secularism is eroding. More and more, they are adopting the Indian version of secularism namely, appeasement of Islam. She summarized the Hindu Right's critique thus: "The laws protecting minorities and giving them special treatment are non-secular." She quickly went over this point, not wanting to draw attention to India's non-secularism. The word "secularism" already had a meaning long before Nehru adopted it, and it means: religious neutrality, i.e. equality of all citizens before the law regardless of religion. So, India is a secular state if all citizens get the same treatment in law regardless of their religion. Is this the case? Of course not: Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsis have different law systems, chiefly because Muslims insist on it. So, contrary to all those fear-mongers' loud proclamations that "the BJP constitutes a threat to the secular state in India", firstly, India definitely is not a secular state, and secondly, the BJP wants to enact a Common Civil Code and is thereby the only major party that wants to turn India into a secular state. The other major parties including the long-ruling Congress Party, by contrast, keep on promising their Muslim voters that they will preserve legal apartheid between the religions and prevent India from becoming a secular state. Indeed, Muslims outside India openly abhor secularism-those in India only swear by "secularism" because they know that there, the word is used improperly and effectively only means "anti-Hindu". Thus, she drew attention to the fact that "secularism" has a very different meaning to Westerners from what it has come to mean in India.

Progressive issues "hijacked" by the Hindu Right The so-called "substantive equality" advocated by Prof. Kapur effectively means inequality, the subjection of citizens to different law systems depending on their religion. She said this was necessary because the "minorities" suffered a historical disadvantage and Hindus carried a "special obligation to redress systemic discrimination". Westerners will be familiar with the "positive discrimination" of (or with the now-official weasel word: "affirmative action" for) the American blacks. Whether these policies are right or wrong, at least they are based on an undisputed historical fact, namely, the grave disadvantage that the Blacks suffered in the form of slavery. That is why, especially among Humanities academics, a wave of sympathy for this legal privileging of certain communities can be expected, including when they hear of it being applied in India. But in fact, no such historical disadvantage applies to the Muslim community. To the Scheduled Castes, yes, but not at all to the Muslims, who on the contrary have a history of being a privileged group. Indeed, many Hindus converted to Islam to escape the burdens imposed on non-Muslims and enjoy the status reserved for the people of the true faith; and their descendants are the present-day Muslims. Ever seen a Bollywood movie making fun of the Muslims as such, to name one example of the type of discrimination that should be redressed? Numerous film scenes make fun of Brahmins, but Muslims as such are always treated with reverence. Now, secularists will point to some statistical parameters where the Muslims prove backward. Yes, due to the selection by the Partition (where many well-to-do Muslims migrated to the promised land which they themselves had created), the backwardness of their religion (as noted by Dr. BR Ambedkar, who saw the will to change as a redeeming feature of a Hinduism he deemed obscurantist, but failed to see it in Islam) and the larger number of children, Muslims have slid backward. But that is a self-imposed condition for which Hindus ought not to pay with legal inequality. The same thing counts for Christianity: in the colonial period, it was a very privileged community, and no disadvantage has been imposed on the Christians after Independence. Abroad, before ignorant audiences, Christians may cite the positive discrimination of Hindu Scheduled Castes (which



Prof. Kapur implicitly supported) as an inequality imposed on them, but in the preparation of the Government of India Act 1935, the missionaries themselves have rejected the extension of this privilege to the Christian community, citing the caste-free nature of their religion.

On the other hand, if at all she insists that justice (nay, even secularism!) demands separate law systems, she is really saying that the Swiss host country, or France as the motherland of secularism, or the US or any Western country, are not just and not secular until they introduce separate religion-based laws. And indeed, some people in Western countries already advocate the adoption of the Shari'a for the Muslim minority, but so far they haven't dared to call that "secular". Indeed, this "alternative" is still recognized as "anti-secular". And in India too, the prevailing legal inequality is indeed anti-secular. So, in this regard, the Hindu Right's demand of a Common Civil Code is in tune with what prevails in the main secular democracies. She fully recognized this, but put a negative spin on it. According to her, the Hindu Right has "hijacked the progressive discourse". Similarly, the abolition of a separate Muslim (and also of Christian) law is justified with arguments from feminism. Thus, polygamy, forbidden to others but legally allowed to Muslims, constitutes an obvious inequality between the sexes. Its abolition is an important demand of feminist groups in Muslim countries. So, the BJP's demand for a Common Civil Code is effectively buttressed with feminist rhetoric.

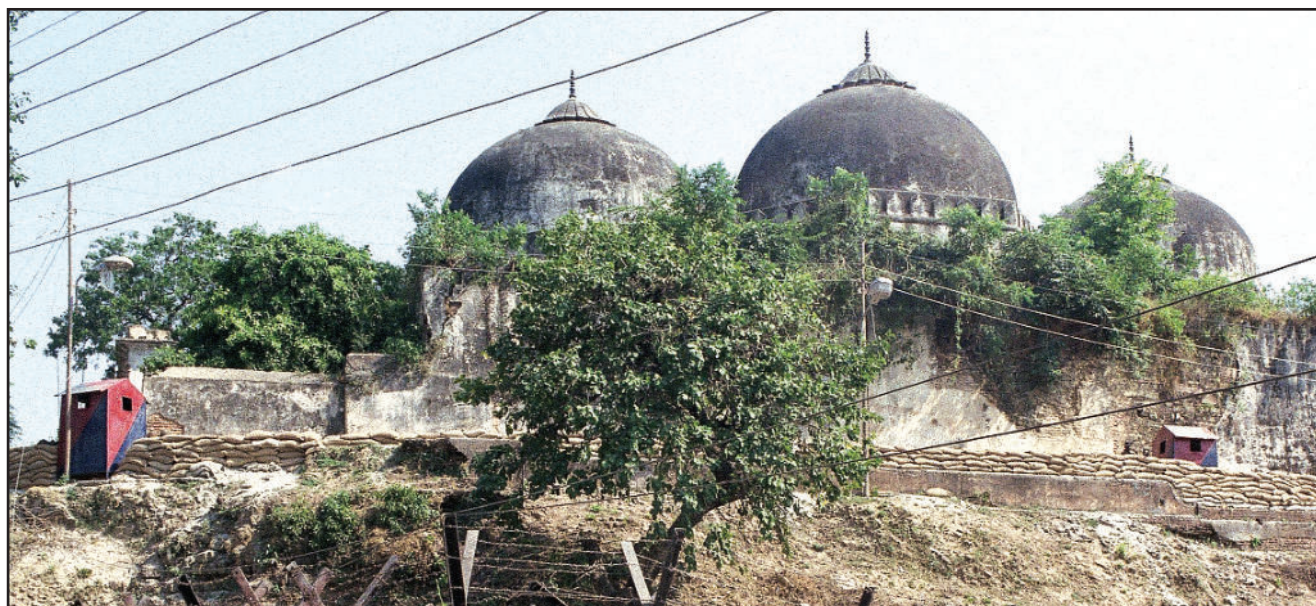
In her spin, it shows how devious and Machiavellian the Hindu Right really is. In a less partisan explanation, this only shows how the demand for a Common Civil Code is a common demand of different groups. There are several reasons, Hindu-Rightist as well as other, why Prof. Kapur's defense of the present system is wrong.

Incidentally, we have borrowed from the speaker the term "minorities". As Rajiv Malhotra has pointed out, this term carries a wrong but intentional connotation. The Christian and Muslim communities are not only historically privileged but they are also Indian branches of multinational enterprises, benefactors of worldwide networks of solidarity. The term "minority" evokes a poor hapless group, and that is precisely what Muslims and Christians are not. Both the said communities are the benefactors of enormous sums of money coming from abroad. Hindus have no such thing: even the remittances from Hindus settled abroad are far smaller and are, after all, generated by people with roots in India, not by non-Indian donors.

## ● Ayodhya

The occasion for Ratna Kapur's talk was the Allahabad High Court's verdict on Ayodhya in 2010. Most people present vaguely knew that this verdict had gone in favor of the Hindu claim on the contentious site where a Hindu temple had been replaced with the Babri Masjid, which had served as a mosque till the British closed it down in 1935. (Since 1949 it had been used as a Hindu temple, but the architecture was still that of a mosque.)

What the audience did not know, and emphatically



did not learn from this lecture, was that the judges had ruled largely in favor of the Hindu claim because the documentary and archaeological evidence went entirely in favor of it (or rather, of what was until the late 1980s the consensus), and against the new secularist-cum-Islamic claim that there had never been a Hindu temple at the site. To make a long story short: Ratna Kapur's own side lost, and it lost really badly. Her keynote address had the single purpose of obscuring this stark fact to keep the larger "secularist" narrative behind this falsified claim afloat. According to her, the pro-Hindu verdict stemmed from the increasing grip on Indian public discourse by an entity called "the Hindu Right". This expression refers to different movements, like the BJP, the RSS and the VHP, and then other organizations of which she only named the Shiv Sena. As its chief ideologues, she named VD Savarkar and MS Golwalkar. The real ideologues of the Ayodhya movement were left unmentioned, especially the late historian Sita Ram Goel, whose list of two thousand demolished temples and discussion of the underlying Islamic theology of iconoclasm have gone entirely unrefuted. And then the whole point of her lecture: "The judiciary strengthens this development." When people want to whip up fear for the Hindu movement, they claim firstly that this is a fanatical and violence-prone movement out to oppress the minorities, and secondly, that it is powerful. In this case: that its compelling influence is inescapable even in the judiciary. Yet this is, on the face of it, quite improbable. But perhaps the Hindu Right's discourse was so impressively correct that even during political low ebb it could influence the Allahabad High Court judges and other public figures? That is what Prof. Kapur implied. In this climate, the judges were certainly not acting on a deeper-than-before Hindu activist influence. In a

thoroughly anti-Hindu climate, they only ruled in favor of the Hindu claim because it happened to be irrefutable. Under cross-examination, the "eminent historians" who testified before the Court turned out to be far less knowledgeable than a compliant press had made them out to be. And so, when faced with the actual evidence rather than with the hyped media version, the judges found in favor of the old consensus, now known as the Hindu claim.

It may be added, in telegraphic style, that she also made one of the following points. Progressives have lost a lot of ground because, while naïve Muslim litigants have treated the Ayodhya case as a property dispute, Hindus have made it a larger issue; indeed, they have proven very clever.

Well, I hadn't noticed that cleverness, but I'll take her word for it. At any rate, it is normal that Hindus treat Ayodhya as a larger issue: for them it is a place of pilgrimage, for Muslims it has no special significance. And this fact immediately suggests what a secular solution for Ayodhya would be-take the energy out of the conflict by doing the obvious: leave the place to those who care for it. What is more natural than leave a Hindu place of pilgrimage to the Hindus?

### ● Conclusion

What struck the most, and even more in the hindsight perspective of a report, was the complete absence of the voice of Hinduism. Of course, many people with Hindu names spoke, and indeed quite a few practicing Hindus, but only about non-controversial issues. The ones that mattered in the ongoing argument against Hinduism were monopolized by the other side. Hindus weren't heard, weren't invited to give the Keynote address or to be present in any other capacity. They were not present, and to my knowledge, they didn't even try. ■

**Note:** Please visit below source for full unabridged version.  
**Source:** [www.indiafacts.co.in/easas-conference-zurich-report](http://www.indiafacts.co.in/easas-conference-zurich-report)

## Australian PM Tony Abbott Returns 11th Century Stolen Idols to Modi

Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott on his recent tour of India handed over to his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi two antique statues of Hindu deities which were allegedly stolen from temples in Tamil Nadu before being bought by art galleries in Australia.

During his meeting with Modi, Abbott returned the idols, one of which is a Nataraja - the dancing Shiva - which belonged to the Chola dynasty of 11th-12th century. The other sculpture is of Ardhanariswara, which represents Shiva in half-female form, and dates back to 10th century.



Source: <http://m.newindianexpress.com/nation/361393>





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This scholarship program hopes to encourage a deeper understanding of Hindu Dharma through recognition of academic excellence, increasing awareness of Hindu values and volunteerism.

The program offers multiple earning opportunities based on age and education level. Eligibility for the scholarship is extended to any currently enrolled student in the United States education system at the middle school, high school, and college/university level.

## AVAILABLE SCHOLARSHIPS

College Level - 3 \$1000 grants a year  
High School Level - 2 \$500 grants a year  
Middle School Level - 4 \$250 grants a year

## CONTRIBUTE TO THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Founding sponsorship provided by Om Temple, MA  
For sponsor information, email: [scholarship@chynetwork.org](mailto:scholarship@chynetwork.org)  
Call: Harsh Dave at 954-873-1651

The Coalition of Hindu Youth (CHY) is an umbrella organization among Hindu youth and Hindu youth organizations to foster unity and share resources. CHY, is a project of World Hindu Council of America (VHPA).

Non-profit, Tax ID 51-0156325

[www.hinduscholarship.org](http://www.hinduscholarship.org)



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