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# HINDU VISHWA

## Vishwa Dharma Digest

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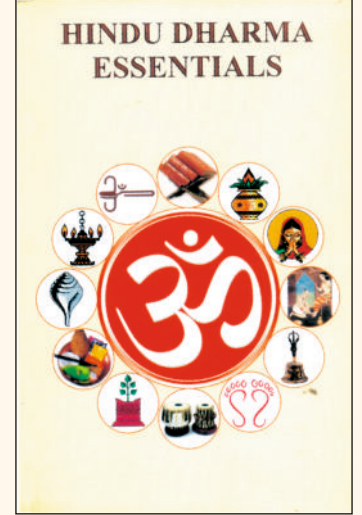
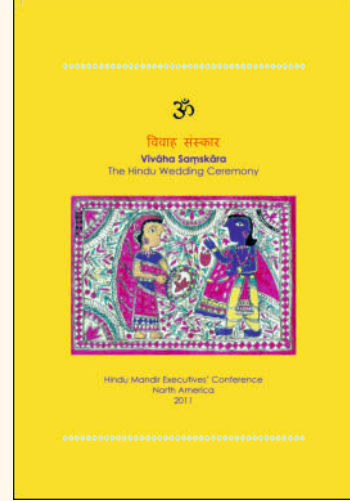
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Om, Asato Maa Sad Gamaya; Tamaso Maa Jyotir Gamaya Mrityor Maa Amritam Gamaya

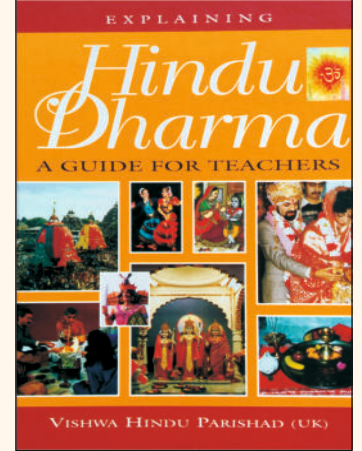
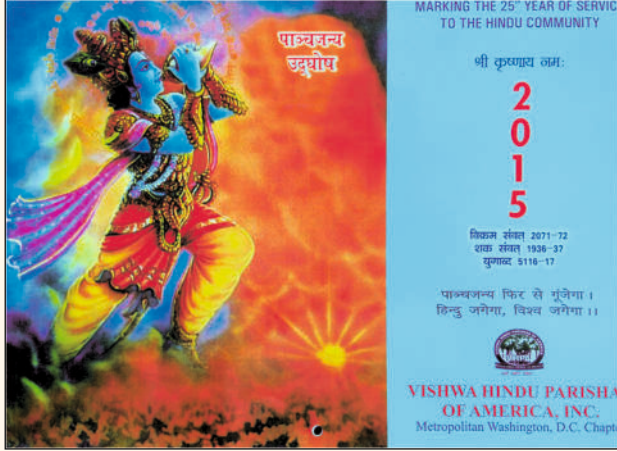
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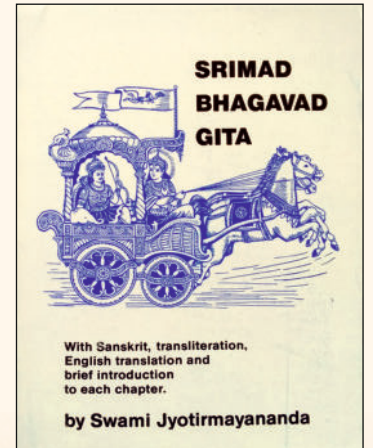
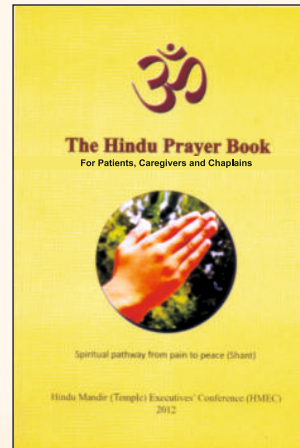
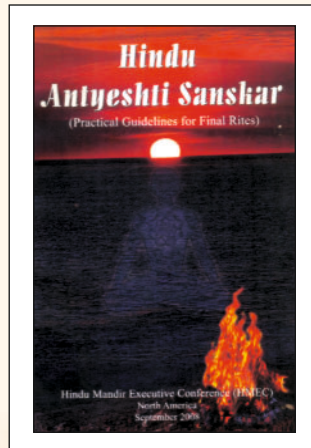
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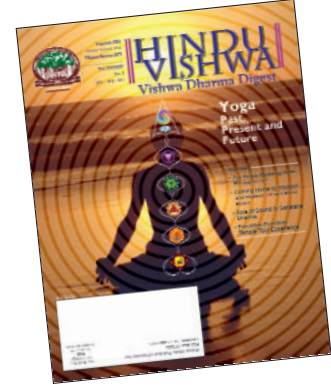
January-March 2015

वृक्षांश्चित्वा पशून्हत्वा कृत्वा रुधिरकर्मम् ।  
यद्येतं गम्यते स्वर्गे नरकं केन गम्यते ॥

पञ्चतन्त्र ३-१०७

*Vrikshanshichhatva pashoonihatva kritva rudhira kardamam |  
Yadyetam gamyate swarge narkam ken gamyate || Panchtantra 3.107*

**If, by cutting of green trees, by killing animals and  
playing with their blood, one can attain heaven, then by  
which action is one likely to go to hell?**



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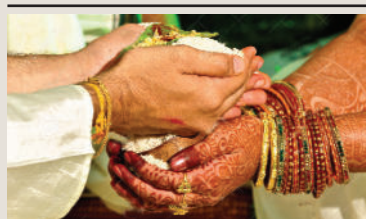
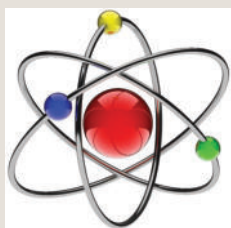
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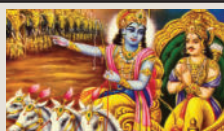


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Arjun is also known as Partha. Krishna agreed to become his charioteer (Sarathi). Thus Lord Krishna is called Partha-sarathi...

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# CONSCIOUSNESS OF YOGA



**W**ith the backdrop of Darwin's theory of evolution, man has evolved from the past and primitive stage - millions of years ago - into the present state. This has been accomplished by virtue of gradual and phased reduction of the mindset of being more governed by the spontaneous reactions to external stimuli by reactive impulse ('Flight or Fight', for instance) to progression toward thoughtful and long-term plans using the cumulative experience and learning. All the external manifestations of civilization with myriad of positive outcomes, ranging from discovery of natural laws and resulting soaring of mankind - be it in the form of skyscrapers or of spacecraft exploring far reaches of the solar system and beyond, peering into the heart of galaxies billions of light-years away - has been made possible through the application of intellectual faculty (*Buddhi*: the ability of analysis and synthesis), primarily driven by consciousness (*Chitta*: the seat of memory, motivation, feelings), under the guidance of *Atman* (soul) which is in essence a part of, energized by, and a unique gift to the biped member of the tree of evolution from, *Paramatma* (God).

What is the next significant stage of evolution (millions of years from today)? Super human? God-Realization for a great percentage of human? Most if not all humans to be a great and exemplary person like Mahavir, Buddha, Nanak...? As a rule, every individual to be possessing a high level of conscience and upward-mobile consciousness? Possibly yes (if man does not succumb to animalistic tendency of violence and self-destruction, that is.)

How is such a positive evolution - perfection of ascending consciousness and ending of negative elements (*Chittavriti*) of consciousness possible?

That's where Yoga comes in. Hence the more uncommon definitions:

"*Yogah: ChittavrittiNirodh*" (Yoga is resisting and control of *Chittavritti*); and

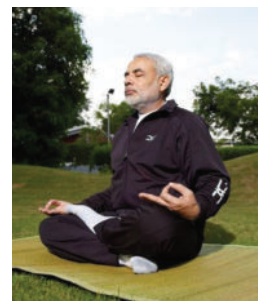
"*Yogah: KarmasuKaushalam*" (Yoga is gaining efficiency in endeavors.).

Proceeding in the direction outlined by Maharshi Patanjali in his 'AshtangYogashastra' is one of the greatest guidepost for such a journey for mankind as a whole. This is the true significance of Yoga, not just postures and meditation for physical, mental, and spiritual health on a personal basis.

Genuine and sustained practice of Yoga can lead to making this planet a paradise in any and all senses of the word. The reverse is equally true: the oft-visible violence including the violence perpetrated to the soul by forced or coercive religious conversion and terror in the name of religion and under the cruel impulse of blatant and blind political and territorial dominance is a sure way to turn this little "blue dot" hanging in space (as seen by astronauts) into a flaming inferno. Certain archaic and ailing religious injunctions - such as, "Strike terror in the hearts of nonbelievers" or "Reap maximum harvest of souls"-must be recognized as such, collectively opposed, and removed from the mindsets if not from the books.

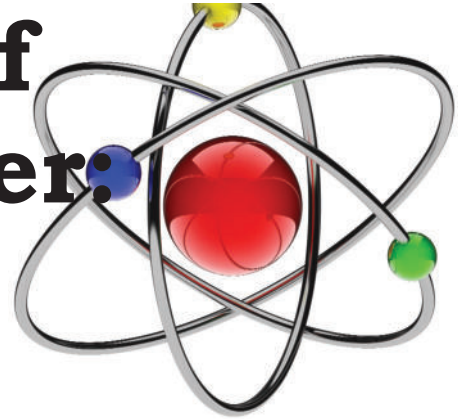
Hence the importance and relevance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call toward Yoga on a global basis, symbolized by celebration of a day (21 June) as the Global Yoga Day as announced by the U.N. after Modi's message in the General Assembly there. It is not without reason that certain ill-minded religious institutions dread Yoga as a force against their sick agenda of world-dominance.

Narendra Modi is not only a great model as the Prime Minister of India, he is a new messenger and harbinger of an evolutionary trend for the world: Practice of Yoga. After the towering figure of Swami Vivekanand and his followers, he is a modern icon of Yoga in a living form. Let us hope that the message comes to fruition and fights the gloom of terror and other illnesses of mind.



# Indian Pursuit of Scientific Temper:

## The Dumbing down of Hindu civilization



*"A word of caution. We all stop thinking and articulating in speech and writing words and phrases like "False realm of mythology". It is absolutely Romilla Thapar: Mythology like pagan is derogatory description of non-Abrahamic worship, cultures and worldview. As though Jesus alone or Mohammed alone are historical while Hindu Devas and Devis are all mythology" - Radha Rajan*

**By Rajiv Varma**

**I**t is good to see resistance is offered to this idea. I will extend this to put this resistance in a certain framework. Indians who find "science" in Vedas or historicize Ramayana or Mahabharata or Puranas, actually end up demeaning our culture and civilization. It is akin to dumbing down a horse to the level of a donkey, so that the horse can fit into a herd of donkeys.

In their classical definitions - "Science" and "History" are disciplines that are contextual to the Western civilization. The evolution of classical "Science" in the West is not an intrinsic development, it is in response to the Abrahamic colonization of the West that began with Emperor Constantine. After 17 centuries, this colonization has been internalized no doubt, and now the then colonized have become the "new" colonizers, but it is colonization nevertheless.

Thus the Science/ Philosophy/ Knowledge development during Greco-Roman-Hellenistic pre-Christian era has a certain philosophical disconnect with Renaissance and post-Renaissance "Science". While the Greco-Roman

knowledge development had a natural rhythm, the post-Renaissance science evolved in the backdrop of earlier Dark Ages that was a direct consequence of Christian colonization of the West.

While it may be true that Renaissance thinkers did rely, inter alia, on (for example) Cicero's De Natura Deorum for inspiration in their quest for new knowledge, they never did escape the outer orbit of Christianity. Thus, it explains the formation of now discredited "sciences" such as craniometry, which became the basis of racism and genocide later.

There is a certain amount of "irrationality" (or I call it unnaturalness) in the Western "scientific rationalism or temper". That is - "it" is limited to the Cartesian plane - and it is not allowed to look beyond it - transcend it, because the Christian God is waiting on the other side, to save the souls.

The efforts like the so-called Noetic Sciences are still disjoint in their conceptualization. Western Science can make giant strides, but it cannot do one thing - it cannot see beyond the "Edge of the Universe" - it does not have the means to - and most importantly it does not have the will to do so. The limitation is provided by the Christian worldview. One can see that the notion of secularism protects Christianity, God and Jesus business from scrutiny.

On the other hand Vedic Rishis have no such handicap. The material and non-material transcend. Hence the sciences that evolved in Ancient India were in tune with the natural rhythm of human civilizational development. The Vedic epistemology established the scope for a Rishi to explore the worlds beyond the "Edge of the Universe" if his/her inquest pointed in that direction. The system never posed

***It is the colonized Indian mind that sees the (Christian-European) "science" as virtuous, and due to its seep-seated inferiority complex, seeks validation from the West***



**I am not against finding historical evidences for the Indian past. But that needs to be a separate discipline. I am not for dumping down Ramayana and Mahabharata to "fall" to a pseudo-benchmark that our colonialist has set for us.**

any problem in this regard. A student of civilizations can see that harmful sciences like craniometry would have had no chance of forming in a naturally inquisitive culture like India. Thus, Vedic knowledge system is much more comprehensive than Post-Renaissance "officially secular but Christian-nevertheless sciences."

Therefore, finding such (Christian-European) "science" in Vedas is demeaning to the Vedic culture.

It is the colonized Indian mind that sees the (Christian-European) "science" as virtuous, and due to its seep-seated inferiority complex, seeks validation from the West

Ditto with "history". Again, post-Renaissance academic discipline of "History" is also a false benchmark to aspire to for Indians. Western discipline of History also exists in Christian framework, whose evidentiary parameters are limited to a set that disables a researcher and an academician to go prior to the dates of Genesis. It is made to sound rational, but in essence it is highly irrational. If Indians were to rewrite their history based on Christian parameters, all they would get is a molehill and never discover the mountain that they have.

Then, there is another problem that is even more severe. The authors of Ramayana and Mahabharata and the Puranas never intended to tell legends for the purpose of "modernist" historical validation. The purpose of this corpus of literature is *adhyatmic* (spiritual). These are tools for a human to know his larger Self. Valmiki never intended for the shrota of Ramayana to start digging graves to find Cartesian evidence of existence of Rama or Sita. Ramayana serves only one purpose - viz. spiritual empowerment for the purposes of upholding Dharma. Ramayana serves as a living kernel of the Indic/Hindu



civilization. Not a Cartesian history book.

I am not against finding historical evidences for the Indian past. But that needs to be a separate discipline. I am not for dumping down Ramayana and Mahabharata to "fall" to a pseudo-benchmark that our colonialist has set for us.

Ultimately, Western Science will self-destruct and will become extinct, just like the Neo-Neanderthal man, because of its own limitation. Greco-Roman-Hellenistic, Chinese and Vedic knowledge systems have a better chance of survival and growth, because of their natural rhythm.

Let us not dumb down our horses to the level of donkeys.

When the term "scientific temper" was inserted in the Indian Constitution, good ole Panditji had no clue that the West had hoodwinked him into a herd of donkeys.

## About the Author

**Rajiv Varma,**  
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<https://bharatabharati.wordpress.com/2015/02/04/indian-pursuit-of-scientific-temper-the-dumping-down-of-hindu-civilization-rajiv-varma/>

# Are Hindu Wedding Vows Misogynistic?



**S**hould Hindu wedding vows be rewritten to suit the times? The answer, as a study of the shastras show, is an emphatic No.

As quoted by Swami Vivekananda, in the Ramayana, once Rama and Sita had gone to visit a female sage in the forest during their banishment:

"Sita approached this sage and bowed down before her. The sage placed her hand on the head of Sita and said: "It is a great blessing to possess a beautiful body; you have that. It is a greater blessing to have a noble husband; you have that. It is the greatest blessing to be perfectly obedient to such a husband; you are that. You must be happy."

Sita replied, "Mother, I am glad that God has given me a beautiful body and that I have so devoted a husband. But as to the third blessing, I do not know whether I obey him or he obeys me. One thing alone I remember, that when he took me by the hand before the sacrificial fire - whether it was a reflection of the fire or whether God himself made it appear to me - I found that I was his and he was mine. And since then, I have found that I am the complement of his life, and he of mine."

Groom to Bride during the Hindu wedding ceremony (translated from Sanskrit):

"I am the sky, you are the earth. I am a song of the Samaveda, you are a Rik, a couplet of the Rigveda; I am thee and thou art me. We are married. Let us get

**By Aditi Banerjee**

virtuous progeny, who will be lovable, lustrous for us. Let us lead a long life in togetherness to enjoy one hundred autumnal seasons."

In a recent column in Business Standard, Mitali Saran argues that Hindu wedding vows should be updated or rewritten by couples for the sake of gender equality. Her basic complaint is that the Sanskrit shlokas used for the wedding ceremony envision a specific division of labor (the woman doing the household work and the man earning for the family while being served by his wife at home) that is unfair to working women in today's world. The column is rather shallow and gratuitously provocative, but raises two serious questions that deserve to be answered:

1. Are the Hindu wedding vows inherently misogynistic?

2. Even if those vows were once appropriate, have they become obsolete today?

There is enormous intricacy and subtlety in the rites of Hindu wedding, and there is also significant variation across different regions, sampradayas (religious traditions), and jatis (clans/socioeconomic groups). The importance of various rites and their different layers of meaning and symbolism deserves its own series of articles, but the focus of this piece will be on the *saptapadi mantras*, which are the



mantras uttered during the seven rounds taken by the bride and groom around the consecrated fire.

The groom leads the bride around the fire for the first three rounds; the bride leads during the last four (which also shows their inherent equality in stature-sometimes the husband leads, sometimes the wife).

The vows themselves are as follows:

Bride and Groom together:

*Let us walk together, hand in hand, the seven steps symbolic of the aspirations below:*

*May We take the first step together for sap (nourishment),*

*May We take the second step together for vigor,*

*May We take the third step together for thriving wealth,*

*May We take the fourth step together for comfort,*

*May We take the fifth step together for offspring,*

*May We take the sixth step together for the various seasons,*

*May We take the seventh step together for everlasting friendship.*

*You be my unswerving partner; (let us have many auspicious progeny who shall see long life crossing 80 years)*

Personally, I find these vows to be extraordinarily rich and multifaceted, reflecting deep psychological and sociological insight into the various needs and phases that a married couple goes through. We do not see in these vows the misogyny alleged by Saran.

However, there is variation in the exact customs followed across regions and sociocultural groups according to various Grihya Sutras, and there appear to be certain interpretations or variations of these vows where the bride promises to cook for and please the groom, which is Saran's main grievance.

Without getting into a lot of arcane debate about whether these alternative interpretations are authentic or interpolations, let us assume for the sake of argument that Saran is correct that in these vows there is emphasis on the bride's promise to take care of the family, feed the family and serve and please her husband with no such corresponding vow required on the husband's part. Even in such a scenario, the basic point is that a division of labor is not in and of itself unequal or derogatory towards woman.

There are differences in male and female psyches



that lead to certain qualities predominating in men and others in women-as a general matter, not to be taken to extremes-and specialization in certain roles tends to optimize the different qualities in men and women for the benefit of all. (In fact, to characterize the role of women in the household as being secondary to office work or business is based on the sexist premise that the domain of the home is inferior to the domain of the workplace. Perhaps it is the husband who should be considered oppressed because he does not get to spend enough time at home!)

This does not mean that those gender roles are ossified for all times and in all circumstances-this is one model for society, and in the context of that model, these vows are entirely appropriate and cannot be considered to be derogatory towards women.

Saran's chief complaint is that the bride is reduced to the lowly status of a maidservant. But in the Hindu conception of wedding and womanhood, as reflected in the shastras and the ordained rites, the bride is not at all a maidservant-rather, she is the one who reigns over the household.

The Sanskrit term for a wife is grhini, which means the owner of the house, whereas the term for husband, grhastha, means a mere resident of the house. If the wife were to have the same status as the husband, she would be known as a grhasthaa. In Tamil, too, the wife is illaai, one who owns the house, whereas the husband is illaratthan, one who performs the dharmic rites in the house.

The conception of the wife as reigning over the household stems from the Vedas themselves. In the Rig Veda, we find these beautiful quotations:

"Happy be you (as wife) and prosper with your



*Ardhanari depicts the duality of human nature, where both man and woman play equally important roles.*

children here (in the house): be vigilant to rule your household in this home (i.e. exercise your authority as the main figure in your home). Closely unite (be an active participant) in Wedding with your husband. So shall you, full of years, address your company (i.e. have authority to speak over household matters)." (10.85.27);

"O Bride! May your father-in-law treat you as a queen. May your mother-in-law treat you as a Samrajni (queen). May the sisters and brothers of your husband treat you as a queen." (10.85.46).

If we have fallen away from these ideals in the recent past, the fault lies in social decay and not in the beliefs and traditions that our rishis have passed down to us.

Unlike Saran, who seems to think that the work a woman does at home is demeaning, our acharyas and rishis held women in great reverence for the importance of their work and role, not just in the family but in society, and for the depth of their devotion and sacrifice.

In traditional Hinduism, the wife plays a fourfold role: she is *ardhangini* (the other half of her husband, metaphorically speaking); *sahadharmini* (partner in the fulfilment of human and divine goals- principally,

the four purushartha, or aims of human life: dharma, artha (accumulation of wealth through righteous means), kama (fulfillment of desire through appropriate means) and moksha (self-realization; liberation from the cycle of birth and death)); *sahakarmini*, (partner in all acts and actions), and *sahayogini* (partner in all ventures).

*Ardhanari* depicts the duality of human nature, where both man and woman play equally important roles.

Moreover, the wife's role was not merely to 'please' her husband:

"It must be noted that a wife creates well-being for the world even as she does the work of cooking or as a source of sensual gratification for her husband... It is not that she cooks for the husband alone. She has to provide food every day to the guests, to the sick and to the birds and beasts and other creatures. This is how she serves the purpose of *atithyam* (serving unexpected guests) and *vaisvadevam* (serving sentient beings)."

In Hinduism, the role of cooking and feeding is not that of a lowly servant-it is a divine role manifested in the form of Annapurna Devi, the goddess of food and nourishment, from whom even Lord Shiva receives bhiksha (food gathered as alms through begging).

The late Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, Sri Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati Svami, explains that one of the three objectives of wedding is "to create a means for women (and men) to be freed from worldly existence. A man who is not yet fully mature inwardly is assisted in his karma by his wife. By doing so, by being totally devoted to her husband, she achieves maturity to a degree greater than he does."

In return for the indispensable help a dharma-patni renders to her husband in carrying out his dharma and evolving spiritually, half of whatever *punya karma* (spiritual merit) the husband attains is transferred to her. On the other hand, none of the *paapa karma* (spiritual demerit) of her husband inures to her, and none of the *punya karma* of the wife is transferred to the husband.

So we see that in the wedding vows themselves and in the Hindu conception of woman and her role as a wife, she was in no way a mere maidservant or meant to be an appendage to serve her husband. Her role was much greater than that, and she was given due respect, reverence and recognition for her devotion and sacrifice that benefitted not just her husband, but also her own spiritual evolution and the society at large.



We now come to the second question, which is whether changes in the modern woman's role at home and in the workforce render the Hindu wedding vows somehow obsolete. The question itself is based on a false premise that these vows are meant to be prescriptive in a literal sense. The Hindu conception of Wedding is much more nuanced and diverse than that. Wedding rituals need to be viewed from a broader perspective.

Traditionally, Hinduism recognizes eight forms of wedding: *brahma* (considered to be the highest form of Wedding, where the groom's parents approach the bride's parents for *kanyadana* (giving away of their daughter to the others' son) -here, the bride is sought out by the groom's family); *daiva* (where the bride's parents seek a groom in the area where sacrifices are performed and marry her to a priest who officiates the *yajna*); *arsa* (where the bride is given in exchange for two cows from the groom's family, or alternatively, where the bride is married to a *rishi*); *prajapatya* (the same as the *brahma* style, but the bride's parents must approach the groom's parents instead); *asura* (where the groom is not a match for the bride, but money is given to the bride and her family in exchange); *gandharva* (where the bride and groom unite out of their own desires); *raksasa* (forcible abduction of the bride against the wishes of her family (but not necessarily of the bride herself; and *paisaca* (where the bride does not or is unable to consent - for example, when a man seduces a girl who is unconscious or mentally incapacitated).

Even though the last two forms of Wedding are generally discouraged by the *shastras* and our *acharyas*, they are recognized for a reason. In Hinduism, *shastras* are made for man; man is not made for the *shastras*. In other words, the *shastras* are developed based on the sociological reality of the day. That is why the *smrti* are ever-changing, and it is only the *Vedas* (*sruti*, that which has been revealed or heard) that are unchanging and eternal.

The *Dharmashastras* are meant to apply based on time, place and circumstance. Our *shastras* are not meant to be one-size-fits-all, and thus provision is made for diversity in cultures, customs and personality



*If people feel that Karva Chauth is too one-sided, nothing stops the husband from also fasting on that day*

types. For example, those who are more accustomed to pleasure and sense gratification would be more likely to engage in the *gandharva* form of wedding.

Similarly, even though the *raksasa* and *paisaca* forms of Wedding may be unethical, our *shastras* grant them some recognition so that, to the extent they occur, some provisions may be made for safeguarding the honor and dignity of the woman; however, because they are expressly disapproved of, their occurrence is meant to be minimized as much as possible.

No matter which form of wedding applies, the Wedding vows are, at the core, the same. Why? Because there is a *bhavana* (feeling/state of mind/attitude) and code of values that underlies these Sanskrit shlokas that is universal-they are meant to promote certain *vrttis* (waves within our consciousness) and *lakshanas* (qualities that promote masculine virtues for the groom and feminine virtues for the bride).

The vows are not just the bride and groom promising fidelity to each other, but, at a deeper level, are a commitment to being partners who will together care for their families, observe together all of the rites and sacrifices enjoined by the *Vedas* in the spirit of *lokasangraha* (wellbeing for the world/cosmos) and be companions who give comfort and strength to each other. These mantras sanctify and cement a bond between husband and wife and their respective families, and they promote social harmony by guiding

*Resident*



*Owner*



***The Sanskrit term for a wife is *grhini*, which means the owner of the house, whereas the term for husband, *grhastha*, means a mere resident of the house.***

couples on how to perform their individual and familial dharma.

These mantras encode the blessings and tapasya (spiritual power) of our ancestors and devas, our *rishis* and *acharyas*, who are invoked through the Wedding ceremony, and such mantras are not to be tampered with lightly.

There is a current of energy, of blessings and power in these mantras and rites, which transforms a Wedding from a social contract and emotional bonding to a sacred covenant that is strong and lifelong (or, rather, seven lifetimes long).

Hinduism does not promote a cookie cutter mold of our wedding - Ours is a tradition that honors the *Panchakanya* (Ahalya, Draupadi, Sita or Kunti, Tara and Mandodari), venerated as the five ideal Hindu wives, although, in their own way, each of them led an

unconventional married life.

The conception of Hindu wedding does not preclude a woman from working or a man from being a house husband. But there needs to be serious reflection on all of the important roles played by a married couple in the Hindu conception of society and how those roles and responsibilities may be carried out equitably in these new scenarios.

We cannot just discard those duties that have been enjoined upon us, but we can find new ways of carrying out those duties-for example, if people feel that Karva Chauth is too one-sided, nothing stops the husband from also fasting on that day (as I know many men do nowadays).

That would be a much healthier alternative than simply stopping the observance of Karva Chauth, as this is a *vrata* that strengthens the marital bond and also the bond between the bride and her new family. The integration of worship with the marital relationship in Hinduism makes Hindu weddings uniquely sacred and powerful, and we cannot lose that sacred link out of some cheap politicization of the gender wars.

When we understand the spirit of the Hindu wedding rites and mantras, the depth of feeling and philosophical intent behind them, it is impossible to think that they are inherently misogynistic.

Yes, it is true that the rites and mantras have been, through social custom, often interpreted in misogynistic ways. But that was not the original intent of the *vivaha* mantras. These mantras can be and should be understood, in spirit, in a way that is in harmony with the world in which we live today. That has always been the Hindu way. ■

*With special contributions from Dr BVK Sastry.*

## About the Author

**Aditi Banerjee**

*is a practicing attorney at a Fortune 500 financial services company in the greater New*

*York area. She is on the Board of Directors of the World Association for Vedic Studies (WAVES) and has organized and presented at global*

*conferences on matters related to Dharma. She co-edited the book, *Invading the Sacred: An Analysis of Hinduism Studies in America*, and has written widely on Hinduism and the Hindu-American experience.*



Source: <http://swarajyamag.com/culture/are-hindu-Wedding-vows-misogynistic/>



# YOGA



# Past, Present and Future

*By Abhishek Gaur*

**A**s a physician trained in the Allopathic system of medicine, I was fortunate to have exposure to scientific elements of Yoga as early as the first year of medical school at The All India Institute of Medical Sciences. There were a series of four lectures in Physiology of Yoga by Dr Chinna, Head of the Physiology Department. However, over the course of my training further there was not one mention of Yoga in other medical lectures. After I moved to the United States about twenty years ago, I saw that there was a lot of interest in Yoga everywhere. During my walks to Columbia University, I saw the fliers of Iyengar Yoga. At that time, I had no idea what Iyengar Yoga was. Exposure to Yoga-Asanas (Yogaasanas) was limited to the family Yoga sessions when we visited our grandparents in Meerut as a child. My paternal grandfather's brother is an avid practitioner and taught my dad and uncles. These short, annual stints were supplemented by occasional talks on television. Then came the Dharendra Brahmachari show on Doordarshan, the state-owned television network, and we would sit and marvel at the perfect Yoga poses introduced by him.

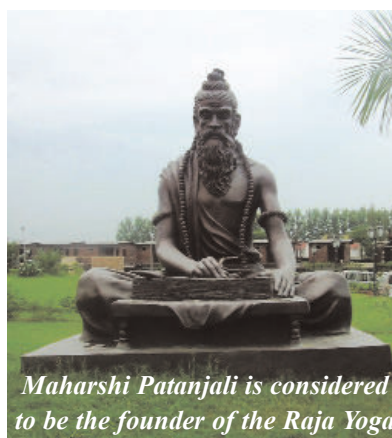
The real journey towards understanding and practicing Yoga began about twelve years ago when I had severe neck spasms and pain. Amazingly, these disappeared completely after about one year of Yoga practice. Later, based on conversations with a prominent author, I became interested in Raj Yoga. Finally, I stumbled upon Isha Yoga and I am currently a practitioner of Hatha Yoga and meditation. The following account is

based on my personal experience, research and study of diverse sources.

The word Yoga literally means 'union'. But there are some other meanings and interpretations too. The practice of Yoga connects one to the inner self and helps attain self-realization. It is universally accepted that Yoga originated in India or Bharat. What is unclear is when and how. Since there was no real tradition of written books in Bharat and information was passed on by listening and memorization (shruti and smriti), we do not know for sure. The first comprehensive written account of Yoga occurs in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra written at a time just preceding the advent of Buddhism, around 400-500 BCE. Clearly, if this was written by one person and based on his own experience and research - this man was an Albert Einstein of the discovery of Human Consciousness. Patanjali is considered to be the founder of the Raja Yoga. More likely, the Yoga Sutra is a compilation of works of several centuries of tradition before him. An early reference to meditation is made in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the earliest Upanishad (c. 900 BCE).

The physical practice of postures is referred to as

Hatha Yoga, which literally means 'stubborn' but is also translated as Hatha standing for the sun and moon. In other words, it is a stubborn physical practice of balancing or integrating the dual aspects of existence like male-female, hot-cold etc. Within this tradition, there have been several modern teachers who have introduced modifications and different emphases. Swami Sivananda Saraswati founded the Divine Life Society and wrote many books.



*Maharshi Patanjali is considered to be the founder of the Raja Yoga*

BKS Iyengar popularized the use of props for asanas to enhance the postures and stretches. Viniyoga, a Yoga tradition started by T Krishnamacharya, popularized by his son TKV Desikachar and other followers is an individualized application of Yoga based on the practitioner's physical, mental and cultural uniqueness. Viniyoga is often emphasized as therapeutic for easing back pain, anxiety etc. Now there are ultra-westernized forms, like Bikram Yoga, named after its founder and practiced in a hot and humid room, which in some ways represents a deviation from the basic or core values of Yoga.

The eight aspects or parts (anga) of Yoga or 'Ashtaanga Yoga' is attributed to Patanjali and forms the basic structure of Raja Yoga. They are Yama (non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence and non-receiving of gifts), Niyama (Shauch - cleanliness, Santosh - contentment, Tapas - austerity, Swaadhyaya - study, Isvarpraanidhana - surrender to God), Aasana (posture - seated position), Praanayaama (extending of Praana - breath), Pratyaaahara (restraint of the senses from external objects), Dhaarana (concentration - fixing the mind on a spot), Dhyaana (meditation) and Samaadhi (super-consciousness). Swami Vivekananda translated and summarized the Patanjali Yoga Sutra into the popular book 'Raja Yoga'.

Bhagavat Gita (God's song) devotes a significant proportion to Yoga but takes a broader view and meaning of Yoga and divides it into Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Gyaana Yoga. The main message, as taught by Lord Krishna to Arjuna at the Mahabharata battlefield, is performance of one's Dharma (loosely translated as duty) without attachment to the object or the result.

In order to explain the flow of energy and the hierarchy of elements in the body, a system of seven chakras (energy wheels or vortices) have been propounded in various Hindu, Buddhist and Tantra traditions. They are the Mooladhaara (base of the spine, root), Svaadhishtana (sacrum), Manipura (solar plexus), Anahata (chest/heart), Vishuddha (throat), Ajna (third-eye or hypothalamus) and Sahasraara (crown) chakras. There are symbolic naadis or energy channels called Ida (lunar or cooling or feminine representing the left side of the body/right side of brain) and Pingala (solar or warm or masculine representing the right side of the body/left side of brain) that flow from the Mooladhaara and join at the Ajna chakra.

By the practice of Praanayaama, the Yogi symbolically stabilizes the chakras, purifies the naadis and controls the praana or life-energy ultimately leading to activation of the central dormant naadi - the Sushumna Nadi that connects to the crown chakra. The final goal of the practice is awakening of the Kundalini or spiritual energy, located at the base of the spine, this awakening which is likened to the uncoiling of a serpent results in a state of bliss.

The practice of Praanayaama is made very popular recently by Swami Ramdev for general physical and mental health and people are incorporating it into their daily routine. Some basic Praanayaama exercises are Kapaalbhaati (deep breathing), Anulom-Viloma (alternate nostril breathing), Bhramari (nasal breathing like a black bee) and advance techniques of regulating the four periods of respiratory cycles: inhalation (pooraka), breath holding (abhyantar kumbhaka), exhalation (rechaka), and pause after exhalation (baahya kumbhaka).

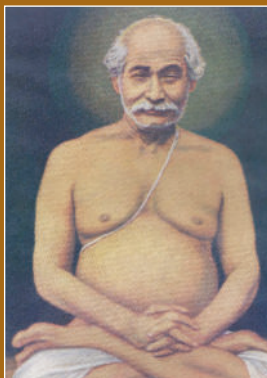
By combining Praanayaama with chants, modern Yogic teachers have developed Kriya (translation - action) Yoga. The practice of Kriya Yoga said to be extracted from Patanjali's Yoga Sutra was first brought into attention by Mahavatar Babaji who taught it to Lahiri Mahasaya in Rishikish. His disciple, Swami Paramahansa Yogananda taught it to the West as recounted in the 'Autobiography of the Yogi'. In more recent times, the Art of Living founder, Sri Sri Ravishankar and the Isha Yoga founder, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev have developed elaborate breathing exercises and chanting (often on the word Om/Aum - considered to be the universal sound of cosmic creation) and combined with meditation to enhance the practitioner's mental and physical well being.

Meditation or Dhyaana is an integral part of Yoga, specifically Raja Yoga, and has been practiced by Hindus for thousands of years. This was subsequently carried on and emphasized in various forms of Buddhism after Gautama Siddhartha, the Hindu prince attained Enlightenment. Dhyaana is contemplation or awareness that is directed inwards towards the inner self or Aatman. A form of meditation called Transcendental Meditation (TM) involving chanting, and introduced to the West by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, was widely adopted by celebrities like the Beatles in the 1960s and 1970s. The immediate benefits are rebooting of the mind by connecting with the self rather than with the outside world and finding solutions to life's problems. The form of mindfulness

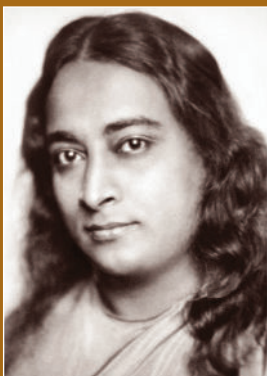




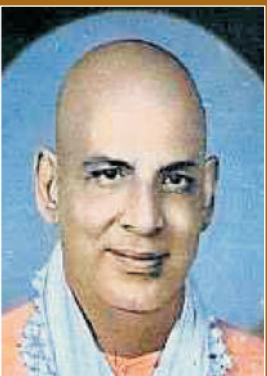
*Mahavatar Babaji*



*Lahiri Mahasaya*



*Swami Paramahansa  
Yogananda*



*Swami Shivananda  
Saraswati*

meditation is known to improve productivity, creativity and happiness. Of course, the ultimate goal in Yogic tradition is union with the Brahman (ultimate non-dual reality).

Across the United States, particularly in the Silicon Valley, the practice of meditation is becoming very popular. The analogy being given is that of shutting down the computer and rebooting it to improve performance. Also, science has taught us that the human brain has the computing power of thousands of supercomputers. Obviously, if there are a lot of parallel redundant programs in operation in this mega supercomputer, it is liable to get overheated as it tries to continue to find solutions to life's problems. Medical literature too is getting richer with neuroscience, behavioral and psychiatric studies on the benefits of Yoga. Research is supporting Yoga's role in treatment of lifestyle related problems like arthritis, anxiety, obesity, back pain etc.

We are at a crucial juncture in world history where Yoga and its various manifestations have permeated to millions of people in the Western world and added more practitioners in the East where it once originated. Many Yoga leaders are teaching more contemporary versions of Yoga that appeal to all. Overall, the practice of Yoga is considered non-denominational and focuses on transformation of an individual's body and mind. This has the potential to provide solutions to many global problems of violence, wars and crime and replace them with compassion, peace and harmony. The famous verse from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

*"Om Asato Maa Sad Gamaya*

*Tamso Maa Jyotir Gamaya*

*Mrityormaa Amritam Gamaya,*

*Om Shaanti, Shaanti, Shaanti"*

meaning, "lead me from unreal to real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality, Om Peace, Peace, Peace", chanted during many Yogic prayers and practices summarizes the ultimate goal of Yoga. ■

**Disclaimer:** *The Yoga exercises and meditation described are not unequivocally proven to be medically beneficial. It is recommended that individuals consult their physician before performing these exercises.*

## About the Author

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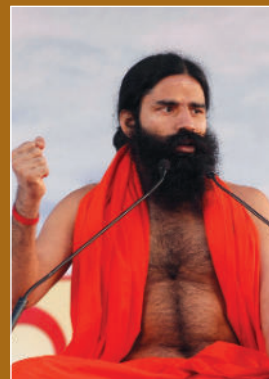
*Sri Sri Ravishankar*



*BKS Iyengar*



*Sadhuguru  
Jaggi Vasudev*



*Swami Ramdev*

# Coming Home to Intuition and Reason - From Blind Belief



*By Maria Wirth*

**Everyone, who learns about Christianity and Islam, will right away discover illogicality**

**T**he topic of conversion has become center stage in India - not because millions have been converted from their Hindu faith to Christianity and Islam in recent years, but because some 50 Muslim families came back to Hindu Dharma.

'How dare Hindus do what only Christians and Muslims are entitled to?' seems to be the motto. Strangely, not only representatives of the dogmatic religions and western mainstream media, including the New York Times, are outraged, but even Indians with Hindu names. Why would they bat for religions that require blind faith, and not for their own Dharma that is based on deep philosophy? The reason may be that many Indians are ignorant, when it comes to religion. They neither know their own tradition, as they have been to convent schools or grown up in westernized families, nor do they know the insidious effect of dogmatic religions as they never were insiders.

Since I grew up as a Christian, I may see clearer why the dogmatic religions depend on conversion and indoctrination to gain followers. The reason is simple: Suppose a community on some island is completely unconnected to the modern world. They will never become Christians or Muslims because they would need to be told a story about God sending his only son to earth 2000 years ago, etc. and then they would need

to believe it blindly and get baptized. Yet if these islanders had wondered about the truth, they might have come to similar conclusions like Sanatana Dharma, as it doesn't depend on some event in history. It only requires dedicated, deep enquiry into "That What Truly Is - Now And Always".

Everyone, who learns about Christianity and Islam, will right away discover illogicality: both religions claim that they are the only true religion and all human beings have to follow it, and both also claim that the Creator of this universe has endorsed this claim. Now such claim would be of great consequence, if it were true. However, none of the contenders for the "only truth" provides any proof. To cover this up, they put forth an ingenious idea: "You will know that it is the truth when you are dead. After you die you will be rewarded with heaven for believing what we tell you."

"And what if it is not true?" may someone have asked.

"What!! You doubt the word of God? You deserve to be put to death!" was the harsh answer given by both religious ideologies over many centuries.

So apart from dangling the carrot regarding the other world, they also used the stick in this world. The threat: "If you don't believe what we tell you, you will be killed", was not only the hissing of a snake. It was



a deadly bite. Christianity stopped killing in the name of God only some 250 years ago and Islam is still at it, with ISIS or Boko Haram being examples of inhuman brutalities in the name of Allah.

Why would they do this? Do they really believe that it is God's command? I don't know. But I guess that ultimately it is about power and big money and not about "saving souls", as claimed.

The strategy to claim divine approval for the demands of a small group had mind boggling results. After some 2000 years for Christianity and 1400 years for Islam, 2 billion human beings consider themselves as Christians and 1.5 billion as Muslims. Imagine, Christianity started with a small group in Palestine and later in Rome, and Islam started with a small group in Mecca and later in Medina. These huge numbers are no doubt extraordinary. However, it was paid for with a heavy price by countless individuals who felt not convinced by the dogmas and behavior of the clergy, but had to conform if they held their lives dear. Further, societies under the sway of Christianity and Islam were neither free, nor happy.

One's own conscience needed to be suspended in favor of the religious doctrine. I learnt it in catechism class as a child: "If there is conflict between one's conscience and what the Church says, one has to follow the Church."

This demand is serious and shows that not all is well with those religions. Is conscience, supported by sound reason, not our moral barometer? Is freedom of conscience not guaranteed in the Declaration of Human Rights? Is it not dangerous to demand suspension in favor of an ideology that may promote, apart from good, also unethical behavior? Should such ideologies that demand blind allegiance not be intensely scrutinized in the interest of humanity?

ISIS terrorists are a case in point. Have those youngsters no conscience? Or has it been silenced by the Quranic injunction to wage Jihad for Allah? They brush away any human feeling and justify their worst, violent instincts. Do they really believe they will be rewarded with paradise for slaughtering other human beings in whom the same one life and love is throbbing?

There are other features of the dogmatic religions that don't stand up to scrutiny:

For example the claim that the creator - God or Allah - is watching us from 'somewhere'. He (alleged to be male) is not our essence according to the dogmatic religions. To claim, as Indian traditions do,

that the cause/ creator is permeating the whole universe, and we are in our innermost being one with That, is considered heresy. Several Christian and Muslim mystics were killed for expressing their experience of being one with the Whole.

Another doubtful claim is that human beings have only one life, and on the basis of this one life, eternity will be decided - either heaven or hell. Simply by reasoning, this seems unlikely. Then there are many cases (over 3000 are documented in the archive of the University of Virginia, USA.) where persons remembered their past life and gave details about their previous life that nobody could know. Moreover, the law of karma makes much more sense when it is stretched over many lives.

Another point is the attitude towards animals and nature. Man is considered as the crown of creation and the rest is there for his service. It is clearly a harmful attitude and the west is in the process of changing it. Butchering animals on a daily basis by the millions can't be the 'right' of man. It demeans him. Vegetarianism is, at least in theory, seen as a solution to many problems.

Extremely harmful is also another attitude: Arrogance towards those, who don't belong to one's religion, as they are damned by the Highest himself. "Don't think about truth" is told to children and adults. "Man can never know the truth. God had to reveal it and he has revealed it only in the Bible", claims Christianity or "only in Quran", claims Islam. And they assure their flock: "You belong to the chosen ones. You are very lucky".

Unfortunately, this claim caters to a weakness in human beings. Who doesn't like to feel superior to others, and more so, when it is divinely ordained? Further, to belong to a big group of like-minded people gives a sense of strength. The only requirement is 'blind faith' in return. It may seem a small price, but it is huge. It undermines one's integrity and humanness.

Christianity stopped killing those who dissent with the dogmas of the Church, but "conversion" of heathen is still considered the sacred duty of every good Christian. Muslims, too, have to bring the whole world to worship only Allah and obviously, the agenda is still unfinished. "Conversion" has necessarily an element of coercion - allurements, deception or threat - because believing unverifiable claims as absolute truth does not

**Christianity stopped killing in the name of God only some 250 years ago and Islam is still at it.**



Westerners are gradually getting out from the grip of forced Christianity. Theirs was a joyless religion and many are tired of it. They don't believe anymore that only one way leads to truth; they consider rebirth as possible and become vegetarians. They are influenced by Indian thought and those who visited India are almost envious of the joyful, sacred atmosphere of spiritual India. Just attending for example Ganga Arti or Ramayana Parayanam induces automatically a feeling of awe, wonder and joy.

come naturally. Both religions didn't grow to those huge numbers by convincing arguments, as there are no convincing arguments. They grew by conversion and by indoctrination of small children born to those who were converted. Every sane, liberal person should welcome a ban on conversions by coercion.

Westerners are gradually getting out from the grip of forced Christianity. Theirs was a joyless religion and many are tired of it. They don't believe anymore that only one way leads to truth; they consider rebirth as possible and become vegetarians. They are influenced by Indian thought and those who visited India are almost envious of the joyful, sacred atmosphere of spiritual India. Just attending for example Ganga Arti or Ramayana Parayanam induces automatically a feeling of awe, wonder and joy.

"We are all Hindus now" was the title of an article in Newsweek a few years ago that summarized the preference among many Americans for Indian insights that are based on reason and intuition, instead of blindly believing in Christian dogmas. This does not mean that those Americans stop praying to Jesus or won't sing Christmas carols, but they don't swallow the whole belief system anymore. They use their conscience and intelligence, and refuse to believe incredible dogmas, like that heathen go to hell. This means, they are more like Hindus.

Westerners become more Hindu and persons with Hindu names shout on Indian TV that Indians that were converted must continue to wear their straightjacket

and must not be allowed to come back to their eternal, joyful Dharma. Further, these same persons have no objection that Christians and Muslims continue their conversion agenda by dubious means and plenty of money. The strangest thing: these people claim to be liberal, secular and progressive. Can someone please make them see light? ■

## About the Author

### Maria Wirth

is a German and came to India for a holiday after finishing her psychology studies at Hamburg University. She visited the Ardh Kumbha Mela in Haridwar in April 1980 where she met Sri Anandamayi Ma and Devaraha



Baba, two renowned saints. With their blessing she continued to live in India and dived into India's spiritual tradition, sharing her insights with German readers through articles and books. For long, she was convinced that every Indian knows and treasures his great heritage.

However, when in recent years, she noticed that there seemed to be a concerted effort to prevent Indians (and the world) from knowing how valuable this ancient Indian heritage is, she started to point out the unique value of Indian tradition.

Source: <https://mariawirthblog.wordpress.com/2014/12/28/coming-home-to-intuition-and-reason-from-blind-belief/>





## Stress Management and Spirituality

*By Siddheshwari Devi  
(Didi ji)*

**W**hile explaining stress management to an audience, a lecturer raised a glass of water and asked, "How heavy is this glass of water?" Answers ranged from 20g to 500g. The lecturer replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long you try to hold it. If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm. If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance. In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes." He continued, "And that's the way it is with life. If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, the burden becomes increasingly heavy and we won't be able to carry on. As with the glass of water, you have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again. When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the burden."

We all carry several burdens throughout life. These are related to matters such as work, family and health, and can leave us feeling 'heavy' after a while. If you let it go on for long, it will consume you and it can affect your physical, mental and emotional health. We see and experience this in our lives on a daily basis. Unfortunately, we either do not rest and refresh ourselves or we seek that refreshment in wrong places and things.

How can we best mitigate the stress of our lives? You can start by setting the glass down and handing it over to God. Your burden will start to lighten immediately. Slowly, you will learn to trust Him to hold the glass for a while. You will slowly start to feel renewed and refreshed.

### Seek Advice from Experts

One of the best ways to learn is to learn directly from someone. Books are a wonderful source of knowledge, but they are not enough. If they were, the



teaching profession would be non-existent. It is quite a privilege to be able to seek advice from an expert in the field.

You must not think that experts are expensive. More often than not, you can gain from their expertise without any cost. These are your friends, neighbors, acquaintances, parents and grandparents. Quite often, the experts are most willing to lend a helpful hand. Think about it. If you are using the computer, as I am, you most likely did not learn how to work on it through books. More than likely, you were taught by a friend or a family member, and you are possibly seeking computer guidance even now, as I am.

It is quite senseless to not seek expert advice. If you have never purchased a house, why not seek advice from someone who has purchased one? If you are going to travel to a different country, why not find out about the country from someone who lives there or has visited it? If you are learning a new language, why not speak with someone who speaks it well already? And if you have to pay for the expert advice, it is well worth it.

Whether seeking worldly advice or spiritual

## Listen Carefully

*Very few people are experts in the art of listening. Most of us are usually absorbed in our own world, and are not accustomed to paying full attention to what is being said. This leads to the common complaint, "You never listen to me."*

*Being a good listener puts you at an advantage in every place and situation, whether it be the classroom, a meeting, daily interactions with people or relationships with family and friends. If you would like to be a good listener, I have some hints for you.*

★ *Make sure to make eye contact with the person speaking to you. Give full attention to what is being said. To make sure you have understood what was said, repeat what was said to you and ask if you have understood it properly.*

★ *Do not interrupt when someone is speaking. Allow the other person to finish what he is saying. If there are questions, ask once he has stopped talking.*

★ *Although this is the age of multitasking, be fully involved in listening to others. Turn off the TV and the iPod.*

★ *Pay attention to body language. People often communicate more through body language than words.*

★ *Do not be embarrassed to say, "Pardon me, I didn't understand what you just said." Many people feel silly doing this, and pretend to have understood even though they really have not.*

★ *In spite of listening carefully, there will be times when you will not understand an unfamiliar name. In that case, feel free to ask the speaker to spell it for you.*



guidance, expert advice is a God's gift. With guidance in all walks of life, we can work more effectively and make more of the little time we all have in this world.

### Practice what you have learned

Would you consent to be treated by a doctor who has attended medical school for years but has never treated a patient in his life, or taught by a teacher who has learned all about making lesson plans but has never made one? Does a country send athletes to the Olympics who can rattle off all kinds of statistics in their sleep but have never played an actual game? I shall safely assume that your answer is 'no' to the above.

Theoretical knowledge is essential but incomplete in itself. Practical experience is an integral part of learning. A doctor spends endless hours treating patients under the watchful eye of a superior before being allowed to treat patients on her own. A teacher has to spend several hours in a classroom under the supervision of an experienced instructor before being given a license to teach. An athlete spends several

hours on the field practicing and playing competitively before earning the right to represent his country in the Olympics.

Similarly, if you wish to make inner progress, theoretical knowledge in itself is incomplete. Reading inspirational books and listening to enlightening talks is very important but in the end you will start making progress only if you diligently incorporate what you have learned in daily life. Theoretical knowledge will provide the spiritual foundation on how to lead your life. However, it is practical experience that will reveal to you the strides you have made and the challenges that have yet to be overcome.

To make self-improvement, you will have to practice what you have learned. ■

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## Turmeric Therapy to Fight Malaria

**New Delhi, Dec. 17:** Indian scientists have trapped a key ingredient of the common kitchen spice turmeric in tiny spheres shaped like soap bubbles and are pitching the entrapped molecule as a potential new therapy to fight malaria.

Aparajita Ghosh at the Bose Institute, Calcutta, and her colleagues have shown that the turmeric compound called curcumin, entrapped in spheres, can improve survival in mice infected with a parasite similar to the one that causes brain inflammation in humans.

Several research groups have earlier shown that curcumin, the compound that imparts the yellow color to turmeric, has anti-cancer, and anti-inflammatory, and anti-infective effects against several organisms, including the malaria parasite.

But curcumin by itself is poorly absorbed by the body and not enough of it is available long enough in the bloodstream for effective therapy.

The large size of the curcumin molecule prevents it from penetrating the biological membrane called the blood-brain-barrier, a key factor to combat cerebral malaria. These drawbacks have prompted researchers to search for novel strategies to deliver curcumin efficiently.

Now, Ghosh and her collaborators at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and the University of Pune have trapped curcumin in tiny nano-spheres, effectively shrinking its size to allow it to cross the blood-brain barrier when administered as an oral therapy.



The researchers infected laboratory mice with a parasite called *Plasmodium berghei* that causes a brain inflammation in mice similar to the illness caused by *Plasmodium falciparum* in humans - and tested their "nanotised" curcumin as an oral drug.

"We see a significant increase in the time for which the nanotised curcumin is available, circulating in the bloodstream," said Ghosh, who had begun the research at the National Institute of Immunology, New Delhi, and is continuing it at the Bose Institute.

Natural curcumin typically circulates in the bloodstream for less than an hour before the body's cleanup mechanisms eliminate it. The nanotised curcumin, Ghosh said, remained in the bloodstream for 48 to 72 hours.

In the laboratory experiments, about 50 per cent of the mice that received the oral nanotised curcumin survived the malaria infection, while all the mice that did not receive therapy died within eight days of the infection.

The researchers also observed that the mice which received nanotised curcumin also had lower levels of convulsions and involuntary body movements, suggesting that the therapy also regulated brain inflammation.

"We know the nanotised curcumin is able to cross the blood-brain barrier, but we do not understand its mechanism of action in the brain yet," Ghosh said. The scientists plan to seek research funds to investigate the biological mechanisms of nanotised curcumin in the brain. ■

**Source:** [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1141218/jsp/nation/story\\_4045.jsp#.VJNXrcqDA](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1141218/jsp/nation/story_4045.jsp#.VJNXrcqDA)



Arjun is also known as Partha. Krishna agreed to become his charioteer (*Sarathi*). Thus Lord Krishna is called Partha-sarathi...

The Lord is ready to hold the reins of our life's chariot and take us through this difficult journey of life if only we humbly and wisely choose Him to be our charioteer...

Who shall we be: Arjun or Duryodhan? The choice is ours.

## Parthasarathi

**By Manu Bhatt**

**A**fter the Pandavas completed their 13-year exile, they sent King Drupad's purohit to Dhritarashtra as their emissary with a request to return to them Indraprastha. As Duryodhan had no intention of returning Pandavas' kingdom and the purohit was so told, it looked like the issue would be decided only by a war. Next, both sides - Pandavas and Kauravas - started sending their emissaries to all kingdoms of Aryavarta to solicit their help in the ensuing war.

Duryodhan despised Krishna but was aware of his prowess as a great fighter and as a ruler with a mighty army. He wanted to get Krishna's commitment to fight on behalf of the Kauravas. He knew that, with Krishna on Kauravas' side, the victory will undoubtedly be his. Therefore, Duryodhan departed for Dwarika his chariot driven by powerful and fast horses. At the same time, Arjun also left for Dwarika to ensure that Krishna would help the Pandavas.

Both of them arrived in Dwarika almost at the same time. When they reached Krishna's chamber, he was

taking a nap. Duryodhan entered Krishna's bedroom first and seated himself on a regal chair at the head of Krishna's bed near his pillow. Arjun entered next, did "pranam" to Krishna with folded hands and kept standing at the end of the bed near His feet.

How Duryodhan and Arjun approached Krishna is indicative of their personalities. Duryodhan was proud and arrogant and took every opportunity to exhibit his status as a king. He did not recognize the greatness of Krishna, did not bow to do pranam and seated himself near Krishna's head on a chair which he thought was worthy of his status. On the other hand, Arjun, like all Pandavas, lived his life with dharma. Though he was considered the best archer in the whole country, he was humble. He had observed and heard of Krishna's greatness and held him in high respect. Many a time, when faced with life's difficulties, Arjun had sought Krishna's advice and help. He revered Krishna. Humbly and with reverence, he kept standing at the end of the bed near Krishna's feet.





When Krishna woke up, his eyes fell on Arjun standing at the end of the bed. He smiled and asked Arjun the reason for coming to Dwarka. Immediately Duryodhan intimated Krishna of his presence and asserted that he had arrived first. Both Arjun and Duryodhan explained that they had come to ask Krishna's help in the ensuing war. Since he had arrived first, Duryodhan insisted that Krishna should accede to his request.

Krishna replied that he saw Arjun first, so he deserved the first chance and per dharma the younger person be given the first chance. However, since he was similarly related to both, he would help both. He presented two choices. The first option, Krishna alone, who would bear any weapon and would not fight during the battle, was available. The second option would make Krishna's mighty one akshauhini army (million warriors) available who were fully equipped to fight. He offered Arjun the first chance to choose. Arjun chose Krishna without any hesitation. Duryodhan, with a fake disappointment but with a jubilant heart, accepted Krishna's mighty army and pitied Arjun for making a bad choice. With great joy and a sense of accomplishment he took leave of Krishna.

Krishna then asked Arjun with a smile why he chose him fully knowing that he will not bear arm and will not fight in the war. Arjun replied that, he was confident of winning the war with Krishna on his side. Arjun requested Krishna to be his charioteer during the war. A skilled charioteer is a great asset in a war. He can place the chariot in the right place and in the right position; he can control the horses deftly so that the warrior can concentrate on fighting. Krishna agreed to become Arjun's charioteer. Arjun is also known as Partha. In Sanskrit language, a charioteer is called Sarathi. Thus Lord Krishna is called Parthasarathi or the charioteer of Partha.

What does this incident, described in the seventh

chapter of Udyogaparva in Mahabharat, teach us?

First, Arjun approached the Lord in complete humility and stood at his feet. The Lord's eyes naturally fell upon him first. Humility is the first step to God-realization. Arjun had no ulterior motives in his mind when he met Krishna. His heart and mind were clean.

Second, Arjun had complete faith in and respect for Krishna. It is with this faith that, faced with confusion when required to fight his relatives, elders and teachers in the war that followed, Arjun surrenders to Krishna and says, "I am confused. I don't know what my dharma is in this war. I am your disciple. Please guide me.\*" And the Lord not only taught Arjun what his dharma was but, with great love and compassion, showed him his Universal All-encompassing Form and guided him to victory in the war. That is why Sanjay says in the last chapter of Bhagavad Geeta,

*"Where the Lord of Yoga Shri Krishna and Partha with bow and arrow stand together, victory is assured. This is my firm conviction."*

For success in life, therefore, we should put our faith in the Lord, surrender to Him and be assured that when He is on our side; boat of life will sail through. Usually, like Duryodhan, we select money, riches, recognition, and sensual pleasures and the Lord is seldom our goal.

Third, as Arjun's charioteer, the Lord guided him through all battle arrays and army formations of the enemy and often saved him from the enemy's weapons. The Lord is ready to hold the reins of our life's chariot and take us through this difficult journey of life if only we humbly and wisely choose Him to be our charioteer.

Who shall we be: Arjun or Duryodhan? The choice is ours. ■

\* Bhagavad Geeta, Ch. 2.

## About the Author

**Manu Bhatt**

*is a founder member, former President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Bharatiya Temple of Central Ohio. He is also the former President of Chinmaya Mission of Columbus.*





## Food Service: Adding to the Growth of Religious Establishment

*By Vijay K. Oza*

**T**he last few decades have seen a tremendous growth of immigrant Indian population in North America. This has led to an increase in demand for more temples of worship and cultural halls by the Indian community. Apart from holding religious functions, the expanded facilities are popular with devotees, and are used for popular cultural, health and educational seminars, special events, and training programs that are hosted at these establishments for devotees of all age groups including children.

Many of these religious establishments are built in remote areas mainly due to the availability of affordable and abundant real estate. Patrons planning to visit such establishments spend considerable time commuting, not to mention the time spent to participate with their family members in religious, cultural and literary programs. During these extended visits, families have to face the dilemma of missing a

meal or finding a food establishment in the area. Many temples do not have a food facility on site, nor are there any within the immediate vicinity, which leaves many families with fewer options. The lack of a food facility has led stakeholders at these religious establishments to devote a section of the building for incorporating a food outlet where devotees and visitors can purchase nutritious food as well as common snacks that are appealing to children.

Fellowship and bonding that comes naturally with sharing food is an integral part of building a strong religious community. Additionally, events involving food can help in reaching out to the community. Adding a food service outlet to the religious temple has several advantages, which benefit both the patrons and the establishments. However, along with the benefits inherent with food service comes a certain amount of risk and responsibility.



Inadequate training informal food preparation, a lack of knowledge in safe food handling, along with casual and carefree attitudes of administrators at the establishment can have devastating consequences. Serious food borne illness outbreaks at various religious establishments were reported in the past:

- ★ 100 fell ill from Mormon church pot luck on Sunday --Nevada health officials believe the cause was a pot luck lunch that took place October 2013;

- ★ In 1997 at a church in Chaptico, Maryland, one person died and at least 143 others became ill after an outbreak of food poisoning traced to a church dinner.

- ★ At a Morgan County, Alabama church dinner at least 19 illnesses including a death are being investigated after church patrons ate a catered meal;

- ★ At least 22 people have reported becoming ill after consuming dinner at a Church in Ark City, Kansas.

**It is important to understand Food Safety Regulations and follow basic food handling safety practices such as:**

- ★ Signage reflecting the Importance of Food Safety
- ★ Applying Good Personal Hygiene of Food Handlers
- ★ Temperature Control for storing, cooking and serving of food items
- ★ Cross-Contamination of food
- ★ Cleaning and Sanitizing of a Facility, it's Equipment & Utensils
- ★ Overall Safe Food Preparation and Handling at all times

### Planning For Food Service Facility

Trustees and Management of religious establishments often underestimate the level of commitment in time, money and other resources, required to build a successful foodservice operation. Often plans are formulated without taking all the pertinent factors into consideration, resulting in omissions, which becomes obvious at the start of the operation. Regardless of the scope and complexity of a food outlet, religious establishments planning to build a new food service facility or planning to carry out major renovation to an existing food service facility must include a food service professional in their core planning team along with the architect and engineers.

Once the planning team is finalized, Trustees and Management must work with the food service professional to establish a program that includes, at the very least, the following:

- ★ Trustees and Management's vision of the food

service program

- ★ Establish an initial budget and timeframe for the food service facility

- ★ Establish number and types of food outlets and their capacity

- ★ Finalize food and beverage menu along with service type and hours of operation

- ★ Hiring a Food Service Professional during initial programming stages has several advantages such as:

- ★ Huge savings in cost and time as a result of layout and design efficiencies, proper equipment selection, and construction cost as the information is available at the front end of the project;

- ★ Managing a project within a time frame and budget that will avoid or at least minimize costly time and budget overruns;



**Guru-ka-Langar, a dining hall where around 35,000 people a day are fed for free by temple**

- ★ Conformance to local, county, state and national code requirements;

- ★ Conformance to food safety guidelines and health code requirements, along with operational safety requirements;

- ★ Information and solutions that impact the overall operation and support the integrity of the facility design;

- ★ Avoiding a last minute scramble for required space to meet functional needs

### About the Author

**Vijay K. Oza**

*has a master's degree in Hospitality Management and is a professional member of FCSI and PMI. Prior to becoming Director of Projects Vijay has successfully managed foodservice design projects with national and international clients, throughout all segments of the foodservice industry including hotels, corporate cafeterias, country clubs, hospitals, school and college dining facilities, and religious establishments.*

# Providing Excellent Temple Tour Experience

*By Fred Stella*



Of all the seva I offer as our mandir's Pracharak my favorite duty is conducting tours of our temple for the various groups that request such an experience. It often gives us the opportunity to make the very 1st real impression that many people will have of Hindu Dharma outside of the 10 minutes they spent studying our tradition in high school. In other cases it serves as way to correct so much misinformation that has prejudiced impressionable minds.

## Is it an Option in Your Temple?

Not every temple offers touring to its non-Hindu neighbors. It is imperative that community members know that they are welcomed into your mandir. There are various ways to create awareness of this; the most obvious is notification on your website. Our homepage has a clearly marked tab that links people with the appropriate contact information. This is how we get most inquiries.

Another way is networking with the broader community. Often times there are interfaith organizations that provide regular newsletters (via print or e-mail) to their constituents. We have this as an

option and take advantage of publicizing our tours there.

Finally, be proactive. Don't be afraid to make contact with local schools and colleges. Comparative Religions instructors often are thrilled to find out that they can plan field trips with you.

## In the Beginning

If the option exists I recommend that people are ushered in a room such as a social hall prior to being led into the sanctuary. I admit that this is as much for dramatic effect as much as anything else. It is here that an introductory lecture can be delivered. With all of the color and pageantry that is found in the sanctuary it is likely to distract from the discussion that will prepare them for that part of the visit.

Naturally, the lecture is crucial on a number of levels. The person who provides this must have a solid working knowledge of Hindu Dharma, yet offer it in a manner that is not pedantic. Remember that the medium is the message. People will recall the delivery of the talk as much as they will recall the talk itself. I always try to inject humor and stories in my



presentations. While not dodging the very significant differences between our beliefs and practices we certainly want to emphasize what we do hold in common.

There are many aspects to a religion: history, rituals, scriptures, saints, etc. But there are 2 very important questions that must be covered before any of these others make sense.

1) What is our concept of Divinity? (Who or what is God? Who are the gods and goddesses? Personal? Impersonal?)

2) How does humanity relate to that Divinity? (Prayer? Are we separate beings? Are we part and parcel of God? What is our ultimate goal?)

I like to cover these before anything else. It is good practice to offer the disclaimer that Hindu Dharma has many different expressions and that people from various sampradayas might answer some questions differently. Occasionally I'll remark that this group might say X about this point, while another might say Y. However, I'm careful not to confuse or overwhelm them with too much data. In most cases one simple answer is fine for the moment.

### Before They Even Ask It

There are certain questions that one can fairly predict will come up when it's time for Q&A if they are not addressed in the lecture. Some of these involve criticisms of our tradition. I think people respect us when we don't wait for them to bring it up. For instance, if you ask the average American who knows little about us to name 3 things about Hinduism you safely bet that "caste" will be on that list; along with cow worship and possibly India's poverty. So often I will get things like that out of the way so we can concentrate on more salient topics. People really do respond to an honest, critical explanation of elements of our faith that might be challenging to address. Admitting to the fact that in our long history there has been corruption and undharmic activity is a noble endeavor that will be received well. This does not mean that we should accept accusations and indictments from poor scholarship that might be leveled. That said, I can say that I have never had to deal with a question or statement that was delivered in a disrespectful manner. But I try to be ready for any situation should one come up.

### Entering the Sanctuary

My time with people in the social hall usually takes

up to an hour. After that I lead them into the sanctuary. I said earlier that there is a dramatic effect. You probably know what I mean. To exit a very basic, unadorned room and walk into a Hindu sanctuary, with its decorated and bejeweled murthies, elegant altars and exotic architecture is (to use a colloquial term) "a mind blower." You can see the expressions of awe in their faces. It clearly lets you know that this is the most colorful place of worship they've ever entered.

During this time we approach each altar and I provide some brief story about the deity. If a puja happens to be in progress we'll observe that for a few minutes. I do my best to explain the various portions as they happen. Since we are on our feet all this time I try to keep things short. Then the group is led back into the social hall for any lingering questions.

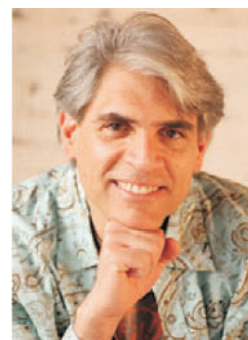
### Happy Endings

The feedback we receive from the various groups we welcome is always very positive. We've had a number of people come back on their own to enjoy some of our more festive occasions. Students have contacted me to offer guidance as they wrestle with issues that their birth religion does not fully satisfy. Most important, it makes us feel like an integral part of our community and keepers of the Dharma. ■

### About the Author

**Fred Stella**

*began his spiritual search within the Hindu Dharma at the age of 15. He was initiated into his specific tradition over 25 years ago. His training includes time spent in temples and ashrams both here and in India. His articles have appeared in Hindu Vishwa, India Link and Hinduism Today magazines. He is an ordained Pracharak and serves in that role at the West Michigan Hindu Temple. For almost 20 years he has served as President of Interfaith Dialogue Association. In that role he hosts the radio program (also available on the web), "Common Threads."*



# Religious Freedom: Whose freedom is it?

*By Virendra Parekh*



**T**hanks, but no thanks. That would be the reaction of discerning missionaries to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's much awaited intervention in the ongoing discourse on tolerance and religious freedom. He has obliged them at last, but with a twist which negates much of the favor.

On the face of it, it would be a matter of immense satisfaction to the church that the political head of a non-Christian secular country attended a purely religious function (organized by the Catholic Church to celebrate the sainthood of Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Mother Euphrasia) and spoke of 'tolerance', 'freedom of faith' and 'the individual's right to adopt the religion of his choice'.

The satisfaction was heightened by the context. Having availed of India's hospitality for two days, the US President Barack Obama thought it fit and necessary to harangue us heathens on the virtues of tolerance and religious freedom. "India will succeed so long as it is not splintered on religious lines," he intoned.

The hypocrisy of this moral grandstanding was astounding. Mr. Obama's remarks were made shortly before he flew to Saudi Arabia, a country which openly denies religious freedom in theory and practice. Pakistan routinely and systematically persecutes its Hindu and Christian minorities, but remains America's frontline ally in the so-called war on terror and receives guns and dollars in large quantities. Yet, "Nowhere is it more important to uphold religious freedom than in India." Back home in Washington he bemoaned the "acts of intolerance that would have shocked Gandhiji."

The hand of the missionary network behind the

remark was too obvious to be ignored. It was no coincidence that the US Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), which was instrumental in the blacklisting of Mr. Narendra Modi after the 2002 Gujarat violence, and believes that religious freedom in India is comparable to that in Afghanistan and Turkey, welcomed the President's remarks. In fact, Mr. Obama, like Mr. Bill Clinton before him, is connected to Southern Baptist groups who have global missionary networks, but they would not mention this in public or condemn the bigotry of Southern Baptists, who would not accept the Hindu, Buddhist or Sikh paths as valid.

An editorial in the New York Times asked the Prime Minister to break his deafening silence on religious intolerance.

And now, Mr. Modi has spoken what was expected of him, but with important improvisation. For the missionaries, it is bad enough that he wants every Indian (and not just Hindus) to have equal respect for all religions. He appealed to 'ALL' religious groups (and not just Hindus) to act with restraint, mutual respect, and tolerance, in the true spirit of this ancient nation.

He went on to say, "My government will ensure that there is complete freedom of faith and that everyone has the undeniable right to retain or adopt the religion of his or her choice without coercion or undue influence." This reference to the right to adopt a religion of one's choice is no doubt a big (and reckless) concession to the Abrahamic creeds. But there is a double qualification here. The right to retain one's ancestral faith precedes the one to choose another. Secondly, the change of religion has to be made 'without coercion or undue





*India's prime minister Narendra Modi at a function organized by the Catholic Church to celebrate the sainthood of Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Mother Euphrasia*

influence', if at all. The standard Hindu position is that we should stick to the tradition we are born into, while respecting and learning from other traditions. Mr. Modi went as close to that as possible under the Constitution.

But Hindu intellectuals and organizations need to go further.

For Abrahamic religions, religious tolerance and freedom of religion is a one-way street. According to The World Christian Encyclopedia, tolerance means that Christians should "show genuine religious tolerance to other expressions of faith in Christ." But so far as other, non-Christian religions are concerned, religious toleration "does not deny their convictions about Christ and his church or abandon proclamation, evangelism or conversion". The Christians retain their right to "believe other religions false and inadequate" and to "attempt to win (adherents) to faith and Jesus Christ." (The World Christian Encyclopedia, David B Barrett, OUP: 1982, reviewed by Ram Swarup in The Times of India, July 14, 1985)

This view of religious tolerance and freedom of religion is implicitly accepted by the modern West in its dealings with other, especially eastern traditions. But they run into a big problem: How to sound liberal without ceasing to be diehard. You scratch them a little and the old theology of Christian superiority shines forth undiminished.

In the last hundred years, western scholars have developed a new intellectual apparatus to attack non-Christian religions and gods. The language of this attack is not theological but psychological. Brazen attempts to subvert and destroy other traditions are paraded as right of the individual to practice a religion of his choice.

This touching concern for individual rights is a cloak

for theological arrogance. In Christian theology, a pagan is more than just a nasty physical fact; essentially, he is a lost soul needing to be saved by Jesus and his church missionaries. Thanks to the powerful missionary lobby in the UN, its universal declaration of human rights 1948 states that every individual has a right to embrace the religion or belief of his choice. This has been interpreted as the right of the church to seek converts among the world's peoples without hindrance by whatever means and regardless of the consequences to the man and society. It has opened the doors for questionable proselytization and conversion tactics with lethal consequences to native traditions across the world. The missionary apparatus is a real threat to the genuine freedom of faith.

The church claims the right to freedom of religion, by which it means its own right to convert others, and never the other way round (recall its strong condemnation of ghar-wapsi). Christian evangelical efforts in the world today constitute nothing less than an open declaration of war on the other religions. What it forgets is that if missionaries have a right to preach the gospel, ancient societies professing pacifist non-proselytizing religions have a right to defend themselves.

Hindu organizations should work for a new and equitable definition of freedom of religion to end this theological warfare and bring peace among religions. The UN must recognize explicitly that countries, cultures and peoples of tolerant philosophies and religions who believe in live and let live too have a right of protection against aggressive, systematic proselytizing. The new charter will assert that an individual's right to religious freedom includes the right to practice his faith in peace free from uninvited attacks upon his faith and family, and not to be forced to compromise his faith as price of accepting help in times of societal or personal upheaval.

This is the view that Mr. Narendra Modi should articulate next time he holds forth on freedom of religion. Most of the non-Christian world, targeted by the church, will endorse this view. He could also share with his buddy Barack a few things Gandhiji said about the missionary activity and conversions.

In a note to a missionary, Dr. Thornton, Gandhiji wrote, "If the missionary friends will forget their mission viz. of proselytizing Indians and of bringing Christ to them, they will do wonderfully good work. Your duty is done with the ulterior motive of proselytizing. When I go to

(Continued on page 29)

# The Secret to a Happy New You: Five Simple Tips to Let Go

by *Satya Kalra*

**W**hat would you do if you picked up a burning-hot coal? Embrace it and hold onto it? Or drop it - fast? If we cling to our painful life experiences, they burn themselves into our consciousness. The more we clutch old pain to our chest, the more we'll suffer, face obstacles, and grow old and tired.

Instead, reprogram your mind and savor every moment of life. Journalist William Allan White said, "I am not afraid of tomorrow, for I have seen yesterday and I love today." Find a today YOU love by letting go. Use these five simple tips to let go and help yourself find happiness.

## 1. Let go of guilt.

Are you feeling guilt when you shouldn't? Some guilt is useful: a reminder to our conscience to do the right thing. But maybe you're carrying more than you can handle. Maybe you feel guilty about mistakes you made years ago. Maybe you think you ought to bear



others' burdens for them. Forgive yourself for what you're unable to accomplish. Let go of guilt and focus on things you enjoy and are good at." The unnatural work of another's path is done with fear; therefore it produces too much stress." (Gita 3.35)

## 2. Let go of the past.

Your parents or others may have hurt you as a child, but you're not a child anymore. You've already forgiven yourself - perhaps it's time to forgive those who have hurt you in the past-parents, siblings, or friends. Sometimes, you can't forgive, if you've been hurt severely or you know those involved will try to hurt you again. Let go of people who can't stop repeating their hurtful behavior.

## 3. Let go of misperceptions.

Pain is often caused more by our perception than by the reality of a situation. But you can change your perception, reprogramming your mind to release the pain and find genuine ways to transform

yourself so you can savor every moment of life. A sense of perspective will help you weather painful problems that come at you from every angle. If you look at the situation honestly, you may realize that the pain is either avoidable, or it was not intended to hurt you after all.

## 4. Let go of negative messages.

If you tell yourself, "you're going to mess this up," or "I can't take this anymore," you may actually convince yourself it to be true. Let those messages go. Think about who put them there in the first place. Every child starts out with a healthy ego, but sometimes, it gets defeated early on. Strengthen



your sense of self with positive messages instead, like, "I've done this before, I'm strong, I can get through it."

## 5. Let go of every task but one.

Let go of everything except one task. Just let all the balls drop but one and see what happens. For each task you pick up, try tackling it from start to finish, in one continuous line. In a controversial Harvard Business Review article, business leader Peter Bregman decided to try one week without multitasking. His biggest surprise? "It was delightful." His senses were finally free to explore the world around him without fear of interruption. "Don't laugh, but I actually - for the first time in a while - noticed the beauty of leaves blowing in the wind?" He let everything go... and found a state of peace. By releasing the obstacles in your life, you free yourself to find PEACE.

Protect yourself with a life free of guilt;  
Energize yourself by breaking free from the past;  
Actualize your dreams by releasing misperceptions;  
Challenge yourself to let go of negative messages;  
Engage fully by dropping extra tasks... Just let go.

Leave the pain behind, embrace the love and happiness within yourself, and move forward, ready to adore all that life brings your way. As Lord Krishna said, "Surrendering all action to Me with your mind fully focused on Me, without selfishness and anticipation of any reward, no claims to proprietorship,

attachment, and without any mental stress, do your duty and fight the battle without any hesitation." (Gita.3.30) ■

**Tag words:** *Let Go, Reprogram Your Mind, Guilt, Past, Perception, Negativity, One Task at a Time, Peace, Love, Happiness, Gita, Lord Krishna, Surrender*

## About the Author

**Satya Kalra,**

*based in California, is a former CEO from Biotech Industry and founder of Path to Anandam (Path to Blissful life). She is a philanthropist, spiritual guide, self-transformational and happiness coach, spiritual guide, self-healing expert, and international speaker. She has published many spiritual articles and 12 bestselling books such as 'My Questions and God's Answers- Bhagavad Gita', '108 Mantra to Awaken Your Soul and four of Path' to Anandam pocketbook series. Her recent bestselling book is "Ultimate Happiness Health & Chakras- The blissful journey through 7 wonders of soul". She teaches how to attain eternal happiness and peace within and reach your unlimited potential by raising your conscious level.*  
[www.pathtoanandam.org](http://www.pathtoanandam.org)



## Religious Freedom: Whose freedom is it?

(Continued from page 27) your institutions, I do not feel I am going to an Indian institution. This is what worries me."

Gandhiji's advice to the missionaries was five-fold. First, stop conversions altogether as "it is the deadliest poison that ever sapped the fountain of truth." Second, if you must convert, direct your efforts to those who are in a position to assess these matters properly. Do not target the poor, the illiterate or the destitute. Third, even for that effort, it would be better for non-Indian missionaries to return to their countries and attend to problems there. Those problems are large enough to engage all the missionaries that can be made available there. Fourth, in doing any kind of work among people, compliment the faith of the people, do not undermine it. Do not denationalize them. Finally, instead of living the life of the Church, live the life of Jesus, of piety, of the Sermon on the Mount. Let that life, that example, persuade people to embrace Christianity if they will, not this salesmanship.

Like the Mahatma, many modern Hindus have wondered why the Church cannot emulate the example of the Ramakrishna Mission and make the tribal understand his own religion better. What is the need for introducing him to Christ, the Bible and Christianity when his own objects of devotion, veneration and spirituality can serve him equally well?

Like communists, the church too has contributed a lot to the corruption of language, loading innocuous phrases with self-serving but sinister meanings and connotations. It is time to undo the damage not just to the language but also to the thought. That will be the beginning of real tolerance and freedom. ■

Source: <http://www.vijayvaani.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?aid=3499>



## Symposium on Understanding Religion's Contribution to Culture

*A Symposium on Understanding Religion's Contribution to Culture was organized by Students Association at Chatham University, Pittsburgh. There were representatives from the Christian community in Pittsburgh, a woman of Saudi origin of the Sufi Islamic tradition represented the Islamic view, a monk of Sri Lankan origin presented the Buddhist point of view, and the Hindu view was represented by **Bhakti Mehta, Sanjay Mehta**, The Hindu Jain Temple and VHPA.*

*During Q & A session at the end of the symposium, audience members asked several questions to the panel. However, the majority of questions were asked to the Hindu panel and were asked by female students. Some of my responses are listed below.*

### Report by Bhakti Mehta

**Q:** In your experience, what is one of the most common misconceptions about the religion you represent? How can it be righted?

Because Hindu faith is not an Abrahamic tradition, academia and media rarely highlight Hindu issues and features. Few misconceptions are many gods, cow worship, and stereotypical images of India etc. It can be righted through the school system and media support.

**Q:** Are there any aspects of your culture that you feel are well-understood by the mainstream in American society?

Some Hindu festival celebrations like Holi, Diwali and practices like Yoga are known by people of all faiths.

**Q:** How has the religion you represent supported or contributed to the art world, either historically or recently? Can these contributions be appreciated by those who do not practice the religion?

Indian dance, music, and traditional dresses are

liked and practiced by many non-Hindus. People from across the world appreciate and participate in the colorful Indian culture.

**Q:** What role does food play in the religion that you represent?

Food helps in spiritual journey and elevation. Vegetarian (sattvik) diet is recommended. A sattvik diet helps the mind balance, which leads to pure and spiritual thoughts.

**Q:** What are some areas in which you have experienced religious intolerance? Can you give a specific example? How did that impact you?

The Ancient History of the World is a text taught in the school system which mentions that 'Hindu women were not allowed to read the Vedas or sacred texts' and the practice of Sati. This being taught as school curriculum creates certain incorrect stereotypes. It takes a lot of effort and positive actions to diminish the impact of these teachings.

**Q:** When people refer to having a time and place





for religion, who or what dictates that time and place?

Often in professional environments and schools people are afraid to refer to religion, thinking it may come off as offensive. This is a practice we should slowly phase out. It should be ok to say Merry Christmas, just as it is ok to say Happy Diwali. Asking questions about other religions should be allowed, as long as the conversation remains civil and informative.

**Q:** What can be done to end religious intolerance?

The focus should remain on mutual learning and respect. It is not just about tolerating, it's about understanding.

**Q:** In what ways do you think your life would be different without the religion you practice?

My religion is who I am on a regular basis, it helps

define every action of my day- no matter how big or small. My life without my religious/spiritual beliefs is like a flower without fragrance.

**Q:** If someone is interested in exploring your religion, what would be a good first step to take into it?

The best way to learn about Hindu Dharma is by visiting a Hindu temple and read texts, such as Gita.

**Q:** What is your relationship with God?

For a Hindu, a relationship with God is direct. Our spiritual texts and Gurus are there to guide and assist in removing the ignorance while raising awareness. Once that stage is reached, the only thing remaining is the realization of God. ■

*Report by Bhakti Mehta,  
Coalition of Hindu Youth (CHY)*

## Fund Raising Campaign Launched to Establish Vivekananda Chair

**WASHINGTON:** A campaign has been launched in the US to raise funds for Swami Vivekananda Chair for study of Hinduism at a top university.

The Swami Vivekananda Endowed Chair for study of Hinduism at the University of Southern California (USC) in the US would require USD 3.3 million, officials said.

California-based Dharma Civilization Foundation has launched a crowd- funding campaign. Such a move by the Dharma Civilization Foundation (DCF) comes after it successfully launched Swami Vivekananda Visiting Professorship for the study of Hinduism in 2013. While several countries have funded chairs in religious studies, India has been lagging behind.

China has funded over 70 Confucius Institutes in the US alone and hundreds globally, in addition to dozens of study centers and numerous Chairs. The Saudi royal family has established multiple Chairs in US. ■

**Source:** [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-12-30/news/57528814\\_1\\_study-centres-fund-raising-campaign-hinduism](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-12-30/news/57528814_1_study-centres-fund-raising-campaign-hinduism)

# Role of Sound

# in Sanatana Dharma

**(Vedic Hinduism)**

***By Dr. M. G. Prasad***

## **Introduction**

Sound that we hear is basically vibrations produced by a source, which gets transmitted as waves through air and enters into our ears and then reaches our brain to be perceived as sound. The vibrations can be produced by various innumerable sources such as human voice, nature in various aspects such as animals, the five elements (earth, water, fire, wind and space) and their interactions, musical instruments, mechanical systems, etc. There are innumerable types of sounds that are perceived by humans in the general audio frequency range of 20 cycles per sec to 20000 cycles per sec. Also there are vibrations produced below and above this audio frequency range called infrasound and ultrasound respectively. The science of acoustics deals with all types of sound production. In reference to human perception from both psychological and

physiological perspectives, sound can be broadly classified as desirable and undesirable. The undesirable and unwanted sound is called as noise. There has been extensive modern scientific research to



*The characteristics of sound play a major role in the precise chanting and oral transmission of Veda mantras*



clearly show that the noise is detrimental to both physiological and psychological well being of humans.

Sound has also received importance in Sanatana Dharma (Vedic Hinduism). Vedas are the foundational reference literature of Vedic Hinduism. Vedas refers to a very large body of knowledge that deals with physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of life and the cosmos. The word Veda etymologically relate to the verbal root "Vid" meaning "to know". However it is interesting to note that Vedas are also termed as "Shruti" meaning "Heard". This means that the knowledge was heard in the form of mantras by the rishis. A rishi is the one who has realized the Supreme Being through intense spiritual austerities and meditation, and, through the blessings of the Supreme Being, has also obtained deep insight into life and Cosmos. A rishi who has heard the mantras in deep states of meditation is also referred as "mantra drishtaara" meaning "the seer of mantras". A mantra is an utterance with intonation, which carries spiritual knowledge and power and is described as "mananaat traananaat chaiva", which means "by repetition and contemplation the chanter is protected". The rishis chant the mantras as heard by them so that the mantras



*A rishi is the one who has realized the Supreme Being through intense spiritual austerities and meditation, and, through the blessings of the Supreme Being, has also obtained deep insight into life and Cosmos*

are orally transmitted with sound precision from them to their disciples in an unbroken process of teaching and learning. The characteristics of sound play a major role in the precise chanting and oral transmission of Veda mantras. The Vedas and Vedic literature place major emphasis on the role of sound in life. It is because sound plays critical role in several important aspects such as spiritual development, Vedic chants, music, bhajans, speech and literature.

### Spiritual Development

The Sanskrit words namely Naada and Shabda cannot be fully translated as sound because sound only refers partially to elaborate description of Naada and Shabda in the Vedas and Vedic scriptures. Also two types of Naada are described namely Anaahata and Aahata. The Anaahata Naada, (experienced in deepest states of yoga) refers to the self-existing unproduced vibrations having no cause, whereas the Aahata Naada refers to the one, which is produced from a source of vibration. Vedas say that Naada has four stages namely Para, Pashyanti, Madhyamaa and Vaikhari. The first three stages are only perceptible to yogis. In reference to human beings, Vaikhari refers to the fully manifest form of sound (speech), which is heard by the listeners. The Madhyamaa stage is within and



getting crystallized. The Pashyanti is deeper in the visionary state. The Para is the causal state. Thus it is seen that any sound producing process has these four stages. Generally the Naada refers to the musical world and Shabda refers to the Vedas and also a word.

The scriptures also use the terms Naada Bramhan and Shabda Bramhan. The Amrita Bindu Upnishat proclaims that, "There are two Bramhans to be realized, Shabda and Param Bramhans; the one who has realized and is well versed in Shabda Bramhan will realize Param Bramhan". Also Sri Lakshmana Deshikendra in his Sharada Tilaka Tantra says, "In my view, consciousness of all beings is Shabda Bramhan". Sri Saranga Deva says in his musical treatise Sangeeta Ratnakara, "we worship Naada Bramhan, that incomparable Bliss, which is intrinsic in all the creatures as consciousness and is manifest in the phenomenon of this Universe". In the Upanishads, the indwelling and all-pervading Pranava (OM) is also referred as Shabda Bramhan. Thus we see that a focus on sound, which corresponds to the stage of Vaikhari, leads us in the inner spiritual development. Sri Adi Shankaracharya in his Yoga Taaraavali says, "There are innumerable approaches to attain spiritual development and Bliss. However it's our view that the



*Many of the deities have musical instruments in their hands, which represent the synthesis of yoga and naada*

approach through focus on Naada is the most effective". He also says, "The one who desires to achieve excellence in yoga should concentrate attentively on Naada by overcoming distractions". Thus anyone seriously interested in inner spiritual development can use the approach of listening to sound. It is important that the sound listened to should lead the person to the spiritual objective. Many of the deities have musical instruments in their hands, which represent the synthesis of yoga and naada. The divine music flowing from Lord Krishna's flute has a yogic effect on the listeners. Goddess Saraswati has the instrument Veena in her hands through which the divine music is played and also She has Akshamala (like rosary) that represents the sounds of the Akshara (Sanskrit alphabets) making the words and speech. She is also known as Goddess of Speech (Vagdevi). Lord Nataraja has the drum, the sounds of which represent the sounds of Sanskrit alphabets in seed forms, which are referred by the great Sanskrit grammarian Maharishi Panini.



*Great saints like Meerabai used music as a means for their spiritual fulfillment*

## Vedic Chanting

Sound plays a critical role in Vedic chanting because it is orally transmitted from the teacher to the student. There are strict phonetic guidelines. Naradeeya Sheekshaa, a treatise on phonetics says, "If the Vedic text (chanting) employed in the sacrifice is defective in the accent (pitch) or sounds, or used for the performance of wrong rites, it does not yield the correct meaning and the desired results". The six parameters that control the precision in pronunciation, according to a mantra in Taaittiriyaopanishat are: "Varna (articulation of alphabets including production of hard aspiration or mahaa praana and soft aspiration or alpa praana), Svaras (tonal accents such as udaata, anudaatta, svarita, prachaya and Nighaata), Maatra (proper duration of pronunciation of each vowel and



consonant), Balam (articulatory force of a syllable), Saama (continuity, proper speed and pleasantness), and Santaanaha (combination and juxtaposition of sounds)".

In addition to strictly following the phonetic guidelines, the chanter should avoid the specific undesirable characteristics and acquire the specific strong desirable characteristics. The undesirable characteristics are: "singing (instead of chanting), high speed, oscillating the head, reading from the written script (instead from memory), not understanding the meaning of chants and weak or shrill voice quality". The six desirable characteristics are: "pleasant and melodious chanting, full clarity in pronunciation, proper breaking of words, and correctness of intonation, strength and steadiness in chanting and proper speed with continuity in chanting." Thus we see that knowledge about the proper production of sound is essential for Vedic chanting as it is transmitted from a teacher to a student. A teacher of Vedic chanting should ensure that the above sound qualities are not only given high importance but also fully met by the qualified students.

### Music, Shlokas and Bhajans

It is well known that the origin of classical music is traced back to the Vedas. In addition to classical music, the recitation of shlokas, devotional songs, and bhajans need sound quality in their practice in addition to sincerity and devotion. In particular the chants of Sama Veda are quite musical. The three svaras namely udaatta, anudaatta and svarita are related to the seven notes of music, which are also termed as sapta-svaras, which are Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni and Sa. In Naaradeeya Sheekshaa, the correspondence between three svaras of Vedic chanting and seven svaras of music are given as: "the sounds of the svaras Ni and Ga originate in udaatta, the sounds of svaras Ri and Dha originate in anudaatta and sounds of svaras Sa, Ma and Pa originate in svarita".

In addition, the seven svaras of music are related to the sounds from animals. The Naaradeeya Sheekshaa says, "svara Sa is from a peacock, svara Ri is from a bull, svara Ga is from a goat, svara Ma is from a curlew, svara Pa is from a cuckoo, svara Dha is from a

horse and svara Ni is from an elephant." In relation to the production of seven svaras from a singer, the Naaradeeya Sheekshaa says, "Svara Sa originates in the throat, svara Ri originates in the head, svara Ga originates in the nose, svara Ma originates in the chest, svara Pa arises from chest, head and throat, svara Dha arises from forehead and svara Ni arises out of all joints". Thus the sounds of nature and the sounds produced through human body is related through music. Great saints like Tyaagaraja, Purandara Daasa, and Meerabai used music as a means for their spiritual fulfillment.

In the words of yogi-seer Sriranga Sadguru of Karnataka, India, "Music should become the bridge that takes the listeners from the sensual level to the level of Atman".

It is important to note that a proper recitation of shlokas and bhajan singing depend on the quality of sound. In addition to the devotion, the clarity in pronunciation of various words with proper soft and hard aspiration is important. In particular when a group collectively recites shlokas and sings bhajans it is extremely important to maintain proper sound synchronization in terms of pronunciation and speed in addition to the devotion of the members of the group. When a group recites Vishnu Sahasranama or Lalita Sahasranama or any other similar shlokas, it is important the group is cognizant of the sound quality in terms of the pronunciation and speed.

### Speech

The speech is one of most common activity of human beings. Saranga Deva in his Sangeeta Ratnakara says that, "the alphabets have manifested from the Naada. The words are made up from alphabets and from the words speech come out. Worldly transactions are carried out through the speech, and thus, the world is dependent on Naada". In a similar way, in the words of yogi-seer Sriranga Sadguru, "just as from seed comes naturally sprout, branch, leaf, flower, unripe fruit and full fruit, like wise starting from spiritual light as seed, the Naada, the Svara and Aksharas have developed into various aspects of knowledge". The four stages of speech, which were referred earlier emphasizes that the normal speech that we hear is the fully manifested form namely Vaikhari. Thus sweet words, which are



truthful, carry spirituality.

Saranga Deva in his treatise Sangeeta Ratnakara describes nicely the process of normal speech (or sound) production by human beings. He says that, "A person impels the mind and the mind activates the internal power source in the body, which in turn stimulates the vital force. The vital force stationed around the root of the navel, rising upwards gradually through the heart, and the cerebrum and the cavity of the mouth as it (the vital force) passes through them to manifest as dhvani (sound)". Thus it is seen that a person uses his or her whole body in producing any form of sound namely speech, music, etc. The speech produced by a person also reflects his or her emotional state. Especially speech combined with anger does not produced good effect on both speaker as well as listener. Thus an understanding and proper articulation of speech and its relation to emotional state are emphasized for spiritual development.

## Literature

The literature that is formed by prose, poems, plays, etc. in any language becomes alive when it is properly

vocalized with human speech. Every language has its own sound effect. A literary work is essentially a composition of words to express the inner feelings of the author. An author after experiencing the theme expresses it through the proper assembly of words. The choice of words especially poetic composition indicates the important role of shabda. A kavi (or poet) is referred to one who has realized the Supreme Being. The great poets such as Maharishi Valmiki, Maharishi Vyaasa, and Atmakavi Kalidasa have demonstrated the effect of shabda in their works. It is well known that the Sanskrit language has several unique effects of sound or shabda. In particular the poems in Sanskrit are easy to memorize due to the explicit sandhi (union of alphabets) effect, which produces new sounds. The large number of vowels and consonants including their combinations as basic sounds enable Sanskrit language to deal with many varied expressions. The metrical details in Sanskrit also bring the sound effect. Thus the infinitely large literature in various languages have been carried through generations by oral traditions not only because of their intrinsic values for life but also for the joy of sound they provide the listeners.

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## Concluding Remarks

This article has briefly presented the spiritual role of sound in various aspects such as Vedic chanting, music, bhajans, recitation of shlokas, plays, poems, speech etc. The poet Dandi, a well-known author in Sanskrit says that, "if sound is removed from the world, then the world becomes dark". Sound carries information. It is for these reason sages of Sanatana Dharma gave utmost importance to sound not only in spiritual development but also in day to day to life. ■

## About the Author

**M.G. Prasad**

is a spiritual disciple of yogi-seer Sriranga Sadguru. Prasad teaches Vedic chanting and gives lectures on Sanatana Dharma in universities, temples and churches. He has written five books on Hinduism. He is a professor at Stevens Institute of Technology, New Jersey. His activities can be found at [www.taranga.us](http://www.taranga.us)





## Interfaith Meet on Religious Founders Day Organized in Pittsburgh



**A**n interfaith meeting on Religious Founders Day was organized by Ahmadiyya Muslim Community at the Al-Nur Mosque in Wilkensburg on Feb 28th and drew leaders from five major faiths namely Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity and Judaism. Shri Sanjay Mehta, General Secretary of World Hindu Council of America attended the meeting. Below are excerpts from Shri Sanjay Mehta's talk.

In his famous book 'How to Win Friends and Influence People' Dale Carnegie wrote, "Philosophers have been speculating on the rules of human relationships for thousands of years. Zoroaster taught it to his followers in Persia twenty-five hundred years ago. Confucius preached it in China twenty-four centuries ago. Lao-tse, the founder of Taoism, taught it to his disciples in the Valley of the Han. Buddha preached it on the bank of the Holy Ganges five hundred years before Christ. The sacred books of Hinduism taught it a thousand years before that. Jesus taught it among the stony hills of Judea nineteen centuries ago."

In his statement while describing messages from various faiths Dale Carnegie has listed names of founders of all the faiths other than Hindu faith. I am

sure he must have done good research but could not find one name as the founder of the Hindu faith. God himself is the founder of Hindu faith/Dharma. Rishis and Gurus have said that God has inculcated divine thoughts in their minds while they were in meditative state. Those divine thoughts became teachings and principles of Hindu faith.

He narrated a story of a person who visited a guru who had proclaimed himself a god, and asked what the difference was between the two of them. "The only difference," the guru replied, "is that I have realized I am God, and you have not yet." The message is: we are all potentially divine."

God himself is the founder of Hindu faith....still if we have to list the founders of Hindu faith we can do as follows:

- Avatar: God himself comes down to the world in human form based on the need of time and space. Some examples are; famous avatars like Ram, Krishna, Ganesh and Durga. We see their images/moorty in Hindu temples.

- Gurus and Rishis or Sages: Hindus honor them as God since they deliver divine thoughts, the message of God.

- Mother and Father: Hindus have gone further and regarded mother and father as God since they are the ones who deliver, translate and demonstrate spiritual messages into practical life to their children.

Hindu Spiritual texts, Gurus and Temples may look different in style and technique but they deliver the same message that we all are potentially divine and the goal is to unfold the divinity within. They are the distributors of founder's (God's) message. Lexus distributor's billboard on W Liberty Avenue says, "Lexus makes the car and we (distributor) make the difference." Similarly God makes the world (expansion of God) and distributors (Spiritual texts, Gurus and Temples)

(Continued on page 39)

# The Goal and Paths of Hinduism: An Overview

*By Dr. D. C. Rao*

**E**verybody without exception seeks happiness. Other goals such as money, power, and reputation are all desired because we think they will make us happy. Although we all seek happiness, we often fail. Is failure unavoidable? Is there a way to rise above the roller-coaster of life and experience happiness at all times? One way to understand Hinduism is as a positive answer to these questions. Hindu scriptures assert that there is an eternal, unchanging Consciousness that pervades the entire universe and that anyone can gain limitless bliss by connecting with that Divinity. This is called moksha.

If blissful Consciousness is all-pervasive, each of us must necessarily dwell in it. Then why do we feel miserable? Hindu sages answer that it is because we forget who we really are and how we relate to Divine Consciousness. When our minds are clear and calm, we automatically become aware of our true nature, which is blissful. One way to understand Hindu spiritual practice is as transforming our minds so that we become aware of our connection with Divine Consciousness and reclaim our blissful nature, attaining moksha.

The Hindu spiritual journey is a journey of the mind - from being agitated in the pursuit of material goals (artha) and sense pleasures (kama) to a state of perfect tranquility. A mind that is clear and calm is no longer an impediment to the enjoyment of Divine bliss. What



are the steps in this spiritual journey?

The first step is to discipline the desire for material possessions and sense pleasures. This is done by firm adherence to dharma, the ethical foundation that is elaborately explained in Hindu scriptures. By performing one's duty and cultivating qualities such as honesty, self-discipline, love and compassion, the mind becomes less agitated by base emotions such as greed, anger and lust. The second step in the Hindu spiritual journey is dedication to selfless service, undertaking all actions without focus on personal gain. This is known as karma yoga. Practice of karma yoga softens the personal ego by discovering the joy to be found in serving others and working as an instrument of God.

Beyond this point on the spiritual journey, the Hindu spiritual path has several branches. Recognizing that spiritual seekers differ greatly in personal temperament, physical and mental abilities and preferences, scriptures offer a variety of ways in which the mind can be further refined and made ready for the practice of meditation and gaining spiritual enlightenment. One possible path is Raja Yoga that trains the mind to meditate using exercises of the body, breath and mind. This path is good for those who have good health and a lot of discipline.

Another path is Jnana Yoga, the path of knowledge, which involves deep study of the Upanishads and



related scriptures to understand who we are and how we relate to the world and to God. This path is good for those who have sharp minds and intellectual stamina for years of study and practice of philosophy. Another path is Bhakti Yoga, the path of devotion, where the seeker is asked to rest his or her mind and heart in God. Unlike other paths, the path of Bhakti Yoga is free of prerequisites but it is by no means "easy" to develop a deep and abiding personal devotion to God. Hindu scriptures offer ways to facilitate this by encouraging worship of God in specific forms with whom the seeker can form a close personal relationship. This is often misrepresented as polytheism and worship of "idols."

Hindu scriptures are replete with techniques and practices that can help refine the mind and overcome deep-seated mental habits that block spiritual progress. The spiritual journey might take numerous lifetimes. Each life begins where the previous life left off and, depending on one's actions, may take one closer to or further away from the goal of moksha. But in the end, liberation is assured for all, as there is no permanent resting place other than in one's own Divine nature.

Far from being mutually exclusive, the various paths of yoga are strongly complementary. Karma Yoga is recognized as powerful in purifying the mind and a necessary foundation for all spiritual practice. A deep practice of the path of knowledge leads to the flowering of devotion; and the deep practice of the

path of devotion leads to the emergence of knowledge. All these paths culminate in a mind that is clear and calm, aware of the Divine's presence everywhere at all times in oneself, in every other human being, and in the whole of creation. Such a person rises above sorrows and spreads peace and joy to others. ■

★ See the opening verse of the ancient text  
Sankhya Karikaby Ishvarakrishna.

## About the Author

**Dr. D. C. Rao**

retired from the World Bank in 1995 to pursue an intensive adhyatmic education and practice. He is a Trustee at the Chinmaya Mission, Washington D.C. and actively associated with the Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy at Honesdale, Pa. He is a member of the Assembly and former President of the Inter Faith Conference of Metropolitan



Washington, where he has contributed to work on Strengthening Teaching About Religion (STAR) for several years. He has degrees from the University of Mumbai, India, Cambridge University, U.K., and a Ph. D. in economics from the University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

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

# Interfaith Meet

(Continued from page 37) of God's message make the difference.

The Veda says, "Mitrasyachakshushasamikshamahe", meaning may we look towards each other with the eyes of friendship and mutual respect.

Also, Shree Harilal Patel shared thoughts on what Hinduism can offer to America:

1. Yoga: Physical aspect and Spiritual aspect: Physical and mental health benefits
2. Control indulgence- AtiSarvatraVarjyet- food, entertainment, and every aspects
3. Family life: Happy, respectful, responsible, self-restrain, sacrifice
4. Spirituality: Meditation, fasting (true way of fasting)
5. Ayurvedic medicine: Home remedies, natural way to heal
6. Environmental and ecological respect- conservation, using resources as they are needed
7. Respect to Mother Nature and its creation (mass killing of pigeons, deer, horses etc.)
8. Nonviolence- unnecessary cattle farming, wars before proper negotiation, gun control
9. Teach tolerance to different way of thinking- for salvation of soul and living on the earth
10. Live and let live attitude- abolish imperialist attitude



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

National Office: P.O. Box 611, Iselin, NJ 08830 Tax ID# 51-0156325  
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\*Home Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ \*Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ Youth Development Programs ☐ Publications ☐ Media Outreach and PR

☐ Liaison with Hindu Mandirs & Hindu Institutions ☐ Hindu Awareness Yatra

I would like to be part of the mission to sustain and strengthen Hindu Dharma and traditions.  
I believe in, practice and/or respect the spiritual and religious principles and practices having roots in Bharat (India).

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check No. \_\_\_\_\_ (Check Payable to VHPA) OR Charge it to a credit card

(Name and address must match with that on the credit card, for using the credit card.)

Credit Card Name: ☐ VISA ☐ MASTER CARD ☐ DISCOVER

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□ □ □ □

Credit Card Number

Month Year

Expiration Date

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: VHPA, PO Box 441505, Houston, TX 77244-1505 Contact Tel.: 732-744-0851

OR

Become member using your credit card on our website: [www.vhp-america.org](http://www.vhp-america.org)

Institutional Membership is available; First year dues are \$201 (\$90 Initiation fee + \$111 membership).

Call 732-744-0851 or email to office@vhp-america.org for application form and more information.