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दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेद्युगपदुत्थिता ।
यदि भाः सदुशी सा स्याद् भासस्तस्य महात्मनः ॥११.१२
divi surya-sahasrasya bhaved yugapad utthita
yadi bhah sadrsi sa syad bhasaa tasya mahatmanah

If the effulgence of a thousand suns simultaneously were to blaze forth in the firmament; then that might be comparable with the effulgence of the Ultimate Personalities universal form.



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

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Uttarakhand Catastrophe

**An Eyewitness Account:
The Horror, and
the New Gods**

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Buddhism as Simplified, Modified Hinduism



Now-a-days, many in the West, and particularly most of the intellectuals in the United States and Europe, feel disenchanted about the orthodox Christianity - what with the unscientific elements the Bible abounds with, and what with the memory of extreme repressive and violent measures against scientists and others in the Middle-Ages. A significant segment of such people, searching for genuine and rational spirituality, feels inclined towards the simple and down-to-the-earth philosophy of Buddhism. Most of these people are totally unaware of the intimate relationship of Buddhism with the mother-religion: Hinduism, however. We, the Hindu community of USA, could have a special role to play in this connection: to make our open-minded American friends familiar with the profound way Buddha adopted the basic Hindu precepts, albeit with certain important modifications and exceptions, to suit his times, and under inspiration and motivation gained by his personal life-experience.

First, imagine the case of Prince Gautam Siddhartha, brought up by his parents in utmost luxury and opulence, shielded within the walls of the royal palace, with absolutely no trace of sorrow and unhappiness. Then, suddenly he is exposed to miseries of life in the form of sickness, old-age, and death, in course of his tour of the city, as goes the legend. The deep shock and mental disturbance in his inner-most psyche can only be imagined. This sea-change leads him to form his first and foremost tenet: "Life

inevitably entails sorrow and misery." Renouncing the world, as he relentlessly travels to, and studies in, Kashi and other centers of learning, he undoubtedly must have come across the teachings of Bhagvad-Geeta (BG), pronouncing in no uncertain terms that the source of sorrow is human mind's endless desires, that to mitigate and eliminate sorrow and delusion toward achieving inner peace and Moksha or 'Nirvana' is to seek freedom from mind's web of desires:

*"Prajahati yada kamaan sarvan Partha
manogataan; Aatmanyeva atmana tushah,
tasya pajna pratisthita"*

and,

BG (2.55)

*"Esham Brahmi-sthiti Partha, nainam prapya
vimuhyati, sthitva syamanta kaalepi Brahma-
Nirvan mrichhati."*

BG (2.72)

However, there was a great departure in his teaching as compared to the *Geeta*; he dealt with, and limited to, the raw material of earthly life only, without any reference to devotion and submission to Lord Krishna, or to the 'Brahmi-sthiti' based on a the Upanishadic concept of Brahman, or to any form of divinity whatsoever. As the popular saying goes, he remains totally silent about the whole question of God (and gods and goddesses.) What could be the reason for such a radical departure from the prevalent mores? (We continue this discussion in the next issue of the *Hindu Vishwa*, for space-considerations.) ■



Second Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference Held in NY

The 2nd Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference concluded at the Shri Surya Narayan Mandir at 92-17 172nd Street, Jamaica, NY 11433, amidst joyful expressions of congratulations and handshakes for a highly successful event. "It was a highly informative two days", was the general refrain. Following the success of the 1st Priests' Conference held in Pittsburgh, PA last year, the Organizing committee which was comprised of seasoned HMEC sevaks and members of the local Queens, NY Hindu community, justifiably felt a strong sense of accomplishment by Saturday evening. The

Conference was hosted by the Shri Surya Narayan Mandir, in collaboration with the Bhavaanee Maa Mandir, the New York Sanatana Mandir and the United Community Mandir.

The Inaugural Session of the Conference got underway on the evening of Friday May 31 at 7:00 pm. In attendance were more than 130 Hindu devotees, Pandits and Swamis. First, the more than 50 Priests in attendance joined in chanting the Ganesha Atharvashirsha, and then Pandit Ram Hardwar, the Spiritual Leader of the Shri Surya Narayan Mandir extended a warm welcome to all the participants.





The stage was now set for the presentations by the erudite speakers who followed. As the audience listened in rapt attention, the speakers made very thoughtful presentations that covered the challenges facing Priests in the community by Amrutur Srinivasan, the work of the USA Pandits' Parishad in Guyana and here in the USA by Pandit Parasram, and Swamini Svatmavidyananda's talk on Devotion, Dharma, Prayer and the Priesthood. The Arya Spiritual Center's Dharmacharya Pandit Ramlall also spoke about the challenges facing the Hindu in hostile societies.

Saturday started at 6:00 am with yoga, pranayama and devotional singing by young Hindus of the community. After a mouthwatering breakfast served up by the host Mandir, it was back to the serious business at hand. There followed six business sessions ably emceed by youthful Sarika Persaud, assisted by rotating moderators who introduced the various speakers.

The sessions covered topics such as Priests' Role: Issues & Concerns; Community's issues & Concerns: Devotees' & Executives' Inputs; Sharing resources, the GOTO Group; and Education & Training. The



appreciative audience was treated to some very scholarly and passionate presentations covering issues as varied as the role of Priests and their assimilation in the North American society to Hindu Chaplaincy in the University setting, and continuing education and

Conference to be organized on a regular basis. The scholarly presentations should find a place on the desk of every serious Hindu Leader. They would prove to be very valuable in devising strategies to resolve difficulties faced by our priests and the devotees they serve.



skill development strategies.

In the third session dealing with Community's issues and concerns, young Aneesh Bairavasundaram stole everyone's hearts with a polished presentation of "My story: Growing up in a Priest's family". Aneesh spoke about the expectations of parents for young Hindus "to blindly follow rituals" laid down by their elders, and that in the "North American context, blind faith is looked down on". As this young man walked away from the podium, he was treated to loud and prolonged applause for the simple and articulate manner in which he shared his story.

One outstanding feature of this conference was the number of youthful Hindus who made presentations. In addition to Aneesh, there was also Austin Ayer who spoke about the training available at universities in the Maharishi Organization, Devi Mehotra who spoke about the Hindu Students Council at Yale University, and Dr. Anand Ramnarine, who called for a "national Hindu Voice, as a means of solidifying our Hindu identity." There were lively Q&A segments after some sessions, which demonstrated that the members of the audience shared strong concern about the topics and presentations, and confirmed the need for this

After all the presentations, the participants unanimously approved two resolutions for action:

- Recognizing the need to enhance communication among priests in North America with the sole object of building a Dharmic Bridge between priests and the community they serve, resolves to establish a Pandit Sabha, a communication network.
- That the Conference Committee resolves to resolve to develop a Priests Training Workshop Model that includes development of a Guide Book.

At the close, Dharmacharya Rishi B. Misir of the Federation of Hindu Mandirs, Inc. and the USA Pandits' Parishad thanked the Conference Committee for its vision and dedication to solving Hindu issues by organizing the event.

It was a conference with all of the ingredients that one could hope for. Brilliant and well received presentations were made by Swamis, Pandits, Mandir Executives, and our Youths, all sharing their perspective on every conceivable issue facing the Hindus in North America. Yes, it was a highly successful 2nd Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference! Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference (HMEC) is an initiative of World Hindu Council of America (VHPA). ■



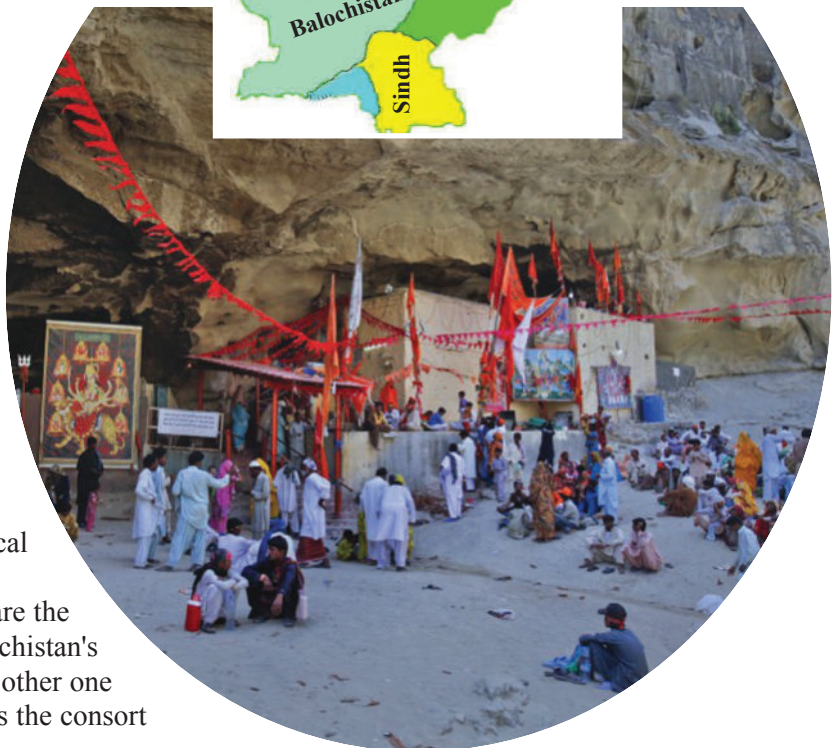
The Balochistan Hindus' Dilemma

■ *By Muhammad Akbar Notezai*

Hindus have been richly contributing in Balochistan's economic prosperity and development since pre-partition days. Historically, it is not clear in documents to assert how and when Hindus originally settled in Balochistan. But after having sat with Balochistan-based Baloch and Hindu historians and writers, all of them agree that Hindus have been living in Balochistan since time immemorial along with Buddhists. It is also said that in some parts of Balochistan paganism has been the religion of the scattered tribal people. However, Hindus ruled Balochistan before the invasion of the Arabs in 712 A.D. In Balochistan, Hindus have two historical and famous sacred places that belong to ancient times. These two sacred places are the Hinglaj Shrine, which is located in Balochistan's Lasbela District in a hilly track, and the other one is in Kalat town called Kali Devi, who is the consort of the god Shiva.

At the time of partition, religious riots were rampant in the subcontinent, but Hindus were living harmoniously and peacefully in the princely state of Balochistan, which was under the rule of the chief ruler of the Kalat state, Yar Muhammad Khan. He respected the indigenes of the Hindu community. He had also given to Hindus economic and religious freedom in Balochistan. That is why the Hindu community did not leave Balochistan at the time of the partition because all their rights were safeguarded.

Hindus had also been living amicably with the Baloch and Pashtuns since the pre-partition days in Balochistan. But after the partition, due to religious



uproar and turmoil, Hindus had to leave Balochistan's Pashtun belt to settle in Baloch populated areas or migrate to India. In 1941, the Hindus' population was 54,000 in Balochistan's Pashtun belt, but soon it dwindled by 93 percent after 1947.

In contemporary times, one of the prominent Hindu intellectuals, Mr Sham Kumar, told this writer about the Hindus living in Baloch populated areas: "Hindus are now facing a situation worse in Baloch residing places than they had to face in the past living in Pashtun residing places because the Baloch elders, who would show great respect for their neighborhood Hindus, are no longer living in this world, or they have become very old."



Hindus have been richly contributing in Balochistan's economic prosperity and development since pre-partition days. They have built schools, libraries and hospitals in various parts of Balochistan. In Balochistan, many of the Hindus are educated. They have been offering services in health, education and other sectors. But it is profoundly shocking that Hindus are now living dangerously in Balochistan. They cannot even perform their religious practices freely due to the nightmarish situation where they interminably fear for their lives, faith, honour and property. Hindus, in spite of being Balochistan's peaceful and largest minority, are running from their old 'motherland' to escape persecution, because their lives are in a precarious and worsened condition these days.

In Balochistan, it was the 1990s period that turned into a great conflagration for Hindus. After that, gradually the Hindus' manifold problems, whether it was abduction, religious persecution, migration or killing, all of them have been intensifying. Externally and internally, many Hindu families have migrated to India, inside Pakistan to its largest city, Karachi, and interior Sindh. But unfortunately they are economically living a pathetic life in these places. There are many more Hindus who still utter the words 'migration' and 'insecurity' in Balochistan. In Balochistan, except in Makran (Panjgur, Turbat and Gwadar), Hindus are living in all other Baloch populated districts. There has been mass migration from these districts of Balochistan: Kalat, Khuzdar, Quetta, Mastung, Lasbela, Hub, Nushki, Dalbandin. On the other hand, Dr Shah Muhammad Marri, the well-known Baloch historian, said: "Take the example of the Marri tribe. They are also migrating due to the law and order situation. This land has been burning for the last 30 years. It has become an inferno for all the castes. Same is the case with the Hindus, the Christians the Hazaras, the Baloch and the Pashtuns. All of them are migrating from pillar to post to find a safe place."

Balochistan's Minority Minister, Mr Basant Lal Gulshan, who is a Hindu, denied the reports of Hindus migrating from Balochistan. But a Hindu Doctor said under the condition of anonymity that there had been migration, even within his own family.

The government officials, on the other hand, also say that the majority of Hindus who have been migrating from Balochistan or the country are economically sound. They see a bright future for their children in India. But it is worth mentioning here that 90 percent of the Hindus of Balochistan are unsound economically. They cannot afford to leave their indigenous places and settle somewhere else, especially India. Moreover, a sane person or community would never give up their connections to their place of birth until or unless circumstances compel them.

In Balochistan, Hindus are also complainants about the mainstream media that their sufferings hardly and rarely get discussed. That is why they rely on private TV channels to bring to light their sufferings, because people at national and international level have very little information about them.

There have also been nearly 35 Hindus killed in the former dictator General Pervez Musharraf's regime where he launched the fifth military operation against Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, the former chief minister Balochistan. Nawab Bugti used to keep the Hindu population in proximity to his legendary fort in Dera Bugti to safeguard them from criminal elements. That is why many Hindus, mainly women and children, were killed and sustained severe injuries in the assault against Nawab Bugti on March 17, 2005.

Additionally, in Balochistan, Hindus are considered low caste. They are treated unequally and as second grade citizens. They are living isolated lives in their separate localities. They do not have the right to vote. The standard of their children's education is abysmal.

In previous times, the government could not have maintained its writ despite completing its five-year tenure. To a lesser extent, the last government would also be held responsible for the Hindus' sufferings. That is why the incoming government should be civilized and democratically elected so that Hindus may find a solution to their tragic dilemma. ■

The writer is a columnist at Daily Balochistan Express, Quetta and blogs at <http://www.akbarnotezai.wordpress.com>. He can be reached at akbarnotezai@yahoo.com and on twitter @Akbar_notezai www.dailytimes.com.



Vastu Architecture *in the West*

■ **By Michael Borden**

The structure of the Vastu inspired building vibrates with cosmic energy and the bodily instrument resonates with this vibration. To create and offer the house of supreme bliss, and to enable us to experience that supreme bliss here in this mundane house itself - these are the prime motives of Vastu Science." Dr. V. Ganapati Sthapati, The Building Architecture of Sthapatya Veda

In 1998 and 1999 I traveled to Madras, India, to study the principles of Vastu Science as applied to Architecture. In the mid-1990's, I had begun a search for information about Vastu Architecture. I found that there were many ancient and modern volumes dedicated to the subject. When I surveyed the books I found them quite confusing. I realized that I needed to find a teacher. I was fortunate to find Dr. V. Ganapati Sthapati of Chennai.

● **Ganapati Sthapati**

Ganapati Sthapati was born in 1927 into a family whose



Photo: V. Ganapati Sthapati

ancestors built the great temple at Tanjore in the 10th century. He learned his craft from his father, Vaidyanatha Sthapati, a renowned traditional temple architect and sculptor. Vaidyanatha Sthapati was commissioned by Sri Ramana of Tiruvannamalai to design and build the Matrubhuteswara Temple, the Mother's Shrine, at the ashram.

Starting out as a sculptor's apprentice, he grew to become a master sculptor and a temple designer. He spent 27 years as head of the Government College of Architecture and Sculpture in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu, a college founded by his father at the request of the Tamil Nadu government. He is responsible for India's significant resurgence in the ancient art of stone carving.

I first met Sthapati in Kansas City. Our interview lasted about one hour. He said that architecture was frozen music and that a building could be an expression of pleasant and powerful harmonies. He spoke of the possibility of a building being a coherence generator, attuning the occupants to the laws of the universe and increasing health, wealth and spiritual well being.

He said that a building was a living organism, like the human nervous system, and could be designed in "harmonic resonance" with the basic underlying energy structure of the universe. But more than his words, his presence, his confidence, his enthusiasm and love of his art, told me that he was a man who lived his Truth.

There are many factors at work in the creation of a building aligned with principles of Vastu Science. I began studies with Ganapati Sthapati hoping that he would act as and interpreter and filter of the knowledge for me and this he did. I came away from my studies with a balanced and applicable body of knowledge.

● **Basic Principles**

"In the heart cave of the body there is inner space and in that inner-space there is the vibrant thread of consciousness. It is this thread of consciousness that functions as the string of the sarira-vina (bodily instrument)."

Dr. V. Ganapati Sthapati



The design regime for the Vastu architect follows specific parameters:

- orientation and siting considerations,
- building layout with regard to a grid called "Vastu Purusha Mandala",
- dimensioning with regard to the client's birth time and use of prescribed units of measure,
- exterior door locations,
- Brahmasthan,
- room placement,
- building volume and height.

● The Brahmasthan



Courtyard of a Vastu residence, Tamil Nadu

A significant element in a Vastu residence is the Brahmasthan or central courtyard. In a grid of 9 x 9 it is the center nine units. It is the energy heart of the house. It is the lung of the house. This part of the house should always be left open and free of obstructing elements (pillars or walls) and mechanical services. It is traditional, where climate permits, to leave the Brahmasthan open to the sky so that the energetic space surrounding the Earth is attracted into the house.

The selection of a building site is a very important factor in Vastu Architecture. The general slope of the site is very important. Level land or land sloping down to the east, northeast, north or northwest is considered to be beneficial with the opposite having negative effects for the occupants of the structure. Orientation of the structure with respect to the cardinal points of the compass is important. Correct

orientation harmonizes the energy of the structure and occupants with that of the earth and celestial bodies. Sthapati says, "This establishes a kind of geometric congruency or harmony with the earthly grid. If the structure's grid is in harmony with the Earth's grid, then the built space and the Earth respond harmoniously energetically. If there is any distortion, deviation or deflection in the grid lines of the proposed building grid and that of the Earth's grid, then the built space is said to be in disharmony with the Earth's energy grid system."

The Brahmasthan provides the occupants of the house with beneficial spiritual energy. Room location in the building is an important factor in Vastu architecture. The location of a particular room defined by function is determined by respecting the particular element, earth, air, fire, water or space that rules that area of the building.

All these principles (and more) give the architect a design protocol for creating buildings that live and vibrate harmoniously with universal energies. I am convinced that this information is worth study and application by anyone interested in understanding the significance and full potential of sheltering the human nervous system. ■

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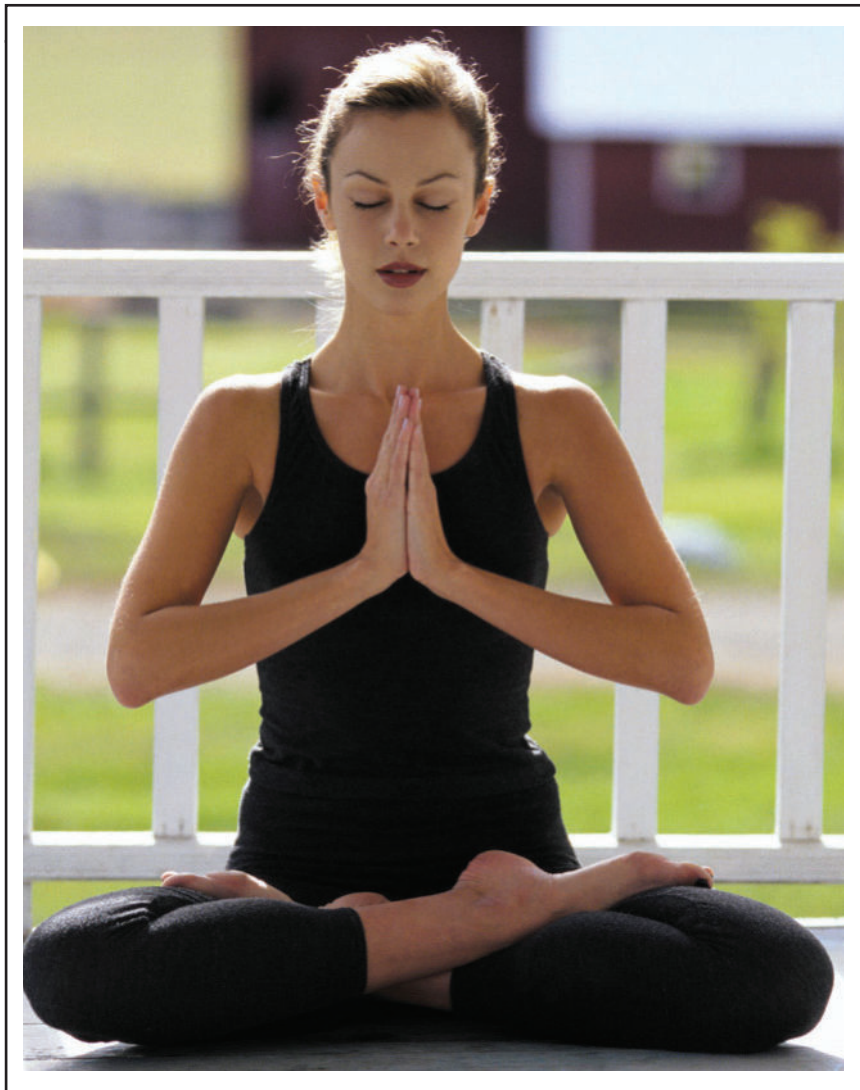
The author with Dr. Sthapati

About the author

Michael Borden has post-graduate degrees in Architecture and Mayonic Science and Technology. He has designed and built Vastu structures for the past 15 years worldwide. Presently, he divides his time between the USA Midwest and New Zealand working on Vastu projects.



Court allows yoga **in US schools**



Phoenix Herald Tuesday 2nd July, 2013

SAN DIEGO, California - A US court has allowed teaching yoga in schools as part of health and exercise curriculum, rejecting a claim by parents that the ancient Indian practice is any religious

indoctrination.

Judge John Meyer's ruling in a San Diego court means that the Encinitas Union School District can continue to teach yoga to its students because it has developed its own version of yoga that was not religious but distinct and separate from Ashtang yoga. "A reasonable student would not objectively perceive that Encinitas School District yoga does advance or promote religion," said the judge.

School district officials were pleased by the ruling but the lawyer for the parents said they will probably appeal. The teaching of yoga in the school was challenged by Dean Broyles, president and attorney for the Escondido-based National Center for Law and Policy. He had filed a lawsuit on behalf of a couple with two children in the school system. Broyles had wanted the court to have the programme cancelled because it violated state law prohibiting the teaching of religion in public schools.

Broyles said having yoga in the schools "represents a serious breach of the public trust".

See more at:

www.phoenixherald.com/index.php/sid/215585301/scat/154063713fe5da1f/ht/Court-allows-yoga-in-US-schools#sthash.5GXXtzL4.dpuf

- **Court has allowed yoga in schools as part of health and exercise curriculum**
- **Court rejects claim that teaching yoga violates state law**
- **Yoga is exercise, not spiritual dogma**



Lord Buddha, Buddhism and its Pervasiveness in the World

■ *By Dirgha Raj Prasai*

Gautam Buddha was born in Lumbini in the 6th century BC in mid Tarai, Nepal. Nepal has been a pious and holy land for all Buddhists as well as all kinds of religious men and women. Buddha has guided human society on the path of peace, non-violence and prosperous thinking. Gautam Buddha meditated at Sarnath-Banarash and acquired the Light of Knowledge (Mokchya) under the holy fig-tree at Gaya, which is now called Buddha Gaya.

A Nepalese scholar Rupesh Shrestha writes-The term Buddha means "Enlightened One", and signifies that the person to whom it is applied has solved the riddle of existence, and discovered the doctrine for the cessation of misery. Lord Buddha propounded Hinayana, a simple religion in which he followed to a large extent. This was a direct and simple philosophy that appealed to the masses.

Geographically, historically and politically, Nepal occupies a position in between two great empires of India and China and has drunk deeply from the two culturally rich springs, drawing inspirations from both its grand neighbors, as the political current ebbed or flowed- an influence clearly illustrated in the building styles of Nepal. In addition, there is the religious, cultural and philosophical effect of that great tide of Buddhism, which swept through the continent of Asia.

The descriptions of famous ancient Chinese pilgrims, Hui'an Tsang (who traveled through India between



AD 629 & 645) and Fa Hein (who traveled between AD 400 & AD 414) indicate to this area, saying, 'Lumbini, where the Lord was born, is a piece of heaven on earth where one could see the snowy mountains amidst a splendid garden embedded with Stupas and monasteries.' An English writer H.A. Oldfield has written- There are about 2000 Buddhist Shrines in the Kathmandu Valley. The majority of those are Chaityas. The Buddhist of Nepal has been adopting several Hindu deities as part of the religious behavior. I have included the opinions of many researchers as Ram Kumar Shrestha, Min Bahadur Shakya, Dr. Tulsiram Baidha V.K Manandhar, Dr.Shanker Thapa, Dr. Tilak Shrestha, and others. DR. Tilak Shrestha writes-'The ethnic politics and



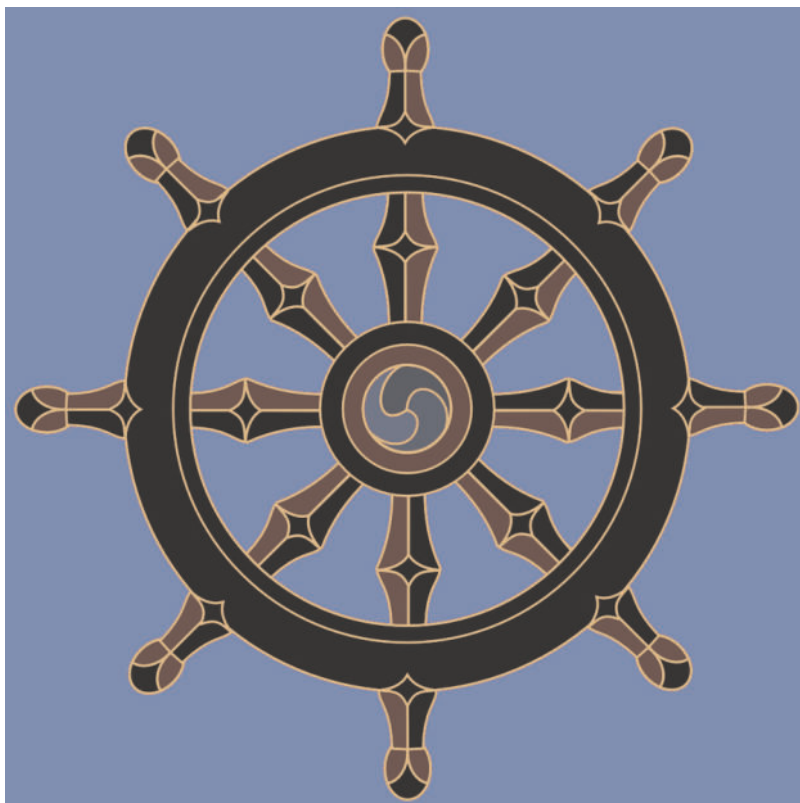
Dharmic ignorance create non-existing problems. In the given setup, to assign Bahun, Pradhan and Kirati traditions into Hindu camp and Tuladhar,

Bajracharya, Shakya, Sherpas & Tamang,

Some Gurungs, Magars, Tharus, traditions into Buddhist camp is the outcome of serious comedy. Shaiva and Bauddha Religion are very similar emphasizing knowledge and meditation. The difference is that Shaiva begins with the assumption of 'Brahma' as the ultimate reality. The world as we know is one of its manifestations. Bauddha remains empirical and makes no assumptions. Though the goal is to go beyond emancipation, the discipline is within the direct understanding and experience of an individual in the world as it is. For Baudha Dharma the 'Bodhi' (Brahma) is the result of the empirical finding, not a priori. One of the philosophers of the middle age Shankaracharya was an Adwaita (Non-duel) scholar and debated mainly with Mimamsa school of Darshan. He also debated with Jaina, Shaiva and Baudha scholars. While Shankaracharya is given credit for the defeat of Buddhism in Hindu literature, he was in fact active after Buddhism had almost entirely faded from prominence. In particular, he was not a contemporary of the last great Indian Buddhist philosopher, Dharmakirti.

'Buddhism is a major breakthrough within the long traditions of Hinduism. That is Buddha achieved Nirvana without depending on supra-humanity or divinity. The central message of Buddha is that an individual can achieve salvation by working within the human faculty. All of Buddha's teachings and analyses are within rational self-examination of the world including one's mind. Buddhism is not political or social grouping. It is an inner discipline, similar to mathematics or music, practicable by any body regardless of their religious or other backgrounds.' Buddha dharma is more rigorous. Its root in Hinduism is symbolized by 'OM.' the 'OM' is the symbol of 'Brahman' in Adwaita, 'Godhead' in

Dwaita and 'Bodhi' in Buddhism. The most repeated Buddhist mantra is 'OM mani padme hum' or the 'goodness comes out of goodness. The greatness of Buddha is that he is able to bring many of the truths, which were considered purely a matter of faith and



revelation, within the realm of rational deduction. Buddhism is not merely a religion but a way of life; its intrinsic values teach all to be better human and to serve humanity. Buddhism is the religion which is practiced to gain enlightenment. Lord Buddha who propounded Buddhism is widely revered with guiding, the entire human society, towards the path of peace, compassion, non-violence and disciplined life. When Shankaracharya came north to the intellectual centers there, he borrowed many of the ideas that had been formulated by Buddhist philosophers of the past. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adi_Shankara)” The unity of the three principal Dharmas of Hinduism in Nepal – Buddhism (Buddha), Shaiva (Nilkantha) and Vaishnav (Narayan) is beautifully given in the temple located in Kathmandu valley, which we lovingly call – ‘Budha Nilkantha Narayan.’ The great contribution for the spread of Buddhism with definition of homely environment and Vikshus



(begging alms) disseminated Buddhism was made by Shankaracharya. The opinion, doctrine and ethics strengthened Buddhism.

Thus, Shankaracharya was not averse to real Buddhism.

Due to the Nepalese princess Brikuti who married with the King of China- the famous Shronchan Gampo, speeded the Buddhism and the craftsman Araniko who built numerous famous Buddhist statues in China and Tibet. From the time of Shronchan Gampo, Buddhism became gradually popular in China, Srilanka, Burma Thailand, Japan, and Mongolia etc. South Asia expert associated with China Institute of Contemporary international Relations Professor Ma Hali expresses- 'There are great many Buddhists in China and they want to visit Buddha's birth place in Lumbini. If Lumbini project could see the light of the today, this would be really good for Nepal and China.' 21 June 2012. Prof. Shanker Thapa writes- 'The expansion of Buddhism in China led to the construction of vast number of Buddhist temples with expanded structures and architectural designs. They are serene and speculators in designs and colorful in pattern. Liuza Hui-neng Temple is one of the important Buddhist temples in South China that has alive.'

In ancient time, Manjushree, came to Nepal from greater ancient China and made the Katmandu Valley habitable by draining out of the water as a lake in Kathmandu Valley, and started a new civilization. Prof. Dr. Triratna Manandhar writes- 'In fifth century A.D. Faxian, a Buddhist monk and scholar from China visited Kapilvastu and Lumbini. His visit was followed by the visit of Nepali Buddhist scholar Buddhahadra, to China, Faxian and Buddhahadra collaborated to translating some of the Buddhist Sanskrit texts into Chinese which staying at monastery in China. In the seventh century A.D. Xuan-Zang visited Lumbini, Kapilvastu and Kathmandu Valley, and left a short description of Nepal, which gives a short glimpse of Mahayana and



Therabad Buddhism in Nepal during ancient period. Sino-Nepali relations revived in the 13th Century when Kublai Khan invited a team of artists from Nepal to erect a golden Stupa. A Nepali team led by Arniko visited China and constructed golden pagoda-styled monasteries in Tibet and China to the satisfaction of the Chinese Emperor. Arniko was given a high post in China, and after his death, his sons continued to work in China. Nepal Kings and Prime minister were decorated by Chinese titles. Rana Bahadur Shah got the Chinese title of 'Ertini Wang' and Bahadur Shah- 'Dhung'. Jang Bahadur received a new Chinese title- Thong Ling Pimma Ko Kang Shang.' Then, we are maintaining the cordial



relation between Nepal and China. Medieval China learned and gained the Buddhism- 'the way of peaceful life.' Fa-xian, a famous monk visited the Buddha's birth place. His account on Lumbini -'Record of Buddhist Kingdom.' is applied as a useful historical asset. A Chinese scholar-Xuan-zhang visited 636 Kapilvastu and his traveling accounts are known as historical knowledge's. Lumbini, the holy pilgrimage had and has been attracting the Chinese monks to visit. The reality is that the Chinese monks contributed to preach Buddhism in China, India, south Asia Burma, Shilanka, Afhaganistan and the western world also. The monks preached translating the Sanskrit sermons of the Buddhism. The Tibetan Buddhism was developed as the most influential Buddhist heritage. Nepal and China have a long history of cultural relations.

In 1895, a German Archaeologist Dr. A. Fuhrer, An Indian researcher Dr. P.C. Mukargee and Nepalese Khadga Shamshere discovered the missing pillar which was set up by the Maurya emperor of India, Ashoka where Gautam Buddha was born- the most visible landmark of the Sacred Garden. The historic importance of the pillar is evidenced by the inscription engraved in the pillar (in Brahmi script). From excavations it has been found that the Ashokan pillar stands on its original base of unborn brick platform which concludes that the Pillar is at its original location.

In 1967, United Nations Secretary General, U Thant (himself a Burmese Buddhist), visited Lumbini and made an appeal in front of the international community for assistance to maintain and improve the pitiable plight of this world famous pilgrimage site. Suggestions of development of Lumbini as an international pilgrimage and tourist centre then came into light. And since the

implementation of the Master Plan for the development of Lumbini, prepared by Prof. Kenzo Tange in 1978, Lumbini has been a marked scene for development, both as an international pilgrimage as well as a tourist centre.

Lumbini was then enrolled in the World Heritage Site in 1997 AD. It must also be mentioned here that UNESCO too has published a report stating that there have been some activities which violate the basic essence of the Master Plan. For instance, the Peace Stupa in the Lumbini Center is built entirely against the Master Plan and violates its spiritual and technical aspects. It is now seen as a counter point of the Ashok Pillar which in its absurdity has affected monumentalize and spiritualism brought about by the Pillar.

A scholar Ram Kumar Shrestha writes- 'Ashoka Pillar built in 300 BC by Indian Emperor Ashok during his pilgrimage to the birthplace of Buddha still stands Lumbini. A thorough excavation and investigation near the Ashok Pillar has found the Nativity Stone that was laid down to mark the Buddha's birthplace. An international team of archaeologists has begun a three-year survey, coordinated by the UNESCO of the archaeological ruins of Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha in Nepal. The team of archaeologists, including experts from Nepal's Department of Archaeology and the Lumbini Development Trust, is directed by Robin Coningham, UNESCO Archaeological Expert and Professor of Archaeology, University of Durham. The UNESCO, after careful examination all facts and evidences, has already recognized Lumbini as the Buddha's



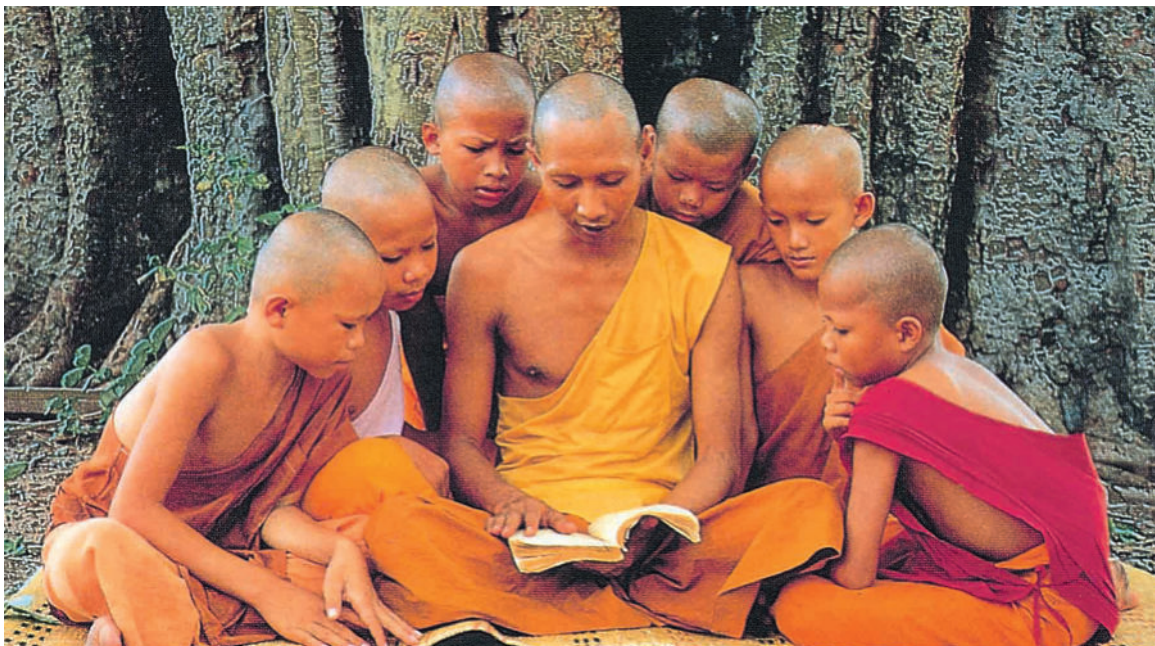


birthplace and a World Heritage Site'. The late King Mahendra had visited Lumbini and advised the government officers to regard and secure the Buddha's land. King Birendra

expressed- 'Although Gautama Buddha was born in Nepal, he belonged essentially to the whole world and to all times. He blazed a trail leading humanity to cast off parochialism and seek liberation and enlightenment. For us in Nepal, the way of life which Buddha practiced and propagated has remained an inextricable part of our cultural heritage. Nepalese civilization has brought about a marriage between Hinduism and Buddhism making them inseparable.'

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says in his message on 17 May 2011 Buddha's birthday 2555 - ' Buddha's teachings can guide our efforts to resolve the severe problems facing today's. His injunction against the three poisons of greed, anger and ignorance is especially relevant to multilateral efforts to overcome the hunger that need. Let us respect all religions. And let us work for the well-being of all people essay affects nearly a billion people in a world of plenty, the brutal violence that takes millions of lives each year, and the senseless environmental damage that human cause to our only home, the planet Earth.' The Buddhism changed the thinking and behaving of human life. We can see the great Stupa in Kathmandu. The ancient Stupa is one of the largest in

The Stupa is on the ancient trade route from Tibet which enters the Kathmandu Valley by the village of Sankhu in the northeast corner, passes by Boudnath Stupa to the ancient and smaller stupa of Ca-bahi (often called 'Little Boudnath'). The Boudhanath Stupa in Kathmandu, Nepal is steeped in history and can offer any visitor a truly magical experience that will last a lifetime. The Stupa itself is a large white dome, or Mandala (greater Area), topped by a pinnacle with eyes to denote the Principal Lord Buddha watching over us; a third eye for wisdom; the nose a Sanskrit number one to mean wholeness, and no ears or mouth so evil cannot be heard or spoken. The five elements - water, earth, air, fire and ether are evident in the thousands of colorful prayer flags adorning the whole site. These are blue, green, white, red and yellow, and each contain a prayer to be blown away by the wind. Visitors include the many maroon robed nuns and priests from Tibet, the yellow from China and Japan, and the (literal) saffron clad devotees from Nepal and India. Their early morning devotional procession is awesome. They wave the Mane inscribed Sanskrit Mantra (hymn)-' OM Mani Padme Hum.' There are a great number of mountain Sherpas and Tibetans visible, and Nepalese and foreign tourists from all over the world. The stall and shop holders and restaurant staff are very friendly and honest Nepalese and Tibetan folk, just waiting to give you a smile. http://www.suite101.com/content/A_Nepalese_Scholar_Mr._Kishore_Sherchand_writes-





"Buddhism in the West, according to several studies, Buddhism was almost unknown to USA 150 years ago. Large scale Chinese immigrants in 1850s and Japanese in late 1880s

began to arrive, and from Korea around 1903. Immigration was at first primarily to Hawaii. Populations from other Asian Buddhist countries followed, and in each case, the new communities established Buddhist temples and organizations. Thousands Buddhist temples and practice centers are estimated to have been established. The first Buddhist temple in America was built in 1853 in San Francisco by the Sze Yap Company, a Chinese American fraternal society. California's Hsi Lai Temple is one of the largest Buddhist temples covering 15 acres (61,000 m²). The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is geographically the largest Buddhist community in the US located in Talmage, California covering over 480 acres (1.9 km²) of land. Buddhism advocates the unification of faith and wisdom. Faith is characterized by the sentiments of respect and of inspiration by an ideal. Faith in Buddhism is developed through contemplation and investigation so that the characteristics of truthfulness, righteousness, and efficacy of the ideal in which one develops faith, can be understood and revealed. Cultivation of faith and wisdom as a unity in Buddhism, unlike other religions, involves several stages, 1. Faith without prejudice 2. Faith with profound understanding 3. Faith with endeavor 4. Faith with realization. Otherwise, faith without wisdom will develop ignorance and wisdom without faith will develop a perverted view. And the most outstanding characteristic of wisdom is free thought and its operative functions include understanding and cognition."

Buddhism in the West has taken a turning point making more appealing to the western people in pursuit of practicing Buddhism. The West has developed it into a system that leads to finding a way of understanding cause and relationship. Many

American youths question whether Buddhism is a Religion or a Philosophy. Because Siddhartha Gautama did not say himself Son of God (Jesus Christ), Prophet of God (Muhammad) or God of God (Shiva). Buddhism does not preach the existence of God. Many of the Westerns youths view and reject their own religious beliefs in God as the supreme power. They perhaps try to think in the line of what Buddha said twenty five hundred years ago or Buddhism says, "Anybody can be Buddha (Enlightened one) if one follows those Four Noble

Truths and Eightfold paths."

A great scientist Albert Einstein said- "The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend personal God and avoid dogma and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description. If there is any religion that could cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism". It is very praiseworthy preaches of Gautam Buddha that he had messaged to all mankind to follow the path of – Noble truth



–('Samyak'): such as-Right View; Right Thought; Right Speech; Right Conduct; Right Livelihood; Right Effort; Right Mindfulness; Right Concentration. Similarly, a) Suffering is common - Birth, Sickness, Old age, Death etc. b) Cause of Suffering - ignorance and greed c) End of Suffering – to cut off greed and ignorance. d) Path to end Suffering –Noble Path is the way to end suffering. 'No killing, No stealing, No sexual misconduct, No lying, No intoxicants are the Buddha's Panchshila.' A top Nepalese Scholar Ram Kumar Shreatha writes-' Buddha taught that the world must be thought of in procedural terms and not in terms of things or substances. This is the understanding that any phenomenon exists only because of the existence of other phenomena in an amazingly complex web of cause and effect covering past, present and future and this seems to be the basic of Newton's law of Motion, to every action there is always an equal and opposite



reaction The Buddha taught that peaceful minds lead to peaceful speech and peaceful actions. If the minds of living beings are at peace, the world will be at peace. Buddhists believe that the

minds of all living beings are totally interconnected and interrelated, whether they are consciously aware of it or not. If we concentrate on putting our own minds at peace, then we can broadcast peace mentally and generate peace through our actions. We should use a peaceful mind to act for peace in the world.'

The religious structure of Nepalese society is formally Hindu; but here and only here the interplay of peoples and their religious traditions has produced a rich fusion of Hindu and Buddhist faiths. It is common for both Hindus and Buddhists to worship at the same shrine, for many gods and saints are cross-over, often known by a different name but holding the same attributes. The original inhabitants of the valley were animists, a tradition which survives in the multitude of spirits, demons, local deities, and stones which receive dutiful worship to this day. Hindu and Buddhist traditions adapted from the pre-existing animist practices and from each other. Indeed, in the medieval period, when both religions' practice adopted mystical, Tantric traditions, they were almost indistinguishable from each other. Nepal's History and Religions Nepal is a rich and complex mix of different cultures and traditions, melded over thousands of years into a unique whole.

Prithvi Narayan Shah, the unifier of the 'Greater Nepal', is the pride of Nepalese people who saved the Hindu and Buddhism in Nepal, in time. It was almost 100 years before unification of Germany (1868), Italy (1868), and the restoration of the Meiji (Japan, 1868) in which America was also under British dependency, that Prithvi Narayan Shah had already unified (1768) 54 small fiefdoms to build a large, expanded and greater Nepal. But after the movement of April 2006 and the party leaders Congress, UML and Maoists came to power they smashed the statue of the great King, contempt and insulted him and called off the birth anniversary of the late king as a day of national unity. Why? If they are Nepalese, they should answer the question.

The site is now being developed as a Buddhist pilgrimage centre, where the archaeological remains associated with the birth of the Lord Buddha form a central feature. Lumbini-Nepal is a Buddhist pilgrimage site in the Rupandehi district of Nepal, near the Indian border. It is the place where Queen Mayadevi is said to

have given birth to Siddhartha Gautam, who as the Buddha founded the Buddhist tradition. Records made by the Chinese pilgrim Fa Xian were also used in the process of identifying this religiously acclaimed site. The holy site of Lumbini has ruins of ancient monasteries, a sacred Bodhi tree, an ancient bathing pond, the Ashoka pillar and the Mayadevi temple. The truth, however is that Buddha was born at Lumbini in present Rupandehi district of western Terai region in Nepal. There are some antagonistic so-called politicians in Nepal; some against of Christian are habituated to exploit our national culture, religions and identities. Almost, the Nepalese Communists are active to minimize the immortality of Hinduism and Buddhism. The communist old-leader Mohan Bikram Sing wants to dismiss the existence of Buddha and he wrote that Buddha was born in Orissa (India) but not in Nepal. (See: Kantipur B.S.2059 Bhadra 19) What is that means? But, the renowned historian of India and native Orrisan Prof. Karuna Sagar Behera has been quoted as saying, "The Buddha was neither born in Orissa nor visited the place during his lifetime"

(<http://tinyurl.com/yl3jlyv>) Similarly, Another communist, the Maoist leader Dr. Baburam Bhattarai stressed – 'Buddha is our Nepalese glory. Lord Buddha held very progressive view during his time and it is needed to expand the Buddhist philosophy across the world.' ('Buddhism'-book launching ceremony- Nepal-China Society, 12 December 2010)

A country's existence and prestige can gradually be eroded by finishing off its faith and belief tradition and culture and the creator of nation. If anyone wants the assurance of integrity and lasting peace in this country, one must not be confused about the country's century's old customs and religious prestige as well as the builder of nationality and unity.

Having diverse cohesive communities, Nepal has built up as a nation in a long historical process. But, at present why the peaceful country where Lord Buddha was born has become the venue of confrontations? The main causes of the crisis is the abolishing our culture and traditions. Some are going to abolish the monarchy-the creator and protector of Hindu and Buddhism. So, for the sake of Nepalese identity, Hindus and Buddhism and the people-oriented Monarchy must be reinstated. ■

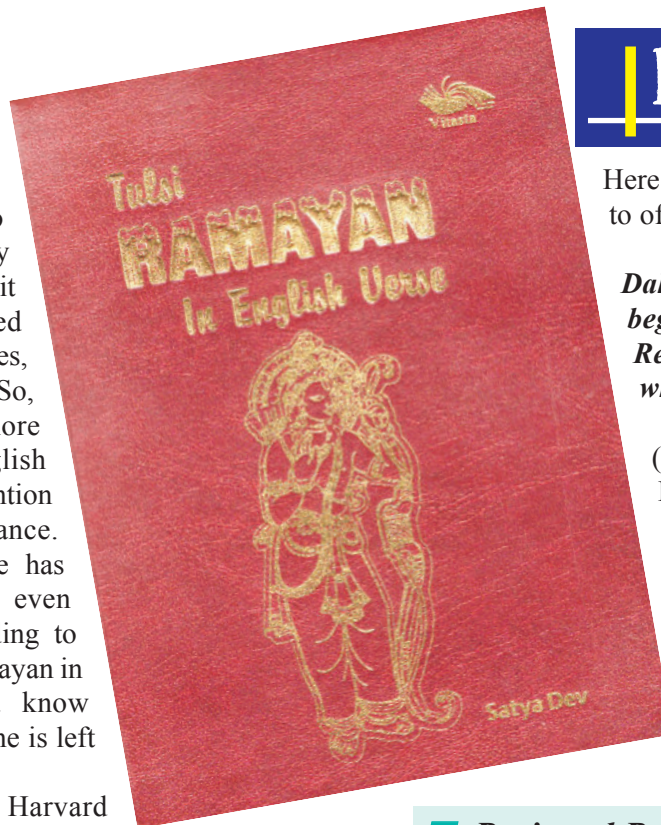
www.srilankaguardian.org/2013/04/lord-buddha-buddhism-and-its.html



Book Review

Ramayan is so immensely popular that it has been translated into many languages, including English. So, having one more translation in English wouldn't draw attention at a first glance. However, when one has the opportunity to even give a cursory reading to this book, Tulsi Ramayan in English verse and know who the author is, one is left spellbound.

Satya Dev is a Harvard graduate who served in the



Here is a glimpse of what the author has to offer by way of poetic rendition:

*Daksha called all the sages, and
began a big yagna ceremony,
Respectfully invited all the gods
who get part oblations, many.*

...60

(starting with the fifth chaupai):

Inquiring, Shiv explained
everything in detail,

Hearing of father's yagna, little
cheer to avail-

"If Mahesh grants me His kind
permission,

Few days I may go, n' live in
this situation."

Conjugal separation, cause great

Reviewed By Gaurang Vaishnav

Tulsi Ramayan in English Verse

Indian army as a captain. When he decided to translate the Tulsi Ramayan verse by verse in prose, his friends laughed at the idea and said that it could not be done. Well, after 15 years of love of labor, persistence and shraddha, Satya Devji brought out this publication in 2010, which will be of immense help to those Hindus and others interested in the great Hindu culture who do not know any language other than English. This would include a majority of second and third generation of Hindus in the northern hemisphere.

Author has taken pain to fit every chaupai, doha, sortha, chhand and shloka in proper meters and while doing so has not sacrificed lucidity of language.

In Baal Kand, there is the famous incidence where Sati is desirous to attend yagna at her father Daksha's home. Bhagwan Shankar reasons with her the inappropriateness of going where one is not invited or where one's spouse is ignored willfully and yet, Sati could not see the reason and Bhagwan Shankar let her go with an ominous warning. These are chaupais between Dohas 60-61 and 61-62.

pain at heart,

Knowing own guilt, says nothing on her part.

Sati spoke in heartwarming language, at last,

Feeling hitch, shyness, a sense of love, so fast-

"In my father's house, O' Graceful!

Such supreme celebration,

May I go and see respectfully,

if I have my Lord's permission." ...61

"Well spoken, to my mind too, of great appeal,

But uninvited, how inappropriate does it feel?

Daksh sent for all his daughters, in good accord,

But due to his spite with me, only you he ignored.

At Brahma's meeting, he felt unhappy with me,

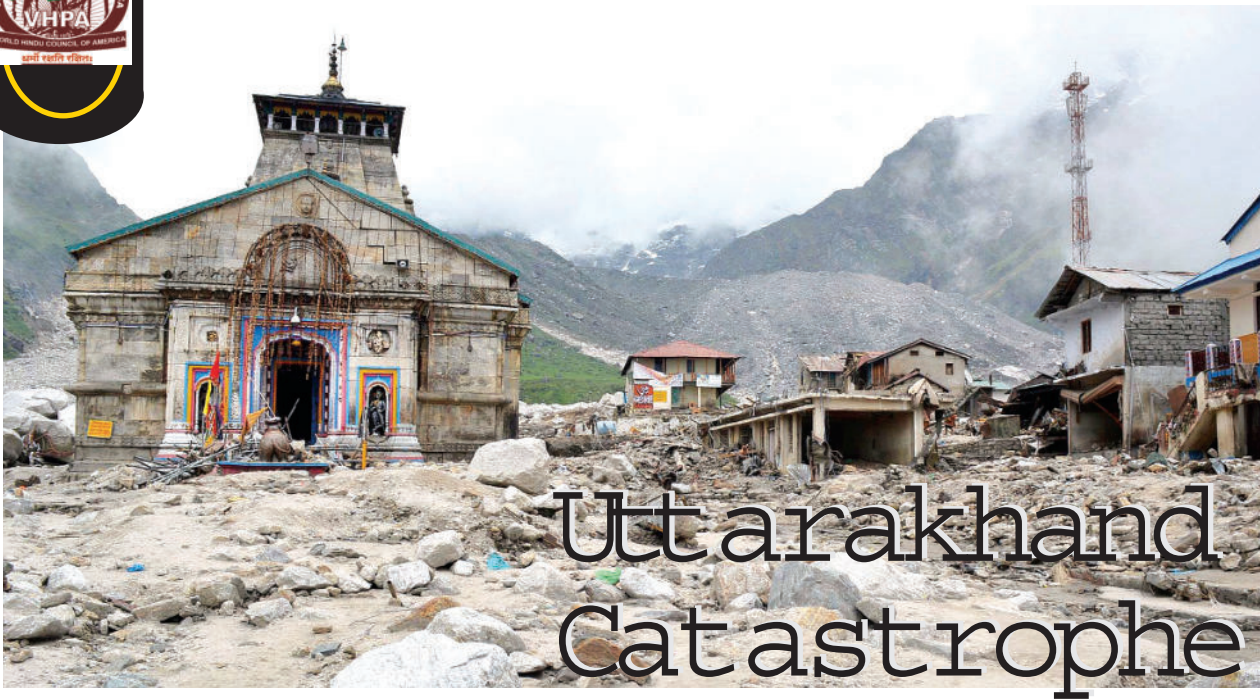
The reason only, he chose, yet insulting to be.

Bhavani! Without an invitation, even if you go,

Continued on page 32

The book is published by Vitatsta Publishing. It is available from VHPA Bookstore (email to vhp.office@gmail.com for order information) for \$60.

Every Hindu home should have it; besides it makes for an excellent gift at birthdays, graduations and weddings.



Uttarakhand Catastrophe

An Eyewitness Account: The Horror, and the New Gods

■ *By Tarun Vijay*

Each yatri had to tell more than his or her story. Heaven it was once, which has turned into a burial ground for the living. With all the advancements in technology, all that glib talk of disaster management, the towering Indian conquering the world with his brilliance and high-end acumen, the fact is we failed our people in crisis. Ultimately the armed forces had to be deployed, who emerged as the new gods along with the RSS swayamsewaks, who worked characteristically in an unassuming, humble manner and saved hundreds of yatriis while providing relief material to thousands in the most trying circumstances. The chopper crash killing 20 rescuers on board once again brought the horror of the situation prevailing in the Kedarnath region. Everyone saluted the brave-hearts who laid down their lives in the service of common Indians. They have emerged as the new gods of Kedarnath. The eye of Shiva that protects not destroys. Everything that shouldn't have happened happened in Uttarakhand. The monsoon was forecast a fortnight later, yet with the cloudburst the Chauri Bari Lake (also known as Gandhi Sarovar) sank

into Kedar Valley burying thousands under the huge boulders and a wall of water that fell on pilgrims from above. That was on June 16. The first help reached them on the evening of June 19. The rush of pilgrims should have been a little less in the week closer to the rains, yet it was overwhelmingly crowded and the road to Kedarnath was a sea of people of all colors, countries, provinces and castes. As everyone knows, the monsoon often wreaks havoc in this part of the state, so the disaster management team should have been very, very alert. Its plans should have been in place with the manpower smartly distributed at all the vulnerable points so that in any eventuality the rescue teams are rushed to the spot without wasting a second. None of the areas that were vulnerable and known as the most crowded places in peak season had any disaster relief teams stationed, no emergency plans were ever prepared, no disaster control room was designed to serve professionally. The district magistrate of the area should have been the first to sound the alert, and to caution pilgrims when the first news of the rains arrived. But he suddenly had a massive stroke at the most critical moment. In the shadow of a terrific calamity, the state government took five days to appoint a new DM. The most precious time to control and minimize the damage



was thus lost. The incident also proved that in spite of being the place of highest reverence for Hindus, that brings more than 400 million faithful from across the globe every year, the area didn't have a hospital to provide emergency treatment to people in distress. Even the district magistrate had to be rushed to Dehradun. Think of the common citizens and pilgrims in such a situation. The nation, i.e., the political masters who take decisions to send help in such situations, and the media, that creates the atmosphere to have an appropriate response by society, should have been completely focused on the incident. But when the dying people needed urgent response in Kedarnath, politicians and the television channels were busy responding to Nitish-Modi-Advani-RSS issues and discussing the future of NDA post the JD-U's secular divorce. Nothing mattered to them as important and as engaging as this political potpourri. TV channels relied on their junior-most reporters, sometimes stringers based in the state; they even used Facebook photos as exclusive "breaking news" clips. On the other hand a Pakistan election gets their chief editors, principal political editors and the highest-ranking senior analysts to go to Islamabad and report from there. Plus, the reports from the state were too noisy and haphazardly presented. For Delhi station directors, Kedarnath didn't deserve well-planned and top-slotted reporting till the third day was over. In market-driven stupid shows, the media in Delhi was saying, "Didn't I tell you a hundred years before that unless you follow what I have been prescribing such calamities will

occur" and giving a push to "green journalism" in a sordid drama of one-upmanship. And another show began a discussion on Rahul-Modi contributions to help Kedarnath victims. They were shameless enough to use a tragedy to earn more masala-driven TRPs. The TV channels hardly showed any sensitivity to the victims, their relatives and the local residents of Gupt-Kashi, Ukhimath, where almost every home lost a member. Weeping mothers, old men with hardly any energy to speak, wailing families and extreme shows dominated the screen. The print media, on the contrary, was more sincere and sensitive to the situation. It all resulted in chaos. That chaos prolonged the dark night of death. That chaos caused the most excruciatingly painful, torturous five days for the thousands of pilgrims and perhaps increased the toll of the dead to an unimaginable count. Look at how our people, our citizens and our kith and kin died. Usha Soni's husband died in her lap; he had dysentery and no anti-diarrhea medicine was available. Sohan Lal Vyas from Udaipur saw her son, daughter-in-law, sister's son and sister getting buried in the water-wall that came with a huge gush of mud and pebbles. A mother was holding her little baby at Kedarnath, and to make sure that hold she tried to clutch the Nandi statue, but in that fraction of a second the water flow took away the wailing child. Khushboo Sahay of Varanasi was swept away with her husband and son; she was found two days later on the river bank, unconscious, by army men and revived. The people on the 14-km long trek to Kedarnath, a huge sea of faithful, vanished into the watery assault that



came with unimaginable force and speed, sweeping away vehicles as if they were made of cardboard. Those who were fortunate to be alive experienced Pralay -- the end of Earth. A family of eight was washed away with a 10-year-old boy being the lone survivor. For six days people at Gauri Chatti, Bhairav Ghati, Rambhari, Gauri Kund were left to their own devices. No food, no water. All around dead bodies lay scattered. Bodies of dead ponies and scores of other animals turned the area into the most horrendous and frightening sight. No one could even airdrop pamphlets with instructions, guidance and hope. No one conveyed to them, "We are coming. We shall bring all of you back home safely." Porters and pony-wallahs assaulted the women. Pilgrims were taken to wrong, lonely routes to deprive them of their belongings. A porter took 16,000 rupees from a group of 10 from Patna, one of them Narendra Singh, a former chief manager of the State Bank of India, just to show them the correct path to Sonprayag. Fingers of dead bodies were cut to take out golden rings. Their pockets were emptied. An ochre-robed man was found with 80 lakh rupees and promptly arrested. The aircraft pressed into service to evacuate pilgrims were small, like three- to six-seated choppers. They had a refueling problem. The Director General of Police, Uttarakhand, told me and urged

for help. I spoke to the Prime Minister to facilitate the ATF being airlifted to higher regions to save time and evacuate more people. Thousands were stranded in Badrinath, Gangotri and Kedarnath regions. It was only after the death toll rose too high and the national media finally understood the seriousness of the catastrophe, that more choppers were brought in to make more sorties. June 22 and 23 were hectic for Kedarnath, but thousands of stranded pilgrims at Badrinath were told to wait, as "they were safe." We left Gupt Kashi by road on the 24th morning early, at 4:30am. Hundreds of rescued pilgrims were with us, in vehicles including old and young women who had lost sons, daughters, fathers and parents and all family members. The tragic stories were endless. Hardly 45 km ahead we faced huge landslides. In the entire 200 km stretch only one JCB road clearance machine was deployed. It was working at its



peak speed, but still would have taken a day to clear the huge blockades if an army officer, Col. Anil Mehra, had not put into action two other JCBs lying idle in a village as they were "privately owned." That's the difference between a babu-government and the army man, everyone realized. A young kid, Shivam Bisht, was crying with pain. He had suffered major knee injury at Kedarnath and a bleeding sore in the stomach. By chance a doctor, who had come to Gupt Kashi from AIIMS to help pilgrims, was with our convoy. He performed first aid, spoke to the state's Health Minister Surendra Singh Negi and he assured that once the boy reached Dehradun he would be provided with all medical help and also special financial assistance. The agony that began in Kedarnath was unending. Had they brought all yatris from Kedarnath? Perhaps not. Some pilgrims were still reported to be in

tents, out in the open without even a sheet of cloth to cover in that wintry, windy climate. The shopkeepers, lodge-owners, were either dead or gone to safety. Everywhere it was a spine-chilling reign of fear, bad memories and hopelessness. People were defecating anywhere. Water filled the Mandakini River. No one was in a condition to hold the hands of the other. A chopper came but the minister took his two relatives and flew away. More sorties and more chaos. Thousands of people were stranded and clamoring to board and leave the hell. The "me-first" push of the crowd eager to reach a safer zone can't be described, it can only be felt. The only gods of succor and life-providing bliss were the men in olive green, the army, the ITBP personnel and the RSS swayamsevak. Like angels they did everything that was possible in that situation. RSS youngsters were the first to reach Gauri Kund and provide food, water and solace to dejected, fatigued, yatris



Bhairav Ghati and beyond. With the monsoon beginning, they would need immediate help. They might not have had any food, shelter and warm clothes. Who was going to provide all that? And what about the dead still buried in Kedarnath area? The bodies had begun to decay and stink. Army officers said unless they were cleared in the next two to three days, a massive attack of infections might have engulfed the entire state. It was only on the fourth and the fifth day that some NDRF teams were sent to Guptkashi, Kedarghati, Gauri Kund and Gangotri areas. Doctors' teams from the Indian Medical Association, AIIMS, Gangaram (New Delhi) too arrived at some places like Guptkashi. But the ordeal of the pilgrims at Gauri Kund, Ram Bari, and Jungle Chatti remained unspeakably painful. No shelter, no



enveloped in hopelessness along with the Gayatri Parivar, local NGOs, the police association, college student unions, etc. It's a tragedy that driven by hate and an ideological apartheid, the wonderful and selfless contribution of the RSS was completely ignored by the media, though the army men gave them a hug and cooperated with them. The IAF and army

saved thousands of people. Crossing ferocious streams and rivers on a string of wire with old, young and the children clinging to them; like monkey cubs, they dawned on the scene as angels. But too many were to be rescued and too less was the number in proportion to the need and calamity-struck people. The security personnel manning the air-rescue had to have some rule -- and one was to get the women, aged and ailing onboard first. It divided the



families. Men and many times young women of the family were left behind. Seemingly young were asked to trek down up to Sonprayag from Gauri Kund, about 14 to 16 km, passing through a bit of forest and negotiating a high hill. In Gangnani area, seemingly youthful ones had to trek approximately 75 km to reach safety. Though some said it was forgotten that after a painful stretch of five days, without food, even the young were half-dead. The mental stress, deadly dance of agony, and dark fears of life coming slowly to a painful end sapped away all the energy that they once had. But they had no other alternative. The forces that were there to provide safety were left with no other option. Still some were lucky to be airlifted and some had to walk down to Gupt Kashi. They were a picture of lifeless, darkened and blank-eyed moving bodies. They needed a shoulder and a few words of consolation. They needed a blanket of hope and warmth, the hug of a relation. A relationship of being a fellow Indian. The people of Gupt Kashi did try to help them wonderfully. The city, a small buzzing town of pundits, ritual performers, shopkeepers of religious needs like dhoop, agarbattis, pooja samagri, lodge-owners of



Kedarnath, helpers, guides, members of temple committee, employees of local government offices was enveloped in grief. Almost every home in this region, particularly Gupt Kashi and Ukhimath, had lost someone in the family. They were desperately scouring the lists getting updated every few hours to find if their relatives' names were there. The town was closed down. No one had the courage to do business when the lights in their homes had died. Still they were the young and the old of Gupt Kashi, who came out to help forlorn pilgrims. They began a free langar, started missing persons search centre, 24-hour announcements were made of the list of arrived pilgrims and missing names. Medicines were provided free. The RSS volunteers were as usual doing their bit by providing food, blankets, shelter and guidance. They were the first to

reach Gauri Kund, the point where the rescued pilgrims were brought from Jungle Chatti. Hungry, dejected, shocked with grief, fatigued and bewildered at being still alive after having spent six days amidst decaying corpses. More of everything was needed and everything available was just not sufficient. The town never had the attention of governors sitting at the Dehradun secretariat. In spite of being the centre of gravity for all things happening at Kedarnath, the feeder city to pilgrimage for all purposes, it abysmally lacked in infrastructure. It had a very unreliable



power supply, no solar alternative, no toilets, no city cleaning mechanism, and not even an iota of a disaster management centre. The government camps for rescued pilgrims had no power supply. When I visited in the evening, candles were being provided to some. Imagine people just arrived rescued from the jaws of death, and many of them had seen their father, mother, brother, sister, wife, husband dying before their eyes and they had to leave their dead bodies either unattended or had them immersed in the Mandakini without being able to even perform the last rites. These were the people stationed in the clumsy, dark, and stable-like rooms without a proper toilet facility. A few toilets, in the school, were rendered useless due to paucity of water and non-functional flush. Fatigued and barely able to walk, pilgrims had to ease themselves in the open, on the outskirts of the camp,



which was an inter-college building. And the worst was not yet over. They couldn't speak to their relatives on phone -- mobile phones were not working. BSNL was the only source of

some hope, to bring cheer on the faces of their anxious relatives back home, but without power most couldn't recharge their mobiles. Almost ninety nine percent had got their mobile phones soaked in rain water and besides, the other private mobile phone operators were simply mercilessly insensitive to the tragedy. "Happy to help" meant a hoax call for all of us. They could have had a special arrangement to get the tower activated, facilitating communications to the pilgrims. But no one came forward to help them in the hour they needed it most. The first thing, after having survived the unspeakable ordeal, a pilgrim would have liked to do is to speak to his near and dear ones. But we Indians, the companies we own -- Vodafone, Tata, Reliance -- simply didn't care. Nilesch Bharane, the effervescent superintendent of police manning the Gupt Kashi helipad did try the satellite phone to get the Sonis of Gujarat to speak with their Mumbai kin but ultimately had to go to a corner of the airfield where like voodoo magic, the signal, feeble though, came through and we saw the Sonis speaking to their folk through intermittent sobs. They had lost their father at Kedarnath. With the instruments available, within the framework of the existing infrastructure and trained, untrained, manpower at hand, everyone did his best. If the RSS and BJP were there in the forefront of relief work, the Congress and many other organizations too worked at the ground level and I went to them, shook hands and appreciated their efforts unhesitatingly. Are they not Indians, and should we get into the murky blame game and one-upmanship because we do not belong to their ideology? That would be demeaning to our own noble intentions. We must salute the spirit of service in everyone who went there and did their bit -- the police, local employees, district magistrates and officers drawn from various departments tried to help the army and the IAF. The Gauri Kund hospital had seen everybody gone to safety, however, there was one pathologist who refused to leave and single-handedly nursed the rescued yatris coming from Jungle Chatti area. There are hundreds of such small stories of heroes who made a big difference. The IAF couple who flew sorties to bring back yatris, the Jha-Janamejay duo (DM and SP) in Tehri who got the crucial Mayala road opened to Gupt Kashi, which effectively became a

lifeline to rescue work and outflow of yatris. In times of any huge crisis, people naturally panic and need immediate help. It's not possible sometimes. Still, I sincerely feel, with no offence to the heroes and every one of those who worked to help, we were lacking in an infrastructure that could have responded to such a situation rapidly. At the end of the day, everything depended on the army and IAF. It was the same in 1940, in 1960, in 1970 and so on. There are lessons to be learnt. How not to politicize a relief operation, keep the communication channels on in the gravest of situations, have the disaster management team professionally stationed at every vulnerable place, regulate the inflow of yatris like Kailash and Amarnath Yatras, provide the best of infrastructure to these border areas visited by millions, train the civil servants to be polite and responsive to the common people, and a political leadership that loves to work and mingle with the masses.

Kedarnath catastrophe was the night that never ended. RSS Sarkaryavah (General Secretary) Bhayyaji Joshi and Sah Sarkaryavah (Jt General Secretary) Dr Krishna Gopal, came to Dehradun and travelled widely to assess the situation and provide a way for effective relief and rehabilitation. Bhayya ji Joshi had an aerial survey too courtesy the Chief Minister Vijay Bahuguna and gave a long ranging pathway for reconstruction work. The biggest challenge is to help the children, thousands of them have become orphans and thousands have lost their schools. There is a fear that many would lose their year of studies. I have committed to adopt 100 such children for their education and hostel stay. Similarly many others have come forward. But there is a great need to create a new paradigm for development and environmental protection. Ganga and Ganga-Bhakt should complement each other. While it is true that the Kedarnath catastrophe will remain as the most painful story of Utrakhnad ever, it will also be remembered for the thousands of those helping hands spontaneously raised. The people of the state, the jawans of the forces and para-military arms, the local and the national level NGOs, media persons, everyone contributed enormously. For four days we were in Gupt Kashi, Son Prayag and then trekked up to Gauri Kund passing through the heavily devastated areas. It was like passing through a bad dream, a world enveloped in excruciating pain, indescribable agony and the hurt that made each yatri look again and again backward towards Ram Bari and Kedarnath. Maybe their dearest ones would come rushing to them and yell, "Hey ma, I was saved, I am



Some suggestions for the long term management of the disasters in Uttarakhand

- ★ Shift focus of administration – make Gairsain a summer capital on the patterns of J & K. The hills will not get importance for development till the government seat is also shifted there
- ★ Roads in main valleys should be above ridge lines
- ★ Tunneling methods on the patterns of the Banihal tunnel be used to connect places and shorten the distances
- ★ Roads construction expert panel & monitoring system be established with the help of credible private construction companies like L & T
- ★ All weather communications including data systems management be properly established
- ★ Village defense and disaster teams should be set up, especially in the border areas under the army
- ★ Take help of highly experienced retired officers settled in Uttarakhand for making reconstruction plans and hold seminars to involve social sector in health, geology, wildlife, forests, economy, and administration
- ★ Adoption of villages be allowed by Army, NGOs, states. I have announced to adopt one village and similarly IMA Dehradun is keen to adopt one village
- ★ NDRF Organisation be properly reorganized, empowered, given a helicopter and its units be established in vulnerable locations under command of the Army
- ★ Enhance capacity – rescue, equipment, training, data, research, communications and command control
- ★ In border areas Ecology TA additional battalions should be raised under Army
- ★ Transport management and tagging – registration system be introduced in all Char Dham Yatras like China has done so that every vehicle and the passengers traveling are properly tagged and administration knows the quantum of people in these areas correctly
- ★ Development mode for these vulnerable areas be decided and implemented so that hazard and unplanned development is stopped. Nature's protection and economic development must be balanced in a wholesome manner
- ★ Immediate attention on building infrastructure – accommodation, storage, heli-dromes, emergency helipads, fuel stocks, food stocks, and toilets
- ★ Establish a single unit State command authority¹⁶. Bring back seriousness to civil military liaison conferences so that confidential bills are in various arms of authorities.
- ★ Research team be sent immediately for making an implementable report for protecting monuments in Uttarakhand.
- ★ A memorial be erected for Kedarnath victims and heroes of rescue operation at Deoprayag/ Haridwar
- ★ Raising funds for reconstruction – people approach, involve a apolitical agency, people of repute
- ★ Arrangements for yatris, guidelines and precautions should be properly publicized and registration of yatris be made compulsory on the pattern of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra
- ★ Winter and monsoon deployment of resources
- ★ Safety of banks and vaults be addressed
- ★ Chardham yatra authority should be re-organized like Vaishno Devi Yatra arrangement
- ★ Lay byes, convoy parking grounds, should be planned on the entire route of Yatra
- ★ Satellite tracking of weather be made a dedicated mechanism
- ★ Monitoring of water flow in rivers
- ★ Electrical crematoriums be established
- ★ Recovery posts & emergency relief stations
- ★ Adventure camps & parking be regularized
- ★ Maps be provided to all vehicle drivers and & training of taxi drivers, first aid box be made compulsory, Radio taxis should be introduced in these areas
- ★ Mule's waste disposal, ban on plastics
- ★ Nepalese & outsiders settlements be discussed and a regularization system be introduced
- ★ Air control and weather monitoring stations be established in higher regions. Today air control system beyond Jollygrant Airport (Dehradun) is absent.
- ★ Separate relief mechanism for residents of Uttarakhand & non-residents should be created
- ★ One agency/command system should be operational 24 hrs/7 days for disaster management



alive, I am with you once again....

"While Delhi was busy in the humdrum of political one-upmanship and media searching frantically for new TRP

enhancer noises, the stars of the rescue operation in Uttarakhand recreated a Ganga of faith and emotions. The heroes who laid their lives while rescuing the people have become our new stars. The fauji is not a paid employee. He is a missionary warrior and a first citizen who protects the nation and is happily ready to sacrifice his life for that. That's what makes him different and that's why he gets so much public respect. He is the only one about whom our oldest scriptures have mentioned with highest honor, he attains martyrdom, a "veer gati", and goes to the Surya Lok, the heavens of the thousand Suns, according to the Bhagwad Geeta. The men in uniform who risked their lives, gave their families a hundred assurances to come back, and while bringing the hopeless, dejected, half dead yatris from Kedarnath, laid down their lives. They broke the promise given to their family but kept the word given to Mother India- to live and die in the line of duty. The jawans on the ground, whatever uniform they wore, olive green or khaki, army, naval commandoes, IAF, NRDF, ITBP and the state police were miracle personified. The old and the kids and the youngsters, completely emasculated like a soaked paper-ball squeezed, came back to life from the jaws of death when the hands of jawans lifted their bodies in their arms, and weak unsure yatris clung to them, locking around their chests. It was an awesome feat. The air warriors, took up the challenge of the skies, tamed the bad weather, adjusted in the most painful absence of any infrastructure for the disaster response, with no air control towers beyond Dehradun, no ATF storage mechanism in uphill border region, very clumsy and congested parking bay for the choppers, everything required was fixed up in a record time and the air warriors flew to bring back life and hope for the

thousands of families. The rescued yatris' feet were swollen, faces black with fatigue, six days without food, clothes torn and wet and soiled. Eyes blank and still. Think of that and then think someone suddenly reaching out to say, "Come on Ma, the chopper is waiting to take you back home." That unbelievable moment of hope was frozen on their faces. The moment of life became unbelievably a magical drop of life and the jawans who carried the yatris in their arms were the heroes, the new gods, who were bathed with blessings sweetened with the salty tears. The stars who gave the rays of life to the hopelessly distraught people, those pilots and commandoes and the NDRF bravehearts who defeated death and challenged the deadly roars of an angry nature's fury and tamed the mountains they became our new gods of Kedar Khand. To remember them is like cruising slowly with the stars. Their memory is like the Ganga flowing amidst us with twinkling diyas floating in it. Or like the stargazers walk nimble footed on a mountainous trek wearing a silence of the praying gods. Now how do we move ahead? The situation demands a new paradigm of work culture and a fresh, new approach to build a disaster response system. I spoke to the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and later President Shri Pranab Mukherjee.

About the author

Shri Tarun Vijay is currently a Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and a national spokesperson for BJP, India. He is also member of Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, Parliamentary Group on India China Friendship, and Hon. Director, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation (Centre for Civilization Values and Policy Research).



For more rescue and relief pictures, please visit tarun-vijay.blogspot.in/2013/06/why-look-to-skies-angels-are-here-rss.html www.tarunvijay.org, tarun-vijay.blogspot.com





2500-Year-Old City Discovered in Chhattisgarh

RAIPUR: After initial survey, archaeologists claim to have found remains of a 2,500-year-old city, buried at Tarighat in Durg district of Chhattisgarh where excavation work is to begin shortly.

Talking to TOI, J R Bhagat, deputy director, archaeology department, said, "The ancient city located 30km away from the capital was found buried in 2008 in

Patan tehsil of Durg district. Its remains indicate that it was a well-planned settlement dating back to 2nd and 3rd century BC."

He said it was a chance discovery during his

personal visit to Tarighat in 2008 when he found some old coins, beads, pottery items, bones and some structural features on the banks of Kharun River. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has approved excavation of the area, based on the initial findings, he said.

"After the completion of the process, I believe it would be counted among the biggest archaeological discoveries in Chhattisgarh. The coins and semi-precious stones appear to be from the Kushan and Satavahan dynasties," said Bhagat, adding that the signs of burnt structures at a few places indicate that the ancient city might have been completely destroyed in a fire.



He said the area seems to have been divided into blocks which appear like a market. "Many structures were found to be facing the main road which is clearly visible between the blocks. About six to eight rooms were found on both sides of the road," Bhagat said. Archaeologists are conducting survey in the 10 km vicinity of Patan. "For excavation, we would have to dig about 20

feet and few patches have been marked in the region where we expect to find more precious elements," he said.

The ancient city is believed to have been rich in ceramic culture with the discovery of a large number of pottery items including vases, basins and bowls. Also, few terracotta figures of males, females and animal figurines were traced while the whole mound was found to be covered with stones. ■

timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/raipur/2500-year-old-city-discovered-in-chhattisgarh/articleshow/18942752.cms



Arya Samaj of Greater Houston Hosts

Fifth Annual HAVAN Conference

Organized by VHPA

The Arya Samaj of Greater Houston hosted the fifth annual Hindu American Vanprasthi Network (HAVAN) conference organized by World Hindu Council of America (VHPA).

Around 100 Hindus participated along with an eminent panel of speakers and many active Hindu community leaders.

The Hindu American Vanprasthi Network (HAVAN) was launched to serve the self-development and identification of service fields need for retired and to be retired members of Hindu community living in America.

The acronym HA-VAN is chosen to reflect the

transformative lifestyle stage of Vanaprasthi. The goal is to engage them locally in meaningful community service activities, develop network, and opportunities to use their skills, specialties, and wisdom for the benefit of the society.

Conference topics included Vedic Vision and Modern day Vanaprasthi lifestyle, Vanaprasthi lifestyle in American context, Experience - History of Hindus in America, Women and Hindu lifestyle, Engaging with Houston's Diverse Communities, Building Bridges - Youth perspective, Vanaprasthis - Medical Science perspective, Social Mingling.

The inaugural session started with Yogesh Naik (VHPA Houston chapter) informing the audience about





the objectives of the HAVAN conference and how it positively impacts seniors of Hindu community in terms of networking, resource sharing and collaboration.

Acharya Surya Nandaji from Arya Samaj of Greater Houston performed the invocation ceremony and spoke about four ashrams (phases) of life, their meaning and roles one play in each phase as per Hindu Vedic scriptures.

Devinder Mahajan (Chief Coordinator of Arya Samaj of Greater Houston) welcomed the audience and thanked VHPA for organizing such enlightening

accomplish collectively that individual Hindus cannot?" followed by question and answer session.

Sanjay Mehta (Jt. General Secretary of VHPA) involved the audience in memory lane game-Jeopardy.

Ramesh Bhai Shah (President, Ekal Vidyalaya Global) spoke on Seva (social service) opportunities for youth, adults and Vanaprasthis at local and national level.

Sarojni Gupta explained SEWA International activities and helpline phone number for community social service and (SEWA helpline number: (832) 900 9394).

THREEFOLD AIM OF HAVAN

- ★ Seniors to feel good about self
- ★ Smooth shift from current lifestyle
- ★ Connection with children and grandchildren.

conference and spoke about programs of Arya Samaj focused towards imbibing Hindu values and culture in children, youth and adults. Pravin Vyas (President, VHPA Houston Chapter) gave an overview of HAVAN and what expectations Hindu seniors can have from it. He also thanked Arya Samaj.

The session on Engaging Vanaprasthis included discussion included by key community leaders with Acharya Surya Nandaji speaking on Vedic vision and modern day lifestyle, giving real life examples of challenges Vanaprasthis encounter in America.

Gaurangbhai Nanavaty spoke on Vanaprasthi lifestyle in American context, challenges they face in old age and communications with children and grandchildren and their important role in social transformation.

Dr. Mahesh Dave spoke on current state of Vanaprasthis from medical science perspective and what medical approach they should adopt what treatments they should avoid for healthy physical and mental well-being.

Atul Kothari spoke on best retirement planning for Vanaprasthi lifestyle in terms of Social Security, Medicare, investments and other retirement packages. Abha Dwivedi from American General Life & Accident company spoke on insurance needs for senior citizen lifestyle and companies that offer such insurance programs, selection criteria and enrollments.

Padamakant Khambhati spoke on 'What can Hindus

Dr. Renu Thapar gave tips for keeping good mental health and day to day activities which fosters good mental health with emphasis on getting involved in some activity as a volunteer, office bearer, donation fundraising for social organizations.

The final session dealt with 'Engaging Vanaprasthis-Networking and Planning' in which Sushma Pallod (Vice-President, VHPA Houston Chapter) conducted a light Yoga session.

Lauren Santerre spoke on interfaith service and Dialogue: Engaging with Houston Diverse Communities.

Neeraj Salhotra spoke on building bridges with youth and how senior community members can apply active role in educating school students in getting high SAT and other academic scores by volunteering in academic education at various community colleges.

Sudhir Mathuria spoke on healthcare, Medicare and long term care program with innovative and informational video presentation.

At the concluding session Sanjay Mehta (Jt. General Secretary of VHPA) thanked audience, volunteers and Arya Samaj of Greater Houston for organizing such insightful and purposeful conference for Hindu seniors and retired community members. All the attendees received a book on speeches of Swami Vivekananda as a gift.

He emphasized the foundation objectives of VHPA which envision Hindu unity irrespective of caste,



HAVAN SESSION PANELIST- ENGAGING VANAPRASTIS

L-R - dr. Bhushan Varma, Gaurangbhai Nanavaty, Abha Dwivedi, Atul Kulkarni, Acharya Surya Nandaji, Dr. Mahesh Dave, Padmakant Khambhati, Pravin Vyas in background



creed, and faith based sampraday or country of origin as VHPA is for everybody. He educated the audience on programs of VHPA such as Hindu Man-dir Executive Conference (HMEC) which has united Hindu temples across USA/CA and allowed sharing of knowledge, re-sources and helped priests develop contemporary skills for Hindu requirement in North America. HAVAN is a byproduct of HMEC.

Some other excellent publications of VHPA like Vivah Sanskara, Hindu Prayer Book were also made available.

Finally, suggestions and comments were discussed for dynamic working model that help. Some take away points for conference were developing senior's home in USA/CA for parents and grandparents, expanding HAVAN network, databases, phone calls and regular monthly meetings. Create library of useful material for Vanapasthi in the area of health, estate, spiritual and culture. ■



Abha Dwivedi spoke on Insurance needs for Vanaprasthi lifestyle



HAVAN Conference

HINDU VISHWA



Dev Mahajan (president, Arya Samaj Greater Houston) welcoming HAVAN participants & speakers



Neeraj Salhotra on Building bridges- Youth



Dr. Mahesh Dave on Current state of Vanaprastis- Medical Science Perspective



Musical programm by Smriti Srivatsav & Rajarajeshwari

Tulsi Ramayan in English Verse

Continued from page 19

It won't be polite, loving, not honourable also.
Home of a friend, lord, father, n' guru although,

Even uninformed are doubtless free n' open to go.
Yet, if someone is ill disposed, in any such place,

It's neither well going there, nor any good to face."
Shambhu tried to convince her, so many ways,

But, reason failed her mind, due as destiny plays.
The Lord yet warned- "Now, if you go uninvited,

It won't do you any good, as I have estimated."

Har tried telling her many ways,

but Dakshsuta doesn't remain,

With prime guards to accompany,

Tripurari bid her farewell then. ...62

The poetry of this book is so compelling that families could use it to recite it with their children, just the way

we have recited Ramcharit Manas in its original language. That will not only popularize the great epic to our children and their children but will help retain and strengthen Hindu culture in our adopted land.

This 700 page book is a classic in true sense of the term. It is a hard bound book with a gold embossed picture of Shree Raam. The printing is eye catching. Interestingly, symbols of shankh (conch), temple bell, kalash (metal pot used for rituals) and lotus have been used liberally to denote Chaupai, Chhand, Sortha and Shloka.

Foreword by Lallan Prasad Vyas, President of International Ramayan Conference series, author's recap of how this work came about and a moving note by the publisher's, in themselves speak a volume about how great this book is and how divine inspiration has guided this endeavor. ■



My Story: Growing up in a Priest's Family

■ *By Aneesh Bairavasundaram,
Grade 11, Ashland, MA*

I was born in the United States in a town called Ashland in MA where the Sri Lakshmi Temple is. I used to live in one of the three houses on the temple grounds that were set aside for the priests and their families. Since I was young I was surrounded by the Hindu culture and its festivals. In fact, I only learned English after first grade. Because everything was provided to me, a home, a place to play, a place to worship, I never had a need to leave the temple grounds; while this nurtured my spirit and my familial life, it also resulted in me being completely unaware of American culture and society.

At the age of five, I had my Upanayanam Sanskar. Since I got my Upanayanam I have been doing my Sandhyavandanam. But because of my age, I did not know what my Upanayanam truly meant, or why I did sandhyavandanam. I was very proud of my Upanayanam, but it was a pride that had no backing. During gym class at school, my friends would ask me what my Upanayam was, and even though I was proud of it, and knew it was very important, I was embarrassed because I did not know what my Upanayanam was, or why it was important. From a young age I began to question why many of our rituals are performed. I asked many people, but never got an answer. Many said that they followed what their parents had asked them to do without understanding why they did so. In the American society blind faith is looked down upon and I became more embarrassed of all the things I didn't know. I felt that my performing these rituals without understanding them was just pure blind faith. As time went on more and more questions about our religion began to arise and my faith began to waiver. But, with the help of my father and my spiritual guru Abhaya Asthana Uncle I learned that everything in Hinduism had a reason; why abhishekas are done or what Upanayanam is. But as my urge to learn more about our religion grew, my education was limited by the short amount of times I got to see my father. As a priest, he is required to work at all days of the week and almost all hours of the day. Even with the short time windows in which I could see my father, the temple environment still helped me answer my questions about our religion. One program was Bala Vidya Mandir. Many of the things I learned made me

proud to be a Hindu, but the misconceptions widely spread also makes me sad. For example, in school, Hinduism is taught to be a polytheistic religion. I and many who are taught the truth, understand that this is a misconception, but many, including Hindus, do not know the truth and believe these misconceptions.

I believe that many Hindu children leave their Hindu traditions behind because of the lack of awareness in the Hindu community. From a young age Hindu Children are exposed to a vast pallet of religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam but not their own. What has become common today is that parents take their children once a year on Holi or Diwali to the temple and rather than showing their children all the murthis and explaining to them about Diwali they socialize with their friends and the children are left clueless about the festivals, much like I was in the beginning. Though the parents may know about all the different aspects of our religion, something they learned from their parents and their own society, many children who grow up here are left in the dark without knowing the importance and value of our religion. If this continuation of ignorance grows, Hinduism will become a religion full of meaningless rituals. But programs like Bal Vihar strive to make sure that Hindu children know about their traditions and customs as well as teach them how to clear out misconceptions of their own religion.

In the future I wish to continue my academic studies and learn the Vedas and more about our Hindu culture. Because of my father's busy schedule, I grew up facing the same cultural struggles and challenges of almost every other Hindu-American boy, perhaps even more. I had the added expectation of knowing everything, since I was "the priest's son". But despite these challenges, I found a way to learn the truth about our religion through many programs and wish to see all Hindus taking an active role in serving their community. I also wish to see the elders of the community, like our priests, teach the younger generation about our Sanatana Dharma. While I have firsthand knowledge about the busy life of a priest, and have seen just how difficult it is to make time to truly teach the younger generation, I feel that if my experience has taught me anything, it is imperative that our priests and religious leaders do guide our youth. I may have found a path on my own, but it is one that was steeped in struggles and challenges, and is one that was unnecessarily more complex than it needed to be. ■



Pre-Ashokan shrine discovered in Lumbini

HIMALAYAN NEWS SERVICE

History-defying discoveries o Excavations have revealed a pre-Ashokan temple of brick, which itself was built over a wooden structure o Older remains of a village dating back to as early as 1300 BC were found a few hundred metres south of Lord Buddha's birthplace **KATHMANDU:** New excavations on the premises of Maya Devi Temple in Lumbini have unearthed ruins of a thriving village with a shrine, dating back more than 1,000 years before Emperor Ashoka built monuments there to spread Buddhism, extending the history of the site to a much earlier date than previously thought.

Until now, the earliest Buddhist temples have been attributed to Emperor Ashoka, who built a pillar and a brick temple in Lumbini in third century BC in his endeavour to spread Buddhism across the region.

"For the first time in South Asia, excavations have revealed a pre-Ashokan temple of brick, which itself was built over a wooden structure," revealed Prof Robin Coningham of Durham University in UK, who co-directed a team of Nepali and international experts together with Kosh Prasad Acharya, at a press conference in Kathmandu today.

Coningham also said that even older remains of a village dating back to as early as 1300 BC were found a few hundred metres south of Lord Buddha's birthplace, pushing the date of the settlement of the region back by a thousand years.

"We have now very robust proof that Lumbini's history extends far before the visit of Emperor Ashoka. The government of Nepal will step up its efforts to preserve the outstanding universal value of the site," says Sushil Ghimire, Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

"These two discoveries are giant steps, which help us to better understand the origins of Lord Buddha's life and the spiritual importance of Lumbini," says Acharya Karma Sango Sherpa, the vice-chair the



The excavation site on the premises of Maya Devi Temple in Lumbini.

Lumbini Development Trust that looks after the preservation and management of the site. The team worked within the framework of a UNESCO project funded by the Government of Japan. The first phase of the project was completed this month in Lumbini, a UNESCO



World Heritage site since 1997. "I am pleased that the project that the UNESCO has implemented in close cooperation with the Lumbini Development Trust and the Department of Archaeology has resulted in such important discoveries," says Axel Plathe, Head of the UNESCO Office in Kathmandu and UNESCO Representative to Nepal. "Japan is honoured to have been able to contribute to the success of this flagship project," says Kunio Takahashi, the Ambassador of Japan to Nepal. ■

www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Pre-Ashokan+shrine++discovered+in+Lumbini&NewsID=382956



Dharma, Discipline, and Devotion:

Priesthood and the Hindu Tradition

Excerpts from the Inaugural Session of the 2nd Annual Hindu Priests' Conference, Queens, New York

■ By Swamini Svatmavidyananda

Leadership in the Hindu Tradition

There is a verse in the Bhagavad Geeta that says:

*yad yad acarati sresthas, tat tadevetaro janah |
sa yat pramanam kurute, lokastadanuvartate || BG 3.21*
Whatever a prominent person does, that alone other people do.

Whatever trend that person sets as proper, the world of people also follows.

The word *srestha* means an important person, a person that everyone looks up to, such as a king, a president, or a religious leader. One often becomes a *srestha* by occupying a position that is considered to be respectable and prominent; however, merely occupying a position of a *srestha* does not ensure that the person is a *srestha*. One has to grow into filling the portfolio connected to the position, for which emotional maturity is needed. Really speaking, a true leader does not become a leader by choice. A person often finds him or herself being seen as *asrestha*, because others look up to the person as awe-inspiring or worthy of emulation. In the Hindu tradition, we have a two-tier leadership. First, there are the priests, known as *purohitas* who are religious people, who handle rituals and liturgical sacrifices. They are married people, and live in the communities they serve. The word '*purohita*' means the one who is placed at the forefront. They are considered to be *srestha* because they are very knowledgeable and their life is committed to worship



and devotion. Next, there are the swamis, monastics or renunciants, who take the concept of leadership a step further by renouncing all ties to the world and not needing to lean on anything or anyone except *bhagavan*. Together, the *sannyasin* and the *purohita* embody the two crucial aspects of the Hindu tradition respectively, namely the vision of oneness (known as *brahma vidya*), and a committed way of life (*karmayoga*) to assimilating this vision as the truth of oneself. The priests are experts in matters of *acara*, the conduct and the practices in the tradition, while the swamis embody *vicara*, self-enquiry, which is necessary for *moksa*, freedom from fear and sorrow. Together, these two tiers of leadership work in tandem to inspire and guide people.

One Who Follows Dharma is a Leader

This two tier leadership underscores a fact that is often overlooked, namely in our tradition, the means are as important as the ends to be achieved. Therefore, we are not allowed to compromise the means for the sake of the ends. The manner in which one goes about fulfilling various ambitions is in itself a highly sophisticated pursuit known as *dharma*. The means in

themselves become an end to be cultivated. *Dharma* is the universal matrix of norms that governs human conduct. It is based on universal expectations of not wanting to be hurt, killed, cheated, defrauded, or deceived. That is why *dharma* is the first *purushrtha*, something to be accomplished by all individuals. Everyone wants *dharma*, either directly or indirectly. You can ask anyone in the world if they wish to be hurt or stolen from, and the answer, universally, is "no." Even those who constantly trespass over the rights and



privileges of others somehow still expect everyone else to be considerate towards them. There was a news item that I came across recently. A man broke into a house in a rich neighborhood and stole a huge plasma television. Since it was very heavy, he dragged the television set and hid it in some bushes the backyard. Then, he phoned a friend to come and help him to load the television into the car. The man then went out to the road to wait for the friend. When the friend arrived, both men went back into the bushes to retrieve the television set. To their horror, it was already gone! Someone else made off with it. The original thieves were so distraught that they impulsively dialed 911 to report the 'stolen' television. When the police arrived at the scene, they immediately noticed the broken locks on the door of the house, and swiftly proceeded to arrest the men. This is the power of dharma, a need that is so fundamental that it cannot be overlooked even by those who habitually violate it. Dharma is therefore something to be accomplished because the tendency to conform to dharma is always under attack from unmanaged desires, *raga* and *dvesa*. Some people think that having desire in itself is a problem, but this is not correct. Desire does not trouble anyone so long as one does not come under its spell. The problem, however, is that there is a fine line between managing one's desires, and being managed by them. One can easily cross this line without even sensing it. Bhagavan Krishna declares in the Bhagavad Gita that he abides in the form of desire, however, only those desires that do not violate dharma have the presence of bhagavan. Desires in the heart must not be allowed to make one compromise the means for the sake of gaining by cutting corners and trampling over the rights and privileges of others. Therefore, there is need to let go of those desires that are not in keeping with samanya dharma, the universal values of ahimsa, non injury, and truth. There is a vakya in the Chandogya Upanisad that says:

yattapo danamarjavamahisa

satyavacanamiti ta asya dakshinah - Ch. U. 3.17.4

Discipline, charity, uprightness, non-injury, and the speaking of truth constitute the spiritual wealth of the person.

Dharma is its own reward. Although it produces puja in the long run, it has dharma-phala, the immediate result of assuring a life free of strife. Unlike other theologies that posit dharma as a mandate of God, we say that dharma is the very manifestation of bhagavan.

Wherever there is dharma, there is bhagavan. The more one is committed to dharma, the more is the presence of bhagavan in one's life. The more the presence of bhagavan in one's life, the more secure one feels. In the beginning, one has to follow dharma deliberately, but gradually, by mastering the right methods of pursuing one's goals, one grows into a person who is incapable of flouting dharma. That is when one becomes a *srestha*, an example to be emulated.

Discipline is Dharma in Action

Dharma is not a static entity. Since it is based on the dharmin, on being enacted by people gifted with free will, it requires constant interpretation and reinterpretation according to place, time, and intention. There is, for example, a big difference in the intentions of a knife-wielding attacker, and a scalpel-wielding doctor, performing a surgery. Technically, both cause harm, but in the case of the latter, it is with the intention to preserve, rather than destroy, life. This is dharma in action, *viseha dharma*. *Viseha dharma* requires the cultivation of alertness in one's life, and the readiness to face new challenges without compromising samanya dharma. For example, circumstances such as immigration to Western countries, living and serving in a land distant from one's own, can create special challenges in conforming to dharma.

A remarkable feature of ancient Indian culture was the total lack of competition. It was a society that was almost entirely devoted to the ultimate pursuit of discovering oneself as wholly contented and limitless. Therefore, the social infrastructure was one of zero competition, and supported this goal by ensuring that each person would have a readymade livelihood, and the consequent leisure to discover themselves. As a result of this legacy, even today, every priest is a son of a priest and marries the daughter of a priest. Coming from this kind of a spiritual culture of non-competition, we are ill-equipped to survive in the modern atmosphere of the mad race to get ahead at all costs. Pressure to assimilate, pressure to get ahead in society, pressure to become someone famous, the pressure to amass great amounts of wealth create skewed priorities that inevitably lead to inner conflict and depression. By drawing upon the timeless tenets of the Vedas, we have to forge a new covenant that will empower us, and equip us to face the challenges without succumbing to such pressures. Recognizing the needs of the time, and rising to meet them with cheerfulness and integrity is dynamic leadership.

Samanya and viseha dharma are the general and



specific manifestations of dharma at the macrocosmic level. Svadharma, the commitment to one's duty, signifies the way in which dharma is to be enacted at the microcosmic level of one's daily existence. This is perhaps the crucial aspect of being a *srestha* --setting an example to others in the day- to-day. Generally, the people are not as inspired by lofty ideas or heavy-duty philosophical discourses as they are by simply seeing how one lives in the every day. Even Arjuna, after receiving the knowledge that the self is free of all afflictions and is limitlessly whole, is curious to know about the manner in which the person abiding in this knowledge leads his or her daily life. He asks Bhagavan Krishna:

*sthitas prajñāsya ka bhasa Samadhi-sthāsya kesava
sthita-dhih kim prabhaseta kim asita vrajeta kim*

How is the person of firm wisdom? How does such a person speak, sit, or walk?

Walking one's talk is svadharma. Following svadharma is not easy, as it demands great self-discipline. The grass always appears greener elsewhere and, purely based on the feeling that one is missing out on something big, one is often tempted to stray into unfamiliar pastures. Knowing this, the sastra has prescribed a curriculum of duties for each person to follow based on their station in life, asrama, and their occupation. Certain things have to be done daily; certain others things have to be done occasionally, but actions which go against samanya dharma must never be done at all. Since following this timetable ensures one's steady progress towards the final goal of freedom from samsara --a life of endless striving and disenchantment-- one has to be very mindful and perseverant in the performance of the prescribed duties. Ideally, each person plays their part in the cosmic flow thereby ensuring the relative security and well-being of all. For an orchestra to create beautiful music, each person has to play their part well, and only then can the whole thing sounds melodious. If, for instance, the conductor suddenly gets bored and decides to go home, chaos and cacophony will surely ensue.

In keeping with the Vedic view that everything is sacred because it is pervaded by Isvara, the Hindu tradition does not make an iota of a difference between the so-called sacred and secular duties. All actions --not merely those duties confined to ritual and worship-- are considered sacred. The contemporary culture in the United States and other Western countries is drastically different from this ancient view. I have repeatedly

heard people describing their day mindlessly, and it is no wonder alienation from oneself and disconnection from the whole appear to be common cultural ailments. When I ask people in this country about their day, the typical answers given contain a litany of violent metaphors. For example, people "throw off the covers" in the morning, and "jump into the shower." After this, they "grab a bite to eat," before "hitting the road." At the office, they "crunch some data," before "beating the traffic" on the way back. Once home, no one cooks. They just "nuke something from the freezer," and then, at then "crash" at the end of the day! In this scheme of things, there is no leisure to just enjoy one's being, or to revel in the creative inspiration behind one's actions. By contrast, in our tradition, starting with waking up in the morning, everything for the Hindu is a sacred act. All actions, even mundane ones, such as bathing, dressing, or eating are acts of prayer performed for the sake of the indweller, the bhagavan that abides in all. In this area, the purohita by his very being serves as an invaluable role model. By simply leading his life in accordance to the teaching of the sastra, he can offer a powerful alternative to the disconnected and stressful life to which one can succumb while living in the USA and other Western countries.

Svadharma is Discovering the Devotee Within

In stark contrast to the contemporary capitalist culture, where fulfilling one's desires is considered to be the hallmark of success in one's life, the Bhagavad Gita redefines success as the prayerful performance of every action. Although we do possess one of the most sophisticated bodies of liturgical worship and prayers, we are encouraged to look upon all our actions as worship of Isvara:

*yatah pravrttirbhutanam yena sarvam idam tatam
svakarmana tamabhyarcya siddhim vindati manavaḥ -*
BG 18.46

worshipping with one's own actions, the source of all beings,

by whom everything is pervaded, the human being accomplishes success.

Each action that is performed is viewed as arcana, a flower placed worshipfully at the feet of the Lord. Just as all the items used in worship are purified by the sprinkling of mantra-water, so too all our actions have to be sanctified by infusing them with a joyous and mindful attitude. Just as we cannot offer yesterday's leftovers in today's worship, or skip certain steps of the worship because we happen to be in a hurry, so too, when action itself is worship, there is no room for



procrastination or carelessness in its performance. Committing to a life of worshipful action insulates one from the inner enemies of raga and dvesa.

The performance of svadharma with a spirit of devotion and surrender transforms one into a devotee, a prayerful person. There is a vast difference between person who prays and a prayerful person. For the former, prayer is one among many discrete acts; for the latter, devotion and prayerfulness are attitudes which permeate all actions.

Like visesa dharma, the performance of svadharma can also vary depending upon the situations in which one finds oneself. No one is born with an instruction booklet of what one has to do, and therefore, we have to learn to be adaptive and flexible in the performance of svadharma. The portfolio of the purohitas in India is very different than those living in North America. Here, it would appear, that one has more duties --one is not just a performer of rituals, but is the very pillar of the community, to whom many look up to for guidance and inspiration. The purohitas find that a lot more than just worship is expected of them. They are suddenly, among other things, counselors, guides, interpreters of rituals, teachers of Hinduism, speakers, interfaith ministers, and inspirers of youth. Faced with this situation, one has the choice to either feel victimized and burdened by the demands of the time, or to embrace the God-given opportunity to grow and do one's best. The latter course of action alone benefits not only the entire community of people, where the purohita resides, but also blesses the purohita by allowing him to evolve spiritually. It is a win-win situation that facilitates one's growth into a yukta-purusa, a *srestha* who is together as a human being. To grow into a person committed to dharma is not easy. One requires help from many sources. If language and social interaction skills are required for the performance of svadharma, one has to acquire them. Additionally to overcome internal obstacles, such as alienation or discouragement, one has to take recourse to gatherings such as this, where we can come together and help one another in a spirit of sharing and networking.

The primary aspect of the purohita's svadharma is to model being a devotee. Who is a devotee? The witness who plays many roles in life effortlessly, the core person, the essential person, is the devotee. The individual who is mindful of his or her connection to the whole, to Isvara, is the devotee. Worship is an act that highlights this connection, where the helpless

individual (jiva) invokes the total (Isvara) in a spirit of surrender. When the limited surrenders at the altar that is limitless, the limited resolves, and all that remains is the limitless Isvara. The awareness of one's essential identity as the devotee keeps one's connection to the whole at the forefront, thereby erasing alienation and insecurity. If one is mindful of the primary connection to Isvara as a devotee, then the performance of other roles becomes easy. The devotee is the one who performs the role of son or daughter, spouse, friend, father or mother. All roles 'roll' into the devotee, and the devotee further resolves into the object of devotion, which is none other than Isvara, the subject, the truth of oneself.

Discovering the devotee within oneself is indeed the master key to spiritual growth, to truly being a *srestha*. For most people this takes a lot of work, as the complex interlays of various roles tends to obfuscate the devotee within. In this regard, I feel that the purohitas are extremely blessed, because in this field alone lies a total identity between what one does and what one is. One's job is one's very being, and one is in the covetable position to reflect the devotee that one seeks to invoke within oneself. One is in the unique place of being able to embody this for oneself, and also model it for others. If I were asked to spell out the primary role of the priests, I would say that it is to reject the basic person, the devotee. Only when this devotee is present in the priest, as the priest, can there be worship. The essence of priesthood is devotion, and the priest is essentially a devotee. The temple attendee is a devotee, the temple executive is also a devotee, and the priest, of course, a devotee. All are devoted to Isvara. The focus of every temple is to help one develop and live this life of devotion, and to provide a conducive atmosphere for each person to invoke the devotee within himself or herself.

Through the lived practice of dharma, self-discipline and devotion, one learns to not be affected by the challenges that one faces in life. This is Hinduism in 3D! This is how one grows to be a *srestha*. When one occupies a prominent position, there is no other option than to grow to fill the post with grace, integrity, and courage. The sacrifice that it takes to do this is not in vain, as it helps one to become an emotionally stable and content person, secure in the knowledge of one's connection to the whole. When we gather our resources, and come together in a spirit of sharing, even the most difficult tasks can be mastered with ease.

Om tat sat.



Bharatvarsh (India) That Was Aryavart

In order to understand the origin of terms Hinduism and India, one must look into the history of ancient India. This article briefly accounts for those events in India's past that are relevant to explaining the origin of these terms.

■ By Surendra Nath Pandey, Ph.D.

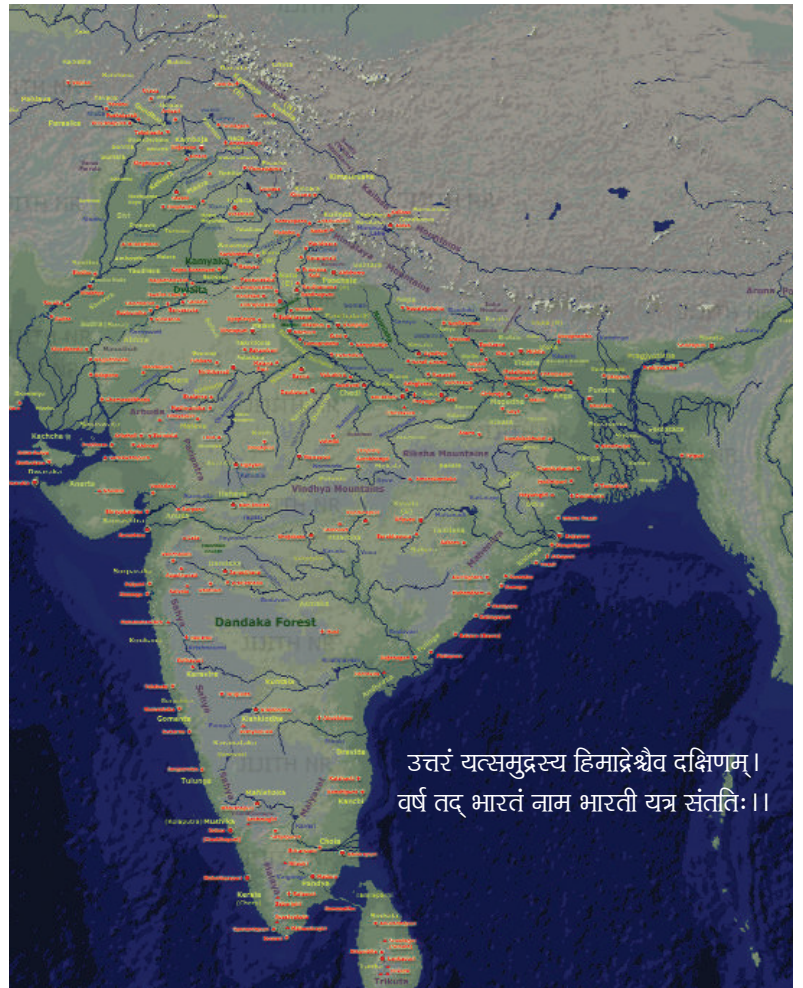
Thousands of years ago India was known as Aryavart (आर्यावर्त) meaning abode (avart) of the Aryas. The boundary of aryavarta may have extended in the north to Himalaya mountain range and to the Vindhya Mountain range in the south as per several references, such as The *Manu Smriti* (Chapter 2 -22/24) which describes aryavart as 'the region located between the eastern sea to the western sea and the tract between the Himalaya and the Vindhya mountain ranges.'

आसमुद्रात्तु वै पूर्वदासमुद्राच्च पश्चिमात् ।
तयोरेवान्तरं गिर्योरायवर्तं विदुर्बुधाः ॥

However, in the two most popular epics, Ramayan and Mahabharat, many locations are mentioned that can be found all over India extending to as far as the current Afghanistan, Pakistan, Arabian Sea, Aruna Mountain, Bangladesh and Burma (Myanmar) to the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent. The most populated areas, however, were the plains of rivers Sindhu (Indus), now dried up Saraswati, Ganga (Ganges), Yamuna, and their tributaries. Later the land (aryavarta) was named Bharatvarsh, after the noble king Bharat. This name existed for thousands of years from pre-

Mahabharat to the beginning of foreign invasion of India as discussed later.

Bharatvarsh refers to the whole of modern India and many other countries which did not exist then as separate nations. Bharat was one of the few emperors to rule all of former India or Bharatvarsh, which was much bigger than the modern India. Vishnu Puran (2.3.1) includes an



उत्तरं यत्समुद्रस्य हिमाद्रेश्चैव दक्षिणम् ।
वर्षं तद् भारतं नाम भारती यत्र संततिः ॥



account of the extent of
Bharatvarsh,

उत्तरं यत्समुद्रस्य हिमाद्रेश्चैव दक्षिणम् ।
वर्ष तद् भारतं नाम भारती यत्र संततिः ॥

uttaram yatsamudrasya himadrescaiva daksinam
varsham tad Bharatam nama bharata yatra
santatih

"The region (varsha) that lies north of the ocean
and south of the snowy mountains is called
Bharat; there dwell the descendants of Bharat."
The religion of the inhabitants of aryavart
(आर्यावर्त) was known as Sanatan Dharma, an
eternal religion which had no founder meaning it
always existed.

To the west of Bharatvarsh, the region referred to
as the Middle East, a man named Jesus Christ
was born about 2,000 years ago who proclaimed
himself as the son of God. His followers started a
religion Christianity in his name hence, they
became known as Christians. About five
centuries later, another man, named Muhammad
was born in the same region. He claimed to have
received word from God whom he called Allah,
and declared himself the last prophet of Allah.
Thus a new religion, Islam was born --the
followers of Islam became known as Muslims.
It's noteworthy that both Jesus Christ and
Muhammad shared the common ancestor -
Abraham, hence these are known as Abrahamic
religions. As the Christians and Muslims tried to
expand their religious influence all over the
word, they fought with each other several wars
over religious and territorial control mostly
confined to the Europe and Eurasia initially.
The first victim of Muslim invasion toward the
east was the portion of India which is now in
Afghanistan/Pakistan. It is believed that when
Muslims from the north and west traveled toward
Bharatvarsh, the first river they reached was
Sindhu (Indus) River. They started identifying
inhabitants around and across the Sindhu River
as Hindus. After several wars, the Muslim
invaders succeeded in establishing a firm rule
over Bharatvarsh, and gave it the name
Hindustan, abode of Hindus. Thus the religions
of people of Hindustan were identified as either
Hinduism, of the natives practicing Sanatan
Dharma, or Islam, of the invaders and forcibly

converted Hindus. A few centuries later, the
Christians from Portugal, France, Holland and
England started coming to India through naval
routes primarily as traders. As their influence
expanded they captured some part of India
forcibly and started conversion to Christianity.
The British became most influential and
powerful. They eventually defeated the Muslim
ruler in 1757; making Hindustan a colony of the
British Empire, and India became its official
name. Perhaps, the name India emanated from
the word Hindi, the most common language of
Indians during British entry into India or a
deformation of the word Hindu.
In 1857, the first fight against the Colonial rule
was started by the Hindus serving in the British
(Indian) army. Even though the original "rebels"
were hanged by the British, they had planted
enough seeds that would produce many freedom
fighters over the years to come. After 90 years of
struggle, the British granted independence to
India in 1947. The new Indian government
adopted two official names for this newly
independent nation: Republic of India in English
and *Bharat Ganrajya* in Hindi, in short India and
Bharat. Unfortunately, before granting
independence, the British carved out two sections
from India to create a new nation Pakistan (East
and West). Later the East broke independent from
the West and emerged as an independent nation
of Bangladesh.
The above is a very brief history of India or
Bharat which is relevant and necessary to
understand the term Hinduism, the current name
for the Sanatan Dharma practiced by the Hindus
in Bharat (India) for thousands of years, and by
the Hindu Diasporas all over the world.

About the author

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