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Vishwa Dharma Digest



Witnessing

RAM LALLA'S

Pran Pratishtha

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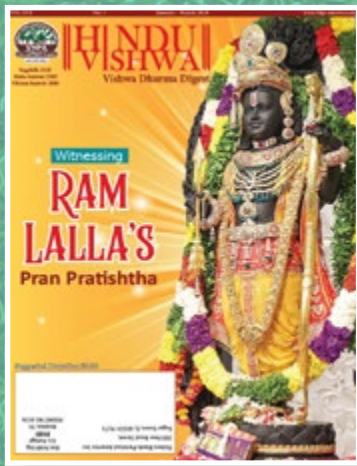
www.vhp-america.org

Tel.: 732-744-0851
office@vhp-america.org

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EDITORIAL TEAM

Managing Editor
Shyam Tiwari
srtiwari@hotmail.com

Editor
Sanjay Gupta
sgatlanta@gmail.com

Contributor
Sarika Jaswani

Advisor
Dr. Abhay Asthana
abhayaji@gmail.com

रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः साधुः सत्य पराक्रमः |
राजा सर्वस्य लोकस्य देवानाम् इव वासवः ||

३-३७-१३

raamo vighrahaavan dharmah saadhuH satya paraakramaH |
raajaa sarvasya lokasya devaanaam iva vaasavaH ||

Rama is virtue incarnate, pious and of unfailing prowess. He is the ruler of the entire humanity (even) as Indra is the ruler of gods.

3-37-13

Shloka 13 from 37th Sarga in Aranyakanda of Valmiki Ramayan

ABOUT THE HINDU VISHWA

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Advertising Inquiries: Shyam Tiwari
Tel: (770)962-2669
Email: srtiwari@hotmail.com

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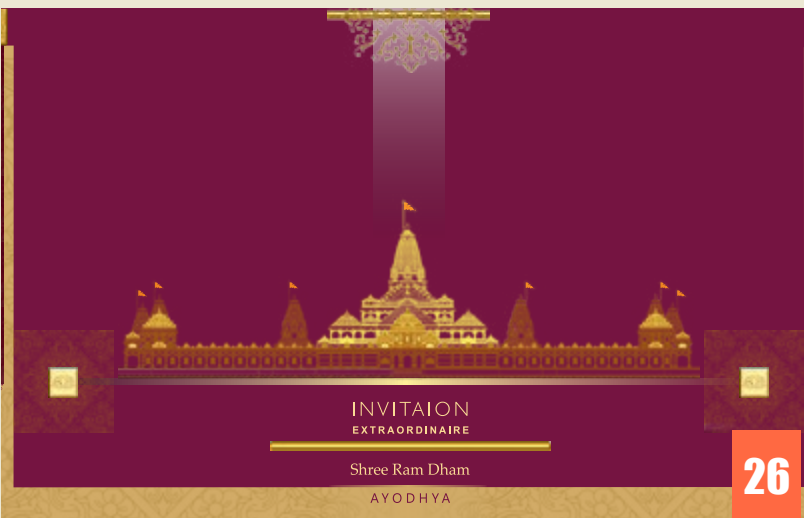
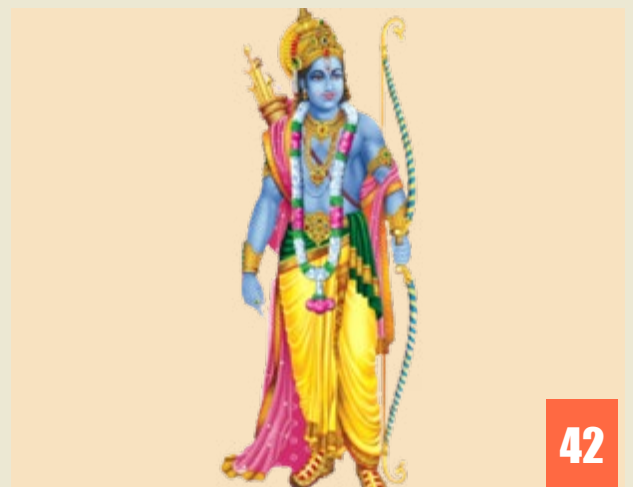
“मैं राम मंदिर हूँ”



My 44-year Journey to Shri Ram Madir on Jan 22nd, 2024



Jai Shree Ram Bhajan





Reclaiming Ram Janma Bhoomi: JUST A BEGINNING

In the annals of history, certain moments stand out not merely as conclusions, but also as the genesis. The reclamation of Ram Janma Bhoomi is one such epoch—a momentous journey signifying the end of a dispute as well as the dawn of a new era. It's a journey that transcends the confines of time and space, resonating with the essence of our collective consciousness—a celebration of faith, culture, and heritage.

At its core, the reclaiming of Ram Janma Bhoomi represents the triumph of perseverance, resilience, and unwavering devotion. It underscores the timeless message of Lord Ram—a message of compassion, righteousness, and valor that reverberates through the corridors of history, reminding us that righteousness and justice shall prevail, no matter the odds. It reminds us that our destiny is shaped by the choices we make and the values we uphold.

The essence of Shri Ram remains a universal and unifying tale, focusing on his virtues, ideals, and struggles. The story of Ram transcends religious boundaries and serves as a source of inspiration and guidance for humanity as a whole. Devotion to dharma—his duty as a son, husband, and prince (king), maintaining integrity and moral rectitude even in the face of adversity—serves as a guiding light for individuals in their personal and professional lives. Ram's compassion and empathy towards all living beings, exemplified by His conduct; highlight the importance of kindness and understanding in our interactions with others. His selflessness and sacrifice for the greater good inspire us to prioritize noble causes above personal comfort.

Forgiveness is another virtue embodied by Lord Ram demonstrating the power of reconciliation and redemption. In

the words of the sage Kabir, "Jaat paat puche nahin koyi, Hari ko bhaje so Hari ka hoyi"—those who worship the divine are beyond the confines of narrow-mindedness. These ageless teachings of Lord Ram continue to resonate with people from all walks of life, cutting across cultural and ideological divides.

The journey towards reclaiming Ram Janma Bhoomi was full of innumerable challenges. It was a journey fraught with internal conflicts and external adversaries. The legacy of Ram Janma Bhoomi liberation is deeply intertwined with the struggle of countless pure souls and the rich tapestry of heroism that is the hallmark of our cultural heritage. The reformist Ramanandi sect, the timeless verses of Tulsidas, the spirit of sacrifice exemplified by the Kothari brothers, the leadership of VHP and Ashok Singhal, the resolve of Dharm Sansad, and the extraordinary sacrifice of ordinary devotees—all have contributed to this historic moment.

In the words of Tulsidas, "Raghukul reet sada chali aayi, pran jaye par vachan na jaye" रघुकुल रीत सदा चली आई प्राण जाए पर वचन ना जाई

—the traditions of the Raghu dynasty have endured through the ages, immortalized in the timeless verses of our scriptures. Let us honor this legacy by upholding our promises and commitments. Amidst the jubilation of this historic milestone, it is imperative to recognize that this journey is far from over. It is a comma, not a full stop. "Abhi to bas yeh jhanki hai, Mathura Kashi baaki hai". It is a significant milestone on our pilgrimage for the rejuvenation and not the final destination, hence the journey continues. It is about reestablishing Ram Rajya where dharma prevails, ensuring that the ideals of Lord Ram illuminate the path towards a brighter future.



SHREE
RAM LALLA



Dr. Koenraad Elst, Belgian Historian. He has written a number of books on Hindu Society's issues and on Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Movement.



Leveles Zoltan Ba (Harijan) from Hungary; he had built a Temple in Budapest and is constructing a Ram Mandir and was my roommate in Hotel Panchsheel.



Welcome at Lucknow airport by HSS volunteer Kiran Muthal from Amsterdam (we were together in Bhakti Shakha in Edison, NJ for a number of years.)

Though later on about twenty-eight people from VHP of America, primarily members of its governing council were allowed to participate as an exception (no other country had that privilege), I was part of a special delegation of representatives from fifty-three countries. There were fourteen countries from Africa, 12 from Europe, eight from Americas, 15 or so from countries East to Bharat, etc. From Botswana to Egypt, Kenya to Ghana, Finland to France, Hungary to UK, Canada to Suriname, Vietnam to Australia, it was a genuine confluence of nationalities present.

These delegates stayed in the same hotel and traveled by same bus so there was an intense sense of affinity and enthusiasm were contagious.

नवधा भक्ति

1. प्रथम भगति संतन्ह कर संगाम।

The first kind of devotion is to make friendship with good and honest people don't be in a company of bad people.

2. दुसरि रति मम कथा प्रसंगाम।

The second kind of devotion is to read the story of various incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

All of us had reached Lucknow by 20th evening as instructed. We were welcomed at the airport with chanting of Vedic mantras, a tilak and offering of a colorful yellow scarf, with the picture of Bhagwan Ram, known as "khes.")

We were bused to Ayodhya next day, a distance of about eighty miles. On both sides of the highway, there were saffron flags with imprint of Bhagwan Ram and Hanuman everywhere- at individual homes as well as businesses. There were hoardings by the dozen welcoming Ram Lalla as well as Modiji and yogi Adityanathji. There were colorful lightings everywhere- from a small roadside dhaba to

big corporate offices. As we entered Ayodhya's outskirts, we noticed trees that were lighted, railings on the side of highways decorated with strings of marigold flowers and bridges ablaze with chains of lights.

Five-star hotels had full size cutouts of Bhagwan Ram at the door and inside. Instead of pop music elevator songs, they were playing bhajans extolling shree Ramchandraji's virtues. Door attendants and hotel staff greeted you with Jay Siyaram.

Newspapers were full of color supplements giving all tidbits of preparation to welcome Ram Lalla back after 495 years and minute details of how communities were gearing up for the grand celebration. Every ounce of Ayodhya had become Ram-may, that is, immersed in Shree Ram. I was reminded of a couplet from Sant Tulsidas's Ram Charit Manas- सियराम मय सब जग जानी, करहु प्रणम जोरी जुग पानी। (I see the universe as immersed in Sita and Ram, I offer them salutation with folded hands.

3. गुरु पद पंकज सेवा तीसरि भगति अमान।

The third kind of devotion is to be always ready in service of Guru that is spiritual teacher or great devotee of God.

4. चौथि भगति मम गुन गन करइ कपट तजि गान।

The fourth kind of devotion is to speak about God's greatness wherever you go, leaving all false ego and habit of dishonesty.

5. मंत्र जाप मम दृढ़ बिस्वासा। पंचम भजन सो बेद प्रकासा।

The fifth kind of devotion is to always chant the name of God (e.g. Hare Krishna Hare Ram) with full faith and no sign of doubt in his existence.

All invitees were given colorful invitations with a unique code number, and all had registered ahead of time giving

vital information. We were told clearly that there would be multiple security checkpoints and unless we had approved ID -Aadhar card or passport- and the invitation, we would not be allowed in.

6. छठ दम सील बिरति बहु करमा। निरत निरंतर सज्जन धरमा।।

The sixth kind of devotion is to take renunciation from bad habits and always maintain good character e.g. celibacy, obedient son/daughter, self-control, honesty, true and faithful relationships, helping needy people.

7. सातवँ सम मोहि मय जग देखा। मोते संत अधिक करि लेखा।।

The seventh kind of devotion is to see me (Lord Ram) in everything like people, animal, tree, universe, etc. and give saintly or innocent people respect like me (Lord Ram) or even more respect than me.

We were bused on Monday morning to the entrance gate about one mile from the temple. We had reached there

by about quarter after nine. There was no other public transportation and Ayodhya was sealed at all boundaries so that no one could get in without an entry pass. From there on, we walked with spring in our feet and unexplainable excitement in our hearts. There were wide walkways with walls with nicely carved windows.

There were an innumerable number of helpful staff dressed in blue jackets, mostly young ladies. They all knew that they would not be attending the event, though being so close to it but they were carrying out their duty with a smile on their lips.

We must have passed through five or six checkpoints, then through a metal detector and physical frisking.

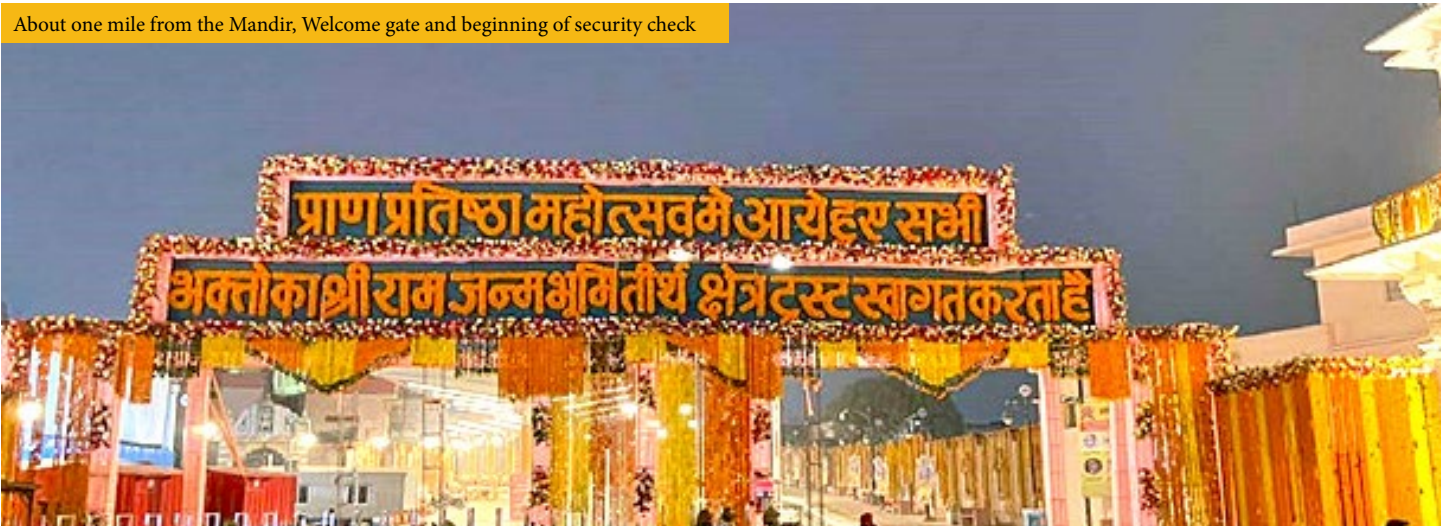
We were allowed to carry our mobile phones but nothing else. Women were not allowed to carry even a purse. I had a single cough lozenge in my pocket which the detector picked out and out it went in a trash can.

There were young girls as well as ladies and some men who were standing on both sides as we passed through and they were applying sandalwood paste on our foreheads, some chanting mantras; we reciprocated with loud Jai Shri

One of several decorations on the way to Shri Ram Mandir



About one mile from the Mandir, Welcome gate and beginning of security check



Ram. Then there were volunteers who adorned us with a beautiful scarf with painting of Shri Ram with his bow and arrow.

9. नवम सरल सब सन छलहीना। मम भरोस हिय हरष न दीना॥

The ninth kind of devotion he says is very simple, always be honest to others don't cheat anybody and whatever circumstances comes in your life don't lose your faith in me (Lord Ram) and never worry keeping in mind Lord Ram is always there with you.

Finally, we arrived in the Mandir Parisar or temple compound and our heads automatically bowed when we saw the magnificent structure. It was decorated with real flowers using hundreds of thousands of them.

While proceeding further I saw Sadhwi Uma Bharati being escorted and I remembered the hey days of Ram Janmabhoomi movement in early nineties when Uma Bharati ji played a very important role in awakening Hindus. I remembered how she shaved off her beautiful



Finally, we reached in the vicinity of Shri Ram Mandir

long hair to sneak into Ayodhya incognito when then Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav had boasted that not a sparrow would be able to enter Ayodhya to perform Karseva (volunteer work at the Ram Janmabhoomi.) Then I saw Pujya Morari Babu surrounded by entourage. Later I spotted ex law minister Ravi Prasad Ji who also represented Bhagwan Ram Virajman in Supreme Court case.

The administration had divided sitting arrangements into 30 blocks and everyone was preassigned the block numbers. Before getting there, we had to remove footwear and deposit it with volunteers at several tents, aptly named Paduka Seva. Everything was seamless and volunteers would not allow us to remove footwear by ourselves but took pride in removing them.

I felt so embarrassed and when I said thank you, they instead thanked me for giving them the opportunity to serve. What humility! It reminded me of Kevat (boatman) who took Bhagwan Ram across Saryu River after washing his feet.

And after depositing our footwear they sprayed sanitizer in our hands. Talk of superb service and consideration of minor details!

Each block accommodated anywhere from 100 to 300 delegates. The 53 foreign delegates (some with spouses) were seated in block number one. Other VHPA colleagues were seated in block 4. We were just in front of the South facing side of the temple. Temple's entrance is east facing and that is where all saints and religious heads as well as select dignitaries like Ambanis and Amitabh Bachchan were seated.

There was about an hour and a half wait before Modiji arrived, so people were greeting each other, trying to find friends and renew old acquaintances which was truer for NRIs like me.



Scarf presented at the Welcome Ceremony



Welcome with Jai Shri Ram Scarf

प्रबिसि नगर कीजै सब काजा। हृदय राखि कौशलपुर राजा॥

Do all that needs to be done after entering the city, keeping in your heart the king of Kaushalpur, Ramchandra.



Prasad and other material received in Ayodhya

हो, जाकी रही भावना जैसी
प्रभु मूर्ति देखी तिन तैसी॥

One sees Ishwar in the form according to his feeling
(contemplation.)

रघुकुल रीत सदा चली आई प्राण जाए पर वचन न जाई॥

It is the tradition of Raghu dynasty in which one can let go
of life but not of his word.

हरि अनन्त हरि कथा अनन्ता कहहि सुनहि बहुविधि सब
संता॥

Ram is eternal and so is his fame; Saints have described his
fame in various ways.

बंदउँ संत समान चित हित अनहित नहि कोइ।
अंजलि गत सुभ सुमन जिमि सम सुगंध कर दोइ॥

Meaning: I salute the saints, who are stable in their mind,
who have no friend and no enemy. The way the flowers
spread their same fragrance to the hands which pluck them
out and to those which hold them, similarly a saint does
same good to friend and enemy.

I spotted Vivek Oberoi and Sonu Nigam a few rows ahead
of us. Someone told us that just before we arrived Kangna
Ranaut had come and raising her hand cried Jai Shri Ram.

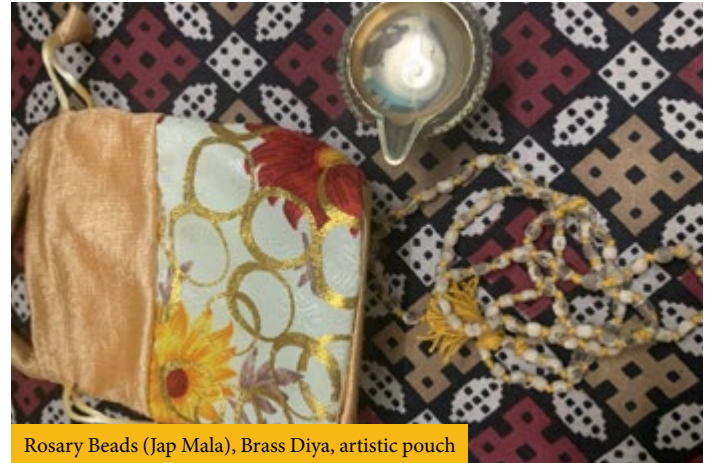
Later I saw Anupam Kher and Manoj Joshi, my favorite
actors in the first row.

Just ahead of me was sitting Anu Malik, with whom I had
a lengthy conversation at Lucknow airport lounge the next day.

Anup Jalota Ji came later and had to sit in the back.
There were no reserved seats except a few.

I also met Shefali Vaidya- those who follow social media
would know her- She is strong and firebrand Hindu warrior
who also appears in TV debates and is an exceptional writer.
Besides, she is an avid traveler, and her travelogues are a joy
to read. She also has a veritable collection of beautiful sarees.

I also saw Khana Khazana fame chef Sanjeev Kapoor.



Rosary Beads (Jap Mala), Brass Diya, artistic pouch

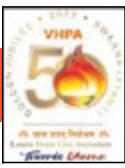
In block 2, I spotted Dr. Pravinbhai Togadia former
General Secretary of Vishwa Hindu Parishad with whom I
had worked at the height of Ram Janmabhoomi movement.
I went and gave my respect

Though he is now estranged from Vishwa Hindu
Parishad, his contribution to movement comes only second
to swargiya Ashok Singhal Ji.

At some point, they served boxed snacks. Distribution
and removal of used boxes was a case study in management
itself. These were all volunteers of RSS who are known for
selfless Seva and discipline.

All this time devotional singing was going on where
Sonu Nigam, Anuradha Paudwal and her daughter Kavita
Tulpule and Shankar Mahadevan enthralled the audience.

Coincidentally gentleman sitting next to me was one by
the name of Mohammed Faiz Khan. He was from Raipur,
Chhattisgarh and is a leader of Gau Rakshak (saving cows
from slaughterhouse) movement. In 2018 he had taken
out a Gau Seva Sadbhavana Padayatra of 12,000 KM from
Kanyakumari to Amritsar. Also, in 2020 he undertook 800
KM Padayatra with soil from Mata Kaushalya's village in
Chhattisgarh to reach Ayodhya on August 5 for Shri Ram
Mandir's foundation. Along with us, he also was lustily



cheering Jai Shri Ram. I had a good and productive talk with him

There were about 6000-7000 attendees, but everything worked out like clockwork. Later during the program boxed lunch was also served.

On all sides of the temple on the main floor there were dozens of plainclothes security personnel in blue outfit as well as commandos in their camouflage uniform were visible. A few of them were on the roof top too.

I will not dwell into the description of the program as everyone has watched it on TV and read about it. But one of the hi-lights was the profuse showering of rose petals on the delegates and the temple by two military helicopters just around the time of Pran Pratishtha. Many of us including me collected the petals as a souvenir and prasad to share with folks at home. Just before the helicopters arrived two eagles were seen in the sky circling the temple, which is considered very auspicious,

Chief Minister Adityanath Yogi Ji, Swami Govind Dev Giri Ji Maharaj who introduced Narendrabhai Modi and param Pujya Sarsanghchhalak of RSS, Dr. Mohan Bhagwat Ji all spoke very well. I noticed these key takeaways from their talks.

Yogi Adityanathji: Those who said Temple cannot be built may come and see that the temple is built and is built where it was supposed to be built. during 500 years of struggle, we never gave up. People rose above differences of caste, ideology, philosophy and method of worship and sacrificed themselves for the cause of Ram. Construction of the temple marked a cultural renaissance in Bharat. Now there will be no sound of bullets in the streets of Ayodhya; there will be sound of bhajans.

Govind Dev Giri Ji Maharaj: Modiji is a Tapasvi. He is like Shivaji Maharaj. He was destined to do this Pran Pratishtha and that is why he is here today. Bharat is fortunate that



Dr. Mohan Bhagwat Ji Narendra Modiji (Prime Minister, Bharat)

it has Modiji as the Prime Minister. Pran Pratishtha is the symbol of Bharat's identity, self-respect and self-confidence. **Dr. Mohan Bhagwat Ji:** It is time to work together. Restrain ourselves. Temple is built. But now what? What will you do? Now is the time to work for raising a new, inclusive Bharat. Bhagwan Ram had to go for 14 years of exile because of discordance in the family but when Bhagwan Ram ji came back, he had solved issues of disharmony in Sri Lanka and in Kishkindha. Shun ego, stay united and lead a disciplined life. We will have to let go of minor differences. Only by collective Tapsya we can make Bharat Vishwa Guru. "The very first requirement of Dharma is mutual understanding."

They all gave the audience points to ponder. If we do not understand the deep meaning of what they have said, we will not be able to bring Ram Rajya.

Modiji spoke for about 40 minutes. Like many others I have listened to him several times and every time there is something new, something out of the box. However, his talk today was a talk coming from the inner recesses of a highly spiritual being. When he said that अभी भी मैं स्पंदित हो रहा हूं. (I am still feeling the vibrations of the experience



Ravi Shankar Prasad



Ravi Shankar Prasad



Joy of Mingling, finding old friends and renewing contacts with similar minded people.



With Dr. Abhaya Asthana, Chairperson, VHP of America's Advisory Board



of performing puja for Pran Pratishtha), I got goose bumps. Here we were sitting outside and watching the ceremony on a screen and yet we felt overwhelmed by the weight of realization that we were becoming part of an epoch-making moment, part of a history that would be written years after we would be gone, then what kind of divine vibration Modiji, who was being an instrument in the process of unveiling divine चेतना (consciousness) in the murti of Ram Lalla would have been feeling? And only an individual spiritually purified can feel that स्पंदन, vibration. For a few moments I felt that Modiji was speaking in a trance. It is hard to encapsulate so many things Modiji said but a few have been etched in our collective consciousness. These are: Ram is not conflict but resolution, this time is not only for Vijay but also for Vinay, Ram is not fire Ram is energy, Ram is not Vivad (dispute), Ram is Samvad (dialogue) and finally the most critical is from Dev to Desh and Ram to Rashtra.

Each one of these requires deep introspection. If we as a society follow it in letter and spirit, Ram Rajya is not too far; however, if we fall back on old habits, Ram Rajya will remain only a distant dream and empty slogan.

I was reflecting on what I had read and heard that the Mandir is built to last 1000 years. What does that mean in practical terms? Mandir will not disintegrate for a long time with proper maintenance and care. But what if there was a war where it becomes a target? What if there is an attack by an enemy or a war?

So, the onus is on us to ensure we become so strong that other countries would think twice before going to war with Bharat and that none would dare to think of invading Bharat.

We also have to educate the younger generation on the importance of protecting our heritage and institutions like Shri Ram Mandir that represent our age-old heritage and history.

We also need to ensure the idea of respecting all religious thoughts becomes a norm in society; that would eliminate or minimize incidences of attacks on places of worship.

The percentage of Hindus in Bharat has been decreasing with every census. This is a matter of concern which needs to be addressed by implementing suitable measures. An awakened and vigilant Hindu society can help in preserving and protecting icons of our culture and dharma.

While doing all this, we have to continue building bridges with other communities to eradicate any doubts they might harbor and develop trust as our destinies are tied together, only when we understand history and take corrective steps, Shri Ram Mandir could be assured of a 1000-year life.

**कोमल चित अति दीनदयाला। कारन बिनु रघुनाथ कृपाला।।
गीध अधम खग आमिष भोगी। गति दीन्ही जो जाचत जोगी।।**

Ramji is very kind and bestows his grace without any reason. Jatayuji (vulture) was a non-vegetarian, but he gave him that high place which even the yogis keep asking.

**मंगल भवन अमंगल हारी
द्रवहु सुदसरथ अजिर बिहारी**

“O Lord Ram your name is good and auspicious for all causes and destroyer of all bad omens, take compassion on me ,of Dasharatha beloved (Shri Ram) who is an eternal player (of the illusion of this world).”

After Modiji left, plans were to call delegates block by block. This would have ensured quick and orderly darshan



Vivek Oberoi and Sonu Nigam



Music Director and Indian Idol judge, Anu Malik



Actors Manoj Joshi and Anupam Kher



Smt. Shefali Vaidya



Mohammed Faiz Khan, Raipur, Chhattisgarh



With Shyam Shankar Tiwari, VHP of America's Vice President, Publications (Right)



Meeting my friend of many years, Trinidad based Swami Brahmedo Upadhyay Ji



At the bottom of steps with VHFA colleagues With Jayabahen Asthana, Anit Shah and Tejalbahen Shah, Jt. General Secretary, VHP of America



In front of the temple doors after doing Darshan. Observe the peacock adorned with flowers.



Prasad consisted of Saryu Rivr Water, Saffron, Kumkum, Rudrax bead, etc

for all but that was not to be. Old habits die hard. This was supposed to be an elite assemblage. But they betrayed trust in them, and everyone rushed to be the first. Of course, they stood in line but at times there was push from behind, some people formed their own lines. Of course, a strong security cordon did not allow people to go even near temple steps.

There was constant request on P.A. system for people to sit in chairs and wait for 30 to 45 minutes, that there were already a thousand people in nryta mandapam and sanctum sanctorum, but it had little effect. We decided to wait it out. As we were waiting, we met a young couple that had come from Gujarat. We found out that that lady's father and grandfather burned to death when Muslim mobs torched a coach of Sabarmati Express carrying karsevaks at Godhra station on 27th February 2002. She said at that time she was only six months old, so she did not remember anything. It was heartening to see that organizers did not forget the families of those who gave their lives for the cause of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi. Purnima Kothari, sister of two Kothari brothers who were dragged from an akhada and shot in head

at point blank range by police of Mulayam Singh Yadav during October 1990 Karseva, was also invited.

Finally, after waiting in line for two and a half hours, we got our turn at five PM. I could just get a glimpse of intricate carvings and sculptures as we were constantly asked to keep moving. It is a glorious temple of which we all can be proud.

What added to the difficulty was people taking selfies and photos of the Murti and coming in the way of other devotees. Though normally you would expect to absorb the grace of sanctified Murti in front of you, I can understand the sentiments of people to take photos and videos for everlasting memory and sharing with families and friends. Many temples have a ban on photography, and I do hope that the temple management here will find a practical way

to serve the interests of all devotees. I would need to go back there in a year or two when the rush wouldn't be as great, and I could sit in front of Bhagwan Ram and feel His divine presence. There were awe inspiring massive Gold-plated doors for the Sacrosanctum besides wooden doors elsewhere. We had barely a few seconds to do darshan and experience the blessings of shree Ram from the murti bedecked with splendid looking ornament before we were literally pushed out by the security. Those who watched it on TV screen would have had better darshan!

Later on, we went to a tent outside the Mandir complex where they were distributing prasad in a jute bag. It was another fast and efficient operation.



The Shilanyaas place after the ceremony on November 11, 1989 – This is where today's Ram Mandir Stands



The Exact spot where Shilanyaas was done on 10th Nov, 1989



Raj Narayan Singh, a Karsevak from the U.P. whom I met in July 1991, lost part of his nose and one eye in police firing in November 1990. We were able to celebrate the Pran Pratishtha of Bhagwan Ram because of sacrifices of thousands of Raj Narayan Singhs.



Tell-tale marks of indiscriminate firing by the police at Lal Kothi, Ayodhya (Photos taken by Gaurang Vaishnav) Lal Kothi where the Ayodhya massacre took place on November 2, 1990.



A street in Ayodhya became a place of Pilgrimage



Sri Ram Stambh



Shri Ram Janmabhoomi liberation movement's dynamic leader Swargiya Ashok Singhal Ji and other revered leaders who are no longer with us must be blessing us from heavenly abode





Another Prasad Box
Laddu in Prasad
Even tote bags are Rammay
(Immersed in Ram)



At this point, let me acknowledge and appreciate unimaginable seva performed by volunteers from Rashtriya Sevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and many allied organizations. Right from the time of sending out invitation, to updated communications, welcome at Lucknow airport and transportation to hotel, to looking after every small or not so small need (e.g., I had to buy warm cloths in a hurry in Lucknow in a hurry as I was not prepared for the extreme cold there), to arranging bus transport to Ayodhya and reserving hotel rooms, to making sure we all had proper documents and passes to be at the Pran Pratishtha to bringing us back to Lucknow and seeing us off, everything was so meticulous and done with grace and real warmth

that we felt as if we were Baratis (wedding party from the other side) at a wedding! Not to mention the leadership of Swami Vigyananand Ji, Joint General Secretary of VHP and Shri Saumitra Gokhale, International coordinator of RSS. It is not possible to name all RSS and VHP volunteers from Lucknow and Delhi but Abhas Agrawal, Vipul Sharma, Saurabh Sharma, Sandip Chopra, Harsu Tiwari, etc. were on their feet all throughout. thank you would be enough but as we say in many big RSS functions, a big OM to one and all.

We took in darshan of Hanumanji at the famous Hanumangarhi which is hardly 2000 feet from Shri Ram Mandir.

Darkness had descended and the air was getting chilly as we strived to return to the hotel. There was a sea of people no matter where you looked. There were throngs of impatient locals, and they were pleading with the security forces to let them in so that they could have a glimpse of their own Ram Lalla but that was not possible. These inhabitants of Ayodhya who seemed to be of meager means were the true and rightful owners of the temple. They had suffered personally through 30+ years' struggle. Some had lost their dear one. I remembered a humble

middle-aged man, Ram Narain Singh whom I had met and interviewed in July 1991 when I visited Babri structure to get firsthand information about October 1990 indiscriminate firing on Karsevaks by the state police. He had lost one eye and part of nose in police firing. I remember his indomitable spirit when he told me, "I will go again and again for Karseva, even if I die doing so, because we have to build Ram Mandir."

And many others like him deserved to have the first chance to have that darshan, not us who jetted in from outside. My VHPA colleague Smt. Vallabha Tantry and I felt guilty that we had usurped their right to be the first to have the darshan. But then we had to take solace thinking this was the wish of Bhagwan Ram.



Bhagwan Ram's cutout in front of our hotel Panchsheel

It took us a long walk and a few hours to get to our bus which could not cross the bridge because of

traffic regulations imposed that day. Though we are extremely tired by physical exertion as well as a sense that a magnificent thing had happened, a struggle of 495 years of which I was active participant from 1984 to 2014 had come to an end and that we had a lot more responsibility now as enumerated by Modiji and Bhagwatji, it was a blessing in disguise as We were privileged to witness to unbridled enthusiasm of people of Ayodhya. we saw people dancing in the streets, waving flags, playing Ram bhajans, breaking into incessant chants of Jai Shri Ram and सब के राम, सब में राम, बोलो जय सियाराम, जय सियाराम। (Ram is everyone's and Ram is in everyone. Say, victory to Sitaji and Bhagwan Ram.)

Half of the main road was taken over by crowds. Every home, every commercial place has lit innumerable earthen lamps and places them in front of their homes/shops right on the footpath where everyone was walking. and then there were firecrackers booming in every direction. This itself was more than a Diwali celebration. We later came to know that there was a light and sound show on the banks of Saryu River too. My pen feels inadequate to describe the environment and joy- it cannot be expressed; it could be only experienced.

I feel that it was only grace of Ishwar that I got this opportunity to be there for the Pran Pratishtha of Ram Lalla who suffered being outside his abode for close to five centuries, because in the scheme of things, I am too

insignificant, a spec of dirt on the tapestry of time.

As I was returning to the hotel, I remembered with reverence Ashok Singhal ji who led Ram Janmabhoomi liberation movement from the front, stayed focused on the ultimate goal and did not give into pressure or compromised. He enthused thousands of people to take up the cause and till his death in 2015 lived every moment for seeing Ram Lalla seated in His rightful home.

Along with Ashokji, Sw. Sarsanghchalaks Bhaurao Deoras and Rajju Bhaiya, Moropant Pingle Ji and Omkarnath Bhavaji, Rajmata Scindia of Gwalior and Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji, Vishnu Hari Dalmia Ji and Acharya Giriraj Kishore ji, Brahmleen Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji, Anjleebahen Pandya and Dr. Mahesh Mehta (both from USA) all had a significant role to play in keeping the issue alive. I felt that though they were not there in physical form, they were very much with us. I fondly remembered how huge efforts of Sadhwi Ritambhara Ji, Sadhwi Uma Bharati Ji, Dr. Pravinbhai Togadiya, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi Ji and Lal Kishan Advaniji helped mold public opinion in favor of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement and brought it in forefront of national conscience.

देत लेत मन संक न धरई। बल अनुमान सदा हित करई॥
बिपति काल कर सतगुन नेहा। श्रुति कह संत मित्र गुन एहा॥

Do not doubt while giving or receiving; Keep doing good according to your capacity. During difficult times, increase your love hundred-fold; According to Veda, that is the characteristic of a best friend.

गुन अवगुन जानत सब कोई। जो जेहि भाव नीक तेहि सोई॥

Everyone knows good and bad, but a person accepts what he likes.

बंदउँ प्रथम महीसुर चरना। मोह जनित संसय सब हरना॥
सुजन समाज सकल गुन खानी। करउँ प्रनाम सप्रेम सुबानी॥

First, I offer salutations to the Brahmins, Gods on earth because they remove all ignorance generated doubts. Then I bow to saints with affection who are repository of all virtues.

This booklet lists 290 places between Ayodhya and Rameshwaram where Shri Ram stayed or passed through during his exile in the forest. It took 40 years of research by Dr. Ram Avatar. The Ashok Singhal Foundation has pledged to install Shri Ram Stambh as each of the 290 locations that will last 1000 years.

Each pillar will be 15 fit tall weighing 12 tons. The



Horizons Merging

The Crossroads of Hindu Thought and Western Psychology I

By **Dr. Jai G. Bansal** and **Kalyan Viswanathan**

“
When meditation is mastered, the mind is unwavering like the flame of a lamp
in a windless place.”
– **Bhagavad Gita**

Examining the role of Bharat’s mind sciences in shaping modern mental health system

Healthy mind and body are two of humankind’s most ardent pursuits. Every society has been concerned with physical health and treatment of physical illnesses and injuries. Mental health, on the other hand, has traditionally been viewed with suspicion and disdain. It is, therefore, not surprising that while everyone knows about Hippocrates, the great Greek physician from 2500 year ago, there has been no noteworthy equivalent in the Western world in the field of mental well-being until the late 19th century.

The ancient Indian thinkers, on the other hand, considered mind and body as two interconnected aspects of the same reality. Many millennia ago, they had explored the depths of the human mind, formulated highly advanced theories about its workings and developed practical techniques to achieve higher states of consciousness. A more accessible form of this ancient knowledge can be found in Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra, which begins by describing Yoga as *chitta vritti nirodha* (a system for the removal of fluctuations of the mind), offering little hint of the sophisticated system - of which meditation is just one part - for attaining a peaceful state of mind as a precursor to self-realization.

Today mental health is as big a problem, if not bigger, as physical health. Data from organizations like SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) and CDC (Center for Disease Control) suggest that 1 in 5 adults and 1 in 6 youth in the 6-17 age group experience some form of mental illness each year in the U.S, suicide is the second leading cause of death among the 10-34 age group, depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide. America spends nearly \$250 billion per year on mental health treatment, not counting the cost of the ripple effects of mental illness such as cardiovascular diseases, violent crime, drug addiction and lost productivity, among others. The global figure for mental healthcare cost exceeds \$1 trillion annually. Thankfully, over the last 100 years or so, a variety of clinical modalities have become available, offering healthcare professionals a range of options to treat mental disorders.

Over the last few decades, the view of what constitutes mental health has evolved in a more holistic way. It now encompasses not just the curative aspects of mental health, but also positive aspects that help people live contented and enjoyable life. The scientific disciplines that support this emergent view of mental wellness have grown as well. In addition to psychoanalysis, psychopathology and

psychiatry, the field is now replete with such sub-disciplines as humanistic psychology, transpersonal psychology, positive psychology, integral psychology and perennial psychology. A more expanded interpretation of mind sciences even includes the adjacent disciplines of cognitive science and consciousness.

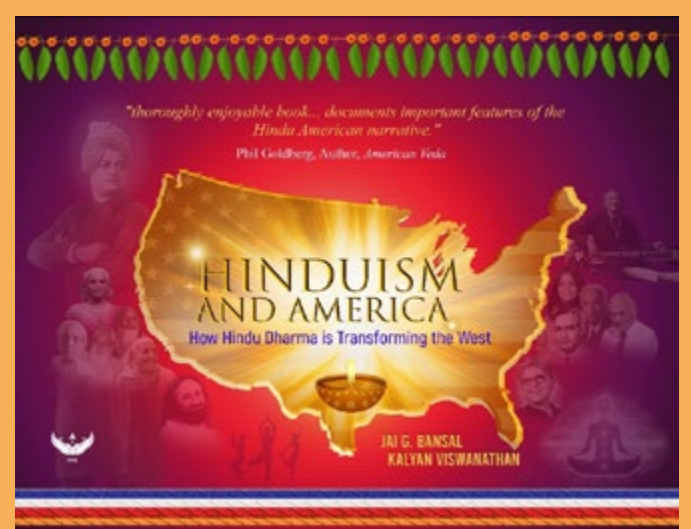
So, where does the ancient Indian knowledge stand in this burgeoning field?

It can be said without hesitation that Indian mind science, especially the meditation part of it, has become a key part of American life. According to a 2008 study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, almost 40% of Americans meditate at least once a week. Meditation has also become a part of workplaces and schools across the Western world. Most meditation practitioners report significant improvements in physical wellness such as removing aches and pains to maintaining cardiovascular health, as well as mental wellness such as improved focus and memory, reduced stress levels and anxiety, and improved sleep. After Yoga, meditation is the most popular choice of CAM (Complementary and Alternative Medicine) today.

Meditation and related concepts are also the subject of intense research. One only needs to look at a contemporary journal of psychology, psychiatry, cognition and consciousness, to see just how thoroughly these ancient Hindu sciences have been studied, modified and repackaged to suit the Western tastes. The realization that meditation could go beyond releasing stress and could help 'train the mind and reshape the brain', according to the psychologist Daniel Goleman, was an insight that was too precious to ignore.

Transmission

Certain aspects of the Hindu thought system were known in the West even before Swami Vivekananda formally introduced it to the Vedanta philosophy in 1890s, or Paramahansa Yogananda established the Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) in early 1920s to disseminate his version of Hindu philosophy. In 1989, Charles Fillmore, the co-founder of Unity, a part of the New Thought Movement, wrote the following in a magazine called Modern Thought: "...the evolution of the spirit has created a demand for a religion of broader scope, and we turn to the lore of India, for lack of a better system nearer home." He began to explore different styles of meditation and finally arrived at the conclusion that the meditative practices from ancient Hinduism were the most effective. Thus began the practice of 'silent meditation', a core concept for Unity, that facilitated 'conscious contact with God'.



HINDUISM AND AMERICA:

How Hindu Dharma is Transforming the West" is a recently released **COFFEE TABLE BOOK** that attempts to narrate the story of this transformative movement. Written jointly by the authors of this article, this book represents two-and-half-year long collaboration effort of VHPA and HUA.

Order your copy at tinyurl.com/3svef6mm, or scan the QR code:



"This book should adorn every Hindu American's coffee table."

Prof. Ved Nanda, Director,

The Ved Nanda Center for International & Comparative Law, Padma Bhushan



It was **Maharishi Mahesh Yogi**, who introduced a simplified version of meditation on the world stage and promoted it above other aspects of the *Ashtanga* or the 8-limbed Yoga system. In 1955, he presented the world with Transcendental Meditation, simplifying and rebranding the original meditation techniques, and followed it up by establishing research institutes to explore the topic further.

Maharishi's meditation-made-easy solution was not received with equal enthusiasm by everyone, for while it increased overall interest in the spiritual practice in the West, it took the practice distinctly away from its traditional roots. According to the Maharishi, this wasn't about meditation leading to *samadhi* but to a state of 'deep rest'. It wasn't about *samskaras*, *vasanas* or *karma* (broadly speaking, desires and action spurred by such desires) but about stress and relief from it. Nor was it about mantras or chants in a language unknown (Sanskrit), but about a guided set of instructions and simple procedures in English, thus not only keeping it simple for anyone to practise, but also making it easy for anyone to teach it.

One of Maharishi's achievements was to make meditation (TM) 'un-elitist' and accessible to the common man. Ironically, his students included some of the biggest celebrities from the 1960s - Deepak Chopra, Herb Benson, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the Beatles, Beach Boys and many others.

In 1967, a lecture by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in London would turn the attention of everyone in the West towards meditation, simply because of three youngsters in the audience who would seek him later to learn his Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique. They were John Lennon, Paul McCartney, and George Harrison from the **Beatles**. They already had fame and fortune, and now, TM would add to their spiritual wealth. Watching them walk away from the limelight to live in solitude and meditate, millions were both curious and inspired to find out more about meditation and how it could help them handle the tumultuous 60s. Suddenly, meditation and mental health seemed to be the topic on everyone's minds. Lectures, classes and ashrams that offered to teach meditation techniques were in big demand.

In 1969, Maharishi founded a separate entity called Transcendental Meditation Centres (TMC), exclusively

for the African American community, to help them experience inner peace and enlightenment through TM. TMC also trained black Americans to become TM teachers and help thousands of others in their spiritual journey. The Centres also conducted studies on African Americans to understand how they responded to TM. The call for blacks to sign up for TM had been given loud and clear by the Maharishi in the May 1968 issue of *Ebony*. The affirmative response was equally loud.

In 1973, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi set up a formal system that would facilitate the study of consciousness in a scientific way and named it Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI). According to him, it was based on Vedantic knowledge and ancient Hindu philosophy and would help study the creative process of consciousness in the individual. It was one of the early attempts to formalize the study of meditative techniques in a scientific manner, and facilitated the entry of mind sciences into universities, corporate sectors, and millions of homes.

Sometime in 1975, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi extended his Transcendental Meditation technique with the TM-Sidhi Program, to help the mind attain Transcendental Consciousness which, according to Maharishi, forms the fourth major state of consciousness. The program was based on the concept of *siddhi*, as explained in Patanjali's *Yogasutras*, and was meant to enable the individual to attain extraordinary powers by controlling the mind. Maharishi also proposed the application of scientific studies to conduct research on the physiological effects of Transcendental Meditation and the development of higher states of consciousness, areas previously relegated to mysticism.

Even as TM was gaining ground as "The meditative practice of America", many others were entering the arena. One of them was Amrit Desai, a disciple of Swami Kripalvananda, who arrived in the United States in 1960 with a new concept he called 'Meditation in Motion'. This 'spontaneous posture flow' was part of *Kripalu Yoga*, a system he developed and named after his guru. Similarly, Chinmoy Kumar Ghose, popularly known as Sri Chinmoy, came to America in 1964 and over the next 4 decades gave extensive lectures on meditation at various universities, the United Nations, as well as to general public. In 1975, Swami Muktananda, a disciple of Swami



Nityananda, opened a Siddha Yoga Ashram in Oakland, and began promoting a typical Hindu lifestyle that included vegetarianism, meditation and chanting. Many others also entered the field and tried to promote their own versions of meditation and related practices in the United States. Notable among these were Sai Maa for her *Brain Illumination Meditation*, Guru Maharaj for *Divine Light Mission* and Bhagwan Rajneesh for his *Dynamic Meditation*, a form of meditation that involves letting out energy before the body and mind settle into silence.

However, none of these movements came close to the prominence that TM had garnered. It had already acquired a formal structure and curriculum through the Students International Meditation Society (SIMS), founded by Maharishi in 1965. In the years that followed, SIMS had made its presence in Berkeley, Harvard and Yale, in addition to the founding chapter in UCLA. According to media reports, students queued up by the thousands, waiting to be

initiated into TM by the guru who had leading celebrities, including the Beatles, for his students.

The Maharishi left his earthly body in 2008, leaving behind a long list of accomplishments and accolades. His crowning achievement was the revival of India's ancient spiritual tradition of meditation in the West and beyond, even if the traditionalists did not appreciate his stripping it away from its spiritual context. The *Newsweek* credited him with helping to launch "a legitimate new field of neuroscience" and *Times of India* hailed his "unique and enduring contribution to humankind (through) his deep understanding of...pure consciousness". His legacy continues to live on through the many institutions he founded, plethora of publications and lecture recordings, and millions of followers whose lives he had changed. Many of his star students would continue to add to his legacy by adapting Vedantic ideas and yogic traditions to further the field of mind sciences.

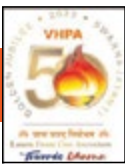
About the Authors



Dr. Jai Bansal is a scientist, author, and community leader with a keen interest in Indian history and in exploring the contributions of the Hindu civilization to the world. He currently serves as the Vice President of Education for the World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), as well as a member of its executive board and the governing council. After a distinguished career spanning 38 years, Dr. Bansal retired in 2014 as the Chief Scientific Officer and the Global Technology Development Advisor of a global petrochemical company. From 2014 to 2018, he served as an advisor to the Argonne National Laboratory, Chicago, and the US Department of Energy. He holds a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Waterloo, Canada, and a B.Sc. (Distinction) from Panjab University. He has published widely and holds over two dozen scientific patents.



Mr. Kalyan Viswanathan is currently serving as the President of Hindu University of America and guiding its renewal and revitalization. He was a longtime student of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, established in the Advaita Vedanta Sampradaya and was associated with his work for over 20 plus years. Prior to his involvement with Hindu University of America, Kalyan was a Global Practice Head for one of India's largest IT Services Company, with a 20-plus year track record. He holds a Master's Degree in Computer Science and a Bachelor's Degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from BITS, Pilani. He is also working on his Doctoral degree in Hindu Studies, currently, with a scholarly focus on the intersection of Hindu and Western thought, the recovery of Hindu epistemology and its relevance and value for humanity.



The sixteenth HMEC (Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference, now Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council) was held at DoubleTree by Hilton, Monroe Township, New Jersey on September 29th, 30th and October 1st 2023. In the past 15 years, over 200 Temples have participated across North America and the Caribbean Islands and Bharat.

This year, there were 10 Hosts and Co-Hosts of the conference mainly from the USA and Canada. Approximately 200 adult and youth delegates from over 70 organizations and four countries participated in the conference.

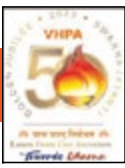
The theme for the conference was: "Hindu Mandir - A community anchor in changing times." Hindu temples are facing challenges due to the changing nature of technology and society that affect the traditional beliefs and practices. The 16th HMEC enabled Hindu leaders to focus on how to

make the temple a stable center for our community by the means of temple management, youth engagement, religious programs, Balvihars and serving seniors and society.

In the inaugural session, held on September 29th 2023, the Deep Prajwalan was done by Swami Svatananda Ji, Sriman Murali Bhattar Ji, Swami Vigyanananda Ji and Shri Abhay Asthana Ji along with the Swasti Vachchan done by all the attending Priests to give blessings for a successful 3-day conference. We were warmly welcomed by our Grand Host team, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Robbinsville. Next, Smt. Tejal Shah, Joint General Secretary of VHPA and Convenor of HMEC, gave a welcome speech in which she highlighted how far we have come in the last 15 years and what was our goal for this conference.

The HMEC Keynote speech was given by Swami Svatananda Ji from Arsh Vidya Gurukulam and the





HMPC Keynote speech was given by Shri Murali Bhattar Ji from Hindu Society of Minnesota. The special guest address was given by Shri Swami Vigyanananda Ji, founder and global chairman of World Hindu Foundation (WHF).

The plenary sessions on Friday, September 29th 2023 set the stage for the rest of the conference. Sessions addressed key points through a great lineup of speakers: Evolving Role of Priests by Shri Anant Dixit, Emotional health and Spiritual care by Smt. Madhu Sharma, Mandir involvement in community Seva projects by Brahmchari Suryanarayan Ji, meeting spiritual need of seniors in community by Shri Ashwani Kumar (covered by Smt. Sunita Agarwal), Sanatani Heart Healthy Lifestyle by Shri Laxman Prajapat & Happy and Healthy Family (Key to a Peaceful Society) by Shri Yoginder Gupta. This session was closed by the introduction of the Sponsors by Smt. Tejal Shah. This was followed by a presentation on Temple Management Software and dinner by Shri Ravi Pulipaka.

The next day started bright and early on Saturday, September 30th 2023 with Yoga, Prayer and meditation. Then the session began which covered an array of topics under the umbrella of “Mandir and Dharma Education”, a panel discussion moderated by Smt. Sahana Singh. The topics included, Approaching the educational system by Smt. Deepa Karthik, Dharma activities through Dayton Hindu Temple for local Educational Institutions by Smt. Sunita Agarwal, Priest engagement and help in the Interfaith community by Shri Madana-gopala Dasa, Challenges and Opportunities faced by youth by Kumar Ravi Kheradia and Kumari Uma Kalluparambil & HMEC and HUA partnership by Shri Kalyan Viswanathan.



The next session was divided in two parts, “Mandir’s role in Dharma Advocacy Part I and Part II”, both moderated by Smt. Vallabha Tantry. The topics in Part I included: Mandir and Public Engagement by Shri Thanedar (covered by Smt. Vallabha Tantry), Electoral advocacy and Voter registration drives in Mandirs by Smt. Shruti Parikh, How to Navigate Public engagement as 501 (c) (3) by Padma Bhushan Ved Nanda ji & leveraging federal grants and strengthening the Hindu community and Dharmic centers by Shri Prem Pusuloori.

The Part II of the session covered Impact of Caste resolution on Mandirs by Shri Ajay Shah, Social issues and impact on Mandirs by Shri Satish Sharma (who traveled from UK to be a part of the HMEC) & Writing grants for Temple security - Physical violence, Hinduphobia by Dr. Smt. Anita Gupta.





The Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council is an attempt to unify all Hindu Organizations and make us stronger.

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The action items from this conference:

- Organize webinars for the topics that Mandirs need guidance on.
- Sanskar books to be launched in 2024 as explained by Shri Deepak Kotwal
- Health and diet along with Sanatan Dharma and Satvik movement
- Priests continuing education (non-ritualistic) workshop; Communication, contemporary issues, social issues etc.
- Compilation of a list of books displayed at the conference along with the websites to purchase them from

Contact Details:

Smt. Tejal Shah
tejal.shah@vhp-america.org
(Ph # 201-757-8491)

Smt. Niyati Vasani
niyati.vasani@vhp-america.org
(Ph # 201-993-4048)

HMEC

The vision of HMEC is to be the network of Hindu Organizations for effective leadership generation to generation in North America. Representatives from Hindu temples and institutions meet to deliberate and solve issues collectively. This conference provides a great opportunity to community leaders to learn from each other and ultimately grow as one community. The World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), founded in 1970 and incorporated in the state of New York, 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. For more information on VHPA, please write to genecy@vhp-america.org or visit www.vhp-america.org

II Narayanaya Namah, Namu Arihantanam, Buddham Sharanam Gachhami, Sat Sri Akal II

outside the locked gates of the structure. I was told that it is the birth place of Bhagwan Shri Ram where a Temple once stood.

I was literally in tears and had thousands of questions bubbling in mind. How could this be true? Why can't we do something about it? It was a very welcome news several years later when I first learnt about the launch of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti movement and opening of the locked gates. Later in 1997, I visited the temporary makeshift temple again and hoped that someday, we'll have a grand temple standing at the very site. Rest is history and the day arrived culminating into the building of a grand temple for Bhagwan Shri Ram and Pran Pratishtha.

With all the past events still alive and constantly playing in the background, Manju and I were ecstatic to receive the invitation to Jan 22nd Pran Pratishtha. It's only by the grace of Ishwara that few of us from VHPA could be part of it.

To be able to attend Pran Pratishtha was a lifelong dream come true. Neither one could control emotions on such an extra ordinary historical moment, nor did I wished to control it, so I let tears flow freely to enjoy the moment. While helicopters flew over us showering rose petals, the

bliss I was in can't be expressed in words. If a Moksha could be felt in the form of an emotion, this was it. Every object – card, food, bag, prasad etc. distributed was the first and felt sacred, so everything mattered and nothing could be spared or discounted as ordinary. This was a trip not only of a lifetime but of several lifetimes to come if may!

It was a mere coincidence or a miracle that our whole trip from Atlanta to Ayodhya was full of surprises. It was specifically marked with flight cancellations starting in Atlanta itself, but each of these surprises resulted in enhancing the trip rather than hurting it. As an example, our return flight to Mumbai from Lucknow was via Varanasi but poor visibility due to fog in Varanasi resulted in cancellation of the Mumbai segment of the flight, which required rebooking the flight to Mumbai all over again. Consequently, booking a whole new flight from Varanasi to Mumbai provided us an ample opportunity to explore Varanasi. We had darshan at Kashi Vishwanath and Sankat Mochan Hanuman temples, enjoyed the beauty of new Kashi Vishwanath

Vallabha Tantri ji, Amit Shah ji, Tejalben ji, Swami Vigyananand ji, Shyam Tiwari ji, Keshav Patel ji, Ajay Shah ji, Manju Tiwari ji



corridor during day and night, with a glimpse of Ganga aarti had enjoyable boat tour during night, and still had enough time left to visit Sarnath next day.

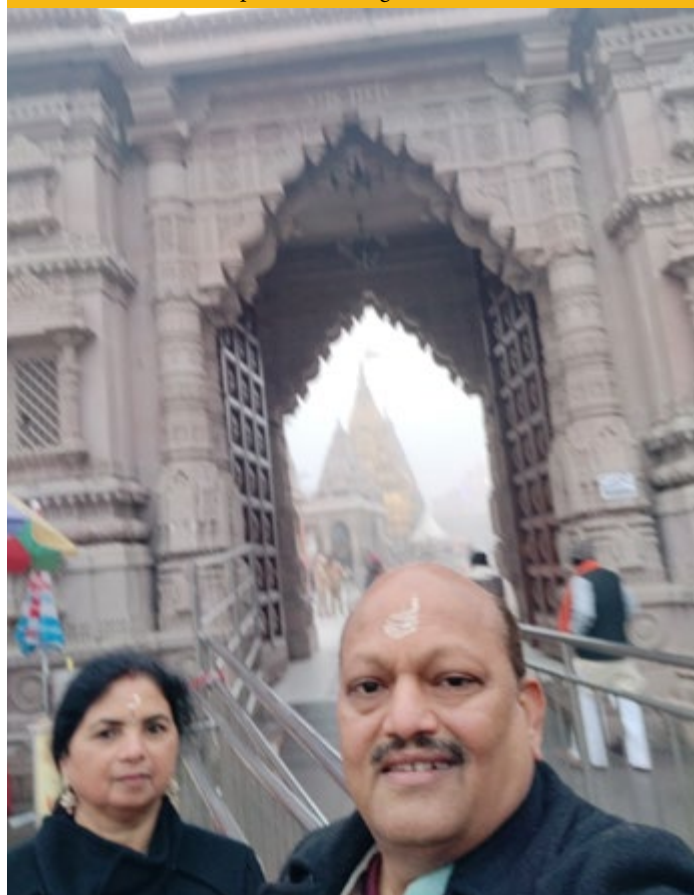
In nutshell – the journey that began 44 years back that

I once thought was mere a journey only to be resulting in a day dream, was fulfilled with darshan and blessings of Bhagwan Ram on the Pran Pratishtha day despite numerous challenges along the way.

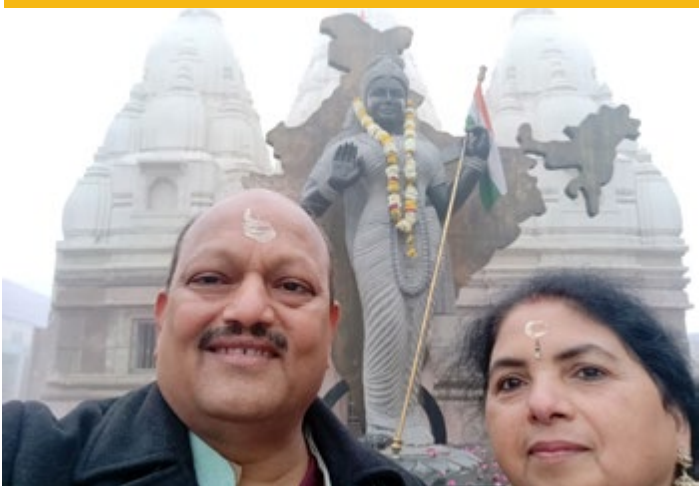
Kashi Vishwanath Ganga Ghat, Varanasi



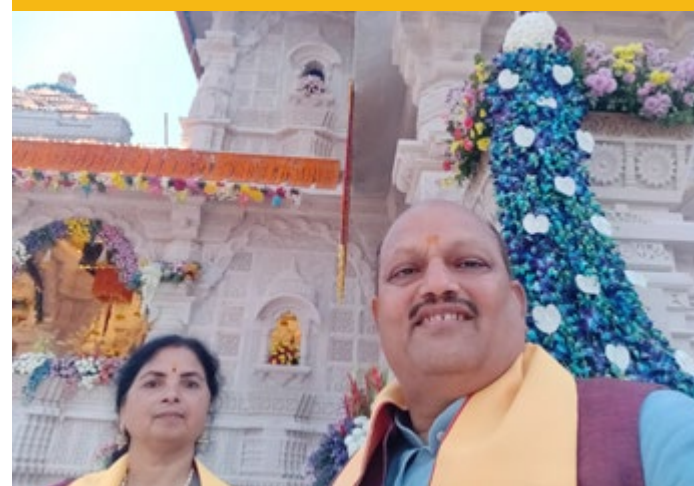
Kashi Vishwanath Temple in the background, Varanasi



Bharat Mata, Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, Varanasi



Shree Ram Lalla Mandir



Tejalben ji, Swami ji, Shyam Tiwari ji



Dr. B K Modi ji, Shyam Tiwari ji, Abhay Asthana Ji, Jay Asthana Ji



Anupam Kher ji, Shyam Tiwari ji

Manoj Joshi, Shyam Tiwari ji



Sudhi Chaudhary ji, Shyam Tiwari ji



Shyam Tiwari ji, Anu Malik ji



Shyam Tiwari ji Rishabh Shetty



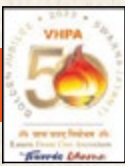
Manju Tiwari ji at Sarnath, Varanasi




Sadhvi Ritambhara ji, Shyam Tiwari ji



Shyam Tiwari ji, Ashutosh ji, Guna Mangesan ji



ॐ
 SHRI RAM JANMBHOOMI TEERTH KSHETRA
 Prana-Pratishtha (Consecration) Ceremony
 Paush Shukla Dvadashi, Yugabd 5125
 Monday, 22 January 2024
 Auspicious time - 12:20 noon



ceremony
 special

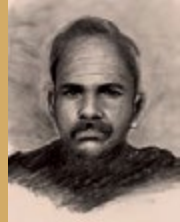


Auspicious Ceremony
 for
 "Ram Lala's return to his Original Seat at New Grand Temple-Home
 &
 "Pran Pratistha"
 On
 Paush Shukl Dvadashi (Koorma dvadashi), Monday
 Vikram Samvat 2080
 22 January 2024, Yugabd 5125
 Nakshatra-Mrigshira
 Abhijit Mahurt, Amritsiddhiyog, Sarvarthasiddhiyog




MARYADAPURI
 AYODHYA

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Shri Gopal Singh Visharad

The Late Shri Gopal Singh Visharad ji was an activist of the Hindu Mahasabha, after Ramlala appeared at the ancient site of his birth on 22/23 December, 1949, Shri Visharad ji filed the first suit in the District Court of Faizabad on 16 January, 1950 for granting the right to worship the deity.



Shri Dau Dayal Khanna

Shri Dau Dayal Khanna ji was the first to propose the handing over of the three Hindu places of worship at Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi to the Hindu community for the construction of temples at the ancient sites and urged the spiritual leaders and holy-men to lead it. In 1984, this proposal was accepted by the spiritual leaders and holy-men at the first Parliament of Religions held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi and it was decided to liberate Shri Ram Janmabhoomi first of all.



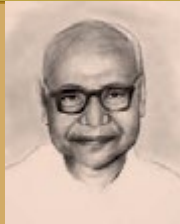
The Revered Mahant Avaidyanath Ji Maharaj

In 1984, the holy-men of the country chose the then head of the Gaurakshpeeth Mahant Avaidyanath Ji Maharaj, a strong supporter of Hindutva and an advocate of social harmony, as president of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Muktiyagya Samiti. Under his leadership, the movement for the liberation of Shri Ram's birthplace picked momentum.



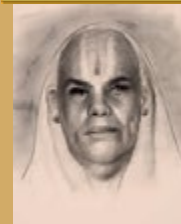
Shri Omkar Bhawe

Shri Omkar Bhawe, a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh pracharak, was agitated with the conversions episode in Meenakshipuram and shifted to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in 1981-82 as part of the Sanskriti Raksha Yojana. Nominated the Secretary of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagya Samiti, Shri Bhawe deliberately maintained a low profile to propel this movement.



Shri Devkinandan Aggarwal

Shri Devkinandan Aggarwal, a retired Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court, joined Vishwa Hindu Parishad as its Vice President. In 1989, he filed a suit in the court as 'Ram Sakha' or 'next friend of Ram' and won the case. This resulted in the Hindu community getting the right to build the Ram temple.



The Revered Shivramacharya Ji Maharaj

A true seeker, the late Jagadguru Ramanandacharya Shri Swami Shivramacharya Ji Maharaj was the founder and first president of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Trust. It was under his leadership that the foundation stone of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple was laid in 1989 at the Singh Dwar located at the Janmabhoomi.

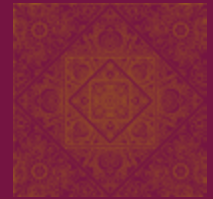
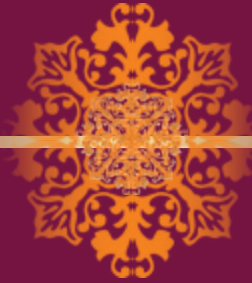
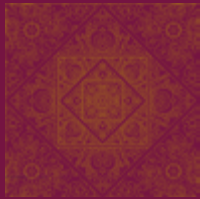


1970-2020 Golden Jubilee Year

HINDU
VISHWA



जय श्री राम



MEMOIRE
OF
HONOUR

Designed & Printed by Remadhav Art





HWN

Conference Reaches 10 Year Milestone

on Saturday February 24th, 2024, Hindu Women's Network (HWN) of Atlanta, commemorated their 10 years with an annual Hindu Women Conference at Best Western in Roswell, Atlanta, Georgia. Theme of the conference this year was **Empowerment Through Knowledge**.

HWN, an initiative of VHPA, aligns to the values of Shakti (Empowering Self and others), Seva (Social contribution), Sadhana (Spiritual Enlightenment) and furthers the conversation on enrichment.

The archway of Best Western board room turned into a vortex of, 'colors of India' beyond the hydraulic doors. Registrations were done online as well as booths were set up with volunteers to register walk-ins. The inauguration of eight-hour session started with lamp lighting ceremony done by VHPA Atlanta Chapter President – Veena Katdare, Vice President – Kusum Khurana and Keynote speaker – Brahmacharini Jyoti Chaitanya followed by prayers led by Manju Tiwari, Smita Daftardar, Preeti Gupta, Neetu Sharma, and Nisha Desai.

Sabitha Venugopal, the facilitator at HWC initiated the program with the welcome speech followed by outlines of the program schedule

spanned between 9pm to 4pm. Mina Menon, a certified yoga instructor, led the conclave through breathing exercises – Pranayama Brahmini, Dwitiya, Tritiya, and Omkar Sadhana, which energized the convocation. Anita Houde, one of the volunteers at HWN moderated the first session – Women In Dharma and invited Brahmacharini Jyoti Chaitanya. Respected Brahmacharini Jyoti ji with her extensive background in Advaita Vedanta addressed the audience on the topic with wealth of her knowledge. Coming from an illustrious background of bachelor's in medicine and surgery, Brahmacharini Jyoti left her post-graduate studies in search of truth. Heavily inspired by the Vedic Scriptures she went back in search of her roots and trained under Sandeepany Sadhanalaya in Mumbai, Bharat. Currently she serves at Chinmaya Mission, Atlanta.

The core crux of the speech of Brahmacharini Jyoti Chaitanya was Devi (Goddess) who is considered the supreme symbol of women divinity. Hindu Scriptures accept and embrace female divinity. Female energy is the God essence – a pinnacle of Brahm Vedanta, leading humans



to enlightenment. The principal element of our culture divinizes women and believes that God revels in the society or nation that idolizes women energy. The reason for confusion today is because we have lost touch with Swadharma. The loss of sight for the inner essence has led to much turbulence on the outside. When head, heart and body align and work together it is then we can act in Dharma. When we connect within, we rewire, re-find, and reinstate that Dharma in ourselves. Mahabharata says where there is Krishna there is Dharma. Where there is Dharma there is success. When we think of God – Dharma becomes foremost in our lives. When we follow Dharma, we become like Arjuna. We change ourselves and the world around us changes for the better. When we find Krishna inside, life becomes an expression of Krishna. Then Dharma lives through you.

The moderator for the next session, Manjula Reddy, introduced the guest speaker – Gita Vemparala, a certified life coach who specializes in divorce and transition into life after divorce. She helps women in navigating the complex and stressful procedure of separation and divorce. She gave her valuable



insights to more than seventy women present for the conference.

Hitherto to lunch of Indian delicacies like Palak Paneer, Pulao and Gulab Jamun, Smita Daftardar, a veteran teacher of decade at Balvihar, heralded in her speech about the growing community of VHPA organization. Semicentennial VHPA's foundation was instituted to bring community together for social and spiritual growth of Hindus. Balvihar was set up in early seventies followed by a family camp in the same year. Hindu Student council in 1990, Coalition of Hindu Youth 2010, Bhagwat Gita Santana Dharma Scholarship in 1993, which was later expanded to



Sharada Scholarship Program 2022. Durga Project supports abused women, Hindu Women Network, to name a few. And announcement of Hindu New Year that will be celebrated on April 20th, 2024.

The interlude of the group was followed by Yoganindra led by Ms. Rita Belsare who guided the audience to succinct relaxation. The timekeepers for the diverse sessions were masterfully managed by timekeepers – Nisha Desai and Neetu Sharma for the flawless tete-a-tete.

Preeti Gupta, moderator for the session – alternative medicine, welcomed Dr. Satish Nair on stage. Dr. Nair is a compassionate healer and an enthusiastic teacher who has expertise in Ayurveda, Yoga, Massage Therapy, and Naturopathy. He takes an integrative approach to healing by combining the positives of both ancient sciences and modern medicine. He talked about mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual health of women. According to him sickness is not inherited, ‘Genetics only helps in loading the gun, it is the environment that we provide that triggers the sickness.’ Focusing on prevention more than cure, he implored the women attendees to take charge of their health.

Sarika Jaswani, contributor at Hindu Vishwa Magazine, introduced the next set of panelists to the

podium in the session – passion to profession. Invitees on the panel included Bishakha Sinha, an amazon best seller author, Monika Mittal, artist guild president at Johns Creek Art Center, Pragati Kolage, an award-winning actor, director and producer who has fueled her passion to reach new heights, and Neha Negandhi, a TEDx speaker, podcast host and journalist. Each of the artist came from a different professional background and shared their awe-inspiring stories of struggles and triumphs in pursuing their passions and turning them into a profession.

HWN segways several initiatives from donation drives, fundraisers, and marathons. This year they introduced a new fad for their loyal patrons – The HWN Book Club. The motto being to enrich booklovers and promote women authors in the community, thereby building a dialogue that invigorates the women network and support in the community. The link to join book club - <https://chat.whatsapp.com/LWmhZKi49RCHaNd6jGSdM7>

The program, wrapped up with prayers and triumphant volunteers huddling for group pictures and selfies with the dignitaries. Each participant went home with a hint of epiphany and a load of empowerment.

“मैं राम मंदिर हूँ”

मैं राम मंदिर हूँ, मेरी एक कहानी है |
राम में मंदिर है, मंदिर में राम हैं,
राम का मंदिर है, जन-जन में राम हैं, कण-कण में मंदिर है,
शाश्वत राम का वैश्विक मंदिर है |
मैं राम मंदिर हूँ, मेरी एक कहानी है |
मेरे रज-कण पर बाल राम के चरण पड़े, उनकी बाल लीलाओं के कितने यहाँ सुमन खिले |
मैंने देखी है प्रभु की बाल-मुस्कान, उनके चंद्र-मुख का तेज कांतिमान |
चारों भाइयों का खेल परिहास देखा, माता-पिता का मान मनुहार देखा |
मैं ही तो हूँ प्रभु राम के अवतरण का प्रथम साक्ष्य,
उनके धरा पर होने का प्रथम प्रमाण |
मैं राम मंदिर हूँ, मेरी एक कहानी है |
अनगिनित वर्षों की है कहानी मेरी, पुरानी बात नहीं करता, पाँच सौ वर्षों की कथा सुनानी है |
मैंने कितने उतार-चढ़ाव देखे, कितने शीत-ज्वार देखे,
मेरी संतान अवश हुई, समय की पकड़ अबल हुई
लुटेरों ने मुझ पर वार किये, मेरे स्तम्भों पर कितने प्रहार किये |
शीर्ष पर मेरे मलबा डाला, दीवारों को भी हिला डाला, परन्तु नींव को मेरी न डिगा पाए,
यह तो राम जी की जननी-माटी है,
मैं राम मंदिर हूँ, मेरी एक कहानी है |
मैं मूक चहुँ ओर देखता रहा, परायों से अधिक अपनों की कायरता सहता रहा |
समय के बदलने की प्रतीक्षा में रत रहा, जाग रहे स्वाभिमान को खोजता रहा |
कार सेवकों के आने की बाट मुझे जोहनी थी, कोठारी बंधुओं की कुर्बानी मुझे देखनी थी |
आज खड़ा हूँ मैं गौरवान्वित मुख से,
अपनों पर आत्माभिमान है |
मैं राम मंदिर हूँ, मेरी एक कहानी है |

रेणु राजवंशी गुप्ता

renurajvanshigupta@gmail.com

USA





जय श्रीराम भजन



जय श्रीराम, जय श्रीराम
जय श्रीराम, जय श्रीराम

जय जय राम, जय श्रीराम
सीताराम, जय श्रीराम
प्रभु श्रीराम, जय श्रीराम
भजमन राम, जय श्रीराम
जय राजा राम, जय श्रीराम
जय सियाराम, जय श्रीराम
सियापति राम, जय श्रीराम
मेरे प्रभु राम, जय श्रीराम
श्रीमन राम, जय श्रीराम
श्रीराम जयराम, जय श्रीराम

जानकी राम, जय श्रीराम
बेदेही राम, जय श्रीराम
मन में राम, जय श्रीराम
घर में राम, जय श्रीराम
घर घर राम, जय श्रीराम
हर घर राम, जय श्रीराम
जन जन राम, जय श्रीराम
हर मन राम, जय श्रीराम
कण कण राम, जय श्रीराम
दशरथ नंदन, जय श्रीराम

असुर निकंदन, जय श्रीराम
सब जग वंदन, जय श्रीराम
शांति निकेतन, जय श्रीराम
कौशल्या नंदन, जय श्रीराम
जय जनार्दन, जय श्रीराम
पतितापावन, जय श्रीराम
राजीव लोचन, जय श्रीराम
जानकी वल्लभ, जय श्रीराम
रघुपति राघव, जय श्रीराम
अवध बिहारी, जय श्रीराम

जन मंगलकारी, जय श्रीराम,
जन हितकारी, जय श्रीराम
जन मन हारी, जय श्रीराम,
सब सुखकारी, जय श्रीराम
मानव हितकारी, जय श्रीराम
सब दुःख हारी, जय श्रीराम
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सब दुःखहर्ता, जय श्रीराम
हे जगज्जाता, जय श्रीराम
जग पालनकर्ता, जय श्रीराम

विश्व विधाता, जय श्रीराम
कण कण बसते, जय श्रीराम
हर घर बसते, जय श्रीराम
हर मन बसते, जय श्रीराम
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हे भक्त वत्सल, जय श्रीराम
राघव रघुकुल, जय श्रीराम
प्रभु दीन दयाल, जय श्रीराम
अजान बाहु, जय श्रीराम

श्रीरामचंद्र जय, जय श्रीराम
श्रीरामभद्र जय, जय श्रीराम
अनाथ नाथ, जय श्रीराम
जय रघुनाथ, जय श्रीराम
परम सनेही, जय श्रीराम
जय पुरुषोत्तम, जय श्रीराम

jay shreeraam, jay shreeraam
jay shreeraam, jay shreeraam

jay jay raam, jay shreeraam
seetaaraam, jay shreeraam
prabhu shreeraam, jay shreeraam
bhajaman raam, jay shreeraam
jay raajaa raam, jay shreeraam
jay siyaaraam, jay shreeraam
siyaapati raam, jay shreeraam
mere prabhu raam, jay shreeraam
shreeman raam, jay shreeraam
shreeraam jayaraam, jay shreeraam

jaanakee raam, jay shreeraam
baidehee raam, jay shreeraam
man mein raam, jay shreeraam
ghar mein raam, jay shreeraam
ghar ghar raam, jay shreeraam
har ghar raam, jay shreeraam
jan jan raam, jay shreeraam
har man raam, jay shreeraam
kan kan raam, jay shreeraam
dasharath nandan, jay shreeraam

asur nikandan, jay shreeraam
sab jag vandan, jay shreeraam
shaanti niketan, jay shreeraam
kaushalyaa nandan, jay shreeraam
jay janaardan, jay shreeraam
patitapaavan, jay shreeraam
raajeev lochan, jay shreeraam
jaanakee vallabh, jay shreeraam
raghupati raaghav, jay shreeraam
avadh bihaaree, jay shreeraam

jan mangalakaaree, jay shreeraam
jan hitakaaree, jay shreeraam
jan man haaree, jay shreeraam
sab sukhakaaree, jay shreeraam
maanav hitakaaree, jay shreeraam
sab dukh haaree, jay shreeraam
sab sukha-kartaa, jay shreeraam
sab dukha-hartaa, jay shreeraam
he jagatraataa, jay shreeraam
jag paalanakartaa, jay shreeraam

vishv vidhaataa, jay shreeraam
kan kan basate, jay shreeraam
har ghar basate, jay shreeraam
har man basate, jay shreeraam
sab jan mohak, jay shreeraam
har jan sohak, jay shreeraam
he bhakt vatsal, jay shreeraam
raaghav raghukul, jay shreeraam
prabhu deen dayaal, jay shreeraam
ajaan baahu, jay shreeraam

shreeraamachandr jay, jay shreeraam
shreeraamabhadr jay, jay shreeraam
anaath naath, jay shreeraam
jay raghunaath, jay shreeraam
param sanehee, jay shreeraam
jay purushottam, jay shreeraam

त्रिलोक स्वामी, जय श्रीराम
अयोध्या वासी, जय श्रीराम
जनक सुता वर, जय श्रीराम
श्रेष्ठ धनुर्धर, जय श्रीराम

परम् मनोहर, जय श्रीराम
विश्व धरोहर, जय श्रीराम
जय जगदीश्वर, जय श्रीराम
मुदित मनोहर, जय श्रीराम
जय रघुवीर, जय श्रीराम
अनाथ सखा, जय श्रीराम
प्रेम के सिन्धु, जय श्रीराम
दीन के बंधु, जय श्रीराम
जय आनंद मूर्ति, जय श्रीराम
जय त्रिकालदर्शी, जय श्रीराम

महा तपस्वी, जय श्रीराम
जय रघुराई, जय श्रीराम
अनादि अनंत, जय श्रीराम
बहुमंगलदायक, जय श्रीराम
हर फल दायक, जय श्रीराम
अति मंगलकारक, जय श्रीराम
सुखशांति प्रदायक, जय श्रीराम
शबरी तारक, जय श्रीराम
दुःख निवारक, जय श्रीराम
सब जन पालक, जय श्रीराम

सब जन तारक, जय श्रीराम
सब सुख कारक, जय श्रीराम
सब दुःख हारक, जय श्रीराम
केवट तारक, जय श्रीराम
आत्म निवारक, जय श्रीराम
मोक्ष प्रदायक, जय श्रीराम
सब सुख दायक, जय श्रीराम
जय प्रतिपालक, जय श्रीराम
दुःख विनाशक, जय श्रीराम
भवसागर पारक, जय श्रीराम

सब मन मोहक, जय श्रीराम
मन मन मोहक, जय श्रीराम
असुर विनाशक, जय श्रीराम
मार्ग प्रशस्तक, जय श्रीराम
प्रेरणा दायक, जय श्रीराम
पुण्य प्रदायक, जय श्रीराम
जग उद्धारक, जय श्रीराम
प्रेम प्रदायक, जय श्रीराम
मुक्ति प्रदायक, जय श्रीराम
सिद्धि प्रदायक, जय श्रीराम

शक्ति प्रदायक, जय श्रीराम
आनंद दायक, जय श्रीराम
सब दुःख मारक, जय श्रीराम
आत्म प्रदर्शक, जय श्रीराम
सुगम सुशोभित, जय श्रीराम
हर मन मोहित, जय श्रीराम
जग पालनहारे, जय श्रीराम
सब जन प्यारे, जय श्रीराम

जय श्रीराम, जय श्रीराम
जय श्रीराम, जय श्रीराम

सियापति रामचंद्र की जय
उमापति महादेव की जय
पवनसुत हनुमान की जय

trilok svaamee, jay shreeraam
ayodhya vaasee, jay shreeraam
janak sutaa var, jay shreeraam
shreshth dhanurdhar, jay shreeraam

param manohar, jay shreeraam
vishv dharohar, jay shreeraam
jay jagadeeshvar, jay shreeraam
mudit manohar, jay shreeraam
jay raghuveer, jay shreeraam
anaath sakhaa, jay shreeraam
prem ke sindhu, jay shreeraam
deen ke bandhu, jay shreeraam
jay aanand moorti, jay shreeraam
jay trikaaladarshhee, jay shreeraam

mahaa tapasvee, jay shreeraam
jay raghuraee, jay shreeraam
anaadi anant, jay shreeraam
bahu-mangal-daayak, jay shreeraam
har phal daayak, jay shreeraam
ati mangala-kaarak, jay shreeraam
sukha-shaanti pradaayak, jay shreeraam
shabaree taarak, jay shreeraam
dukhk nivaarak, jay shreeraam
sab jan paalak, jay shreeraam

sab jan taarak, jay shreeraam
sab sukh kaarak, jay shreeraam
sab dukh haarak, jay shreeraam
kevat taarak, jay shreeraam
aatm nivaarak, jay shreeraam
moksh pradaayak, jay shreeraam
sab sukh daayak, jay shreeraam
jay pratipaalak, jay shreeraam
dukhk vinaashak, jay shreeraam
bhava-saagar paarak, jay shreeraam

sab man mohak, jay shreeraam
man man mohak, jay shreeraam
asur vinaashak, jay shreeraam
maarg-prashastak, jay shreeraam
preranaa daayak, jay shreeraam
puny pradaayak, jay shreeraam
jag uddhaarak, jay shreeraam
prem pradaayak, jay shreeraam
mukti pradaayak, jay shreeraam
siddhi pradaayak, jay shreeraam

shakti pradaayak, jay shreeraam
aanand daayak, jay shreeraam
sab dukh maarak, jay shreeraam
aatma-pradarshhak, jay shreeraam
sugam sushobhit, jay shreeraam
har man mohit, jay shreeraam
jag paalanahaare, jay shreeraam
sab jan pyaare, jay shreeraam

jay shreeraam, jay shreeraam
jay shreeraam, jay shreeraam

siyaapati ramachandr kee jay
umaapati mahaadev kee jay
pavanasut hanumaan kee jay



VHPA - Executive Board (EB)

| Name | Title | |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Ajay Shah | President | shahajay@gmail.com |
| Amitabh Mittal | General Secretary | avmittal@vhp-america.org |
| Tejal Shah | Jt. General Secretary | tshahnj@hotmail.com |
| Shyam Tiwari | VP Publications | srtiwari@hotmail.com |
| Vasav Mehta | National Treasurer | vasavmehta@gmail.com |
| Toral Mehta | Jt. General Secretary | trexmehta@gmail.com |
| Jai Bansal | VP Education | jaigb0@gmail.com |
| Rakhi Israni | Legal Counsel | rakhi@exceltest.com |
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| Sanjay Kaul | | |

VHPA - Extended EB with Special Invitees

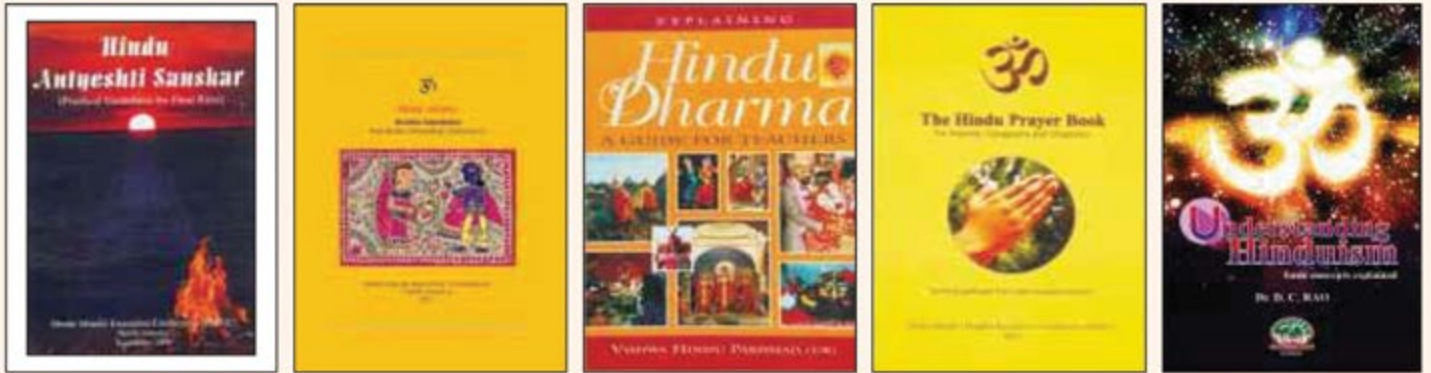
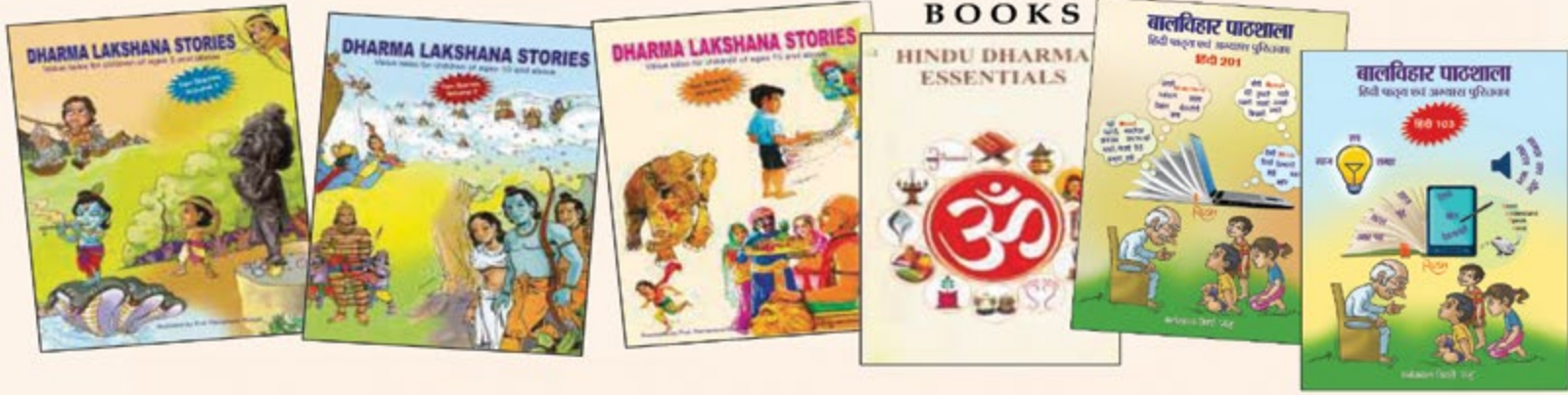
| Name | Title | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Anit Gupta | Assistant Treasurer | anitgupta@gmail.com |
| Dhaval Joshipura | VP Membership | djosh58@gmail.com |
| Manju Tiwari | National Bal Vihar Network | msrtiwari@gmail.com |
| Sanjay Shah | Director of Financial Planning | shahsanjay@hotmail.com |
| Sneha Mehta | | |
| Makarand Abhyankar | | |

ॐ असतो मा सद् गमय । तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय । मृत्योर्मांमृतम् गमय । ।

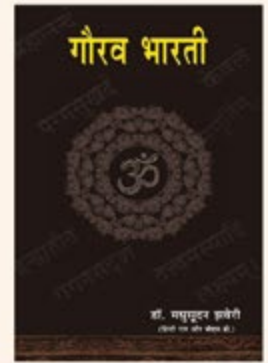
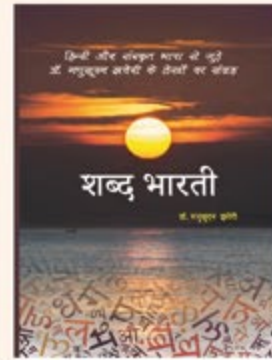
Om, Asato Maa Sad Gamaya; Tamaso Maa Jyotir Gamaya Mrityor Maa Amritam Gamaya

ॐ शांतिः शांतिः शांतिः

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