

Affirming Sanatana Dharma and Recording the Modern History of a Billion-Strong Global Religion in Renaissance



Teaching Kids the Truth About India's Amazing History



MILIND KETKAR/DINODIA



DINODIA

COVER: Young students explore an image of Siva Nataraja as part of their history of India studies. HINDUISM TODAY offers an accurate and sympathetic lesson for US schools, pages 37-55; (above) colorful sari fabrics are laid out in the sun to dry after dying.

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NAVARATRI

Travel with us
across India to
witness nine nights
in honor of the
Goddess
... page 18

Welcome

TO HINDUISM TODAY'S DIGITAL EDITION!

I am pleased to welcome you to the free digital edition of Hinduism Today magazine. It is the fulfillment of a vision held by my Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, founder of Hinduism Today, to bring the magazine's profound Hindu teachings to the widest possible audience. The text of each issue has long been available on the Web, right back to 1979, but without the photographs and art. Now you have here the entire contents of the printed edition, with all photos and art. Plus, it is interactive—every link is live; click and you go to a web page. You can participate in the magazine in a number of ways, accessed through buttons on the right. And you can help support this free edition in two ways: make an online contribution (even a small one); patronize our specialized advertisers. Explore the resources here, enjoy our latest edition and e-mail us if you are inspired.

Bodhinatha Veylanawami

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DIASPORA

U S A

New Life in Arid Arizona

ANOTHER US TEMPLE CAME to life during the *prana pratishtha* Deity installation ceremonies held at the Maha Ganapati Temple of Arizona, May 16-18, 2008. Eleven priests from around the US performed the rite, which literally means “Establishing life breath in the Deity.” The event was blessed by the presence of Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami and attended by 5,000 devotees.

It was a joyous fulfillment for the devotees who had worked so hard for nine years. In 1999 Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami sent them a 1,400-pound granite Maha Ganapati, as he had done for many other fledgling Hindu societies. The *murti* was first

kept at home by Vignesh and Darshini Sukamaram. Devotees began attending the weekly Sunday puja and in 2000 they formed a nonprofit society—the Maha Ganapati Temple of Arizona (see www.ganapati.org.) Ganesha then went to the home of Ganesh and Radha Krishnan for two years. Suri and Sujata Gunnala donated 15 acres of land near Maricopa, 20 miles south of Phoenix, where Ganesha lived next in a modular home for five years with a full-time priest. In May of this year, He was officially placed in his new, permanent shrine.

The traditional South Indian temple was designed by Muthiah Sthapati. Only Lord Ganesha's main sanctum is finished. The adjacent shrines for Siva Lingam on the right and Balaji on the left will be completed next. Future plans include a wedding hall, priest quarters and a retirement home.



Water-filled kumbha pots, charged with power during sacred fire rites, are paraded around the temple before being taken into the main sanctum (above) where the water is poured over the Deity



Hindu and Maori leaders. “We are the same family but speak two different languages,” Rahui Papa, spokesmen for the Maori King

NEW ZEALAND

Hindu/Maori Mind Meld

ALANDMARK IN THE HISTORY of New Zealand and race relations,” boasts the press release from the 2nd New Zealand Hindu Conference held May. His Highness Te Arikinui King Tuheitia, the Maori King, inaugurated the event at the Hindu Heritage Centre, Auckland, by lighting the lamp in

the traditional Hindu way. The conference theme was “Sustaining New Zealand communities through health benefits of yoga, meditation and ayurveda.” Mr. Vinod Kumar, the President of the Hindu Council of New Zealand, said the Council was working to strengthen the bond between New Zealand communities, develop the creativity of the youth, and understand and experience the Maori culture. Rahui Papa noted that *mana* means the same in Maori and Sanskrit.

UNITED KINGDOM

Britain's Hindu Chaplain

SON OF A BRAHMIN SHOP owner in Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh, Krishan Attri studied the *Vedas* in a rigorously disciplined *gurukula* as a boy, excelled in school and went to England all alone in 1986, at the age of twenty-two, to serve as a priest at the Hindu temple of Newcastle on Tyne. Nineteen years later, in 2005, he was a leading Hindu priest, fluent in English (and 7 other languages), when the Ministry of Defence made him the first Hindu chaplain of 470 Hindu soldiers in the British armed forces. Besides offering spiritual guidance, he performs army weddings, family counseling and acts as their liaison with commanding officers.

In his interview for the job, when asked what he would say if a soldier did not want to go

to war, he responded, “Duty is our priority. It's our karma, and we have to face it.” Hindu teachings have armed most of the soldiers he counsels with resolve. “They know they've undertaken a contract to look after the boundary walls of the country.” The *Bhagavad Gita* is his most crucial tool for counseling soldiers. He says, “I use it all the time.”



Acharya Krishan Attri



Delegates at the WAVES conference, June, 2008, discussed a range of subjects relating to Hinduism

U S A

Youth Issues Flood WAVES

THE WORLD ASSOCIATION for Vedic Studies, WAVES, is a multidisciplinary academic society formed in 1996 as “a forum for all scholarly

activities and views on any area of Vedic Studies variously called Indian Studies, South Asian Studies or Indology.” Through the years, it has served as a powerful network for academics.

Over 200 delegates came to Orlando, Florida, for this year's conference in June. It was unique for its focus on

youth and contemporary issues facing Hindus. The all-day youth workshops on June 30th organized by Hindu American Foundation (HAF) and Hindu Student Council (HSC) were lively. Hindu youth sitting on panels at the plenary session felt heard, empowered and engaged in thoughts on their heritage and how it could shape



Siva Kumar Bhattar from India, head priest of Malaysia's Maha Mariamman Temple, has served Malaysia for 15 years

MALAYSIA

Easing up on Priest Visas

IT IS REGULAR PUJAS BY trained priests that keep the power of the temple strong. Though he does not stand between the devotees and God, the priest keeps the spiritual

engine running and doors to the heaven worlds open. Many important Hindu ceremonies require not only one but many priests. So, Malaysian Hindus were relieved when the Muslim government's Human Resources Ministry said in April this year that it had decided to renew the visas of temple priests, musicians and sculptors from India who are currently in the country, a move that was seen as a goodwill gesture to the ethnic Indian community which alleges marginalization in this multi-racial nation. The announcement came

after immigration authorities had adopted a go-slow process on renewing visas of temple priests. The statement issued by the Ministry said, “The Cabinet has made the decision to allow or renew the visas of the temple priests, musicians and sculptors currently in Malaysia. The Cabinet has agreed to extend their service in this country, in special categories only.”

CHICAGO

Police Video Wins Kudos

AMIDST THE CLOUDS OF modern misinformation on Hinduism, a video produced by Chicago Police Department offers some sunshine. Released as part of a DVD series in 2005 that was sent to 50 police headquarters nationwide (see www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/pubs/diversity.html) Chaplain Rev. Kevin Dean introduces his officers to Hinduism with a brief history and then provides a series of tips for law enforcement techniques sensitive to Hindu religious and cultural traditions. Drawing on interviews with Hindus, the film's subjects include, non-touching of ladies by male officers, removal of shoes in temples and homes, respect for shrines in homes, conducting interviews in view of other people, never asking women to remove their marriage pendant, explanation of the forehead tilak-bindi, the original meaning of the swastika which may appear in homes, and more. The video series also covers other religions.

their life and lives of future generations.

“We want to be listened to by our parents so that together we can incorporate our heritage in our lives,” said Jaya Goswami, the past president of HSC Chapter at University of Central Florida. “By being included in the WAVES Conference we feel empowered.” added Ruti Dwivedi, a UCF junior.

Intergeneration sessions had hot debates on contemporary issues facing Hindus in America, such as: “Is there at all a need to establish one's Hindu identity? What about inter-religious marriage and Hindu value of all religions leading to the same God?” It was encouraging to see the WAVES community stepping out of the world of academic discussion into the world of real life Hindu experience, challenges and solutions.

They all end on a similar note, “All of the people we encounter on a daily basis expect to be treated with dignity and respect. Those who practice Hinduism are no different. It is our hope that this video will help enlighten and foster a new understanding.”



Nine minutes of clear, unbiased info sets high standard for police

EDUCATION

Texas WASPs Want Control

THE BATTLE BY US HINDUS to rescue their heritage from distortion in school textbooks has spread from California to Texas. Mel Gablers’ Educational Research Analysts (see www.textbookreviews.org) is a “conservative Christian organization that reviews public school textbooks submitted for adoption in Texas.” Inflicted with a severe case of cultural myopia, the

group focuses on the negative aspects of pre-colonial cultures. They want control over educational material relating not only to Christian values, but to Asian history as well. Their recommended review criteria for adoption process on the subject of world history says, “Prevent stereotypes of whites-as-oppressors and people-of-color-as-victims from slanting discussions of Western imperialism by noting that British rule brought peace and a common language (English) to deeply divided India, ended or opposed suttee, infanticide, and child marriage there...”

The Gablers would have authors overlook important facts. India was the richest country in the world before the British arrived. It was then systematically looted and abused by such diabolical operations as Britain’s use of India as a giant poppy farm that profited off the sale of opium to China, where they nurtured addiction.

The foundation writes, “Our reviews have national relevance because Texas state adopts textbooks and buys so many that publishers write them to Texas standards and sell them across the country.” Hindus need to be heads up. For an excellent analysis of the situation read “Don’t Mess with Texas” in Tamin Ansary’s article at: <http://www.edutopia.org/muddle-machine>.



“Unfunny” Movie critics panned The Love Guru as “utterly disgusting,” “the worst movie I have ever seen,” “88 minutes of ridiculous gags and obscene puns,” “crass, sloppy, repetitive and thin”

U S A

Vulgar Film Incites Hindu Censure

THE LOVE GURU” MOVIE starring Mike Myers as an American raised in India who became a self-help guru led to hot debate among Hindus in the US. Though little of the script besides the words *guru* and *karma* relates to Hinduism, some Hindus felt that the character would promote negative

stereotypes about Hindu religious leaders and tried to get Paramount to cancel the movie. Vocal protester, Rajan Zed, a Hindu chaplain from Nevada, said, “cinema is a powerful medium, and people who are not well versed in Hinduism get misinformed.” Hindu American Foundation board members found it “vulgar, crude ... and tasteless,” but few thought it anti-Hindu or mean-spirited. Most Hindus thought it was harmless, dumb humor, no different than similar satires of other religions, and urged people to just forget about it.

BATTLE OVER CONTROL OF ONE of America’s first Hindu temples ended on July 13, 2008, when the New York State Court of Appeals unanimously validated the original management rules for the Ganesh Temple in Flushing, Queens. The attempt to have elections for temple trustees was thwarted. Under New York Religious Corporations Law, it remains a “Free Church,” governed by a self-perpetuating board.

THE TIRUMALA VENKATESWARA Temple has become the world’s most visited place of worship. With over 60,000 visitors each day, that is 20

million per year. The crowds are nearly double those estimated to visit Vatican City. The numbers are so large that every visitor is given a bar-coded wristband that indicates the time of his or her *darshan* (their time to see and receive blessings from the Deity).

IN JUNE, 2008, A GROUP OF sannyasins met the Governor of Kerala, urging him to direct the government to take action against the attack on ashrams in various parts of the state. Young militants, presumably from communist groups, have violently assaulted several religious institutions.



HINDUISM TODAY was founded on January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927–2001). It is a nonprofit educational activity of Himalayan Academy, with the following purposes: 1. To foster Hindu solidarity as a unity in diversity among all sects

and lineages; 2. To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; 3. To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; 4. To protect, preserve and promote the sacred *Vedas* and the Hindu religion; 5. To nurture and monitor the ongoing spiritual Hindu renaissance; 6. To publish resources for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, photographs, reports on events and by encouraging others.



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IN MY OPINION

Why We Are Illiterate

First-generation American Hindus failed their children by not teaching them about their faith

BY MURALI BALAJI

I AM A 28-YEAR-OLD, SELF-described devout Hindu whose parents moved to the United States 30 years ago. I think I might be one of the last American Hindus who actually does Gayatri mantras every day and reads a chapter of the *Gita* as part of my spiritual salvation. Yet my faith came as a reaction to the racism I faced growing up and my sense that, if I did not seek out Hinduism more, I would lose it from my life altogether.

But I believe I am more the exception than the rule. Many young American Hindus are confused by what it means to follow Hinduism. I’ve spoken with hundreds of young people over the years who admit they have no idea why they go to pujas, and more importantly, what those pujas mean. I have also met those who claim to be “philosophical Hindus,” which is tantamount to knowing a few key concepts from the *Bhagavad Gita* and maybe a rudimentary understanding of the *Ramayana*. I have met others whose interpretation of Hinduism is based on biased Western scholarship. In California, Hindu parents have sued to protect their children from slanted textbooks. However, I’m not so sure that young American Hindus’ ignorance or confusion about Hinduism has to do with institutional media bias. Rather, it starts at home.

Many of us have grown up in households where family customs have been inaccurately linked to Hinduism. More importantly, our parents’ conservatism when it comes to our social practices has been defended as maintaining Hindu culture. Do 9pm curfews have anything to do with our faith? Is socializing with groups of other backgrounds a non-Hindu thing to do? Of course not.

However, I think I speak for a great number of second-generation Hindus when I say that our parents’ unwillingness—or inability—to explain how to practice Hinduism has led to our collective illiteracy about our way of life. Instead of appreciating the beautiful simplicity of Vedic teachings or learning more about the lives



of great Hindu saints, many of us have scorned Hinduism because we have equated it to our parents’ rigid rules.

My message to Indian parents is to take time out and teach your kids about Hinduism. Don’t make it an inaccessible way of life that can only be learned through an understanding of Sanskrit. Make your kids understand

that Hinduism has survived because it has been a positive force for billions of people over thousands of years. If your kids have questions, try to answer them. If you don’t know the answer, get together with your kids to try to find the answer. Believe me, you will alienate your kids from the faith if you merely say, “That’s just how it is.”

As I reflect on my teenage years of rebellion and bouts of rejecting Hinduism, I wish I had had more encouragement to learn more about our way of life. I would have tried to help some of my friends who were raised as Hindus in name only, and as a result, have either become atheists or converted to other faiths. It dawned on me only in my early 20s that much of the way we learned Hinduism was from an external sense. Hinduism, or the very idea of living according to the *Vedas*, comes from within; the rest is mostly superficial.

But these are lessons learned for me and members of my generation. If we raise the next generation in a way that allows them to be comfortable in identifying as Hindus, maybe they won’t face the same kind of cultural ignorance and confusion we experienced. Moreover, they will likely better understand that Hinduism is about more than just wearing “Om” shirts, going to the temple and dropping a couple of bucks in the collection box, lighting candles for Diwali and dousing their friends with colors on Holi.

MURALI BALAJI is a lecturer at Penn State University, a journalist and an author who is active in Philadelphia community organizations. E-mail: murali.balaji@gmail.com

White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) in Texas want kids to believe that Western imperialism was a blessing



BRIEFLY...

IN KERALA, A CONTROVERSY rages over a seventh standard social studies text. The chapter “Life without Religion” has raised opposition from Hindu and Muslim religious leaders in the Indian state. Those objecting allege that the chapter undermines the role of religion and had been deliberately included to propagate the state’s Marxist ideology.

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION Manushi is protesting false charges against its founder, Madhu Kishwar, which they

allege have been brought by corrupt police and gangs that she claims are practicing extortion and abusing Delhi city’s street vendors.

THE HISTORIC SOMNATH TEMPLE in Gujarat is all set to regain its old glory as a golden temple by 2010. The famous temple’s Trust is carving and gold-plating the Sabha Mantap, the place where devotees gather, and will also embed porous Bellastones on the outer structure that will be coated with fungus resistant paint.

Using TV as a Spiritual Tool

Television, like real life, can help us work through our karma, if we approach it in the right way

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

TELEVISION IS A LITTLE LIKE GOD: it's everywhere. Traveling by plane and staying in hotels, you encounter TV at dawn in the hotel's fitness center, then in the breakfast cafe and later at the airport and even on the plane 30,000 feet above the Earth! Settling down that night in your next hotel three thousand miles away, the TV is there; and sometimes it has already been turned on for you! Talk about ubiquitous influences.

A well-researched web article notes that close to 100 percent of the adult population watch some television every day in the media-saturated societies of North America, Western Europe, East Asia and in most Latin American countries. In the rest of the world—with the exception of some African countries and India, where the percentages are 56 percent and 64 percent, respectively—TV is the daily fare of 70 to 85 percent of the adult population.

The best TV shows are viewed all over the world. When my guru, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, visited South Africa in the 1990s, he was advised not to hold events on Wednesday nights because the popular American soap opera "Dallas" was on that night, and everyone would stay home to watch it. When populations around the globe view the same material on television, it unifies the thinking, for better or worse, and thus the actions, of Earth's peoples. Gurudeva observed, "Today, television has become an instrument to convey knowledge and bring the world together, set new standards of living, language, styles of dress and hair, ways of walking, ways of standing, attitudes about people, ethics, morality, political systems, religions and all sorts of other things, from ecology to pornography."

Television, like the fashion world, has its own trends over the decades. There was a time, back in the 60s, when nearly every show was about cowboys and Indians, set in America's Wild, Wild West. Then came the era of quiz shows, like the "\$64,000 Question" and "Truth or Consequences." Around the same time, there was a wave of Carol Burnette and Ed Sullivan type talent shows. Later, TV featured evening dramas: "Dynasty," "Falcon Crest" and a galaxy of others. More recently, humanity has been inundated with stories about detectives, crime scene investigators, lawyers, reality shows and dirty, rotten scoundrels.

Lately, we have a new breed of fiction and nonfiction programming with mystical themes: prescient dreams, immortality and reincarnation, humans with remarkable powers such as reading minds, seeing and speaking to the dead, stopping time, listening to people's thoughts and flying through space and time. It's a fascinating evolution to follow, and I find it encouraging that viewers are interested in these mystical ideas and themes,



interested in the untapped potential of the human mind.

How does significant exposure to television affect us? Is it making us wiser or worldlier? Is it a help or a hindrance to our spiritual progress? The key lies in how we approach it and what we watch. Approached in the right way, TV can be a tool for spiritual progress.

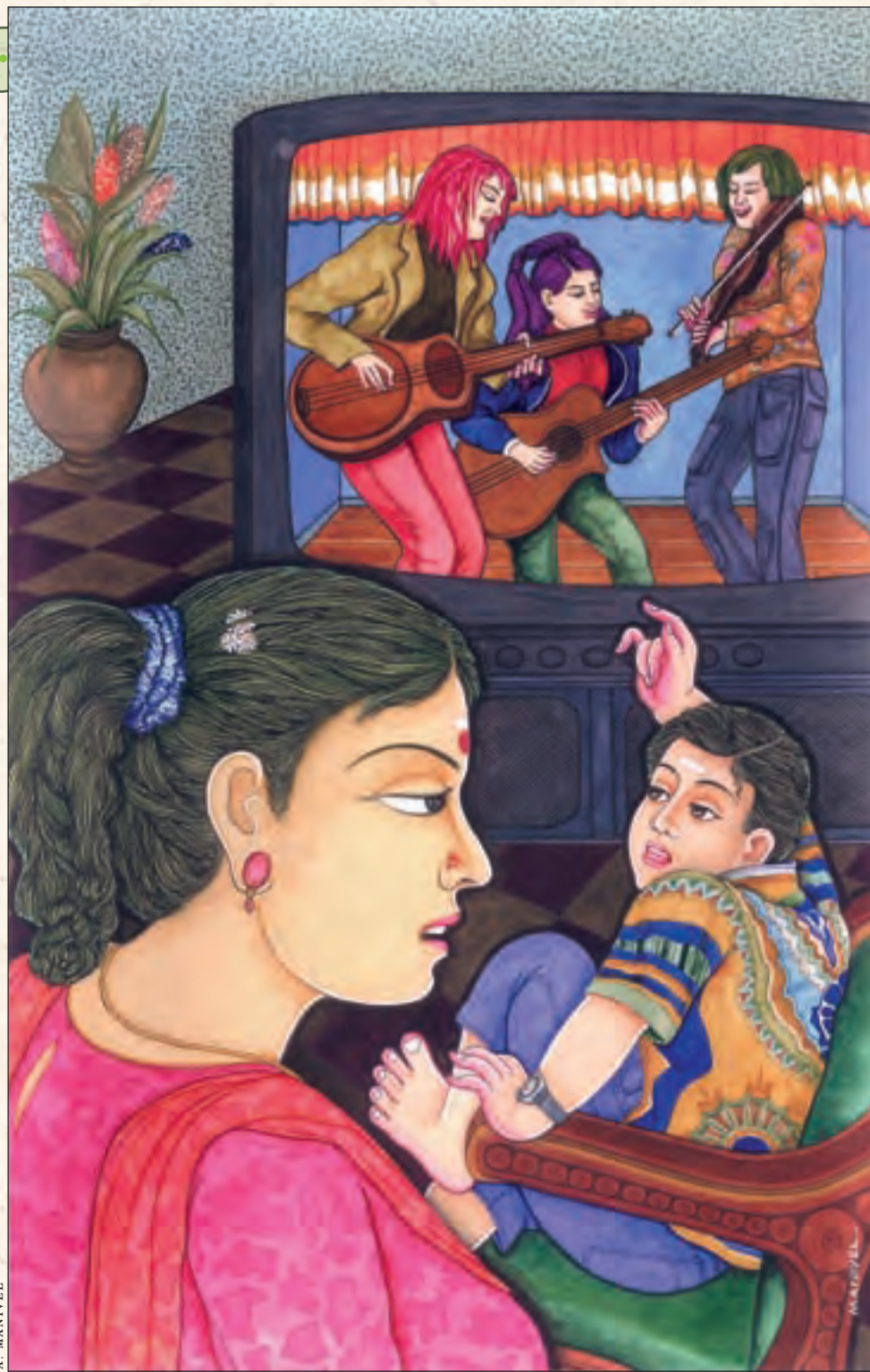
To elucidate this point, let's compare TV to the world. Our Paramaguru, Siva Yogaswami, noted: "The world is an ashram, a training ground for the achievement of moksha, liberation."

Of course, for that to be true for you, you have to make it that way; you have to hold that perspective. What is the world to a care-free, fun-loving high schooler? It's a place to party, kick back and hang out. To an up-and-coming entrepreneur, the world holds the promise of lots of money. That's his focus. Others are focused on fulfilling a profession or perfecting an art. To some, it's all about relationships, making friends, building a family. In short, the world is what we make it. It's not something unto itself that we all look at the same way.

To the practicing, mystically awakened Hindu, the world is fundamentally a place to make spiritual progress, where we face our karma and grow from experience. Karma normally comes to us through individuals or groups of people. It is not always pleasant. Situations don't always work out fairly. Sometimes we are mistreated. Philosophically, we know that this is the result of our *prarabdha* karmas. How we face such situations is crucial. The instinctive response is to retaliate: "This person is mistreating me, so I'm going to mistreat him in the same way." But if we do retaliate, we create new negative karma which will return to us as painful experiences in the future. That is not spiritual progress.

As I explained in our "Karma Management" Insight (Oct/Nov/Dec, 2002), the goal is 1) to not retaliate; 2) instead, accept the karma that comes to us as our own creation; and 3) ideally, forgive and forget the whole event, rather than holding onto it and letting it gnaw at us on the inside. When we successfully handle a karma according to these three principles, we make spiritual progress. We are looking at the world as an ashram.

Gurudeva explained this beautifully: "Hindus know that the object of life is to go through our experiences joyously and kindly,



always forgiving and compassionately understanding, thus avoiding making unseemly *kriyamana* karmas in the current life which, if enough were accumulated and added to the karmas we did not bring into this life, would bring us back into another birth, and the process would start all over again."

Like living in the world in the right spirit, viewing television from the correct perspective can help us face and manage our karma. As Gurudeva noted, "Television has afforded us the ability to work through our karmas more quickly than we could in the agricultural age. On TV, the 'other people' who play our past experiences back to us, for us to understand in hindsight, are actors and actresses, newscasters and the people in the news

TV as education: A Hindu mom takes time to talk with her son about the rock music program he is viewing so he understands the nature of the music and the lifestyle and values it promotes

they broadcast. Hindus know nothing can happen, physically, mentally or emotionally, but that it is seeded in our *prarabdha* karmas, the action-reaction patterns brought with us to this birth. Therefore, on the positive side, we look at television as a tool for karmic cleansing. The great boon that television has given humanity, which is especially appreciated by Hindus, is that we can soften our *prarabdha* karmas quickly by analyzing, forgiving and compassionately understanding the happenings on the screen, as our past is portrayed before us, and as we work with our nerve system, which laughs and cries, resents, reacts to and avoids experiences on the TV."

That is a powerful idea: that television is a tool for karmic cleansing. It's all in our approach, our attitude, toward it. Specifically, television helps soften our karmas. The karma still comes to us, but we have prepared ourselves to receive it by watching similar situations on television and gaining an understanding the nature of that kind of action and reaction. We have "pre-lived" it through the actors and actresses. Thus, when the karma comes, we don't react as strongly, or it comes to us in a less disruptive way. We handle it with less emotion and more wisdom, less reaction and more understanding.

Parents can help their children learn to use television to increase spirituality by watching programs together and discussing them afterwards. Talk about the various characters, their actions and the consequences of those actions. A good perspective to convey is that "All men are your teachers. Some teach you what to do, and others teach you what not to do." Oftentimes on today's television programs the principles of reincarnation and karma are presented in one form or another. This can be pointed out and discussed to see how accurately the concept was presented. There's even a popular comedy about karma, called "My Name Is Earl," which tells of a man working hilariously to resolve his past misdeeds. Mystical practices, which are common in recent shows, such as being able to read other's thoughts or seeing the future in a dream, are also useful to talk about with children, drawing out lessons to be learned.

Before the widespread viewing of television, storytelling was a common form of entertainment. Gurudeva describes this shift: "Television at its best is storytelling. We used to sit around and tell stories. The best storyteller, who could paint pictures in people's minds, was the most popular person in town. In every country, at every point in time, humans have sat down and been entertained, and entertainers have stood up and entertained them."

The advantage of storytelling is that the teller or reader of the story can choose tales with strong dharmic themes and avoid those with adharmic ones. With television, while you do have the choice of what shows to watch, the themes and plots are in the hands of the writers and producers, who come from all sorts of backgrounds. So, it can take some creativity on your part to find ways to view television—personally and with your children—so that it strengthens you spiritually, makes you wiser rather than worldlier.

Definitely, we don't want to watch TV too much. Gurudeva's advice is: "Siva's devotees may watch television and other media for recreation and to keep informed about the world, limiting viewing to about two hours a day. They avoid nudity, foul language, crudeness and excessive violence.... Television can be very entertaining and helpful, or it can be insidiously detrimental, depending on how it is used. Therefore, fortify your mind with a thorough understanding of what you are watching."

LETTERS

Social Change

I HAVE ENJOYED READING HINDUISM TODAY since it was in newspaper format. This publication is a great service provided by the swamis and reporters. The article "Social Change Through Education" (Jul/Aug/Sep, 2008) is an excellent piece of positive news not covered by any other publication. Education is the real treasure that we can pass on to the future generations. I would like to bring your attention to another organization doing a great job in providing education to very poor children of tribal villages of India: Ekal Vidyalyaya Foundation. They have started more than 24,000 schools that teach more than 720,000 students all over India.

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Sri Madhva's Challenge

MR. ARMSTRONG'S ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE and philosophy of Sri Madhvacharya ("Difference Is Real," Jul/Aug/Sep, 2008) was a valuable contribution. Madhva's challenge to the orthodoxy of his time was nothing less than a revolution, and it merits such modern explication. The strictly biographical aspects of the article, however, were lacking in one respect: they relied too much on purported supernatural acts attributed to the great guru. While I would not presume to question the truth of such accounts, I feel such emphasis does a disservice to the teachings of Madhva. His thought and theology stand on their own. It is devotion to the path of *jnana* yoga that gives our great teachers such prestige, not apocryphal stories about their mundane lives. Perhaps future explorations of the great philosophers will detail the intellectual processes and debating techniques they used in their times.

GOUTHAM GANESAN
CHANDLER, ARIZONA, USA

I READ WITH INTEREST JEFFREY ARMSTRONG'S article, in which he describes in detail the interpretation of Vedanta as propounded by Madhvacharya, using the philosophy of dualism. There are at least two other interpretations of Vedanta. One is qualified non-dualism, as propounded by Ramanujacharya, and the other is non-dualism, as propounded by Shankaracharya. Dualism insists that the Lord and his devotee are two distinct entities. Qualified non-dualism claims that the devotee is a part of the whole, the Lord. Non-dualism thunders that the Lord and His devotee are non-different in that the devotee experiences himself as the whole. When man identifies with his body, dualism seems to make sense. When he identifies with his mind and intellect, in-

stead of his body, qualified non-dualism appears to be correct. When he identifies with his soul, non-dualism is the only philosophy that makes sense. All three philosophies are correct in their own right, and they differ from each other only because of the difference in their points of reference. The three philosophies are beautifully described in the *Ramayana* when Hanuman, the greatest devotee of Lord Rama, explains his relationship with Him by saying, "O Lord, at moments when I am steeped in my body consciousness, I am Thy slave; when I identify with my mind and intellect, I am a part of Thee; but when I identify with my soul, my true Self, I am Thyself!" Thus, our relationship with Brahman can be explained in three different ways according to our state of self-consciousness. The three schools of thought complement, rather than compete with or contradict, each other.

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HPI Is Welcome

HINDU PRESS INTERNATIONAL IS A WELCOME step in the interest of Hindus all over the world. May it grow from strength to strength to unite the Hindus of the world to save themselves from the clash of civilization ensuing between the two warring monotheistic religions.

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Crossing the Ocean

RESPONDING TO THE ARTICLE "CROSSING the Ocean" (Jul/Aug/Sep, 2008), I feel that the secret to Hinduism's purity in the non-Indian world is to remain loyal to the subtle as versus the gross body. While remaining in the subtle and having the understanding of the omnipresent light of God, one can not only escape gross influences but do a positive service to the environment in whatever country one may be found. Christian Science is sometimes called the "Vedanta of the West." I recall a story, from that tradition, of a little girl of six who went to visit her friend and was told by the friend's mother that she could not come in because the friend was sick, and so she might get sick if they came in contact. The little girl, steeped in the absolute goodness and healing power of God, was puzzled. When she came home to her mother, she asked, "Why should I get sick from my friend? Why shouldn't she get well from me instead?"

It is in the nature of the Deity to be pure, however I have found that when I am in the awareness of a gross sense of body, it is difficult to be aware of this purity. The Hindu

religion has a very good understanding of the subtle body, which has been of great help to me personally. The Western religions tend to identify man with the gross body. It is this pervasive feeling of identification with the gross rather than the subtle which can be eliminated by a period of one-pointed inward awareness of the subtle qualities and divine light. The need for a retreat for anyone undergoing a great deal of outer activity is evident, because even if we are trying to do good, it seems inevitable that some of the sense of non-good which one is trying to overcome must creep in. Since the major Hindu scriptures do not prohibit travel, I would recommend that there be a period of retreat to re-establish the sense of the subtle nature and of good. The length of this period should be left to the individual's judgment.

MARY GASKILL
CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND, USA

The Bane of Ritalin Addiction

AS A SMALL CHILD IN SCHOOL, I HAD A speech impediment. Other children picked on me. I was very disruptive, and this stood out to the teachers. When I was in seventh grade, a school guidance counselor, trained to spot children with Attention Deficit Disorder, put her label on me and told my parents that I needed to see a child psychiatrist and be put on Ritalin. I became addicted to this horrendous drug, and that led to a life of addiction to other dangerous amphetamine drugs. Years later, while in a drug rehabilitation center, I was counseled by another therapist who discovered that I was not, in fact, mentally ill, and that my disruptive behavior in school was a reaction to having been abused as a young child. I never recovered from having been misdiagnosed with ADD and mistreated with dangerous controlled substances like Ritalin, Adderall and Dexedrine. I am now serving a life sentence for murder, with no hope of ever being free again. Only through learning about and practicing Sanatana Dharma and the eight limbs of yoga have I turned my life from misery and pain into bliss. I beg parents, please don't let people with all those letters after their names convince you that your child has ADD or ADHD. If your child is misbehaving, talk to the child, find out what is really bothering him or her, and you will find that your child does not need poison to modify his or her behavior. All children need is a lot of love and understanding.

DALE BURKE
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✓ In his talk at the 2006 TED Conference in Monterey, California, Sir Ken Robinson recounted a thought-provoking story from the 1930s about Gillian Lynne, who as a

child was brought to a doctor because she couldn't sit still. If it had been decades later, she would likely have been labeled with ADHD and put on medication to calm her down. Instead, the doctor told her parents to take her to dance school. She became one of the most celebrated dancers and choreographers of the twentieth century. Hear his inspiring and humorous talk at www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/66 (story of Gillian Lynne begins at 15:08).

Pursue Dharmic Activities

THERE IS A BEAUTIFUL VERSE IN THE THIRD chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* which says, "It is better to do one's own duty, *svadharma*, though we may not be successful, than to do the duty of another, *paradharma*. It is better to die doing *svadharma*, for *paradharma* is filled with fear." How apt this is in today's world. Parents push their children into what they consider is best for them. If a father is in business, he may push his children into the business, assuming that it would be profitable and comfortable for them. Youngsters themselves may be dazzled with a lucrative career, such as IT, which gives them high pay at a young age, and pursue it without considering whether they have the aptitude for that job. Additionally, society gives preference to careers like medicine and engineering and exhibits prejudice against other careers, declaring them less demanding or profitable. Whatever may be the reason to pursue an activity which does not appeal to one's interests, it may be disastrous in the long run. However successful one might be in the par-

adharmic activity, ultimately frustration sets in. A person might be earning huge amounts of money, may have a high position, but in the end he will lose interest and become disappointed. There have been countless cases where people with lucrative careers have quit their jobs to pursue something else, such as working for the underprivileged. The reason is obvious. Working against one's basic nature creates mental agitations. It is a crime to take up a path out of pressure, because, though you may be successful, sooner or later stress creeps in. So, it becomes our bounden duty and responsibility to identify our interests and pursue them. Initially we may not be successful, but at least we will have the peace of mind and satisfaction in having pursued what we want. Perfection is achieved through *svadharma* activity. Listening to M.S. Subbulakshmi reciting devotional songs, even foreigners were moved—such was the passion and devotion in her songs, that it crossed all barriers of language. M.S. Subbulakshmi had a passion to sing and obviously she loved it. Such is the power of an activity filled with passion that an observer himself will be moved and the work will then assume the form of worship.

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Yoga Renamed Is Still Hindu

I APPRECIATE THE ARTICLE "YOGA Renamed Is Still Hindu" (Jan/Feb/Mar, 2006). It is very informative and useful in terms of dealing with this subject with Christians.

There is one statement in the article, however, that is untrue. While the quote from Cardinal Poupard is correct, the 2003 document, "A Christian Reflection on the 'New Age,'" says no such thing as to permit Catholics to practice the New Age or yoga, as your article suggests. The document may be found here: www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20030203_new-age_en.html

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Corrections

✓ Shana Dressler is Jewish, not Christian, as misstated in "Discovering Ganesh" (Jul/Aug/Sep, 2008).

✓ It was incorrectly reported in "Social Change Through Education" (Jul/Aug/Sep, 2008) that the Kolam Charitable Foundation pays volunteers \$25 per day. Volunteers actually pay \$25 per day for room and board when working at the Foundation's school.

Letters with writer's name, address and daytime phone number should be sent to:

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or e-mailed to: letters@hindu.org

Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of HINDUISM TODAY.
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Building Proud, Self-confident Youth

Help us inspire them today and in the future

IT TOOK YEARS OF KNOWING modest Vijay Pallod for us to gradually discover the many good works he has been involved in. He has spent his life espousing or initiating worthy causes, such as disaster relief and working with youth, "finding ways to inspire them to be good Hindus." To this end, he has tirelessly set up summer camps and seminars for them, offered counseling and provided guidance with their service projects, to name a few of his activities.

Vijay, a financial controller in Houston, Texas, came from India to the US in 1980—and, oh yes, he has been reading HINDUISM TODAY for 20 years. "The magazine has done much for me personally, for my family and my work," he



"I just want them to appreciate what they have." Vijay and Mrs. Pallod with their three children. Every year, the entire family helps manage Houston's Hindu Youth Summer camp.

explains. "It has kept me motivated to remain high-minded, disciplined and less externalized. It has helped me raise my children. While they were young, I read articles to them, and their mother and I have gained so much knowledge and

insight from HINDUISM TODAY that we could all along give good answers to their questions, and those of the youth we work with, too. It has made a great difference—and made us all proud of our faith, and who we are."

Vijay has generously supported HINDUISM TODAY over the years and recently gave \$1,000 to the Production Fund, which is a part of Hindu Heritage Endowment. "I wanted to help," he said, "so the magazine can continue giving youth the tools they need to grow up proud and self-confident."

If you feel inspired to support Hindu youth now and in the future, please

consider donating to the Hinduism Today Production Fund. Contact us to receive our Production Fund e-newsletter: 808-822-3012 ext.244
hhe@hindu.org
www.hheonline.org/ht/plannedgiving/

QUOTES & QUIPS

The secret of the true life is to remain still in the midst of activity and vibrantly awake while in meditation.

Dada Vaswani, Sindhi spiritual leader, head of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission and a nonagenarian

In my silence, I experience one vast garden, spread out through the universe. All plants, all human beings, all higher devas are about it in various ways and each has his own uniqueness and beauty. Their presence and variety give me great delight. Every one of you adds in a special way to the glory of this garden.” **Sri Anandamayi Ma**, (1896-1982), *Bengali mystic*

Man needs a guru. But a man must have faith in the guru's words. He succeeds in spiritual life by looking on his guru as God Himself. Therefore the Vaishnavas speak of guru, Krishna

and Vishnu equally. **Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa** (1836-1886)

Because you think I am capable of loving or despising you, you cannot know who I am. **Satguru Yogaswami** (1872-1964), *Sri Lanka's most revered contemporary mystic*

Humility is a strange thing. The minute you think you have got it, you have lost it. **Swami Chinmayananda** (1916-1993), *founder of the Chinmaya Mission*

Discipline your speech. Speak the truth at all costs. Speak little. Speak

sweetly. Always utter encouraging words. Never condemn, criticize or discourage. Do not raise your voice and shout at little children or subordinates. **Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh** (1887-1963)

We want to claim that which we already are. You are already the Self. You are just not aware of it. Do not put it off based upon some concept that we are not ready, we are not worthy, we need more of this or that. None of those principles apply when it comes to Self-realization. **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami**, *publisher of HINDUISM TODAY*

Arise, awake! Stop not till the goal is reached. **Swami Vivekananda** (1863-1902), *disciple of Sri Ramakrishna*

How do you describe the constantly cheerful person? Grinning from year to year! *Anonymous*

If today is a typical day on planet Earth, we will lose 116 square miles of rainforest—an acre per second. Forty to a hundred species will disappear. Today, human population will increase by 250,000 and we will add 15 million tons of carbon to the atmosphere. By tonight, Earth will be a little hotter, its waters more acidic, and the fabric of life more threadbare. **David Orr**, *American environmentalist, in a book published in 1991. If he said it today, the numbers would be 312 square miles, 130 species, 220,000 people and 60 million tons of carbon*

Attach yourself to Him who is free from all attachments. Bind yourself to that bond so all other bonds may be broken. **Tirukkural 350**

When you are going about any action,

Frank and Ernest



remind yourself of its nature. Picture to yourself the things which usually happen in that action. Be prepared. Then, keep your own mind in an adequate state. For thus, if any hindrance arises, you will say, “It was not only to do this action that I desired, but to keep my mind in a state I decided; and I shall keep it only if I allow no thing to bother me.” **Epictetus**, (55-135 CE) *Greek philosopher of the stoic school*

What is the most exclusive club in the world? The Advaita Club. It has only one member. *Anonymous*

It is impossible for me to reconcile with the idea of conversion as it happens to-

day. It is an error and perhaps the greatest impediment to the world's progress toward peace. Why should a Christian want to convert a Hindu? Why should he not be satisfied if the Hindu is a good or godly man? **Mahatma Gandhi** (1869-1948)

As the bee takes the essence of a flower and flies away without destroying its beauty and perfume, so let the sage wander in this life. **Dhammapada**, 50

A woman's guess is much more accurate than a man's certainty. **Rudyard Kipling**, (1865-1936), *English writer and poet*

How can one realize that which alone is

real? All we need to do is to give up our habit of regarding as real that which is unreal. Reality alone will remain, and we will be That. **Sri Ramana Maharishi** (1879-1950), *South Indian mystic*

In the philosophies of the Orient, the inner mind is often depicted as the lotus flower. That is what the mind would look like if you could see the mind. We can look at things on the material plane. The ugly things tell us how ugly the mind can become. But when we look at the beautiful creations of nature, we see how lovely the mind can be. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927-2001), *founder of HINDUISM TODAY*

DID YOU KNOW?

Seven Steps for Marriage

A HINDU WEDDING IS AN ORNATE festivity, a ritual that encompasses the essence of a married life. In the ceremony, one finds the values which should be followed to lead a happy life. A sacred fire serves as a channel for the Gods to witness and bless the marriage. Around that fire, the couple takes seven steps together that represent victory over the challenges they will face in life.

The first step is taken to earn and provide a living for their household. The second step is taken to build physical, mental and spiritual powers and to lead a healthy lifestyle. The third step is taken to earn and increase their wealth by righteous and proper means. The fourth step is taken to acquire knowledge, happiness

and harmony by mutual love, respect, understanding and faith. The fifth step is taken to have children for whom they will be responsible, all of them healthy, righteous and brave. The sixth step is taken for self-control and longevity. The seventh step is taken to be true to each other, loyal and remain life-long companions by this wedlock.



BASICS OF HINDUISM

Hinduism's Three Pillars: Temples

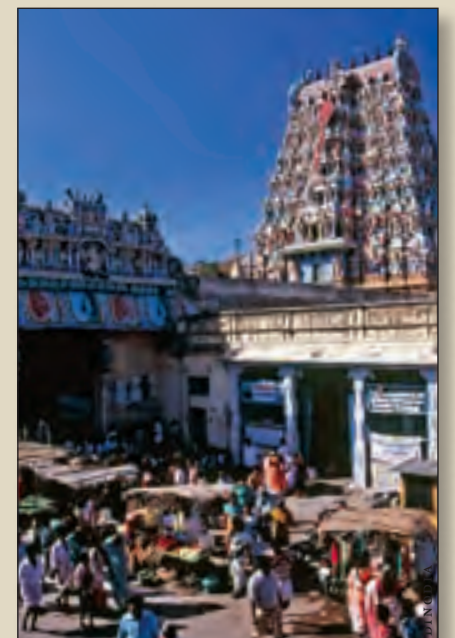
THE THREE PILLARS OF HINDUISM are the temples, the scriptures and the satgurus. All these we revere, for they sustain and preserve the ancient wisdom. If any two were to disappear, Hinduism would come back from the third, as perfect as it ever was.

Here we describe the first pillar. **Hindu temples** are esteemed as God's home and consecrated abode. In the temple we draw close to God and find a refuge from the world. His grace, permeating everywhere, is most easily known within the precincts of the temple. It is in the purified milieu of the temple that the

three worlds commune most perfectly, that devotees can establish harmony with inner-plane spiritual beings.

When the spiritual energy, shakti, invoked by the puja permeates the inner shrine and floods out to the world, Hindus know they are in a most holy place where God and the Gods commune with them. Within most Hindu temples are rooms, sanctums and shrines for the many Gods and saints of a particular Hindu tradition.

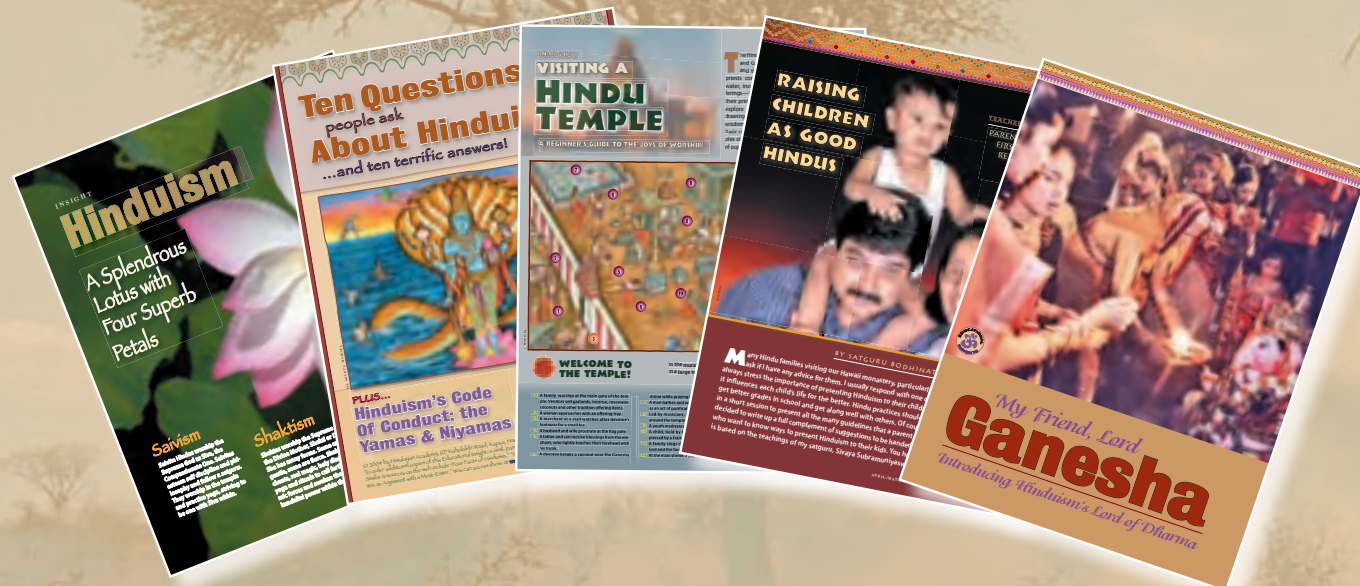
When properly consecrated, the temple becomes a place from where God sends out His divine rays to bless the world.





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FROM THE AGAMAS

The Perfect Spiritual Apprentice

Lord Vishnu describes the ideal qualities of a worthy student

SATVATA SAMHITA IS THE FIRST OF 108 samhitas, or texts, comprising the Pancharatra Agama. The following is drawn from chapter 22 on the "Characteristics of the Disciple." It has been edited for readability from Dr. Apte's near literal English translation of the Sanskrit.

THE SAGE SHANKARSHANA SAID, "O GOD! I WISH TO know the distinguishing characteristics of the apprentice (or beginning) disciple."

The Venerable Lord Vasudeva (Vishnu) replied: He is one who is endowed with wealth, who absorbs faith, who is talented, who holds fast to his vows and speaks only what is true. He is the Lord's devotee. He consumes a moderate diet, refrains from attachment and is dedicated to the adoration of the preceptor. He is steady of mind, not absent-minded. He is born into a Vaishnava family who are true devotees. He is brought up with the proper sacraments and carefully made eligible at a young age by his mother and father, free from unholy admixtures of faith. He is restrained in mind and wary of the post-death plight. He aspires to be in the company of saints. He is avid in reading the scriptures and collects them constantly.

He is set on the path of righteous people who are absorbed in auspicious deeds. He has integrity, forgiveness, courage and compassion. He favors virtuous people. His clothing is spotless. He speaks with endearing language and bears a pleasant countenance. He does not covet others' money and is free from passion toward other's wives. He has attained a state of proper spiritual discrimination. He may belong to any of the social orders: martial, commercial or menial. He is not addicted to liquor or meat. He is deeply absorbed in self-study, content and energetic. He avoids eating leftover food. He bears the discus mark [of Lord Vishnu] branded on his body. He avoids pride and jealousy; hence he is great. He is ever ready to perform the ceremonies honoring Gods and ancestors.

He is free from hypocrisy. He is affectionate to his pious kinsmen and faithful to his mother and father. He keeps promises. He is fearless. He is humble. He sets a high moral standard for himself. His intentions are always good. He is singularly interested in the upliftment of his family dynasty.

He is blessed by the sight of the mantra within the mandala design, just as he is blessed by the glance of the guru. Having received such blessing, the disciple concludes, "Now I have become one whose mission is fulfilled." From that time onward, he desires to learn the proper interpretation of the scriptures through the lessons given by his well-pleased preceptor. After listening to those lessons, he meditates on their meaning, seated alone in a secluded place.

Such a disciple does not become arrogant, even though he is taught perfectly. He does not teach others out of greed or any selfish interest. He does not force a particular interpretation of a scripture, but tranquilly seeks unbiased insight, day and night. He maintains his serenity even when attacked in an assembly of scholars. Nor



Lord Vishnu: His worship in temples is governed by the Pancharatra Agama or the Vaikasana Agama, according to the tradition of the particular temple

does he presume, at that moment, to think, "I shall decisively beat the debaters."

He should prostrate at the feet of elders when so instructed by his teacher. He should not express so much curiosity that they would be annoyed. Having pleased them properly, he may ask about what he has not understood or has forgotten. When encouraged by the elders, he may offer his own viewpoint in a humble manner. The disciple with these inherent characteristics is considered by the teachers as a *samayi*, an apprentice. He should then pray to God and his preceptor to attain the second status, *putraka*, or most loved son.

DR. PRABHAKAR P. APTE translated this Agama as part of a project by the Academy of Sanskrit Research, Melkote, inspired by Sampathkumar Ramanuja Jeeyar Swami. The project was funded by a grant from the Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam and published in 2005. To order the book, e-mail K.P. Umaphy, sastra1000@yahoo.com.

The Vedas and Agamas are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, *shruti*, of Hinduism, likened to the Torah (1200 BCE), Bible New Testament (100 CE), Koran (630 CE) or Zend Avesta (600 BCE). There are two principal Vaishnavite Agamas, the Pancharatra and Vaikhanasa. Dr. Apte dates the Satvata Samhita of Pancharatra Agama between 300 and 500ce.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Navaratri

In the festival of “Nine Nights,”
Hindus across the globe worship
the feminine form of the Supreme

Return to formlessness: Devotees carry
a murti of Durga to be immersed in the
Ganga river on the last day of Navaratri





NO OTHER MAJOR RELIGION OF THE world acknowledges God as part female, or is willing to fully depict Her as the Goddess. But for Hindus, the Goddess, called Shakti, is the emanating power, the essence and the creative manifestation of the Supreme Being, who is beyond opposites. This unique broadness of Hinduism makes Navaratri the world's greatest festival dedicated to the Goddess. This yearly festival is celebrated for nine or ten days in the lunar month of Ashvina (September-October). Hindus observe this festival in a wide variety of ways, depending on their region, local history and family influences.

Millions of Hindu women consider Navaratri each year's primary festival, the one they can most deeply connect to. Many see it as a way to commune with their own feminine divinity. A widespread practice honors the Goddess in every woman by inviting young girls to the family's home, feeding them and offering new clothes. Soumya Sitaraman, a specialist in Hindu festivals and author of *Follow the Hindu Moon*, teaches how this should be done. "To make Navaratri an affirmation of femininity, invite and honor girls between the ages of two and twelve. A respected married woman

can be chosen, too. Begin by honoring the youngest one on the first day as if she was the Goddess. She is addressed only by the Goddess' name, eats prasadam first and is given an aromatic bath and a new dress. On the second day, the second youngest should be honored, and so on. Some families might alternatively choose to venerate all girls at the same time, on the last night."

During the festival, women are ready to exercise their share of restraint to get closer to the Divine by performing *tapas* and selfless acts. Author Madhur Jaffrey explains, "Navaratri is a time to present to the Goddess our silent requests. This is not done crudely, but properly. We pray morning and evening, the women fast, and the poor in our neighborhood are given food and cooking pots. We offer magnificent food to Goddess Parvati and only after She eats we discreetly whisper our requests."

Navaratri's common practices

Sprouting seeds: In a ritual performed throughout India, Hindus begin the observances with the sprouting of seeds. This is called *pratipada* in the South and *ghatasthapana* in the North. In this ceremony, an earthen or silver pitcher, or *kumbha*, is filled with water and barley seeds. The vessel is

placed in the shrine room or some other honored place in the home, where the seeds will sprout over the next nine days. It is a green exuberance that displays the fertility power of the Goddess and brings blessings for a bountiful crop. A traditional Deity *kumbha* is also prepared. This is an ornate brass pot filled with water, herbs and metals, with mango leaves and a coconut on top. The *kumbha* is set up to invoke the Goddess and all the devas during the festival period. Pandit Ramesh Chandra Kaushik, chief priest of the Durga Temple in Moti Nagar, Delhi, explains, "The *kumbha* is established while invoking the blessings of all the 330 million devas (angels). This *kumbha* is supposed to symbolically have all of these devas in it." With these preparations in place, the celebration of Navaratri then officially begins, with puja to Lord Ganesha and offerings to the *kumbha*.

Tool blessing: Another ceremony associated with the festival across most of India is the *ayudha puja*, the blessing of the tools of one's trade. At dawn on the ninth day (usually) of Navaratri, selected tools, instruments, utensils and devices used by a worker or artist are ceremoniously placed at the feet of the Goddess and quietly worshiped with prayers and flowers. The items remain at

the Goddess' feet until a puja is performed. Until that happens and the items are returned with blessings, no studies, work or performances should happen.

The *ayudha puja* can be simple, an offering of cooked rice, fruits, flowers and an *arati* that is silent except for the ringing of a bell. A more elaborate form is to draw a *kolam* and place a Sarasvati *murti* in the center, with all the tools touching the *kolam*'s lines.

No kind of instrument or tool is excluded from the blessings of the Goddess. A tailor will bless his sewing machine and a driver his vehicle. Shopkeepers usually decorate and bless their whole store, including the cash register.

Vaishnavites have also adopted the *ayudha puja*. On the same date, they ritually place tools and weapons at the feet of Lord Rama for His blessings. Author Madhur Jaffrey recounts in her book on the traditional stories of India, *Seasons of Splendor*, "At this festival, every family worships the 'weapons of its trade.' My mother would first set up a statue of the good King Ram in our prayer room, properly garlanded with a fresh marigold necklace. Under the statue, where some people arranged guns and swords, my mother arranged pens, pencils, ink and

Devotion to the Mother Divine

(Counterclockwise from upper left) A golden murti of the Goddess in West Bengal; in Tamil Nadu, devotees take Shakti in a procession to the sea; devotees wait their turn to have darshan at the Jandhewalan Durga Temple in Delhi; women carry clay pots with barley seeds that have sprouted during the nine days of Navaratri





paper. Those were the weapons of our family. As far back as 1,500 years, my ancestors made their living writing, not fighting.”

The Indian army takes the day, which they call *shastra puja*, to bless real weapons. Retired Lieutenant Colonial N. C. Guha of Delhi reported in an article in the Ramakrishna Mission magazine, *Vedanta Kesari*: “Within the Garhwal Rifles, Vijay Dashami or Dussehra is the religious event of the year. The 25,000 soldiers of Garhwal Rifles fully observe the festival for ten days, beginning with the *ghatastahpana* ceremony at the unit temple. On the ninth day is *shastra puja*, during which all the weapons of the unit armory are decorated with flowers and displayed in a square fashion in the center of the parade ground.”

Beginning of learning: A key *sanskara*, or rite of passage, for children ages three to five is performed on this day across India. It is the *vidyarambha*, literally “beginning of knowledge,” which marks the start of a child’s formal education. The worship begins with an elder or priest taking the child’s index finger and writing “Om Sri Ganapataye Namah” in sand or uncooked rice. If the child is old enough, he or she writes the letter “A” on the rice as well. Then, using a gold ring dipped in honey, he gently touches the child’s tongue with a motion in the shape of the letter “A.” Beautiful marks of auspiciousness made with sacred substances are placed on the books, and usually a priest will perform the ceremony

Ma Durga



in the presence of the whole family. Preceptors, wise men and gurus are also revered on this day as embodiments of Sarasvati’s knowledge. They receive many visitors and *dakshina*, monetary offerings.

It is a widely held belief, especially in South India, that a proper blessing on this day will ensure lifelong success in a child’s study and career. Parents, therefore, make sure that the Goddess’ goodwill is properly invoked. Some pilgrimage to distant temples with their sons and daughters to beseech Her grace.

Vijayadashami: On the tenth day, Vijayadashami (“tenth day victory”) the festival culminates in the triumph of the Goddesses over the demon Mahishasura. For this day, the place to be is **Karnataka**, specifically Mysore, for that is where the victory is said to have occurred. The city takes its very name after Mahishasura and has a temple dedicated to him. Recently a gigantic statue of the demon was built near the temple of Durga on the city’s Chamundi Hill. Mysore is noted for its magnificent elephant processions during Navaratri.

There is a specific explanation of Vijayadashami associated with Karnataka. It is attributed to the story in the *Mahabharata* of the Pandavas’ 14-year exile in disguise—which is also likely related to the military tradition of *shastra puja*. Discretion in exile was indispensable, so the Pandavas stored their many divine and distinctive weapons under a *shami* tree in Karnataka during

Amma Lakshmi



(Counter-clockwise from upper left) Durga on Her vahana, the lion; a devotee performs arati to Durga on a street in Bangladesh; a murti of Durga, worshiped as the mighty Kali; devotees in West Bengal immerse sprouted seeds into the waters in honor of the Goddess; Lakshmi sits on a lotus and holds grains, bestowing abundance



the tenth day of Navaratri. They prayed to Durga, asking Her to protect their weapons, and returned at the end of one year to find them intact. On that same day, they went forth to defeat their enemies, adding their success to the celebrations of the Goddess' victory. Today people exchange *shami* (*Mimosa suma*) leaves and on this auspicious date to wish each other a victorious life.

Navaratri's regional flavors

The seed-sprouting ceremony, tool blessing, beginning of learning and Vijayadashami are observed over most of India. Regional variations abound, from South India to Nepal.

South India: Here the Goddess is worshipped in three forms. During the first three nights, Durga is revered, then Lakshmi on the fourth, fifth and sixth nights, and finally Sarasvati until the ninth night.

Durga (meaning "invincible" in Sanskrit) is the epitome of strength, courage and ferocity. Her devotees approach Her—sometimes with difficult penances—for those qualities and for the protection She bestows.

A more gentle worship is observed for Lakshmi. Also called also Annapurna, "Giver of food," Lakshmi is the Goddess of abundance, wealth and comfort. She is the ever-giving mother, worshiped for well being and prosperity. A traditional way of invoking Her is chanting the *Samputita Sri Suktam*. In Her honor, food is prepared and offered to neighbors and all who visit, thus strengthening community ties. On the full-moon night following Navaratri, it is believed Lakshmi Herself visits each home and replenishes family wealth. In Saivite areas, Parvati is worshiped on these days instead of Lakshmi, with an emphasis on the motherly aspect of the Goddess. Otherwise,



S. RAJAM

Sri Sarasvati



HINDUISM TODAY



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the devotional practices are similar.

The last three days of Navaratri exalt Sarasvati, the form of Shakti personifying wisdom, arts and beauty. Her name literally means "flowing one," a reference to thoughts, words, music and the Sarasvati River. The evenings of Her worship are marked with melodic bhajans. The musicians select challenging pieces and play their best in order to earn the Goddess' blessings for the coming year.

Mystically, Sarasvati is believed to be the keeper of the powerful Gayatri Mantra, which is chanted during the festival to invoke Her supreme blessings. Devotees meditate for days on this mantra alone, as it is considered the door to divine wisdom.

Kerala's Ma Amritanandamayi explains, "At one level, Navaratri signifies the progress of the spiritual aspirant. During this spiritual journey, the aspirant has to pass three stages personified by instinctive Durga, motherly Lakshmi and finally wise Sarasvati. Then, he or she enters into the realm of the infinite, wherein one realizes one's Self."

Families in **Tamil Nadu** traditionally prepare in their homes a *kolu*, an exhibition of small dolls and figurines on a stepped, decorated shelf (see photo on page 28). At least one *murti* of Shakti must be present, as

well as wooden figurines of a boy and a girl together, called *marapachi*, to invoke auspicious marriages. Almost any small item may be included on the *kolu*, so almost all the small artifacts from around the house find their way there.

Author Soumya Sitaraman writes, "A *kolu* is a well-planned occasion. People will often print and send cards inviting family and friends to come see their *kolu*. This results in new friendships and stronger relationships. Navaratri evenings are a bustle of rustling silk, twinkling jewelry and laughter. Women are very particular about their attire and go visiting, hopping in a logical sequence, every house they are invited to." Daughters of marrying age accompany their mothers on the visits, as this is an auspicious opportunity for match making. The *kolu* is also celebrated in Andhra Pradesh and the parts of Kerala bordering Tamil Nadu.

North India: In the North, Navaratri is commonly called Durga Puja. While the South celebrates three Goddesses as different aspects of the Supreme Mother, in the North, Durga is regarded as the Mother Herself, and all other Goddesses are Her manifestations.

The practices and the ways of worshiping are almost identical. However, the names

and stories underlying the festival's rites differ, often incorporating strong Shakta influences or elements of the *Ramayana*. The worship of Durga is the year's largest Hindu festival in many northern states, as it is in Nepal and Bhutan.

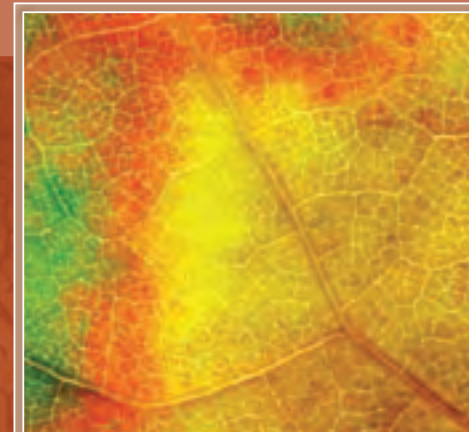
Durga is worshiped as *Navadurga*, the one with nine manifestations, one for each day of the festival. They vary in attributes and appearance, but usually include: Shailputri, daughter of the mountain; Brahmacharini, the chaste one; Chandraghanteti, the fighter; Kushmanda, of many lights; Skanda Mata, mother to Lord Skanda; Katyayani, the divine daughter; Kalratri, the black one; young-looking Maha Gauri, who seems no older than eight years; and Siddhidatri Ar-dhanarishvara, the all-powerful Siva-Shakti. Each is invoked with a special mantra and, frequently, with complicated tantric.

During the nighttime rites, the Goddess is invoked with precise repetitions of the *Durga Sapta Shasti*, followed by recitations of the *Devi Bhagawat Purana* and the *Devi Mahatmya*. The most dedicated chant a mantra or shloka thousands of times during the nine nights.

Asking for fertility and blessings, priests and women devotees intone Her words into the night, chanting, "When for hundreds of



(Counter-clockwise from above left) Goddess Sarasvati, bestower of knowledge and wisdom, plays the veena while holding a palm-leaf book and a japa mala. Tools of a stone carver are ceremoniously blessed at Kauai Adheenam's Iraivan Temple worksite in Hawaii; two iPhones receive blessings at the timeless ayudha puja; a priest touches a girl's tongue with a gold ring, marking the start of her education at the vidyarambha ceremony; school books painted with auspicious symbols are placed at the feet of Sarasvati during Navaratri.



DINODIA

years there will be no rain and the Earth will be without water, the great contemplative rishis shall sing praises of Me, seeking Me. I will come down without human parentage; and with hundreds of eyes, I shall look kindly upon those profound sages. Then I shall cover the entire Earth with greens born of my own being. I shall nourish them all with these greens, sustaining the prana of all beings, and thereby I shall be known as Shakambhari, 'the Bearer of Greens'" (*Durga Sapta Shasti* XI 42-45).

In **West Bengal**, Durga Puja is everywhere. In playgrounds, traffic circles, ponds and wherever space is available, elaborate structures called *pandals* are set up, many with a year's planning behind them. Usually made of bamboo and cloth, they serve as temporary temples. Each houses a highly decorated *murti* of the Goddess worshiped throughout the festival. While some *pandals* are simple, others are extravagant works of art with themes that range from the traditional to the wildly modern, often based on current affairs, famous movies or pure imagination. Representing the Universal Mother's transcendence of cultural boundaries, in West Bengal one can find Her in an Inca or an Egyptian setting, or even aboard the famous Titanic.

Most people celebrate buying new clothes and jewelry, which are worn on the evenings when the family goes out to see the *pandals*. Ritual drummers, called *dhakis*, carrying large leather-strung instruments, enliven



A pandal in Kolkata

the surroundings with their performances during the many ritual dances that happen in every *pandal*. The festivities are so pervasive that it is common to see people from all backgrounds and religions participating.

At the end of the celebration, in all Her glory, the exquisitely crafted Durga *murti*, with countless adornments, is taken to a river, where it is immersed. The procession

leading to the waters is accompanied by loud chants of "Bolo Durga mai-ki jai" ("Glory be to Mother Durga") and "Aash-chhe boochhor abar hobe" ("It will happen again next year"). Intense drumbeats mark Her release into the waters. It is said that this final ritual returns the Goddess to Her eternal home in the Himalayas—until next year's Durga Puja.

In **Bangladesh**, which shares a common Hindu heritage with West Bengal, numerous *pandals* also crowd the cities. The Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad, a Hindu organization, counted more than 20,000 *pandals* nationwide in 2007. Here, Durga Puja is a national holiday. The president of Bangladesh, Iajuddin Ahmed, recently stated, "Though it is a festival of the Hindu religion, Durga Puja is an indivisible part of our Bengali culture." Bangladeshi Rabinranath Trivedi, former press secretary to the government, puts it more poetically: "Devi Durga represents the eternal victory over ugliness and terror, and out of it the lotus of beauty arises." Unfortunately, attacks on these celebrations by Muslim radicals are not uncommon.

In **Orissa**, the celebrations have grown more similar to those in neighboring West Bengal, due to an influx of migrants from the neighboring state. Historically, the Goddess is profoundly revered by native Oriyas. The capital, Cuttack, has a very old temple in the heart of the city, the Ma Katak Chandi temple. Most devotees make a point of

visiting this temple during the festival. Recently, Bengal-style *pandals* have become popular in Orissa, too, and in grand style. One, a silver-ornamented *pandal* known as *chandi merha* (silver home), has dazzled countless devotees. It has been improved and gold plated, changing its name to *sun merha* (golden home).

In **Punjab**, Navaratri's disciplines are strictly followed by most of the population. Although few Punjabis are vegetarian, alcohol, meat and some forms of entertainment are completely avoided at this time. Following the fast, on the last day, devotees feed beggars and follow the tradition of worshipping a young girl representing Shakti.

Hindus in **Jammu and Kashmir** used to celebrate in more pomp, but the region's insurgency has forced the festival indoors, where it has become quiet and focused on the family. Adult members of the household are expected to fast on water and take fruits in the evenings. As elsewhere, Kashmiris grow barley in an earthen pot and watch expectantly, as an augur for the coming year's crops. The most important ritual for those near Srinagar is to visit the temple of guardian Goddess Kheer Bhawani on all nine days.

In **Gujarat**, dance in adoration of the Goddess takes a whole different form. Temples have a constant stream of visitors into the night. But after leaving the temple, devotees will gather in public



DINODIA

Ram Vanquishes a Demon

Joining the festive season, Vaishnavites hold Ram Lila during the same days Navaratri is observed. Ram Lila is a dramatic re-enactment of the battle between Lord Rama and the demon Ravana, as told in the *Ramayana*. The play, which is often staged over ten or more successive nights, culminates in Dusshera, Rama's defeat of Ravana in faraway Sri Lanka.

In most of India and especially in the North, Ram Lila and Navaratri celebrations are not entirely separate. Many homes will find it difficult to explain the differences, and some will describe Navaratri as an event honoring Rama alone. In the *Ramayana*, Rama invokes the help of Durga in his battle against Ravana, so many understand that the Goddess is

being honored in gratitude during this celebration of the incarnation of Vishnu. It is not uncommon for home shrines to honor the Goddess along with Rama or even Krishna during Navaratri. Where the lines of theology get blurred, regional tradition or the family ways prevail.

During Dusshera, giant effigies of nine-headed Ravana and his fellow demons are stuffed with firecrackers and set alight. The fireworks are often spectacular. The festival, described as a celebration of the victory of good over evil, is considered auspicious for spiritual practices. In Gujarat, a common saying goes, "If your horse (representing dharma) cannot stand on the other days of the year, at least today it should."

Scenes from Navaratri worship



DINODIA

(Clockwise from top right) An actor plays the nine-headed demon who kidnapped Sita during the events of the *Ramayana*; in Nepal, a devotee harvests the seeds he planted under his home shrine on the first day of Navaratri, now fully sprouted; an artist paints a *murti* in preparation for Durga Puja; the lion guards a Durga Temple in Punjab; a *murti* of the three forms of Shakti in front of a Kolkata pandal



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squares, open grounds and streets to dance *garba*, Gujarat's popular folk-dance, late into the nights. *Garba* dance takes a circular motion, the dancers' circles closing, opening and touching according to the rhythm. Dancers move around the center while clapping rhythmically. At every step they bend sideways and wave their arms, each movement ending in clap. A variation is the *dandiya-ras*, where sticks are used as part of the choreography.

Garba began as a dance around a suspended earthen pot with many holes, called the *garbo*. A lamp inside the *garbo* shines through the holes, creating an array of twinkling, swirling dots of light around the room. *Garba* may be one of the most ancient forms of dance: its special pots have been found in the 5,000-year-old Harappan excavation site.

Nepal: In the Himalayan nation of Nepal, Durga Puja is the grandest national festival. Over 21 million Hindus celebrate it here—not just for nine nights, but fifteen, reports HINDUISM TODAY correspondent, Dr. Hari Bansh Jha. In addition to the various forms of the Goddess, Siva, Ganesha and Kartik-keya are worshiped. Even with the former Maoist rebels in charge of the government, now secular Nepal still declares national holidays from the seventh day of the Navaratri until the next full moon night.

As is the case with most of India, Dr. Jha reports, Navaratri in Nepal begins with the *ghatasthapana*—creating holy temporary



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DINESH PRATAP SINGH/WIKIMEDIA

vessels for the Deities and planting seeds. In Nepal, barley is planted on sand. Each day water is sprinkled on the sprouts, which begin to germinate from the fourth or fifth day and by the ninth day can be six inches tall.

The last days of celebration are the most intense. On these bustling national holidays, the whole country is engaged in Durga worship. On the sixth day, devotees rejoice in parading from Durga temples to a bilva tree, playing conches, bells and drums. The tree roots are washed with cow dung and the best fruits are adorned with red cloth. On the seventh day, the same fruits are wrapped in red and offered at the feet of the Goddess.

But in Nepal, a country where Shakta beliefs have a large following and vegetarians are rare, another form of red adorns the Goddess' feet. From the seventh until the last day of Navaratri, goats, cows, chickens and other animals are sacrificed in large numbers. In Kathmandu, at the Courtyard of the Hanumandhoka Palace, the military sacrifices 54 water buffaloes and 54 goats in honor of Shakti. Modernity and Maoists aside, the demand for sacrifices has noticeably increased in the last years. Reformers, such as Sita Karn from Janakpur, one of Nepal's most progressive cities, demand, "This tradition of violence and cruelty must come to an end. Killing animals is killing oneself." Some Durga temples have adopted the breaking of grain-filled clay pots or coconuts instead.

By the tenth and most auspicious day, the nation is completely taken up by the festival. On Vijayadashami, the sacred yellow grass called *jayanti* (meaning "victory") is



Mahishasura statue in Mysore

harvested. Sanskrit pandits recite mantras while placing *jayanti* on the head of the devotees for blessings. Elders also offer *jayanti* to the young. In reverence, devotees carry it on their heads and walk to the local temples or to a river, where they offer it

to the Goddess. In temples the *jayanti* with rice and grass can be knotted up and tied to a devotee's arm. This amulet is called *bali*, and some keep it for one year as a protective amulet.

In Nepal's *pahad* region (the plains), the young go to the elders to receive *tika*, rice mixed with red vermillion, applied to their forehead. Until recently, it was a tradition for ministers, high-ranking officials and all citizens who could attend to line up in front of the royal palace and receive *tika* from the King of Nepal himself—a custom likely to be ended with the monarchy's abolishment.

Jai Ma!

HINDUISM TODAY's Delhi correspondent, Rajiv Malik, paints a word picture of Navaratri: "With the coming of Navaratri, Delhi assumes a festive air. It signifies the coming of fall and departure of the sultry months of summer. Here in Delhi, we see the confluence of cultures within the Hindu community, as Bengalis, north Indians, Gujaratis and South Indians all celebrate according to their own customs. The overall enthusiasm for the Goddess is summed up by M. K. Sethi, an official of Delhi's Jhandewalan Temple, who told me during an interview, 'Ma Durga is the incarnation of power. All evil is destroyed by Her. Whatever I have asked of Her, I have received.'" 🍽️

WITH RAJIV MALIK, NEW DELHI; HARISH BANSHI JHA, NEPAL; LAKSHMI SRIDHARAN, CHENNAI

From the Puranas

The story behind Navaratri is one extolling the power of the Goddess. According to the most common version, from the *Markandeya Purana*, a vastly powerful demon called Mahishasura had the cunning to be dedicated and patient in his *tapas*. He performed austerities for countless years, excelling in self-control and cold astuteness. Eventually, he gained a boon from God Siva, that no man or God would ever defeat him.

Satisfied at last, the presumptuous demon saw no more reason for moderation. Greedy, devilish, insatiable, he began to wreak havoc in all three worlds. Mahishasura had always been a formidable opponent, but that boon made him unstoppable.

Alarmed by the disturbance in the cosmos, the Mahadevas convened. Siva's word was that no God could stop Mahishasura. But the edict said nothing about Goddesses; and the three greatest, Lakshmi, Sarasvati and Parvati, held hands and meditated together, balanced on a space no bigger than the head of a needle. They combined their strength in one fierce aspect of Shakti, and terrible Durga came into existence. Durga received the best weapons from

(Opposite page, top) The dandiya dance in Gujarat, with traditional *rass* sticks. (left) A play of dance and drama celebrating Durga Puja in Nepal enacts the Goddess' victory over demons, with Brahmayani (Sarasvati) in yellow and Durga in a red mask. (far left) A kolu in Tamil Nadu honors all of a home's small artifacts.

the celestial lords, and flaming with rightful might, She set out to protect Her children in all planes of the universe.

For nine nights, Durga and Mahishasura battled. Their struggle ripped the skies apart, and there was no place that did not tremble with the power of Shakti. Feeling he had met his match, the demon tried to trick Durga by changing into a lion, then a man, then a buffalo. But the Goddess senses were keen, and on the tenth day, She pierced the holy *trishul* through Mahishasura, vanquishing his dangerous ignorance into nonexistence.

In the *Skanda Purana*, another story is told. Mahishasura, roaming about Earth, one day arrived at Arunachala. Parvati, piously sitting in lotus and doing japa, caught the demon's lustful eyes. Insidious, sly, he spoke to the Goddess with a melodious voice until he caught Her attention. "Why are you performing *tapas*, O beauty?" He asked. With her eyes half-open, absorbed in the bliss of Her meditations, She answered, "To please the Supreme God and to achieve Him." The demon lost all manners and returned to his arrogant, frightful self. "Nonsense! I am more powerful than Him. Come and marry me," he boasted in a harsh, demonic voice. The Goddess replied calmly. "I myself am more than you, wretched creature. And I will show you your place." In this less common version of the festival's origins, She became a fierce warrior, and for nine nights battled ignorance and evil until fully vanquishing it on the tenth day.



PROFILE

Dada Vaswani: Walking with God

At 90, the joyful leader of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission celebrates the Lord's *lila*

BY LAVINA MELWANI, NEW YORK

HIS EYES ARE SMILING AS HE HANDS the little girl a chocolate bar and sees her eyes light up. His photographic memory can recall the first names and faces of hundreds of devotees, even those he hasn't seen for many years. He delivers soaring extemporaneous speeches which younger intellectuals would stumble on. He can quote from the *Bhagavad Gita* and from Thoreau with equal facility.

Thousands of followers and well-wishers came to New York's Town Hall on June 13 to greet Dada J.P. Vaswani, spiritual head of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission, at a celebration of his 90th birthday.

Dada, as he is fondly known, has kept his positive attitude, his sense of humor and his childlike joy so well that it is hard to believe that he is only a decade short of a century.

"I don't believe it myself," he affirms, laughing, his face unlined, his eyes shining, dressed as always in immaculate white. How does he look so calm, radiant and peaceful? Could he share with our readers his secret for looking and feeling so wonderful at 90? "The secret is always trying to live in the presence of Sri Krishna," he asserts simply.

How does one do that? Dada explains, "That comes through *abhiyaas*, practice. As it is, God is just a word to so many people. There are some who get up in the morning, spend a few minutes in prayer and worship—their lips keep muttering certain

words, their minds keep straying to places. Then they feel they've done their duty by God. They keep the *Thakurs* (Deities) in their place, and they go to their offices.

"I believe the one message we need is to make God real to ourselves in our daily lives. God is our constant companion. We should walk with God; we should talk to God. We should seek His advice, His guidance, at every step, at every round of life. As it is, the one disease that is increasing all over the world is the disease of loneliness. Why? Because we've cut ourselves off from God. All we need to do is close the eyes, shut out the world and call Him with longing in the heart, and here He is, in front of us."

This oneness with God is a core teaching of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission, an educational, religious and humanitarian organization based in Pune, Maharashtra, 165 km east of Mumbai. It was founded in 1930 by Sadhu T.L. Vaswani and today has centers in India and many parts of the world. Dada J.P. Vaswani, who was born on August 2, 1918, in Hyderabad, gave up a shining academic

future to follow his uncle and guru, Sadhu Vaswani, on the rocky path of service to the needy and the disenfranchised.

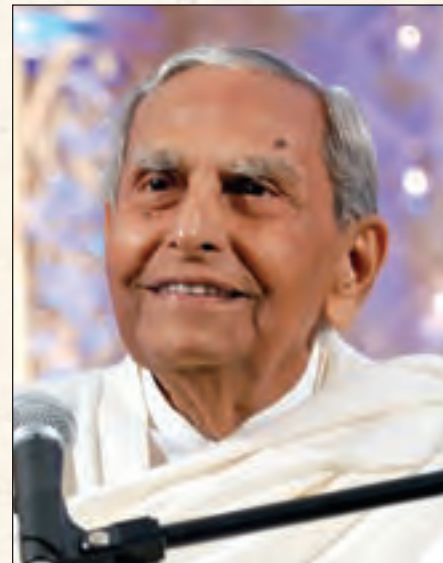
Dada has a magical touch which connects him with just about everyone, be they scholars and swamis discussing intricate scriptures or teenagers conflicted about parental pressures. He has addressed august gatherings in the House of Commons and

Dada's Homespun Wisdom

Even as particles of dust cling to our clothes and we wash them with water and soap, even so there are particles of noise which cling to our hearts, to our minds and to our souls. They need to be cleansed every day in the waters of silence.... Silence is very much like a river—we need to go and take dips in the river of silence again and again and cleanse our hearts and our souls.

Do you respect those who can be of no help to you whatsoever? Then, indeed, are you a true pilgrim on the path—a pilgrim of peace.

Acceptance is not passive submission. Acceptance is active cooperation with the will of God.



PHOTOS COURTESY SADHU VASWANI MISSION

the United Nations and has gone one on one with families in spiritual camps.

Neelam Deo, Consul General of India in New York, points out that Vaswani is a gifted writer and orator, with over 100 books in English and Sindhi, his native language, and these have been translated into languages from French to Russian.

"He's a thinker, a philosopher who's written several books filled with practical wisdom and this is one of the features that characterizes him, that he gives simple examples from every day life," Deo reflected.

"He recounts anecdotes that we all can identify with, because these are the kinds of things which happen to people like you and to people like me. So we do not feel the wisdom that he imparts to us as something

too rare and too difficult for us to grasp. When he speaks, he tells us something that we ourselves can easily understand and identify with, something we can absorb into the way we think and the way we live."

And that is Dada's strength: the ability to translate complex issues of dharma and morality into simple language for ordinary mortals—to educate people about dharma. Indeed, under Dada, the Sadhu Vaswani Mission has focused on education as the agent for character-building, inculcation of devotion to service and Indian ideals, international understanding and the cultivation of the soul. The most important component of education at the Sadhu Vaswani Mission is reverence toward all life.

"We should respect all life, because there

Mission: Service To Humanity

The Sadhu Vaswani Mission in Pune is well known for its work in education, medicine and social service. Over 7,000 students attend its schools and college, the Mira College, which was judged the best college in the University of Pune for 2007-2008. It has now been given autonomous status. Dada's dream is that it will be its own independent university, and the Mission has acquired 100 acres of land on the outskirts of the city for this purpose.

The Mission has four hospitals, including a general hospital and others dedicated to eye care, heart and cancer care. Over 1,800 free or concessional cardiac operations are conducted every year.

"Thousands and thousands of villagers lose their vision due to cataracts and are not respected by their families because they are not productive and become a burden," says Krishna Kumari. "We have started the KK Eye Institute and have done over 20,000 cataract operations. We bus in the people from their remote villages, give them hospitality for three days, perform the operations and then deliver them back home."



Unveiling: Sindhi community leaders Baba Manghoo Ahuja and Lal Sani help Dada release his new book documenting Sindhi civilization and culture at an event in New Jersey

is only one life," says Dada. "That same life flows into us, it flows into the animals, and it flows into the birds. This one life is asleep in the stones and the minerals; it stirs in the vegetables and the plants; it dreams in the birds and the animals; it wakes up in man. There's only one life, there's only one breath. The breath that I am taking is the breath the animal is taking. You see, there is unity of life. But this, man has forgotten."

Devotees of the late Sadhu Vaswani observe his birthday, November 25, as International Meatless Day. On this day each year, supporters pledge to give up all foods of violence—fish, flesh and fowl—to honor this great saint of mercy.

Dada feels strongly about the environmental crisis that looms over our Earth, pointing out that according to one estimate, every day 200,000 acres of rainforest are being destroyed; every day 13-15 million tons of toxic waste, most of which is carcinogenic, are being dumped into our air, into our water, and onto our soil. He adds, "Every day about 120 species are becoming ex-

tinct. About 120 types of plants and animals which are the product of billions of years of evolutionary process, are gone forever."

He points out that the Hindu way is not to exploit nature: "The true Hindu respects na-

mal kingdom. We have respect for all life.

"This is what is missing today: we need to develop, we need to grow in respect for all life. Go back to the Hindu way of worshipping nature. People used to laugh at us and say we were superstitious. It was not superstition, it was the right way of handling nature. We have become scientific, we say. But science has taught us irreverence for nature."

While Dada's powerful message is all-encompassing and appeals to people across nations and cultures, it especially resonates with the Sindhi community, a people who lost their homeland of Sindh in the Partition of 1947. For this enterprising community scattered across the world, Dada Vaswani is guru and guide.

Author Lavina Melwani, a popular free-lance correspondent, was born in Sindh, grew up in New Delhi and has lived in Hong Kong and Africa. She currently resides in New York with her husband and two children.

PHOTOS COURTESY SADHU VASWANI MISSION



Celebration: Kiran Ahuja introduces young performers of a Krishna lila as part of a June 9 Krishna Jashan celebration

ture, worships nature. We begin our day by worshipping the Sun God. People laugh at us, but that is the correct way. We call the Earth 'Mother Earth.' We worship the Earth—we worship cows as a representative of the ani-

Honor All of God's Creation: Don't Eat Meat

BY DADA J.P. VASWANI

TODAY, MAN STANDS ON A PLANET OF LIMITLESS PROMISE. He has set foot on the moon. His rockets go flying past the distant planets. But he has lost touch with his real being and purpose. His mind is agitated; his heart is troubled and unsure; his anger flares easily. He has become a slave to his appetites, cravings and desires. And the civilization he has built, and of which he is so proud, is already crumbling beneath the burden of its own weight. What is the reason?

Man has alienated himself from God's creation. He has lost his sense of at-one-ment with Nature, with Life. All Nature is one; All Life is one! And if a new civilization is to be built, if man is to grow in the peace that passeth understanding and the joy that no ending knows, he must make friends with all birds and animals, trees, flowers, streams, and stars, with all that lives. Unless man becomes the guardian and protector of creatures that breathe the breath of life, the Earth will fight back at the greatest destroyer of nature and life, viz., man. There will be droughts and floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. And the tilting of the Earth and the melting of the ice caps will change the very face of the Earth.

The ancient Rishi of the *Ishopanishad* sang: *Ishavasyam idam*

sarvam. "All that is, is the vesture of the Lord!" God comes to us, putting on different vestures, different garments. Clad in different garbs, the Lord comes to us to test us, to find out if we truly love Him, as we say we do. Alas! We slay the Lord. We handle Him roughly, we treat Him harshly. We offer Him worship in temples and churches; we chant hymns to His glory. But out in the street we are cruel to Him. We slay Him and eat His flesh.

For we forget that the animal, too, is an image of God!

Much on Earth is masked. But there is a strange, a mystic sense of our fellowship with all that is. This is what makes every life sacred. The roots of our being are in the One Reality that breathes out benedictions on every man and bird and animal, river and rock, stream and star. For all, all is a part of God! From Him we come, unto Him we must return.

Vegetarianism is not an end in itself. It is only a means to an end. The end, the goal, is the vision of the One-in-all.

As the *Bhagavad Gita* says, "Who sees the separate lives of all creatures of the Earth, of men and birds and beasts, and

of the worms that creep, and the fish that swim in the watery deep, who sees them all united in the Spirit, the one Eternal God, sees them brought forth from Him, His hidden depths, he sees, indeed!"



Nonviolence: A papier mâché cow displayed at Vaswani's celebration of Krishna, reminding all of her sacredness

A Fraudulent Mission

Exposing the false premises and dangerous notions behind Christian missionary activity

BY DR. DAVID FRAWLEY

I WAS RAISED AS A CATHOLIC. I WENT TO CATHOLIC school. My uncle was, and still is, a missionary. He went to South America to save the souls of the Native Americans who, I was told, would suffer eternal damnation unless converted to Christianity. I was taught that Hinduism was a religion of polytheism, idolatry and superstition and that there was no place in heaven for Hindus. This was the Catholicism of my childhood; it remains the Catholicism of today. In 1994, Pope John Paul II issued a statement, “The Coming of the Third Millennium” (Google “**Tertio Millenio Adveniente**”). He said, “The Asia Synod [meeting of the clergy] will deal with the challenge for evangelization posed by the encounter with ancient religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. While expressing esteem for the elements of truth in these religions, the Church must make it clear that Christ is the one mediator between God and man and the sole Redeemer of humanity.”

This is a statement that neither Buddha, nor Krishna, nor Rama, is equal to Jesus. This is a statement of exclusivism, the position that mine is the only way. If this is my firm belief, how then can I be really tolerant and accepting of you if you follow another way? Such intolerance is going to end up causing conflict, division, disharmony and poor communication.

It's a big business: The global missionary business is huge, perhaps the largest business in the world. Not only the Catholic Church, but also various Protestant organizations have set aside billions of dollars to convert non-Christians to Christianity. They have trained thousands of workers, formed various plans of evangelization and conversion and targeted certain communities for that express purpose. This multi-national conversion business is not like a multinational economic business. It is not fair and open. It is not a dialogue or a discussion. It is about one religion triumphing over all the other religions. It is about making all the members of humanity follow one religion, persuading them to give up and, usually, to denigrate the religion they previously followed.

The conversion business is especially big in India, because India is the largest non-Christian country in the world where missionaries have the freedom to act and to proselytize. Islamic countries, such as Pakistan and Bangladesh, do not allow such missionary activity at all. Saudi Arabia will not allow even a Bible or a picture of Jesus in the country. Nor does China allow such wide-scale missionary activities. India, because of its openness and tolerance, has become the target.

Recent newspapers have reported that one missionary was killed in India [by Hindus], which is unfortunate. But in that same week, fifty Christians were massacred in Indonesia by Muslims. Religious violence is endemic worldwide, and Christians are not always the victims. For centuries, Hindus in India have been routinely killed for their religion. In Kashmir a number of Hindus were recently massacred. But in the Western media, the death of Hindus for their religion has never constituted a story.



Missionary activity has a bloody history of genocide on every continent of the world, as colonial interests used force and persuasion to bring about conversion. We are told that we should forget all about that, even though it has only been a generation or two since the colonial era. But we cannot forget so easily, because the very religious groups that performed these atrocious acts have not yet apologized. Christians in America have made some apologies for what they did to the Native Americans. But, so far, there have been no apologies to Hindus. If the missionaries want us to believe that they have changed their ways and are now purely nonviolent and charitable, then why do they not at least apologize for what they did in the past?

Why should there be conversions at all? What is the motivation? Christians believe that theirs is the only true religion, Christ is the only savior of humanity, Christians gain salvation or heaven and non-Christians are damned to hell. That is not a policy of harmony and tolerance. It is a blueprint for disharmony and conflict. What ultimately happens when someone who has that attitude comes

into a community and converts people? People are taught to reject their ancestors and their traditions. Families are broken up. Division and conflict almost inevitably occur wherever this missionary business goes on.

The old Protestants, the Anglicans and the Lutherans, have reduced their missionary activity, and some Christian groups are not missionary at all, such as the old Greek Orthodox and the Syrian Christians. But the Catholic tradition is promoting its missionary activity all over the world, though more subtly than in the past. They are no longer using the force they used during the colonial era, but they are still aiming at global conversion. And there is a new evangelical force in the world, particularly US fundamentalist Christian groups—the World Vision, the Christian coalition, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Baptists and so on. These groups are actively asking for donations in America in order to convert Hindus in India. Such appeals are routine on Christian television channels. Pat Robertson, one of their main leaders, has said that Hinduism is a demonic religion.

They show Hindu Gods with animal heads and say, “Oh! Look how primitive these people are.” They point out the political and social problems of India and say, “These are all owing to Hinduism. Please donate money to our cause so we can go to India and convert these people from this horrible religion.”

The missionary threat is not something of the past. Hindus must not be naive. It is a mistake to believe that there is religious harmony all over the world and that the other religions respect Hinduism and are willing to live together quietly with Hindus. Missionaries continue their work, and some are going back to the old hell-fire, damnation, condemnation of Hinduism that the Catholics employed in the Middle Ages and in the colonial era. Some American textbooks teach that Hinduism is not a religion because it does not have only one God, one book and is not a missionary religion seeking to convert or conquer the world.

Conversion and poverty: No country in the world has been raised up economically by religious conversion. The Philippines is the most Catholic and the oldest Christian country in Asia. Yet, it remains one of the poorest countries in Asia and has one of the

widest gaps between rich and poor. The most devout Catholics in the world are in Central and South America, which also suffer tremendous social inequality. But the Catholics there are not telling the poor people that they should convert to another religion in order to raise themselves economically. The whole attack on Hindu society that blames poverty on Hindu beliefs and claims to raise the poor on religious grounds is based upon one motivation: conversion.

Then there is the whole issue of hospitals, orphanages and schools. It is all very wonderful to selflessly help other people. But why bring in religious forms? As long as the picture of Jesus is there—particularly given the 2,000-year history of aggressive conversion activities—how can anyone be expected to believe that there is no seeking of conversion, that it is purely selfless service and love of God? The human being is not a property of any church. The human being is not something which is owned by anyone or anything. The soul does not need to be saved. It is the eternal and immortal part of our nature. We need only understand the Divine within us.

Hinduism is based upon respecting each individual and the *swadharma* of each individual. We should have many paths and many religions. The idea of only one religious faith for all humanity is like having only one set of clothing for all humanity. It is like people having to eat only one kind of food or having only one type of job. There should be diversity, abundance and freedom in the religious realm as well.

There is not one goal: Unfortunately, all religions do not have the same goal. Religions have various goals. Religions are various paths. Not all religions are theistic. In Buddhism and Jainism, there is no creator God. There are religions with a multiplicity of Deities. Monotheism is not the only form of religion in the world, nor is it the best form. All forms of religious worship have their validity, and Hinduism recognizes them, whether they are polytheistic, monotheistic or monistic. Even atheists have their place in Hinduism. People should have complete freedom to reject religion, if that is what they want to do.

It is most unfortunate that there is so much misinformation and disinformation about Hinduism in the world. The fault for this lies not only with Western people. The fault lies also with Hindus themselves, who have historically been poor at expressing what their religion is, and in countering disinformation and propaganda against it. Most Hindus today do not study their religion properly, and so they cannot explain it.

They are also misinformed about other religions; many think that other religions are just Hinduism in another form. But the rich traditions of yoga, meditation, *Vedas* and Vedanta cannot be found in other religions. Particularly in the Protestant faiths in the West, those traditions are usually rejected. To Evangelical Christians, they are considered the work of the devil. Some people say all religions teach the same things and they only differ in inessentials. But Hinduism teaches the law of karma and rebirth, which are not accepted by Christianity and Islam. Is the law of karma and the process of rebirth inessential?

Transcending differences: We must move beyond all our narrow, human-centric creeds. True religion is not a matter of name, form or identity. It is a matter of that which is eternal, that which is universal, that which no one owns. It is a matter of consciousness, awareness and truth.

Let there be dialogue. Let there be open, friendly and thoughtfully critical communication in religion, just as there is in science.

Let us expose and put an end to this missionary business, and let us not think that the missionary business is tolerant. The missionary business is not about freedom of religion. It is about the triumph of one religion. It is not about secularism. The missionary business is based on the idea that only one religion is true. It is a religious war aimed at religious control.



Whitewashed history: Pope Benedict XVI's 2007 statements that Latin America's indigenous peoples were “silently longing” for Christ” (pictured above) angered indigenous Indians from Chile to Mexico who felt his revisionist views of a violent history ignored Catholicism's genocide, enslavement and destruction of native cultures. After five centuries under Christendom, much of Latin America still remains in squalid poverty.

The way to challenge this is not through violence or through intolerance. It is through being properly informed. It is through open, friendly dialogue and discussion, so that others understand the Hindu point of view, so that any distortions about Hinduism are removed. For harmony to exist, we must recognize that we are all the same Divine Being, that we all share the same human nature. At the same time, we should not be naive about the forces of the world that are trying to disintegrate Hindu society and Hindu culture in India.

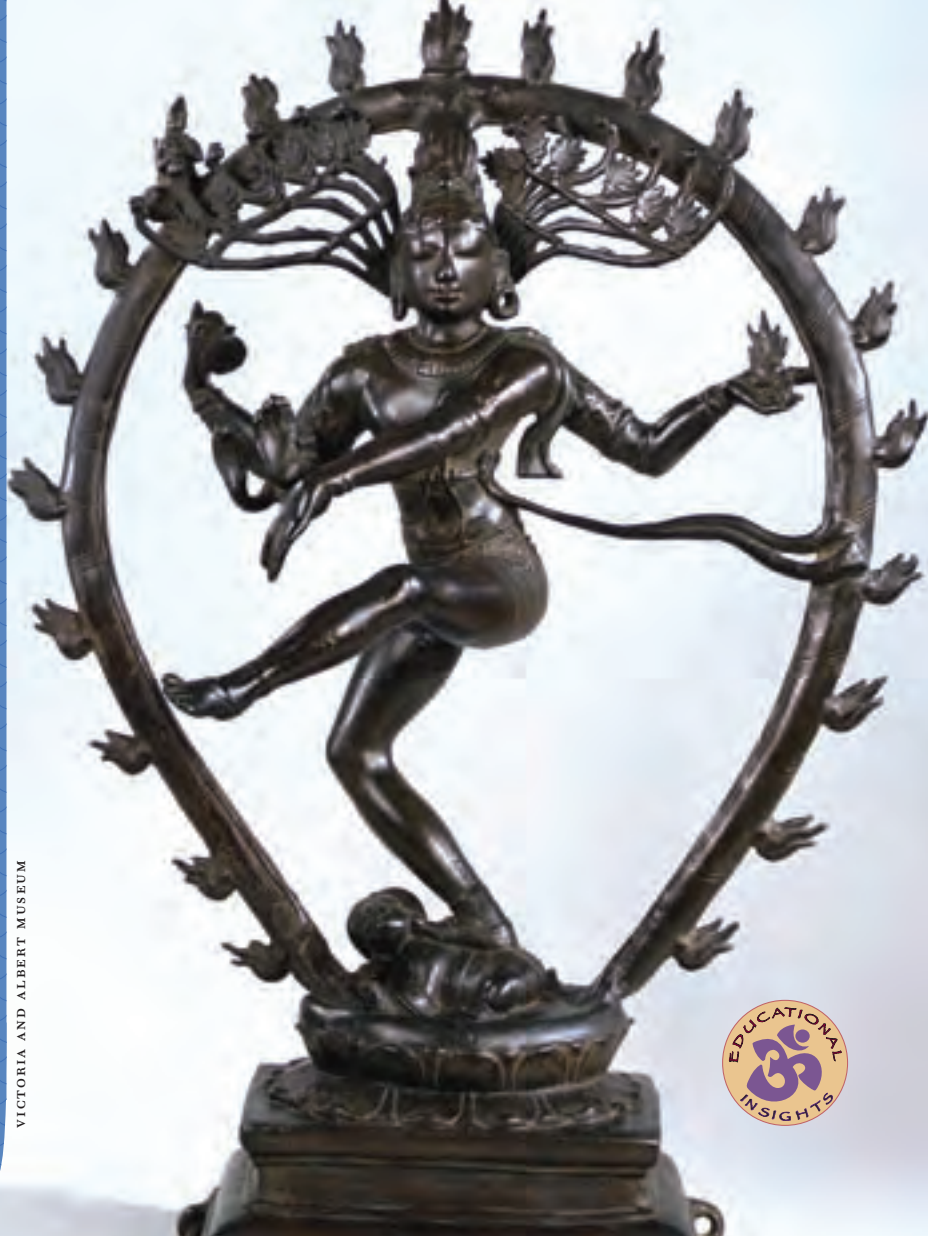
It would be a tremendous loss if India gave up Hinduism and became another Christian or Islamic country. The world has enough of these already. Why do Westerners go to India? They go there for its wealth of spiritual knowledge, for its wealth of spiritual traditions. In fact, India has more than enough of these and should be exporting its religion. The rest of the world desperately needs better access to India's wealth of spiritual resources.

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Excerpted from “*Debate with Christian Missionaries in India*,” a talk given by Dr. David Frawley (Vamadeva Shastri), noted author on Hinduism, yoga and ayurveda, at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Hyderabad, in September, 2007.

Hindu India: 300 to 1100 ce

During these eight centuries, empires, religion, commerce, science, technology, literature and art flourished in India. In ways vitally important to Hindus to this day, the Hindu faith was advanced by temple building, the Bhakti Movement, holy texts and great philosophers, saints and sages.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM



This is an 8th century South Indian bronze of Supreme God Siva as Nataraja. This divine dance depicts His five cosmic powers of creation, preservation, dissolution, veiling grace and revealing grace.

Note to Students, Parents and Teachers

This Educational Insight is the second chapter in our series on Hindu history intended for use in US primary schools. During this period, India was the richest region of the world and one of the most populous. Great agricultural abundance, plus plentiful natural resources, were key to the region's prosperity. India lay in the center of the world's ancient trade routes. Merchants sent spices, cotton, sugar and exotic items east to China and west to Europe. Hindu religion and culture and the Sanskrit language linked all of India. Great scientific discoveries as well as major religious movements came out of this advanced and stable society.

This lesson was written and designed by the editorial

staff of HINDUISM TODAY in collaboration with Dr. Shiva Bajpai, Professor Emeritus of History, California State University, Northridge. Academic reviewers: Dr. Klaus Klostermaier, Professor of Religious Studies, University of Manitoba; Dr. Jeffrey D. Long, Chair, Department of Religious Studies, Elizabethtown College; Dr. Vasudha Narayanan, Distinguished Professor, Department of Religion, University of Florida; Dr. Anantanand Rambachan, Professor of Religion, St. Olaf College; Dr. T.S. Rukmani, Professor and Chair in Hindu Studies, Concordia University. Research Assistant: Justin Stein, MA candidate at the University of Hawaii and former middle school teacher in New York.

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Ancient Indians regarded the subcontinent as one country.
2. From 300 to 1100 ce, India was a land of prosperity whose economic, religious and cultural influence extended across Asia.
3. Empires and kingdoms dominated most of India. Toward the end of this period, more regional powers emerged.



The Big Idea

Hindu culture, Sanskrit language and imperial tradition unified India during this age.



This column in each of the three sections presents our subject outline for India and Hinduism from 300 to 1100 ce.

1. Describe the physical and linguistic geography of India, along with population figures.
2. Describe the major empires and kingdoms, including the Guptas, Vakatakas, Chalukyas, Pallavas, Rashtrakutas, Pratihars, Palas and Cholas.
3. Discuss the importance of Sanskrit and the *Dharma Shastras* in uniting India.
4. Describe India's early Arab trade settlements and the later Islamic invasions.

Of Kings and Prosperity

If YOU lived then...

You live in a village in a small kingdom in central India. One day you hear that the king of a neighboring realm has attacked your king and conquered the royal city. The conquerer demands that your king pay a portion of his income. In return, he will allow your king to continue to rule, and also protect the kingdom from others.

Should your king accept the offer?

BUILDING BACKGROUND The 4th-century *Vishnu Purana* describes India: "The country that lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called Bharata, for there dwelt the descendants of Bharata. It is the land of works, in consequence of which people go to heaven, and ultimately attain oneness with God."

Understanding India

The triangle-shaped Indian subcontinent is naturally bounded by ocean on two sides and the high Himalayan mountains on the third. Hindu tradition, scriptures and the Sanskrit language link people from one end to the other of this immense and fertile area. Our period, 300 to 1100 ce, was a golden age in India. There was widespread prosperity and remarkable social stability. Advances were made in science, medicine and technology. Many Hindu saints lived during this time and magnificent temples were built. Hinduism as practiced today evolved over this glorious period of Indian history.

Geographical regions

There are three major geographical regions in India. The first region is the Indo-Gangetic Plain. This vast, fertile region stretches northeast and southwest along the base of the Himalayas. During our period, this area was heavily forested. The second region is the Deccan Plateau, bounded by the Vindhya mountain range in the north and the Nilgiri Hills in the south. It contains several major rivers and is rich in minerals. The third region is South India, the area south of the Nilgiri Hills extending to Kanyakumari at the tip of India. It has rich agricultural farm lands.

Afghanistan



This satellite photo shows India's three major regions, its principal rivers and the major cities of the period 300 to 1100. India lay at the center of the bustling sea and land trade routes to Europe, Arabia, Persia, China and Southeast Asia

Language areas

India is divided linguistically into two major regions. In the north are mainly Sanskrit-based languages, such as Hindi. In the south are the Dravidian languages, such as Tamil, which include many Sanskrit words. This division cuts across the middle of the Deccan Plateau. Often today when people speak of South India, they mean the Dravidian-speaking areas. These are the modern-day states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. During our period, regional dialects developed within both the Sanskrit and Dravidian areas. Sanskrit was the language of religion, law and government throughout India. Travelers could use Sanskrit to communicate wherever they went on the subcontinent.

Empires and regional kingdoms

In 300 ce, an estimated 42 million people lived in India, 23% of the world's population of 180 million. Approximately 60% of the Indian people lived in the Indo-Gangetic Plain. There were many towns and cities, but more than 90% of the population lived in villages.

As our period began, the Indo-Gangetic Plain again became the most important region of India, as it had been in the past. From 300 to 550, the Imperial Guptas established an extensive empire from the Himalayas deep into the south of India. Samudra Gupta (335-370) was the most heroic conqueror. The reign of his son, Chandra Gupta II Vikramaditya (375-414), was the most brilliant in the entire Hindu



Linguistic Regions

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

autonomy
self-rule,
independence

history. The Gupta kings granted local and regional autonomy. The frontier states were nearly independent. The empire was responsible for security, major roads, irrigation projects and common welfare.

The Guptas created both political and cultural pan-India unity. India made original literary, religious, artistic and scientific contributions that benefitted the entire known world. Chinese Buddhist monk Fa-hsien (Faxian) reported in the early 5th century, “In the cities and towns of this country, the people are rich and prosperous.” Hinduism thrived under the Guptas, taking forms which endure until today. Gupta culture and economy influenced much of Eurasia, notably China and Southeast Asia.

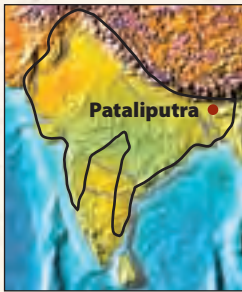
The Gupta Empire declined in the late 5th century because of internal strife and invasions by fierce Central Asian Hunas who ruled areas west of the Indus. The Hunas were driven back in the mid-6th century by emerging Hindu rulers.

During his 17-year journey through India, 7th century Chinese monk-scholar Hsuan-tsang (Xuanzang) wrote that there were about 70 regional powers. Many were part of the empire of King Harsha in the North

and the major empires of the South.

In the 8th century, the Rashtrakutas took control of the entire Deccan, parts of West Central India and much of the South. Between the 8th and 10th centuries, they competed with the Pratiharas and Palas for pan-India dominance. The Pratiharas at their peak ruled much of northern India. They were the first to effectively stop Arab Muslim invasions into western India, holding them in check until the 10th century. The Palas, a Buddhist dynasty centered in eastern India, reached their zenith in the early ninth century. Then the Pratiharas displaced them from much of the Gangetic Plain.

There were several large Hindu kingdoms in the Deccan and South India in our period. They included the Vakatakas, Chalukyas, Pallavas and Pandyas. Rajendra Chola I, who ruled from 1014-1044, unified the entire South. The Cholas had a large army and navy. In an effort to protect their trade routes, they subdued kingdoms as far away as Malaysia and Indonesia. Their expeditions are unique in Indian history. The Cholas dominated trade between South India and the Middle East and Europe in the West, and Southeast Asia and China



Gupta Empire: 300-550, with its capital at Pataliputra (present-day Patna)

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

- pan-India** relating to the whole of India
- sack** to seize all valuables and destroy buildings
- empire** a group of kingdoms under one authority
- imperial** of, or relating to, an empire
- plunder** property seized by violence

in the East. Indian traders brought Hindu religion and classical culture to Southeast Asia. Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms arose in present-day Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and South Vietnam.

Government and legal system

The kingdoms of India were guided by the *Shastras*, Hindu legal texts written in Sanskrit. The *Dharma Shastras*, such as *Manu* and *Yajnavalkya*, recorded laws and customs regarding family, marriage, inheritance and occupation, as well as suggested punishments for crimes. The *Artha Shastra* and *Niti Shastras* offered rules and advice on the king's behavior, war, justice, administration and business regulation. People believed that when the king was brave and just, the kingdom prospered. *Shastras*, local customs, advice of the wise and sound judgment of the king together produced sophisticated, stable and enlightened government.

Muslim invasions

Arabia, where the new religion of Islam began in 610 ce, had long traded with India. Arab merchants belonging to Islam settled peacefully in South India in the early 7th century. By 711 Arab Muslim armies had conquered North Africa, Spain and the Persian empire. They attacked India's frontiers as well. Arab Muslims conquered Sindh (now in southern Pakistan) in 712. Their further

invasions were stopped by the Pratiharas, who confined Muslim rule to the Sindh region. Northwestern India remained stable under Hindu rule until the Turkish King, Mahmud of Ghazni (in modern Afghanistan), invaded India for plunder and the expansion of Islam. Ruling from 998-1030, Mahmud raided the country 17 times, wreaking large-scale destruction of temples, cities and palaces. The sack of the famed Siva temple of Somanatha in 1025 was the most horrific, involving the massacre of 50,000 defenders and the theft of fabulous wealth. This battle marked the beginning of Muslim domination of northwestern India.

Section 1 Assessment

REVIEWING IDEAS, TERMS AND PEOPLE

1. **List:** What are India's major geographic regions?
2. **Describe:** Where did most Indians live in 300ce? What was it like? Who ruled this area at that time?
3. **Explain:** How did the Cholas succeed in unifying South India and spreading Hindu culture overseas?
4. **Apply:** What do you think are some rules and advice that the *Shastras* should give for kings?
5. **Evaluate:** If you ruled a kingdom that was attacked by a more powerful empire, would you fight back or try to join the empire? Why?

FOCUS ON WRITING

7. **Analyze:** Describe the Indian empires of the time and explain why they were attacked by Mahmud of Ghazni.

Timeline: 300 to 1100 ce



Gold Coin of Chandra Gupta II



Child Saint Sambandar



Thanjavur Temple

1025 Chola dynasty is at its height. Its influence extends across Southeast Asia. Builds great temples at Thanjavur and creates world-famous bronze statues of Siva Nataraja.



Somanatha Ruins

320 Gupta dynasty flourishes through 550 during a golden age of literature, art, science and religion

500 Bhakti Movement begins, gaining strength over the next thousand years. It was led by saints such as Sambandar of South India (at right with God Siva and Goddess Parvati)

712 Arab Muslims conquer the Sindh region of western India. Their further advance is halted by Hindu armies. No further conquests occur for nearly 300 years.

732 Charles Martel decisively stops Arab expansion into Europe at the Battle of Tours (in central France)

802 Jayavarman II founds Indianized kingdom of Kamboja in what is now Cambodia, with capital at Angkor

1025 Mahmud of Ghazni sacks Somanatha temple in western India as part of his campaigns to plunder the fabulous wealth of India and expand Islam

300-1000 World-famous Ajanta and Ellora Caves are created

476 Rome falls. Indian trading shifts from Europe to Arabia and the Middle East while continuing with China

542 Hindu kings defeat Hunas and end their brutal rule in central and northern India

641 Harsha, ruler of much of north India, establishes diplomatic relations with China

Society, Science And the Arts

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. India was a wealthy country during this period.
2. Towns and villages provided economic and social structures that brought prosperity.
3. Important advances in science, technology, literature and art were made.

The Big Idea

India's towns and villages were largely self-governing.

Key Terms

Gross Domestic Product, p. 6
commerce, p. 7
varna, p. 8
jati, p. 8
panchayat, p. 9

HINDUISM TODAY'S TEACHING STANDARDS

5. Explain how India was the world's richest country during this period.
6. Describe the main features of town and village life.
7. Explain the principal advances in art, science, technology and mathematics, especially the decimal system.

If YOU lived then...

Your father is a master potter. One day a leader of the potter's guild visits from a nearby city. He says he can sell your father's wares at a better price than he gets in the village. He explains that a caravan will come periodically through the village to collect his pots. In fact, he tells your father the guild can sell all the pots the village potters can make.

Should the potters accept the guild's offer?

BUILDING BACKGROUND: Scholars used to call the period from 500 to 1000 ce the Dark Ages or Medieval Period of European history. *Medieval*, a Latin word, came to mean "backward," though it really just means "middle age." Unfortunately, these terms were also applied to Indian history. In fact, Europe and—much more so—India flourished greatly in this age.

The Abundance of India

Throughout the period from 300 to 1100, India was a wealthy country. It produced a large amount of food, manufactured goods and various items for domestic and foreign trade. The nation made advances in medicine, mathematics, astronomy and metallurgy. People enjoyed prosperity, peace and freedom and achieved unprecedented artistic and culture excellence.

The richest nation in the world for over 1,000 years

Economic historians estimate that between the first and eleventh century ce, India produced roughly 30% of the world's Gross Domestic Product, or GDP. The GDP is the total value (the "gross") of everything a country or region produces. It includes the value of food, manufactured items (such as cloth, jewelry, tools and pottery) and services (such as the incomes of doctors, teachers, authors and artists). India had the highest GDP in the world for this entire period. China was the next highest, with 25% of the world's GDP. By comparison, in 1,000 ce Europe's GDP was just 11%.

Cities: centers of wealth and culture

The Indian subcontinent's population in the fifth century is estimated at 50 million, of which perhaps five million lived in cities and towns.

The capitals where the kings lived were usually the biggest. Cities and towns grew up along important trade routes, at sea and inland river ports and adjacent to major temples and pilgrimage centers. Temples had become an important focus of life in cities and villages. They served as places of worship, scholarship, education and performing arts. City life was dynamic, diverse and fulfilling, as seen in the excerpt from an ancient poem, *The Ankle Bracelet*, on pages 10 and 11.

Larger houses were two- or three-story structures with tile roofs, built around an open-air, central courtyard. The homes of wealthy citizens had attached gardens. Cities maintained public gardens, parks and groves. Prosperous citizens were expected to be highly sophisticated and to lead an active social and cultural life. Ordinary citizens lived in humbler circumstances.

Then, as now, the Hindu calendar was filled with home celebrations and public festivals. Some festivals, such as Sivaratri, took place in temples. Others, like Diwali, Holi and Ramnavami, were held city-wide.

Singing, dancing and gambling were available in special city areas throughout the year. Traveling troupes of musicians, acrobats, storytellers and magicians provided entertainment.

Cities served as centers of commerce and were largely self-governing. A four-person ruling council included a representative from the big business community, the smaller merchants and the guilds of artisans. The fourth member, the chief clerk, was responsible for making and keeping records, such as land deeds.

The wealth of the region depended upon the abundant agricultural harvests and the diverse products of many artisans. It was in the city that this wealth was concentrated. The king and well-to-do citizens actively supported the fine arts, including literature, music, dance and drama. They promoted medicine, technology and science. They patronized the skilled jewelers, weavers, painters, metalworkers and sculptors.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

commerce

buying and selling of goods

sophisticated

educated and refined

ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT

The artisans of India produced masterpieces which included huge temples, metal and stone statues and ornate gold coins.



Three Chola-era bronze statues: Lord Vishnu (center), Bhudevi, the Earth Goddess (left), and Lakshmi, Goddess of Prosperity (right)

This Gupta-era gold coin (actual size) has a horse on one side and Goddess Lakshmi on the other. It weighs about eight grams.



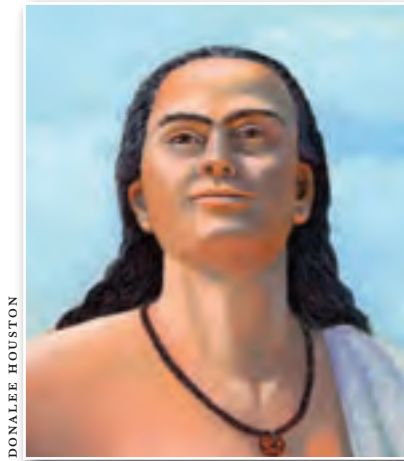
Sarasvati, Hindu Goddess of knowledge, music and the arts, was also worshiped in the Jain religion

PHOTOS: BRITISH MUSEUM

SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT

Among India's greatest contributions to the world are the concept of zero and counting with ten numbers. This **decimal system** was best explained by Brahmagupta.

He was born in 598 ce and lived during the time of King Harsha. It was much easier to multiply, divide, add and subtract with the Indian system. At right you can see the English numbers and the Sanskrit they were derived from. Note how you can recognize some shapes, such as 3 and some names, such as *nava* for nine. **Aryabhata** (pictured here), born in 476 ce, lived in the Gupta age. He determined that the Earth is a sphere spinning on its axis. He calculated its **circumference** within just 67 miles. He understood and accurately predicted solar and lunar **eclipses**. He also made discoveries in mathematics. The **Delhi Iron Pillar** (lower right) is 23 feet 8 inches tall, 16 inches in diameter at the base, and weighs 6.5 tons. This victory pillar was forged in the 4th century and has stood without rusting for the past 1,700 years. Scientists have determined that an unusual chemical composition has made it rustproof. Only a few foundries in the world today could duplicate it.



DONALEE HOUSTON

0	shunya	०
1	eka	१
2	dvi	२
3	tri	३
4	chatur	४
5	pancha	५
6	shash	६
7	sapta	७
8	ashta	८
9	nava	९



DINODIA

ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING INFORMATION

Find a few English words or parts of words that are related to the Sanskrit numbers. For example, the *tri* in triangle is related to Sanskrit *tri*, 3.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

foundry

a workshop for casting metal

barter

exchange of goods or services for other goods or services (without using money)

guild

an association of craftsmen who cooperate in the production and sale of goods

Understanding the village

The villages, where 90 percent of the people lived, were usually surrounded by agricultural land. Each had for common use a pond or water reservoir, wells, grazing grounds and at least one temple. The year-round warm climate and monsoon rains allowed farmers to produce two crops a year. The villages enjoyed a food surplus, except when struck by natural disaster. The villages had priests, doctors and barbers and skilled craftsmen, such as carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, oil pressers and weavers. Some villages specialized in one or more trades, which were organized into guilds, or *shrenis*. There were daily and weekly markets in the villages and nearby towns to barter and sell goods.

Hindu society evolved into many *jatis*,

based on specific occupations. The *jatis* are called *castes* in English. *Jatis* are grouped under the four-fold class division, or *varna*: priests, warriors, merchants and workers. A fifth group gradually developed that included scavengers, leather workers, butchers, undertakers and some tribal people. This group, about ten percent of the population, was considered “untouchable” and lived outside the city or village.

The Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien reported that when a member of one of these castes entered a city, he had to clap two sticks together to announce his presence.

Because the *jatis* were hereditary, the families became expert farmers, craftsmen, merchants, etc. Each family in the village interacted with all other *jatis* and were bound together in a permanent relationship.

There would be a family barber, washerman, priest, doctor, carpenter, etc., routinely serving the family needs. Thus the village was an interlocked economic unit. Each village was self-governed by an assembly of five elders, called the *panchayat*.

The central unit of the town and village was the joint family, as it is today among many Hindus. Father, mother, sons and their wives, unmarried daughters and grandchildren all lived under one roof. Land and finances were held in common, and everyone worked for the advancement of the family.

Marriages were often arranged by the parents. The boy and girl had little say in the matter, but if a couple eloped, the marriage was recognized. In the system called *swayamvara*, a woman, usually a princess, could choose her husband from a group of assembled suitors.

Villages were interconnected with one another, due in part to arranged marriages. The girl often came from a different village, one not more than a day's journey away. A day's journey (on foot or by bullock cart) was about 60 kilometers. Visits to relatives created an interlocking communications network through which news, technology and ideas freely flowed. Merchants, Hindu holy men and women, storytellers and pilgrims added to this network of communication and to cultural enrichment. Such itinerants often traveled long distances throughout India. Each village along the way offered abundant hospitality.

Science, technology and art

India's enduring prosperity allowed for great progress in science, technology and the arts. The most visible examples are the great stone temples that stand today. These temples were expertly carved using simple iron chisels and hammers.

Knowledge was taught in many schools. The world's first universities were built,

including Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramashila and Vallabhi. Students entered Takshashila at age 16 and studied the *Vedas* and the “eighteen arts and sciences,” which included medicine, surgery, astronomy, agriculture, accounting, archery and elephant lore. One could later specialize in medicine, law or military strategy. Nalanda was described by Hsuan-tsang as a center of advanced studies with 10,000 students and 2,000 teachers.

Indian medicine, *ayurveda*, developed sophisticated systems of disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment. Widely practiced today, this holistic system aims to create and preserve health, rather than just cure disease.

From the Gupta Empire onward, India witnessed a vast outpouring of literature in the form of plays, poems, songs and epics. Performing arts were noted for portraying the nine *rasas*, or emotions: love, humor, compassion, anger, heroism, fear, disgust, tranquility and wonder.

All these achievements created what historians call a “classical age.” India developed strong moral values and noble ethical principles. High standards of intellectual and artistic sophistication and refined patterns of living were set that served as models for following generations.

Section 2 Assessment

REVIEWING IDEAS, TERMS AND PEOPLE

- a. **Define:** What is Gross Domestic Product?
b. **Identify:** What country had the biggest GDP in the world for 1,000 years? What country was next richest?
- a. **Explain:** Where were cities and towns located?
b. **Analyze:** Who ran the city? Do you think this was a good system? Why?
c. **Contrast:** Give three ways that Indian villages were different from the cities.
- a. **Evaluate:** Do you think the system of *jatis* was a good system? How is it different from modern life?

FOCUS ON WRITING

- Analyze:** Why is this time a “classical age” in India?

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

elope

to run away and get married without parent's consent

itinerant

one who travels from place to place

ayurveda

Literally, “science of life,” a system of health and prevention of disease

City Life in South India

Translation by Alain Danielou

The Ankle Bracelet is an ancient Tamil poem. This excerpt describes the port city of Puhar during an annual Hindu festival. Puhar was typical of the port cities of our period.

AS YOU READ Try to visualize what the city looked and felt like.

The Sun appeared, peering over the eastern hills. He tore off the mantle of night, spread his warm and friendly rays over the pale Earth. The sunshine lighted up the open terraces, the harbor docks, the towers with their arched windows like the eyes of deer. In various quarters of the city the homes of ¹ wealthy Greeks were seen. Near the harbor, seamen from far-off lands appeared at home. In the streets hawkers were selling unguents, bath powders, cooling oils, flowers, perfume, incense. Weavers brought their fine silks and all kinds of fabrics made of wool or cotton. There were special streets for merchants of coral, sandalwood, myrrh, jewelry, faultless pearls, pure gold and precious gems.

In another quarter lived grain merchants, their stocks piled up in mounds. Washermen, bakers, vintners, fishermen and dealers in salt crowded the shops, where they bought betel nuts, perfume, sheep, oil, meat and bronzes. One could see coppersmiths, carpenters, goldsmiths, tailors, shoemakers and clever craftsmen making toys out of cork or rags, and expert musicians, who demonstrated their mastery in the seven-tone scale on the flute and the harp. Workmen displayed their skills in hundreds of small crafts. Each trade had its own street in the workers' quarter of the city.

At the center of the city were the wide royal street, the street of temple cars, the bazaar and the main street, where rich merchants had their mansions with high towers. There was a

street for priests, one for doctors, one for astrologers, one for peasants. In a wide passage lived the craftsmen who pierce gems and pearls for the jewelers. Nearby were those who make trinkets out of polished sea shells. In another quarter lived the coachmen, bards, dancers, astronomers, clowns, actresses, florists, betel-sellers, servants, *nadaswaram* players, drummers, jugglers and acrobats.

On the first day of spring, when the full moon is in Virgo, offerings of rice, cakes of sesame and brown sugar, meat, paddy, flowers and incense were brought by young girls, splendidly dressed, to the altar of the God who, at the bidding of Indra, king of heaven, had settled in the town to drive away all perils. As they went away from the altar, the dancers cried, "May the king and his vast empire never know famine, disease or dissension. May we be blessed with wealth—and when the season comes, with rains."

The people made merry on Indra's chosen day. Great rituals were performed in the temples of the Unborn Siva, of Murugan, the beauteous god of Youth, of Valiyon, brother of Krishna, of the dark Vishnu and of Indra himself, with His strings of pearls and His victorious parasol. A festive crowd invaded the precincts of the temple, where Vedic rituals, once revealed by the God Brahma, were faultlessly performed. The four orders of the Gods, the eighteen hosts of paradise and other celestial spirits were honored and worshiped. Temples of the Jains and their charitable institutions could be seen in the city. In public squares, priests were recounting stories from the scriptures of the ancient *Puranas*.



This 19th-century painting portrays a typical Indian food market. About 50 different items are for sale. *How many can you identify?*

GUIDED READING

Word Help

Tamil

Ancient language of South India

Puhar

A port city 240 kilometers south of modern Chennai

unguent

an ointment

bazaar

a large marketplace

- ¹ Greek merchants had homes in the city of Puhar.

Why do you think they were wealthy?

GUIDED READING

Word Help

nadaswaram

a high-pitched, double-reed wooden horn

paddy

unhusked rice

famine

extreme shortage of food

parasol

here, a highly decorated, ceremonial umbrella

- ² The city had both Hindu and Jain temples.

How does this show religious tolerance on the part of the citizens?

Understanding Original Sources

- Comparing:** The scenes described in this poem took place over 1,800 years ago. What are the similarities and differences between the people and activities portrayed here and those of a modern city?
- Analyzing:** In these times, each craft or trade was the work of a separate *jati*. How many *jatis* can you identify from the crafts and trades mentioned in this poem?

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Hinduism permeated the lives of India's people.
2. A great devotional movement developed during this time.
3. The Hindu religion made it possible for anyone to reach God.

The Big Idea

India's rulers and people held a tolerant attitude toward all religions.

Key Terms

religious harmony, p. 12
 Bhakti Movement, p. 13
 puja, p. 13
 Agama, p. 14
 Purana, p. 14

**HINDUISM TODAY'S
TEACHING STANDARDS**

8. Explain how Hindu kings maintained religious harmony.
9. Describe the Bhakti Movement and the importance of the *Puranas*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.
10. Describe the importance of the *Agamas* and the development of temple worship during this period.

Leading a Sacred Life

If YOU lived then...

It is your first visit to the thriving city of Puhar. When you arrive with your parents, you see not only Hindus but also Jains and Buddhists. You observe Buddhist monks debating philosophical points with Hindus, but afterwards all having snacks together as friends. The king of Madurai, you learn, is a Hindu, but he also shows his religious tolerance by supporting Jain temples and Buddhist monasteries.

What is the value of religious harmony?

BUILDING BACKGROUND: Physical evidence of ancient culture is sparse. Wood, paper and cloth disintegrate over time; bricks and stones are recycled. This makes it hard to answer some questions about history. But scientific methods such as carbon dating and DNA analysis are giving new data and correcting wrong theories about ancient times.

Leading a Sacred Life

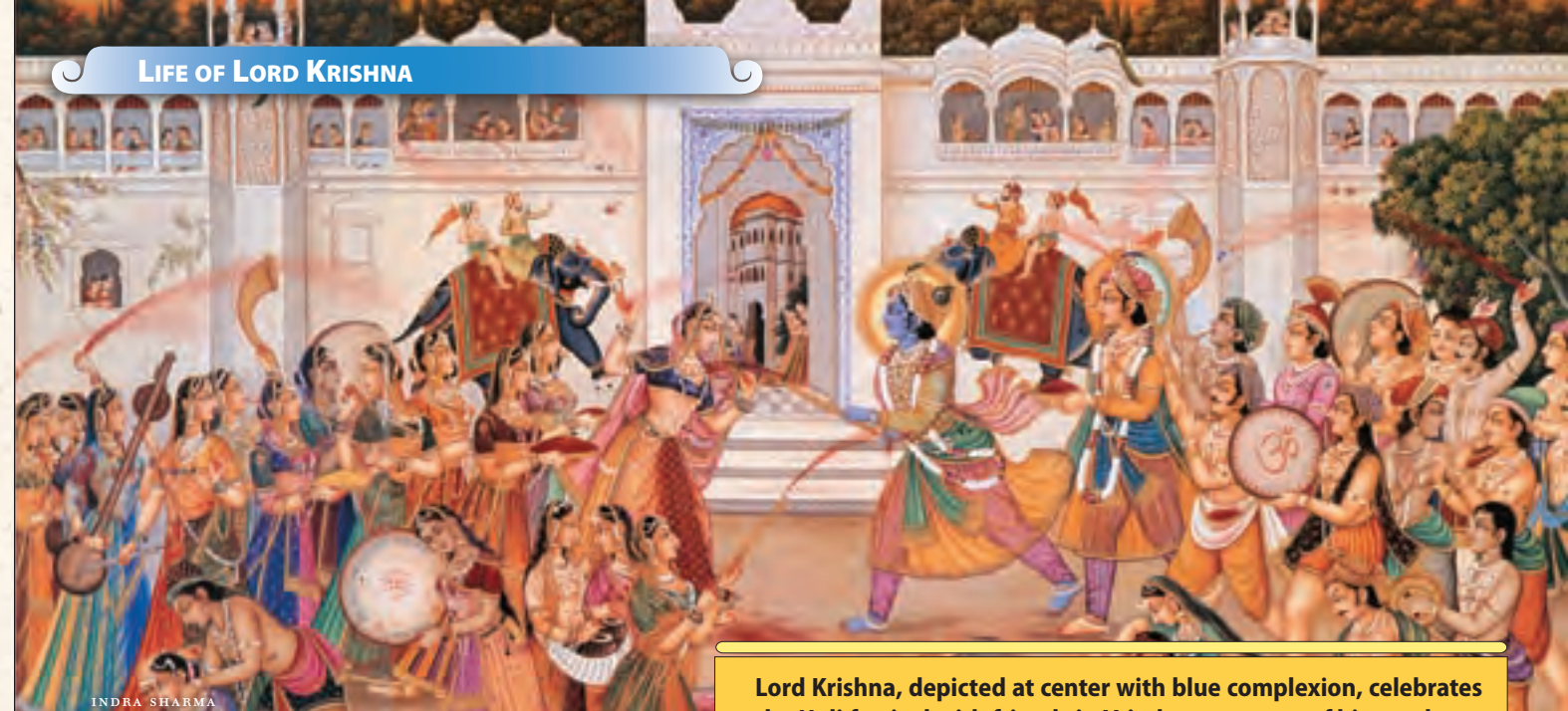
Daily life in villages and towns was guided by the principles of righteous living as taught in the Hindu scriptures. Every day began with a time of worship in the home shrine. Temples were the center of village and city life. Families visited them to worship God and participate in festivals and celebrations which were held throughout the year. Holy men and women were honored. One's daily work was considered sacred. The people respected all the religions.

Truth is One, paths are many

Most kings of this period were Hindus; some were Buddhists and Jains. With rare exceptions, all supported the various religions during their reign. A *Rig Veda* verse declares: *Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti*. "Truth is one, sages describe it variously." This means that there are different ways to speak of the One Truth that is God.

The Rashtrakuta rulers, for example, not only patronized Saivism and Vaishnavism, but also supported Jainism and Buddhism. Rulers of the period welcomed Christians, Jews, Muslims and Parsis and encouraged them to settle in their kingdoms and practice their faiths. This policy maintained religious harmony in society and even aided international trade.

LIFE OF LORD KRISHNA



Lord Krishna, depicted at center with blue complexion, celebrates the Holi festival with friends in Vrindavan, a town of his youth

Evolution of temple worship

From ancient times, Vedic fire worship rites, called *yajna*, had been practiced. Families continued to perform these rites at home each day. Rulers across India held spectacular Vedic ceremonies, including coronations and other royal celebrations. Scholars believe that the devotional worship of God and the Gods in small shrines existed alongside or even predated Vedic rites everywhere, especially in South India.

Since at least the third century bce, devotional worship became increasingly popular. It eventually became the central practice of Hinduism. Some small shrines evolved into great temples with more complex worship, called *puja*. *Puja* is the ritual offering of water, food, flowers and other sacred substances to the enshrined Deity. *Yajna* rites, Sanskrit chanting and verses from the *Vedas* were all incorporated into the temple rituals.

The Bhakti Movement

Many Hindu saints of this time preached the importance of devotion to God in what is called the Bhakti Movement. Adoration for God, known as *bhakti*, stresses one's personal relationship with the Divine as a love-centered path of spiritual advancement. It comple-

mented meditation and yoga, offering an all-embracing means to enlightenment and liberation from birth and rebirth through divine grace.

The most famous early saints of the Bhakti Movement are the Vaishnavite Alvars and the Saivite Nayanars. They came from all castes and were a voice for equality. Four of the Nayanars enjoy prominence to this day: Appar, Sundarar, Sambandar and Manikkavasagar.

While pilgrimaging from temple to temple, the Nayanars composed poems and songs in praise of the loving God Siva. These became part of a massive body of scripture called the *Tirumurai*. These passionate hymns, composed in the Tamil language, remain popular today in South India. Saints emerged all over India composing devotional songs to Siva, Vishnu, Krishna, Rama and Devi in local languages. There was a massive response to this stirring call of divine bliss.

Great teachers and philosophers, such as Ramanuja and Yamunacharya, were critical to the Bhakti Movement. They explained how to relate to God through worship.

THE IMPACT TODAY

Hindu temple worship continues to be performed in modern times, using Sanskrit chanting and following instructions from the *Agama* scriptures.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

adoration

deep love and respect

Saivite

worshiper of Siva

Vaishnavite

worshiper of Vishnu

Rock-Cut Temple

The Kailasa Temple to Lord Siva at Ellora, Maharashtra, in West India, was begun in the 8th century by Rashtrakuta King Krishna I and completed by his successor. Amazingly, it was carved out of a solid mountain of rock. It took the stone workers 100 years to remove 200,000 tons of rock. The temple, measuring 160 feet by 280 feet, was created in the South Indian style by architects of that region. It was designed to resemble Mount Kailasa, the Himalayan home of God Siva. Along the same rock cliff are 34 caves that were excavated from the solid rock between the 5th and 10th centuries. They served as monasteries and temples. Twelve were built for the Buddhists, 17 for Hindus and five for Jains. The fact that these were all built in the same complex testifies to the religious harmony and diversity of the period.

ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING INFORMATION

Why do you think the king went to so much time and expense to build this large temple?



ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

assimilation

the absorption and integration of a people, idea, religion or culture into a society

guru
teacher

epic
a long poem about heroic deeds and people

Adi Shankara

The guru Adi Shankara (788-820) developed the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta during this time. In summary, his philosophy can be stated as: “Brahman (the Supreme Being) is the only truth. The world is an appearance. There is ultimately no difference between Brahman and the *atma*, or individual soul.” He taught this philosophy across India. He established four monastic centers which remain influential today. His teachings and the Bhakti Movement together brought back many Jains and Buddhists to Hinduism.

Temple worship

All over India great Hindu temples were built or expanded between 300 and 1100 ce. Many are at the center of large cities, such as Varanasi on the Ganga in the North, and Madurai in the South, and remain powerful places of worship.

In the temples, the people worshiped

their chosen Deity with great devotion and paid respects to the many other enshrined Deities. The priest conducted the holy rituals, but did not stand between the devotee and God.

Temple worship was defined in great detail in the *Agamas* and parts of the *Puranas*. The refined art of building with stone, brick and other materials was the subject of the *Vastu Shastras*. These books on architecture cover temple design, town planning and house construction. All these texts are in Sanskrit. The *Agamas* include rituals and Sanskrit chants for every act connected with the temple, from its conception and construction to the details of daily worship.

Temples were central to the social and economic life of the community. Large temples also served as centers for education and training in music and dance. Over the centuries, many temples acquired agricultural land and great wealth. During festivals, thousands of people pilgrimaged

to the famous temples. This flow of visitors helped the local economy and spread cultural practices and religious belief.

The Purana Scriptures

Puranas are dedicated to a particular Deity. Each contains a description of the origin of the universe, lists of kings, Hindu philosophy and traditional stories about the Gods and Goddesses. Among the most important *Puranas* are the *Bhagavata*, *Vishnu*, *Siva* and the *Markandeya*, especially for its *Devi Mahatmya* section. The *Bhagavata* narrates the greatness of Lord Vishnu and His ten avatars, of whom the two most important are Lord Rama and Lord Krishna. The *Siva Purana* extols the four-fold path leading to oneness with Lord Siva: service, worship, yoga and wisdom. It also explains *Namah Sivaya*, regarded by Saivites as the most sacred of mantras.

The *Puranas* record an important feature of Hinduism, the assimilation of different ethnic and religious groups. They tell us that earlier migrants into India, such as the Greeks, Persians and central Asian peoples, including the Hunas, had been completely absorbed into Indian society and Hindu religion. Various tribes were also brought into the mainstream and their beliefs and practices assimilated. The stories of these people are recorded in the *Puranas*.

Ramayana and Mahabharata

You read in chapter one about the two great historical tales of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. These epics were revised into their present form and gained popularity all over India, and beyond, during our period. They played a crucial role in the development of devotional Hinduism. Unlike the *Vedas*, which could be understood only by those who studied Sanskrit, the epics were retold into local languages. Drama, dance, song, painting and sculpture

based on the epics became the main means of teaching the Hindu way of life.

During our period, Hinduism and Buddhism spread to Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand. It was made popular in these countries through the epics and other Sanskrit texts.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The time from 300 to 1100 ce was a golden age in India. Its prosperity, stability and religious harmony encouraged scientific and artistic achievements that set standards for the entire world. Devotional Hinduism developed in a powerful manner. Through songs and stories, it brought Hindu principles and values into the languages of the common people. Temples became popular centers for worship of Gods and Goddesses. The *Puranas*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* provided an abundant library of history, philosophy, religious practices and moral teachings in stories that were passed from generation to generation. This great devotional tradition inspired and sustained the people in their daily life, as it continues to do today.

Section 3 Assessment

REVIEWING IDEAS, TERMS AND PEOPLE

- Explain:** How did Hindu rulers show tolerance?
 - Define:** What is bhakti?
 - Elaborate:** What is the purpose of the temple priest?
- List:** Name three important *Puranas*.
- Explain:** What does *assimilation* mean?
 - List:** What peoples were assimilated into Hindu society?
- Explain:** What is the Bhakti Movement?
 - Explain:** What caste did its saints belong to?
 - Elaborate:** What are the ways the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are presented today?

FOCUS ON WRITING

- Explain:** Why do you think the Bhakti Movement became popular all across India?

THE IMPACT TODAY

The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* continue to enrich religious life. They have even been made into popular movies and TV programs.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

avatar

the Supreme Being appearing in human form

yoga

practices that bring union with God

mantra

sacred sound

DIRECTIONS: READ EACH QUESTION AND CIRCLE THE LETTER OF THE BEST RESPONSE

- The Indian subcontinent was united as a one country by:
 - Hindu religion, customs and the Sanskrit language
 - The Buddhist Pala kings of Northeast India
 - Outside invaders who conquered the subcontinent
 - A confederation of rulers
- From 300 to 1100 ce, India comprised about what percent of the world population?
 - 5%
 - 15%
 - 25%
 - 35%
- What were the Guptas not famous for?
 - Advances in art, science and technology
 - Creating a pan-Indian empire
 - Suppressing the Buddhist and Jain religions
 - A prosperous economy with strong foreign trade
- Why did Mahmud of Ghazni invade India?
 - To remove unjust Hindu kings from power
 - To establish his own pan-India empire
 - To seek revenge for an Indian invasion of his country
 - For plunder and the expansion of Islam
- Which is the correct list of GDPs for our period?
 - India 50%, China 25%, Europe 5%
 - India 20%, China 20%, Europe 20%
 - India 11%, China 25%, Europe 30%
 - India 30%, China 25%, Europe 11%
- The cities of India were ruled by whom?
 - A council representing the major interest groups
 - A council elected by vote of all residents
 - A hereditary ruler
 - A military general
- What is a *jati*?
 - A priest, warrior, merchant or worker
 - A group following the same hereditary occupation
 - A group of foreign sailors
 - A group assigned to an occupation by the king
- Hindu villages were in close contact because:
 - Runners daily delivered news from village to village
 - Many women married into families of nearby villages
 - People wrote letters to each other frequently
 - Villages met monthly
- Why was our time period considered a “classical age?”
 - Greeks ruled India throughout this time
 - Great Hindu kings conquered areas outside of India
 - India’s advances in knowledge and development of refined patterns of living
 - The land was very prosperous
- The city of Puhar described in the poem, *Ankle Bracelet*:
 - Was a city intolerant of religions other than Hinduism
 - Was an underdeveloped city
 - Was home to many merchants and craftsmen
 - Had little to offer by way of entertainment
- Which of these religious groups were welcomed in India?
 - Muslims
 - Jews and Christians
 - Parsis
 - All of the above
- Why is the Kailasa Temple in Ellora unusual?
 - It was built from 10,000 granite blocks
 - It was carved out of solid rock
 - It was the largest clay brick structure in India
 - Though made of wood, it lasted 500 years
- The Bhakti Movement was based on:
 - Rules set by the brahmin caste
 - Temple worship, scriptures and devotional songs
 - The religions of Buddhism and Jainism
 - A royal command of the Rashtrakuta rulers
- The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* influenced:
 - Mainly the community of merchants
 - Only the people of the Indo-Gangetic Plain region of India
 - Mostly South India
 - All of India and countries in Southeast Asia

Internet Resources: Go to <http://www.hinduismtoday.com/education/> for a PDF version of this chapter, as well as Chapter One, “Hinduism from Ancient Times,” with clickable links to resources. Also at the same

URL are additional teaching resources and letters of endorsement from academics and community leaders. To order additional copies of this educational insight, go to <http://www.minimela.com/booklets/>.

TRADITION



Arboreal Treasures

Protecting India’s sacred groves preserves both religious tradition and biodiversity

BY TIRTHO BANERJEE,
LUCKNOW, UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

ALL OVER INDIA THERE ARE HALLOWED woods venerated by the local people who love and respect their power. The trees are held pristine and dedicated to local Deities, ancestral spirits or nature devas. These sanctuaries are protected by villagers and honored in simple rituals and traditions upheld by generations too many to remember. And in a thoroughly Indian marriage of modern and primordial, scientists have been discovering that they hold a treasure-trove of notable plants and invaluable genetic resources. Recently, a rare medicinal plant, last seen by scholars 115 years ago, was found in Arunachal Pradesh. This was no surprise to the villagers, who use the *Begonia tesaricarpa* to treat stomach ache and dehydration. Conservative estimates list 700 such rare plant species, some of which may hold priceless cures.

Some of India’s sacred groves are protected by traditional rules which prohibit the collection of any material, be it wood, food or small plants. It is believed that transgressions will prompt a withdrawal of the presiding Deity’s protective blessings and unleash natural calamities. These forests, having never been encroached upon by man, are a special find

in a subcontinent that has nurtured a vast civilization for thousands of years. Most groves have less stringent rules, and serve as resource forests where people gather products for their sustenance while still honoring nature and its devas.

It is estimated that 150,000 sacred groves adorn India. Called *devarkans* in Karnataka, *kavusands* in Kerala and having many other local names, they are part of the identity and religion of those who live near them. History has it that 363 Bishnois died in 1730, fighting to protect oran trees from wood cutters near Jodhpur. The Tamil poet Nakira asserts that Lord Murugan is found



A living shrine: Deities are placed at the base of a sacred tree, building on its natural power with simple forms of traditional worship

near any place surrounded by water and groves. Ayyappa, Aiyandar and Sasta are other Divine beings who come from forest havens. Village patron Deities, *gramadevatas*, often do not have formal temples but are worshiped at an auspicious tree or plant.

Numerous temples began as sacred tree shrines, developing traditions and a life of their own. Siva revealed His cosmic dance when saints Vyagrapada and Patanjali worshiped in a remote forest of tillai trees. Today the forest is long since gone, but the large and famous Chidambaram temple that stands in its place is still called Tillai by poets. Sacred trees

may thrive for centuries. Near Puthukottai, saint Manickavasagar established the mystical Avudaiyar Temple at a sacred kuthurai tree. In this rare south-facing temple, Siva is revered in His transcendent aspect, represented by an invisible *Sivalingam* said to exist atop the base, or *avudaiyar*, which is the only visible icon in the inner sanctum. In consonance, the *prasadam*, or blessed food, given out after puja is merely the steam arising from a bowl of cooked rice that the priest passes among the devotees. The kuthurai tree honored by saint Manickavasagar 1,300 years ago still there.

Under British rule, the India Forest Act of 1878 accorded the groves no religious significance and curtailed people’s rights to their use. Today, agriculture and population pressure are pushing back the borders of native forests and, in the villages, many of the younger generation regard notions of their priceless spiritual heritage as uncultured superstition.

The symbiotic relation between groves and indigenous peoples is the subject of an emerging science called *ethnoforestry*. This symbiosis—found in cultures from Ecuador to Indonesia to Turkey—approaches perfection in India. The challenge now is to continue protecting her sacred groves and not allow them to be exploited and destroyed for the priceless treasures that they contain.

Growing a temple: A sanctified thread is tied around the tree, marking it as sacred. Here simple aratis are performed by villagers. Bells rung by the wind sing along with the rustling of leaves.



DINODIA

EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

Fabric Begets Fashion

The Indian sari remains the pinnacle of weaving skill and designer apparel

WITH TUCKS AND PLEATS, flowing folds and knotted ties, Hindus have for fifty centuries fashioned impeccable apparel from lengths of unstitched cloth. Ranging from simple body coverings to masterfully embroidered works of weaving and wearing, the sari is without question the reigning queen of the world's traditional dresses. No attire elicits images of India more strongly than the sari, and no other culture's costume has remained in vogue longer—over 5,000 years. While the sari soars in social circles, the time-worn garbs of other world cultures, such as Japanese kimonos, have largely faded from public view—usurped by Western garb and scuttled to museum displays or limited to ceremonial occasions. In contrast, the sari, still the daily dress of most village Indians and the preferred attire of millions of urbanites, is now the rave in big-city clothing cliques around the globe. It commands the respect and admiration of chic designers who revere the silken swath of cloth as a fashion stalwart, an icon that has transcended time's trendiness. What has saved the sari from extinction is its exceptional quality of being ever open to the creative inspiration of its wearer. While tailored clothes are strictly one-way-forward, up or down, and either casual or formal, the sari stretches beyond such limitations. A single unstitched weave can become an entire wardrobe, all depending upon the chosen



SHUTTERSTOCK

methods of draping. No other garb has such a range of possibilities. In this educational Insight, we explore the global popularity of this timeless attire and present some excellent resources about the sari and the fine art of draping.

Traditional and modern, *the* garment of India tours the world in flying colors

BY LAVINA MELWANI, NEW YORK

AT A BIG SOCIETY WEDDING IN DELHI, EVERYONE WAS dressed in the latest budget-busting designer outfits, yet all eyes were on a young girl dressed in a rich, bluish-pink Varanasi sari with intricate floral motifs. This one-of-a-kind cloth had cost her nothing, for it had been part of her mother's trousseau thirty years ago. Instead of having gone stale and out of style with age, it was the cynosure of all eyes, a treasure which had grown more valuable with time.

Who would have thought that six yards of fabric could be a synonym for elegance, beauty and style? The sari is the world's longest-running fashion story, as relevant today as it was hundreds of years

ago. While the sari shares space in a modern woman's wardrobe with the popular salwar kameez (also known as the Punjabi suit, consisting of trousers and a long top) and Western pants, it is still the garment of choice for many, be it a washerwoman, an urban working woman or a high-society socialite.

While Western dress has made inroads into almost every Asian culture, with traditional garments like the Japanese kimonos and Chinese cheongsams being reserved for ceremonial wear, the sari is a living garment, a part of the daily lives of women in the Indian subcontinent, from Nepal to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Practical and always in style, it is a forgiving garment that conceals a woman's imperfections and enhances her special qualities.

Even for a young, 21st century girl, draping a sari for the first time is the ultimate coming-of-age experience.

Author and folk-art historian Jasleen Dhamija describes in her book, *Handwoven Fabrics of India*, how "The most intimate element in a person's external being is the cloth with which one wraps oneself or one's loved ones. It is also closely associated with inner life and the stages through which a person passes. Though the rituals are similar, their enactment and the fabrics used in them are quite distinctive. Saris were bought during the Dipavali festival, and the whole family participated in the yearly visit of the family weaver to the house, for saris traditionally were never bought off a shelf."

"Weavers came from the weaving centers of Thanjavur, Kumbhakonam, Kanchipuram and Dharamavaram, bringing samples of new designs, colors and different qualities of silk. Families of weavers worked over generations with large joint families. Every village or center had a distinct style which a connoisseur could distinguish."

While the sari lives on in villages and cities, young innovative designers in India now give it fresh life and a new twist for the new generation. In India there are about 15 established labels, such as

Rohit Bal, J.J. Valaya, Rina Dhaka, Suneet Varma, Tarun Tahiliani, Sandip Khosla and Ritu Kumar. These designers have revitalized the sari, adding heavily embroidered blouses to plain cloth, or restyling the *pallav* (the portion of the sari which covers the bodice and falls over the shoulder) to give a new look to the sari. There's even been the zip-on sari for girls who may have trouble handling all those pleats! At fancy weddings many women drape the sari in Gujarati style or *seedha* (straight) *pallav* (the *pallav* is taken from the back to front instead of being taken from front to back)—considered high style by the fashion-conscious.

India's designers, adroit in Western styles and fashion, still take great pride in ethnic traditions, and their offerings often echo embroideries and designs of earlier craftsmen, celebrating India's cultural heritage. There are designer saris with scenes from the *Mahabharata* or *Ramayana* embroidered on the *pallav* (the ending border of the sari), or entire village portrayals in Bengali *kantha* work (running stitch embroidery used on decorated quilts). There is a kind of visual poetry in these saris, which are often woven by Muslim artisans for Hindu brides. Some of the best embroiderers in



The Sari, Always in Vogue



Weaving apprentices stretch six-yard lengths of newly made saris to dry on the steps along the river Ganga in Varanasi. Inset, at a wedding in Mumbai, seven women from India, Asia and the US show off their treasured attire outside the Jhole Lal temple. Each wears a distinctive design and draping style.



HENK JACOBS

Luminous elegance: It's 7am in the Madurai Meenakshi Temple. A local pilgrim basks in the early sunlight's mellow glow. A perfect example of the modern nivi drape, which has become a universal style for Indian women.

India are Muslim, who can even reproduce the intricate *pieta dura* work found on the Taj Mahal. Saris tell stories—of the *Ramayana*, of folk lore and mythical heroes and carry verses from the *Vedas*. Ganesha—the auspicious one—is popular on sari *pallavs*.

As Indians have spread around the world, they have taken the sari with them. Saris are a common sight in London, Johannesburg, Trinidad, Toronto, San Francisco, Hong Kong and Singapore. In places as far flung as Mauritius and Nigeria, saris are a part of the landscape. In fact, saris are big business in countries like Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan, countries that produce bolts of synthetics like chiffon, satin and nylon which are bought in six-yard lengths by Indians to use as saris. These are also exported to many countries and find their way to the Little Indias of the US, UK and Dubai.

Saris in America: Sari shops thrive in many Indian enclaves in America. Among the largest is India Sari Palace in New York, with a vast inventory from India as well as Japan. Many Indian communities here, such as the Gujarati, wear mostly saris, so there is a constant demand. Just looking at the stores in Little Indias across the nation indicates the sari is thriving. In the 60s, many women were reluctant to wear saris in the US, afraid they would stand out. But in today's multicultural America, there seems to be a growing pride in one's ethnic roots. While some Indian women working in corporate society may still prefer to wear Western dress to fit in, others in less structured jobs—film editors, writers, travel agents—often wear salwar kameez or saris to work.

Many especially wear saris to evening events. After all, there is nothing quite as graceful as the sari, especially for evening wear. While styles and lengths of the salwar kameez fluctuate with alarming regularity, a sari is always in style. Traditional saris from different regions have a beauty all their own and are timeless.

Kavita Lund, a wife, mother and accountant living in New York, has a sizable collection of saris and enjoys the grace it imparts. She, like most of her friends, wears the more practical pants and salwar kameez during the day and saves the saris for special occasions and evening events. Her 19-year-old daughter, Monisha, born and brought up in the US, is just as fascinated by saris, though she wears only the trendy designer styles. These modern incarnations of the sari would probably make any great-grandmother faint—the stomach is completely exposed and the *pallav* is wrapped nonchalantly around the neck, leaving the bodice bare. Dr. Manjula Bansal, a pathologist at the Hospital for Special Surgery and the Cornell University Medical Center in New York, has a large collection of saris from every part of India and wears them with great pride. Even when she was a medical resident, she wore a bindi on her forehead and saris to her workplace, riding on the subway. Now she wears the more practical salwar kameez to work, but always dresses in saris for social events, be it an Indian or a mainstream gathering.

Bansal, who was involved with funding of the India Chair at Columbia University and with other mainstream cultural organizations, finds her sari a great ice-breaker at international gatherings. Her treasured saris are always great for conversation. She says, "Not only is a sari beautiful, but it is a story in fabric, depicting religious and social beliefs, and it shows good omens for a good life. Every craftsman puts his identity into it. You don't have to be beautiful to feel beautiful in a sari. It

brings out your inner beauty and grace."

So many styles: In all countries, dress usually indicates religion, social position, ethnicity, wealth and regional origin. While this is still mostly true in India, some urban Indian women and those living abroad do wear a cross-section of saris from different regions, and are certainly more Indian than regional in their perspectives.

Women have a rich array of saris to choose from, including handloom saris from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, silk brocades from Varanasi and Kanchipuram, *jamdani* (fine, transparent cotton muslin) from West Bengal, cotton saris from Kota in

Rajasthan, *patolas* (elaborate, five-color design) and *ikat* (special dye process) from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. For those living abroad, a trip to India means a new wardrobe, since the variety of fabrics in Indian cities is so vast.

Interestingly enough, just as there are fakes in art and jewelry, there are fakes in saris. Today it's easy to be taken for a ride because technology has improved so much. For example, saris with artificial gold look identical to those with real gold threads, the difference in price being a hefty Rs. 10,000 at least.

Advances in India's textile technology have made saris more

India's Ten Top-Selling Saris

India remains the best place in the world to shop for saris. Rajiv Malik of Delhi, our HINDUISM TODAY correspondent and an expert in fabrics, composed this list of ten most popular saris after consulting with Mr. Vishnu Manglani, a leader in India's national sari business. Prices are in US dollars.

- 1 Gadwals:** Cotton with separately woven and attached silk borders and *pallavs*. Made in Andhra Pradesh. \$25–130.
- 2 Tancois:** Pure silk with intricately woven *pallavs* and borders. Variety of designs used. Made in Varanasi. \$130–400.
- 3 Bumkais:** Silk yarn, made in Orissa. Yarn is dyed so that, when woven, patterns appear in various colors. \$20–125.
- 4 South Handlooms:** Like Kanjivarams, but they cost less. Bangalore made. Jari and silk borders and *pallavs*. \$90–300.
- 5 Printed:** Silk, hand printed on three materials: silk, crepe and chiffon. Comfortable for party or home wear \$65–130.
- 6 Tangails:** Fine cotton, hand-woven in Calcutta. Traditional Bengali designs. It gets softer with each washing. \$10–100.
- 7 Cotton Handlooms:** Hand-woven in Coimbatore. Elegant for summer wear. Rich and crisp. Need much care. \$20–50.
- 8 Valkalams:** Pure silk, woven in Varanasi to depict folk art scenes. Special handlooms can weave 25 colors. \$90–400.
- 9 Kanjivarams:** Finest handloom silk, specialty of Tamil Nadu. Also called heirlooms. Pure jari-woven borders. \$130–1500.
- 10 Chanderis:** Made with silk and cotton yarn in Madhya Pradesh. Saris are lightweight, ideal for summer. \$20–125.



DEV KUMAR

Let's shop: Astute shoppers travel to stores like this one in India for all-natural saris

affordable and easy to maintain for working women. Synthetic saris made in powerful industrial mills are attractively priced and don't need heavy ironing or care. The flip side is that this has endangered the livelihood of village craftspeople who can take many months on a loom to produce a single sari. As one old weaver told Bansal when she visited his dilapidated, almost shut-down workshop, "People are impatient nowadays, and they can get ten machine-made saris for the price of one hand-woven sari. They don't want to wait or spend the money."

Fads and experiments: Recently the New York Fashion Institute of Technology showed the 1940s saris of Princess Niloufer, an Ottoman princess who married the son of the Nizam of Hyderabad. She made the traditional sari her own by giving it a Western touch through decoration and the placement of motifs. Her saris were ornamented with sequins, beads and metallic embroidery on chiffon, crepe and net, with the floral designs falling in the front or over the left shoulder. Many of these saris were designed by a Frenchman, Fernande Cecire,



Manly drape : Young men performing Ganga Puja at Dasaswamedh Ghat on the banks of India's holy Ganga River in Varanasi

and embroidered in India. This is reminiscent of the days of the British Raj, when Indian princesses traveled to Paris and had saris designed by French couturiers.

Saris, with their golden threads, intricate embroidery and innate romance, have always attracted Westerners. Glimmerings of Indian inspiration appeared in the West in the 1920s when Madame Gres, a renowned Paris designer, showed sari-inspired styles in her collection. Western passion for Indian fashions can be traced to the British Raj, when socialites in London, New York and Paris were smitten by Indian fabrics and embroidery. Famous Western designers were deeply influenced. Those who have used saris and Indian fabrics in their collections include Mary McFadden, Oscar de la Renta, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Norma Kamali and Anna Sui.

Recently, British designer Paul Smith did an entire collection based on India, including men's shirts created out of saris. When Indian designer

Rohit Bal's mother saw this collection, she said plaintively to her son, "What's all this nonsense about? I used to make shirts like this for you when you were young, and you never wore them!" To which Bal retorted, "I'm sorry, mom, but that was you. This is Paul Smith!"

While some Westerners fashion saris into everything from pillow covers to tablecloths to evening dresses, others actually wear them, a memento of their Indian adventure. Some designers use it to outrageous effect. John Galliano was once spotted at a society gala in New York wearing a silk sari with a short tuxedo jacket and dress shoes. Supermodel Naomi Campbell wore a sari at the MTV Music Awards, and Goldie Hawn, a great fan of India, often wears saris to social events. The Duchess of York was presented with a green Varanasi silk sari by Prince Andrew. Legendary ceramist Beatrice Wood, who died at 105, wore nothing but saris and Indian jewelry for the last several decades of her life. And pop icon Madonna is very much into



High fashion: A Yama fabrics model displays the opulent refinement of the maker's elegant weaves

Indian saris, *mehndi* and meditation in her CD, "Ray of Light."

For mainstream Americans, the sari is still an exotic garment, a costume to transport them to another world. In fact, Magic Markers Costumes, a Halloween costume supply house in Huntington, West Virginia, offers a sari for rental, along with blouse and petticoat, for US\$45. Their website: www.magicmakers.com, shows an American woman draped in a sari.

Fads come and go, but the sari survives them all. As Bansal points out, "One wants to be noticed, especially in a crowd, but why ape the West? The sari creates an instant identity for you, and I think that's what most people are looking for, whether you are a CEO or a physician or you're trying to make a mark. The sari says a lot about you."

The Remarkable Indian Art of Draping

While there are many detailed studies of India's textile and sari-making industries, only one recent study has focused primarily upon the diverse ways saris are worn. In 1997, French anthropologist Chantal Boulanger [see her story on page 64] published a landmark work, *Saris: An Illustrated Guide to the Indian Art of Draping*. Her efforts are a significant step towards categorizing and preserving sari draping styles, some of which may be known only by a few elderly ladies in each region. The following overview is drawn from her work. See page 62 for definitions.

By CHANTAL BOULANGER, FRANCE

THE MOST ANCIENT RECORDED INDIAN DRAPE, EXCLUDING those of the Harappa civilization, is a dhoti. Buddha's lay followers, such as Ashoka and the men and women represented on the stupa of Bharhut (Madhya Pradesh, 2nd century bce), wore elaborately pleated dhotis. Nowadays, dhotis are still worn by men all over India. They require a piece of cloth which seems longer and larger than what was worn in the past, but their pleating is often simpler, and they are no longer adorned with belts. There are several styles which reflect personal taste and/or occupation, such as the classic, priest, Andhra, Marwari and the Chettiyar dhotis.

In the past, women wore dhotis just as men did. But from the 14th century onwards, women's clothes started to develop in a very different way from those of men. The number of yards required increased and the shawl that sometimes covered the shoulders was transformed into the upper part of the sari—the *mundanai*. By the 19th century, the colonial attitudes imported from Victorian Britain considered dhotis to be indecent for women, and women in some castes modified the drape so that it covered their chest.

Dravidian saris, which are the basis of the modern sari, are draped in two parts. The *veshti* (from the Sanskrit verb *vesh*, meaning "to cover," "wrap around" or "to roll") covers the lower part of the body.

It is supplemented by a separate *mundanai* or *mundu*. The draping of the *veshti* is simple and virtually universal. Most people all over the world use this drape to wrap a bath towel around themselves. Various forms of *veshtis* were worn in India, and are represented on many sculptures and paintings from numerous places as early as the 2nd century bce. *Veshtis* are commonly worn by men in India's two southernmost states, and also by women in Kerala. It is a common drape in many countries of Southeast Asia.

It was probably not earlier than the 19th century when women joined both pieces of cloth, thus creating many elaborate new drapes. The draping of Tamil saris did not change much from that of the *veshti-mundanai*, except that this new fashion had one big inconvenience. When walking, the sari was pulled upwards by the *mundanai*, revealing the legs. Women in each region of Tamil Nadu found their own solutions, and adapted their draping in order to remain "decent," thus spawning a great variety of styles.

Most saris fit into families, which means they follow certain basic ways of being draped. There are four main families: the dhoti family, the Dravidian sari, *nivi* saris and tribal saris. There are also sub-families and a few smaller families. The *dhoti* family includes men's *dhotis*, women's *dhotis* and South Indian Brahmin saris. Dravidian saris include *veshtis*, Tamil saris, Eastern saris and Santal saris. The *nivi* saris are modern saris, *kaccha* saris and upper *kaccha* saris (the Sanskrit word *kaccha* means "pleats" or "pleats tucked between the legs"). The tribal family consists of high *veshti* tribal saris and right-shoulder tribal saris. The smaller families are the Gond-related saris, Lodhi saris, drapes with *nivi* and Dravidian influences and unique saris. Some drapes could fit within two families, such as the Gauda sari, which is at the same time tribal and *kaccha*. On the other hand, several drapes do not fit anywhere.

The drape which is now considered to be the Indian sari, called *nivi*, has never been represented on any ancient painting or

The four main families of sari drape: (clockwise from upper left) Marvari, Dravidian, Nivi and Tribal.

sculpture. Whereas *dhotis* and *veshtis* were commonplace in the past, *nivi* saris seem to have been nonexistent.

The *nivi* family is by far the most widespread. These saris are now worn all over India, as well as in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan, not to speak of the Indian communities living abroad. In Rajasthan, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, where stitched clothes are traditionally worn, *nivis* are becoming increasingly popular. In Sri Lanka, it has become the compulsory sari of government employees, rather than the more typical Ceylonese sari. It has influenced Western stylists and evokes for most European women a vision of flowing beauty and elegance.

Every drape requires a piece of cloth of a specific length and width. For instance, it is impossible to make a Marwari sari with six yards; nine yards are needed. Each region of India has developed textiles woven in the dimensions fitting the local drapes. But apart from the size of the cloth, almost all saris can be tied with any kind of textile.

When at home or working, women wear cotton or synthetic fabrics. When going to a function or an event, they often dress up with a silk sari. Most of the time, the draping is the same whatever the textile. While there are festive and daily drapes, a festive drape can be worn with a beautiful



The Marvari Draping Style



The Dravidian Style



A Tribal Style



The Nivi Style

silk, polyester or cotton sari, and one might wear an old silk sari with a daily drape. Both textile and drape are independently influenced by fashion. Stylists are mostly concerned with the fabric and the form of the *choli*, or blouse, but sometimes the adventurous introduce new drapes, too. Cotton always provides the best sari drape. Once folded and tucked, cotton stays in place, and doesn't require anything to hold it. For weighty or slick cloths, such as silk, a pin or a clip might be used to hold the pleats and to keep from having to readjust the drape all the time. Just as in painting or playing a musical instrument, it takes training and practice to wear a sari perfectly. Saris are fun to wear. They can be tried by anyone, and more

styles can be created. They are the expression of women's creativity, and there is for each woman one drape that suits her perfectly. Often it is not the modern sari.

Stylish leaders: (Left) Dressed in a red, silk sari, Indra Nooyi, C.E.O of Pepsi, presents awards at the India Abroad Publisher's Event in 2007. Indra was ranked by *Forbes* magazine as the fourth most powerful woman in the world and the number one most powerful woman in business. Recipient of the Special Award for Excellence, dressed in a yellow sari, was Renu Khator, president and chancellor of the University of Houston and its 56,000 students.



Definitions

Choli: a usually tight-fitting blouse often worn with a sari.
Dhoti: usually white, a five-yard long, four-foot high weave, normally made of light cotton, having little or no borders and *pallavs*. These are worn by men all over India, except in Tamil Nadu and Kerala where only Brahmins drape them.
Lower border: the edge touching the feet when the sari is first tied.
Mundanai: the part of the sari, starting from the *pallav* but significantly longer, that is thrown over the upper body.
Mundi: a Tamil word meaning *pallav*, or border; the *mundi* is the *pallav* at the other end of the sari, less elaborate, where the colors of the body and the borders usually mix. Draping often begins with this *pallav*.
Mundu: a smaller piece of cloth often used to cover the head or

thrown over the shoulder. This word usually translates as *towel*.
Pallav: the most decorated end-part, which is thrown over the shoulder.
Upper border: the highest border when the sari is first tied, generally used for the knot in closings.

A sari's two dimensions are **length**, which may range from two to nine yards, and **height**, which may range from two to four feet.

Recommended resources: *Saris: An Illustrated Guide to the Indian Art of Draping*, by Chantal Boulanger, Shakti Press International, Post Office Box 267, New York, NY 10276-0267; *The Sari: Styles, Patterns History, Techniques*, By Linda Lynton, Harry Abrams Publishers, 100 Fifth Avenue,

New York, NY 10011-6903; *Ikat Textiles of India*, by Chelna Desai, Chronicle Books, 275 Fifth Avenue, San Francisco, California 94118-2307; *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*, By Emma Tarlo, University of Chicago Press, 5801 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

Draping a Sari

Of the more than eighty styles of sari drapes documented by Chantal Boulanger, the *nivi* sari is the most widely used style in the world. The following instructions are from her book, *Saris: An Illustrated Guide to the Indian Art of Draping*. For newcomers to draping saris, here is a word of advice from Sheela Venkatakrishnan of Chennai.



1 This sari is draped counter-clockwise. Start by making a knot on the right side of the abdomen with the upper corner of the *mundi* and the upper border, after passing it around the waist.

All *nivi* saris start from the same basis, with little differences when tucking the pleats. All modern saris require six yards of cloth. If a petticoat is worn, an alternative to tying a knot for the closing is to tuck the upper corner of the *mundi* in the petticoat on the right side of the abdomen.



2 Take the upper border, pass it and tuck it around the waistline counter-clockwise, making a small pleat first on the left hip, and then on the right hip. Finally tuck the upper border over the middle or the left side of the abdomen (depending on whether you want the front pleats to fall straight or in a fanlike shape).

Most women tuck the pleats over the right side of the abdomen, so that they fall in the middle, but others tuck them in the middle, their fall being over the left side. If the pleats are to fall really straight, the first and last ones should be larger, and a small pleat should be made on the right hip before the main pleats, toward the right.

3 Pass the sari around the body once, let it fall and take the *pallav* to drape the *mundanai*. It is essential not to follow our instinct to drape the sari from one end to the other, since the front pleats—the most characteristic part of *nivi* saris—are made with the cloth left between the drape of the sari's closing and its *mundanai*.



4 Take the *pallav*, either pleated in height or by its upper corner, pass it (at the waistline level), across the back and just under the right arm (in the armpit). Throw it from under the right arm to over the left shoulder, pulling it long enough to be able to come again across the back, under the right arm and to the left side of the abdomen.

5 Once the *mundanai* is draped around the upper part of the body, a length of sari should be falling in front, between the closing (or the tucking) and the drape of the *mundanai* at its tightest. Take the upper border of this part and pleat it towards the inside, starting from that which is closest to the closing. Once the whole length is pleated, tuck it over the abdomen, pleats towards the left.

The length of the *mundanai* is determined by the way each woman likes to drape it. Some let the *pallav* fall from the shoulder only to the waistline in the back. Others leave it down to their feet. What I have described here is the way most ordinary women wear it on usual days, when they tuck the *pallav* back in the closing over the left side of the abdomen. There is no absolute rule for the drape of the *pallav*; it is only a question of personal taste. Two common styles are shown below.



Sari's Unlikely Savior

How a French anthropologist, happening upon an unusual sari, rescued dozens of Indian drapes from extinction



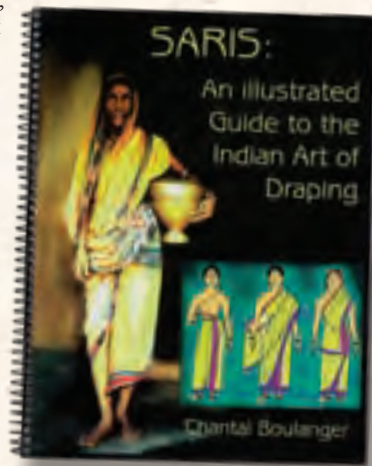
ELIZABETH PATRICK

Job well done: The exhibition team poses at the end of opening day. Guest curator Chantal Boulanger is in center. Student curator Susheela Hoeffler stands third from left, exhibit designer Jean Ross second from left and Hazel Lutz is second from right.

BY SHIKHA MALAVIYA, MINNESOTA

IT IS A BLUSTERY, COLD AFTERNOON AS I MAKE MY WAY TO the Goldstein Gallery and the University of Minnesota's School of Apparel and Design. Opening the auditorium door, I make out the silhouettes of roughly 200 people focused on a slide of a Tamil woman whose sari wraps around her knees and divides in the middle, a common style among rural working women. The lights turn on, and in the front of the auditorium a petite, blond-haired woman dressed in a navy blue silk sari deftly demonstrates that very style from the slide on a volunteer while explaining its method in a lilting French accent. The audience stares in awe as anthropologist Chantal Boulanger proceeds to unravel the mysteries of sari draping.

The sari, a versatile female garment of ancient Indian origin, has enthralled and mystified many in its variety of texture, design, size and draping style. While numerous scholars document the intricacies of the sari's myriad colors, fabrics and patterns, few, if any, have closely examined draping styles. Chantal Boulanger hopes to change that. Boulanger is the author of *Saris: An Illustrated Guide to the Indian Art of Draping*. In her book, Chantal documents and lucidly illustrates more than 100 sari drapes, which she divides loosely into families and sub-families where possible, based on certain basic draping techniques. By doing so, Boulanger is the first scholar to define the art of sari draping and give its study a legitimacy that goes beyond mere fashion.



Boulanger's book came to life in an exhibition presented by the University of Minnesota's Goldstein Gallery January 25–March 1, 1998, aptly called "The Indian Sari: Draping Bodies, Revealing Lives." It was the first sari exhibition to accentuate draping techniques rather than fabric texture or design aspects.

For Chantal, it all began in 1992 when a unique sari drape at a wedding in South India sparked her interest. "I saw a drape with pleats on the side and its border in the back. I asked how to do it, but no one knew." Having studied Tamil temple priests for the past fifteen years, Chantal encountered various sari drapes in her field work, but never imagined they would one day become the object of her study. A trip to a research center in Pondicherry turned up little information on the "wedding sari" drape, and her inquiries to Tamil women followed suit. Finally, an old woman identified the mystery sari as a drape worn by peasant women from the region of Tondaimandalam, in Tamil Nadu. Many young women no longer wore such styles because they didn't want to be identified as a peasant or a lower caste. Chantal realized that many of these drapes—at times intricate, functional, and in most cases symbolic of religion and social status—carried a certain part of Indian women's history, and that it would vanish without a trace if not recorded soon.

Zigzagging across the Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal from 1990 to 1997, Chantal visited big cities and remote villages. Taking notes and photos of diverse sari drapes was a constant ritual, even if it meant stopping women on the street. But this wasn't enough to cognize intricacies of the wrapping art. "I realized the only way to remember these saris was to try them again and again," Chantal shared with HINDUISM TODAY in 1998. She practiced until she got them right, and wore saris under every possible circumstance to personally experience how saris work in daily life. "Whenever Indian women taught me how to wear a sari, they missed essential steps I had to discover on my own." Secrets such as knotting a sari instead of just tucking it into a petticoat came with trial and error. Now a bona fide expert in more than eighty drapes, Boulanger is an inspiration to most of us Hindu women who barely know a handful.

Dissection: As Chantal organized her information, she realized that most sari drapes could be categorized into families. On grouping various drapes, she found the necessity of a glossary to identify each part of a sari. "Every sari starts with tying it tightly, whether on the waist or chest. So I decided to call it the closing." Boulanger enlisted words from Sanskrit and Tamil because "I couldn't just write, 'tie this end to that end.'" As a result, she terms the part of the

sari from which the drape begins, *mundi*, and the part thrown over the shoulder, *pallav*. The main part of the sari is the body. The edges are the upper and lower borders.

A "how-to" book on draping: All the studies on Indian clothing, Chantal points out, have ignored "the extraordinary precision and care that have been devoted to draping in its many forms." Her book, self-illustrated, shows step-by-step instructions on how to master over 80 drapes.

While Chantal created a working glossary of the sari, she feels most successful in having arranged the sari into families. Studies that preceded her work grouped drapes according to region or state, so she initially followed suit. But as her research progressed, she realized that draping styles cross regions. By focusing on method instead, she found that most sari drapes could fit into four main families [see page 29]. Many drapes overlapped families, indicating migration of a group from one region to another—and some saris were unique and did not fit within any family—but the grouping of saris revealed many things. "I saw dhoti styles worn mainly by the brahmins," shares Boulanger, "while *veshti*-style drapes appeared on other classes." In this context, Boulanger applauds the modern nivi drape, with its pleats in front and *pallav* over the left shoulder, calling it the egalitarian sari because, she enthuses, "It crosses boundaries of class and caste, making all women equal in the eyes of others."

Charmed by the sari's visual appeal and social context, Chantal dreamed of a sari exhibition. But as she pitched the idea to friends and colleagues, they urged her to write a book to supplement it. Accepting the suggestion, Chantal labored five years and finished the project in 1997. Her biggest challenge was creating more than 700 illustrations which she personally drew and redrew until satisfied they were clear and accurate. The exhibition of Boulanger's work would marry the aesthetic importance of drapes with related cultural implications.

Drape display: The Goldstein exhibit rendered sari draping with

such authenticity that it provoked visitors to feel transported to India. Call it coincidence or kismet that student curators Hazel Lutz and Susheela Hoeffler had both sojourned in India, and Jean Ross, responsible for exhibit design, had visited India and Pakistan. Lutz and Hoeffler primarily focused on drape families and technique, but also featured saris in various contexts, such as photographs, a wall of artwork (including a sketch by world-renowned artist Jamini Roy), a display of blouse styles, Indian dolls dressed in saris, and hanging saris as well, because as Hoeffler observed, "It's hard to visualize the mass of a sari as a flat piece of cloth when it is draped on the body."

Lutz (who co-authored *The Visible Self: Global Perspectives on Dress, Culture, and Society*), saw the exhibition as a way to "fully appreciate the complexity of drapes, and drop stereotypes. We are showing that there is innovation within the confines of a sari, and tradition is fashionable as well as practical." Ross added a rural touch to the exhibition by painting the walls saffron and the top with a red, stenciled border, reminiscent of villages in India and Pakistan. With Boulanger's work as their focus, and their individual experiences in India to draw from, Lutz, Hoeffler and Ross turned an intimate gallery into a colorful Indian oasis of art and savoir-faire.

The exhibition drew over 200 on opening day, some out of curiosity, others to learn. Regardless of motives, visitors left the exhibit with fresh knowledge. As Mani Subramaniam, native of India and business professor at the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management commented, "On my next visit to India, I'll definitely be looking at saris more carefully, even though I have seen them all my life." A fitting compliment for Chantal Boulanger and her work, and for women worldwide who make the sari an integral part of their lives.

Chantal Boulanger Publishing website: www.devi.net

The Full Six Yards

Feminine, graceful, elegant are a few words that come to mind when you hear the word sari. The modern sari has stepped beyond tradition to become a fashion statement. Designer saris, and blouses too, have made their mark beyond India's borders, draped in ways that seem very fashionable but are actually like how they were worn very long ago in India. The six yards has come a full circle, it appears. ¶For many women, their very first attempt to wear a sari would have been when they were five or six years old. You guessed it! They want to be like their mother. Imagine wrapping a full length sari around that tiny body! As she grows, the little girl gets other inputs, and these days more often than not, the sari is looked down



upon as "not in." College is the time when the sari regains its stature on special occasions, especially weddings. Grandparents fawning over their "little big lady" is a sweet moment to witness. ¶Many city girls grow up never having worn a sari. So much material going around (God knows how!) in hot weather. The pallu slipping off, the waist being visible, stepping on the pleats and having the sari come off are but a few mini-nightmares she would have to overcome before gaining the courage to make the first attempt. Once bitten, totally smitten is usually what happens. Rarely does someone say, "Not for me." The magic of the sari begins to work! The way one feels in a sari can only be experienced. It cannot be described. Try it. You will like it!

Sheela Venkatakrisnan, Chennai

Heralding the Drapes of India

Excerpts from Chantal's book, one woman's fashion odyssey

BY CHANTAL BOULANGER

OF ALL THE ARTS THAT HAVE FLOURISHED IN INDIA, one of the least known and studied is that of draping. This is all the more extraordinary because it is a unique art and craft which offers special insights into the ethnology of Indian and Southeast Asian peoples and the archaeology of the periods in which it developed. At its heart is Hinduism, whose preference for unstitched clothing, for both religious and social reasons, fostered the growth and development of the sari. Although knowledge of sewn garments has existed since prehistoric times, these were mostly reserved for warriors and kings, and never achieved the popularity of drapes. Therefore, the Indian culture developed the art of wrapping a piece of cloth around the body to a degree that far surpassed that of any other people. Unfortunately, this art has never been fully studied. Books on saris usually show a maximum of 10 or 15 drapes, and too few explain how to drape them. Most of these studies have been done by men who have never experimented with the drapes themselves.

When I was studying Tamil temple priests, I learned that the women draped their saris in a special way, using a piece of cloth nine yards long. It is a well-known fact that Tamil brahmins, such as the Coorg, Bengali or Marwari women, have their own peculiar way of wearing saris. Yet, nobody had noticed the way Tamil peasant or Kannadiga laborers draped theirs—and neither had I.

Having discovered that sari draping had never been properly researched, I decided to record as many drapes as I could find. As I traveled throughout South, Central and Eastern India, I realized that the whole subject was far too big for my own researches to be exhaustive. I hope, however, that this work will lead others to carry on this research all over India. Apart from the few famous saris recorded in the past, I found a large number of drapes, most often typical of a caste or a small region. Only worn by old women, the majority of them will be forgotten in a few decades.

The modern drape, often called *nivi* sari, is now worn by most Indian women. Few even bother to learn from their grandmothers how to attire themselves traditionally. This is especially true with the lower castes, where girls refuse to dress in a way that clearly displays their humble origins.

"Show me how you drape, and I will tell you who you are" could be the motto for this book. Drapes are closely linked with the ethnic origin of the wearer, and in Chapter Seven I detail the conclusions that I reached from this study.

I started this research totally unaware of its wide implications (not to mention the time and effort!). Thinking that I would save a few drapes from fast-approaching oblivion, I discovered a totally unexplored world whose meaning had never been considered.

Researching drapes requires travelling through as many villages and regions as possible, looking at everybody to identify precisely what they wear, and asking everyone if they know or have seen different ways of draping. Once I found an unknown drape, I not only saw how it was produced from the person who usually wore it, but I also learned how to do it myself. It was very important for me to be able to wear it. Since this might seem a little extreme, here is an anecdote which will illustrate the necessity.

I always thought I knew how to wear a *kaccha* sari, such as



ELIZABETH PATRICK

Anthropological modeling: Chantal wore them all

worn in North Karnataka and Maharashtra. All I had to do was to drape a modern sari with nine yards, so as to have many pleats in front. Then I had to take the lower border of the middle pleat and tuck it in the back. When I went to the region where these saris were worn, I did not bother at first to learn how to drape them. Problems started when I decided to go out wearing a *kaccha* sari. It was in Goa and I went to a Hindu temple, where I was clearly conspicuous. Most people appreciated my efforts, but at one point, a woman, seeing me, shouted something in Konkani and everybody laughed. My assistant was reluctant to translate, but eventually he explained that the woman had said: "The way she wears her sari, all the boys are going to fall in love with her!"

I understood that something was wrong with my draping and immediately I sent my assistant to find someone who could teach me how to wear it properly. A few minutes later, a woman showed me many of the finer details which prevent this kind of drape from crumpling up and backwards, revealing the thighs.

I have travelled quite extensively through Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. I have also visited Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal, although not as thoroughly. A short trip in Assam convinced me that there is much to learn in this area. Exhaustive research

would have meant visiting almost every village and caste in India, a task far too difficult for me. This may again sound a little extreme, but many drapes are worn by small castes, and may only be found in a village or two. For instance, the Kappulu sari, one of the most interesting and elegant drapes I have found, is worn only by old women of the Kappulu caste.

I have asked many women to teach me how to drape their saris. Most of them were unknown to me, and I had simply met them in the street. None refused and every one of them, from the educated Brahmin to the illiterate tribeswoman, understood what I was doing and why. They were all pleased with my work and entrusted to me their knowledge with pride.

The woman who taught me the *pullaiyar* sari was about four feet tall, and so old that no one in the village knew her age. She was illiterate and spoke a dialect of Tamil I hardly understood. But I could see she was happy to give me what she clearly perceived as part of her culture and identity. When I left she took my hand and said, "Go and tell others who we are." From her village, I walked several miles through the jungle to the nearest road and eventually came back to France, keeping the photograph I had taken of her as a treasure.

Sources: To help complete my field research, I used information provided by other scholars in books or orally. For antique drapes, the work of Anne-Marie Loth, *La vie publique et privée dans l'Inde ancienne, fascicule VII, les costumes* (1979), is the

most detailed and complete book available on draping. For Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Nepal, I relied on information from Linda Lynton-Singh [see her book below], who is a textile specialist and who had learned several drapes from Northeast India (her husband is from Bihar). Thambal Yaima showed me the two styles draped in Manipur. Mrs. Ruklanthi Jayatissa helped me with the saris worn in Sri Lanka. For Madhya Pradesh, I also studied very closely the book *Saris of India: Madhya Pradesh*, by Chishti and Samyal (1989). I tried all the drapes myself. For tribal saris, I relied on the book *The Tribals of India through the Lens of Sunil Janah* (1993).

I don't believe that these drapes should simply be recorded and then confined to dusty libraries in the future. Drapes have many advantages over stitched clothes, especially when beauty is an important value. Saris are much more practical than we think, especially since they can be so easily modified. I made this work for anybody who wants, at least once, to wear a drape, any kind of drape. Draping is an art. I hope this book will help it take its place as a heritage of mankind.

Chantal died suddenly in Africa of a brain aneurism on December 27, 2004, the day after the Asian Tsunami. She was cremated in London, and her ashes were spread by her husband Peter Maloney on the shore at Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu, India.

Styles, Patterns, History & Techniques

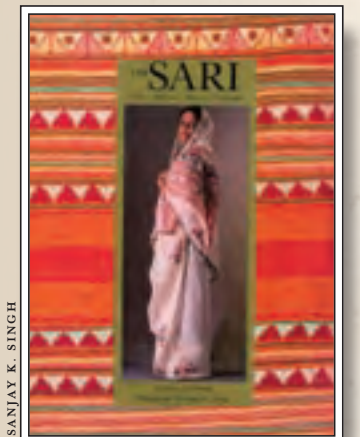
Linda Lynton brings us a lavish sourcebook

LINDA LYNTON-SINGH, A PROFESSIONAL WRITER, BECAME CURIOUS ABOUT SARIS when, upon marrying Sanjay Singh, a native of India, she was welcomed by his extended family with gifts of saris. "I heard stories about local saris and hoped to find more stories about saris from other regions of India, so I looked for books, but didn't find many," Linda recalls. That lack of information on saris inspired five years of research and an expansive tome—*The Sari: Styles, Patterns, History, Techniques*. By concentrating on region, Linda captures the sari's beauty and complexity in vivid detail through ethnic art, historical facts, motifs and patterns, all which integrate and represent their geographical surroundings. "Most of the world uses tailored clothing, and here is a culture that doesn't," explains Linda. "The whole emphasis is on the cloth itself, how it's woven, how it's decorated, how it's colored, and that alone makes it interesting."

Particularly notable in the book are textiles from groups, such as Gujarati indigo-dyed saris that heretofore were never illustrated and documented. While Chantal Boulanger's book is a practical manual on draping techniques, Linda surveys the sari as a prized fabric, focusing on its design. From this perspective, Linda documents forty types of saris with photographs and diagrams to illustrate complexity in patterns, weaves and colors. She also includes a comprehensive glossary of textile terms, in English and Indian languages. An exhaustive and scholarly work, 208 pages, with photographs by her husband, Sanjay K. Singh.



COURTESY LINDA LYNTON



SANJAY K. SINGH

(from above) The cover of the book; a sample spread, focusing on the Western Deccan; the author, Linda Lynton



A Tribute to Indian Dress

Fashion that has survived over 5,000 years

BY THE EDITOR

FASHION IN CLOTHING IS A KIND OF LIVING ARCHEOLOGY, a wash-and-wear history. It tells us much about who we are and where we came from, and maybe not a little about where we're going. Modern clothes tell a story of simple pragmatism. Throughout the world, clothing has become more spartan, more practically polyesterish, less elaborate. Men, especially, have made some dismally utilitarian decisions about their wardrobe. Around 1666 the present-day suit was first stitched in France and England, and by 1872 it was widespread enough in India to be fiercely satirized. Somewhere in that era, men from all cultures made the not-so-natty decision to abandon other attire in favor of the egalitarian grey suit, white shirt and necktie.

Men around the world lost their national and personal character when they adopted the Western business suit. Japanese men, who once looked so very Nipponese in their graceful robes, now look like Europeans. South Americans,

once so distinctive in their hand-woven costumes, now look like the Japanese who look like the Europeans. Indian men, who 200 years ago had regional raiment

that was earthy and elaborately colored, now look like the South Americans, who look like the Japanese, who look like the Europeans. Look at the marriage photo to the right. She's elegant, and he is—there's a word in the world of fashion—boring!

I know of what I speak. Visitors to our Hawaiian editorial offices

know our monastic staff is not sitting at their MacBook Pros in jeans and T-shirts. We are swathed in saffron and ochre cotton—hand-spun, hand-woven and unsewn—draped in the old South Indian style. I can never forget the first time, three decades ago, that a Jaffna, Sri Lanka, elder helped me wrap a veshti, and then took us to the bustling main market-place. Every step was terrorizing, the unwieldy garment threatening to fall, with me cinching up the subversive sarong several times a minute, both hands never more than a few swift inches from my waist. How awkward I felt, and certainly looked. As time passed and the fabric was tamed, I learned how refined one feels in such attire.

It was like floating, living in your spirit more than in your body. To this day, I only feel comfortable and soulful in these traditional robes. Jaffna is, in fact, one of the few sanctuaries where Western pants and shirt are disdained, and most men, including politicians, go around in their *veshtis*. Indian women who wear saris know the sad truth of all this. They have watched their sisters go the way of men, wearing dresses that look like the dresses that every dressmaker dresses her customers in. Okay, women at least have wide options in type and

A single stretch of fabric that comes in a range of textures and patterns—the sari is creativity at its best.



THOMAS KELLY

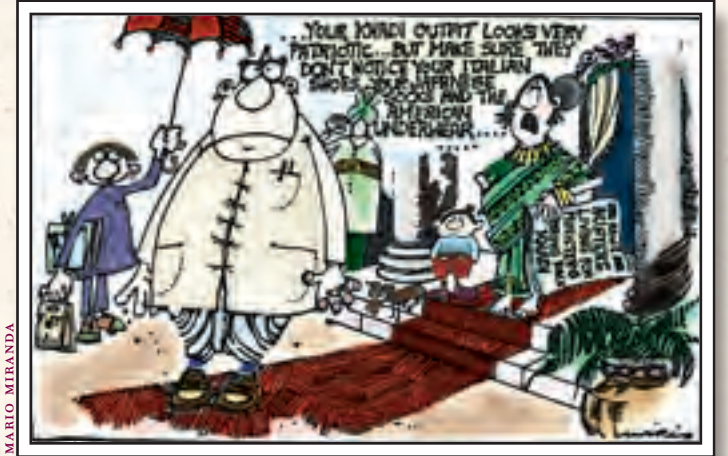
fabric and color. And that is good. But still, women in Japan look like women in Australia, who look like women in China, who all look like women in Europe. There are few *kimonos* left to announce the passing of a Japanese lady and few *ao dai* to tell us that the woman shopping over there is Vietnamese.

So, we pay tribute to India's women and Hindu women abroad who have not relinquished their elegant dress. They alone have preserved traditional attire, for the sari is the only major apparel to have survived the last 500 years and to remain elegant and vogueish daily wear in the 21st century. That's quite an accomplishment. No wonder the Western world has been smitten by the sari, and every woman with a smidgen of sartorial savvy wants one.

Exploring the web on saris, I found this gem, written by Shantipriya Kurada in 1994: "The beauty of the sari never ceases to amaze me. There is something strikingly feminine about it. Flowing like sheer poetry, graceful in every contour and fold, it's a fascinating mixture of tradition and style. A single stretch of fabric that comes in a range of textures and patterns, the sari is creativity at its best. A cotton sari, charmingly simple, starched and perfectly in place, has such a natural feel. Chiffons and crepes add a glamorous touch. Fragile, utterly soft and delicate, they create an aura of fine elegance. Weddings come alive with the grandeur of silk saris. Painstakingly handwoven to the last detail, the brocade created to perfection by skilled hands, each silk sari is a work of art. A sari has such a special place in every girl's life. It all starts with wrapping around mother's sari, playfully and clumsily tripping on its edges. Then there is the first sari you wear, perhaps to a college function, looking self-conscious and achingly innocent. And, of course, the precious wedding sari that's fondly preserved and cherished for a lifetime. In a world of changing fashions, the sari has stood the test of time. There is something almost magical about it, for it continues to symbolize the romantic image of the Indian woman—vulnerable, elusive and tantalizingly beautiful."

Historians say the sari can be traced back more than 5,000 years! Sanskrit literature from the Vedic period insists that pleats

be part of every woman's dress. The pleats, say the texts, must be tucked in at the waist, the front or back, so that the presiding deity, Vayu, the God of wind, can whisk away any evil influence that may strike the woman. Colors, too, are ruled by tradition. Yellow, green and red are festive and auspicious, standing for fertility. Red, evoking passion, is a bridal color and part of rituals associated with pregnancy. Blue evokes the life-giving force of



MARIO MIRANDA

the monsoon. Pale cream is soothing and represents bridal purity. A married Hindu woman will not wear a completely white sari, which is reserved for brahmacharinis and widows.

The sari culturally links the women of India. Whether they are wealthy or poor, svelte or plump, the sari gives them a shared experience, a way in which they are all sisters, forging a link that binds them across all borders, even geographical ones. Women wearing saris in Durban, Delhi or Detroit are part of a social oneness that is nearly eternal and which may, it seems, last yet another thousand years. Jai Hindu women!

How I Came to Be the "Lady in the Sari"

My personal path of fashion self-discovery took me back to our unbeatable Indian dress

BY KAVITA DASWANI

LAST YEAR, I HAD TO MAKE A WORK RELATED TRIP TO the Italian city of Vicenza. There I was introduced to an elderly gentleman. "Ah," he said, clapping my hand. "You have been described to me as the lady in the sari. Why are you not wearing one?" In my functional beige pantsuit, I suddenly felt slightly ashamed. I had gotten off a plane to come straight to the meeting. I didn't think a sari would be appropriate. This man's perception was not misplaced. Over the past few years, I have made numerous trips to Europe and the US in my capacity as a fashion writer. When I was much younger, I thought the way to shine was to wear a little black designer dress, like all fashionable women. Then I realized that I had adopted an urban uniform that wasn't really mine.

So I learned how to drape a sari. As a Hindu Sindhi girl brought

up in the bosom of a semi-traditional trading family in Hong Kong, this sari business should have come naturally. But it didn't. I was cajoled into wearing one during family weddings after relatives insisted it would "look nice." But I would stand, frustrated and impatient, while someone would

tie and pleat and fold the fabric on me. Then, I carried the sari like a burden.

Now, my sari-wearing has become a burden no more. Instead, it is an honor and a privilege. Who needs a Chanel gown or a Gucci evening suit—all essentially redolent of sameness—when you can be swathed in a beautiful pink brocade sari, shot with golden threads, its *palu* revealing a parade of peacock motifs? What can



possibly rival the elegance of a Kanchipuram sari, all handwoven silken threads and flecks of gold?

So now, whenever I travel, I pack a tiny bag filled with a

few saris, some glass bangles, bindis and a shimmering *kundan* set. At formal dinners in glamorous Western capitals, where low-cut dresses and fanciful frocks are the norm, the effects of me and my sari are fascinating. There is an immediate sense of respect. I am often greeted by a halting "Namaste" instead of a two-cheek Euro-style kiss. People suddenly, surprisingly, become rather tender.

At an outdoor cafe in Florence once, in a chiffon sari with a colorful tie-dye pattern, I walked past French fashion designer Christian Lacroix. He stopped his conversation to stare at every fold in the fabric and thread. Wanda Ferragamo, owner of the Italian fashion empire that bears her name, made her way across two gilded salons to tell me that I was "the most elegant woman in the room." At another party in Paris, actress Tracy Ulman peered at my bindi, cast her eyes over my rich ivory silk and gold sari and asked, "Are you someone rich and famous I should know about?" And, most memorably, at a charity benefit in Los Angeles last summer, where Hollywood celebrities competed with one another in their sexy, revealing dresses, I stood apart in a pink and green silk brocade sari. A young American man approached me, looked at the bikini-clad dancers on high platforms around him, pointed at my sari and said, "Now that is how all women should be dressed. I think the sari is God's gift to womanhood."

So the next time I saw the man in Vicenza, I did not disappoint him and arrived in a dark-hued cotton sari. The look of appreciation on his face was worth more than all the designer dresses in the world.



PERS INDIA

A timeless art: The contemplative craft of weaving

DIGITAL DHARMA

MUSIC

www.hinduismtoday.com

Real Time, Online Music Lessons—as Good as Being There



PROFESSOR SANJOY BANDOPADHYAY, renowned sitarist and pundit of Indian classical music, is also a much beloved music guru with a big heart dedicated to nurturing Indian music worldwide. In his global performance travels, many told him they yearned to learn Indian music, but they had no teachers. In 2000 he started teaching online, using peer-to-peer technologies like Skype. The program is a big success. Markus Wieninger in Brazil writes: “Initially I was hesitant about learning the sitar in real time mode over the Internet. I was concerned about latency, Internet reliability, time zone differences,



etc. However, after taking the two free lessons, I realized these were minor issues, especially when compared to the expertise offered by Professor Sanjoy.”

In 2003 Sanjoy started www.IndianMusicLessons.com with the help of his student Gary Pro in Seattle, who says that “Sanjoy is revolutionizing the art of teaching.” Eight teachers on his Kolkata-based team now offer lessons for sitar, bansuri (flute), Hindustani vocal, sarod, tabla and pakhawaj (double-headed barrel drum).

The remote training has proved to be as effective as in-person classes, with added benefits, including not having to commute for lessons, which might take hours, which means fewer missed lessons and more time to practice. Students who get “music lesson anxiety” when going to a studio say



Left: Pundit Sanjoy, head of the Department of Music, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, introduces the online lessons. Above: Ms. Rajrupaa Sen gives a sarod lesson to Brazilian student, Markus Wieninger (right).

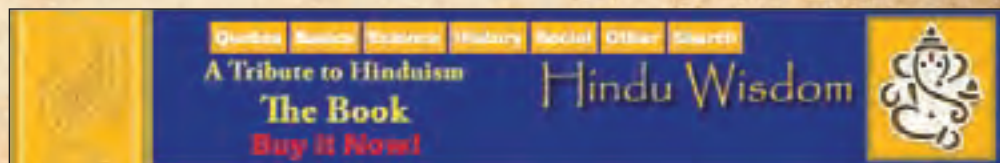
..... that learning is facilitated by the private, relaxed, at-home atmosphere. Camera close-ups can show precise finger positioning. And students in far-away nations get to train with gifted professionals in India.

Mariette Galea Ebejer says: “In Malta there are only a few who play sitar, and they are not proper sitarists but fret the way they do with a guitar. I am the only female to study the sitar in my country. With the kind help and guidance of Professor Sanjoy, I shall be able to make a difference!”

REFERENCE

A Rich and Authentic Hindu Compendium

IN 2003 WE REVIEWED THE SITE, “A Tribute to Hinduism,” an encyclopedic resource by Mrs. Sushama Londhe. Started in the Internet’s early days, in 1996, her site, now called www.hinduwisdom.info, has evolved into one of the most comprehensive and authentic resources on Hinduism in the digital info sphere. The site’s simple organization under Quotes, Basics, Science, History, Social and Other categories belies the breadth and depth behind the links.



With a focus on Hindu pride in the face of Western ideological imperialism, Sushama organizes subjects with outlines to draw together hundreds of authoritative quotes, book excerpts and links to external web sites into a powerful educational framework. Noteworthy are the abundance of quotes by Westerners in support of Sanatana Dharma. Tackling misinformation about Hinduism “head on,” the pages on conversion fearlessly

expose the fallacies behind Western Christian and Islamic assertions of exclusivity. The page on the caste system is one of the best resources on the subject we have ever seen. And for a real thriller, don’t miss the page “India on Pacific Waves” with citations of all the evidence that indigenous Americans, Incan and Mayan cultures came from India. Featured is Sushama’s book, *A Tribute to Hinduism*.

Hindu Heritage Endowment

FUND HONORING LATE WIFE GIVES SOLACE TO HUSBAND

Selvanathan Jothiswarar of Kuala Lumpur felt profoundly conflicted when his late wife’s insurance check arrived after her death in August of 2007 at the young age of 37.

“I just didn’t know what to do,” he recalls. “I had a loved one who had sacrificed everything for my sake,” he said of his wife Rani. “It felt grossly unfair just to take the death benefit. I thought I should use the benefit to do what my wife loved most doing: giving.”

She was remarkably responsive to needy individuals and good causes, he explained. “She would insist on my giving as much as we could, even if it meant depleting our savings or pawning her jewelry. If I hesitated, she would always say, ‘It’s OK if we are deprived of our wants. But a needy person or a noble cause should never be deprived of funds.’ Every time we gave, I could see great satisfaction in her face.”

With that image in mind, Selvanathan used the insurance proceeds to establish the Rani Jothiswarar Memorial Fund at the Hindu Heritage Endowment. But he still had to define the Fund’s purpose.

“I discussed the fund with our Satguru Bodhinatha of Kauai’s Hindu Monastery. Swami replied that the insurance proceeds could be used to maintain the retreat facilities for the monks on Kauai. I agreed. Our scriptures clearly say our monks must help keep the physical and inner world equilibrium. But it is the responsibility of the grihasthas, the families, to take care of the monks’ material needs.”

His family’s relationship with Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami goes back to 2001 when Bodhinatha came to Ulu Behrang, Malaysia, shortly after becoming Kauai’s Hindu Monastery’s leader. “The first temple Kumbabhishekam which Bodhinatha presided over in Malaysia was the Ulu Behrang Ganesha temple where my father presided,” Mr. Jothiswarar remembers.

“Swami blessed our home, too. From the day Rani was diagnosed with cancer, we were in touch with Swami almost every day by e-mail explaining her condition and seeking his prayers and guidance. There were frequent occasions where certain painful situations were overcome by Satguru’s prayers. So when Rani left, I sought his advice on setting up a fund.”

Selvanathan found that establishing the fund (fund #72) was more than a tribute to his wife. It was a salve to his grief. He encourages others to talk to their loved ones about what they want done in their memory when the time comes. That kind of frank discussion, he urged, though difficult, “will allow us to have the satisfaction of knowing we have done what pleases our loved one the most.” He added that a gift supporting his Hindu faith was particularly comforting.

“As we suffer the grief of a great loss, the only bastion available is our religion,” he shared. “We must make sure we offer the material help needed for our faith to live on and on, helping every Hindu overcome the moment of loss and grief.”

An engineer by profession, Mr. Jothiswarar lives with his two children, Siva Jothiswary, 14, and Kodiswara, 10, and now works as an astrologer in Kuala Lumpur. He travels north on alternate days to Ulu Behrang, Perak, to assist his father, a Hindu priest and astrologer, with the Ganesha Temple prayer services.

For information about the Rani Jothiswarar Memorial Fund or to establish your own fund, contact Shanmuganathaswami at hhe@hindu.org. To donate to this fund, visit www.hheonline.org.



Rani Jothiswarar

APRIL TO JUNE ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment	
Ripla & Gaurav Malhotra	US\$501.00
K. Lakshmi Kantha Reddy	305.00
Pathmini Saravanapavan	25.00
Darmaguan & Shivali	
Satgunasingam	75.00
Niraj Thaker	76.50
Other Donations	4,924.92
Total	5,929.25

Iraivan Temple Endowment	
Gayatri Arasaratham	100.00
Roger & Rosemary Brown	120.00
Victoria Lynne Johnson	51.00
Latha Kannan	153.00
Anonymous	600.00
Shetal Joshi & Anant Khudanpur	20.20
Anonymous	1,503.00
Niraj Thaker	76.50
Gunavinthan Siva Thirumalai	240.00
Raja Vishnu	123.50
T. Wickramavarathan	100.00
Other Donations	58,378.66
Total	61,476.78

Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund	
Gunavadee Caremben	2.95
Somasundaram Caremben	2.95
Sukanta Caremben	2.95
Sharath Chigurupati	369.00
Kamala Guhan	240.00
Victoria Lynne Johnson	17.00
Shetal Joshi & Anant Khudanpur	20.20
Amooda Koothan	5.76
Saravan Koothan	5.76
Saroja Devi Manickam	1.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	33.32
Jayasutha Samuthiran	42.08
Devaladevi Sivaceyon	9.27
Nutanaya Sivaceyon	46.50
Patudeva Sivaceyon	9.27
Hemavalli Sivalingam	2.80
Kantaruban Sivalingam	2.80
Nitya Sivam	50.00
Potriyan Sivanathan	19.78
Uma Sivanathan	40.00
Siven Veerasamy	30.86
Total	965.17

Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund	
Yatrika Ajaya	134.62
Jeri Arin	168.00
Kris Bhat	493.00
Jnanideva Cevvel	500.00
Ram M Cheerath	240.00
Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam	246.40
Kamala Guhan	160.00
Rosa Jaramillo Osuna	174.47
Auslin Mangal Lawrence	45.00
K. Nagarajah	958.60
Shankar Paramasivam	240.00
Bharati Patil	240.00
Bhaskar & Phani Peesapati	80.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	80.00
Suselah Periasamy	280.64
Kirit Shah	240.00
Sujata Singh	160.00
Rohan Sundaralingam	240.00
Shivani Vinayaga	86.63
Haresh D. Vyas	800.00
Total	5,578.28

Hindu Businessmen's Association Trust	
Paramaseeven Canagasaby	26.86
Vel Mahalingum	23.03
Manogaran Mardemootoo	57.61
Easvan Param	956.14
Total	1,063.64

Boys School for Iraivan Priesthood	
Bala Sivaceyon	18.54
Total	29.46

Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund	
Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam	46.05
Rajadeva Alahan	166.18
Gowri Nadason	54.00
Vayudeva Varadan	4,800.00
Other Donations	5,077.15
Total	

Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam	
Jnanideva Cevvel	500.00
Sheree Lipton	900.00
Total	1,410.92

Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund	
Arumugam Alvappillai	60.00
T. Anbu & Gowthamy Balakumaran	90.00
Sangarappillai Manoharan	75.00
Thavaputhiran Sivapalan	30.00
Nirupa Vignarajan	900.00
Manny Yogarajah	90.00
Total	1,255.92

Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment	
Manoharan Navaratnarajah	75.00
Total	85.92

Hinduism Today Production Fund	
Sherilyn G. Daugherty	100.00
Hiranya Gowda	93.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	33.34
Narayana & Sarojini Rao	1,500.00
Caryn Sobel	25.00
Total	1,762.26

Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund	
Vinaya Alahan	50.00
Sherilyn G. Daugherty	100.00
Jothi Kotta	666.00
Kumar Ranganathan	300.00
Alex Ruberto	75.00
G.V. Sarojini	20.00
Rodney & Ilene Standen	30.00
Raja Vishnu	123.50
Total	1,375.42

Hindu Education Endowment	
Murali Balaji	8.33
Indu Dey	35.00
Naran D. Patel & Mani N. Patel Family	100.00
Total	154.25

Hindu Press International Endowment Fund	
Hiranya Gowda	63.00
James Stapleton	18.00
Total	91.92

Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund	
Eric Jautee	100.00
Manoharan Navaratnarajah	75.00
Gassa Patten	1,500.00
Total	1,685.92

Swami Agnivesh Endowment Fund	
Prasad Krishnan	4.50
Total	15.42

Saiva Agamas Trust	
Jnanideva Cevvel	600.00
Ganga Sivanathan	426.00
Total	1,036.92

Positive Discipline Endowment	
Vinaya Alahan	50.00
Total	60.92

Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund	
Prasad Krishnan	4.50
Total	15.41

Hindu Heritage Endowment Administrative Fund	
Anonymous	2,349.00
Total	2,359.91

Kauai Aadheenam Religious Art and Artifacts Fund	
	153.00
Sherilyn G. Daugherty	100.00
Total	212.91

Thank You Bodhinatha Fund	
Hotranatha Ajaya	33.00
Jnanideva Cevvel	600.00
Anonymous	60.00
Sherilyn G. Daugherty	100.00
Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai	324.00
Allison Harmer	11.34
Shetal Joshi & Anant Khudanpur	20.20
Rajkumar Manickam	108.00
Krishnakumar Manoharan	51.00
Dayavati Murugan	58.00
Anonymous	125.00
Manoharan Navaratnarajah	150.00
Hong-Nhung Nguyen	15.00
Shanta Devi Periasamy	345.00
Anonymous	191.00
Jayshree S. Rao	1,008.00
Alex Ruberto	45.00
Laurie & Mark Scurich	200.00
Vayudeva Varadan	63.00
Raja Vishnu	123.50
Total	3,641.95

Mathavasi Travel Fund	
Sherilyn G. Daugherty	100.00
Total	110.91

Saivite Hindu Scriptural Fund for the Visually Impaired	
Vidyavathi Ande	50.00
Alex Ruberto	45.00
Total	105.91

Sri Chandra Madhab Debnath Endowment	
Anonymous	525.64
Murali Balaji	8.33
Total	544.88

Manitha Neyam Trust Fund	
Bala Sivaceyon	37.07
Total	47.98

Taos Hanuman Fund	
Murali Balaji	8.34
Total	19.25

Kapaleeshwara Temple Orphanage	
Rajkumar Alagesan	54.00
Prasad Krishnan	4.50
Savithri Sundaresan	101.00
Total	170.41

Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund	
Dayavati Murugan	58.00
Total	68.91

Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund	
Rajkumar Alagesan	54.00
Prasad Krishnan	4.50
Anonymous	23.00
Savithri Sundaresan	101.00
Total	193.41

Karnataka Temple Development Fund	
Hiranya Gowda	303.00
Ramesh & Arundathi Gowda	300.00
Subramanyam Krishnamurthy	10.00
Total	587.91

Sri Ganesha Hindu Temple of Utah Endowment Fund	
Ramana Gopalan	1,500.00
Total	1,510.91

Hindu Literature Fund	
Anonymous	111.00
Nigel Subramaniam Siva	600.00
Total	721.91

Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund	
Hiranya Gowda	153.00
Jothi Kotta	667.00
Natraj Narayanswami	20.00
Anonymous	108.00
Total	958.92

Himalayan Academy Book Distribution Fund	
Raja Vishnu	123.50
Total	134.41

Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund	
Victoria Lynne Johnson	17.00
Total	27.91

Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment	
Jeri Arin	200.00
Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam	46.05
Shetal Joshi & Anant Khudanpur	20.20
Rajkumar Manickam	25.00
Natraj Narayanswami	143.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	33.34
Kumar Ranganathan	150.00
Ganga Sivanathan	300.00
K. Suriyakumar	1,500.00
Silas H. Zirkle	375.00
Total	2,803.50

Siva Poomi School Trust	
Natraj Narayanswami	20.00
Total	30.91

Yogaswami Hindu Boys' Home Fund	
Siva & Dharshi Balasingham	75.00
Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam	46.05
Dharmalingam Siddhan	150.00
Total	281.96

India Hindu Tribals Endowment	
Jothi Kotta	667.00
Total	677.91

Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund	
Shetal Joshi & Anant Khudanpur	20.20
Vayudeva Varadan	54.00
Total	85.11

Saivite Tamil Foundation Endowment	
S.K. Vadivale	45.82
Total	56.73

Rani Jothiswarar Memorial Fund	
K. Balaraman Family	155.42
Rani Jothiswarar Estate	100.00
Sarkunan Krishnan	100.00
Total	355.42

Ramanathaswamy Temple Cleaning Fund	
Vinaya Alahan	100.00
Panshula Ganesan	20.00
Amravadee Kownden	100.00
Sushela Ramalingam	150.00
Shebabrata Shaha	7.00
Harish Mathuradas Thakrar	5.00
Total	382.00

Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment	
Other Donations	600.00

K.D. & A.D. Williams gave to 65 different funds totalling	
	\$720.36

Total Contributions	\$106,075.83
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Funds at Market Value, June 30, 2008	
Total Endowment Funds	\$8,958,030.33
Total Pooled Income Funds	\$208,010.48

Grand Total	US\$ 9,166,040.81
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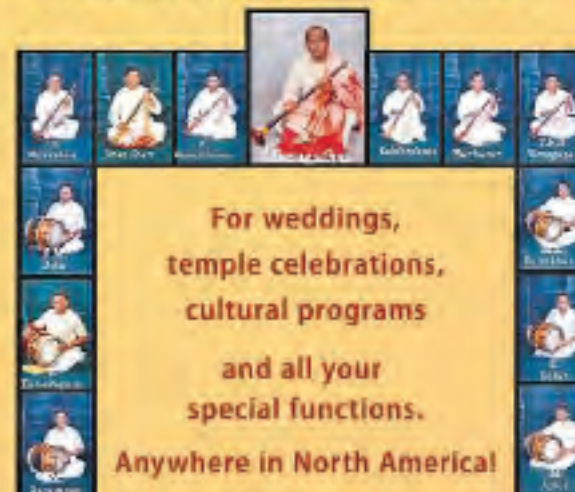
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Sri Saraswati Puja
Oct 6th - Oct 8th
5 - 9 PM

Sri Saraswati Abhishekam
Sri Saraswati Homa
Sri Saraswati Pustaka Mandala Puja & Bhajan
Aarti & Divine food (Prasad)

Sri Lakshmi Puja
Oct 3rd - Oct 5th
5 - 9 PM

Sri Lakshmi Abhishekam
Sri Lakshmi Homa
Lakshmi Trisandana Puja & Bhajan
Aarti & Divine food (Prasad)

Vijaya Dasami
Oct 9th
5 - 9 PM

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India Health Scene 2008

Currently, the healthcare scenario in India is peculiar. World-class hospitals have sprung in various cities across India, and suddenly 'medical tourism' has become a buzzword to the Government's health ministry, who have promised 50-100 billion rupees of additional revenue by 2015.

Unfortunately, at the same time, 80 children out of every 1000 born in the rural India – where more than 70% of the country's population reside – do not live to see a single day; and 30 per cent of all infants born weigh less than 2.5 kg, which is the World Health Organization's cut-off level to determine low birth weight in reference to an infant's longevity.

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Arogya Rakshak: Life Guard

Arogya Rakshak is a local person trained in preventive health care, early identification of major diseases, nutrition, and hygiene. This person carries a kit of basic medicines and apparatus and visits each village that is assigned to him on a regular basis. They are regularly refreshed in their trainings by doctors. When they foresee an epidemic in a particular season they plan appropriate action.

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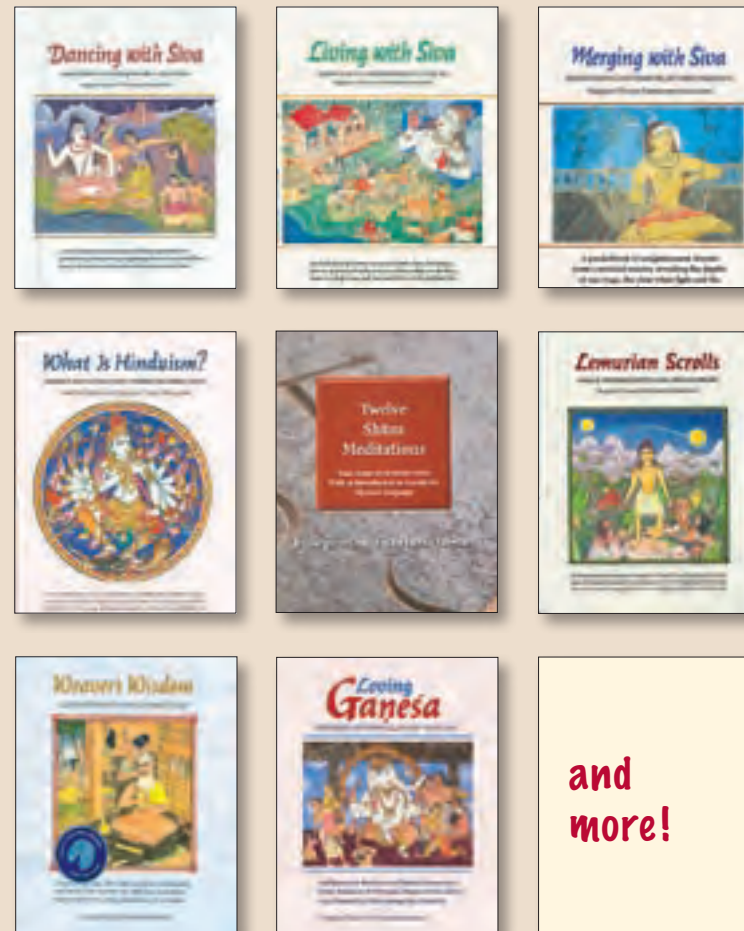
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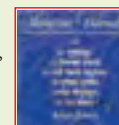
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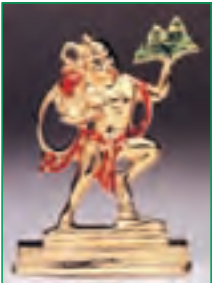
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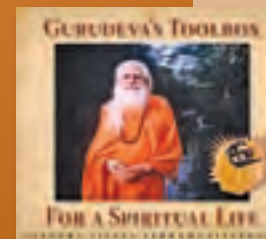
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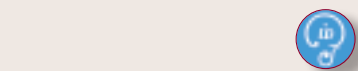
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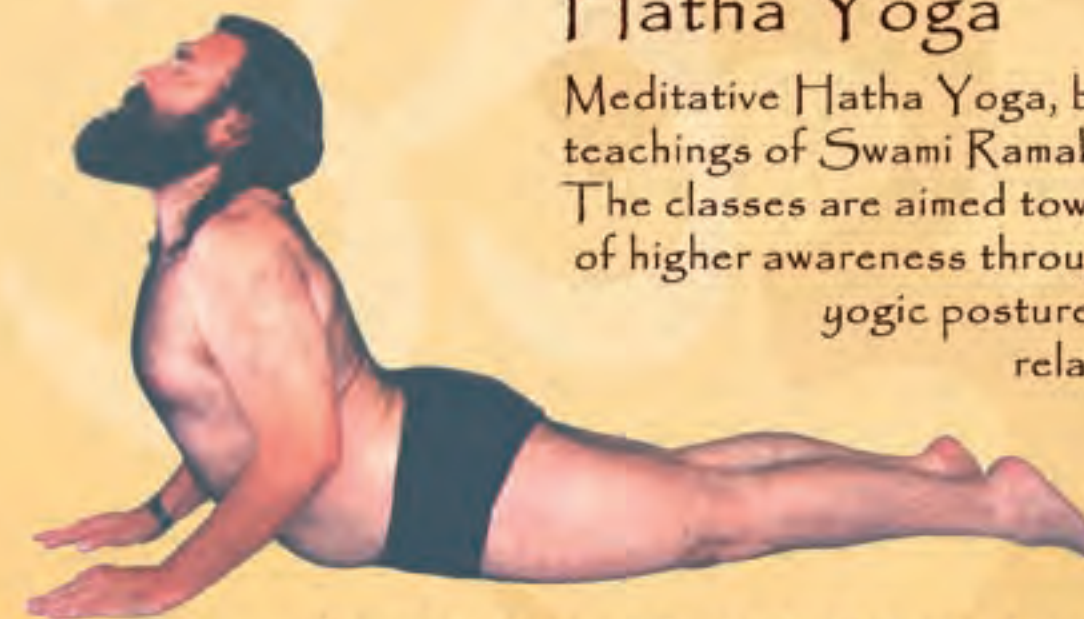
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