

HINDUISM TODAY

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



GANESHA, LORD OF DHARMA



COVER: Our friend, Lord Ganesha, dances on a lotus flower while His faithful mouse Mushika offers a sweet *modaka* ball; (above) Two chefs at a food stall along Delhi's Paratavali Gali, "Flat Bread Lane," expertly prepare their famed fried fare

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 2005 • HINDU YEAR 5107
PARTHIVA, THE YEAR OF EARTHLY PROSPERITY

Bodhinatha Veylanawami
www.gurudeva.org

INTERNATIONAL

- Feature:** The Fractured Lives of Nepal's Untouchables 18
Service: Meet a California Heart Surgeon Who Took His Skills Back to Native Sri Lanka 30
Food: Lavina Melwani Savors the Vegetarian Delicacies of Mumbai and Delhi 32
Temples: Honoring the Seers Who Gave Us Medicine, Faith, Astrology and More 54

LIFESTYLE

- Insight:** My Friend, Lord Ganesha 37
Health: Keys to Childhood Nutrition 53
Issues: How Ramakrishna and Vivekananda Revivified Hinduism 56
Movies: *Super Size Me*, a Startling Personal Encounter with McDonald's Fast Food Menu 59
Society: Namaskaram: "Would You Shake Hands with God?" 62
Youth: Surprise, Teens Value Temple Experience 64

- Movies:** The I-Max Movie, *Mystic India*, Is a Spectacular Tour of Hindu Spirituality 65
Honors: Swami Tejomayananda of Chinmaya Mission is Our "Hindu of the Year 2005" 66

OPINION

- In My Opinion:** On the Importance of Worship and Gratitude in the Workplace 9
Publisher's Desk: Dispelling the Myth of a Trinity of Hindu Gods 10
Letters 12
From the Vedas: The Mysterious Presence of the Divine Atma within All 17
Opinion: Why Many Non-Indians Following Hinduism Don't Call themselves Hindus 60

DIGESTS

- Diaspora** 6 **Digital Dharma** 86
Quotes & Quips 14

Letters to the editor, subscription and editorial inquiries may be sent to HINDUISM TODAY, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304 USA, letters@hindu.org. HINDUISM TODAY (ISSN# 0896-0801), October/November/December, 2005, Volume 27, No. 4. Editorial: 1-808-822-7032 (ext. 227); subscriptions, copy or bulk orders: (from USA or Canada:) 1-800-850-1008 or (from all countries) 1-808-240-3108, subscribe@hindu.org; advertising: 1-888-464-1008, ads@hindu.org. All-department fax: 1-808-822-4351. HINDUISM TODAY is published four times a year in January, April, July and October by Himalayan Academy, a nonprofit educational institution at 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304 USA. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, Founder; Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanawami, Publisher; Paramacharya Palaniswami, Editor-in-Chief. USA subscriptions: US\$35/1 year, \$65/2 years, \$95/3 years, \$155/5 years, \$1,001/lifetime. Contact us for international rates. In India: Central News Agency Limited, 4E/4 Jhandewalan Extn., New Delhi, 110055. Tel 011-5154-1111, E-mail: subs@cna-india.com. For permission to republish a HINDUISM TODAY article, call 1-808-822-7032 (ext. 227) or fax 1-808-822-4351. Printed in USA. Application to mail at periodicals postage rates is pending at Kapaa, Hawaii, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HINDUISM TODAY, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304.

© 2005 HIMALAYAN ACADEMY, 107 KAHOLALELE ROAD, KAPAA, HAWAII 96746-9304 USA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



www.hinduismtoday.com

Brazil . . . BRL 10.55
Canada . . . CAD 7.50

India . . . INR 85.00
Malaysia . . MYR 10.00

Mauritius . MUR 87.00
Singapore . . SGD 7.50

Trinidad . . TTD 36.00
UK GBP 3.75



Nepal's Untouchables

Her baskets curing in the sun on his slate roof, this skilled artisan is considered an “untouchable,” a Dalit, in the Hindu social system of Nepal. She and other Dalits now face economic pressures threatening their livelihood, on top of centuries of discrimination... Page 18

DIASPORA

PAKISTAN

Cache of Hindu Treasure Rescued from Smugglers

IN JUNE, 2005, PAKISTAN'S Customs Drug Enforcement Cell confiscated 1,482 pieces of pre-Harappan artifacts, Gandhara, Hindu-era, Islamic-era sculptures and more from a container that was to smuggle them to United Arab Emirates. Authorities said the antiquities are worth over US\$11.7 million dollars). A case was registered against exporter Khwaja Muneer Ahmad of Kashmir Carpet House, who had declared the shipment as furniture, brass and copper items worth only \$13,400. A thorough examination uncovered the artifacts packed in 66 boxes. Such smuggling appears unfortunately common.



Treasures from ancient India are recovered in Pakistan



Lawsuit's centerpiece: McDonald's fries still not vegetarian fare

U S A

McDonald's Supersizes Hindu Charities, but Still Beefs Fries

THEY DECEIVED THE PUBLIC about beef flavorings in their "vegetarian fries." They got caught. They were sued. They settled in court. In July, 2005, McDonald's mailed a check for \$254,773.19 to HINDUISM TODAY magazine's endowment fund, one of 24 American institutions to share the \$10 million settlement.

It started with Seattle lawyer, Harish Bharti, a vegetarian Hindu who makes a habit out of identifying ingredients in purportedly vegetarian foods. In 1990, he examined McDonald's French fries after they switched from beef tallow to vegetable oil for frying. McDonald's had a problem. Their veggie-oil cooked fries didn't taste like tallow-cooked fries. So, they added beef flavoring to the potatoes before frying, labelled "natural flavor." Vegetarians assumed—and McDonald's did not try to dissuade them—that the fries were now vegetarian.

Bharti sued McDonald's in 2001, and that grew into a lawsuit involving a number of lawyers and organizations. Ultimately, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, Muslims, vegetarians and vegans joined the fray—the Jews because the beef flavoring was not kosher and the Muslims because it wasn't halal.

In March, 2002, the lawsuit was close to being settled. McDonald's agreed to issue a

formal apology, better disclosure of ingredients, creation of an advisory board and payment of \$10,000,000 to organizations which promote vegetarianism and issues related to the fries.

The apology reads, in part, "McDonald's sincerely apologizes to Hindus, vegetarians and others. Mistakes were made in communicating to the public. Mistakes included instances in which French fries and hash browns sold at U.S. restaurants were improperly identified as 'vegetarian.'"

Organizations were invited to submit specific proposals to Bharti and the other lawyers for a share in the settlement. In May, 2003, the Illinois court where the suit was litigated announced the 24 organizations awarded money under the settlement, one of which was the HINDUISM TODAY endowment.

After an appeal was dismissed, the final disbursement of \$10 million was made during the first week of July, 2005.

Hindu vegetarians around the world may wish to take note of the little-publicized fact that McDonald's made no changes in their fries, which are still beef-flavoring saturated. Sure, the oil is vegetable. But make no mistake about it. There is meat in those luscious Golden Arches French fries. For settlement details see: www.hinduismtoday.com/press_releases/mcdonalds/

GUATEMALA

The Mayan-Vedic Nexus

IN THE TRANQUIL ENVIRONMENT of Antigua, Guatemala, Hindu and Mayan elders shared their belief systems in a conference held on May 29 and 30, 2005, organized by the International Center for Cultural Studies (ICCS), USA. Fifty delegates came from five countries. Dr. Yashwant Pathak, coordinator said, "Never before has such a symposium been organized."

The premise of the conference was that the Vedic and

Hindu rite and the procedures and ingredients of the Mayan *yagna* astounded everyone. Elizabeth Araujo, an elder Mayan woman explained, "We believe in the uniqueness and the infiniteness of the Almighty but still believe in its thousand aspects that are tangible. We believe that the Almighty pervades in all creations; plants, animals, the sun and the moon are all touched by its existence. We believe fire to be a source of purifications, and therefore in the *yagna* we offer our homage through fire."

Don Alajandro, one of the most respected Mayan elders, addressed the Hindu as "his



Hindus and Guatemala Mayans discover common beliefs and rites

Mayan civilizations were in close communication in the ancient past. Through history, both Vedic and Mayan traditions faced declines due to internal failures and external onslaughts by other later civilizations. Both cultures were challenged in the survival of traditions and propagation of their ancestral wisdom for generations.

"Preservation of Vedic knowledge was a magnitude more successful; language, rituals, clothing, etc., survived the invaders and missionaries, due to a persistent retaliation and the deep rooted nature of Vedic philosophy," explained Dr. Lata Dani, retired professor of English at Nagpur University, India. "We still need to interact because we want to pick up pieces of history we could have lost through time."

The conference started with a Mayan *yagna* (fire worship). The similarity between the

brothers and sisters" who have come so far to build bonds. He said that this meeting was in accordance with Mayan prophecy. He discussed at length the social and political challenges that Mayans face today. Later as a symbol of brotherhood, the Hindu delegation tied *rakhees* on the wrists of Mayan attendees.

On the second day of the conference the Hindu delegations impressed their Mayan counterparts by performing a Vedic *hawan* (fire ceremony) and presented Hinduism's revival efforts. "Unless Mayan youth take up the responsibility of cultural rediscovery, it will remain a challenge," said Dr. Diwedi, an ICCS executive committee member. The conference was followed by a four-day tour of the ancient temples and sites of archeological relics. For more on the fascinating work of ICCS, visit:

www.iccsus.org



Muruga brings together Hindus of all ethnic backgrounds

RODRIGUES

Hindu Solidarity Shines in Rodrigues' First Thaipusam

THE TINY MAURITIAN ISLAND OF RODRIGUES HELD ITS first-ever Thaipusam, Kavadi festival in April, 2005. Leaders of a Hindi Shivala, devotees of Sai Baba and officials and businessmen from Mauritius cooperated to manifest the event. Last year the Hindi owner of Ram Restaurant, Monsieur Ram, donated a small icon of Lord Muruga, which was duly consecrated by a Tamil priest. This year Muruga's most celebrated festival was observed by all. *Vanakkam* newspaper in Mauritius reported on the event, making a point of the cross-cultural nature of the celebration, where the congregation sang together in both Hindi and Tamil. Its article closed with these words: "Muruga nous a donné là une leçon d'amour et de coopération. Une leçon a retenir....Muruga has given us there a lesson of love and cooperation. A lesson to be remembered."

AFRICA/MALAYSIA

One African Mother of All Humanity

IN MAY, 2005, A TEAM OF geneticists at the University of Glasgow claimed that their studies of the DNA of Malaysia's Orang Asli ("Original Men") show that the entire modern human race evolved from a single migration out of Africa 65,000 years ago. The band of hunter gathers, who could not have been more than several hundred, is calculated to have pushed along the coasts of India to South-east Asia, reaching Australia 50,000 years ago, the date of the earliest known archaeological

sites there. Europe was then in an ice age, and these scientists say that Europeans likely descended from Indians who later pushed north through Iran. The report casts further doubt on the Aryan invasion of India theory. A larger global DNA study will hopefully finally settle the debate. The evidence is drawn from studies of mitochondrial DNA, which is solely inherited through the female line. See: www.stats.gla.ac.uk/~vincent/



Orang Asli—your brothers and sisters



Devotees of Lord Shrinath Ji carry Him from His old home to a new site

U S A

Srinath's New Texas Home

LORD SHRINATHJI—THE seven-year-old form of Lord Krishna worshiped by Vallabhacharya Vaishnavas was moved from a simple dwelling in Texas to a fabulous new Houston home in June, 2005. The Vallabh Priti Seva Samaj (VPSS) held a week-long cel-

ebration to consecrate and open the doors of the new state-of-the-art \$7 million, 40,000 sq. foot premises on eight acres of land.

The Houston Chapter of VPSS began in 1979. From humble beginnings, with prayer meetings held in private homes and garages of devotees, the group, through intensive fund-raising, procured premises on Bintliff Drive in 1991. That was Lord Shrinath Ji's first

Houston home. Fifteen years later, excited devotees moved Shrinathaji to His new home.

The project, which already has a grand community center, is still in phase one. Future plans include a 150-unit retirement community, a 50-unit assisted living facility and a 25-unit nursing home. The goal is to build an enduring facility for future generations to enjoy, said Executive Chairman Suresh Patel. See www.vpsshaveli.org



Indonesia's Sunarno Dance Company (above) performs in London to the music of England's South Bank Gamelan Players (below)

MUSIC/DANCE

UK Musicians Meld with Java

GRAHAM WATT'S REVIEW of the third annual Ramayana performance in London, in "Ballet.co" says, "The Sunarno Dance Company appears all over the world, but I wonder where else—apart from Java and Bali in Indonesia—it is able to perform with an *in-situ gamelan* orchestra of this quality." What was indeed unusual about the June, 2005, performance was not the excellent dance, but England's own South Bank Gamelan Players.

An ensemble-in-residence at



the Royal Festival Hall, it was founded by Alec Roth in 1987. Many of the musicians have undertaken extensive study in Java and a number are tutors for the Royal Festival Hall Gamelan Programme. Working closely with dancers, puppeteers and composers from Indonesia, Europe and the USA, the group has established an international reputation both for its performances of traditional Javanese music and for its championing of new music for gamelan.

USA/EDUCATION

Swami Blesses MIT Grads

AMID CHANTS OF SANSKRIT prayers, some 2,300 students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) 139th commencement received degrees in Cambridge, June 13, 2005. Swami Tyagananda offered the invocation in the language of the Gods to reflect the large international crowd's spirit of unity and goodwill. "May we be granted clear understanding and the courage to pursue the goals of social justice, nonviolence, harmony



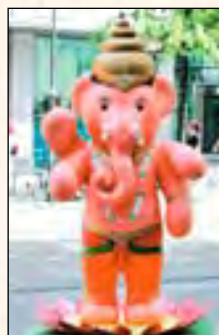
Swami Tyagananda, head of Boston's RK mission, is also MIT's Hindu chaplain

and peace," he said. MIT has 2,724 international students registered for the current academic year, a bulk of them from India and China. MIT has an active campus Vedanta Society.

SWITZERLAND

Swiss Teddy—Jai Ganesha!

WE OFTEN THINK HERE AT HINDUISM TODAY that Lord Ganesha definitely has His own marketing program. He made yet another unusual appearance this year in the 2005 summer Swiss teddy bear invasion. Under the auspices of the Swiss department of tourism, artists created and placed polyester teddy bears of all shapes and sizes throughout Zurich—800 in all. Many were full human size. Lord Ganesha was one among them.



"Please...pleeeeee, I need a hug!"

history with both Masters and Doctoral degrees awarded. A first ever of its kind, the degree of Doctor of Hindu Studies in "Yoga Philosophy & Meditation" was awarded to Mona Khaitan, and the first Masters degree in "Hindu Philosophies" was received by Jadeine Shives.

ANOTHER USA SWAMINARAYARAN

Temple was consecrated in Florida in July, 2005. The new Polk County temple is housed in a 20,000-square-foot building that was purchased about two years ago by local Florida Gujaratis.

UK IMMIGRATION MINISTER, TONY

McNulty, MP, invited on June, 30, 2005, Anil Bhanot, Hindu Council of UK General Secretary, and Dr. Narayan Rao, HCUK Director and Vice Chair of the Interfaith Network, to

talk about visa restrictions requiring priests from overseas to pass a high-level English language test. Dr. Rao requested that the Ministers of Religion category should be split into two, one for a pastoral role and the second for a non-pastoral role. The latter would apply to priests who would not preach, who know only Indian languages, but are scholars of Sanskrit needed to perform temple rites.

AN UNLIKELY HINDU-JAIN

controversy has arisen atop Mount Girnar and other peaks, in Rajkot, Gujarat, where Hindus have installed a shrine and icons in areas which Jains claim are protected. The pair of footprints atop Mount Girnar are worshipped as those of Lord Dattatreya by Hindus and Lord Neminath by Jains.



HINDU RENAISSANCE TEAM

HINDUISM TODAY was founded January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami. 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 a resource for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, reports on events and encouraging others. to subscribe.

Founder: Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

Publisher: Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Editor-in-Chief: Paramacharya Palaniswami

Publisher's Aide: Paramacharya Ceyonswami

Deputy Editor: Acharya Kumaraswami

Managing Editor: Sannyasin Arumugaswami

Graphics Director: Sannyasin Natarajathaswami

Production Manager: Sannyasin Sivakatirswami

Subscription and Distribution Manager: Sannyasin Shanmuganathaswami

Contributing Editor: Yogi Japendranatha

Advertising Manager: Sadhaka Jothinatha

Correspondents: Choodamani Sivaram, Bangalore;

Rajiv Malik, Prabha Prabhakar Bhardwaj, Madhu

Kishwar, Delhi; Mangala Prasad Mohanty, Orissa; V.

S. Gopalakrishnan, Kerala; Archana Dongre, Los Angeles;

Lavina Melwani, New York; Dr. Hari Bansh Jha, Nepal;

Paras Ramoutar, Trinidad; V. G. Julie Rajan, Philadelphia;

Rajesh Jantilal, South Africa; Iraja Sivasadas, California;

Tara Katir, Hawaii. *HPI Staff:* Janaka Param,

Toshadeva Guhan, Clive Roberts, Easan Katir,

Adi Alahan, Chandra Sankara, Shama Vinayaga, Arjana Daswani.

Sanskritist: Dr. P. Jayaraman, New York.

Artists: A. Manivelu, S. Rajam. *Cartoonists:* M. Arumugam,

Bob Thaves, Ripin Karla. *Photo Contributors:* Thomas L. Kelly,

Stephen P. Huyler, Dinodia, Dev Raj Agarwal, Gilles Flament,

Vel Kadressen, Mu Devarayan, Indivar Sivanathan.

Web Masters: Nitya Nadesan, Sadhunathan Nadesan.

Distribution: USA: Ingram Periodicals, New Leaf,

EBSCO Subscription Services, OneSource, Ubiquity.

Europe: SWETS Subscription Service. Malaysia and Singapore: Sanathana Dharma Publications.

India: Central News Agency Limited, Delhi. Mauritius: CODIP.

Trinidad: Pandit Narendra & Ashwinee Ragoonanan.

Printer: Banta Publications Group, Kansas City, Missouri

IN MY OPINION

"Workship" with "Grattitude"

The rewards of hard work and thankfulness

BY NANNAPANENI NARAYANA RAO

I COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL in India 58 years ago. Eighteen years after that, I received my Ph.D. in the United States. For the 40 years that have transpired since then, I have been working at the same job. Now, in my eighth decade of life, people are beginning to ask me why I continue to work, why I don't just retire and enjoy life. I always reply that I love my job and I enjoy my work. Still, everyone is wondering what keeps me going.

Finally, I announced to the people that I work with—all 150 of them—the secret of my inspiration: *gratitude*. In his divinely beautiful style, Gurudeva Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (founding publisher of HINDUISM TODAY) explains: "Gratitude and appreciation are the key virtues for a better life. They are the spell that is cast to dissolve hatred, hurt and sadness, the medicine which heals subjective states of mind, restoring self-respect, confidence and security."

I am grateful for many things. But most of all, I am grateful for the Hindu heritage I received from my late pious parents. They lived in a village called Kakumanu in Andhra Pradesh, India—halfway around the world from my Illinois home. As I reflect upon my young life with them, I am convinced that it is their influence that has fostered the development in me of what I now consider to be the ultimate attitude for the enjoyment of work. To further express this concept I have been inspired to coin two new words for this article: *grattitude* and *workship*.

Grattitude means an attitude of gratitude. In the performance of my job, I feel *grattitude* for the opportunity I have been given to help facilitate the education of our wonderful youth, through my teaching, writing and administration. I have learned that performing such work with *grattitude* yields immediate enjoyment, while performing that same work expecting appreciation in return yields the opposite effect.

Workship means approaching work as



HINDUISM TODAY

worship. This is nothing new. It's an old Hindu concept which I am just now identifying with a catchy new word-name. In his article, "Work Is Worship" (HINDUISM TODAY, July/August/September 2004), Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami lists four ways to cultivate what I would call *workship*: "1) integrate spirituality into work; 2) seek ways to serve; 3) dedicate your actions to God; 4) work on yourself." When I read this I realized that I had been following these practices for a long time.

I approach my job every morning with the thought that I am going to the "Temple of Electrical and Computer Engineering," where I will *workship*. The first thing I do when I enter my office is offer salutations to a statue of Lord Ganesha, which I have installed in a small shrine there. Then I go to *workship* with my staff, students and faculty colleagues, striving always to carry out my tasks with a willpower born of the conviction that "for every problem, there is not just a solution, but a good solution."

I have found that when one is able to practice *workship* with *grattitude*, rewards come without being sought. Recently, a student walked into my office unexpectedly. She was carrying a beautifully framed painting of Ganesha and a greeting card, which read: "If we measure success by the number of lives we touch and the ways that we reach out to others and truly make a difference, then it's hard to imagine a richer life than yours."

Certainly, at that moment I was filled with immeasurable *grattitude*—not just for such a wonderful gift and the beautiful thoughts behind it, but for everything. I may now honestly say that I am truly grateful to all for all, because I have learned, in my 70-plus years, that true enjoyment is the result of *workship* with *grattitude*.

Nannapaneni Narayana Rao is Associate Head of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Illinois in Urbana, Illinois.

BRIEFLY...

IN MADURAI, TAMIL NADU, THE Central Research Institute for Siddha plans to digitalize nearly 10,000 formulae of Siddha compositions for various ailments and host them on the traditional knowledge digital library being evolved by the Department of Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy. This was an effort to prevent the grant of wrong patents for non-original inventions in India's traditional knowledge system at the international level, according to G. Veluchamy, Director, Central Research Institute for Siddha.

NOT ALL TEMPLES IN INDIA ARE aware that United India Insurance offers a comprehensive temple insurance covering

fire and allied perils, including temple structures and their contents from terrorist attacks. Temples insured include Tirupati Devasthanam in Andhra Pradesh, Madurai Meenakshi temple in Tamil Nadu, Shree Vaishnodevi and Guruvayoor Sreekrishna temple in Kerala among others. The idea of insurance coverage for temples became popular after the deadly terrorist attack on the Swaminarayan temple in Gujarat.

THE HINDU UNIVERSITY OF

America, located in Orlando, Florida, hosted its third Graduation Commencement, on Saturday, June 25, 2005. This particular graduation made

The Hindu Trinity Myth

How temples can publicize their philosophy and lineage to counteract the misconception that Hinduism is polytheistic

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

A FEW YEARS AGO A NON-HINDU PROFESSOR who teaches world religions at a Texas University visited our monastery to learn more about Hinduism. His first question was, "Is it true that Hindus worship a trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva? That is what the textbooks teach. That is what the professors tell their students." Though I was aware of the wide scope of this misconception, I was aghast to see it taken as fact.

We explained to him that this idea is based on stories from the *Puranas*, but it has no relevance in actual Hindu practice or theology. Some texts seek to draw credence for this idea from the massive *trimurti* (three-faced) stone carving of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshvara as one being in the Elephanta Caves (ca 700). However, a more sensible view is that this 16-foot-tall carving is a paradigm of the oneness of Divinity. One might even surmise that the Elephanta image was carved to glorify the famous Vedic verse (*Maitri Upanishad* 5.2): "That part of Him which is characterized by *tamas* is called Rudra. That part of Him which belongs to *rajas* is Brahma. That part of Him which belongs to *sattva* is Vishnu." Is this a prayer to a trinity of three Gods? No. It is a prayer of adoration to the One Supreme Lord.

The professor was truly amazed to hear this, having never actually spoken to a Hindu about it before. He thanked us for the clarification and pledged to change his syllabus for the coming year to state that Hindus actually worship a one Supreme Being and are not polytheists. Unfortunately, most teachers of world religions continue to indoctrinate students with the misunderstanding that Hindus are polytheistic. Hindus were never polytheistic in the sense that there are many equal Gods. Henotheism (literally "one God"), which philosophers also call inclusive monotheism, better defines the lofty Hindu view. It means the worship of one God without denying the existence of other Gods.

Whether there is one or more Supreme Gods can be traced to two distinct but intertwining streams of Hindu thought and tradition. There is the original Vedic-Agamic Hinduism, with its high-minded philosophical edicts, its vast knowledge about ritual and theology and a wealth of mystical insights into God, man and world. And there is the more recent Puranic Hinduism, with its folk narratives and myths, its teachings of culture and religious practices, its vast record of history, architecture, medicine and geography and, of course, the popular and sometimes implausible stories about the Gods. Vedic-Agamic Hinduism is ancient, for the authoritative Vedas and Agamas have their source deep in human history, 6,000 to 8,000 years ago, while Puranic Hinduism is more recent and based on secondary scripture.

Another source of confusion in this regard is the Hindu temple



HINDUISM TODAY

itself, when not properly explained. We walk in the door and encounter a multiplicity of shrines, each with a different Deity. How does the onlooker reconcile the one Supreme God of the *Upanishads* with the profusion of Gods we encounter in the temple? This final section of the *Vedas* states that God is the Supreme Reality referred to as Brahman, transcendent and immanent, one and indivisible, infinite and eternal, all-pervading, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss—as well as the Personal Lord.

This is where the knowledge of Hinduism's four denominations or sectarian traditions is quite helpful. The *Tamil Lexicon* by the University of Madras defines them as follows: "**Saivism**: The religion which regards Siva as the Supreme Being and is exclusively devoted to His worship, of sixteen sects. **Shaktam**: The religion which enjoins the exclusive worship of Shakti as the Supreme Being. **Vaishnavam**: The religion which holds Vishnu to be the Supreme Being." The definition for the Smarta or Vaidika Sampradaya is found under **Shanmatam**: "The six Vedic religious systems: Saivism, Vaishnavam, Shaktam, Ganapatiya, Kaumaram, Sauram." In other words, Smartas have a choice to worship any one of the six Deities—Siva, Vishnu, Shakti, Ganesha, Subramanya and Surya—as the Supreme Lord, as their Ishta Devata, or preferred Deity.

However, we don't want to leave the impression that all Hindu denominations hold the Smarta viewpoint that all Gods are "aspects" of the Supreme Being. In Saivism, for example, God Siva is the Supreme Being and Ganesha and Subramanya are separate Gods who assist Him. These Gods are not symbolic representations, but real spiritual beings, somewhat akin to the archangels of Christianity.

A uniquely confusing situation we find in the West is that Supreme God Vishnu and Supreme God Siva are sometimes equally enshrined side-by-side in the same temple to accommodate various allegiances. This gives the wrongful impression that the practicing Hindu worships more than one Supreme God. This problem does not occur in India, where only one Deity is enshrined as the central God in any temple.

Indeed, we know of US temples which on their website describe Siva as the destroyer and Vishnu as the preserver. Of course, this is not how knowledgeable Saivites or Vaishnavites look at it. To Saivites, Siva is the *entire* Supreme Being, not merely the dispenser of destruction. To Vaishnavites, Vishnu is the *entire* Supreme Being, not just the Lord of preservation. That we worship the Supreme Being above all others is clearly the view of Hinduism's



S. RAJAM

revealed scriptures (*shruti*), the *Vedas* and *Agamas*.

Not all Hindus are familiar with the category of scripture called the *Agamas*. The *Agamas* were part of an oral tradition of unknown antiquity which some experts consider as ancient as the earliest *Vedas*. The *Agamas* are the primary source and authority for temple construction and ceremonies. Each of the major denominations—Saivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism—has its unique *Agama* texts. Smartas recognize the *Agamas*, but don't necessarily adhere to them, relying mainly on the *smriti* texts, such as the *Dharma Shastras*, *Puranas*, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*.

In the *Saiva Agamas*, for example, Lord Siva is described as the Supreme Being, performing all three divine actions of creation, preservation and destruction. Quite often two additional actions are included: His veiling and revealing graces. The *Raurava Agama* states, "The birth of the world, its maintenance, its destruction, the soul's obscuration and liberation are the five acts of His dance." No wonder Saivites take great exception to the statement that Siva is the God of Destruction, a concept that finds its source in the *Puranas*.

Holy texts: Hindu spiritual texts are vast, scribed on palm leaves, manuscripts, carved in stone tablets and more. The artist shows our most revered scriptures, the Vedas and Agamas, delivered from God's hand, while other scriptures are man-made.

I have been to a number of temples that have equal shrines for Venkatesvara and Siva. If such a temple took the Puranic approach, it would say that at the Sri Venkatesvara shrine we are worshiping Vishnu, the God of Preservation, and at the Sri Sivalingam shrine we are worshiping Siva, the God of Destruction. In the Agamic approach, we would say the Venkatesvara shrine is of the Vaishnava denomination of Hinduism, which worships the Supreme Being as Vishnu. The liturgy, or temple ritual, is conducted according to the *Pancharatra* or *Vaikhanasa Agama*. The Sri Sivalingam shrine is of the Saiva denomination of Hinduism, which worships the Supreme Being as Siva. The liturgy is conducted according to the *Kamika* and *Karana Agamas*.

The misunderstanding created by the *Puranas* is not a new problem. Arumuga Navalar (1822-1879) was a devout and brilliant Saivite working to reeducate the Saiva community of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, following the departure of the Portuguese and two centuries of foreign domination and anti-Hindu preaching. The Christians were criticizing Hinduism as superstitious, childish and polytheistic, quoting from the *Puranas* to prove their point. Navalar boldly defended his faith, even translating the *Bible* into Tamil to show its own failings and immaturities. The missionaries loved the Puranic tales which speak ("absurdly," Navalar declared) about the marriages of the Gods and promote a multiplicity of Supreme Gods.

Navalar believed in the Gods, the Mahadevas, and worshiped Lord Murugan devoutly. But he knew his faith spoke of a single Supreme Being and wanted his fellow Saivites, who were languishing under missionary assaults, to understand the traditional view. He spoke against the storybook aspects of the *Puranas*, making it clear to Saivites that the *Agamas* are spiritually superior and should be the source of their faith and practice. Still, he defended the greatness of the *Kanda Purana*, which he saw as high-minded and inspiring. He succeeded in bringing Saivism back to life by showing his people the true, mystical purity of Hinduism.

The point that Arumuga Navalar was making is: don't take the Puranic stories literally. They are a major source of misconceptions about Hinduism. When the *Puranas* are taken as the authority on Hinduism, the high philosophy of the revealed scriptures is obscured and confusions arise.

For temples in the West, the Vedic-Agamic approach is what is needed to create clarity about Hindu temple worship in the minds of Hindu youth, as well as the non-Hindu community. We are encouraging all temples to help create this clarity of Hindu belief by stressing on their websites and in their publications that, first and foremost, Hindus all worship a one Supreme Being, though by different names and through different traditions.

We also suggest that temples share more information on their traditions, such as: 1) **Mata**: whether the liturgy is of the Vaishnava, Saiva, Shakta or Vaidika tradition; 2) **Agama**: the name of the *Agama* (or other scripture) that governs the ceremonies; 3) **Murti**: the form of the main Deity and a brief history of its worship in India; 4) **Archaka**: the background of the priesthood; 5) **Darshana**: the philosophy or philosophies taught at the temple; 6) **Anubhuti**: any divine experience, dream, vision or inspiration that led to temple's creation. For such a description for our own Kadavul Hindu Temple go to www.himalayanacademy.com/ssc/hawaii/kadavul/.

There is no reason for Hindus to endure the criticism of polytheism when we have the glorious *Vedas* and *Agamas* to guide the way and offer wisdom about our worship of the one Supreme God. Hopefully this article will help Hindus respond to misconceptions they may encounter.

LETTERS

Eastern Culture, Western World

I WAS SO MOVED TO READ SHURJENDU Dutt-Mazumdar's essay ("Finding Self Identity," Oct/Nov/Dec, 2004) prompted by your query about the challenges immigrants face of respecting their religious culture while living day to day in the Western world. Simply, his opening line brought tears to my eyes. What wisdom he shows for such a young person! The world is in a very dangerous phase right now. I know very little of the Hindu religion and the myriad cultural traditions in India, but I do know about humanity, and I don't think that hate or intolerance is natural. I could insert any country and religion into his statements and know that it could ring true for them all. If we simply respected our past, our present and our future and the past, present and future of every individual and lived with tolerance, we would be a far more successful world society.

MARYLYNN MCSORELY
BOULDER, COLORADO, USA
✉ MLMCSORLEY@HOTMAIL.COM

Radical Universalism

I BELIEVE THAT THE VIEWS PRESENTED by Dr. Morales in his article ("All Religions Are Not the Same, The Problem with Hindu Universalism," Apr/May/June, 2005) are erroneous, and that the subject matter is of such critical importance that the views presented therein must not be left unanswered. Hindu Universalism is not borrowed from outside Hinduism as Dr. Morales claims, but derives from the richness of its own soil. Hinduism's universal outlook is the prime reason for its remarkable syncretism, for the great hospitality of its people and the tremendous resilience of its civilization. To ask Hindus to abandon universalism is not only to reify Hinduism but to promote a kind of parochialism that Hinduism has never harbored in the course of its long history. I have written an article, "The Sword of Kali," available at www.boloji.com/hinduism/101.htm, in which I have taken pains to comprehensively examine, based on Hindu scriptures as well as the philosophical doctrines of Hinduism, all the arguments of Dr. Morales, and I find that the case he makes is erroneous and specious. I do believe that Dr. Morales is doing good work in the cause of Hinduism, but his philosophical critique of radical universalism presents a false view and should not go unanswered.

CHITTARANJAN NAIK
MUMBAI, INDIA
✉ CHITTARANJAN_NAIK@YAHOO.COM

I THINK THE ARTICLE BY DR. MORALES completely misses the point by suggesting that Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda promoted the idea that "all religions are

the same." Reading of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* or the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* will immediately enlighten the reader to the fallacy of such a suggestion. Sri Ramakrishna by his following different religions did demonstrate that all religions are like paths leading to the same goal. However, the religions or paths remained distinct. Not only are the individual religions different, but Sri Ramakrishna cautioned against following the less desirable paths, i.e., religions.

PARTHA SINHA
LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY, USA
✉ PARTHASINHA1@YAHOO.COM

DR. MORALES MAY HAVE A POINT ABOUT the misuse of the concept of the "harmony of religions"—so necessary in this day of clash of religions and civilizations. Despite his apparent knowledgeable about India, it is incredible to discover that his knowledge of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda is so rudimentary! The way he writes about both of them, and the other events in 19th-century India, seems similar to what Wilhelm Halbfass writes in his book, *India and Europe*. As we all know, the concept of the "harmony of religions" can be interpreted narrowly, namely that "all are the same," and that we should be tolerant. However, acceptance of pluralism is the requirement. All the trouble springs from the Abrahamic religions proclaiming their superiority. Surely, the Vedic "*Ekam sat, vipra bahudha vadanti*," "Truth is one, sages describe it variously," can be interpreted as authority for pluralism. Taken as a revelatory statement (subject to verification in personal experience—not mere relative belief) it points to the One Reality to which all aspire and interpret differently. With the article as published, the impression is gained by the uninformed reader that Ramakrishna and Vivekananda are to be blamed.

JOHN MANETTA
ATHENS, GREECE
✉ JMANVEDA@PANAFONET.GR

✓ *Our feature on Radical Universalism struck a philosophical nerve. But our critics above are missing the point. Dr. Morales is not against Hinduism's magnificent and precious universalism, which is integral to its philosophical outlook and a key to its exemplary tolerance. He does take issue with its too common "radical" counterpart, specifically "the idea that Hinduism somehow teaches that all religions are equal, that all religions are the same, with the same purpose, goal, experientially tangible salvific state and object of ultimate devotion." This all-religions-are-one view, he asserts, has done much to weaken Hinduism. Also, it should be made clear that Hinduism Today has always honored Ramakrishna and Vive-*

kananda for their remarkable lives and gifts to Hindu understanding and pride.

HINDUISM TODAY EDITORIAL STAFF

Hinduism Today Is Beautiful

THANKS TO HINDUISM TODAY FOR THE knowledge we enjoy by reading the beautiful magazine. Your team is doing such a great service by bringing Hinduism to our doorstep here in Australia. What a joy it is each time to pour over the glossy, colorful articles. It's getting more and more attractive as the years go by, like a young maid. These articles capture the hearts of readers. Many of my friends here borrow it from me the minute they see it. I await each issue eagerly. It is the only Hindu magazine that caters to the older and younger generations alike. I know it will be popular eternally among generations to come.

NAGESVARI NADARAJAH
EPPING, NSW, AUSTRALIA

Christian Names

THE ARTICLE BY DR. AMRIT PAL BINDRA ("The Importance of Hindu Names," July/August/September, 2005) was beautiful, but there was an oversight. Respectfully, African/Black Americans did not "adopt" Christian names and faith. Christianity was forced on Blacks during the slave trade.

MARK ISHVARA
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, USA
✉ GLAM100MPH@YAHOO.COM

Hindu Names Mispronounced

THIS IS IN REFERENCE TO THE ARTICLE about naming children ("The Importance of Hindu Names," July/Aug/Sep, 2005). I have a son whom I chose to give a Western name. Here is why: My name is Vidya, and in the sixteen years I have been in America I have yet to meet one American who can pronounce my name the way Indians know how. It is either pronounced "Vidia" (sounds like "video"), "Witchya" or "Wideya." Many comment negatively about my name, and as a sensitive person I have been offended by their comments. The latest incident occurred in a doctor's office where the nurse told me that my name was the strangest name she had ever heard. When I objected vehemently, she only offered me a superficial apology. I didn't want my son to go through all this negativity by only giving him a meaningful, beautiful Hindu name. So, I compromised by giving him a Western name and then performing a *namakarana vidhi* and giving him a Hindu name as well. I struggled with my decision, and I was criticized by my Hindu family and friends. But my son now understands, and he likes his Hindu name, which I use often. As the author states, most Americans relate better to

a Western-sounding name, and in my opinion it does lead to greater acceptance. We in India and America do not dress like our ancestors did. We have accepted Western-style clothing, speak a Western language, so what's wrong with a Western name? My son does not have to pronounce it ten times for his doctor, teachers and playmates, and I save myself a lot of headaches when filling out forms and making appointments, to name a few obvious benefits.

VIDYA BHIDE
LEDGEWOOD, NEW JERSEY, USA
✉ VIDB196@YAHOO.COM

International Marriage

I WISH TO STATE MY APPRECIATION FOR the article by Satguru regarding mixed-religion marriages ("Mom, Dad, Meet Elaine," July/Aug/Sep, 2005) and relate my own experience. In March 2001, I began dating a man who immigrated to the US from southern India. Eventually our relationship became exclusive, and I encouraged his plans to open his own retail business since he would be staying in the US permanently while his family continued living in India. I dreamt how wonderful our life would be together. How could it possibly be otherwise? All we needed was love, sensible goals, well laid plans and perhaps eventually I could quit my job and work with him when it made sense financially. I had had some interest in the culture for several years before and, while it was coincidental that he was Indian, our relationship deepened my curiosity. Thus, I began to learn Hindi

and study Hinduism. I had spent time with my boyfriend's cousin and her husband on many occasions and believed they knew me to be of excellent and likable character, so I felt assured that all things would work in my favor. Quite frankly, if I had any glimmer in the beginning of what was to befall me at the end, I would have run quickly in the opposite direction. He had always promised he would tell his mother about us, and I took this to be truth. Evidently before this actually occurred, his cousin figured out how serious our relationship had become, alerted the family in India in August 2002 and marriage arrangements to a woman of their choosing began in earnest. The realization of how influential my boyfriend's family was finally made itself abundantly clear to me. I couldn't just let him go! I had to stand up and do something to save our relationship! I enlisted a trusted friend of his family to intervene, to tell them of all my good qualities, what a wonderful family I come from, that I would willingly convert to Hinduism so much did I love their son and brother. But that, it turned out, was all for naught. He took time to think things over, made his decision and by October the dream was ended without my having any say in the matter at all. It cut me to the core losing the man I loved so deeply, knowing that he had turned away from me and learning that what I mattered more than who I am. It has taken many months to heal and move forward, though admittedly sometimes I miss him still. While I don't agree with Satguru on every point, the predominant role of culture

and religion in a Hindu/non-Hindu relationship lends prudence to giving his words very serious consideration indeed.

ANN KRUSE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, USA
✉ KRUSE93@HOTMAIL.COM

Please Send Books to Prisons

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR THE one-year subscription, but I would like to give up my subscription to the prison itself. I think it could do a lot more good if it was in open circulation, which only happens if it is sent to the prison and not to an individual. A lot more inmates would have access to the magazine and be able to learn about Hinduism. There are literally thousands of people in here who don't practice any faith, and every time I speak about the ideals of Hinduism, they seem to be interested. I would like to encourage temples, monks and priests to send books to prison libraries, as these libraries do not have very many Hindu books. It will be good for the growth of Hinduism and humanity.

MICHAEL WOODFORD
BOSCOBEL, WISCONSIN, USA

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

Letters, Hinduism Today
107 Kaholalele Road
Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA
or faxed to: (808) 822-4351
or e-mailed to: letters@hindu.org

Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of Hinduism Today.
✉ INDICATES LETTERS RECEIVED VIA E-MAIL

Strong Support from Behind the Scenes

Preparing now for HINDUISM TODAY's grand future

A GREAT PART OF OUR work consists in creating HINDUISM TODAY's future. As we speak, grand visions and bold concepts are being nurtured to make HINDUISM TODAY an ever richer resource, ever more able to reach Hindus and like-minded souls wherever in the world they may be.

Here at Kauai's Hindu Monastery, home of HINDUISM TODAY, a team of monks known as the Pillaiyar Kulam works quietly behind the scenes to give substance to those dreams and visions. They create the financial sta-

bility for the present, overseeing distribution, subscriptions, advertising, promotion and more. They also help prepare for HINDUISM TODAY's grand future by managing the Hindu Heritage Endowment, especially its HINDUISM TODAY Production Fund, which will provide future editors with regular and generous grants to make an ever more potent journal—hiring the world's best consultants, artists, writers, photographers, reporters, scholars and researchers, and sending them on assignments all over the globe to bring back great and precious news

and stories, information and inspiration that will uplift the world. There is oh-so-much more to tell of Hindus and Hinduism! Please join in this team effort to make it all happen, and consider becoming

a benefactor of HINDUISM TODAY by making the Fund a beneficiary of a gift of \$5,000 or more in your estate plan—in your will, life insurance, a revocable living trust or charitable remainder trust. Please contact us and ask for our HINDUISM TODAY Production Fund flyer.

www.hheonline.org/htplannedgiving/
hhe@hindu.org
808-822-3012, ext 244



The abundance team: Sadhaka Jivanandanatha, Shanmuganathaswami, Muruganathaswami and Sadhaka Jothinatha

QUOTES & QUIPS

“Important things are not things.”

Swami Tejomayananda, spiritual head of Chinmaya Mission

Do everything with full attention. Nothing should be done without reverence, for everything is really done unto God. You should not worship God carelessly. It is not that God will punish you, but that you will destroy your own fine sense of values. Don't trample on greatness in any form. One should have reverence for whatever one does, even if it is just an extraneous thing. **Swami Ashokananda** (1893-1969), monk of the Ramakrishna Order and accomplished teacher of Vedanta in the West

The Bereaved Mother: Even the beasts have feelings of mother and child. A dog knows how to protect its young, and a cow how to caress its calf. The mother hen closely watches and protects her fledgelings. And it is said that an eel is always precautionous to ward off the danger that may entangle its young ones. But men, merely to gratify their tongue, kill and separate others' dear ones. All the dumb creatures suffer the pinch of pain as much as men. The only difference is that men cry with tears.

॥ अपत्य-विरहिता माता ॥ प्राणिष्वपि वर्तते वात्सल्यम् । शुनी कुक्कुरकं पालयितुं जानाति गौश्च वत्सं लालयितुम् । कुक्कुटी शवकान् अप्राप्तपत्रान् अहर्निशम् अधीक्षते गोपायति च । सुविदितं च यत् सर्पमत्सी स्वापत्यानि भयेभ्योऽभीक्ष्णं वारयति । नराधमास्तु जिह्वास्वादपरायणाः स्निग्धान् जीवान् वियोजयन्ति घ्नन्ति च । मूकप्राणिनां वियोगक्लेशास् तादृशा एव यादृशा नराणाम् । विशेषस् त्वेतावानेव यत्राश्रूणि पातयन्ति ॥

From Chinese Poems and Pictures on Ahimsa, translated into Sanskrit and English by Dr. Raghu Vira

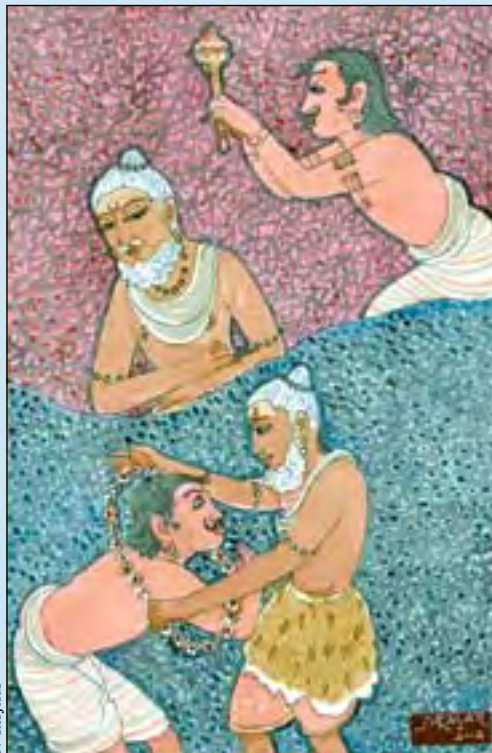
A swami, when asked to define Hinduism, remarked, “Friends, Hinduism is so fine that I hesitate to define it.”

Life should be dynamic, full of movement, flowing endlessly like the mighty Ganges.

Life's movement should be channelled in the right direction. Life becomes a burden for many people because it has lost its dynamism. For them life is not like a flowing river. It is a static, turbid puddle. Understand that action gives movement to life, knowledge gives it direction and devotion bestows the inspiration to life's journey. **Rameshbhai Oza**, inspired performer of Vaishnava kathas

Love is seeing and feeling life everywhere. When your heart is full of love, you sense life pulsating through all creation. **Mata Amritanandamayi Ma**, Kerala-based hugging saint

The greatest service one can do for people is to help them experience God. **Swami Omkarananda** (1930-2000), founder of Omkarananda Ashram, Rishikesh



Life is like photography. You use the negative to develop. **Swami Beyondananda**

A Cherokee elder sitting with his grandchildren told them, “In every life there is a terrible fight—a fight between two wolves. One is evil: he is fear, anger, envy, greed, arrogance, self-pity, resentment and deceit. The other is good: joy, serenity, humility, confidence, generosity, truth, gentleness, and compassion.” One child asked, “Grandfather, which wolf will win?” The elder looked him in the eye and replied, “The one you feed.”

Brown rice is healthier compared to white rice as vitamins and minerals are removed when processing white rice. **Datuk Seri Kerk Choo Ting**, Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Minister of Malaysia, when speaking of his government's efforts

Avoidance of Injuring Others

Tirukural 312: It is the principle of the pure in heart never to injure others, even when they themselves have been hatefully injured.

Tirukural 314: If you return kindness for injuries received and forget both, those who harmed you will be punished by their own shame.

Tirukural 318: Why does he who knows what injury to his own life is like inflict injury upon other living human beings?

Tirukural 320: All suffering recoils on the wrongdoer himself. Thus, those desiring not to suffer refrain from causing others pain.

Frank and Ernest



to create a more dynamic food industry by promoting brown rice for good health and growing and selling it domestically for the first time in Malaysian history

Learn to laugh at yourself. You will have a lifelong source of amusement.

God cannot be partial if He is everywhere. **Arvind Sharma**, professor of comparative religion, McGill University, Montreal

There the eye goes not, nor words, nor mind. We know not. We cannot understand how He can be explained. He is above the known, and He is above the unknown. Thus have we heard from the ancient sages who explained this truth to us. **Sama Veda, Kena Upanishad 1.3**

When the solution is simple, God is answering. **Albert Einstein** (1879-1955)

Until we have peace in our own heart, we can't hope for peace in the world. Peace is the natural state of the mind. It is there, inside, to be discovered in meditation, maintained through self-control, and then radiated out to others. The best way to promote peace is to teach families to be peaceful within their own homes by settling all conflicts quickly. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927-2001), founder of HINDUISM TODAY

DID YOU KNOW?

The Significance of 108

IT IS SAID THAT THE cosmos is mystically connected to the number 108, for reasons yet to be comprehended. Many have wondered at the sacredness of 108. Certainly, its application to nearly all things holy is in itself significant, including the number of beads on a *japa mala* that are counted while repeating a mantra and the number of names of a God or Goddess chanted during *puja* while offering flowers. But what is the meaning behind its significance?

In numerology, 108 breaks down to $1 + 0 + 8 = 9$. Nine is a mystically charged number, and the sum of the digits

resulting from any number multiplied by 9 always returns to 9.

Vedic astrology divides the heavens into 27 moon signs, called *nakshatras*, each with 4 *padas*, making 108 *padas* in all, giving 108 basic kinds of human nature. The *pada* occupied by the moon at the time of birth indicates the nature of one's career, pleasures, family and path to liberation.

In astronomy, Vedic seers calculated that the distance between the Earth and Moon is 108 times the diameter of the Moon, the distance between the Earth and Sun is 108 times the diameter of the Sun, and the diameter



Mala: 108 rudraksha beads used for prayer

of the Sun is 108 times the diameter of the Earth. These numbers are remarkably close to the results of calculations based on modern scientific measurements using the average distances between Earth

and the Moon and Earth and the Sun.

Ayurveda tells us that there are 108 *marmas*, points in the body, where consciousness and flesh intersect to give life to the living being. Similarly, the lines of the mystical, mesmerizing Sri Chakra Yantra intersect in 54 points, each with a masculine and feminine quality, totalling 108.

In explaining the number of beads on a *japa mala*, some say that 108 are the number of steps a soul takes to reach the Divine within himself. With this sacred number appearing in so many intersections between the Divine and the human, it is no wonder that Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and Taoists find that offerings of 108 help us remain in harmony with God's perfect universe.



Children need solid Hindu wisdom to face and shape their future.



Visit www.himalayanacademy.com/teachingtools
(or call 1-800-890-1008) for contemporary, practical brochures
to help you teach them the world's most venerable faith.

FROM THE VEDAS

Your Self, the Inner Controller

The mysterious presence of the Divine Atma within all

THE UPANISHADS CONTAIN FAMOUS PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATES held in the courts of ancient kings. Rishi Yajnavalkya shines victorious with his revelations about the nature of reality. Here are excerpts from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, III.7.1-23, which focus on the quintessential Hindu awareness of atma-antar-yamin—the immortal divine inner controller within all beings.

Uddalaka, the son of Aruna, questioned Yajnavalkya.

“Yajnavalkya,” said he, “in Madra we lived in the house of Pa-tanchala, of the line of Kapi, studying the scriptures. His wife was possessed by a *gandharva* who said, ‘He who knows that *sutra* and that Inner Controller indeed knows Brahman; he knows the worlds, he knows the Gods, he knows the *Vedas*, he knows the beings, he knows the self, he knows everything.’ If you, Yajnavalkya, do not know that *sutra* and that Inner Controller, and still take away the cows (the debate winner’s prize) that belong only to the knowers of Brahman, your head will fall off.”

Yajnavalkya said: “O Gautama, I know that *sutra* and that Inner Controller. Vayu is that *sutra*. By Vayu, as by a thread, O Gautama, are this world, the other world, and all beings held together. There-fore, O Gautama, they say of a person who dies that his limbs have been loosened; for they are held together by Vayu as by a thread.

“He who inhabits the earth, yet is within the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body the earth is, and who controls the earth from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. He who inhabits water, yet is within water, whom wa-ter does not know, whose body water is, and who controls water from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. He who inhabits fire, yet is within fire, whom fire does not know, whose body fire is, and who controls fire from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. He who inhabits the air, yet is within the air, whom the air does not know, whose body the air is, and who controls the air from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits the sun, yet is within the sun, whom the sun does not know, whose body the sun is, and who controls the sun from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. He who inhabits the moon and stars, yet is within the moon and stars, whom the moon and stars do not know, whose body the moon and stars are, and who controls the moon and stars from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. He who inhabits the akasha, yet is within the akasha, whom the akasha does not know, whose body the akasha is, and who controls the akasha from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller. He who inhabits all beings, yet is within all beings, whom no beings know, whose body all beings are, and who controls all beings from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. He who inhabits the nose (prana), yet is within the nose, whom the nose does not know, whose body the nose is, and who controls the nose from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. He who inhabits [the organ of] speech, yet is within speech, whom speech does not know, whose body speech is, and who controls speech from within—He is your Self, the Inner Con-troller, the Immortal. He who inhabits the eye, yet is within the eye, whom the eye does not know, whose body the eye is, and who



Husband and wife worship a mystic yantra together while simultaneously worshipping the divine within themselves

controls the eye from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. He who inhabits the ear, yet is within the ear, whom the ear does not know, whose body the ear is, and who controls the ear from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Im-mortal. He who inhabits the mind, yet is within the mind, whom the mind does not know, whose body the mind is, and who con-trols the mind from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. He who inhabits the intellect (*vijnana*), yet is within the intellect, whom the intellect does not know, whose body the intellect is, and who controls the intellect from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. He who inhabits the organ of generation, yet is within the organ, whom the organ does not know, whose body the organ is, and who controls the organ from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He is never seen, but is the Seer; He is never heard, but is the Hearer; He is never thought of, but is the Thinker; He is never known, but is the Knower. There is no other seer than He, there is no other hearer than He, there is no other thinker than He, there is no other knower than He. He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. Everything else but Him is perishable.”

Thereupon Uddalaka, the son of Aruna, held his peace.

SWAMI NIKHILANANDA (1895–1973) was founder and spiritual leader of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York from 1933 to his Mahasamadhi in 1973. His four-volume *Upanishad* translation was completed in 1959.

The *Vedas* are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, *sruti*, of Hinduism, likened to the *Torah* (1,200 BCE), *Bible New Testament* (100 CE), *Koran* (630 CE) or *Zend Avesta* (600 BCE). Four in number, *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva*, the *Vedas* include over 100,000 verses. Oldest portions may date back as far as 6,000 BCE.

NEPAL'S DOWNTRODDEN

Brick by brick: A Dalit laborer, member of one of Nepal's Untouchable castes, prepares one mongramed brick at a time in a mold, then turns them out to dry in the sun before they are baked in a kiln. She will be paid by the brick.

THE KINGDOM OF NEPAL'S 24 MILLION CITIZENS COMPRISE 103 DISTINCT GROUPS speaking 92 languages. The caste-based Hindus, 86% of the population, follow a hierarchy of status codified by King Jayasthiti Malla in the 14th century and revised by King Surendra Bikram in 1854. This 1854 "Old Legal Code of Nepal" lists four hierarchical caste groupings: those wearing the sacred thread, those consuming liquor, those from whom water may not be

A NATION STRUGGLES TO FIND THE WAY TO RELIEVE 4.5 MILLION DALITS FROM THE STIGMA OF "UNTOUCHABILITY"

accepted by higher castes and those whose water is not acceptable and whose touch requires purification. The latter two groupings are the Dalits, or Untouchables. In our feature article this issue, HINDUISM TODAY correspondent and economist Dr. Hari Bansh Jha explores the complex religious, social and economic factors which have not only sustained discrimination against the Dalits but sometimes increased exploitation, despite legal reform outlawing the practice of untouchability.

BY DR. HARI BANSH JHA, KATHMANDU

THE DALITS OR “UNTOUCHABLES” OF Nepal are the poorest people of our already poor nation. They have a per capita yearly income of just US\$39 against the national average of \$250. In life expectancy, literacy and all other standards of living they fall far below the norm. The Dalits suffer various forms of discrimination in society, from being barred entry to temples and access to public water resources to servitude bordering on slavery and being the occasional victims of outright atrocity. Modern manufacturing methods are eliminating the market for many of their traditional occupations, such as blacksmith, cobbler and tailor, forcing them to depend on agricultural and manufacturing jobs, such as brick making.

Dalit is a coined word meaning “oppressed people.” It has replaced the term *Untouchable*, as well as Mahatma Gandhi’s term, *Harijan*, “Children of God,” both of which the Dalits consider condescending.

No one knows how the caste system, as it is commonly called, came to be in its present form. The ancient Hindu scriptures describe four non-hereditary castes: brahmin, *kshatriya*, *vaishya* and *shudra*. The brahmins are engaged in spiritual practices, worship and teaching. The *kshatriyas* are warrior-class people holding power for the protection of the state. The *vaishyas* are businessmen. The *sudras* are the workers. What exists today is a complex system of subcastes or *jatis* within the larger caste, which are hereditary and occupation-based. The scriptures do not describe a large fifth class of hereditary “untouchables.” One theory is that they are the result of forbidden marriages between castes. Whatever the origin, it is clear that certain occupations are judged as unclean or impure, and whoever follows those occupations faces restrained contact with the other castes and significant disadvantages.

In July of 2005, I contacted two of Nepal’s national Dalit leaders, Mrs. Durga Sob, president of the Feminist Dalit Organization and former secretary of the National Dalit Commission, and Mr. Moti Nepali, president of the Dalit Welfare Association. Asked what she wanted to say to the Hindu world through HINDUISM TODAY, Mrs. Sob replied, “We Dalits want to live a life of justice, equality and social dignity as first class citizens. Any obstacles on the way to that goal should be tackled jointly by Dalits and non-Dalits.” Mr. Nepali added, “We Dalits want freedom from hunger, freedom from social atrocities and freedom from the degrading and disgraceful system of untouchability.”

Even these educated and relatively well-off national leaders suffer discrimination. Nepali reports he’s been denied entrance

to temples, shops and some public places. He can’t rent a house in Kathmandu from a non-Dalit. Mrs. Sob reports the same treatment, with rent deposits being returned to her family upon the landlord’s learning their caste. Their reports are similar to the kind of discrimination faced by Black Americans up until the 1950s when government and public action finally brought a change. Yet still today in America, half a century later, Blacks face discrimination in housing and employment and unequal justice before the law. For example, a Black man will typically

receive a harsher sentence for the same crime than a white man.

While Sob and Nepali lay the responsibility for untouchability upon Hindu codes and traditions, especially *Manu Dharma Shastra*, they remain staunch Hindus. Sob says, “The Hindu religion is the main base of the Nepali caste system. There are scriptures which say people should discriminate against certain occupational castes, even though they are from the same Hindu community. So this is the challenge. The Hindu institutions have to renounce the religious



ALL PHOTOS THOMAS KELLY

A DALIT FISHERMAN



A LIFE OF PHYSICAL BURDENS

In the remote areas of Nepal, most transport is on foot. These ladies of the Dalit Kami blacksmith caste are hauling heavy baskets of fuel .

Fishing in one of Nepal’s many rivers provides a livelihood for some Dalits in Nepal’s hills and the Terai region adjacent to India. The womenfolk also fish and harvest shellfish from along the river banks. The fisherman here casts his net in shallow water.

based, the solution is much more complex than declarations and actions by Hindu organizations, though no doubt that is a good first step. In the remainder of this article, we’ll explore the complex legal, historical, social, religious and economic issues that define the Dalit life.

Caste in Nepal’s legal codes

Nepal’s existing caste system can be traced to the reign of King Jayasthiti Malla (1380-1394). He ruled Kathmandu Valley and classified the residents into 64 castes according to occupation. In 1854, the Old Legal Code of Nepal, set by King Surendra Bikram Shah, ratified this classification. It also formalized the hierar-

chy of castes and specified the norms and behavior for each group. This 1854 Code recognized four categories: 1) Tagadhari, the “twice born,” including the brahmins, Thakuris and Chetris; 2) Matwali, “liquor drinking;” 3) *Pani nacalne choit chito halnu naparne*,” castes from whom water is not acceptable and 4) “*Pani nacalne choi chito halnu parne*,” castes whose water is not acceptable and whose touch requires purification by the sprinkling of holy water. It is the third and fourth groups who are the Dalits or Untouchables of Nepal.

There is debate about which groups are Dalit and which are not, consequently estimates of the number of Nepal Dalits ranges from twelve to twenty percent of the population. In 1963, the Naya Muluki Ain (New Civil Code) stated that every citizen is legally equal irrespective of caste, creed and sex. Finally, the 1991 constitution declared the act of untouchability as illegal and punishable by law. But, complains Nepali, the law has not been implemented. The idea of legal equality remains nothing but a campaign slogan of the ruling party.

The social structure of caste

The central theme of the caste system in Nepal is based on the concepts of purity and impurity reflecting the rank of a caste in local hierarchy and other walks of life. By tradition, the women are more particular about purity-impurity than the men and it is on this ground that they are called the “custodians of tradition.” The kitchen serves as the heart of this system. Food, in fact, occupies a pivotal stand in the domestic ritual, which varies from caste to caste. It is solely within the domain of the women to decide who eats what, where and when, and consequently who is regarded as acceptable and unacceptable.

It is wrong to think that the question of “purity-impurity” is confined to just food



THIS YOUNG GIRL IS ALREADY A MOTHER

and water. Sex is equally governed by this consideration. A man or woman is not expected to indulge in sexual activities with another caste. The village *panchayat* or council functioning as quasi-judicial institution punishes such offenders of social law. Usually the offences dealt with by the *panchayats* include issues such as eating, drinking and sexual activity with forbidden caste groups, refusing to accept the wife in an arranged marriage, refusal to meet the promises made during the marriage, etc.

One report on the condition of the Dalits cited a case where a young Bahun, of the brahmin caste, was in love with a Dalit girl from the Budhabare Village Development Committee area (a government division, like a county). When they married, many non-Dalit people, including the Develop-

ment Committee chairperson, tried to break off their marriage. Tension mounted, and some Dalit friends helped the couple leave the village for their own protection. They returned a few months later and faced even greater pressure. The brahmin community threatened the boy, telling him he must either leave the girl or leave the village permanently. Pressured by his relatives, the boy eventually left the girl for good.

The caste system is so strong, in fact, that even those who are converted to alien religions such as Islam and Christianity carry caste distinction with them. A convert from the brahmin caste thinks himself superior to the Dalit convert. Mrs. Sob observed, "Some Dalits have converted to another religion, but I cannot say that they have improved their social standing."



A CLASS WITH CHALK AND SLATES

Main Dalit groups and their occupations

The 2002 study, *National Dalit Strategy Report* prepared for the government of Nepal, enumerates the traditional occupations of the Dalit communities. The Dalits themselves have a hierarchical structure, and the Report lists the castes more or less in order from top to bottom. The Kami caste makes new agricultural tools and household utensils such as sickles, knives, axes, hoes, spades, plough tips and nails. They also repair them as needed. Among Dalits, Kamis are considered the highest in social rank and never accept cooked food or water from the Dalit groups below them. They are the largest Dalit group, 960,000 people according to the 1991 census. They comprise 44 percent of all Dalits and 5.2 percent of the total population of Nepal.

A goldsmith, or Sunar, makes golden or silver ornaments upon request by clients. The Parkis are basket weavers who make a variety of storage baskets and floor mats from bamboo. The Chunara, a blacksmith group of far-western Nepal, makes utensils from wood. In the Damai group, both men and women are tailors who sew clothes. They are the second largest group, 17 percent of all Dalits.

The Sarkis are leatherworkers who make shoes and other products from the skin of dead animals such as cattle and water buffaloes. They are the third largest Dalit group,



THE WORKING LIFE STARTS EARLY FOR THESE KAMAIYA CHILDREN HARVESTING SUGAR CANE

This locally organized, nonformal education class (at left) takes place in the evening when the Dalit children are not working. Obviously short of supplies and teachers, the classes are nevertheless a start in the right direction and the children are eager learners.

This young mother (far left) continues as part of a cycle of little education, early marriage, deficient nourishment for both mother and child and a consequent high rate of mortality among Dalit babies.

With few educational opportunity in the rural areas, these children (below) work harvesting sugarcane, enjoying themselves in the process—or at least enjoying having their picture taken. The Dalits own very little of Nepal's agricultural land.



PRIEST OF THE MAITIDEVI TEMPLE, A DALIT, PERFORMS THE FIRST WORSHIP OF THE DAY

at 12 percent. The Badis are singers and dancers, with a significant number of women co-opted into prostitution. One Badi elder explained that their entire troupe might receive 500 rupees for an evening's performance. When someone offers them 1,000 rupees for one of the girls, he indicated they had little choice. And even their opportunities for performances are diminishing.

The Gaines caste entertain by singing songs, accompanied by the *sarangi*, a difficult stringed instrument played with a bow, akin to the sitar and vina. The Gaines are wonderful musicians. Tulasi Prasad Acharya wrote of one, "His spontaneous songs spill over on the themes of betrayed lovers, tragedy of the common man and the story of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. I listen to each of them in awe and curiosity and can't control the tears rolling down my cheeks." But, the Acharya noted, the singer was collecting only a few rupees for his efforts, his art also overrun by modernization. "I think the *bandbaza* (played on modern instruments) and remix songs have supplanted the folk music."

The Tarai (region adjacent to India) Dalits such as the Chamar are leather workers. They make and polish shoes as well as

dispose of dead animals for clients. The Tamas are weavers. The Doms are basket makers. The Halkhor, the lowest Hindu group in the Tarai region, are sweepers who clean the streets and bath rooms for the government as well as individual households. No other Dalits will accept food or water from the Halkhor.

Dhobis are washermen by profession who work mostly for cash, rather than the traditional barter for food grains that many Dalits must settle for. They make a relatively good living compared to other Dalits and, at 21 percent, have one of the highest literacy rates. The Dalits of Kathmandu Valley, particularly the Chyame, Pode and Halahulu have a monopoly on cleaning public and private bathrooms, hotels and government offices. In addition, they clean the public streets for the municipality. The Kasai, or Khadgis, are traditionally butchers.

In the rural areas where most Dalits live, they are paid in kind, in the form of grain, and sometimes in cash. In addition, each craftsman gets his traditional share of food, vegetables, cloth, etc., when there is a festive occasion, marriage or other rituals at his client's house. They also have specific functions to perform during these events.

The relationship between the Dalit and the client can be permanent, but normally it is renewed each year.

Looking through the list of occupations, and understanding the Dalit's relationship to their clients, it is easy to see the impact of the modern economy and distribution systems for goods, even though many of these occupations require a high degree of skill. The *National Dalit Strategy Report* says, "The caste-based occupation was the major means of livelihood for the Dalit populations up to a couple of years ago. It has been gradually disappearing over the years primarily due to three reasons: 1) They themselves think that their occupation has lower social prestige and is demeaning socially; 2) Many young educated Dalit boys and girls do not like to follow their fathers' footsteps, and 3) They are finding difficulty in competing with the open market which is supplying various types of similar goods depending upon the needs of the customer." As a result, many Dalits have turned to agriculture and manual labor to supplement or replace their traditional occupation.

Religious life among the Dalits

The religious life of the Dalits enjoys the full

Left, the Maitidevi temple in Kathmandu has a Dalit priest, as well as brahmin priests. This is one of Nepal's popular Goddess temples where members of all castes come to worship.

Right, these men and boys carry bricks on their head using flat wooden supports from the kiln to waiting trucks. The unhealthy, dust-filled conditions, and long hours of work contribute to the shorter life expectancy of Dalits.



LABORERS AT A BRICK WORKS

A KAMI CASTE BLACKSMITH TEMPERS A KHUKURI KNIFE



ALL PHOTOS THOMAS KELLY

The Kami blacksmith caste are the most affluent of the Dalits. They make many implements, but are best known for the khukuri, known in the West as the Gurkha knife, for it is the intimidating weapon of choice for these famed soldiers. In Nepal itself, these well-made knives serve as machete, axe, adze, shovel, and—in a pinch—can opener.

Agricultural laborers (right) plant rice in extensive rice paddies located in the Tarai region adjacent to India. Rice is the most important cereal crop in Nepal. The same fields are planted in wheat immediately after the rice is harvested, using the rice stalks as mulch.

complement of Hindu practices and traditions, including festivals, Deities and provision for all religious observances. Dalits are, in fact, strong Hindus. The important festivals are shared with other Hindus and include Jurshital (New Year), Chaurchan, Durga Puja, Chaittha, Lakshmi Puja, Holi, Tihar and Ramnavami. As well, each caste has their chosen God, many of them local Deities. For example, the Musahar worship Dina Bhadri, a wrestler who was deified. The Dusadh worship the deified King Salhesh, the Khatwe worship Soshiya Maharaj, the Tatma worship Mahikari and the Char-mar worship Ravidas. In the Terai region along the border with India, the Dom and Halkhors have Bhagavati or Kali as their main Goddess. The Dalits worship Rama,

Krishna, Hanuman and Siva with great devotion. Each caste follows its own traditions in its worship. These same Gods are also worshiped by certain non-Dalit castes.

There is a *pandaram* priesthood among the Dalit, that is, non-brahmin priests serving their own community. These *pandaram* priests maintain the same tradition as the brahmin priests, including using Sanskrit for the rituals, although they have no formal training. They perform worship ceremonies, marriage and death rituals. They are not generally as well trained as the priests of the brahmin caste, but are highly respected within their community and called “pundit.”

Surprisingly, there are a number of temples in Nepal with Dalit priests. These temples are revered by all Hindus regard-

less of caste. In Kathmandu itself, the Sobha Bhagawati, Maitidevi, Bhadrakali, Guhyeshwori and Dakshin Kali temples all have priests from the Dalit caste. At the Maitidevi temple the Dalit priest performs his worship for the first hour in the morning, then brahmin priests take over for the rest of the day. My own daughter-in-law, a brahmin, performed the Vata Savitri Vrata ceremony (see *HINDUISM TODAY*, January, 2005) at this Maitidevi temple. This is a ceremony blessing the newly married girl and often performed at this particular temple—and example of the integration of Nepal’s Dalit and non-Dalit communities.

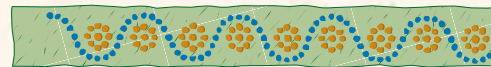
Types of discrimination

The *National Dalit Strategy Report* cites a

list of 205 existing practices of caste-based discrimination, which they lump into nine broad social categories: 1) Denial of entry into a house, hotel/restaurant, temple, etc; 2) Interference in religious service, where the wearing of the sacred thread is not permitted, worship conducted by Dalits is not acceptable and so on; 3) Access to common resources, such as using a water tap, pond, etc., is denied; 4) Denial to participate in public activities or entry into public places, such as a religious event, government function, etc.; 5) Forced labor or discriminatory practice of labor such as barter payment—often insufficient—with food grains instead of cash, forced labor, bonded labor or being required to dispose of dead animals; 6) Dominance of Dalits in behavior such as

RICE PLANTING IN THE TARAI REGION





jadau system (practice of paying obeisance to a higher caste person); 7) Atrocities, such as higher incidence of rape; 8) Social boycott—if a high caste Hindu marries a Dalit, he or she is boycotted from society; and 9) Attitudinal untouchability, such as if one sees a Kami caste member in the early morning it is considered inauspicious, or if there is a Dalit teacher, children of high caste groups will not attend the school.

Our Dalit leaders, Mrs. Sob and Mr. Nepali, have encountered each of these forms of discrimination. They are particularly hurt by degrading treatment, such as being prevented from using drinking and eating utensils in public places, being insulted with derogatory names or having their children seated separately in school. Like the Black people in America, the issue of personal self-respect and dignity is as much or even more important than the economic issues.

The report cites the case of a Dalit teacher in Kailali who was reassigned away from his village school in Dhangadi because he ordered students of higher castes and the Untouchable caste to sit together in the luncheon provided under the Nutritious Food Programme. The school inspectors were satisfied with his teaching quality, but the headmaster, a brahmin, who did not accept this equalitarian principle, influenced the District Education Officer to relocate the teacher.

Recent social mobility

Caste discrimination is considerably diluted in the urban areas today, but very little has changed in the rural areas. Certain Dalits have emulated the customs and traditions of the upper caste people under the process known as “Sanskritization.” They have started wearing the sacred thread as used by the upper caste brahmins and *kshatriyas*. As a result of occupational changes, increased education, their own efforts to emulate the upper castes and a mustering of political influence, urban Dalits in the Terai have moved up in status. The *National Report* says, “Over the last 15-20 years, three groups, namely Sudi, Kalwar and Teli have socially upgraded their status from the Untouchable to the water acceptable community within the Tarai origin Hindu caste groups.”

Progress following the 1990 Constitution

The Dalits started from a position of complete political disadvantage, having no economic power and no place in the government administration or judiciary. It is only around the last half of the 20th century that the world in general started changing its course in favor of the weak, old, women, poor and downtrodden sections of the society. Following the restoration of multi-party democracy in Nepal, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal (1990) not only guaranteed the



ALL PHOTOS THOMAS KELLY

SWEPPER CASTE CLEANS PUBLIC ROADWAY

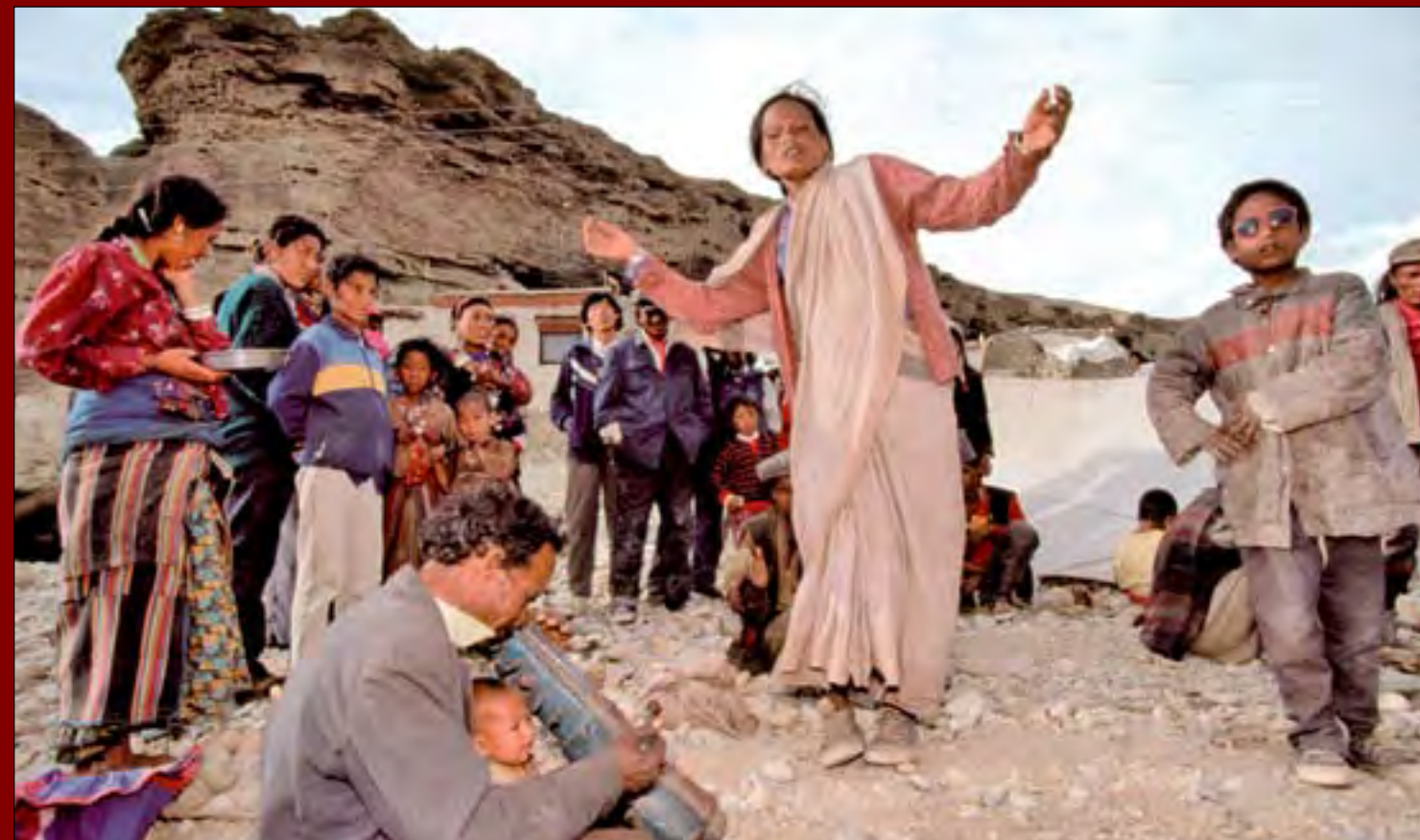
fundamental rights of its people but it also, for the first time, declared the traditional practice of untouchability punishable by law.

Sweeping measures one after the other were introduced in the country to discourage discrimination. The Dalit Development Committee was formed in 1996-97. In 2002, the National Dalit Commission was formed. Numerous non-governmental organizations were formed in the country to address the problems of Dalits, some of which got massive support from international non-governmental organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies.

The *National Report* explains, “The introduction of the New Legal Code was a bold attempt in the traditional Nepali society, but it could not function effectively because of

the poor economic system of people as a whole. The Dalits could not go against this traditional Hindu model, as they were heavily dependent on the high caste Hindus for their survival. There might be other hidden problems, but the irony is that they need to fight for their rights against those who are their means of livelihood. Therefore, the Dalit emancipation campaign relatively has been taking a long time in Nepal.”

The *Report* explains that there are two schools of thoughts on the Dalits’ development. One is that the development of the Dalit community should be through enhancement of their traditional skills, such as shoe making, blacksmithing, goldsmithing and tailoring, as well as other so-called lower level occupations. The second is



The usual image of a Dalit in India is that of a sweeper, such as this lady, of Nepal’s Chami caste. But the Dalits also include highly skilled metalworkers, cobblers and tailors.

This Badi caste family entertains through dance at a rural village. The father at lower left is playing the *sarangi*, a difficult stringed instrument related to the vina and sitar. Once in good favor with rich landlords, the caste has fallen on hard times.

that improvement in the quality of life of Dalits is to be accomplished by increased education and creation of income-generating facilities as has been done for other segments of Nepal’s population. It is often expressed that the former—enhancement of traditional skills—is championed by non-Dalits, and the latter—education and job creation—is the chosen approach of Dalits.

The *National Report* says, “Over the years, the Dalit community has become politically more conscious of their rights and more determined to become unified so that they can challenge the democratic government for their rights and privileges. At the same time they are challenging the Hindu, brahmanic model of caste hierarchical structure based on pollution and purity, and blame this model as their root cause of underdevelopment. The report quotes Padam Singh Bishwakarma, former chairperson of the National Dalit Commission, “Religion is responsible for classifying touchability and untouchability in the society. So, religious institutions should be responsible for eliminating

untouchability. There should not be any confusion in defining Dalits. It is straightforward that Dalits are those who are religiously discarded, socially oppressed, economically exploited, politically suppressed and educationally deprived. The movement of development should be from the bottom for economic upliftment and from the top for abolishing untouchability against Dalits.”

Mrs. Sob complained, “The government has no special policy to include Dalits in the mainstream, so now we are demanding reservations for jobs and political representation in all sectors of the government as historical compensation.” Nepali added, “The Dalits want knowledge and wisdom through education, and power through participation in decision-making bodies.”

As an economist, I recommend that all possible efforts be made by the concerned agencies to provide the Dalits market for the sale of items produced by them like *khukuris* (the formidable “Gurkha knife”), utensils, ornaments, agricultural tools, woodcarvings, shoes, basketry items, etc. It is regrettable

that in a certain district the milk brought to the market by the Dalits has been refused on the ground that the supply was from the untouchable community. In the future, if any organization is really interested in serving the interests of the Dalits, it should focus on improving their traditional skills. In this context, it would be important to set up a Technical Training Institute for them in various regions of the country. With a combination of effective programs like these, the conversion of the Dalits to alien faiths, particularly to Christianity, will come to a halt.

If the Hindus expect equal treatment from the West, it is essential that they should give the same treatment to their Dalit families. By the same token, if the Dalits want equal treatment from the non-Dalit Hindus, they should also avoid discrimination among themselves. The Hindu ethos is guided by *atmavat sarvabhuteshu*, i.e., looking upon all beings as your own self. For our country to advance, our society must rid ourselves of what Swami Vivekananda called the mental disease of “Don’t touchism.”



SERVICE

For the Love of Lanka

A doctor takes high-tech skills back to his native land, devastated by war and water

Ganapathypillai Shanmugasunderam (62), known professionally as Dr. Shan Sunder, was born and raised in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. After immigrating to the US in 1969 and concluding his higher education in New York City, he moved cross country to Lancaster, California, where he has lived with his family and worked as a successful cardiologist since 1975. When an interim peace accord was signed in Sri Lanka on February 22, 2002, quieting the country's bitter, 20-year civil war, he began traveling back to his homeland to help rebuild its war-damaged health-care system. During a recent visit to Hawaii, Dr. Sunder shared with HINDUISM TODAY some highlights of the three trips he has made to Sri Lanka thus far—and his plans for more.

Can you give us the overview of what you have been doing in Sri Lanka over the past three years? Since the peace process began in Sri Lanka, I have been studying the medical problems there—especially in the field of heart care. In this regard, I have been particularly interested in providing some portable and user-friendly technology necessary for more easily diagnosing and treating heart diseases in the poverty stricken rural areas of North and East Sri Lanka where such facilities are not readily available. In addition to providing these state-of-the-art tools, I am also trying to teach doctors and trainees there how to use them.

What has motivated you to perform this unique service? For years, I have heard from my colleagues and friends how the war has caused damage to the health-care infrastructure of Sri Lanka. I have always been inspired to go there and help rebuild these shattered facilities and also to bring in the latest technology. But mostly, I was motivated by Gurudeva (Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, founding publisher of HINDUISM TODAY). When I asked him how I might

best spend the later years of my life, he told me, "Work in the charity hospitals of Sri Lanka." I took this very seriously as timely advice and great words of wisdom. Also I felt it was time to pay back for the many blessings I have received in this life.

Your wife says you come back from these trips looking young and happy? [Laughs] It has been a wonderful experience so far—mainly because of the people there. The helpers, trainees, health care volunteers, community servants, social workers and doctors I have been fortunate enough to work with are so tireless, dedicated and committed. They never expect payment or reward and work constantly, 24-7, serving and helping people in any way they can. I have not ever seen this kind of dedication anywhere else in the world. This has inspired me more than anything else. Of course, the people we help have lots of appreciation, and this is personally rewarding.

What goals did you seek to achieve on your first trip to Sri Lanka? On my first trip to Sri Lanka, my aim was to get a bird's eye view of what was needed, and also to get to

know some of the people. I traveled extensively. There were ten clinics in the North, and I made it a point to visit them all. It became apparent that helping the poor was the number one priority. I made it my goal to set up hospitals in the poverty stricken rural areas.

How did you move and work on your last two trips? When you moved from place to place, did a team go with you or did you develop a new team in a new place? The people I worked with on my last two trips were mainly resident doctors and trainees. They already had mobile clinics and pharmacies resourcefully equipped to penetrate deeply into rural areas to accommodate certain basic preventive-care needs, such as providing food supplements, vitamins and medical advice. What I did first was set up a system whereby medics and health-care workers could screen large numbers of people for heart disease, then bring them to a strategic location where my specialized team could perform further investigation for the treatment of heart disease. On my first trip, I had learned that there was a lot of rheumatic fever, which effects the heart and the joints and also causes birth defects in the children of mothers affected by this disease.

Long-term poverty, a prolonged civil war and now the recent tsunami have left behind widespread malnutrition. Learning this on my first trip, I arranged to bring in appropriate state-of-the-art equipment on my second trip. This included an ultrasound machine, just released in US, which weighs only six pounds but costs about US\$25,000. I also brought a portable electrocardiogram, some palm pilots and laptops complete with useful databases. I made it a priority to teach the people I worked with how to use all of this equipment, and they were all quick studies. On my last two trips, we have been able to move around quickly, screening and helping a large number of people.



Help! During one day of routine diagnosis and treatment, a man riding a bike nearby suffered a heart attack. His family rushed him to the clinic where Dr. Sunder stabilized his heartbeat with electric paddles, probably saving his life.



Getting to work: (Clockwise from top left) Patients waiting to see Dr. Sunder. Many fishermen lost everything in the tsunami. Patients needing immediate surgery were brought to centrally located emergency hospitals. Dr. Sunder carried with him a six-pound, state-of-the-art, battery-operated, ultra sound imaging device that allowed him to perform sophisticated internal diagnosis even in the jungle.

What is the current state of Sri Lanka's medical technology? In the North and East of Sri Lanka there is very little advanced technology—and what is there is not available to the poor. The poor there have always been deprived, not only of advanced medical care, but of the most basic necessities of health and hygiene. Minimum health care is a basic human right that many of these people have never known. These are the people who are most vulnerable. And these are the people that we want to help.

Rampant malnutrition and infection especially affects mothers during pregnancy. I was astonished to find that at least 50 percent of the children that I treated had been afflicted with congenital and rheumatic heart disease. By US standards, that's an astonishing number.

Are there other people doing this sort of service-oriented work? Yes, there are a lot of physicians coming in from the US, Australia, England, Canada, Malaysia and Singapore—especially after the tsunami. They work as individuals and as teams. One of the greatest resources we have is the Tamil diaspora. We easily have 5,000 qualified Tamil physicians spread all over the world. And a great many of these highly trained people are ready to help right now. In England alone there are at least 2,000. This is a tremendous potential resource for us. One of our biggest challenges will be to coordinate the efforts of all these physicians. Of course, they must volunteer. This will certainly be a key factor in our success.

I firmly believe that we will soon create something really great in Sri Lanka as a result of these relief efforts. Our Tamil diaspora working in coordination with their Western counterparts could build a health-care system like the world has never seen.

How do you plan a tour? Generally, I communicate with the Sri Lankan physicians and medics I will be working with from the US before I leave. Through their web sites I am able to see what their basic needs are.



Then each time I go, I take with me one or two pieces of modern equipment that I know will be of use in what they are already doing. All the travel plans are provided by health care personnel of the Health Department in North and East Sri Lanka.

Can you describe a day in the field? Generally my trip will be advertised on the radio and in the newspapers. This makes it possible for people to come on their own to a predetermined location. Sometimes they travel as far as 75 miles. Typically, we start at eight in the morning and go until about nine o'clock at night, with only a short break for lunch around two in the afternoon. It is not uncommon that some people will arrive in the middle of the night needing immediate attention. This can make it very difficult. I might personally see as many as 80 patients in a single day.

Can you summarize the overall plan for your tsunami relief efforts? Yes, coming to the tsunami relief, phase one started twenty minutes after the tsunami hit. The Tamil Relief Organization was mainly responsible for all the emergency work accomplished during that phase in the North and East. Their efforts were exceptionally well coordinated and efficiently accomplished, even to the astonishment of the Western world.

This phase was funded by the the Tamil Relief Organization and the diaspora of Tamils living around the world.

The second phase consisted of immediate resettlement, including the building of temporary shelters. The people needing the most help here were the fisherman. Great efforts were made to get them new fishing boats and nets so that they could go back to work. Again, this was well coordinated by the Tamil Relief Organization.

Phase three started with the establishment of permanent housing, health care, education and basic living facilities at a community level. This work will go on for decades. Again, the Tamil diaspora can play a key role in this phase.

How is religious life being sustained in Sri Lanka during these difficult times? I was amazed the first time I went to North and East of Sri Lanka. Despite the war, the temples all around were fully functioning. Festivals were going on. This was truly magnificent. The people were rebuilding the temples even before they were rebuilding their homes. Their spirituality and religious belief have definitely helped them survive. They won't ask for help for themselves or their families, but they will beg for the temple. I met one temple priest who was deaf from a bomb blast that demolished his temple. Yet he was busy rebuilding his temple. He was 75 years old and not thinking about himself even a little. This is the kind of person that survives misery and tragedy with faith and spirituality.

What have you learned from all of this? The tsunami has underscored the damages of war and made them impossible to ignore. I think world communities need to learn a spiritual lesson from all of this pain and misery. That lesson is this: "War is bad, peace is good. War is destruction and peace is harmony and progress." If we have not learned this, we have learned nothing at all.



DINODIA

Tasteful elegance:
When beautifully displayed in India's finer restaurants, distinctive vegetarian cuisine almost looks better than it tastes.

FOOD

Feasting in the Land of Gods

Our intrepid New York correspondent takes us on a five-day vegetarian tour of Mumbai and New Delhi where dining and devotion blend like milk in milk

BY LAVINA MELWANI, NEW DELHI

FOR HINDUS, FOOD AND RELIGIOUS devotion are intricately entwined. I grew up in New Delhi and remember all too well the tiny silver Deities of our home shrine, all dressed up in their pretty silk robes. Every Monday, my mother would bathe these miniature Gods and change their clothes, which she would make herself. She would snip little holes in the middle of small squares of multicolored fabric—then, slip these pieces of fabric over their heads. When these miniature Gods were finally dressed and decorated, she would offer them tasty fruits and sweets on a small silver platter, beautifully arranged with fresh flowers from our own garden.

When we sat down to meals, my mother would first say a silent prayer and place a portion of rice, vegetables and dhal on a plate as an offering to God. This food would later be given to a cow that came meandering through our neighborhood, or to the pushy crows that congregated on our lawns, cawing loudly, edging out the tiny sparrows.

After we would abstain from taking food during a religious festival, my mother would break our fast by feeding children from the neighborhood—giving them gifts of money or fruit as well. Whenever we observed a religious celebration in the homes of our relatives and friends, there would always be a typical Sindhi meal complete with *alu tikkis*

(potato croquettes), chick pea curry, rice and spinach cooked with dhal and vegetables. This meal would first be offered to the Deity being worshiped, then fed to the priest. Only after this would we partake of the food. Even when we honored the memory of beloved family members who had passed away, we would begin by offering them food along with our prayers. Since this food offering was for a loved one, it would always include the very finest of fried snacks along with our favorite sweets.

As a child, I used to look forward to going to the temple, because it always meant getting a sweet treat. The Lord would never send us away from his home without some *prashadam* (a food offering). I still remember the sweet *choori*—a sugary paste of *besan* flour with nuts and fruits mixed into it. Once, while attending a puja in a small temple at Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh, we were offered a complete vegetarian meal on banana leaves. During our visits to Haridwar, we would frequent a small shrine run by an elderly Sindhi couple. They always gave us food that was so aromatic and fresh, with small clay cups of homemade yogurt.

While good vegetarian food was the dietary mainstay of our home, my

family also ate meat. I was, however, a finicky meat eater. At the market, I agonized over the glaring eyes of dead fish and the squawking of live chickens awaiting their demise. Gradually, I moved towards vegetarianism. Now it's been 15 years since I last tasted meat, and I certainly have not missed it one little bit.

Vegetarian food is special because it does not sustain a vibration of pain and suffering. Whether it is consumed in a five-star hotel or a temple basement, this gentle cuisine has a distinctive purity and fullness about it. It makes eating a way of bowing down, of dedicating one's existence to the

DINODIA

Home coming for the soul: New Delhi's magnificent Lakshmi Narayan Temple, also known as the Birla Mandir, brought back warm memories for the author. It was the first temple she ever attended as a child.



Almighty. Individually, we might not be able to save the world, but we can at least avoid the perpetuation of violence inflicted just for the sake of taste.

Traveling companions: Because worshipping in temples and enjoying vegetarian food comprised such a large part of my childhood, I was naturally inclined to enjoy a good deal of both during my most recent trip to India. I was traveling on a five-day program with the Friends of India delegation. Twenty of the ladies among us were Americans experiencing India for the very first time. The remaining ten were like me: born Indians now living in the US. It was a wonderful experience for us all. For me, it was an opportunity to see India both as a tourist and as a native—as a newcomer and an old-timer. Through the eyes of my 20 American colleagues, this land of my birth looked like a wild amalgam of color, confusion, beauty, poverty and extravagance—all pushed to the extreme.

Everywhere we went, there was food, food and more food. When it comes to nurturing guests, India has no equal. She's always in overdrive, be it drink, food, entertainment or warm embraces. As an Indian Hindu, I know well the loving care that pervades the extended family structure here in India, but I was personally taken aback to discover this same adoration being expressed in a larger context to and within our diverse traveling group. During our whirlwind tour, we were hosted, toasted, loved and made welcome in that special way that is exclusively Indian. We became instant family and have remained so to this day.

In Bombay, I stayed with my niece who is a devotee of Radhaswami and cooks only vegetarian food. Each morning for breakfast we enjoyed freshly grilled Sindhi *kokies*—flatbread embedded with chopped onion, tomatoes and chilies—with homemade yogurt and red papaya. In the afternoons, we feasted on peas and *paneer* (homemade cheese) or cauliflower and potato. This kind of food can't be found in New York, where I now live.

Our group shared many official dinners at grand hotels like the Oberoi, the Hyatt and the Taj. These were elaborate affairs featuring tables laden with a wide variety of international cuisine. Although non-vegetarian food was featured, there was always plenty for vegetarians to eat, be it continental, Chinese or Indian food. We all experienced such a wonderful feeling of being pampered. I think I must have eaten *paneer* cooked in 20 different ways!

The city of Bombay is booming with a variety of restaurants featuring food from different parts of the world. Anywhere you



Up-scale eatables: The chef at the Oberoi hotel in New Delhi demonstrates that fine food and great atmosphere can be well worth the price. (Below) A high-priced "tali tray" features a variety of distinctive Indian tastes.



go, there is an amazing variety of innovative dishes for vegetarians. That's one of the wonderful things about India. All menus feature lots of veggie choices.

Although things have admittedly improved in the US over the past few years, high-priced dinners in five-star hotels there in the States too often offer too little for vegetarians—sometimes nothing at all. Often, when I ask for a vegetarian meal at an American business dinner, I am offered fish. Still, gone are the days when a vegetarian traveling anywhere must suffer on bread, water, lettuce, pizza and fries.

Temple time: In India, worship is very much a part of daily life. Every morning as I rushed toward the Gateway of India on my way to the Taj Hotel to meet the members of the delegation, I would pass a small roadside temple cramped in on a small niche of pavement. Even in this humble shine, the Deities were bedecked with fresh marigold garlands every day and offered reverence like I've rarely seen anywhere. This is so typical of India. The finest devotion is not reserved for the finest temples.

As the sun rose on the expansive Bombay waterfront, I saw people scattering seed for the birds and placing pieces of bread on the parapet for the seagulls. For the Hindus of India, this sort of food offering is considered an act of devotion to the Lord. Again—the unique beauty of India. God is worshiped everywhere and in all things.

There is at least one wonderful activity from my childhood that is now most certainly lost forever, at least for me: eating spicy *bhel* and *chaat papri* from street vendors. Having lived abroad, I have learned to tactfully avoid something we used to call "Delhi belly," more commonly known as serious indigestion. While traveling in Bombay, I was tactfully cautious and stayed with popular eateries like Kailash Parbat in Pasta Lane, a street filled with delicious Indian foods hot enough to make you cry. Other vegetarian places that have stood the test of time are two well-known Gujarati eateries named Satkar and Purohit.

As I traveled with my tourist friends, I experienced the many material wonders of a booming India—new malls, skyscrapers and fly overs. But I set aside one full day to visit temples on my own. After all, how could I come to Bombay and not at least go to the Siddhivinayaka Ganapati Temple? On my drive in from the airport, I had seen literally thousands of devotees on the streets en route to a celebration at this temple. I couldn't wait to go myself.

I visited the temple on a weekday. Even then, there was a large crowd that included the old and the young, the rich and the poor, mothers with babies and parents with school children in uniforms. Many people regularly visit this important Ganesha temple. It is a part of their daily religious life. Every day, devotees line up for a view of its black stone icon with four hands. This particular statue of Ganesha is rendered with a third eye—just like Lord Siva. Flanking Ganesha are Goddesses Buddha and Siddhi, signifying wisdom and success.

It is said that all dreams are fulfilled at this temple. This feature alone keeps the crowds coming. Students walk long distances to this temple as an act of sincerity and devotion before taking their school exams. Wives

hoping to become pregnant come to pray. It is said that when the famous Indian actor, Amitabh Bachchan, was injured, thousands came here to pray for his well-being.

In this temple there is a granite sculpture of Ganesha's mount, the humble mouse. Standing five feet tall and plated with intricately crafted silver, this icon is an artistic masterpiece that is hard to ignore. Hundreds of devotees daily encircle this mouse and whisper their deepest desires into his ears, fully believing that he will then pass their messages on to Lord Ganesha. I performed this ritual. It seemed like the most natural thing in the world to be whispering my deepest hopes, desires and fears to this silver magnificent *Mushika*, as he is called.

We also visited the simple Mumba Devi temple in whose honor the city was renamed Mumbai. Outside, the street was crowded with flower sellers, walking vendors and small shops through which worshippers thronged on their way to God. Bombay is not only a city of temples. There are also many churches and mosques here.

Snacking along the way: In Delhi, I visited a bazaar called Dilli Haat. This delightful shopping and eating oasis was a showcase for crafts and foods from many different regions of India. I immediately purchased seven small brass Ganesha *murthis*. Each one was playing a different musical instrument. The whole experience was just so enchanting. The same artisans who crafted these little masterpieces also wrapped them up for me in newspaper so that I could carry them safely. Where else but India could one have such a humble and kindly shopping experience?

Soon enough, we started tasting some of the cuisine made available in the many small stalls tucked away all around us. We ate a *dosa* here and a plate of *channa* there. This is the way it is done here in Delhi. Dilli Haat is a place where you can eat a lot of food, have a great time and spend very little money in the process.

Indeed, Delhi is full of such cheap treats. The street foods available at Nathuram's in Bengali Market and at the Sweet Corner in Sunder Nagar are absolutely delicious. Each suburb has its local market where a remarkably varied range of low-priced eats are readily available.

Just to relive a little of my childhood, I visited the Parthewali Gali—literally, "Flat Bread Lane"—in Old Delhi, where narrow winding lanes lead you through a maze of displays featuring tantalizing flatbreads and *sabzis*, all made by the same family for decades.

The city also has a number of moderately priced restaurants like Banana Leaf, a cozy café offering South Indian delicacies. A place called Khana Khazana features a purely vegetarian, all-you-can-eat buffet for about 50 cents. There are also the old standards like Volga, Kwaliti and Embassy where, as a youth, I consumed many a satis-



Affordable quality: Great food, skillfully prepared, is also available at low priced eateries like the Parthen Wali Gali in Chandni Chowck, New Delhi, where cooks and customers often share the same space.



fying meal of *chana-batura*, *palak paneer* and creamy black dhal. Another place to pick up a reasonably priced vegetarian meal with a lot of variety is at the International Center. This charming place, set amidst pleasant greenery, is quite picturesque.

For lovers of black dhal, the best places to go are Moti Mahal and the Bukhara at the Maurya. These spots are famous for non-vegetarian food but their dhal, *paneer* and fresh breads are truly gourmet.

What I found surprising was the number of eating establishments offering international cuisine. One evening, I went with two vegetarian nieces to Shalom, a Middle Eastern restaurant, where we managed to feast upon humus, falafel and spinach pastry. On another night, we went to an upscale Italian place called Olive Bar, where we found a great choice of vegetarian pastas and salads. And these were all restaurants that featured meat. We also had Thai food at a restaurant called Cosmos, where again we discovered a whole array of vegetarian dishes. Delhi is expanding in all directions, with huge apartment complexes, malls and multiplexes coming up everywhere. All of these new places are packed with new restaurants to investigate, but alas, the time is short and the subject is vast.

The major five-star hotels are also surprisingly kind to vegetarian palates. At the Park Royal, I enjoyed a virtual Chinese banquet with all kinds of different vegetable dishes. At Restaurant 360—a chic, contemporary eatery in the Oberoi—a huge buffet featuring one of the largest varieties of international vegetable dishes I have ever seen anywhere stretched out through two large banquet rooms.

The restaurant I enjoyed most was Haldiram's. It's a simple little place, but you can really splurge there on street foods, because everything is safe. All items are made with bottled Bisleri water and are moderately priced. Plus, it's truly democratic. There are families, couples and teens all enjoying India's most popular street foods. In the 1940s, Haldiram Bhujawalla was a humble little eatery. Now it's a thriving chain, offering Indian snacks, mini meals and continental dishes as well as Tandoori and Chinese food. And every single item is pure vegetarian.

Another wonderful quality about India is its festive spirit. And everyone there celebrates religious holidays with food. When I was invited to a relative's home for dinner, I struck it rich. It was Sivaratri, a very popular celebration honoring Lord Siva, which is observed even by meat-eating Hindus. My host family employed a superb cook who really outdid himself, preparing a meatless meal of more than

15 dishes. Some of these delicacies—like a fragrant yogurt curry and puffy *puris* made out of the dough of green peas—had been family specialties for generations.

My trip would not have been complete without visiting the Lakshmi Narayan Temple, also known as Birla Mandir. This was the first temple I ever attended in my life. So, I experienced some treasured childhood memories while there. Arriving before the temple doors opened, I relaxed amidst the stone elephants, caves and ponds of a nearby garden complex which I had visited as a youngster. This place had seemed such a wonderland when I was young. Now it looked a bit ordinary, even a little rundown. Looking into the water of a nearby pond, I saw the reflection of a statue of Vasudeva carrying the child Krishna in a basket on his head. I turned my head to look at the statue directly, but it was not there. It had been taken away years ago. As a child, I was so inspired to see this giant statue rising majestically out of the water. Now it was gone. Yet not really. In a way, it was still there—even if only in my mind.

When the temple doors opened, I ascended the cool marble stairs with my offering of marigolds. There they were, the radiant faces of Siva, Lakshmi Narayan, Radha Krishna and Durga, just as I had remembered them—so peaceful and content. It was like I had gone back in time.

Delhi has many temples, ranging from the magnificent marble edifices in the rich suburbs to makeshift shrines lining the India's many dusty roadsides. In my sister's neighborhood in Greater Kailash, there is a lovely

Siva temple on a small hill. She insisted with great conviction that wishes and prayers are most surely answered there.

A small Hanuman temple in the heart of the city is one of the most popular in New Delhi. It is also one of the city's oldest. Devotees throng to this place, especially on Tuesdays. I still remember the sweet, orange-colored *prashadam* offered by the priests.

Time always seems to move too quickly when you've got a lot that you want to do and see. Before I knew it, it was time for me to go. I had been lost in nostalgia, connecting the past with the present. Now it was time to continue my journey into the future—but not before my sister-in-law helped me awaken one last, wonderful memory.

She bought me a large box of *pista mithai* made from real pistachios, not those com-

mercial, artificially green-colored *barfi* that seem to be sold just about everywhere. It gleamed like a box of emeralds. To me, it was so precious. Holding it in my hands, I was immediately transported back into my childhood again. There I was, just five years old. My father was giving me this same treat. He would go all the way to Old Delhi just to buy this treat for me. Right then and there, I promised myself that I would save this rare delicacy to offer to the Gods on Deepavali, the Hindu festival of lights.

I had my final taste of Indian vegetarian cuisine on the airplane. Believe it or not, it was quite delicious—steaming *pullao*, spicy vegetable curry, *papad*, yogurt and a small container of pickle, not to mention rice pudding. Yes, Air India might not always be on time, but you can count on them for decent vegetarian food.

As I returned to my home in New York City, my suitcases were bursting with Indian shopping, and my head was full of Indian memories. My favorite mementos: that box of pistachio *mithai* and a small black stone Siva Lingam I had purchased at the Birla Mandir, fitting keepsakes from my feasting in the land of Gods.

And as for my lady companions from the Friends of India delegation, especially those 20 from America, our good-byes were warm and heart-felt, but not final. Just recently, we all got together in New York for a reunion at the Princeton Club followed by dinner at Jewel of India. The warmth of our camaraderie was almost palpable as we each took turns talking about how India had impacted our lives and made us friends forever. 🍽️



On the road: The busy Hanuman Temple in New Delhi. (Below) The Friends of India delegation of 30 women pose in the lobby of the Taj hotel in Bombay. The author, dressed in a light blue outfit, is standing to the immediate left of the hotel CEO seated at center.



COURTESY LAVINA MELWANI



My Friend, Lord
Ganesha
Hinduism's Lord of Dharma



My Friend, Lord Ganesha

In Hinduism, believing in God is only a first step toward an ever-deepening personal experience of God's presence. In this regard many of the great saints and sages of Hinduism have had visions of Lord Ganesha and have shared them with their devotees, thus strengthening their devotees' faith and understanding of this divine being. In ancient times Saint Auvaiyar wrote of her experience of the elephant-faced God in her devotional poem "Vinayaga Ahaval:" "Desiring to make me yours this instant, you, like a mother, have appeared before me and cut the delusion of unending births." In modern times, my Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, had many experiences of Lord Ganesha, whom he considered a dear friend. He observed, "There are a great many liberal Hindus and/or Western-influenced Hindus who don't think of Ganesha as a real being. To them He is a symbol, a superstition, a way of explaining philosophy to children and the uneducated. But this has not been my experience of our loving Lord. I have seen Him with my own eye. He has come to me in visions several times and convinced my lower mind of His reality." Of course, the *murti*, or form, of Lord Ganesha does contain important symbols, such as the noose and the goad, which relate to His creating and removing obstacles. And it is true we can learn a great deal about Ganesha and the other Deities through studying such symbols, but what is even more important is to know that Ganesha is a real being whom we can know and love. ¶ We have arranged group pilgrimages to India since 1969, and some pilgrims on various programs definitely had visions of Lord Ganesha, as well as other Deities. Some witnessed the stone or bronze *murti* moving and smiling at them or turning into a human-like figure. Others, with eyes closed, saw the Deity's face as real as any living person. The more common way we experience the Gods and devas is as an uplifting, peaceful, divine energy, or shakti, that radiates out from the image. It is easiest to feel their blessings at the high point of the puja when the flame is held high. The shakti of Lord Ganesha is a gentle, loving force which has the power to move the devotees' awareness into a peaceful, contented state, free of any worry, fear, anger or other negative emotion. ¶ This Educational Insight is drawn from Gurudeva's book, *Loving Ganesha* (www.gurudeva.org/resources/books/lg/), delving into the nature of the elephant-faced Deity, what He is like, what functions this great God performs and how each seeker can make Him a vital part of daily life on the path of experience.

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Hinduism Today founder Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami holds a stone murti of Lord Ganesha. He gifted three dozen such murtis to budding temples outside India to encourage initial patterns of worship.

HINDUISM TODAY



Adopted by the Elephant God

Seekers of Truth come from many backgrounds, many religions, and have trod many paths. Having become acquainted with Lord Ganesha, they may wonder how their past can participate in their present aspirations. "What am I doing worshipping an elephant-faced God and loving it?" they may wonder. "What do I do now to harmonize this unfoldment with my previous upbringing?"

There is a way to reconcile this subconscious dilemma. Let's not "pack it away in denial," as they say; let's face up to the spiritual awakening. Truth is, you have a loving friend in Ganesha, who, if we may use the word, is the pope of the Hindu religion. And you are by no means alone. One fourth of the human race is acquainted with Ganesha—twenty-five percent of the people on this planet—1.25 billion, and that number is growing year by year.

Our loving Ganesha leads his devotees deep into the oldest religion

to, worshiped and adored in one form or another since time began; and time itself began with His creation. He, above all others, is the God, the great Mahadeva, to be invoked before every act and especially worshiped and prayed to when changes occur in our lives as we move from the old established patterns into new ones. Lord Ganesha is always there to steady our minds and open the proper doors as we evolve and progress. He never, ever fails. He is always there for us when we need Him.

Hindus around the world pray to Ganesha for help and guidance as He leads us out of an agricultural age through the technological and information eras and on into the new age of space. Many are still on the farms; others are in the offices and in the factories; while still others land on the moon and orbit through space. With a mind more intricate than the most complicated computers in the world all hooked together, but as simple as an on-and-off switch, Ganesha knows all aspects of these transitions, in unfailing continuity, from one era to another. He is totally aware, at every point in time, of the mother in her home, the farmer in his field, the astronaut orbiting this planet, the corporate worker at his desk and the factory technician performing his tasks.

For thousands of years in the villages of Vedic India, Lord Ganesha has been and is today in towns and cities in many countries, a powerful and immediate presence in everyone's lives. He was and is the one prayed to when starting a business or an enterprise of any kind. Today factory workers approach a small shrine dedicated to Him before commencing their daily work, so that nothing might go wrong. Businessmen beg His help in adjusting the stock market to their advantage, and farmers, of course, chant His 108 names while planting their seeds, rice, other crops, or trees. When no rain comes, images of our loving

Lord are seen throughout Bharat land submerged in water up to His neck, so that His great mind may become impressed with the people's crying needs. When grandma is sick or the crops are not coming in on time, when the children are growing up wrongly by adopting alien ways, Hindus diligently pray to our loving God for help in restructuring their lives. He is the supreme Lord of Dharma, and we pray to Him for guidance in the direction of our lives.

Worship of Lord Ganesha is immediate. One has but to think of His form to contact His ever-present mind. Close your eyes for a second, visualize His large elephant head and experience the direct communication that has immediately begun. This is similar to punching in a code at a personal computer terminal which gives immediate access to the entire network of computers, large and small. On this remarkable and universal Inernet, obscure and necessary information and answers to every question are now available as needed through the direct link with Lord Ganesha. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, we can use the computer terminal of our own brain and code in the divine image of Lord Ganesha and gain complete access to His vast computer-like mind. Ganesha's mind has been programmed by the history of experience over eons of time and naturally encompasses the intricacies of the universe and the cycles of life in all their ramifications and simplicities. Our great God Ganesha sits contentedly upon the *muladhara* chakra. This chakra controls the forces of memory within every creature. Worship of Him strengthens your memory, builds character and brings knowledge from the within. It also protects you from the lower forces which reside in the little-known chakras below the *muladhara*. These darker chakras govern fear, anger, jealousy and the confused thinking centered around self-preservation.

Wherever His devotees are—in the home, the factories, the offices, the hospitals, the marketplace, orbiting in space or tilling the soil on the farm—Lord Ganesha

on planet Earth. There are two ways to come into Hinduism. One is to be born into the Hindu religion and be carried in your mother's arms to the temple, there to be inwardly and psychically connected to our loving God, Ganesha. So strong are those early impressions and samskaras that they carry you through life. Another way is to unfold naturally to the point of being ready to formally enter Hinduism, to supplicate, to sincerely entreat the guardians of that religion to allow you to be a part of that immense and ancient tradition. You have to want to be a Hindu so strongly, so sincerely, that Lord Ganesha lifts you out of the fog of the materialistic conscious mind, establishing a connection and a relationship with you. This is a personal relationship with the Deity. There is nobody in-between—just you and the God, Lord Ganesha. It's like being adopted, in a way. If you were an orphan or abandoned on the streets of Sao Paulo or Chennai or on the streets of wherever

is ever there. Intimate access is acquired by simply loving Ganesha and holding His robust image in your mind. Carefully visualize the large head and ears, His long trunk, massive body, big belly and the objects He holds in His many hands. Look into Ganesha's eyes. Train yourself to see Him within your own mind with your eyes closed. This is the key. Hold His form steady in your mind through the power of visualization. Now you can talk to Him. Pronounce the words mentally into His ear. He is listening, though He will never speak back but take into His vast mind your prayer and slowly work it out. You must simply speak all of your questions and your problems into His right ear. When you are finished, open your

eyes. Go on with your day and go on with your life. Wherever you are, remember this simple way of making contact with Lord Ganesha and as a good seeker exercise this psychic power, this *siddhi*.

Starting today and in the days to come, you will notice how He answers questions and solves problems for you through the course of your daily life. You will notice how He influences events and decisions slowly and subtly, in unseen ways. Situations will change for you, unexpected doors will open, and accustomed ones will close as you are propelled through His grace toward your inevitable glorious future. Read and reread the above formula for immediate access to Lord Ganesha until it is firmly implanted in

your subconscious memory patterns, and then begin to make contact with Him often through each day wherever you are and whatever you are doing. Yes! Lord Ganesha is immediate, and you have immediate access to Him. Wherever you are, remember this and as a seeker on the path through life's experiences exercise this *siddhi*. It is your right to do so.

Once a psychic connection is made with Lord Ganesha—the Deity who manifests in several forms, including the elephant-headed Lord of Categories and Remover of Obstacles—one is brought slowly into the mysteries of the Sanatana Dharma. Such an inner connection, which can be as subtle as a feeling, as tenuous as a dream or as bold as a personal visit, is also an entering into one's own *muladhara* chakra, governed by the planet Mercury, for every opening into a new chakra is also an introduction to the Deity who governs that state of consciousness and the planet to which that chakra is connected.

The Sanatana Dharma, known today as Hinduism, is the only living religion on the planet that does not look to a human founder for its source of inspiration, scripture or historical beginning. It is timeless and ageless. Sanatana Dharma, the root religion of humankind, looks inward for its origins, into the subtle, superconscious realms within the microcosm, which it calls the Karanaloaka, Sivaloka or Third World. This great religion has no single organized headquarters on the material plane. Nor does it

have a one hierarchy. Who then is in charge of Hinduism? Why, it is none other than our loving Ganesha! He doesn't live in Rome, nor in Salt Lake City. Lord Ganesha lives simultaneously everywhere Hindus worship and pray within themselves. He doesn't have to be reappointed from time to time, because yugas and yugas ago He was permanently and irrevocably appointed when He was created for this work.

Ganesha, the Gatekeeper

Yes, it is the Great Ganesha who is the gateway for seekers into the world's most ancient faith. He is the inner authority, the guardian, the one who grants access to the spiritual mysteries of the Sanatana Dharma. All Hindus worship Him, regardless of their sectarian or philosophical positions. He truly binds them together in His love. This great God is both the beginning of the Hindu religion and the meeting ground for all its devotees. And that is only proper, inasmuch as Ganesha is the personification of the material universe. The universe in all of its varied and various magnificent manifestations is nothing but the body of this cheerfully portly God.

Ganesha sits on the psychic lotus of the *muladhara* chakra, the ganglia of nerves at the base of the spine within everyone. This chakra governs time, matter and memory. As the spiritual aspirant is lifted up from fear and confusion into conscious awareness of right thought, right speech and right action, the *muladhara* chakra becomes activated. It is then that the seeker, with heart filled with love, encounters the holy feet of Lord Ganesha. As the spiritual seeker worships the loving elephant-faced God, clearness of mind comes more and more as he automatically and very slowly enters the Hindu path to enlightenment. Once the connection is firmly established between the devotee and Ganesha, all of the currents of the devotee's mind and body become harmonized. After that strong connection is made, should he falter on the spiri-



PHOTOS BY SHANA DRESSLER

Right, devotees immerse a large image of Ganesha during His grand departure festival in Mumbai. Above, a devotee shows off the clay Ganesha she has made for the festival. Below right, a man dances in ecstatic devotion as Ganesha hovers nearby in His subtle body.



“Adopted” continued...

there are little kids running around, you would be “free.” You could go through life listening to no one and exercising unrestricted free will, free instinctive will. If you had a developed intellect, then you could exercise an intellectual will. You could do anything that you wanted to do, absolutely anything. Of course, you would find that as you attempted to fulfill your desires, you were limited, sometimes prevented, by the natural forces within and without. But you could attempt anything.

If you were fortunate enough, foster parents might come along to help you. They would adopt you and take you into their home. Your new mother would begin to lovingly guide and direct your life. You are a part of their family now, and your well-being, your education,

your training all now come under their will, to which you must adjust yourself and obey. They will watch over you and discipline you morning and night. They will protect you from getting into trouble with your “free will.” The modern concept of freedom leads to the darker chakras below the *muladhara* chakra. Anguish is there.

It is the same when you evolve a relationship, a personal relationship, with the Deity Lord Ganesha. He will not allow you to use your free will to get into difficulties. Guiding you carefully and protecting you along your way in your natural karma through life is His concern. Someone once said, “I worship Lord Siva. I worship Lord Murugan, but I have never really gotten acquainted with Lord Ganesha.” I responded, “You worship Siva and Lord Murugan, and that is wonderful. But unless you have established a personal relationship with Lord Ganesha, your

worship of any of the Gods is probably more according to your own thoughts and fancy than true worship. Until you have established a rapport with Lord Ganesha, you cannot establish a relationship with Krishna, Ayyappan, Amman, Vishnu, Rama, Hanuman, Lakshmi, Sita, Radharani, Siva

or Murugan, outside of your own limited concepts. It is Ganesha who introduces you to the millions of Gods of the Hindu pantheon, no one else. That is the way it works.” Yes, little by little, slowly, imperceptibly, a relationship evolves, a very personal, loving relationship, between the devotee and the elephant-faced God. Psychic protection is granted; physical protection, mental and emotional protection are all granted as boons by Him. He will not allow His devotees to use their free, instinctive willfulness to make more negative karma by getting into difficulties. Rather, He will guide them carefully, protecting them every moment along the way so that their natural birth karmas may be worked through and good karma created by right living. This is His

main concern. Lord Ganesha loves and cares for His devotees. Once the devotee is connected to Him through the awakening of the *muladhara* chakra, loneliness is never experienced.

Ganesha is a truly wonderful, loving God. He has an extraordinary knack for unweaving complicated situations and making them simple. He can unweave His devotees from their karma, simplifying and purifying their lives. But this only happens after they have established a personal relationship with Him. Soon thereafter, changes begin to happen in their lives; and when they go through difficult times, they no longer become angry or live in fear or worry. When difficult times come, they know it is because they are being unwound from accumulated and congested, difficult karmas, or being turned in a new direction altogether. They know that at such a time they have to consciously surrender their free, instinctive willfulness and not fight the divine

happenings, but allow the God's divine will to guide their life. Such is the spiritual path of total surrender, known as *prapatti*.



A. MANIVEL

tual path, he has gained divine protection.

But the seeker loses one thing. He loses his free, instinctive willfulness. It is lost forever. Yet it is not a great loss. Man's own personal willfulness, his animalistic free will, is a feeble and insignificant force when compared to Lord Ganesha's divine will. When beholden to God Ganesha and inwardly awakened enough to be attuned to His will, it is then quite natural that the instinctive will bows down. Personal likes and dislikes vanish. Limited faculties of reason and analysis are overpowered and subdued by a greater will, a cosmic will, the will of dharma. When sufficient humility has been awakened, it is easy to surrender personal, instinctive willfulness to the greater subsuperconscious will of dharma. It happens most naturally, but very slowly, because Lord Ganesha, of all the many Gods, proceeds with methodic deliberation. He is the careful, loving guide on the inner path of all seekers.

Among all the wonderful Hindu Deities, Lord Ganesha is the closest to the material plane of consciousness, most easily contacted and most able to assist us in our day-to-day life and concerns. In His hands Ganesha wields a noose and a goad. With the noose He can hold you close or hold obstacles close. Ganesha can capture and confine both blessings and obstacles. With the goad, Ganesha can strike and repel obstacles. This Lord is called the Remover of Obstacles; but He also places obstacles in our way, for sometimes his devotees are proceeding in the wrong direction, and His obstacles block their proceeding and guide them

slowly back onto the straight path of dharma. When instinctive willfulness causes the seeker to decide to step out of the boundaries of dharma, the Lord of Obstacles is there to block the way. His emblem is the swastika, symbolizing His circuitous course in guiding the seeker through life's perplexing experiences.

The Meaning of Grace

"What about the grace of the Deity?" seekers ask. Grace is received from the God when you are consistent in your worship, consistent in your discipline, consistent in your bhakti, your devotion. With such a foundation in your life, a great shakti, a force or power, will come from Lord Ganesha. This is grace. It is uplifting. It comes unexpectedly. When grace comes, your mind may change and your heart may melt. Your sight will become clear and penetrating. You may say, "I have been graced to see everything differently." New doors will begin to open for you, and as you go through them, your life will become more full, more wonderful. And the grace of it is that it would not have ordinarily happened to you.

By grace we are directed deeper into spiritual life, pointed in the right direction, carefully guided on the San Marga, the straight path to our supreme God. After grace has been received, our thoughts are enlivened,

our life is inspired with enthusiasm and energy, and we live daily in the joyous knowledge that everything is all right, everything is happening around us in accord with our karma, our dharma and God's gracious will.

The Gods Are Real Beings, Not Mere Symbols

Many people look at the Gods as mere symbols, representations of forces or mind areas. Actually, the Gods are beings, and down through the ages ordinary men and women, great saints and sages, prophets and mystics in all cultures have inwardly seen, heard and been profoundly influenced by these superconscious, inner-plane, inner-galactic beings. Lord Ganesha is just such a being. He can think just as we can think. He can see and understand and make decisions—decisions so vast in their implications and complexity that we could never comprehend them with our human faculties of limited understanding.

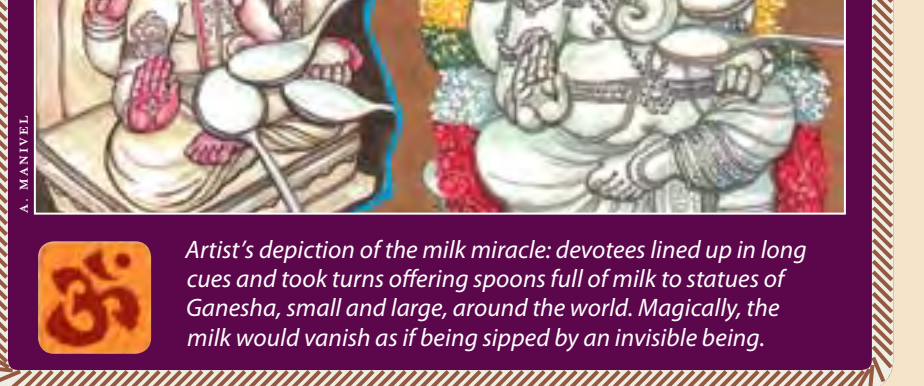
In recent history, missionaries and others from the Western religions have told the Indian people over and over again that their Gods are not real beings, but merely symbols of spiritual matters—and unfortunately many have begun to believe this and look at their Gods in this way. Even among Hindus there are quite a few who don't believe in inner-world beings. Their belief is restricted to the people they see in the physical world, and that is all. You dare not tell them differently. It is very difficult, but not impossible, to introduce them to the grand philosophy which is based

The Milk-Drinking Miracle of 1995

It all began on September 21, 1995, when an otherwise ordinary man in New Delhi dreamt that Ganesha, the elephant-headed God of wisdom, craved a little milk. Upon awakening, he rushed in the dark before dawn to the nearest temple, where a skeptical priest allowed him to proffer a spoonful of milk to the small stone image. Both watched in astonishment as it disappeared, magically consumed by the God. Within hours, news spread like a brush fire across India that Ganesha was accepting milk offerings. Tens of millions of people of all ages flocked to the temples. The unworldly happening brought worldly New Delhi to a standstill, and its vast stocks of milk, more than a million liters, sold out within hours. Just as suddenly as it started in India, it stopped, in just 24 hours. But it was just beginning elsewhere, as Hindus in India

reports from around the world. Everywhere the story was the same. A teaspoonful of milk offered by touching it to Ganesha's trunk, tusk or mouth would disappear in a few seconds to a few minutes—not always, but with unprecedented frequency. Reuters news service quoted Anila Premji, "I held the spoon out level, and it just disappeared. To me it was just a miracle. It gave me a sense of feeling that there is a God, a sense of Spirit on this Earth." Not only Ganesha, but Siva, Parvati, Nandi and the Naga, Siva's snake, took milk. This "milk miracle" may go down in history as the most important event shared by Hindus this century, if not in the last millennium. It has brought about an instantaneous religious revival among nearly one billion people. No other religion has ever done that before! It is as if every Hindu who had, say, "ten pounds of devotion," suddenly has twenty.

Miracles witnessed by many people happen from time to time in Hinduism as in other faiths, but they're rare. As a young boy, the tenth-century saint, Nambi Anbar Nambi, inspired Lord Ganesha to actually eat the offerings placed before Him.



Artist's depiction of the milk miracle: devotees lined up in long cues and took turns offering spoons full of milk to statues of Ganesha, small and large, around the world. Magically, the milk would vanish as if being sipped by an invisible being.

Saint Jnaneshvara of Maharashtra became famous 600 years ago for having a water buffalo recite the Vedas before a group of arrogant priests. Naturally there are skeptics—10 percent of Hindus, according to our very unscientific poll, all of whom moved swiftly to distance themselves from the phenomenon. "Capillary action," coupled with "mass hysteria," is the correct explanation, concluded many scientists within a few hours. Aparna Chattopadhyay of New Delhi replied to these scoffers in a letter

to the Hindustan Times: "I am a senior scientist of the Indian Agriculture Research Institute, New Delhi. I found my offerings of milk in a temple being mysteriously drunk by the Deities. How can the scientists explain the copper snake absorbing the milk I offered with a spoon kept at a good distance away from it?" Scientific or not, gallons of milk were disappearing with hardly a trace. A leading barrister in Malaysia was dumbfounded when he watched a metal Ganesha attached to an automobile dashboard absorb six teaspoons of milk. In Nepal King Birendra himself made offerings to the God. Deities in Kenya and other countries took gallons of milk while sitting in shallow metal trays with no drains.

The worldwide press coverage was nearly as amazing as the miracle itself. Of course, the event dominated the news in India for days. But once it started outside India, local and leading national papers, such as the New York Times and Washington Post in America, and the Financial Times in UK, picked up the story. The international wire services, Reuters and Associated Press, carried a dozen articles a day on what had now been named the "Milk Miracle." Many in India are unaware of how warmly the Western press embraced the miracle. In many countries reporters came to the temples and personally offered milk.

Temples mobbed after 'milk miracle'

HUNDREDS of people mobbed temples in the Indian capital of New Delhi yesterday after a rumor that this Hindu deity was drinking milk brought an end to the fast.

Devotees were flocking to temples to offer milk to the deity. The deity was believed to be drinking milk. The deity was believed to be drinking milk. The deity was believed to be drinking milk.



Statue of Hindu God, Ganesha, drinks milk



Believers thirst for a miracle from Hong Kong to Southall

Wonder of milk draws thousands



Millions queue to witness 'Act of God'



India's thirsty statues drink a nation dry





solely on worship, meditation, inner discipline and the search for Absolute Truth. But this is too high-minded for those living in the everyday materialistic consciousness. For the knowledge of inner worlds to become accepted, a personal realization has to occur. This is a slow process for the materialist, a very slow process, and only Lord Ganesha can help it along. To contact Lord Ganesha, it is imperative that the materialist visit one of His temples or shrines, to make initial contact. It only takes one meeting.

Around the World

Maha Ganapati, of course, belongs to all mankind, not to Hindus alone. To the Chinese He is embodied in the form of a massive dragon, whose physical immensity depicts

His incredible and irresistible force. To some Chinese He is Kuan-shi t'ien or Ho Tei, the large-bellied God of Happiness. To the Polynesians in Hawaii He is God Lono.

The South Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils call him by the affectionate term Pillaiyar, "Noble Child." The Tibetans know Him as Ts'ogsbdag, and the Burmese worship Maha-Pienne. In Mongolia His name is Totkharour Khaghan. Cambodians offer worship to Prah Kenes, and the Japanese supplicate Vinayaksa or Sho-ten. By some He is envisioned as the feminine Mother Nature, and even nonbelievers seek to understand Him through personifying His great powers as Fate, Destiny or Numen. The ancient Egyptians may have known Him as a minor but very popular Deity, Bes, grotesque, pot-bellied and cheerful. The Romans called Him Janus and sought His blessings at the outset of any new venture. On His festival on the first of January (the month named after Him)

He was treated with special cakes; mutual good wishes were exchanged and people made presents of sweets to one another for a good omen for the new year. In the West He is ubiquitous as the corpulent jolly Santa Claus, the dispenser of boons and gifts, especially to children, who knows our thoughts, words and deeds and bestows rewards accordingly. The Buddhists and Jains also honor Ganesha. In one form or another, He is honored throughout the world.

Hindus worship the great God Ganesha at countless pujas performed daily on every continent. In temples and home shrines Lord Ganesha is worshiped today in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Malaysia, Java, Bali, Borneo, Tibet, Myanmar, Siam, Afghanistan, the Middle East, China, Indo-China, Japan, the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands, Africa, Mauritius, Reunion, Europe, Australia, Canada, South America, the United

States and elsewhere.

Every Hindu village and community has an image of the God Ganesha, and one of the many forms of Ganesha is found in every Hindu temple. The eminent scholar M. Arunachalam wrote, "Ganesha is usually installed at the entrance to the central sanctum, at the south, and also at the southwestern corner in the first court, of every Siva temple. Besides, He is placed on the first eastern *goshta* (niche) on the other southern wall of the *ardha mandapa* (secondary hall) in the dancing pose, known as Nartana Ganapati, in many temples. The tip of His trunk will curve to the left and touch the *modaka*, generally held in the left hand. In a few rare cases the trunk will curve to the right to touch the *modaka* on a right hand. Here He is called Valampuri (right turned) Vinayaga" (*Festivals of Tamil Nadu*, 1980, p. 112).

While Ganesha shrines are found at all Hindu temples, they of-

Mantras to Ganesha—Using the Magic of Sound

Japa, or recitation, is the spiritual practice of devotedly repeating a mantra, generally a specified number of times, such as 108, often while counting on a strand of beads, called a *japa mala*, while conscientiously concentrating on the meaning of the mantra. The repetition should be dutifully slow. This brings *punya*, merit, to the devotee. It should not be thoughtlessly mechanical or hurried, the so-called rapid-fire or machine-gun *japa*. Such casual, nonchalant negligence and disregard for contemplative traditions brings *papa*, demerit, to the devotee, creating internal strife, community opposition and turmoil for all concerned.

Japa is a form of devotional worship, invocation, supplication, praise, adoration, meditation and direct, experiential communion. Unless we are actually in a state of samadhi (total absorption), which is rare for most people, *japa* provides a means to disengage from our racing thoughts and our memories of the past—mostly the bad ones. The repetition of positive, uplifting, spiritual mantras over and over again lifts consciousness and causes the *muladhara* chakra to spin clockwise. We feel uplifted. Life does not look so bad, and neither does the past. A sense of forgiveness comes and the future looms bright. The past is forgiven and forgotten.

What is important for us to realize is that each Mahadeva can be experienced, expressed, in a mantra form that corresponds to that Being. This phenomenon is akin to remembering someone by his name rather than his face. When we utter such a mantra, we call forth the Mahadeva

or cause a particular inner truth to rise up in our minds. Then we feel His presence and enjoy.

Repeating mantras slowly purifies the mind, like running fresh water continually into a container of discolored water. A fresh stream of water causes the mud at the bottom of a container to rise and flow out over the top edges, eventually to be completely replaced by crystal-clear water. Similarly, *japa* cleanses the mind of impurities as the pure vibrations of the mantras loosen and wash away the impure vibrations.

Lord Ganesha is invoked through the mantra Aum. The *Mandukya Upanishad* elucidates the inner meaning of Aum, which embodies the highest wisdom. Aum has three syllables. A represents the waking state. U represents the dreaming state. M represents the state of deep sleep. Aum in its entirety, plus the moment of silence which follows it, represents the shanti, the peace beyond understanding. Thus, Aum *japa* performed as an invocation to Lord Ganesha, the Lord of Wisdom

and Knowledge—while love is welling up from our hearts and tears are for no reason flowing simultaneously—calls forth the knowledge of the entirety of our existence in these four categories of consciousness. These are realms that God Ganesha rules over as Lord of Categories, and this is the knowledge that He can grant devotees who perform Aum *japa* and meditation on the meaning of Aum.

For Aum *japa* to be effective, the mantra must be pronounced correctly. The first syllable is A, pronounced as the English word "awe," but prolonged: "aaa." The second syllable is U, as in "roof," pronounced "oo" but prolonged: "ooo." The third syllable is M, pronounced "mm" with the front teeth gently touching and the sound prolonged: "mmmm." Each repetition is sounded for about seven seconds, with two seconds on A, two seconds on U and three seconds on M, with a silence of about two seconds before the next repetition. The three syllables are run together: AAUUMM (silence), AAUUMM (silence), AAUUMM (silence). On the first syllable, A, we feel the solar plexus and chest vibrating. On the second syllable, U, the throat vibrates. The third syllable, M, vibrates the top of the head. Thus, proper chanting of Aum is a high form of yoga, moving energy from the lower chakras of the body up to the highest chakra, or energy center—the *sahasrara* chakra at the crown of the head.

Another traditional way to do this *japa* is to take a full breath and then chant the AUM three times as you exhale. The first repetition is

audible, the second is more quiet and the third is barely audible, as you concentrate within. Then inhale slowly as you visualize the image of our loving Lord Ganesha in your mind. Then repeat the AUM again three times as you exhale. The breathing should not be forced, but natural, slow, gentle and rhythmical. We can use a *japa mala* with 108 beads and pass over one bead for each repetition, or do the *japa* for a prearranged period of time.

Two other Ganesha mantras are commonly used. One is Aum Shri Ganeshaya Namah, meaning "Praise to Lord Ganesha." This is the mantra of invocation, adoration and worship. It is repeated at the beginning of pujas, and it can be used for *japa* to invoke Ganesha's blessings for the auspicious beginning of a task, project, change of life, community undertaking or simply to offer Him our praise. Another special mantra is Aum Gam Ganapataye Namah. This is Lord Ganesha's *mula* ("root") mantra. It is also known as His *bija* mantra, for it combines Ganesha's *bija* ("seed") sound, *Gam*, with the phrase, "Praise be to Ganapati." This mantra is used for yoga *sadhana* in which we invoke Ganesha and merge ourselves with His supreme knowledge and peace.

When the *ganas* and *devas* of Lord Ganesha are finally attracted to the home shrine, the room will feel filled with spiritual energy. This feeling indicates that Ganesha's *ganas* are present, eager and willing to do whatever they can to maintain shanti, peace, within the home and bind the family together.

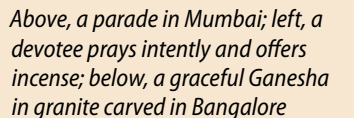


Top of page, a gallery of Ganesha images, from greeting cards, posters and temples; right, Ganesha in the Aum; above, a devotee performs japa.



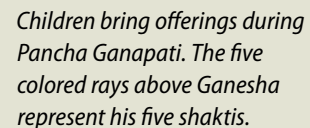
Perhaps the most famous Ganesha temple in India is the Uchi Pillaiyar Koyil at Trichy. Uchi means "at the top." This large temple

A five-headed Ganesha mounted on a lion resides at Nagapattinam. At Vellore, India, Ganesha is enshrined as Valampuri Vinayakar, with his trunk turned to the right instead of to the left. This *murti* is considered very auspicious. Highly revered Ganesha shrines are also found in the Siva temple of Tirunelveli, in the



Shri H. Krishnamurthi writes in *Tattvaloka* (Feb.-March 1990): "Several images of Ganesha have been discovered in the excavations of Central America and Mexico. It is said that in Mexico the name of Ganesha is Virakosha." India's Birla Science Institute

Ganesha Chaturthi, also known as Vinayaka Chaturthi, is the festival day celebrating the birth of Lord Ganesha. One of the great national festivals of India, and the foremost annual festival to Ganesha, it is celebrated on the *chaturthi*, or “fourth day” after the new moon, in August/September. We decorate the temple and home shrine with banana leaves, sugarcane and strings of mango leaves, making it look like a small for-



Vinayaka Vratam is a 21-day festival honoring Lord Gane-

Pancha Ganapati is a modern festival of the Five-Faced (*pancha* means “five”) Ganesha held in Hindu homes from December 21 through 25. Pancha Ganapati is a Hindu expression of this natural season of worship, gift-giving and celebration. A festive shrine is created especially for the five-day event in the main living room of the home. Each day sweets,

first shakti to create a vibration of love and harmony among immediate family members. On day two we draw forth Ganesha's second shakti to establish a vibration of love and harmony among neighbors, relatives and close friends. On day three we strive to create love and harmony among business associates, the casual merchant and the public at large. On day four we draw forth the vibration of joy and harmony that comes from music, art, drama and the dance. On day five we strive to bring forth the special rewards and fulfillments that only religion brings into our life. We focus this day on our connection with Ganesha, the Lord of Dharma, by holding five special pujas for Him through the day. After the grand evening puja, gifts are distributed and joyously opened. Happy children. Happy parents. Happy God.

announced a new find: "A piece of evidence was connected with the legend of Ganesha's writing down the epic to the dictation of Vyasa. A metal plate depicting the elephant-headed Deity holding an etching stylus has been found in Luristan in Western Iran and has been dated to around 1200 BCE (Motilal Banarsidass Newsletter Dec. 1993)."

Among the most renowned of Ganesha's temples in Malaysia are the Siddhi Vinayagar temple of Petaling Jaya and the Kotta Malai Pillaiyar Temple of Kuala Lumpur on the busy street of Paduraya. The latter is a small temple, but extremely powerful, said to be the most popular Ganesha temple in the land. Also notable are the Jalan Pudu (Pasar Road) Pillaiyar Temple and the Poyyata Vinayagar Temple of Melaka. In Hawaii our Kadavul Hindu Temple has a three-ton, six-foot-tall Ganesha. At the Saiva Dharmashala at Riviere du Rempart, Mauritius, we have dedicated a Spiritual Park and erected a grand pavilion around a five-ton, nine-foot tall, five-faced *murti* of Ganesha, Panchamukha Ganapati, in a mango grove. In Edmonton, Canada, New Zealand and Nandi, Fiji, Seattle, Salt Lake City, Bethesda, Denver, Scottsdale, Sebastian, Anchorage and Chicago there are exquisite stone *murtis* of the elephant-faced God, gifted by my *aadheenam* to the born Hindu communities, conferring blessings for new temples. In Great Britain Ganesha is enshrined at each of the nation's several new temples and is the presiding Deity at the Shree Ganapati Temple in Wimbledon and at temples in Switzerland, Germany and Denmark.

The religion of the earliest known North American Indians bears many analogies to and apparently has sprung up from the same ultimate sources as our own venerable Sanatana Dharma, a fact that is evidenced by their rituals and religious beliefs and symbols. One of Lord Ganesha's oldest symbols, the swastika, was one of the central motifs used in the designs and patterns of many

American Indian tribes and is still seen today in their beautiful blankets and pottery. So the great God Ganesha is not really new to the Western countries, but quite old. His recent coming into prominence is more our remembering Him in lands where He has always been. But it is in this twentieth century, in the decades of the 70s and 80s, that Lord Ganesha came to be traditionally enshrined in magnificent multi-million-dollar Hindu temples. We find Him in New York, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Concord, Livermore, Fremont, Denver, Houston, Nashville, Edmonton in Canada and hundreds of other places. These shrines have brought forth the *murti*, or physical image, of Ganesha as Gajanana, the Elephant-Faced. Ganesha's presence in North America at the beginning of the growth of Agamic Hinduism in the West ensures its success.

As Hinduism emerged in North America in the twentieth century, Ganesha led the way. One of the first traditional temples to be built was the large Maha Ganapati Temple in Flushing, New York. As each community sought guidance and direction in establishing religious roots, I constantly urged the trustees of each temple society, who came seeking guidance from Kauai's Hindu Monastery in the Hawaiian Island chain, to first begin their congregations in the worship of Ganesha in order for their temple to come up quickly.

We would often present the group with large or small stone im-

ages of the great God and give them the blessings for His worship to begin. Thus, at many a new temple site, a Ganesha image was established in a small shrine while construction and fund raising proceeded. This occurred in Fiji, Edmonton, Livermore, Fremont, Salt Lake City, Houston, Denver, Chicago, Lansing, Bethesda, London, Germany and elsewhere. Priests were brought from India, devotees flocked to the shrines, the worship began, and the funds to construct the temple began to flow. This practice has now become a tradition in the West as Hindus have learned from experience that once Lord Ganesha is worshiped, it is actually He who builds the temple in a most wonderful and inspiring way, and they are His helpers.

Visions of Ganesha

Lord Ganesha's vivified presence in the Western world has already culminated in many special visions of Him by both born and formally converted Hindus living in North and South America. In hopes of spiriting onward the worldwide fellowship of Hindus around the globe, a few such visions will be included here anonymously.

Lord Ganesha has been worshiped here and there in North and South America in many small ways by devotees from India for many years since the turn of the century. But not until events in



JULIEN DE WILDE

Left, this stunningly ornate Ganesha shrine at Bangkok's World Trade Center is a favorite place of worship for Thai Hindus and Buddhists. Below, Bodhinatha receives an elephant's blessing in Madurai. Below left, a devotee performing puja perceives Ganesha as a real, living being.



SHANA DRESSLER

Connecting with Ganesha through Puja

Love and joy come to Hindu families who worship Lord Ganesha in their home through the traditional ceremony known as puja. By means of such sacred rites and the divine energies invoked, each family makes their house a sacred sanctuary, a refuge from the concerns and worries of the world. Pujas can be as simple as lighting a lamp and offering a flower at the Lord's holy feet; or they can be elaborate and detailed, with many chants and offerings. The indispensable part of any puja is devotion. Without love in the heart, outer performance is of little value. But with true devotion, even simple gestures are sacred ritual. Every morning, all around our planet, millions of Hindus perform puja in their home.

A superb definition of puja is given in *South Asian Folklore: An Encyclopedia*. "A puja is a ritual performance that honors a being or an object and provides the context for the transaction between worshiper and deity in which a visual and substantive connection can occur. The most common expression in theistic Hinduism today, pujas are done outdoors, in homes, temples, at natural sites, and within a devotee's mind and body.



A. MANIVEL

The external focus of a puja is a *murti* (form), which may be a respected living being, such as a teacher or guru; a stone, wood, or metal icon of a deity; an aniconic image, such as the Ganges

River; plants; animals; the implements of one's profession or subsistence; or any form to which devotion and a relationship of dependence is to be demonstrated" (Routledge, 2002).

One need not be initiated to perform simple puja invoking our Loving Ganesha. All that is required is that the celebrant believe in the laws of karma and reincarnation, which are the cornerstones of Hindu ethical and philosophical doctrine. Ganesha worship is enjoyed by all, Hindus and non-Hindus alike, as He is the first God to be worshiped. It is not wise for an *ardha*-Hindu, or half Hindu, to centralize worship on Siva or Murugan or other Gods until full commitment has been made through receiving the traditional sacraments, called *samskaras*. Home puja is performed at least once a day, usu-

ally in the early morning. It is traditional to not partake of food at least three hours before puja, so puja is usually done prior to meals.

All Hindus attend puja at their local temple at least once a week and maintain a sacred shrine at home, which esoterically functions as an extension of the temple. The shrine room is meticulously cared for and not used for purposes other than worship, prayer, japa yoga, scriptural study and meditation. Here puja, home liturgy, is performed daily, generally by the head of the house. All members of the family attend.

Creating a home shrine is not difficult. The altar should be close to the floor, since most of the puja is performed while seated, or when there are small children in the home it is often higher, out of their reach. For a Ganesha shrine, an image, or *murti*, of Lord Ganesha is placed at the center of the altar.

The entire puja, of which this is a summary, can be learned at www.gurudeva.org/resources/books/lg/lg_ch-12. Puja is a ritual welcoming

of a holy person or deity, to whom all precious substances and comforts are offered. Offerings are made with the right hand.

The offering of food is an important part of puja, such as cooked rice or freshly cut fruit. After the puja, the food offerings—along with holy ash (*vibhuti*), sacred water (*tirtha*), sandalwood paste (*chandana*), red powder (*kunkuma*) and flowers (*pushpa*)—are passed out and enjoyed as *prasada*, for they have been imbued with the blessings of the God.

After the sacraments are passed out, everyone present can chant Aum three times and then sit quietly and direct their worship to God within themselves. Externalized worship traditionally is followed by internalized worship, yogic quietude enjoyed in the aftermath of the puja. The simple practice of mentally chanting Aum followed by a period of meditation and self-reflection makes devotees strong enough to face the external world with enhanced willpower, true confidence and a heart filled with love, realizing that we are truly one world, one family.

the early 1970s brought about the building of a large and very expensive Ganesha temple in New York did Lord Ganesha take up a formal public residence. The sequence of events leading up to this temple affirmed for our modern times the ancient tradition wherein the Deity Himself decides when and where His temple is to be built. It is not a man or a woman or a group of people who make that decision on the whim of personal inspiration. Rather, the Deity, the God, informs us that the time has come for His temple to come up and then we, in turn, proceed to help Him manifest it in the material world. The message from the God containing the direction of when and where to build His home is traditionally given by Him to holy men, gurus, swamis or saints who are respected by the community and are in personal touch with the Gods. Such religious leaders also have spiritual insight into the religious progress of the community. Lord Ganesha may strengthen the instructions of such holy men through a dream or vision to a devotee.

The Maha Ganapati Temple in Flushing, New York, began with two gentlemen from India who had been living in New York for several years. One of these hailed from a long line of temple builders; the other was a devout man who performed regular religious and yoga *sadhana*. This man had returned to India. He had a vision one night. He found himself soaring high above New York City until he came above an abandoned church in an area near his former residence. He came over the church, which opened as he moved down to land in front of the altar. Lo! There on the altar was Lord Ganapati Himself, who said nothing to him but just smiled. Immediately upon awakening, with his heart filled with love and the vision of the Great God still fresh in his inner mind, this sant phoned the temple builder who was then serving at the United Nations in New York.

The temple builder asked him to come to New York right away. Travel arrangements were made, and within 24 hours the two of them were driving around the Queens section of New York in search of Lord Ganapati's new home. They finally came upon the old Christian church that was the very one seen in the vision and

which was for sale at the time! There could be no doubt that Lord Ganesha had come and had shown where to put His temple. The building was subsequently purchased. After many years of hard work, with the blessings and sanction of Shrilashri Pandrimalaiswami, Lord Ganesha was installed and consecrated in an orthodox shrine to receive traditional public worship.

Since 1972 many other devotees have seen Lord Ganesha in their visions and dreams. For example, several pilgrims on the 1981 India Odyssey, a spiritual pilgrimage to the holy lands of ancient Bharat (India), had life-altering visions of Lord Ganesha at the Shri Kumbhalavalai Temple in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Such visions of Lord Ganesha clarify much about the way this great Lord works. While the visions took place within the subtle minds of His devotees, or our microcosm, this subtle space is in fact enormous and quite a macrocosm of its own.

Just as Lord Ganesha's vehicle, the tiny rodent, ferrets out every secret space and hidden area of the house, so does this Great Mahadeva have the ability to move within the seemingly most obscure and intricate areas of our minds. He is the master of both the big and the small, the macrocosm and the microcosm. Lord Ganesha's great girth is the entire manifestation of all that is, of the five elements of earth, air, fire, water and ether. Thus, He pervades all, not from

questions in exactly the same way they came to me. Thanks to Lord Ganesha, I had already prepared my answers and was easily able to handle them and finish the interview successfully. That night I went to the temple and thanked Lord Ganesha for helping me. A few months later I was accepted into the program."



Sheela Venkatakrishnan, Chennai. "Ganesha in myriad shapes and forms sit around my home, reminding me of who I am and what I can become! Tears wash away with just one look in the sheer joy that emanates from every form He took. Acceptance becomes a way of life. Surrender comes as a shield from strife. It becomes easy to amble along with the heart singing a sweet, sweet song! Ganesha, my friend, my guide, stands strong when all seems wrong. He lights up the way every day and shatters all that stands in the way of what I will become

A. MANIVEL



Left, Gurudeva sees Lord Ganesha in a vision, who tells him to rub a little oil on the sharks' noses; right, devotees attend puja in a Ganesha temple; below priests raise the arati flame at the crescendo of puja to the five-faced elephant Deity at Kumbhalavalai Temple in Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

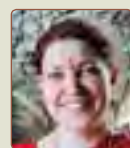
A. MANIVEL



INDIVAR SIVANATHAN



Personal Testimony about Ganesha



Kamala Garneau, Edmonton, Canada. "During the last year of my degree, I was facing a very important interview for entrance into an internship program. As the interview drew near, I went to the temple and sat and prayed to Lord Ganesha. I told Him that I would make coming to see Him daily a priority in my life for a minimum of two weeks and as long as I could after that, and prayed for Him to remove any obstacles blocking my path from having a successful interview and being accepted into the program. The next day I woke up early and went to the temple for the puja. This routine continued, and the day of the interview drew near. On the day of the interview, I was reviewing some possible interview questions my family and I had prepared. Later, as I was brushing my teeth, three different interview questions just entered my mind. They were somewhat unusual and a little complicated to answer, so I mentally prepared answers to them as I drove to the interview. As it turned out, I was asked all three of those



one day! A shining soul such as He. You are Him, and He is me!" **Vikneswaran, Kuala Lumpur.** "Since my teens, I have been acquainted with this beautiful God. He was my guide since then. I first got to know Him when I saw His *svayambhu* form in an old tree where people used to pray to Him. I would go and burn camphor to Him whenever I could. I wasn't a devout person, and I was very much attached to the ideologies of the West. Still, my daily life somehow was centered around Him. I used to sit at the tree simply watching His beautifully formed face with its huge trunk. He somehow communicated with me whenever I was there with Him, and gradually my life turned



me to a powerful consecration rite for a nearby Pillaiyar temple. During the visits to Pillaiyar in this temple my spiritual life deepened. I am still learning about Lord Ganesha, still communicating with Lord Ganesha, still loving my Lord Ganesha. Every single obstacle that I face in my life, Pillaiyar removes for me; even the littlest problems are solved by Him." **Chamundi Sabanathan, California.** "My most vivid experience with Lord Ganesha occurred at the old temple on Sacramento Street in San Francisco, not long after His *murti* was installed. I was seated at the back of the room, but suddenly had the experience of being at His feet, prostrating with overwhelming devotion."

the outside in but from the inside out. He does not move to pervade, for all form in its purest state is together, not far apart. Seated unmoving on the broad, four-petalled lotus of the *muladhara* chakra, Lord Ganesha records and governs the movements of vast inner oceans of actinodic energy that appear to our physical eyes to manifest as forms so many millions of miles apart. He is at work through all the outwardly gross forms of nature, and yet mounted on his tiny mouse He can, in utter minuteness, travel about within His devotees' minds as if they were great, well-lit caverns. Such is the mystery of the pompous elephant-faced God, the embodiment of form who rides the mouse.

The final vision to recite is one that I had in the mid-1980s of Lord Ganesha walking from His temple attended by two priests. He was about to take a bath in the beautiful Indian Ocean in the country of Mauritius where the river meets the sea. I was standing in the water with several sharks swimming around me. Lord Ganesha, accompanied by two priests, looked at me and said, "Just rub some oil on their noses and they will not harm you." This vivid mystic experience is illustrated on this page (above left).

Remember, such visions of this great Lord do not come only to the meditating yogis, but to sincere *bhaktas* as well—those who by virtue of their good karma receive this special grace at particularly auspicious times in their lives.

more meaningful as I began to analyze what Sanatana Dharma is. I began to meditate, or rather sit down quietly to get some concentration. I began to buy books on spiritual life. Then one day, my group of friends brought

The Benefits of Drawing Close to Lord Ganesha

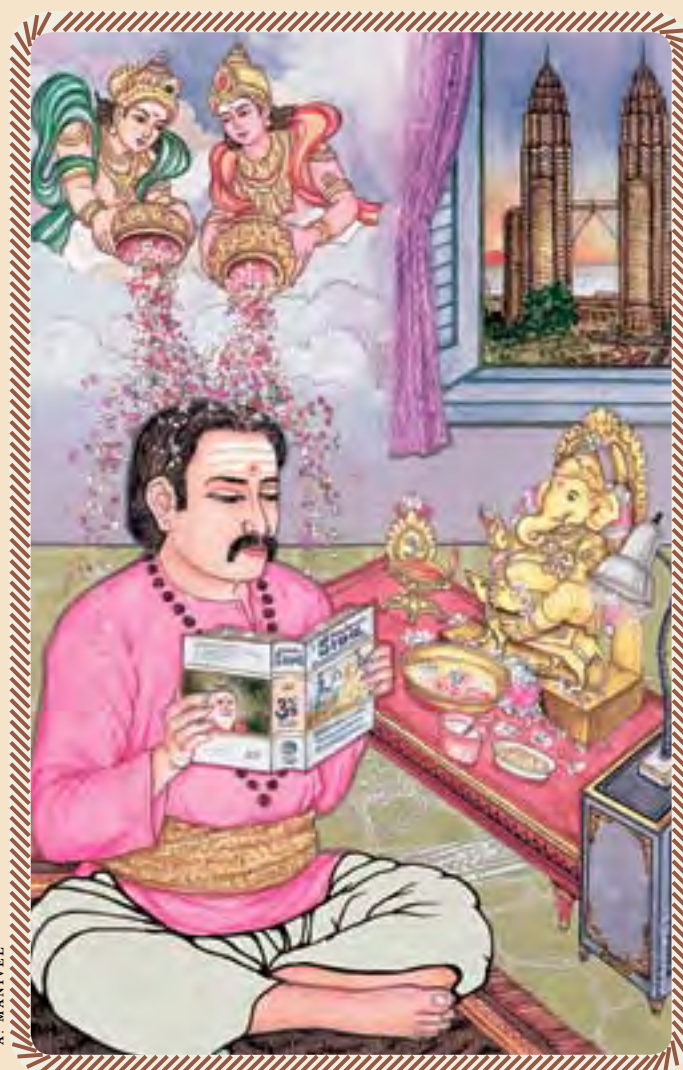
WE SINCERELY HOPE THAT THIS EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT WILL serve to bring you closer to Lord Ganesha. We are deeply grateful to Gurudeva for his inspiring words of wisdom. One comment that he makes especially stands out to me as central: "Among all the wonderful Hindu Deities, Lord Ganesha is the closest to the material plane of consciousness, most easily contacted and most able to assist us in our day-to-day life and concerns." In giving this some thought, we developed a list of eleven ways in which Ganesha can benefit your everyday life. These benefits were written for youth, as that is the best time to develop a closeness with Ganesha, but they apply equally to adults.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ✿ strengthen memory | ✿ experience good timing |
| ✿ stimulate intelligence | ✿ increase domestic harmony |
| ✿ solve problems easier | ✿ increase self control |
| ✿ study well in school | ✿ remove obstacles in your path |
| ✿ stabilize emotions | ✿ be more successful in life |
| ✿ improve your character | |

Through the worship of Lord Ganesha, we feel better about life, rising above the lower emotions of insecurity, fear, anger and jealousy and instead experience peace and contentment. Tuning in to His shakti and being, through attending puja at the temple or even just visualizing Him in your mind, helps raise you up into the *muladhara* chakra and therefore out of anger and fear into a calm state of mind. In fact, you can slowly seal off these lower states of mind and keep awareness permanently lifted above the animal instincts of fear and anger through the regular worship of Lord Ganesha. He sits on the chakra of memory, and when we are stable in that chakra, focused and concentrated, our memory is strong and our intellect keen.

Lord Ganesha's worship can enable us to tune in to the natural flow of events that allows us to be in the right place at the right time. Have you noticed that some days our timing is excellent and yet other days everyone we go to see has just left, the store just closed, we missed our bus by one minute? The worship of Ganesha quiets the aggressive intellect, allowing you to be guided by intuition, which can change a day of bad timing to one of perfectly good timing. Everyone knows Lord Ganesha is the Lord of Obstacles, able to both place a barrier in our path when our direction is less than perfect and to remove barriers that keep us from achieving our highest aspirations in life. By bringing our consciousness close to Him, we give permission for Him to positively influence our life in these subtle, often unseen, ways.

When you start each day's study, or come upon a difficult subject, pray for Ganesha's clear mind. See and feel a bright yellow light around your head. Feel smart. Strongly desire to understand. When you have



a problem in life, at school, home or work, Lord Ganesha will help you. Ganesha knows everything about you and everybody you know, from the past into the future. But you must ask for His help. See Ganesha's majestic face and with mental force ask for help and explain the problem. Lord Ganesha will send you ideas and thought power, introduce you to new attitudes, help you to understand other people, help you use wisdom and not emotions to face life's many experiences, and when that happens you will be more successful in all you undertake.

It is very clear that worshiping Lord Ganesha can benefit our life in many ways, provided we have developed a closeness with Him to the point where He is our friend. Ganesha is then able to help us become happier, more successful and more cultured Hindus who value the temple as an indispensable part of our life.

Knowing that the Gods are real beings and that the purpose of going to the temple is to experience their blessings is what transforms the temple from a cultural hall to a truly sacred place.

For the full, online version of *Loving Ganesha*, go to www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/books/lg/

Jai Ganapati! Bodhinatha

Childhood Nutrition

Don't just feed your children good food, teach them how to eat right their whole life

BY DR. VIRENDER SODHI

CHILDHOOD ILLNESS IS ON THE RISE. MANY KIDS ARE diagnosed with obesity, diabetes, asthma, chronic otitis media (ear damage), ADD, ADHD and more. Research has shown that the standard American diet causes or contributes to many of these diseases. It is imperative that parents know how to feed their children correctly at each stage of their lives and teach them the nutritional knowledge and habits they need for a lifetime of good health.

In Ayurveda, a child's nutrition is divided into three stages: *kshirup*, the period of nursing; *kshiranaad*, the feeding of solid food mixed with milk; and *anaad*, solid food. In the *kshirup* stage, lasting six months to a year, the infant's nutrition is his mother's milk. Infant formula was designed to be a medical nutritional tool for babies who are unable to breast feed. Formula does not fully meet the nutritional and immunity needs of infants, leaving their immune systems failing. Babies who are breast fed are less likely to get sick with diarrhea, gastrointestinal illness, urinary-tract infections, respiratory disease or pneumonia and rarely suffer sudden infant death syndrome. They are less likely to have allergies, less likely to have later weight problems, less likely to have ear infections and—according to a study published in JAMA issue of May 8, 2002—more likely to be more intelligent.

In the *kshiranaad* stage from one to two years old, milk is slowly tapered off while side-by-side fruit juices, pulp, syrups, soups of pulses and vegetables are started. Rice, beans such as mung and lentils, different fruits (especially ripened bananas), nut milk, vegetables and milk products are excellent. Ayurvedic medicine does not recommend introduction of solids before six months of age.

The stage of solid food, *annaad*, begins at two. I highly recommend eating together as a family. It is a comforting ritual for both parents and kids. Children like the predictability of family meals, and parents get a chance to catch up with their kids. Studies have shown that kids who take part in regular family meals are also more likely to eat fruits, vegetables and grains, less likely to snack on unhealthy foods, less likely to smoke, use marijuana or drink alcohol. Involve your children in meal planning and preparation, especially your teens, as it will keep them interested in participating. Keep mealtime calm and congenial. The dinner table is not the place for parental lectures or sibling arguments.

At the main meals, serve good sources of protein, such as beans and nuts. Choose whole-grain breads and cereals so your child gets more fiber. Serve water, milk, freshly squeezed juice or smoothies. By drinking milk, kids boost their intake of calcium, which is important for healthy bones. That means 800 milligrams (mg) a day for kids ages 6 to 8 and 1,300 mg a day after age 9. Use only organic dairy products. Kids will develop allergies to milk if they are introduced to cow's milk earlier than six month of age. Consumption of dairy products, especially yogurt, kefir, lassi, butter and ghee is very helpful. I believe it is better for kids to have whole and non-homogenized milk. Saturated fat is very important for development of a healthy nervous system.



It is important that you don't do battle over food with your children. Let the kids decide if they're hungry, what they will eat from the foods served and when they're full. Establish a predictable schedule of meals and snacks. Kids like knowing what to expect. Don't force kids to clean their plates. Doing so teaches them to override feelings of fullness. Don't bribe or reward them with food. Avoid using dessert as the prize for eating the meal. Don't use food as a way of showing love. When you want to show love, give them a hug, some quality time or praise.

I recommend you stock the pantry and refrigerator with healthy snacks, such as yogurt, peanut butter and celery, whole grained crackers and cheese. This will make it easier for you to limit fast food and other low-nutrient snacks, such as chips and candy. But don't completely ban such snacks from your home. Instead, make them "once-in-a-while" foods, so your child doesn't feel deprived. For an education in junk food, I recommend viewing (after pre-viewing) the documentary "Supersize Me" with your kids. It will be an eye-opener.

Thoughtful parents will limit sugary drinks, such as soda and fruit-flavored drinks. Many of these are also loaded with caffeine. A 12-ounce bottle of Coke has 46 milligrams of caffeine, the same as a cup of coffee. At lower levels, caffeine can make people feel more alert and like they have more energy. In both kids and adults, too much caffeine can cause jitteriness and nervousness, upset stomach, headaches, difficulty concentrating, difficulty sleeping, increased heart rate and increased blood pressure.

In 1996, researchers made discoveries about diet with important implications for childhood nutrition. They found that boys with lower levels of omega-3 fatty acids in their blood showed more problems with behavior, learning and health than those with higher levels of total omega-3 fatty acids. The omega-3 fat and its derivative, DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), is so essential to a child's development that if a mother and infant are deficient in it, the child's nervous system and immune system may never fully develop, and it can cause a lifetime of unexplained emotional, learning and immune system disorders. Rich sources of omega-3 fatty acids are nuts and seeds. Include one or two handfuls of raw, unroasted fresh nuts and seeds in your diet. Another way to incorporate nuts and seeds is to soak them in water and make nut milk.

The vegetarian family needs to be sure they get these nutrients in their diet: vitamin B12 from dairy products and vitamin-fortified products, such as cereals, breads and soy (limit soy to once or twice a week) and rice drinks; vitamin D from dairy products, calcium-fortified orange juice and vitamin-fortified products; Calcium from dairy products, dark green leafy vegetables, broccoli, chickpeas and calcium-fortified products, including orange juice, soy and rice drinks and cereals; protein from dairy products, tofu, dried bean and nuts; iron from dried beans, dried fruits, whole grains, leafy green vegetables and iron-fortified cereals and bread; and zinc from wheat germ, nuts, fortified cereal and legumes.

If you can be a dietary roll model yourself and follow the advice given here, you will not only raise healthy children, you'll give them a life-long gift of wise eating habits.

DR. VIRENDER SODHI holds an M.D. (Ayurveda) from India and a N.D. from Bastyr College of Naturopathic Medicine, USA. E-mail: drsdhi@ayurvedicscience.com. Web: www.ayurvedicscience.com.

Enshrining Saints & Sages

Suhir leaves a legacy of respect well earned

BY VRINDAVANAM S. GOPALAKRISHNAN, KERALA, SOUTH INDIA

NOT LONG AGO, I RECEIVED THE blessings of a truly good man. His name was Sudhir Vaidhyam. Everyone who knew him loved him dearly. He brought good health and well being to a lot of people before he died in February of 2003. And he did it all his own way. Clearly, he deserved all the praise that was heaped upon him. But there was one feature of his distinctive 70 years on Earth that is worthy of special note. As one of his close friends put it: "Oh yes—Sudhir Vaidhyam! He was a very great man—doubly great. He lived two lives in one."

When Sudhir was a young man, he was told by astrologers that he would die at the age of 57. He was happy with this prediction and contentedly prepared for his transition in a most admirable and dignified manner. However, when that fated time finally rolled around, he was impressively healthy—no where near

death. "What is this?" he asked himself. "Was the astrological prophecy incorrect? Surely not! There must be some other reason for this extension of my life."

Being religious, Sudhir assumed this gift of a "second life" was for some purpose related to service or devotion. Although he had always helped the less fortunate, and certainly felt a strong inclination to do more of the same now, his secret spiritual aspiration had always been to build temples dedicated to the worship of holy men and women. He asked in prayer, "Am I finally being given an opportunity to build my temples?" The Gods must have answered "Yes," because that is exactly what he did.

Sudhir figured his "second life" began in 1990. When I talked to him just three weeks before he passed away in 2003, he briefly explained what he had been doing for the past 12 years. "We formed a charitable trust and bought some marshy land," he said. "On that land we built a temple for Agasthya Muni (a famous Tamil Saiva saint who lived in South India approximately 5,000 years ago). Since then, 11 other temples for holy men and women have come



up. The construction of these temples has continued without interruption. The money was always there."

Sudhir's temples are located at Agasthyasramam at Agasthya Nagar in the village of Kureekad in the Ernakulam district of the South Indian state of Kerala. They are considered unique because 12 out of 13 of their images of worship are people rather than Gods. Although this is unusual, even in India, these deified souls are treated like Gods for good reason. Each of them provided invaluable scientific and spiritual contributions in the fields of Vedic medicine, astrology, service and spirituality.

As one might expect, the rituals performed in these temples are also appropriately distinctive. Because many of the men and women worshiped were healers, the *murtis* (icons) in the sanctums are anointed with



A moment of worship: Devotees pay homage at one of the twelve shrines of Agasthyasramam

vision.

"We feel his presence here," said Dr. Yogi Das, Sudhir's first disciple. "We are confident that all he conceived will manifest. Those who had received treatment from Sudhir Vaidhyam (*vaidhyam* is a title for a healer) regularly visit this temple complex because they believe that their cure was made possible through the blessings of Agasthya Muni and the other "deities" here. Many cases deemed incurable by modern medicine were treated and ameliorated by Sudhir Vaidhyam," Dr. Yogi Das told HINDUISM TODAY, "The growth of the ashram here and the temple complex is a standing testimony to his greatness."

the juice of medicinal plants instead of milk and ghee. The garlands used for decoration are made of grasses, seeds and leaves from medicinal plants, rather than flowers. The *prasadam* given out after the temple *pujas* (worship ceremonies) by the well-trained, non-brahmin priests consists of healthful herbs instead of sugary sweets.

As a devotee enters the temple complex through its main entrance to the south, he comes upon Lord Siva in the form of Dakshinamurti enshrined to the North. In two facing rows to the East and West, twelve shrines—six on either side—house the images of famous Vedic healers, saints and sages, including Markandeyan, Jnana Murugan, Lopamudra Devi, Oushada Ganapathy, Bharadwaja Maharishi, Athri Maharishi, Anasuya Devi, Saubhagya Mahalakshmi, Bhriugu Maharishi, Arundhati Devi, Vasishta Maharishi and Narada Maharishi.

The shrine for Agasthya Muni was the first to be built. Thus the entire complex of 13 small temples was named Agasthyasramam in his honor. The design of this unique temple construction represents a famous Vedic scene called "Naimisharanyam" in which wise men sit together in spiritual conclave for the benefit of all mankind.

When I met Sudhir, his presence was humble yet overpowering. Slim, quiet and unassuming, he hardly looked the part he played in the lives of the many people he influenced. Long before he was scheduled to leave his physical body, his reputation as a practitioner of siddha and ayurveda medicine had extended far beyond his home state of Kerala. His methods were more mystical than orthodox. One retired, senior police of-

ficer told me he watched Sudhir diagnose a patient by simply running his palm over the affected region of the patient's body.

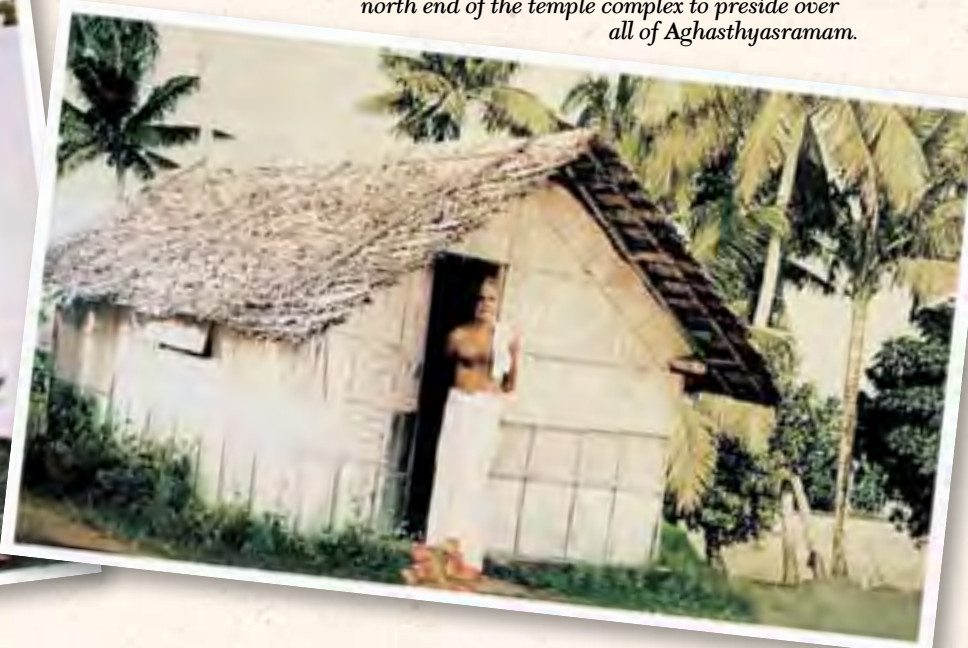
It seemed that everything about this man was intriguingly unique, if not special. In the ancient land of Kerala, famous for its temples dedicated to Siva, Sakti, Vishnu and Ayyappan, Sudhir worshiped Agasthya Muni, the father of siddha medicine. Although he personally lived an ascetic's life in a small thatched hut, he built two fully equipped hospitals, a number of medicinal gardens, several clinics, an old age home, an orphanage for the physically handicapped, a modern research center for the study of Vedic medicines and a library for ancient texts on ancient medicine.

Today, all of the projects that Sudhir set in motion are coming to life according to his

Many of the people that Sudhir treated were of national repute. These wealthy and influential souls, including ministers, politicians, judges and religious leaders, donated to Sudhir's projects through the years.

When asked by a journalist in the early 1990s why he felt so impelled to build temples to great spiritual men and women, Sudhir replied, "All the sciences, including siddha and ayurveda medicine, have come to us from our great Vedic teachers, but we have not built any temples for them. The present and future generation needs a place where they can seek the blessings of these great souls, or at least have some notion of what they did." Certainly, Sudhir Vaidhyam lives on as one more of Agasthyasramam's illustrious inner-plane assembly of the wise and benevolent.

Gods, sages and devotees: (Clockwise from below) Sudhir Vaidhyam stands before the simple thatched hut he chose to be his home; Sage Agasthya Muni in his temple/shrine; Dakshinamurthi, a form of Lord Siva, positioned at the north end of the temple complex to preside over all of Agasthyasramam.



Vision coming to life: Sudhir Vaidhyam (far left) presides over the installation of the icon of Agasthya Muni.

COMMENTARY

Inspirers for a Modern Hinduism

Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda revived and renewed our religion's spirituality

BY JAY DILIP LAKHANI

OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS THE VIVEKANANDA CENTRE London, of which I am the director, has worked hard to present and promote a wholesome image of Hinduism in the academic arena of the United Kingdom. The work has produced handsome dividends; we are now in a very strong position to influence the Department of Education, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority as well as many of the university boards in the way they portray Hindu teachings in schools and colleges throughout the country. The source of our authority and inspiration are the spiritual giants of contemporary Hinduism, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Let us share our experiences with the readers.

A few months back we were asked to make a presentation of Hinduism to over 100 Christian ministers at King's School in Canterbury Cathedral. The session generated a very visible thrill in the audience who felt a tremendous affinity with Hinduism. About a month back we conducted assemblies at Watford Grammar School, addressing about 1,400 English boys between the ages of 11 and 18. In the middle of the presentation, without any prompting the boys started to applaud, they had to be asked to stop applauding so that the session could continue! Last week we were asked to address many heads of religious education from some famous schools like Eton. We talked at length about the role of Hinduism in religious education; one could feel the atmosphere in the lecture room becoming charged up. At the end of the session, one lady came over and, in the process of thanking, said, "I have been living in a spiritual desert. Thank you for bringing me out." Whilst she was talking, tears welled up in her eyes and she started to weep. We ask ourselves, why are we able to touch and influence so many hearts, and not just Hindu hearts? The answer is very simple. We are successful because our presentations draw from the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

Who are these personalities and what is their status in Hinduism? At the end of the last century *The Times of India*

carried out a poll to find out who their readers considered was the "Spiritual light of India in the past century." The overwhelming winner was Swami Vivekananda. The spiritual force that drove and guided him was Sri Ramakrishna. This article examines the uniqueness of the teachings of these personalities and their relevance in reviving and refreshing the message of spirituality not only for Hindus but for the whole of mankind.

Experiential religion: Youngsters in the West are dissatisfied with religion which has to be purely a matter of belief; they need more, much more. They are looking for experiential religion. This shows a real awakening, a real desire to experience religion. We sometimes ask our Hindu audience, "Who are the figures of author-

ity in Hinduism? Are they the priests who are so apt in carrying out elaborate liturgy?" The reply we get is that they are not. "Are the figures of authority the storytellers who recount our Hindu histories?" Though mythologies are wonderful tools for making spiritual teachings colorful, these storytellers are not the figures of authority in Hinduism. We continue to inquire, "Does the authority of Hinduism perhaps lie with the pundits? Do these scholars who are so well versed in the scriptures and who are so good at reconciling the various strands of Hindu philosophies hold the authority of Hinduism?" Certainly not, would be the correct Hindu response. The authority of Hinduism lies only with those glorious personalities who have first-hand experience of God. These personalities do not conjure up a God through mental gymnastics or through book learning, nor do they seek accreditation from universities to gain status within the Hindu tradition. The only stipulation required to be a person of authority in Hinduism, or to be truly literate in Hinduism, is this single but very stringent requirement of first-hand experience of God.

Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) is one such personality who makes this claim. Not only does he confirm God experience through one pathway prescribed by the Hindus but through a vast number of pathways both from the Hindu and non-Hindu traditions. This is a first in the history of mankind. Arnold Toynbee, the well-known historian, in his foreword to the life of Sri Ramakrishna says, "Religion is not just a matter of study, it is something that has to be experienced and to be lived, and this is the field in which Sri Ramakrishna

manifested his uniqueness. His religious activity and experience were, in fact, comprehensive to a degree that had perhaps never before been attained by any other religious genius, in India or elsewhere." The source of everything wonderful and grand and authoritative in the Hindu tradition becomes visible in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. Religion cannot be just a matter of belief; it has to be a matter of realization. In a science-oriented world where verification is the buzz-word, such pronouncements

Sri Ramakrishna: (left) The great 19th century saint of India; (right) Dakshineswar Temple where he conducted worship for thirty years.



PHOTOS: VEDANTA SOCIETY OF ST. LOUISE



about religion supported by experience generate acceptance even from the hard line atheistic lobbies.

The divinity of man: A dynamic teacher will attract dynamic disciples. This was the case with Sri Ramakrishna. This fountainhead of spirituality required a very able disciple to carry his message to the rest of the world. This able disciple was none other than Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). The aspect of contemporary Hinduism that we emphasize in our presentations is: the divinity of mankind or spiritual humanism. This idea was emphasized in the strongest terms by Swami Vivekananda. Addressing Western audiences, he said, "The Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth. Shake off the delusion that you are sheep, you are souls, immortal spirits, free, blest and eternal." When we present this aspect of Swami Vivekananda's teachings, the Western audience is visibly thrilled. No one had ever equated them with divinity! We are not material beings aspiring to spiritual ideas so that we can improve our material status as the humanist claims; we are essentially spiritual beings caught on a material journey, affirms Vivekananda. Materialistic humanism stands no chance against this brand of humanism which can best be called spiritual humanism. Sri Aurobindo commented on Vivekananda's taking this message to the West, "The going forth of Vivekananda marked out the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake, not only to survive but to conquer."

The life of Sri Ramakrishna reflects the evolution taking place within Hinduism. He was once found weighing up the word *daya*, or compassion, with the word *seva*, or service. Sri Ramakrishna concluded, *daya* is not the right attitude for modern Hindus; the correct attitude has to be *seva*. Who are we to show charity to others? Our job is to serve others as God. Or as he put it: serve *jiva* (individual souls) as Siva. We hear this message thundered again and again by Vivekananda who proclaimed: The highest worship of God is not worship of images; the highest worship of God is through service to mankind. This particular method of translating religion into practice appeals very strongly to the Western youth we interact with.

Religious pluralism: Professor Ninian Smart, perhaps the most authoritative figure in the field of religious education in the United Kingdom, in his book on world's religions comments, "Swami Vive-

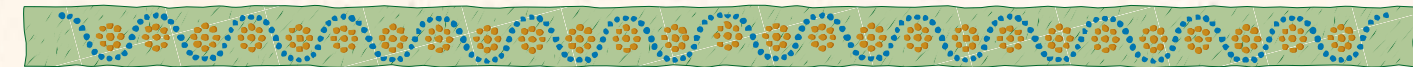
kananda can be said to be the chief spokesperson for the modern Hindu ideology. This ideology presented Hinduism not as a backward religion but at the forefront. It was this Hindu who saw his own pluralistic faith as a foreshadowing of the emerging World Religion. With Swami Vivekananda Hinduism as an all-India religion came into being. It is with Vivekananda that Hinduism for the first time gained self-conscious integrity. Various strands of Hinduism that appeared so baffling began to make marvellous sense." Vivekananda came on the world stage in 1893 at the first-ever parliament of religions and, ironically, his first address was given on 9/11. The theme of that first speech was religious pluralism. He quoted the *Siva Mahimanstotra*, "As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee." The Vivekananda Centre continues to present these ideas of religious pluralism to many religious groups. Though there is resistance from the evangelical lobbies of some of these religions, the astute lobbies within these religions are beginning to appreciate the ideas of religious pluralism. We have ensured that the new syllabus for teaching world religions in the United Kingdom has incorporated the ideas of religious pluralism as an essential part of religious education.

The theological challenge on the issue of pluralism comes from the Abrahamic faiths in the guise of equating pluralism to relativism. We respond by saying pluralism is certainly not relativism, or an attitude of "there is no absolute, hence anything goes." Pluralism merely asserts the contextual nature of religious expression. As we are all different, the way we view and approach God will necessarily be different; this is not a statement of compromise but a statement of fact. It cannot be otherwise. These views are gaining acceptance. Recently at a meeting of the religious education council of England and Wales we pointedly asked the Archbishop of Canterbury, "Why do you say, 'We Christians must tolerate other religions?' Is the word *tolerate* correct? Religious pluralism would disagree with such usage." The Archbishop responded in a gracious manner by saying, "The word *tolerate* was not right, as it suggests a concessionary attitude towards other religions." What a wonderful response from the head of the Anglican Church. The ideas of pluralism sown by Swami Vivekananda in the West are now beginning to bear fruit in this dramatic manner.



Chicago 1893: Parliament of the World's Religions poster announcing Swamiji's participation

VEDANTA SOCIETY, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA



RAMAKRISHNA KUTIR, ALMORA

Swami brotherhood: Vivekananda (center) with fellow monks of the fledgling Ramakrishna Order in Calcutta, 1899

Religious pluralism does not imply that “all religions are the same.” In no place in the hundreds of lectures given by Swami Vivekananda do we find any such a naive comment. All religions are different, hence the need to invoke pluralism. The idea of religious pluralism is resisted by some orthodox Hindu groups, who turn the *Mahimanstotra* hymn on its head and suggest that “maybe the streams do not come down from the same mountain top—maybe they come down from different mountain tops,” indirectly implying that Hinduism is radically different from other world religions. If that is the case, then these groups should go up their mountain tops and stay there and stop bothering the rest of mankind. Such a narrow ideology has no room in the modern world. This brand of Hinduism has sacrificed its universal component and appeal.

If it is not possible to reconcile the truth claims of various religions, or between the sectarian movements within the same religion, then all religions are doomed. The challenge from the rationalists of playing one religion against another or one sectarian movement against another will have won. If we press hard any theologian of any world religion to give us some definite “proof or validity” to their religion, in the final instance they all point to their prophet and say, “Because he says so.” Religious truths are not validated by debates or discussions, neither are they validated by scriptural injunctions. The only way they are validated is through very intense, personal experiences. This is what the *Upanishads* teach. The only way religious pluralism, too, can be validated is not through long-winded discussions between scholars of different faiths, but through the validation of this claim by a personality who can claim the same God experience using different pathways prescribed by different religions or by different movements within the same religion. The only personality who has synthesized vastly different spiritual experiences is Sri Ramakrishna. One moment he is in the *dvaita* mood sporting with the Divine Mother, in the next

moment he is engulfed in the bliss of *advaita* and reports swimming in the ocean of *satchidananda*. Sri Ramakrishna represents this essential synthesis between vastly differing strands within Hinduism as well as between Hinduism and other world religions.

Hinduism looks upon itself to be a living religion, constantly evolving and refreshing the message of spirituality to suit the changing needs of its people. It has received many knocks; sometimes they came from outside; many a time they came from within. Hinduism has shown its resilience by reacting strongly to all such attacks. Every time it has dug deeper within itself and produced a more comprehensive, a more grandiose response that has engulfed the world with a tidal wave of spirituality. This time around the wave had to be more majestic than ever before. It had to weave together vastly differing approaches promoted within Hinduism with many non-Hindu approaches. It had to draw from the depth of experience and the breadth of vision of ancient and modern sages to replenish the spiritual needs not only of the Hindus but of the rest of mankind. We pay our tribute to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, the personifications of this spiritual wave India has unleashed on the world stage. 🍽️



Jay Dilip Lakhani, 56, is director of the Vivekananda Centre London. His family is originally from Gujarat, and he was born and raised in Kenya. He took early retirement from his profession as a physicist to study and promote Hinduism. He is a popular speaker in the London educational system and has made presentations on Hinduism at hundreds of schools. Contact: vivekananda@btinternet.com.

MOVIES

“Super Size Me!”

Breakfast, lunch and dinner at McDonald’s for a month—how it ruined a filmmaker’s health

BY MARK HAWTHORNE, CALIFORNIA
WHILE COUNTLESS DOCTORS AND nutritionists indicate fast food is a major contributor to poor health, Americans rely more than ever on fast-food restaurants for their nutritional needs, and they have the waistlines to prove it. U.S. consumers have come to count on the convenience and uniformity companies offer in the form of cell phones, overnight deliveries, and, of course, instant hamburgers and sodas. Corporations naturally regard this hunger for quick meals as a tremendous source of revenue; in fact, Americans now spend \$110 billion a year on fast food—up from \$3 billion 30 years ago.

Into this drive-through culture enters the affable filmmaker Morgan Spurlock, who spends one month eating nothing but food from McDonald’s and documenting both the culture of corporate food-service and the transformation his body undergoes as he ingests 5,000 calories a day. The resulting film, *Super Size Me* (www.supersizeme.com), received more 2004 film accolades than we have room to mention, was a hit in theaters and is now available on DVD.

Super Size Me (rated PG-13) was inspired by a 2002 news story about two girls suing McDonald’s for making them fat. When Spurlock heard

McDonald’s defend their food as nutritious, he decided to test the claim, figuring that if the food was indeed healthy, he should be able to eat it every day with no ill effects. As he examined the McDonald’s marketing machine, which is aimed squarely at children, Spurlock began to think there might be more at play here than a country full of insatiable gluttons. Thus the movie follows him across America not only to McDonald’s



Three squares a day? Documentary maker Morgan Spurlock with a Big Mac; *Super Size Me* poster

for his daily meals, but to often funny, sometimes alarming visits with doctors, advertising executives, lawyers, consumers, and a lobbyist for the food industry. Alas, no one from McDonald’s would return his calls—they had no doubt seen Michael Moore make fools of spokespeople in his confrontational documentaries.

The warped genius of *Super Size Me* is that in exploring the link between junk food and obesity, Spurlock goes to extraordinary lengths to become dangerously unhealthy in an accelerated time frame. He eats every

breakfast, lunch, and dinner at McDonald’s for 30 days straight; he “super sizes” his order whenever asked—that is, he buys a larger portion of fries and soft drink at a slight price increase; and he eats every item on the McDonald’s menu at least once. He also mimics the lack of exercise the average American gets by keeping his physical activity, even walking, to a minimum. Consequently, the six-foot-two-inch Spurlock, 33, goes from a healthy 185 pounds to 210 pounds, his cholesterol increases from 168 to 230, and his liver reacts as if he was binge drinking liquor. His doctors are amazed by his swift decline and urge Spurlock to stop his experiment, especially after he develops chest pains and has trouble breathing.

Spurlock wants to present a strong indictment of corporate practices, and for the most part he succeeds. As Eric Schlosser reminds us in his 2001 book *Fast Food Nation*, which exposed the factory farms and assembly-line procedures behind the fast-food industry, 30 years ago farm activist Jim Hightower warned of “the McDonaldization of America” in which the huge, multinational corporations behind food service retailers would become a threat to independent restaurants, running them out of business with a cheaper, more efficient delivery system. Today, McDonald’s is one of the world’s most recognized brands.

Spurlock uses considerable humor and fascinating facts to show that McDonald’s offers plenty of food with dubious nutritional value and that they market to children with their restaurant playgrounds, happy meals, toys, cartoons and clown mascot. But he fails to address the role that adults play in this scenario: they have the power to simply not take their kids to McDonald’s. Unfortunately, it’s more difficult for parents to monitor what children eat in school cafeterias, and the documentary shows students eagerly giving in to the lure of fries and sodas.

McDonald’s called Spurlock’s film “a super-sized distortion of the quality, choice and variety available

at McDonald’s.” Yet, the company quickly revamped their menu, offering more salads and phasing out their super size menu options—and then claimed *Super Size Me* had nothing to do with their decision. With bonus features that include a lively audio commentary by Spurlock and Jamieson, an interview with Schlosser, and a graphic demonstration of how long it takes junk food to decompose (ten weeks into that experiment, the McDonald’s french fries still looked fresh), this DVD is definitely food for thought. Just don’t watch it while eating. 🍽️



IDENTITY

Confessions of a Western Hindu

Thousands of non-Indians follow the practices of Hinduism and are intrigued by its philosophy. So, why don't they call themselves Hindu?

BY SWAMI SHANKARANANDA

I AM DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER OF THE SHIVA ASHRAM NEAR Melbourne, Australia. Like many seekers of my generation, I left the West (in 1970) seeking spirituality in India. I assayed various paths, both Buddhist and Hindu, until I found my guru, Swami Muktananda. After that, I considered myself to be a yogi, a meditator, a spiritual seeker and devotee—but not specifically a Hindu. However, in 1977 at my guru's request, I was inducted into the Saraswati order of monks by Mahamandaleshwar Brahmananda Giri.

Certainly, I love the Hindu scriptures, rituals and even the so-called “feel” of Hinduism. In my ashram, we chant and do *pūja*, even though most, but not all, of the participants are Western. We enjoy making mini-pilgrimages to the local Hindu temple, where the brahmin priests are our good friends. These same priests have presided at religious functions in our ashram.

It wasn't until we had to incorporate as a religious institution here in Australia that the issue of Hinduism arose. At that time, it became obvious that the most truthful path for us was to incorporate as a Hindu institution. That was plateau number one.

Plateau number two occurred as a result of my being invited to represent Hinduism at local interfaith conferences. Before I knew it, I was being generally regarded as the leading spokesperson for Hinduism in the Melbourne area. This was curious, since I still noticed within myself some reluctance to refer to myself as a Hindu.

In addition to the 25 people in residence here at the ashram, we have a significant *grihastha* (family) community living nearby. I have asked many of these family devotees which box they checked under the heading of “religion” on government and hospital forms. A remarkably small percentage said they were Hindu—perhaps one in fifty. Most of them wrote in something like “Shaivite,” “Shiva Yoga” or “Kashmir Shaivism.” Some checked “Catholic” or “Presbyterian,” falling back on their childhood religion.

I have friends and colleagues who are leaders of the Buddhist community here in Melbourne. They say that, in general, the Western Buddhist practitioners under

their tutelage have not the slightest problem saying they are Buddhist. What's the difference between them and us? Why is it easier for Westerners to call themselves Buddhists than Hindus? It's not simply because Buddhism is more fashionable at the moment, being apparently more rational (fewer Gods), or currently enjoying the charisma and leadership of the Dalai Lama. Why should a person who practices yoga and meditation, believes in karma and reincarnation, honors Hindu tradition, chants Sanskrit and venerates Hindu deities be reluctant to call himself a Hindu?

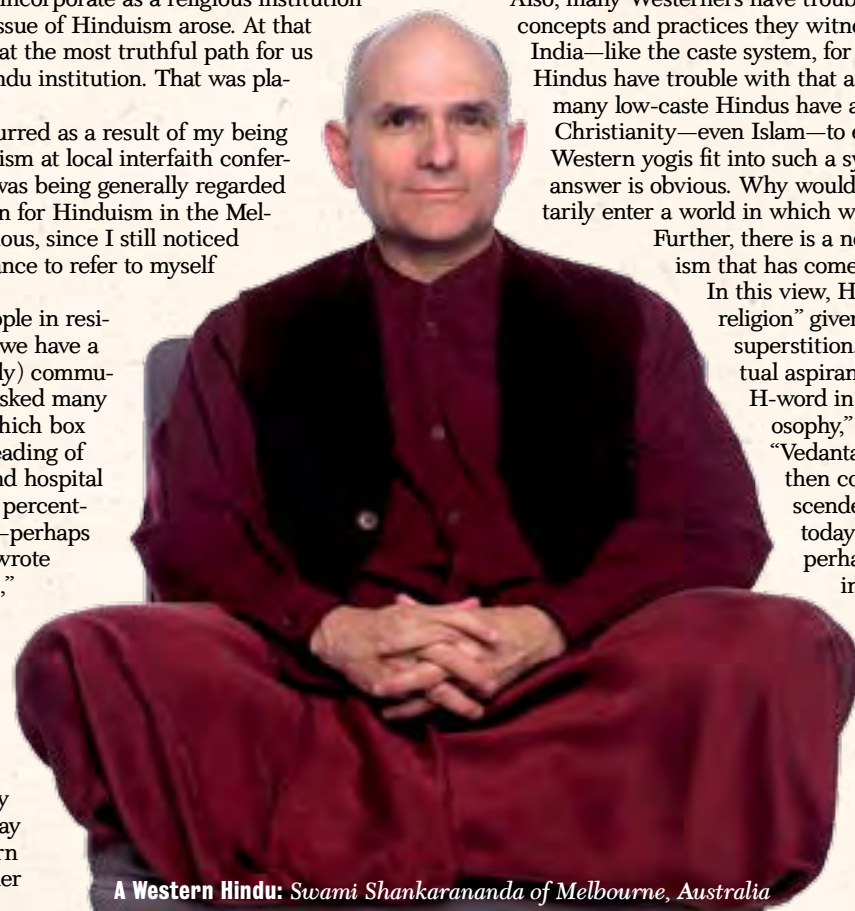
Buddhism has taken root in many cultures. Because of this, we have Thai Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Korean Buddhism, Zen Buddhism and more. Such a precedent makes an American Buddhism or an Australian Buddhism more palatable. While Buddhism does not consist of any one predominant ethnicity, Hinduism is overwhelmingly Indian.

Also, many Westerners have trouble dealing with certain concepts and practices they witness in today's Hinduism of India—like the caste system, for instance. Indeed, some Hindus have trouble with that as well. It is a fact that many low-caste Hindus have adopted Buddhism and Christianity—even Islam—to escape it. Where would Western yogis fit into such a system? Certainly, the answer is obvious. Why would we Westerners voluntarily enter a world in which we have a low status?

Further, there is a negative view of Hinduism that has come out of the British Raj.

In this view, Hinduism is a “heathen religion” given to idol worship and superstition. The first Western spiritual aspirants steered away from the H-word in favor of terms like “Theosophy,” “Vedic religion” and even “Vedanta.” Such practices were then considered more “transcendental” than Hindu. Even today's New Age philosophy—perhaps unconsciously—has incorporated many Hindu ideas, like reincarnation and karma.

While Hinduism is generally dignified by an extraordinary tolerance and universality, it is also true—and I've experienced this myself—that Westerners are sometimes barred entry into Indian temples.



A Western Hindu: Swami Shankarananda of Melbourne, Australia

COURTESY SWAMI SHANKARANANDA



On the job: Swamiji lectures at a public event in Melbourne

Also certain Indian Hindu leaders have just told me flatly that Westerners can never really become Hindus. To be fair, I have also been told the opposite.

Many Western candidates also have difficulty accepting the diminutive status Indian Hindus bestow upon women. This position is represented to an extreme in concepts such as *sati* (the self-immolation of widows). It's easy to see why a stance like this—even when its origin is well explained—acts as a deterrent for Westerners considering whether or not they want to be identified as Hindus.

In summary, we may say that, for understandable reasons, many Westerners accept certain beliefs and practices of Hinduism but reject others. Because of this fact, a Western Hinduism has naturally begun to develop. This needs be acknowledged.

Some might ask, “What's in a name? Why call it anything?” While it is true that you can successfully get to the top floor of a building by the stairs, an elevator or an escalator, you can't use all three at once. You must choose one of them to actually get you there. While realizing “I am the Self” is perhaps the highest truth, it is also necessary to have clarity at the social and religious levels.

There are at least two main reasons for considering these questions seriously. First is the children. In our community, many children come to our *satsang* (religious gathering). They enjoy the atmosphere, especially the chanting and the *pūja* (Hindu worship ceremony). During the talk and meditation, they go off to a children's program, which they also love.

Many of the parents ask me what they should tell their children about their religion and how they should instruct them in talking with the kids they meet at school? “Isn't it important for children to feel the security of a recognized tradition?” they ask me.

The second reason for us to seriously consider calling ourselves Hindus is self-empowerment. If all the Western Hindu groups remain small and separate, they lose their voice in government and society. The Buddhists have a strong voice, because they are able to unite and say, “We are Buddhists and our rights should be respected.” I am not saying that there should be a Hindu lobby. But where Christians, Jews and Moslems and their institutions are afforded certain rights, privileges and immunities, why should we be deprived of them?

I have been using the title “Western Hindu” in this essay. In

the past, I have also used “Philosophical Hindu,” which suggests that being a Hindu is not only a matter of birth but of attitude. My final take on the situation is this: We are, in fact, Hindus. But when asked, we are likely to be more comfortable referring to ourselves as “Shaivite yogis” or “Vaishnava bhaktars” or “TM meditators,” only admitting to being a Hindu after additional dialogue. But in this sense, we are perhaps not unlike the Indian devotee who is more inclined to refer to his or her specific Hindu lineage or theology when asked about religious identity. Perhaps it's a Hindu characteristic not to want to say things too bluntly.

And so I throw this discussion up to the readership of HINDUISM TODAY—to both Westerners and Indians. My experience has made me want to confess that I am a Hindu. But I am a new kind of Hindu. I believe that Hinduism is a living entity that is only now transcending ethnicity. Yoga is not Buddhism, not Christianity, not New Age. It is Hinduism of some kind.

In my own ashram, I value both independence and tradition. We work with the brahmin priests, but at the same time we have simplified the rites of passage and *pūjas* that we perform into forms more suitable for our cultural context. We live in a time of an unprecedented interchange between cultures. What Swami Vivekananda began in 1893 in Chicago has become an important cultural phenomenon. The East has come to the West, and it is my belief that Western practitioners must find their unique identity and expression in this.

As Western Hindus, we are pioneers writing on a clean slate. We are on the cutting edge of a cultural and spiritual evolutionary process. Some Western gurus and their students no longer have any organizational affiliation with Eastern groups and truly stand on their own.

One of the remarkable features of Hinduism is its lack of a central authority, each guru and lineage being essentially independent. Now that this tradition has translated to the West, we have reached an important moment of self-definition. A new chapter in the evolution of Hinduism has arisen. We should acknowledge this and embrace it.

Swami Shankarananda is a disciple of Swami Muktananda. His teaching and his recent book, *Consciousness is Everything*, focuses on the path of Kashmir Shaivism.

Namaste: Greeting the Divine

West and East: The hand shake versus the *anjali mudra*

BY PARAMACHARYA PALANISWAMI, EDITOR

SHAKE HANDS AND COME OUT FIGHTING.” IT’S THE REFEREE’S final counsel to two pugilists about to beat each other’s brains out with clenched fists. Even outside the ring, a handshake can be a little off-putting. When one returns to the West from an extended sojourn in India or elsewhere in Asia, the hand suddenly thrust forward can seem more ominous than friendly, especially if the hand offered is that of a stranger.

This moment of intimidation has a history. According to some anthropologists, one early manifestation of the handshake in the West arose in medieval Europe. More than a few men approached others on the byways with daggers drawn for self-defense. To fend off the fear of a foe’s foul foil, weapons would be sheathed, and men would offer to each other open, visibly empty hands. It was a kind of surety, a gesture of trust which said, “See, I am unarmed. So you may safely let me approach.” Soon the gesture itself took on broad meaning, and less lethal men on the street adopted the handshake as the proper way to greet others.

In much of the world today, people do not shake hands when they meet. They may hug formally and kiss one another on the cheek, as in Eastern Europe and Arab states. They may bow softly, eyes turned to the ground, as in Japan and China. The Hawaiian greeting, termed *honi*, consists of placing the nostril gently beside that of the person greeted, a sharing of breath, life and prana.

For Hindus, of course, the greeting of choice is *namaste*. With two hands pressed together and held near the heart, the head gently bowed, one says, “Namaste,” or “Namaskara,” “Namaskaram” or “Namaskar” in the varied languages of the subcontinent. It is both a spoken greeting and a gesture, a mantra and a *mudra*. The prayerful hand position is a *mudra* called *anjali*, from the root *anj*, “to adorn,” “honor,” “celebrate,” “anoint.” The hands held in union signify the oneness of an apparently dual cosmos, the bringing together of spirit and matter, or the self meeting the Self. In Sanskrit *namas* means “bow,” “obeisance,” “reverential salutation.” It comes from the root *nam*, which carries meanings of bending, bowing, humbly submitting and becoming silent; *te* means “to you.” Thus

namaste means “I bow to you.”

Namaste has become a veritable icon of Indianness. Indeed, there must be an Indian law that requires every travel brochure, calendar and poster to include an image of someone with palms pressed together, conveying to the world India’s hospitality, spirituality and graceful consciousness. And there can be subtle ways of enhancing the gesture, as in the West one might shake another’s hand too strongly, to impress and overpower them, or too briefly, indicating the withholding of genuine welcome. In the case of *namaste*, a deeper veneration is sometimes expressed by bringing the fingers of the clasped palms to the forehead, where they touch the brow, the site of the mystic third eye. A third form of *namaste* brings the palms completely above the head, a gesture said to focus consciousness in the subtle space just above the *brahma-randhra*, the aperture in the crown chakra. This form is so full of reverence it is reserved for God and the holiest of *satgurus*.

It is always interesting and often revealing to muse about the everyday cultural traits and habits that evolve in each nation and community. For instance, a saw for cutting lumber, if designed in the USA, is made in such a way that the carpenter leans into the saw, cutting away from his body. But in Japan saws are engineered so that the cutting takes place as the carpenter draws the saw toward himself. A small detail, but it yields a big difference. One is a thrust of power, the other provides more control in the cut, requiring surprisingly less effort. Each has its place in the global toolbox. Each speaks—like the handshake and *namaste* greeting—of an underlying perception of man’s relationship with things.

In the West we are more outgoing, forceful, externalized. Phone and web companies tell us, “Reach out and touch somebody.” We are unabashedly acquisitive, defining our progress in life by how much we have—how much wealth, influence, stored-up knowledge, status or whatever. Every culture exhibits such traits to some extent, but in the East, Mother is there to remind us, “Reach in and touch the Self.” Here we are taught to be more introspective, more concerned with the quality of things than their quantity, more attuned with the interior dimension of life, where things are not



S. RAJAM

Vaishnava saint: *Saluting the divine within his devotees*

the thing. So there you have it, the whole of Eastern and Western culture summed up in the handshake, which reaches out horizontally to greet another, and *namaste*, which reaches in vertically to acknowledge that, in truth, there is no other.

As a test of how these two greetings differ, imagine you are magically confronted with the Divine. God walks up to you on the street, like on the Joan of Arcadia TV show. What do you do? Reach out to shake His/Her hand? Probably not. Though suitable between man and man, it’s an unseemly expression between man and God. We never shake hands with God. I mean, what if your palms are sweating? So, you *namaste* instead. The reason it feels natural to *namaste* before God is that it is, in its very essence, a spiritual gesture, not a worldly one. By a handshake we acknowledge our equality with others. We reveal our humanity. We

convey how strong we are, how nervous, how aggressive or passive. There is a bold physicality to it. For these and other reasons, Popes never shake hands. Kings never shake hands. Even mothers don’t shake hands with their own children.

Namaste is cosmically different. Kings do *namaste*. Satgurus *namaste* before God, a holy man or holy place. The *namaste* gesture bespeaks our inner valuing of the sacredness of all. It betokens our intuition that all souls are divine. It reminds us in quite a graphic manner, and with insistent repetition, that we can see God everywhere and in every human being we meet. It is saying, silently, “I see the Deity in us both, and bow before It. I acknowledge the holiness of even this mundane meeting. I cannot separate that which is spiritual in us from that which is human and ordinary.”

And while we are singing the praises of *namaste*, it should be observed how efficient a gesture it is in an age of mass communication. A politician, or performer can greet fifty thousand people with a single *namaste*, and they can return the honor instantly. In such a situation a handshake is unthinkable and a mere waving of one hand is somehow too frivolous. Recently many non-Hindus, especially celebrities, are adopting *namaste* to avoid transmission of contact diseases.

There are other, more mystical meanings behind *namaste*. The nerve currents of the body converge in the feet, the solar plexus and the hands. Psychic energy leaves the body at these junctures. To “ground” that energy and balance the flow of prana streaming through the nerve system, yogis cross their legs in the lotus posture, and bring their hands together. The *anjali mudra* acts like a simple yogic asana, balancing and harmonizing our energies, keeping us centered, inwardly poised and mentally protected. It closes our aura, shielding us psychically. It keeps us from becoming too externalized, thus we remain close to our intuitive nature, our superconsciousness.

We asked a number of Hindus for their insights into *namaste*, what it means and why we do it. Here are a few responses:

“Namaste elevates one’s consciousness, reminding one that all beings, all existence is holy, is God. It communicates, ‘I honor or worship the Divinity within you.’ Also, it draws the individual inward for a moment, inspires reflection on the deeper realities, softening the interface between people. It would be difficult to offend or feel animosity toward anyone that you greet as God.”

“Namaste is a gesture of friendship and kindness, also of thanks or special recognition. Mystically it is called *namaskara mudra* in the Agamic puja, and it centers one’s energy within the spine.”

“I’ve heard it means, ‘I salute God within you.’ The true *namaste* gesture is accompanied by bowing the head and shoulders slightly. This is a gesture that lessens our sense of ego and self-centeredness, requiring some humility to do it well—whereas shaking hands can be quite an arrogant event.”

“Touching the hands together puts you in touch with your center, your soul. Namaste puts you forward as a soul, not an outer personality.”

“The gesture has a subtle effect on the aura and nerve system. Bringing focused attention and a collection of one’s forces, so to speak. It also protects against unnecessary psychic connections which are fostered by shaking hands. This might be called a form of purity also—protecting one’s energies.”

“This form of acknowledgement is so lovely, so graceful. Just look at two people in *namaste* and you will see so much human beauty and refinement.”

Universal greeting: (left to right) Balinese dancing girl greets a tourist, Prince Charles on a visit to India, Bengali boy, Russia’s President Putin in India, Assamese bride



LEFT TO RIGHT: DINODIA; AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, PRAKASH SINGH, DINODIA; AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, RAVEENDRAN; DINODIA

TESTIMONY

Do Teens Like Temples?

A survey of my friends shows that most young Hindus enjoy the temple's serene atmosphere

BY RAMYA GOPAL

"HUKLAM BARADHARAM VISHNUM..." echoes the Saturday morning chanting through the body of the temple where the priest sits next to a statue of Vishnu and Lakshmi. My mom and I read a sign that says, "Please be quiet inside," and open the doors. The red-and-blue-carpeted floor is empty, save a few early-rising devotees. The sunlight cascades downwards from skylights, gently lighting the statues. The *murtis* are set up on the back of the stage in the main prayer room. The largest statues are those of Vishnu and Lakshmi, with smaller *murtis* of Hanuman, Durga, Siva, Saraswati and many others. Each *murti* is decorated with a garland, and all have a beautiful array of fruits and flowers spread before them. I walk up to the stage and ring a bell hanging from the dome three times, the sound resonating, breaking the silence. People beside me bow down in namaskara and then apply kumkum to their foreheads from a steel bowl in front of the fruit offerings. A priest sits on the side, and each devotee comes up for *prasadam*. My mother and I walk down from the stage and sit on the carpet, simply gazing at the *murtis* in a peaceful moment of *darshan* or meditation. This is how I spend every Saturday morning.

Our weekly trips to the temple have been a ritual for as long as I can remember. These visits, coupled with weekly religion classes, have always helped me expand my circle of Hindu friends. The prevailing notion held by many parents is that first generation Hindu teenagers, like me, have no interest in their religion and don't enjoy visiting the temple for prayer, festivals and other activities. To the contrary, it is the temple's atmosphere that attracts most of us. My friend, 14-year-old Nikiti Desai, shared, "The atmosphere feels very holy, kind of sacred. If you do something wrong, God is watching, but it's still very peaceful." It is the peaceful atmosphere of the temple that breaks our busy days in school and allows us to connect with our religion and faith. Once I brought my Jewish friend to the temple, and she admired the openness of the temple, remarking, "Anyone can walk in at any time. It's nice." The temple is one of the few ways young teens can connect with not only our religion, but also with our Indian culture, because it isn't just a place of worship.

The *murtis* are another point of interest for temple teens. Even those who don't particularly like the atmosphere agree that the *murtis* are beautiful. "All temples have basically the same atmosphere to them, but I particularly like the temples in India. Everything is just so beautiful," offered 16-year-old Kriti Samayamantri.

However, not every Hindu teen goes to the temple. A friend who wishes to remain anonymous believes that "The temple feels too

much like church, like a congregation of people praying." It is ironic that the temple, which is intended to promote spiritual equality, makes some people feel uncomfortable, especially when a member of the family stands out because he is disabled. "I think that it should be more private," she said, "I just don't like the temple. There are too many people gossiping." Sixteen-year-old Avinash Danashekar of Islen, New Jersey, confessed the reason he doesn't go to the temple: "My parents are always busy, so we rarely go."

Unfortunately, work commitments don't always allow parents to take their children to the temple, and that not only deprives them of the experience of the temple's serene atmosphere, but also the opportunity to connect with other Hindus. While the temple does attract sincere devotees who meet and enjoy spending time with each other, it can often promote division between people of different nationalities and even regions of India. The few Hindus that are not Indian usually are not as welcome by the priest and are sometimes clearly excluded from the patches of brown. Depending on the festival being celebrated, each language- or state-based group isolates itself from the others. This is not the type of atmosphere that temples should continue to foster, and Hinduism would be put in a better light if every house of God attempted to reach out to all Hindus, not only Indians.

Like churches and synagogues, the Hindu temple has become more than just a place to revere the Gods and pray. The Bharatiya temple in Troy, Michigan, where I live, also houses a library brimming with books on Hinduism, Indian languages and religious DVDs and tapes like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. However, the most-used part of the temple is downstairs: a cultural hall with a stage and a cafeteria. The hall hosts dance classes, *pujas*, religion classes and shows such as Basanth Bahar, a cultural program to welcome spring. Last November, the temple hosted Ras Garba, a Gujarati dance celebration of Navaratri. Temple activities such as these make it even more fun and interesting for teenagers.

Of all the friends I surveyed, none of them was forced to come to the temple or said that he or she hated anything specific about it. Sixteen-year-old Anu Joshi commented, "I want to continue visiting temples even after I go to college, because I like going." Fifteen-year-old Sneha Inguva noted, "It's important to have some religion in your life. I probably would go every weekend or at least twice a month." These voices reflect the general opinion of most of my friends, a fact that may surprise some.

Among teenage Hindu devotees, there are mixed feelings toward the temple. It has brought me closer to my religion and culture, while it has alienated others. In the growing Hindu diaspora, we need to learn to accept our differences and allow our temples to grow to embrace everyone in the community.

RAMYA GOPAL, 16, plays the violin in a community orchestra, studies classical Indian music and dance and is a senior at the International Academy.



COURTESY RAMYA GOPAL

MOVIES

India Comes to the Big Screen

BAPS volunteers faced extraordinary challenges in producing IMAX film to promote India's magnificence

BY KALYANI GIRI, HOUSTON, TEXAS
FROM THE SNOWY SPLENDOR OF Mount Kailash to the wild jungles of Sunderbans, from the towering minars of mosques to the hand-sculpted 12th-century Rameshwaram temple, the majestic grandeur of India is the backdrop against which the documentary presentation *Mystic India* is set. Making its USA debut in Houston at the Museum of Natural Science Wortham IMAX theater in April, *Mystic India* details movingly the extraordinary true story of a boy yogi's solitary journey in search of spiritual enlightenment.

Produced by the international socio-spiritual organization Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), the documentary won the Audience's Choice Prize in January at the Tenth International Large Format Film Festival held in La Geode, France. The project, a brainchild of BAPS spiritual leader and humanitarian, His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, was created to portray the diversity of India in an educational, informative and entertaining film which would appeal to audiences globally. The first large format film ever made on India, *Mystic India* has already played to critical acclaim in Paris, Singapore and London, where the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall attended the Royal World Charity Premiere. The narrative of the English language version of the film is by legendary thespian Sir Peter O'Toole.

Set in 18th-century India, the film traces the path of 11-year-old Neelkanth (played by 10-year-old Latesh Patel), who, leaving

his home town of Ayodhya in Northern India, traverses barefoot and alone 8,000 miles over India's often treacherous terrain without food or money in hand. Neelkanth's journey from 1792 to 1799 is one of steely resolve and survival against all odds. When he reaches Muktinath, where an ancient temple of Lord Vishnu stands surrounded by 108 waterspouts (pictured below), Neelkanth performs severe yogic austerities, undeterred by adverse weather conditions. He



Blessings: Neelkanth receives the grace of Muktinath in Nepal

grows up to become a great Hindu spiritual leader, Bhagwan Swaminarayan, founder of the movement that today bears his name.

Mystic India was produced in IMAX large-format film (15-perforation 70mm, ten times larger than a standard 35mm movie frame), which achieves images of incredible sharpness that can be projected on screens up to eight stories high. This special format also made it a challenging and expensive project, as it was filmed at over 100 locations with a cast of 45,000 volunteer extras. It took 570 production volunteers, who put in

over a million man-hours, propelled by their desire to see this exemplary production to fruition. Armed with historical manuscripts, scriptwriter Kamlesh Pandey crafted the original Hindi script. After interviewing nearly a hundred large-format professionals, BAPS entrusted the task of directing the film to veteran director Keith Melton. He, along with director of photography Reed Smoot and writer Mose Richards, captured India's marvels on film—colorful festivals, exquisitely sculpted temples, churches and mosques reflecting the diversity of religion and culture; the depth of spirituality symbolized by the unique rites and rituals; the extreme contrast of Kerala's lush paddy fields and Rajasthan's hostile deserts.

BAPS President Southwest Chapter Vikram Patel feels the documentary vindicates India of the negative view portrayed by Western media: "They're always showing India as mired in misery and poverty. The film gives a wider view of her cultural legacy, arts, spirituality." BAPS Public Relations Coordinator Keith Patel was elated with the turnout. "Every weekend we have sold-out bookings. At most showings, mainstream viewers comprise around 35 percent of the audience." Latha Thomas, Director of Marketing at the Natural Science Museum, described *Mystic India* as a "crowd pleaser."

I asked Jayesh Shelat, spokesperson for BAPS, what the greatest challenges were in making this film. He responded, "Over 11,000 screen tests were performed to find the right child to play Neelkanth. Scouting teams travelled 22,000 miles in search of ideal locations. Crews and cast filmed in the freezing Himalayas and scorching deserts. The toughest challenge was filming the cast of 8,000 in the Rath Yatra scene."

To watch the trailer and find out if *Mystic India* is playing near you, visit www.mysticindia.com. Proceeds will benefit the many charitable and humanitarian endeavors that BAPS Care International undertakes.



PHOTOS: WWW.MYSTICINDIA.COM



Giant wonders: The magnificence of India, from the north to the south and everywhere in between, is captured on film like never before



Hindu of the Year

Sri Swami Tejomayananda, worthy successor to Swami Chinmayananda

BY ARCHANA DONGRE, LOS ANGELES

S EVEN HUNDRED DEVOTEES JUMPED to their feet and applauded enthusiastically as Swami Tejomayananda was honored as “Hindu of the Year” by HINDUISM TODAY magazine. I presented the award to Sri Swamiji as part of the opening of the new Chinmaya Mission Mithila Center in Tustin, California, on June 11, 2005. He had just flown in from France for the inauguration of the center. Swamiji was pleased to receive the award, while the audience responded with waves of joy and admiration and a prolonged standing ovation.

Starting in 1990, HINDUISM TODAY has honored one eminent Hindu each year who has most impacted the faith and spread its values, compassion and profundity across the globe. Past renaissance winners are: Swami Paramananda Bharati ('90), Swami Chidananda Saraswati, “Muniji” of Parmath Niketan ('91), Swami Chinmayananda ('92), Mata Amritanandamayi Ma ('93), Swami Satchidananda ('94), Pramukhswami Maharaj ('95), Sri Satya Sai Baba ('96), Sri Chinmoy ('97), Swami Bua ('98), Swami Chidananda Saraswati of Divine Life Society ('99), Ma Yoga Shakti ('00), priest Sri T. S. Sambamurthy Sivachariar ('01) and Dada Vaswani ('02), Sri Tiruchi Mahaswamikal ('03) and priest Pichai Sivacharya ('04).

The plaque's inscription reads, “Presented by HINDUISM TODAY to Hindu of the Year, 2005, Sri Sri Swami Tejomayananda, spiritual leader of Chinmaya Mission Worldwide, for fulfilling the vision of his guru, Swami Chinmayananda, guiding the Chinmaya Mission's exemplary teaching programs, inspiring the dynamic expansion of the monastic order (including new swamis from the diaspora) and teaching hundreds of thousands to be better Hindus.”

The Mithila Center is itself a product of the Mission's success. It is the second center to open in Orange County. The first one, Kasi, abode of a white marble murthi of God Siva, opened just nine years ago in nearby Anaheim, is less than 20 miles away. The new Mithila has a temple with Lord Rama, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman. The facility will conduct Vedanta and meditation classes as well as educational activities that keep the Chinmaya Mission centers everywhere buzzing with enthusiastic young-



Duly honored: (above) Sri Tejomayananda is garlanded by Swami Ishwarananda while holding the Hindu of the Year plaque; (below) Swamiji with Mithila Center families

sters and adults throughout the year. About 640 youngsters, in the age group of 5 to 18, regularly attend the Sunday Balvihars in the 10 Chinmaya centers in Southern California. While the kids attend the classes, their parents listen to talks on scriptures given by the swamis. Visit their website at www.chinmayamission.org for an overview.

“I am not in Swami Chinmayananda's shoes, I am at his feet,” Tejomayananda had been reported to have said many times. Swami

rananda, head of Mithila Center. In the past 15 years he has written Sanskrit works like *Dhyanaswaroopam*, *Manahshodhanam*, *Jnanasaram* and *Bhakti Sudha*. Inspired by the *Ramacharitamanas* of Sant Tulsidas, he has written *Manas Bhaktisutras*. He has written books based on his talks, such as *Peace in the Restless World*, *Right Thinking*, *Parenting*, *The Game of Life*, *The Hindu Culture*, *The Vision of Geeta* and *Meditation*. One of his key contributions is *Hindu Culture: an Introduction* which is a text in some American high schools.

Swami Tejomayananda's administrative style is such that swamis and devotees alike feel at home with him. “He does not preach, but teaches by example. He gives a lot of freedom to the swamis in their work and is very forgiving,” Swami Ishwarananda said.

Asked his guidelines in running the Mission, Swami Tejomayananda said, “Without losing sight of the vision given by our Revered Gurudev, Swami Chinmayanandaji Maharaj, we remain steadfast in doing our work in a team spirit invoking God's grace and Sri Gurudev's blessings. Our teaching programs in the West have become successful and popular because that is the need of the hour fulfilled by our mission's *sevaks* and *sevikas* (volunteer teachers and workers) in an interesting and appealing manner with utmost devotion. All credit goes to them. More-

over, we have made it a family program where children and parents learn simultaneously, attending their respective classes.”

Swami Tejomayananda, now age 55, is currently spearheading the Chinmaya Vibhooti Spiritual Complex on 55 acres of land in Kolwan, among the Sahyadri mountains near Pune, a project that will be built in three phases at the cost of about US\$1.6 million. The project itself will be a grateful tribute to Swami Chinmayananda by all his disciples and devotees.

What is the secret of the expansion of Chinmaya Mission Centers? They now have 243 centers in more than 70 countries of the world, with 30 in the US. “It is simple,” Swami Ishwarananda explained, “Our area of work is very specific. We want to get the whole family involved. When we do it sincerely, the whole society gets involved in our Jnana Yajnas (spiritual lectures), Bal Vihars (children's classes) and Yuva Kendras (youth programs).” Ishwarananda added, “Our main focus is on Vedantic knowledge. Although we teach the epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and some *Puranas*, our

concentration is on Vedanta as elaborated in the *Upanishads*.”

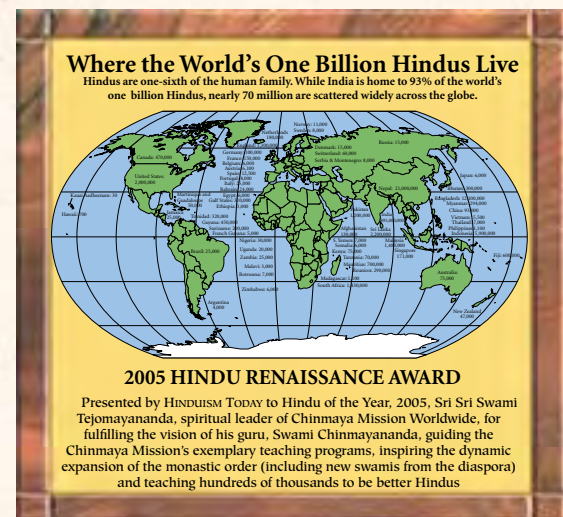
The whole family treats the center as their spiritual home, and gathers there not only for the Sunday classes and evening seminars, but for religious observances and festivals, including Sivaratri, Ram Navami, Krishna Janmashtami, Navaratri and Diwali.

The efforts are supported by the superb training and unwavering dedication of their brahmacharis (celibate lay monks and nuns in training) and ordained swamis. For example, as Swami Ishwarananda, 40, takes the helm at new Mithila, Brahmachari Girish Chaitanya, in his late 30s, has become the spiritual head of Kasi. During his few months here, he has already earned respect and admiration for his brilliance, knowledge and winning ways with the youth. The India-born, California-raised, Girishji worked as a successful electrical engineer for 10 years, and then, following his inner voice and spiritual inclinations inculcated since childhood by his pious mother, joined the Vedanta *gurukul* or school conducted at Sandeepani Sadhanalaya in Mumbai in 2002, and graduated from it in 2004, before his appointment at Kasi as the *brahmachari acharya* (teacher).

Swami Ishwarananda conducted the 2002-2004 class. He said, “The two-and-a-half-year long Vedanta courses are offered at our Mumbai and Siddhabari (in Himachal Pradesh) centers. We advertise the course in major publications, then select 60 to 80 students, who must be under 30 years of age and bachelors, from the hundreds of applicants.

During their study, they are provided free accommodation, food, white clothing, instruction and all educational material. Neither the male nor female students are allowed to leave the premises for the duration of the entire course. They go through a rigorous discipline of starting their day at 5.30 a.m. with Vedic chanting and meditation. Their day comprises Vedanta classes, Sanskrit language classes and activities like yoga, gardening and prayers. The students also get practical experience conducting classes for youth. About 65 started the intensive course, out of which 43 graduated and became *acharya* teachers. Upon becoming an *acharya*, a *brahmachari* is appointed to a center to assist a swami. A *brahmachari* becomes a swami in about seven to ten years, Ishwarananda explained.

“Vision Plus Action Equals True Transformation. Our beloved Swami Chinmayananda used to say that ideas will become reality when you supply hands and legs,” Swami Tejomayananda had said in his June 11, 2005 address at Mithila. Truly, his vision illuminates the path for families and individuals alike who seek enlightenment the Vedic way to enrich their lives. 



“I am not in Swami Chinmayananda's shoes, I am at his feet”

—SRI SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA

Chinmayananda (1916-1993) founded the Mission in 1951. He stated its purpose as, “The inner transformation of individuals through knowledge of Vedanta, spiritual practices and service to society resulting in a happy world around them.”

Born Sudhakar Kaitwade in Khandesh in a Maharashtrian family, Swami Tejomayananda was a physics student when he met Swami Chinmayananda at the age of 20. Influenced by his work, the young man went to Mumbai to study Vedanta in 1981. He was initiated into *sannyasa* in 1983 and became spiritual head of the Mission ten years later upon the Mahasamadhi of Swami Chinmayananda.

A tireless worker, he constantly travels the globe conducting lectures and guiding the administration of the centers. He is assisted by the Mission's monastic community of 240 people, including 49 ordained swamis and 26 ordained swaminis.

“Swami Tejomayananda is a man of many talents. He sings well, writes poetry in Sanskrit, composes music and plays harmonium. He is even a great cook,” said Swami Ishwa-

CULTURE

Interactive Festival Finder

ONE OF THE MOST frequently asked Hindu questions is "When is the next festival, what does it mean and what do we do?" The great new site by www.sivananadaonline.org offers a marvelous answer: a calendar with rollover pop ups that show you what festival or observance there is for each day of the month for a whole year...all on one page! What is super cool is that you can click on the little festival label that pops up and it takes you to Swami Sivananada's explanation of that festival or observance.

Swami did a great service to Hinduism by documenting the meanings of almost every important Hindu festival. Here it is at the click of a date. You must dig to find this jewel. Click "Resources" and scroll down the sidebar links.



When and how to observe any festival

GOD AND GODS

Ganesha Lore Galore

A FABULOUS, DEEP, AMAZING WEB SITE ON LORD Ganesha and Hinduism in general from a French Hindu. What we love about ganapati.club.fr, (be sure not to put

"www" in front or you will get an error) is the attention to content and focus on one thing: Lord Ganesha—forms, names, myths, worship, virtual temple



visits, handicrafts, modern art, folk images, Ganesha temples worldwide—with over 1600 photos and a "sister" travel site with vast resources on places in India. Regarding the site's unpolished, no frills design, the webmaster says he's too busy working on content. "Handsome packing for uninteresting content is not sufficient to make a nice gift." He got it right. And you can help. Offer to assist with English translation.

ECOLOGY/HEALTH

The Alarming Truth about Genetically Engineered Food



SUSAN MARIE DOPP, LILY FILMS

A DVD not to be missed by families and small farmers

IN THE VEIN OF THE WELL KNOWN EXPOSE "Super Size Me" (see page 59 of this issue), but with a more sobering hard science approach, Deborah Koons Garcia brings us the disturbing truth behind the unlabeled, patented, genetically engineered foods that have quietly filled US grocery store shelves for the past decade. While US and Canadian consumers are unknowingly engaged in what concerned scientists call the largest and most dangerous experiment ever undertaken by mankind, other countries are fighting to stop the invasion of genetically modified crops. This DVD tells you why.

Among other amazing tales, learn how renowned scientist, Dr. Arpad Pushtai, was suspended two days after discussing his research, which raised questions about the depressed immune systems and growth of rats who had been fed genetically modified potatoes. Cornell University researcher, John Losy, found that when

caterpillars of the Monarch butterfly were fed corn pollen from BT corn in the lab, forty percent of them died. Beware, Garcia warns, despite consumer concerns, genetically modified food producers have won the battle on labelling. You will never know whether or not the food you eat is genetically modified because US law does not require that you be informed.

The DVD examines the complex web of market and political forces that are changing what we eat as huge multinational corporations seek to control the world's food system. For those concerned with their family's health and the future of the Earth's food supply, the film also explores alternatives to industrial agriculture, identifying organic and sustainable agriculture as real solutions to today's farm crisis. "If you eat food, you need to see *The Future of Food*..."—Newstarget.com Watch the trailer and find out more at: www.TheFutureOfFood.com

Hindu Heritage Endowment

YOGASWAMI HINDU GIRLS' HOME AT SITTANDY FUND

The events following the devastating Asian tsunami of December 26, 2004, have helped reveal the plight of many children in that part of the world. Nilufer Clubwala, a New York pediatrician, became aware of a little-known orphanage for girls on the East coast of Sri Lanka (visit anathi.org/sittandi.girls.home.htm) soon after Hindu Press International covered the story of the destruction of the Tirunavukkarasu Gurukulam, an orphanage for boys in that same area. Nilufer explains how she was moved to open the Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home at Sittandy Fund, HHE endowment #62.



Nilufer Clubwala
lives in New York

"One normally lives in a state of complacency in the hope that life goes smoothly with no waves, just sunshine and a maybe a frappuccino. But then life is rarely scripted. When the tsunami struck, thousands of lives ended, and for those who survived, their lives would never be the same again.

"Being one who strives to carry Gurudeva's message of service, love and joy always in the heart, I was happy to be able to help out by gathering donations for the boys of the Tirunavukkarasu Gurukulam orphanage. It was during this work that I became aware of several other orphanages on the East Coast of Sri Lanka. One of them was the Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home in Sittandy. Like most of these homes, it was overcrowded, badly in need of repairs, with a dilapidated drainage system and toilets, inadequate water supply and scant school supplies. They have no telephone or computer. Most

of all, they need to hire teachers to help the girls with their school work. This is what inspired me to start an endowment for this home. It would indeed be a living testament to Gurudeva's message. The girls of today will be the mothers of tomorrow. How wonderful if the girls of this home could be brought up to live by the priceless teachings of Yogaswami and Gurudeva. Just envision dozens of homes one day filled with joy, harmony and mutual respect because the mothers in those homes were taught early on in life that that is what matters the most.

"However, before one can impart these wonderful teachings and expect them to take root, we have to restore a sense of normalcy to these children and address their everyday needs. For this we need your help as generous sponsors. It is only by putting into practice the teachings of our teachers that we have truly fulfilled our dharma as children, parents, spouses, and most importantly, as *bhaktars* of the guru."

The average expenditure for one of the 37 girls and one boy at the home is US\$1 per day, and a donation to the endowment of \$9,125 would generate \$365 every year and fully support one child in perpetuity. Donations can be made on the web by going to www.hheonline.org. Donations are safe and secure, whether you live in the USA or other countries. Make a one-time donation or sign up for a recurring donation. For more information, call Sannyasin Shanmuganathaswami at 1-808-822-3012, ext. 244 or e-mail hhe@hindu.org.



Chellathuraiswami, 93, is a direct disciple of Jaffna's great sage, Yogaswami. He sits with the staff and girls at the Sittandy home.

APRIL TO JUNE ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment Anonymous 597,85.00 David Joseph Ebacher 13.67 Shanta Devi Periasamy 56.34 Ajay & Lata Shah 5,000.00 Niraj Thaker 21.00 Other Donations 29,994.45 Himalayan Academy 2,250.00 Total 38,120.46	Total 41.37 Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund Anita Mansha Bathija 18.00 Gowri Nadason 90.06 Vayudeva Varadan 54.00 Total 162.06	Shanta Devi Periasamy 345.00 Chamundi Sabanathan 101.00 Niraj Thaker 21.00 Vayudeva Varadan 75.00 Raja Vishnu 68.00 Total 1,173.16	Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund McDonald's French Fry 254,773.19 Settlement Fund 153.00 Hiranya & Saraswathi Gowda 12.50 Natraj Narayanswami 40.00 Pravin Trivedi 254,978.69 Total
Iraivan Temple Endowment Anonymous 554.00 Nathan Mudrick 108.00 S.V. Ravi Rahavendran 151.00 Thevarani Singam 261.44 Niraj Thaker 21.00 Other Donations 9,828.00 Total 10,923.44	Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam Chellappa Deva 25.00 Total 25.00	Udayan Care Endowment Fund Richard Stocker 21.00 Total 21.00	Himalayan Academy Book Distribution Fund Ushasree Chamarthy 8.34 David Joseph Ebacher 13.67 Total 22.01
Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund Hemakeshaa Naatha Batumallah 3.00 Rathi Devi Batumallah 35.00 Suguneswary Gunasegaran 54.65 Dinesh Kumar Jayaram 78.95 Thaneskumar Kumaraavel 78.95 Dasan Mahadevan 720.00 Logadasan Murugesu 75.00 Devaladevi Sivaceyon 7.80 Nutanaya Sivaceyon 7.80 Patudeva Sivaceyon 7.80 Hemavalli Sivalingam 2.37 Kantha Ruben Sivalingam 2.37 Rohini Sivalingam 2.37 Potriyan Sivanathan 47.18 Total 1,123.24	Sri Subramuniya Ashram Scholarship Fund Anonymous 12.48 Total 12.48	Saivite Hindu Scriptural Fund for the Visually Impaired Alex Ruberto 45.00 Total 45.00	Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund Rajendra Giri 108.00 Total 108.00
Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment Craig Bagdasar 50.00 Manoharan Navaratnarajah 75.00 Total 125.00	Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund Craig Bagdasar 50.00 Total 50.00	Manitha Neyam Trust Fund Bala Sivaceyon 31.20 Total 31.20	Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment Jill Atlas-Steir 25.00 Kaika & Nilufer Clubwala 502.00 Lila Shakti Devi 25.00 Tracy Hollis 70.00 Reuben Lelah 1,540.00 Shankar & Sri Mallampalli 2,000.00 Jutikadevi Sivaraja 108.00 Silas H. Zirkle 300.00 Total 4,570.00
Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund Anonymous 88.00 Rathi Devi Batumallah 94.00 Veerasamy Batumallah 99.00 Barbara Curi 240.00 Sundar Mani Dixit 80.00 Rajul & Heidi Gandhi 74.66 Poonam Gupta 1,001.00 Isanah Kamen 23.70 T. Iswarah Kumar 71.00 Logadasan Murugesu 30.00 Gassa Patten 150.00 Charles & Jan Roberts 90.75 Linda Seeley 50.00 Jiva Shanmuga 102.00 Vinaya Sharma 240.00 Chandra Shekharan 30.00 Nigel Subramaniam Siva 240.00 Chandra Sivalingam 800.00 Dasa Sivam 76.00 Lavanadevi Sivam 51.00 Meghasyamara Theertham 107.50 Karen Yang 800.00 Total 4,538.61	Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund Anonymous 336.50 Lila Shakti Devi 49.00 Brahmanand & Panna Nagarsenker 501.00 Natraj Narayanswami 40.00 Alex Ruberto 45.00 Rodney & Ilene Standen 30.00 Niraj Thaker 21.00 Matthew Wiczork 36.00 Total 1,058.50	Mahajana College Fund Anonymous 8.34 Total 8.34	Sri Arjunan & Srimathi Dhalama Monastic Fund Arjunan Subramaniam 26,281.21 Total 26,281.21
Hindu Businessmen's Association Trust Easvan Param 1,070.28 Janaka Param 58.00 Total 1,128.28	Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund Anil Ananda Badhwar 148.30 Manoharan Navaratnarajah 75.00 Total 223.30	Taos Hanuman Fund Anonymous 12.48 Total 12.48	Ayurvedic Formation Fund Nigel Subramaniam Siva 200.00 Total 200.00
Boys School for Iraivan Priesthood Anonymous 12.51 Bala Sivaceyon 28.86	Tirumural Sannidhi Preservation Fund Shyamadeva Dandapani 3,023.29 Total 3,023.29	Kapaleeshwara Temple Orphanage Sharmila Kesavalu 65.00 Ganesan & Rajalakshmi Ramalingam 50.00 Rajalakshmi Ramalingam 25.00 Jayanthi Vasudevan Naiker 300.00 Total 440.00	Pooled Income Fund Trust (PIF) Gowri Nadason 30.00 Satya Palani 50.00 Total 80.00
	Alavedy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund Craig Bagdasar 50.00 Total 50.00	Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund Anonymous 4.17 Mirta Noemi Cotto 90.00 M. Krishnan 130.00 Lawrence Lee 100.00 Shanta Devi Periasamy 130.00 Raman Pumaniam 260.00 Total 714.17	Total Contributions \$350,811.97
	Hindu Heritage Endowment Administrative Fund Ushasree Chamarthy 8.33 Total 8.33	Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund Ganesan & Rajalakshmi Ramalingam 50.00 Rajalakshmi Ramalingam 25.00 Total 75.00	Funds at Market Value, June 30, 2005 Total Endowment Funds \$6,296,897.76 Total Pooled Income Funds \$200,406.53
	Kauai Aadheenam Religious Art and Artifacts Fund Anonymous 12.50 Rajadeva Alahan 153.00 Total 165.50	Karnataka Temple Development Fund Anonymous 12.51 Pradeep & Ranjna Agnihotri 18.00 Ushasree Chamarthy 8.33 Ramesh & Arundathi Gowda 36.00 Shipra Putatunda 18.00 Total 92.84	Grand Total \$6,497,304.29
	Thank You Bodhinatha Fund Anonymous 25.50 Amarnath Devarmanai 324.00 David Joseph Ebacher 12.66 Krishnakumar Manohar 51.00 Manoharan Navaratnarajah 150.00	Swami Vipulananta Children's Home Endowment Craig Bagdasar 50.00 Lila Shakti Devi 25.00 Gangadhar Shaktiprema 15.00 Total 90.00	
		Hindu Literature Fund Michael F. Duncan 1,000.00 Pravin Trivedi 40.00 Total 1,040.00	

MISSION STATEMENT: Hindu Heritage Endowment is a publicly supported, charitable organization recognized as tax exempt by the IRS on April 22, 1994. Employer ID 99-0308924. Founded by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, its philanthropic mission is to provide secure, professionally managed financial support for institutions and religious leaders of all lineages of Sanatana Dharma.

PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS: Halbert, Hargrove/Russell, Investment Counsel; Alvin G. Buchignani, Esq., Legal Counsel; and Hirose, Kato and Co., CPA. HHE is a member of the Council on Foundations, an association of more than 2,000 foundations which interprets relevant law and management and investment principles.

I WANT TO PARTICIPATE. WHERE SHOULD I SEND MY DONATION? You can send your gift to an existing fund, create a new endowment or request information through the address below. Donations may be made online at www.hheonline.org, or use the HHE tear-out card in this magazine to join our family of benefactors who are Strengthening Hinduism Worldwide. Thank you.

HINDU HERITAGE ENDOWMENT

KAUAI'S HINDU MONASTERY

107 Kaholalele Road

Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA

Tel: 808-822-3012 Ext 244 • Fax: 808-822-3152

hhe@hindu.org • www.hheonline.org



MURTI SCULPTURES

Wholesale inquiries invited.

VEDIC RESOURCE

COLLECTIBLE CLOCKS



Ganesha Jr. resin. 2 inches tall. **\$3 K20**

Ganesha Jr. resin on wood base with velvet pads. 6.5 inches. **\$12 K21**



Ganesha on Throne
10.5 inches.
\$27 L07



NEW
Shiva and Nandi
8.5 inches **\$15**
A27



Luxmi Clock CLK2
Shiva Clock CLK4
Clocks are made of melamine with an indelible image baked on. Quartz movement, 12 inch diameter, **\$12**



Om Clock CLK2



CHAKRA PENDANTS
with brilliant cubic zirconium to invoke the protection



of the divine Sadarshan chakra. **Pure silver**. 1.25 inch, **\$12 CPS**
18K gold. 1.15 inch, **\$90 CPG**

Sweet Luxmi
11.5 inches.
\$23 L00

Saraswati
11 inches.
\$23 K26



JIGSAW PUZZLES

Pine wood, 11 by 14 inches, 1/4 inch thick. Each puzzle has 25 big pieces (2 by 3 inches, 1/8 inch thick) and comes in durable clear ziploc bag for storage.

\$5 each Krishna and Cow. **P175**

Ram Darbar (below) **P174**

Inquire for Wholesale



Shiva Lingam
4.5 inches.
\$6 J05

GANGES WATER / GANGAJAL



The Vedas declare the Ganges to be supremely pure and auspicious. By touching, drinking or bathing in her water all karmic reactions can be nullified.

1/2 OFF SALE **Gangotri**

Ganga Water in 200 ml. foil pouch, from 8,500 feet elevation in the Himalayas. Was \$1 each, now **2 for \$1**; 120 pouches for **\$51. GGJ**

Ganga Water plus 100% Tirthas, 350 ml., deluxe gift bottle, **\$3 each** **9 for \$18. MGJAL**



To Order Call
1 800 829 2579
www.krishnaculture.com
Request our catalogs!

Hawaii

Your Family's Perfect Pilgrimage Destination

Come to the ultimate Hindu pilgrimage destination. Here you will find Kadavul Hindu Temple, with its daily 9am Siva puja to the mystical Nataraja deity, established in 1973 by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami. Also you can visit the currently being constructed, hand-carved granite Iraivan Temple, the many sacred areas of San Marga, such as Muruga Hill, the twelve-foot Dakshinamurti, the Narmada Sivalingam where you can conduct your own abhishekam, the sacred Wailua River and more — all available to Hindus for worship, meditation, japa and quiet reflection. Plan your pilgrimage to Iraivan Temple now—an icon of Hinduism's beauty and strength!

Kauai's Hindu Monastery

107 Kaholalele Road

Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304 • USA

iraivan@hindu.org • www.sanmarga.org

Tel: 808-822-3012, Ext. 239 • Fax: 808-822-4351

For Hawaii travel planner, see:

www.bestplaceshawaii.com/ • www.gohawaii.com



American Institute of Vedic Studies

Expand your horizons in Vedic and Hindu Dharma. Practical teachings of Vamadeva Shastri (Dr. David Frawley). Authentic Vedic knowledge in a clear modern idiom. Books, courses, conferences and research information from the ancient *Rig Veda* to *India in the Planetary Age*.

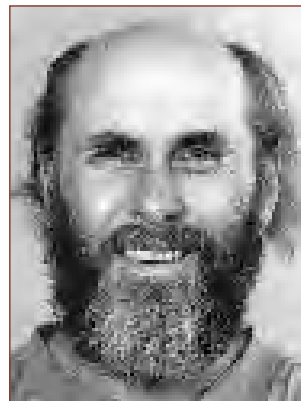
Dr. Frawley's latest books:

- *Yoga and the Sacred Fire: Self-realization and Planetary Transformation*
- *The Rig Veda and the History of India*
- *How I Became a Hindu: My Discovery of Vedic Dharma*

Courses from the Institute:

- New Advanced Yoga and Ayurveda Distance Learning Program
- Ayurvedic Healing Course for Health Care Professionals
- Astrology of the Seers, Vedic Astrology Course.

American Institute of Vedic Studies
PO Box 8357, Santa Fe, NM 87504-8357 USA
tel: 505-983-9385 • fax: 505-982-5807
info@vedanet.com • www.vedanet.com
(Note our Vedanet resource guide and on-line books and information.)



Butala Emporium

www.indousplaza.com

ARTS & HANDICRAFTS
BEAUTY CARE PRODUCTS
BOOKS
AURVEDIC ESSENTIALS
INCENSE & ESSENTIAL OILS
MUSIC
MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS
MAGAZINES & NEWSPAPERS
RELIGIOUS & PUJA
SPORTING GOODS
UTENSILS

Contact us for wholesale inquiries

37-46 74th St.
Jackson Heights, NY 11372
tel: 718-899-6590
www.indousplaza.com

Live Music Nathaswara, Thavil



For Weddings
Temple Celebrations
Cultural Programs
and All Your Special Functions
Anywhere in the World

Music of USA, Inc.

Contact: Mr. A. Murugathas
USA: 1-281-997-1430 • Canada: 1-416-286-3121
Cellular: 1-416-420-1309
www.nathaswarathavil.com • psa@nathaswarathavil.com

Deities Gilded in 24 K. Gold

Ganapati sitting (or dancing), Ram Darbar, Lakshmi, Shiva-Parvati, Durga, Shirdi Sai Baba, Hanuman, Santoshi Ma, Tirupati Balaji, Vishnu, Shiva Nataraj, Krishna with Cow. 3"-5" (7-12 cm) high. US\$19.95 to \$39.95. \$3.50 shipping. Catalog. Discounts for retailers and temples. Nirvana Collection
94 Route 416, Campbell Hall, NY 10916 USA • Tel: 800-374-2304 or 845-294-1498 • Fax 845-294-3870



A Glimpse of Divinity

By Mukund M. Hanumante, PhD

"Contains a clear exposition of japa-yoga, chanting a mantra or group of spiritually charged words to quiet and concentrate the mind on its Godward path."

—Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

"A channel for blessings from Sri Swami... For seekers of knowledge and wisdom... A vision of life that transforms... We felt the horizon of Joy ever widening in our hearts..." [reader responses]
Hard cover • 180 p. • color • US\$25 (incl. s&h in USA)

AKKALKOT SWAMI SAMARTH FOUNDATION
http://home.att.net/~swamisamarth • mukund@juno.com • 504-482-3110

India's #1 channel is now available in the U.S. STAR PLUS and a whole lot more!



It's **easy** to get started!

Steps

1

Choose your DIRECTV System.

See your information card for details on all DIRECTV systems. Or call 1-800-444-4444.

2

Add English-language Base Package.

Package	Price	Channels
Basic	\$5.99/mo.	10 channels
Entertainment	\$11.99/mo.	20 channels
Family	\$17.99/mo.	30 channels
Ultimate	\$23.99/mo.	40 channels

3

Select your WorldDirect package.

Package	Price	Channels
WorldDirect	\$19.99/mo.	10 channels
WorldDirect	\$24.99/mo.	20 channels
WorldDirect	\$29.99/mo.	30 channels
WorldDirect	\$34.99/mo.	40 channels

AMERICASAT
INDO-AMERICAN BROADCASTING SYSTEM
INDIAN TELEVISION

407-251-1001
1-888-542-1960

DIRECTV
worldDIRECT

Chakrapani Ullal, Vedic Astrology

World-renowned teacher and advisor, Chakrapani Ullal, consults internationally with people from all walks of life. As the founding honorary chairman of the ACVA (American Council of Vedic Astrology), he has played an active role in bringing together the Eastern Indian Vedic astrologers and Western astrologers. Considered a teacher of teachers, he travels widely as an author, lecturer and consultant.



Born into a traditional Hindu lineage of astrologers in South India, Chakrapani began his training at an early age and enjoyed associations with many of India's most revered and celebrated saints and sages. With over 45 years of experience, his depth of knowledge and unique understanding of how astrological principles apply to different cultures are sought out by people from all over the world. For more information and a schedule of his upcoming itinerary, please contact:

Chakrapani Ullal • 12044 Kearsarge Street
Los Angeles, CA 90049-4113 USA
Tel: 310-476-9942 • Fax: 310-471-3205
info@vedicastrology.com • www.chakrapani.com

ANTIQUES FROM INDIA AND TIBET



12-ft. black granite
Dhakshinamurthy

- Statues of Hindu & Buddhist Gods & Goddesses
- Rare furniture pieces
- Folk art textiles
- Prayer & Tibetan rugs
- Silver ethnic jewelry
- Buddhist Thangkas, Pichwais & batik paintings
- Maha meru & other yantras
- Books, Healing Mantra CDs & henna body art
- Musical instruments: sitars and tablas
- Shivalingams for temple and home—all sizes

- Orders taken for monasteries & temples for marble & bronze statues
- We offer group tours to visit temples in INDIA. Various packages. Contact us for more info. See www.indiavoyages.com
- Purchase your Hinduism Today magazine copy at our store.

Zaposh India
2339 University Blvd
Houston, TX 77005
tel: 713.665.2948
fax: 713.661.5136
www.hinduismtoday.com
safest@zaposhindia.com

Custom Tours to India

Kali Travel is uniquely qualified to organize custom-made tours to satisfy the needs of any type of group, organization or individual and to structure an itinerary appropriate to their specific needs and interests.

For more information, contact:

Kali Travel, 169-12 Hillside Ave
Jamaica, NY 11432-4498 USA
1-718-291-9292
www.kalitravel.com



Life Insurance and Estate Planning

Rely on a professional for Retirement and Estate Planning.

For information, contact one of the most highly trained financial advisors:

Niraj P. Baxi, msi, clu, chfc
Tel: 800-686-8436
www.insuranceplanning.com



SACRED GIFTS FROM KAUAI'S HINDU MONASTERY

HOME OF HINDUISM TODAY MAGAZINE



1" Crystal Ganesha, hand carved in clear or rose quartz, jade, tiger's eye, malachite, topaz or amethyst, \$20 or \$25.



Iraivan DVD. Documentary on Indian temple architecture and the science of sacred space. Filmed in India and at Kauai's Hindu monastery. 65 minutes, \$29.95.



Hindu greeting cards for all occasions, handmade by devotees. Proceeds go to Iraivan Temple being constructed by the monks. All four, \$12.95.



Rudraksha from the monastery's own forest. Five beads in a box, \$15.00, or various malas strung by devotees.



Holy ash. This is the high quality, near-white holy ash the monks use. From Palani, South India. Five 25-gram packets, \$7.00.



Natural sandalwood incense from India, used exclusively in the monastery's temple. Three 50-gram packs, \$10.50.

Browse and order:

www.minimela.com • 800-850-1008

Himalayan Academy • Kauai's Hindu Monastery • 107 Kaholalele Road • Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304 USA

Ask for our
MINI MELA CATALOG

EXPLORE INDIA NEPAL • TIBET • BHUTAN

Adventure • Cultural • Pilgrimage • Wildlife
with **Worldwide Travel Inc.** established 1975
Consolidators and Tour Operators

EXPERIENCE INCREDIBLE INDIA WITH US

South India, 6 days	\$625
Classical India, 6 days	\$650
Palace on Wheels, 8 days	\$2,695
Laddakh Adventure, 6 days	\$375
The Golden Triangle, 5 days	\$450

Please call Mr. Rakesh Kumar:

202-659-6430 / 800-343-0038 ext. 107
www.worldwidetours.in • info@wwt-usa.com

For our lowest air fares,
call: 888-800-1202, or visit
www.lowestfaresworldwide.com

U.S. Immigration for Hi-Tech Clients

Initial telephone or e-mail consultation is complimentary!

Areas handled: • US Immigration matters, with emphasis on employment based and business related visas. • Matters concerning Indo-US joint ventures, government liaison work in India, international law & trade.

LAW OFFICES OF CHETAN P. TANNA, INC.
4615 Convey St
San Diego, CA 92111 USA
Tel: 858-268-3283 • Fax: 858-268-9229
greencard@usa.net • www.tannalaw.com



India's Largest Vedic Astrological Monthly

Let a Vedic Astrologer enter your house every month!

Each issue includes articles...

- For the Beginner or Scholar
- Dashas, Vargas, Transits, Varsat & Navat Granthas
- Mantra Yantra Tantra
- Remedies to improve Planetary Influences & Nativitate Signs
- Mundane or World Predictions
- Monthly predictions based on your Moon Sign & Birth Star and much, much more...

Subscribers are entitled to **FREE CONSULTATIONS** and **REMEDIES** throughout their subscription as well as 1yr, 2yr or 3yr **PREDICTION / FORECAST!!!**

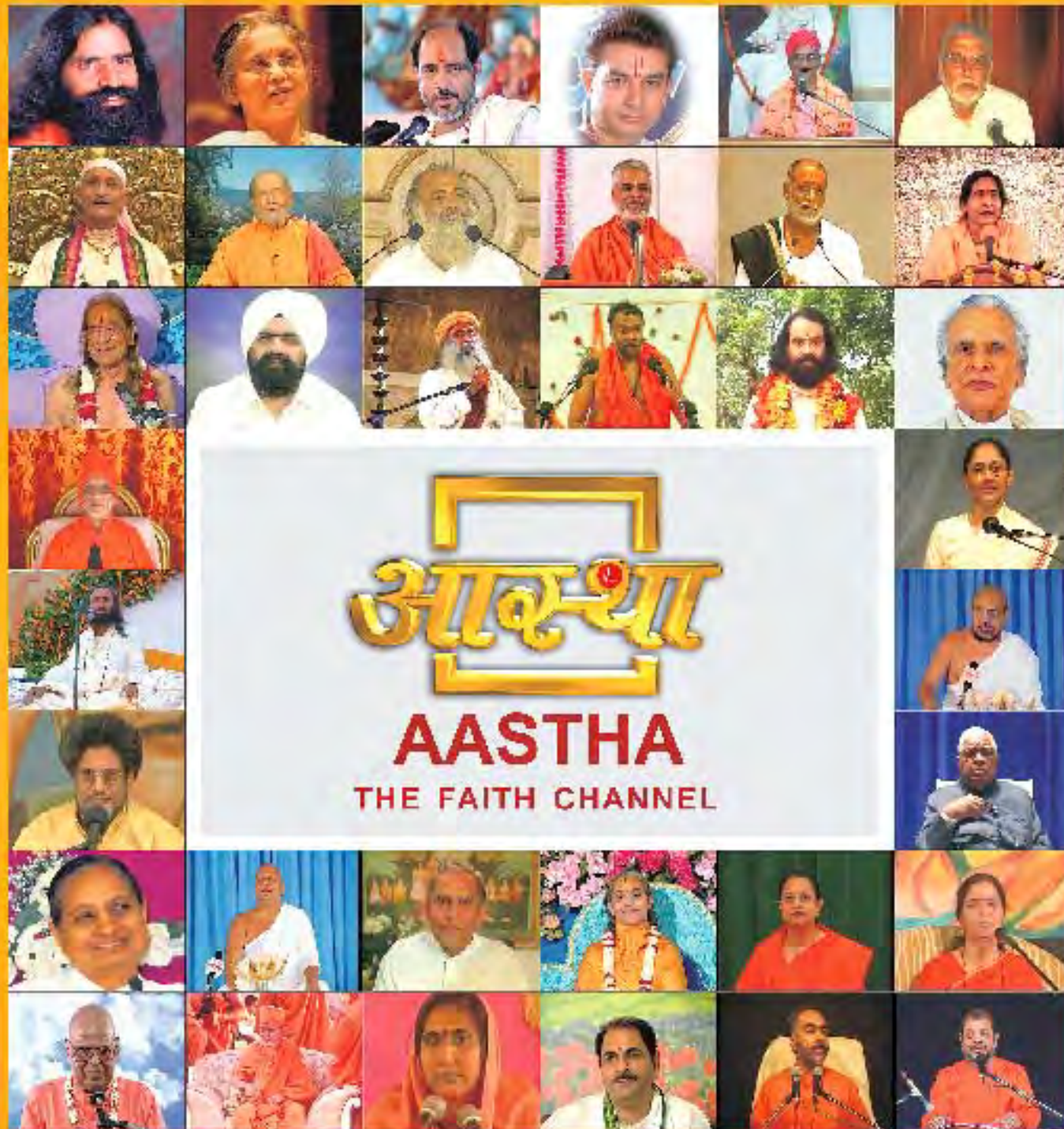
Subscription Rates: 12 issues \$50 • 24 issues \$90 • 36 issues \$135

Mail your check to 752 N Jacob Miller Rd., Port Townsend, WA 98368

Call 206.295.4791 or 360.385.5229

Sample our magazine at
www.starteller.com

AASTHA'S Pearls Of Wisdom



आस्था

AASTHA

THE FAITH CHANNEL

America's first Asian Indian Spiritual and Cultural Television Channel

Get AASTHA for your home

FREE for the first two months. Ask how you can get up to 4 DIRECTV receivers **FREE**.
Call DIRECTV for more details on 1-800-378-4179.



www.aasthatv.com

Tollfree 1-888-8-AASTHA



**Expert advice.
Customized financial solutions.**

Understanding your needs. Producing results.

Solihar Vansapala
MBA, ChFC, CLU, CFP®
Senior Advisor

Office: 908.306.1554
Toll Free: 800.600.WPAG
solihar@wealthplanning.com

1st Floor
1256 U.S. Hwy 202/204 North
Bridgewater, NJ 08807-1246

Financial advice and services for individuals with annual incomes of over \$250,000
or investable assets of \$500,000 or more.

Registered representative of Wealth Planning Group, Member SEC, FINRA
Investment advisor services provided through Wealth Planning Group, LLC, an SEC-registered investment advisor

Vastuved International Inc
Building design in the ancient tradition of
Vastu Shastra
Residential or Commercial Projects

www.vastu-design.com
(641) 472-2157



Exotic India
www.exoticindia.com

Free Worldwide Five
Day Delivery by
FedEx, offering
* sculptures * silver
and gold jewelry
* paintings * and
eclectic books

"AASTHA now AVAILABLE on DIRECTV"					
At Channel No. 2005					
Call 1-800-378-4179					
Monday to Friday			Saturday & Sunday		
PT	Programmes	PT	Programmes	PT	Programmes
06:00	ISKCON	06:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	06:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
06:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	06:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	06:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
07:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	07:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	07:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
07:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	07:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	07:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
08:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	08:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	08:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
08:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	08:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	08:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
09:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	09:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	09:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
09:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	09:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	09:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
10:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	10:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	10:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
10:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	10:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	10:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
11:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	11:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	11:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
11:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	11:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	11:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
12:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	12:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	12:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
12:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	12:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	12:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
13:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	13:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	13:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
13:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	13:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	13:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
14:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	14:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	14:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
14:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	14:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	14:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
15:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	15:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	15:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
15:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	15:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	15:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
16:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	16:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	16:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
16:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	16:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	16:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
17:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	17:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	17:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
17:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	17:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	17:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
18:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	18:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	18:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
18:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	18:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	18:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
19:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	19:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	19:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
19:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	19:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	19:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
20:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	20:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	20:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
20:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	20:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	20:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
21:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	21:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	21:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
21:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	21:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	21:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
22:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	22:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	22:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
22:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	22:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	22:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
23:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	23:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	23:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
23:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	23:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	23:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs
24:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	24:00	Swarnam Devotional songs	24:00	Swarnam Devotional songs
24:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	24:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs	24:30	Pragmatish Devotional songs

Plug in to your roots in India!

The mananam Series
writings from the spiritual traditions of the world

The Latest Title in the Series • *Youth: Keeping the Balance*

**Youth:
Keeping the Balance**

Keeping the balance. This is the key to a rewarding life. A life filled with enthusiasm, love, and inner peace. Instead of being tossed around by the ups and downs of life, how can we as young adults learn to ride the waves?

The authors of this book show us how to create the balance, maintain the balance, and enjoy the balance through:

- Respecting ourselves
- Knowing how to love our family and friends
- Understanding our connection with the universe

Price: \$10 ISBN: 1-880687-58-5

Some recent issues of the mananam series include:

- In the Company of Sages
- Mananam: Reflection Upon Truth
- Emotions
- Vision of the Bhagavad Gita
- The Light of Wisdom
- Peace in a Restless World
- Devotion
- Service: An Act of Worship
- The Journey Called Life
- Reincarnation: The Karmic Cycle

For the latest catalog and to order the titles please contact:
Chinmaya Mission West Publications Division
560 Bridgetown Pike • Langhorne • PA 19053 • USA
Tel: 1-888-CMW-READ, 215-398-0390 • fax: 215-398-9710
publications@chinmaya.org • www.chinmayapublications.org

LOTUS SCULPTURE

Experience the artistry and the sacred

HAND CRAFTED
HINDU AND BUDDHIST
SCULPTURE THAT
SHOWS YOUR
LIVING SPIRIT WITH
GRACE AND SERENITY

PH (866)-LOTUS-12
www.lotussculpture.com

**Announcing Amrita Veda's
New Ayurvedic Herbs Made
from Herbal Extracts!**

Our new herbal lines include:
Specialized Formulas for Ayurvedic Practitioners
Traditional Formulas for Over the Counter Use

For our free email newsletter join us at:
www.amritaveda.com
888.943.9332



Hari Om
**Vedic Astrology
& Ancient
Indian Healings**

Commander Selvam PhD

Siddhar Selvam, or Dr. Commander Selvam, is the only *Atharva Veda* scholar in North America for Indian Astrology, Indian Vaasthu, ancient Indian Holy Massage and alternative medicine. *Atharva Veda* is the only Veda that deals with application of Yantra, Tantra, and Mantra Saastra. He has written 27 books on the Vedas and has a weekly column in leading US newspapers. He was initiated by his Gururji Akasthiya Maamani Sri Chinnappa "Siddhar" at 5 years of age and is now *Guru Parampara*, the 126th *Mattathipathi* of Sri Akasthiyar Siddhar Peedam, India.

Siddhar Selvam has helped countless families to relieve stress and live balanced lives, following dharma, growing in meditation, devotion and more. Yagya/havan/homam is performed in his Ashram for people worldwide who will receive prasadam including video and audio of the event on a CD.

Please contact him for more information and for his upcoming itinerary and schedules in USA, Canada, Fiji and Singapore.

Commander Selvam
14982 Riverside Dr. • Apple Valley, CA 92307
1-800-5-SIDHAR (1-800-574-3427) • 408-829-7780 • 760-946-2600
www.yogacraft.com • vishalparu@aol.com

EXPLORE THE DEPTHS WITH MONKFISH BOOKS

THE METAPHYSICAL INFLUENCE

Swami Suddheswarananda

Translated by Ananda Saran Das

**PILGRIM
OF LOVE**

The Life
and
Teachings
of
Swami Kripalu

Edited by
Atma Jo Ann Lewis

**THE RELIGION
OF MAN**

RABINDRANATH TAGORE
NOBEL LAUREATE FOR LITERATURE
FOREWORD BY PHILIP MORRIS

Swami Suddheswarananda was a monk of the Ramakrishna Order of India, who became the spiritual head of the Centre Vedantic Ramakrishna in Greer, Pa. In his last writings, the author sought to convey an experience of intuition beyond logic and outside the play of opposites to better understand the nature of reality.

"Swami Kripalu, (Mapuji or dear father), was one of the greatest spiritual voices of the 20th Century. His thoughtful and creative approach to his life and teachings in *Pilgrim of Love* builds a strong foundation for getting to know this extraordinary master of yoga." —Stephen Cope, *Yoga and the Heart in the Time of Sri*

The complete edition of the Nobel Laureate's *Essays on Religion* defined at Oxford. His only book on the subject of religion.

Tagore is unequivocal in his faith. He appreciates the intellectual triumphs of science, but he writes as a poet and philosopher.

Available wherever books are sold or directly from the publisher
MONKFISH BOOK PUBLISHING COMPANY • www.monkfishpublishing.com • 866.650.5665

**VYDIC YAGNYA
— C E N T E R —**

Celestial Assistance in Daily Life

Vydic Yagnya Centre is dedicated to helping bring peace, contentment, inspiration and general happiness into the lives of sincere devotees by the intercession of Gods and Devas through the traditional Vedic yagnya, or holy fire ceremony.

Vaastu rectification yagnyas are available for houses that are non-sthapatya-vedic. If there are inaccuracy issues with your house, business site or office, we will perform a traditional vydic Vaastu-rectification Yagnya on site, including installation of a copper-plate yantra. This first part of the year is one of the most auspicious times to do Vaastu Yagnyas. (Astrological consultation is also available: family, health, wealth, romance, marriage etc.)

Special Lakshmi Yagnyas for prosperity and success in business—traditional, powerful and highly focussed—have remarkable impact, often measurable in improved sales and profits.

Our Yagnyas have also proved highly effective in resolving personal, health, family or professional issues. If you have concerns in any area of life, please feel free to consult with our highly trained priests in utmost confidence. They will consult astrology, perhaps suggest certain sadhanas or mantras, and tailor a ceremony to your needs, or your group's needs. All consultations are free of cost.

Contact us about other yagnyas and spiritual services we provide to make your life happy and abundant.

info@yagnya.com • 1-888-835-7788 • www.yagnya.com • www.vydic.org

CLASSIFIED

Classified ads are US\$45 for 20 words, \$1 for each additional word. "Box ads" are \$65 and \$120 • 10% to 35% discount for repeat ads
Tel: 888-464-1008, 808-240-3108
Fax: 808-822-3152 • ads@hindu.org
www.HinduismToday.com (click "advertise")

Appeals

Devastated Girls' Orphanage in Sri Lanka desperately needs help. The Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home in Sittandy, Sri Lanka, cares for 38 children. Since the tsunami, they are surviving on the barest amenities. Funds are needed for basic improvements to the building and for education. A small donation can make a tremendous difference. Details on p. 68 of this issue. See photos and donate at: www.hheonline.org/orphanage/sittandy/

Ayurvedic/Health

Nurture Your Being

Enjoy ayurvedic rejuvenation in a private forest cabin, central Florida. Hosts have practiced ayurveda since 1985 • 863-494-7565
www.ayurvedicretreat.com

Low-cost blood test by mail. E.g. PSA, \$10, HIV screen, \$10 • www.LowCostBloodTest.org
Call Dr. Siva, tel: 1-866-505-1556 (USA).

Oils for Mind, Body and Spirit

Taruna Oils provides essential oils. These therapeutic grade aromatherapy oils and products are nature's solution to the stress of modern life • www.tarunaoils.com
tarunaoils@tarunaoils.com

Devotional Supplies

www.indiahandicraft.net

700 web pg: exclusive bronze, stone, wood statues, temple statues, Tanjore paintings, home altars. Wholesale, retail or custom. Bangalore, India • 91-802-371-7118 / 7119
artha@indiahandicraft.net

Top quality Rudraksha beads and malas
Jai Hanuman Ltd. • sales@rudraksha.com
Tel: toll-free 800-379-6439 • 641-472-2448
www.rudraksha.com

www.SacredSource.com

Free catalog of 500+ Deity statues, including handmade Ganges clay-fired murtis.
1-800-290-6203, POB 163-HT03A, Crozet, VA 22932



Rudraksha • Beautiful vibrational tools for Meditation, Yoga, Personal Adornment, Healing, Alignment • GF, SS, 14K Rudraksha Japa Malas, Gemstone Prayer Beads, Nine Planet Astrological Jewelry. Protect and Hold your Yogic Energy. • www.rudraksha.com

Education

Books by Jyotish Vachaspathi Krishnan
Vedic Astrology—Ashtaka Varga Made Simple for the Western Astrologer, 120-pg., US\$10 including s&h. *Vedic Astrology—Stock Market Analysis*, 144 pg., \$16 including s&h. Order from the author: <http://rgkrishnan.anubazaar.com>

The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita

Swami Sri Atmananda's course on the *Bhagavad Gita*. Inner meaning, commentary, glossary, chanting tape. Brochure: Satyachetana—USA, POB 20903, Reno, NV 89515-0903 USA • satyachetana@iname.com

Home-Study Course in the Vedanta. Contact Parashakti Vidya Gurukul, PO Box 250, Spring Valley, NY 10977 • devapada@aol.com

Free Products and Services

Shri Shivabalayogi Maharaj Meditation Blessings. Peace, Bliss and Self-Realization guaranteed through Meditation. Receive Shivabalayogi's photo, holy ash and meditation instructions. Free. Germaine, PO Box 8023, Roanoke, VA 24014-0023 USA.
www.meditate-shivabala.org

Jewelry

FREE emailed 15-page Vedic Horoscope and nine gem planetary recommendation analysis. Please submit the form at www.astrogems.com • Help Strengthen your health and spiritual goals

Music and Art

Art for the Soul at www.shankar-gallery.com
A site to see at www.shankar-gallery.com

www.mahakali.com

Devotional Hindu Deity paintings from India. Ganesha, Shiva, Kali, Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Krishna, Rama, Karttik, Hanuman, & more.



Products/Stores

Purity Farms organic traditional ghee 100% pure, from cows raised completely free of hormones, chemicals or pesticides. A delight to cook with! *A Guide to the Royal Oil—Ghee*, 89 pages on the art of preparing,

appreciating and enjoying this precious, nourishing, healing spiritual food.
us\$9.95 + \$2.50 s&h • 303-647-2368, USA.

Fine Quality Neem Products

Living neem trees, fresh branches, twigs or leaves. Complete line of neem products including cold-pressed oil, soaps, cream, shampoo, salve and certified-organic extract and capsules, all at fresh-from-the-farm prices • 813-661-8873
www.neemtreefarm.com
601 Southwood Cove
Brandon, FL 33511 USA



Professional Services

Freight Forwarder

Ship >45 kg or more
Anywhere from US
Fx: 1-800-396-6659
Sales2@air7seas.us
www.air7seas.com



Publications

Raising Children in the USA

Guide to Indo-American Parenting covers all aspects of child-rearing and important cultural traditions." (S. Parikh, MD). Author Kris D. Bhat, MD, noted pediatrician, raised 3 children in America. Lucid, concise, practical. 363 pg • US\$26.95 + \$2.55 shipg.
Orders/information: 409-835-5382
www.indo-american.com



Babaji's Kriya Yoga & Publications. See our e-commerce at www.babaji.ca • Books, correspondence course, seminars. In India: babajiindia@lycos.com • Outside of India: tel. 1-888-252-9642 or 1-450-297-0258 • info@babaji.ca

The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies is an annual academic publication dedicated to analyzing the interactions and affinities between Indic and Judaic civilizations, from ancient through contemporary times. The eight issues published so far are available at US\$15 each. Send checks payable to the Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies to Professor Braj M. Sinha, Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Saskatchewan, 9 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A5 Canada • katzn@fiu.edu

Real Estate

Seeking ashram land in South India. The Advaita Foundation is looking for land suitable for an ashram, or even a facility in disuse, for a favorable fee or free. They will revive the place, renovate, and build an ashram/centre for vedic studies. Contact Swami Advaita at advaitaguru@vsnl.com
www.advaitaguru.org

Travel / Vacation / Pilgrimage

Group Tours to Temples. Visit Kedarnath, Badrinath, Kailash, Rishikesh & Haridwar. India International Voyages • voyages@india.com

india.com • www.indiavoyages.com
-713-668-2948

Video

Acclaimed Spiritual Videos. "SADHANA—India's Holy men and Kumbha Mela." us\$30. (postpaid to US). Check/credit card. Catalog VHS and Pal available. Penny Price Media, 406 Mountain View Rd., Rhinebeck, NY 12572 USA • Tel: 845-876-0239
Fax: 845-876-0260 • Pricemedia@aol.com

Wanted

Hindu University of America is actively

searching for faculty in Paurohitya (Priest Education) Program and Yoga Therapy areas. Please visit www.hindu-university.edu or call 407-275-0013, or e-mail staff@hindu-university.edu for details.

Yoga

Yoga in Daily Life. Yoga, meditation, satsang. Books, CDs, incense and yoga props available online. 2402 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria, VA 22301-1330 USA. Tel: 703-299-8946
alexandria@yogaindailylife.com
www.yogaindailylife.com

atmajyoti.org
Discover classical yoga meditation, the teachings of Sanatana Dharma, and more at the website of
Atma Jyoti Ashram

DHARMAWARE
Gallery of Sacred Arts
Quality Puja Supplies
Antique Bronzes
Shiva Lingams
www.dharmaware.com
54E Tinker Street Woodstock NY 12498
Mail Order 1 888 679 4900 Tel 845 679 4900

Study Ayurveda with Dr. Vasant Lad, M.A.S.
Offering the finest education in Ayurveda since 1984, first level graduates are certified lifestyle counselors (640 hours); second level graduates integrate Ayurveda into their clinical and health care practices (430 hours); advanced students study in India in clinical settings under Vasant Lad, B.A.M.S.
Other programs & services available:
★ Weeklong Summer Intensives with CEUs available
★ Weekend Seminars on in-depth Ayurvedic topics
★ AyuroYoga™ Classes and Intensives
★ Panchakarma, Ayurvedic Cleansing Programs
★ Ayurvedic Correspondence Course
★ Herbs, Books, Tapes and Lifestyle Supplies
The Ayurvedic Institute
PO Box 23445 • Albuquerque, NM 87192-1445
(505) 291-9698 • www.ayurveda.com

Know Your Language To Preserve Your Identity
Learn Hindi • Learn Gujarati
Learn Hindi with Tapes, Books, and Videos
Learn Gujarati with Tapes, Books, and Videos
Sakshar, Inc.
PO Box 1100, Oakland, CA 94611-1100 USA
Tel: 510-451-2070 • Fax: 510-451-4810
www.sakshar.com
Sakshar, Inc.
PO Box 1100, Oakland, CA 94611-1100 USA
Tel: 510-451-2070 • Fax: 510-451-4810
© 1998 Sakshar, Inc. All Rights Reserved

LOTUSPRESS LOTUSPRESS LOTUSPRESS LOTUSPRESS LOTUSPRESS LOTUSPRESS

Yoga
on the Sacred Fire



Swami Sachin

LOTUSPRESS LOTUSPRESS LOTUSPRESS LOTUSPRESS LOTUSPRESS LOTUSPRESS

Sanskrit Academy

Promoting Sanskrit Language and Culture

- Sanskrit classes for all ages
—individuals or groups
—by correspondence with continuous guidance
—elementary, intermediate or advanced levels
- Translation Service



Contact Dr. Sarasvati Mohan, Director
sanskrit_academy@yahoo.com
www.samskrtam.org

Ramanand Shastri, Vedic Astrologer

Jyotish Pundit Ramanand Shastri represents the 41st generation of a traditional family of Vedic astrologers dating back over 1,000 years. He has over 40 years of experience, advising and spiritually uplifting tens of thousands of people in 55 countries.



You may meet Pundit Shastri during his upcoming world tour or connect with him by phone, email or fax. He is available for individual, family or group appointments. Many who have met Punditji have been amazed at his accurate insights and his ability to help them to be more happy and successful. This has been so especially with people who were at an important juncture: planning marriage or a turning point in a business, making a career move, having to make a major decision or deal with difficult times, such as illness. Oftentimes people who had felt stressed or confused with their life circumstances felt suddenly relieved and positive, after consulting with Pundit Shastri, which in turn opened doors of abundance within them and good fortune outwardly. For more information, please contact:

tel: 1-808-876-1370 (Hawaii, USA)
fax: 1-808-876-1580 • shastrinternational@yahoo.com

Quality Ayurvedic Products

Direct from Kerala, India

TRI HEALTH offers the finest Ayurvedic Herbs, Food Supplements, Medicinal Oils, Aristhams, Leyhams and other Rasayanas (Rejuvenators) prepared in strict accordance with the sacred classical texts. And... when on Kauai (Hawaii) be sure to experience our luxurious South Indian Massage Treatments.



TRI HEALTH INC., PO Box 340, Anahola HI 96703-0340 USA
office: 800-455-0770/customer service: 808-822-4288/clinic: 808-828-2104
oilbath@aloha.net • www.trihealthayurveda.com

Divine Play

The life of Shri Shri Shri Shivabalayogi Maharaj. To read about Him is to experience.

"Yogi is love."

Available through bookstores, online retailers, and www.handloom.org
ISBN 0-976078-30-9



The Silent Teaching of Shiva Bala Yogi

AYUSH HERBS, INC.®

Modern Science Validating Ancient Medicine

Offering you the highest quality Ayurvedic herbal products, vitamins, minerals and enzymes available.

Anti Aging Products

Amlaplex
Ashwagandha
Trifal
Sitawari
Shilajeet Mumiyo



*Statements made herein have not been evaluated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.
This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease or condition.

www.ayush.com

1-800-925-1371

BISWA KALYAN FOUNDATION

YAJNAS



In Vedic Astrology, yajnas are excellent to alleviate negative influences or to increase the positive ones coming into your life. All our yajnas are performed in the purest Vedic tradition, under the supervision of Pandit Jyotirm Benu Mukhopadhyay, in India, near the Ganges river in West Bengal.

"The Biswa Kalyan Foundation's yajnas have produced extraordinary results in my life and for many of my clients. I would be lost in my astrology practice without them."

- James Braha / Vedic Astrologer

BISWA KALYAN FOUNDATION

210 rue Labordet, Longueuil, Qc, Canada, J4H 2P7
Email: ywcb@yajna.com • Web: www.yajna.com
Tel: (450) 463-3436 • Fax: (450) 463-4361

PARAMAHANSA
YOCANANDA
As I Knew Him



Revelation, Observation, and Reflection
of a Mystic

ROY EUGENE DAVIS

new INNERSEARCH itinerary



A spiritual travel-study adventure with Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

January 6th ~ 19th, 2006

Innersearch is one of life's special moments, a time of spiritual retreat, an opportunity to leave behind that all-too-familiar routine for a while, to travel and explore distant lands and the depths of your true being. Sure, it's also fun and the discoveries of new cultures and peoples are rewarding, breathing new life into our purpose on Earth. In the last couple of months we recrafted our Australia-New Zealand itinerary to create a more exotic and adventurous journey. It is so unique, we think this is the perfect chance to send your retired parents on a spiritual holiday, assured that they will be cared for well while traveling with supportive Hindus.

Exotic Itinerary ~ Our journey will take us from the beautiful city of Sydney with its famed Opera House and Harbour Bridge to the outback of Australia, where we will spend four nights in log cabins in a forest protected resort, before flying off to the spectacular Southern Alps in New Zealand's south island for four more nights. A brief stop in the Kiwi capital, Wellington, followed by an all-day train ride through the

gorgeous North Island will end our journey in Auckland. We will join the local Hindu communities in Sydney and Auckland in their worship during visits to their temples.

Enlightened Master ~ Bodhinatha will lead this exotic adventure himself. It truly is an extraordinary privilege to be in such close proximity with a mystical being, a sacred time to share and exchange thoughts and inspirations and perhaps enter, even if momentarily, into states of consciousness where he lives each day.

Precious Classes ~ Every day will be a rare opportunity to explore, through meditations, discourses and informal sharing, the day-to-day practicalities of living a dynamic Hindu life in a modern world. Bodhinatha's classes include insights into Hinduism's uniqueness, an in-depth look at karma and suggestions for refining our conduct to intensify our spiritual progress.

How to Enroll ~ For more information or to sign up for this Innersearch please call 1-808-822-3012, Ext. 239 or e-mail danda@hindu.org.

www.himalayanacademy.com/innersearch



The Infinite Creator

"Muruga is Lord Siva in action"

— Gurudeva, *Dancing with Siva*

Let me end the year
As I began: with adorations to Thee.

Creator – Form and Formless

Thou Art.

But I adore best
Thy Regal Form, sitting
On Thy Peacock Throne
With Thy Septre beside.

Dazzled am I
With Thy Eyes
Those Eyes of Thine
Which like two suns rising
From the waters of the Ocean
At the horizon
Inspired my aged legs to trek
The Glacier above Gomukh and
Work the boulders up to Tapavan,
Where, lo, spread across the blue canvas
Was the Mighty Shivling.

I stood there.
Alone.
Still.
In the silence of eternity.
Unable to unlock my glance
Entangled in the mist hugging Thy peak.

Thou Art my Way.

My Infinite Muruga...



By Dr Arjunan Subramaniam, Sunday, August 23, 2003, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia