



Hindu University of America

A Unique Dimension of Hindu Thought and Traditions

Newsletter

Volume 12, Issue 2

June-July 2003

Highlights

- Recent Graduates
- Board Meeting
- Mysticism
- Vasudhaiva Katumbakam
- Gayatri Mantra

One of the M.S. Theses, by recent HU graduate, Rishipal Dahiya is on: "Modern And Ancient Concepts of Diet & Nutrition; & Nostril Dominance in Normal Volunteers before and after Integrated Yoga Practices".

14 HU Students Graduate with Master of Hindu Studies

Hindu University announces the first batch of its graduate in Yoga Philosophy and Meditation. These students have successfully completed a minimum of eight 3-credit courses including three university core courses, three core courses for Yoga Philosophy and Meditation program, and two elective courses in this area. In addition, they have carried out theoretical and experimental research and written master theses as a part of the degree requirements. They studied at Hindu University's extension center at SVYASA (Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana) near Bangalore (India). This research was supervised by and

the courses run by HU's faculty at Bangalore, which includes Dr. H. R. Nagendra (President SVYASA), Dr. R. Nagarathna, and Dr. Shirely Telles.

These fourteen first batch students will receive their degree in a special HU commencement ceremony to be held in Bangalore on September 11, 2003. The graduates are: Itagi Ravi Kumar, Heisnam Jina Devi, Sushilkumar Khemka, Balaram Pradhan, Natesh Babu, Rishipal Dahiya, Abhijit Ghosh, Sonyabapu B. Borotikar, Sushreeta S. Tarte, Satyapriya Maharana, Meesha Joshi, Loksha Hutchappa, Ningombam Ganga Singh and Sanahal Sharma Phurailatpam.

Volunteers Recognized at HU BOD Meeting

The contributions of Orlando-area volunteers were recognized in a ceremony on June 28th during a meeting of HU Board of Directors held on the University's 12-acre campus. Dr. Mahesh Mehta, Dr. Yash Pal Lakra, and Mrs. Beth Kulkarni – all HU Board members from outside Florida – presented plaques to Mrs. Rukmani Sharma, Dr. Guru Prasad, Prakhar Agarwal, Meera Butta, Prof. Narsingh Deo and Attorney Rana Tiwari. These volunteers have contributed greatly to the ongoing programs and projects of the university.

In other business, the Board approved starting a program in Purohitya to train priests for Hindu temples in America, and setting up of a Saraswati-Dakshinamurthy-Navgrahas temple on the campus. The Board also toured the facil-



ity and was pleased with the Phase I construction. Sunday (June 29th) morning session of BOD meeting focused on the mission, growth and planning of the university in 2003 and beyond.

In the photo above, Prof. Deo is seen receiving the recognition plaque from Dr. Yash Lakra.

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"Hindu University of America is a world class institution of learning and research in Hindu thought and traditions allowing unfolding of spiritual dimension of human beings."

Vedic Foundation Inaugurated at Barsana Dham, Austin

President of the Hindu University Professor Gupta was invited to inaugurate “the Vedic Foundation” at Barsana Dham near Austin (Texas). This Vedic Foundation has been created to re-establish the greatness of authentic Hinduism. The foundation is committed to spreading the knowledge of Hinduism in its original form as revealed in the Vedic scriptures. The Foundation’s first endeavor is to disseminate this information through the book “*The True History and the Religion of India*,” prepared by Shree Swami Prakashanand Saraswati to clear up misconceptions about Hinduism. The inauguration took place on April 26, 2003 at Barsana Dham, one of the largest Hindu temples in the Western Hemisphere. This event occurred in conjunction with Barsana Dham’s annual Mela celebration in which over 8,000 people participated.



Vedic Foundation booth at Barsana Dham mela.

The objective of this Foundation, namely, “... *spreading the knowledge of Hinduism in its original form as revealed in the Vedic scriptures*,” is very consistent with the mission of the Hindu University which includes “...*to provide for learning, research and training in a broad spectrum of topics related to Vedic/Hindu culture including religions, philosophies, practices etc. ...*” Recognizing this commonality of objectives the two organizations are exploring the possibility of mutual collaboration and working towards the common objective of re-establishing the greatness of authentic Hinduism.

The Vedic foundation is a registered non-profit, educational, religious and charitable organization created to focus on educational programs. Aims of this Foundation include: (1) Re-establish the greatness of Hinduism by bringing it back to its original form, (2) Re-new the Indian pride in their heritage through education of authentic Hinduism, and (3) Create an interactive forum to share ideas, inputs and concerns of the community.

The Vedic Foundation is planning various programs including: (a) Promotion literary works that provide correct and complete understanding of Hinduism; (b) Development of study guides and curricula; and (c) Creation of products tailored for different audiences including: CD ROM’s for kids, and Audio and Video sets.

From Editor’s Desk ...

Please Contribute articles to the newsletter

Brothers & Sisters, Namaste. I want to thank you for all the support we got on these two newsletters. We will strive to remain as an open forum and like to solicit articles for the newsletter. We want to thank Sri Srinivasachar for his contribution. Copies of newsletters are also posted on HU website. Please come for-

ward with your suggestions, comments, and advice. We are also thankful to the contributors of this issue and others who have submitted their articles.

-Guru Prasad

newsletter@hindu-university.edu

HU Speakers Bureau has been set up. A training program for speakers is in place. Please contact the Editor for details.

Hindu University Newsletter is published by Hindu University of America. Editing and publication is handled by a committee which, at present, consists of Guru Prasad and B.V. Venkata Krishna Sastry. Views and opinions expressed by authors are not necessarily of Hindu University.

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Essentials of Hinduism: Sri Abhinav Dwivedi

- contd. from last issue

(Excerpts from a talk delivered at a Hindu camp in Tampa, FL on 26th January 2003. Shri Abhinav Dwivedi is a member of the Board of Directors of Hindu University)

Hinduism is Not Static -

Hinduism is open to reinterpretation to suit the changing time, circumstances and evolving humanity (Yug Dharma). The universal and eternal laws are given practical, working forms from time to time. It has happened several times in the history of Hinduism. Ancient Vedic truths were recast in various Upanishads; later on those were reinterpreted as Puranas and Itihasas in the form of Ramayana, Mahabharata. Buddha and Mahavir took certain aspects and developed them further. Shankara and other Acharyas brought back certain purity and rigor. In the middle ages Bhakt-Kavis and saints such as Kabir, Rasakhan, and Ravidas, Nanak and other Sikh Gurus, Chaitanya and Tulsidas, Mira and Narsinha, Tyagaraj, Gnaneswara, Tukaram, and Eknath and Sahajanand Swami many others- gave it an easy to understand shape so even less educated can benefit. In the modern, scientific age giants like RamaKrishna, Vivekanand, Aurobindo, Raman Maharshi, Dayanada Saraswati, Yogananda, and many others are again reshaping it so that even non-Hindus can easily comprehend the essence.

Hinduism is Resilient -

Hinduism has a tremendous capacity to absorb and digest alien ideas and cultures, and turn them into its own. A number of foreign invasions, influences have come to India. Hinduism has absorbed them all without losing its identity or diluting its core. In fact, it invites everything, which is new and noble

“Aa no bhadra kratavo yantu Vishvataha”

—Let noble thoughts come from all sides.

Modern age is an age of science-

It has enveloped all aspects of human life. Hinduism is perfectly at home with the new scientific discoveries in various fields. Not only there is no conflict with science and its methodologies and discoveries; but Hinduism is seen to be shedding new lights on the science itself. Its age old truths and beliefs are being validated by modern sciences, and providing paradigm shift to science.

Hinduism is Non-monolithic -

Hinduism has a capacity to hold contradictory ideas, philosophies together. It intuitively seeks higher truths that transcend contradictions. Charvak's materialistic philosophy, Vedant's Advait, Dwait, Vishishtadwait philosophies, Shaiva and Shakta, all have coexisted in Hinduism. It has a tremendous variations and colors and shades. MahaKali, the ferocious looking deity is also called the Mother, and is just as loving as MahaLaxmi and MahaSaraswati. Yama, the God of Death is also called DharmaRaja. Lord Shiva, the God of destruction and dissolution is also the most auspicious one. The Flute-playing blue boy of Vrindavan is also the one who advises Arjuna to go and fight.

Astika and Nastika - both have room to co-exist in Hinduism. It allows all opinions, including rejection of the authorities of the Vedas, as Buddhism does. And still Hinduism reveres Buddha as one of the incarnations! Hinduism is Universal but not uniform. This extreme tolerance and acceptance of divergent systems stem from the deep understanding that no one has a monopoly on Truth, and hence any system and belief, any practice, which truly helps an individual to progress, is allowable. One can follow multiple paths simultaneously. No bar! In future, some new system, a new Vibhuti, a new prophet comes up with a newer way to help humanity; Hinduism will embrace it enthusiastically and make it its own.

(Article to continue in the next Issue)

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Mysticism — Sosale Srinivasachar

“In the realm of religious faith an individual’s quest for a “personal” experience of god is not available, at least convincingly, through a knowledge of scriptures or ritual practices.”

Questions like “Does God exist?”, “Is there a moral order that governs everything?” or, “What is the purpose of human life?” do not bother the mystics.”

Bertrand Russell observes: “It is important not to caricature the doctrine of mysticism in which there is, I think, a core of wisdom...”

(S. Srinivasachar is a freelance writer and faculty member of Sri Ramakrishna Institute in Mysore, India. He graduated with a Masters degree in 1941. He has taught history and archeology at Univ. of Mysore and worked under Dr. Wheeler at the excavations at Arikamedu, Brahmagiri and Chandravelli in India)

It is important that we should not mistake the two terms ‘mysticism’ and ‘mystery’ to be synonyms. They mean two entirely different things. Many things exist or happen beyond our reasoning and comprehension. Then we call ‘mystery’. But the term ‘mystical’ is generally associated with religious experiences. It can also be associated with aesthetic experiences as in the case of great nature poets.

A mystic is one who has a direct appreciation of a supremely satisfying or inspiring experience which is almost ineffable, defying verbal description. The intensity of the experience is such that no words in our vocabulary can adequately describe it. In the realm of religious faith an individual’s quest for a “personal” experience of god is not available, at least convincingly, through a knowledge of scriptures or ritual practices. In such a situation an unusually gifted individual summons, what may be called, his inner spiritual strength of experiencing the Divinity. It is a revelation, as it were, which he obtains in a state of blissful trance, where the knower and the known become unified.

Since mystic experience is invariably personal and deeply felt, different mystics have apprehended truth in slightly different ways. We find such mystics in the history of every religion. They made ‘Truth’ the pivotal point of their quest and belonged to all nationalities, and to all ages — whether they were believers, pagans or heathens. If we were to characterize their experiences as purely subjective and hallucinatory we should be questioning the credibility of several personalities of undoubted eminence. Even an eminent philosopher and a self-proclaimed agnostic like Bertrand Russell observes: “It is important not to caricature the doctrine of mysticism in which there is, I think, a core of wisdom” (Religious & Science by Bertrand Russell — Home University library of Modern Knowledge).

There have been a galaxy of mystic phi-

losophers from Plotinus to Hegel in Europe, from Upanishadic seers to Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Arabindo, from the Sufi Abu Yazid al-Bistami (9th century AD) in Islamic history and a host of others from among Hebrews, the Chinese, the Japanese and the Tibetans. The goal of all mystics has been to seek and find bliss in the union or identity of the Self and the Transcendental (God). At all times mystics have pondered deeply on the dimensions of experience in its totality and could comprehend the harmony that lies at the root of everything that happens inside and the outside us.

There is obviously a dividing line between scientific knowledge and mystical experience. In the former case space and time and all attributes in the nature of form, color, weight etc. constitute its nature. In the latter case all of these attributes, including space and time, are said to lose their relevance and fade away. Once Albert Einstein conceded, in his letter of condolence to a friend’s sister: “Michelle has left this strange world just before me. This is of no importance. For us, convinced physicists, the distinction between the past, the present and the future is an illusion, although a persistent one”.

Mystics are known to comprehend the harmony that exists at the root of everything that happens. Often in an assertive and pithy language they proclaimed the absolute validity of the universal principle amidst all the pluralities and flux that we experience. Questions like: “Does God exist?”, “Is there a moral order that governs everything?” or, “What is the purpose of human life?” do not bother the mystics. The answer comes to them in a state of trance in which every moment is transformed into eternity and every object reveals its universal character. This experience, unique to mystics, is not available to others who are conscious of their ego and the environment in which it exists.

The mystic finds little use for the rationalism of philosophers or the faith of the orthodox in scriptures. So in Islam and Christianity where “the Book” is considered the ultimate authority, and mystics have received a raw deal in spite of their faith in God. They are often harshly persecuted as heretics for this reason.

(...to continue in the next Issue)

Gayatri Mantra: Its course from Rigveda and Later

(Excerpts from a talk delivered at Hindu University by Dr. C.L. Prabhakar, an Adjunct Professor with Hindu University)

Gayatri is a benefic Mantra well known in the sacred Hindu tradition and Philosophy. Simply, people respect Gayatri to be an object of common worship for both men and women. The stretch in importance of Gayatri is immeasurable in the Hindu Tradition. Homas are performed to please the deity, and temples are constructed for Gayatri. The faith and belief in Gayatri has increased in the contemporary times. All this should be due to the meaning and significant combination of words and arrangement in the mantra.

Gayatri is the name of the metre. Mantra is the thought content. Gayatri mantra, then, just means thought content in the metre called Gayatri. The Veda mantras are couched in several metres. Actually there are seventeen metres employed in Rigveda. There are 10028 mantras in the Samhita. Out of so many mantras, the Gayatri mantra is of special importance. Though there are many verses in Gayatri metre addressed to Lord Savitr, the tenth verse of the sixty-second sukta of third mandala of Rigveda has become greatly popular in the Indian tradition. Then it becomes a matter of curiosity for anybody to know certain probabilities that become important to see the reasons behind the importance.

This mantra is designated as Savitri mantra if the deity of the mantra is focused and then it is called Gayatri if the metre is emphasized. In the tradition, however the metre is given importance. Among the Vedic metres Gayatri is the shortest metre. It contains three padas and eight letters in each pada and totally twenty four syllables. It is felt that in veda Akshara or word is important. As we know a letter is Brahma (*aksharam brahma samhita*). Gayatri is the mother of all chandas (*chandasa mata*). The word chandas means also 'knowledge'. Savitr is the important Vedic deity known for the function of impelling and push the world for activity. Also he is connected to Intelligence. Intelligence is the root of life to all beings upon the world. Therefore, this deity is given importance in the galaxy of Vedic gods.

Analysis of the Mantra

The Gayatri mantra viz., "tats savituh Varenyam bhargoh devasya dhimahi dhiyoy nah pracodayat" contains five words of note. The five words are: varenyam, bhargoh, dhimahi, dhiyah and pracodayat. These words are significant and they are considered. The meaning of the mantra is: 'We meditate upon the choicest effulgence of Lord Savitr who would direct our intelligence.'

This mantra connects the varenyam bhargoh (choicest brilliance) of Lord Savitr with the dhih (intelligence) of the upasaka. In other words, a relation is established between the quality of God and devotee. Before that quality is energized to act upon the intellect of the devotee, the quality of the deity is meditated upon. It is to appease and activate the grace (effulgence) of the Savitr under consideration. The grace of the deity and the desire of the devotee lead to personal spiritual upliftment. There may be different explanations for this mantra. They may be from the aspect of sacrifice, physical and metaphysical. However it stands to reason that this mantra acclaimed importance in the tradition.

Gayatri in the later literature

This mantra is found in the Samaveda (2.812). But it occurs only once. It occurs at four places in the Sukla Yajurveda. In Krishna Yajurveda (KYV) also the mantra occurs. In Tatriya Samhita, it occurs three times and in Mai. Samhita the mantra occurs for two times. The other available recessions of KYV viz. Katha and KapiKatha samhitas do not have this verse. This mantra does not occur in Atharvaveda (AV). This is a significant point because the mantra is free from the character of AV mantras. It is well known that the mantras of AV bear the character that of charms and incantations. From the Vedic Concordance compiled by Prof Bloomfield, we note that this mantra is found in thirty-one Vedic texts. From this we note the supreme popularity of the mantra in the religious and academic tradition of India.

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(Article to continue in the next Issue)

Embodying The Unity And Universality of Sanatana Dharma—"Vasudhaiva Katumbakam"

(An overview by Yogacharaya Shri Amrit Desai. Yogiji, as he is popularly known as known as, has for the last 42 years made unique contributions in bringing the authentic teachings of yoga and Vedic culture from the ancient tradition of India to the United States and around the world. He is the originator of a new in-depth approach to Yoga, "Meditation in Motion." He has been one of the foremost leaders in reviving the deteriorating standards of yoga worldwide. He is a renowned speaker, seminar leader and author of several books on yoga, personal growth and transformation. Yogi Desai is an Adjunct Professor with HU.)

Today ... there is a real possibility for creating the integrative unity consciousness expressed in the fundamental principle of Sanatana Dharma "Vasudhaiva Katumbakam".

In past 39 years I have been extensively teaching, mostly to Americans and Europeans who come to me for Yoga. In my intimate encounter with Western cultures I have discovered that our ancient Indian culture and spiritual heritage has a great deal to contribute, and we have a great deal to learn from the Western culture.

Today the world community's old barriers have been lifted, and there is a real possibility for creating the integrative unity consciousness expressed in the fundamental principle of Sanatana Dharma – "Vasudhaiva Katumbakam". It is a miracle to see so many diverse traditions, religions, cultures, languages, dresses, foods and customs live in harmony among Hindus in India. We do not fight for religious differences – neither do we try to convert others to our religious beliefs. But this is passive unity, which is opposite from what we find among religious fundamentalist fanatic groups who appear to be in active unity.

Today more than ever we need to enter a whole new level of approach, which honors active unity in diversity. This form of unity is not a passive one that tolerates other's religious beliefs or fights to prove oneself to superior over others. This conscious integration and unity of Hindus stands in the spirit of our ancient Vedic teachings; that is neither passive toleration nor aggressive imposition.

Many fanatic groups that shun other paths have strong powerful unity – but that is fanatic unity. We want to go for conscious unity which is born not from aggressive vio-

lence or ego, but unity that comes from spreading the spirit of Hinduism through teaching and demonstrating the power of our ancient heritage of Yoga, Vedanta, and principles of Sanatana Dharma.

From this point of view, we need to first educate our young generation to grasp the profound teachings of our ancient scriptures, Bhagavad Gita, Bhagvat, Ramayana, and Yoga Vedanta.

Most of us who have immigrated to foreign countries are only familiar with superficial religious stories and cultural traditions, attitudes and beliefs, or at most some have an intellectual grasp of our spiritual heritage. We need to provide experiential understanding of our religious and spiritual philosophies. Without that experience that touches their heart and gives them powerful tools to deal with crisis of health, business and intimate relationship and interpersonal conflicts, all the teachings will be impotent; at the most it will create fanatics.

In my past almost 40 years of mostly teaching Western followers, I have discovered that they have turned to Yoga and have come to me because their religious teachings fail to help them cope with their daily life issues of health, marriage, business, and personal peace in life.

More than ever the young generation is ready to receive the depth and spirit of true principles of unity, harmony, peace and love that is represented in the core teaching of Universal Brotherhood without compromising our commitment to our own spiritual heritage.

The garden is beautiful and attractive only when all varieties of colorful flowers and plants enhance the beauty of each other. We are not trying to make a garden of only one kind of flowers (like roses). It will lose its beauty, it will become a commercial farm. Today everywhere I go in America, I find temples and groups and unions, representing diverse paths. They may not fight with each other, but neither do they unite together to stand in the common base of Sanatana Dharma as a Hindu to actively work for the common purpose that breaks the invisible barriers that keep us from living, thinking and acting as a united whole, without compromising our religious background.

Amrit Yoga Institute and Hindu University are working together for implementing HU's Master's degree program in Yoga Education.

For more details
please contact
Hindu University
or
Amrit Yoga Institute
www.amriyoga.com

Founding Patrons of HU – Thank You

Hindu University recognizes the donors providing \$10,000 or more as Founding Patrons of Hindu University. The current list these gracious donors includes:

Anand & Sarita Agarwal, Avanish Aggarwal, Braham Aggarwal, Gauri Aggarwal, Krishna Aggarwal, Satya & Vidya Chalsani, Anil Deshpande, Raj & Bharati Gandhi, Ram & Pushpa Goswami, Kuldip & Usha Gupta, Rohini Gupta, Sarita Gupta, Suresh Gupta, Vishaal Gupta, Vasudev Kulkarni, K. Parekh, Arun and Vimla Patel, Jitendra Patel, Vishnu Patel, G.V. and Geeta Raghu, and Nikhil Tiwari.

In its current state of development, HU needs generous contributions from all of its well-wishers. Please consider joining our distinguished panel of Founding Patrons. Thank you.



Namaste

The traditional Hindu way of greeting wherein one with hands folded near heart and head bowed, one bows to the divinity in the other person.

Campus Buz

- HU participated in “The Great Indian Carnival” organized by “Sangam (the Indian Students Association)” at University of Central Florida on April 19th.
- An eight-hour long Meditative Prayer was organized at the initiative one of HU students, Marion Uselding from Miami, on Sunday, April 20, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. Several friends of HU came and joined for meditation by sitting around a deity of Goddess Saraswati surrounded by incense and flowers.
- HU participated in “IndiaFest” organized by the Hindu Temple in Orlando on Saturday May 3.
- Professor Lallan Prasad from Department of Business Economics at University of Delhi South Campus delivered a lecture on “Kautilya’s Philosophy – Economic Model and its Relevance to Globalization and Good Governance” on May 21, 2003.
- Rana Tiwari is leading an effort in HU’s interactions with Orlando Regional Hospitals. Two meetings with Pastoral Care Department and Mind/Body/Spirit Center have taken place regarding Hindu tradition; concepts of illness, death and bereavement; and do’s and don’ts of dealing with Hindu patients.
- HU participated in AAPI Convention held in Orlando June 19-21 by setting up an information booth.
- Intensive course on “Spiritual Linguistics” was held June 16-21. Students in the course honored Professor Sastry as *Vak Yoga Vachaspati (Doctorate of Spiritual Linguistics—The Yoga of Speech)*.



Bhishma Agnihotri, India’s Ambassador - at-Large visited HU campus on June 20, 2003.

Fall 2003 Courses at HU

1. HUC 5001 – Principles of Hinduism; Every Monday and Wednesday 6:00 – 7:15 pm.
2. HUC 5002 –Practices of Hinduism; Every Monday and Wednesday 7:30 – 8:45 pm.
3. HUC 5003 -Basic Sanskrit; Every Tuesday and Thursday 7:30 – 8:45 pm.
4. HIN 5900 – The Message of Bhagavad Gita - An Independent Study; Meetings on Thursdays 4:30 – 5:45 pm.
5. HIN 5009 – Basic Hindu Scriptures; Every Tuesday and Thursday; 6:00 – 7:15 pm.
6. YMP 5003 – Principles & Practices of Yoga Meditation (An Independent Study); Meetings on Tuesdays 4:30 – 5:45 pm.
7. HIN 5900 - Creative Sanskrit Composition (An Independent Study); Meeting timings to be decided.

ON CAMPUS CLASSES start in the week of September 1, 2003. Most of these courses are also available in distance-education mode. All the above are 3 credit-hours courses. Class timings may be adjusted to suit students convenience.



Hindu University of America

A Unique Dimension of Hindu Thought and Traditions

Newsletter

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The mission of the Hindu University of America is to provide for learning, research and training in a broad spectrum of topics related to Vedic/Hindu culture including religions, philosophies, practices etc. The University aims to promote the catholicity of Hinduism, and to establish harmony among Eastern religious thoughts and modern sciences, thereby contributing to better human understanding and global peace. The University is committed to a comprehensive and liberal education with a broad curriculum at baccalaureate, masters and doctoral levels in various areas related to Hindu religions, philosophies and culture providing the students with a practical Vedic base for their spiritual growth. The University fulfills the growing need of modern western society to obtain authentic and unbiased understanding of the vast and rich heritage of Hindu culture, traditions, philosophy, etc.