

# Mandir Vani

HMEC Souvenir Issue Number XVIII (2025)

Vikram Samvat 2082



**18<sup>th</sup> Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council Conference**

**12<sup>th</sup> Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference**

**Sustaining Dharma through Mandirs**

**September 12-14, 2025**

**DFW Hindu Temple Society (Ekta Mandir), Irving, TX 75061**





## **World Hindu Council of America (VHPA)**

*thanks the sponsors for their generous support for the success  
of the 18<sup>th</sup> Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference  
and 12<sup>th</sup> Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference*

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# *Mandir Vani*

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Vikram Samvat 2082

## **18<sup>th</sup> HINDU MANDIR EMPOWERMENT COUNCIL CONFERENCE 12<sup>th</sup> HINDU MANDIR PRIESTS' CONFERENCE**

**September 12-14, 2025**

**DFW Hindu Temple Society (Ekta Mandir), Irving, TX 75061**

### **Editorial Board**

Dr. Surendra Nath Pandey, Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Umesh Shukla

Smt. Madhu Bhargava

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**Note:** In *Mandir Vani* and HMEC activities and discussions, the use of the term *Mandir*, *Hindu* or *Hinduism* is in very broad sense that includes all religions, places and spiritual organizations of the philosophies that have their roots in *Bhārat* भारत (India).

**Disclaimer:** Views expressed in *Mandir Vani* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the organizers of HMEC. They are meant to contribute to the understanding and enhancement of *Sanātān Dharma* सनातन धर्म, and generate awareness about the needs of the Hindu society as viewed by the authors.

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धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः (मनु स्मृति)

*Dharmo rakṣhti rakṣatah*

*Dharma protects those who protect it. (Manu Smriti)*

## *From the Editor's Desk*



It has been 17 years of successful conferences held all around USA, Canada and the Caribbean. We return to the great state of Texas after 10 years. It is rewarding for the organizers that we have witnessed increased participation by the Mandirs and the priests since HMEC and HMPC started holding the conference jointly.

Mandirs have been helpful in sustaining Dharma. Since ancient times Mandirs were built all across Bharat. While several were destroyed by the invading forces, most of them survived. Those that suffered the onslaught of the foreign forces, are being restored or completely rebuild. Shi Ram Janmbhoomi Mandir is the most well-known rebuilding after, not only being destroyed but topped by a mosque over it.

Another example of restoration is Nalanda University; the oldest residential university located in Bihar province that suffered massive destruction by the invading army in 12<sup>th</sup> century. It has been restored and the new campus in Rajgir was inaugurated by Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India on June 19, 2024 in the presence of hundreds of dignitaries including several ambassadors representing their countries. We hope the readers will find very informative an article on Nalanda University included in this issue of Mandir Vani.

In addition to Nalanda University, this issue includes several articles on promoting Sanatan Dharma, supporting Mandirs and Hindu diasporas, respect for the environment in Sanatan Dharma, Mandirs in Kashmir, Kumbh celebration in Bengal, and more. We are thankful to all the authors who have contributed to this issue of Mandir Vani.

We are grateful to those who have generously supported HMEC/HMPC and this publication. My special thanks to Smt. Madhu Bhargava for putting this magazine together.

May Sanātan Dharma guide our path!

*Surendra Nath Pandey*

Editor-in-Chief, Mandir Vani

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## Conference Venues

<b>HMEC</b> 1. Atlanta, GA (2006) 2. Edison, NJ (2007) 3. Detroit, MI (2008) 4. Washington-Baltimore area (2009) 5. Houston, TX (2010) 6. Columbus, OH (2011) 7. San Jose, CA (2012) 8. Toronto, Canada (2013) 9. Orlando, FL (2014)	10. Port of Spain, Trinidad (2015) 11. Atlanta, GA (2016) 12. Indianapolis, IN (2017) 13. Chicago, with World Hindu Congress (2018) 14. East Hanover, NJ (2019) <b>HMEC/HMPC</b> 15. Cincinnati, OH (2022) 16. Monroe Township, NJ (2023) 17. Morrisville, NC (2024) 18. Irving, TX (2025)
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॥ Narayanaya Namah, Namo Arihantanam, Buddham Sharanam Gachhami, Sat Sri Akal ॥  
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hk	Time	Topic	Role	Name
<b>18th HINDU MANDIR EMPOWERMENT COUNCIL (HMEC) AND 12th HINDU MANDIR PRIEST CONFERENCE (HMPC)</b> Sept 12 (Friday) -Sep 14 (Sunday) , 2025				
<b>Hindu Diaspora: Mahakumbh of Sanatan Traditions</b>				
<b>Friday September 12, 2025</b>				
<b>Registration</b>	<b>4:00 - 6:00 PM</b>			
<b>Session 0</b>	<b>6:00 - 6:30 PM</b>	<b>Opening Ceremony/Session</b>	<b>Welcome Address and Opening Remark</b>	<b>Sri. Manoj Chopra - Host Team Convenor</b> <b>Smt. Vallabha Tantry - HMEC Convenor</b>
			Mahakumbh experience	Mahakumbh experience sharing:  Priest Bibudutta Mishra (US Priest) Svatmaanand Swami ji (Keynote speaker) Sri. Abhaya Asthana (Mandir Executive) Sri. Rutvij Holey (youth)
	<b>6:30 - 7:30 PM</b>	Local Temples Management - 5 mins about their activities to all the congregation		Sri. Upendra Shelar
		Mandirs, Community, and Culture: The Vital Role of Socio-Cultural Organizations	Panelist	Sri. Hiten Bhutia
		Sewa International	Panelist	TBD
		Spanish translation of Ramayana	Panelist	Sri. RangaPuri Das
		My Mandir Programs: How Different?	Panelist	Sri. Suresh Lohiya
		Hindu Dharmic parenting	Panelist	Smt. Kalika Uttarkar
<b>Saturday September 13, 2025</b>				
<b>Registration</b>	<b>7:30 - 9:30 AM</b>			
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>8:30 - 9:30 AM</b>			
<b>1.1</b>	<b>8:30 - 8:40 AM</b>	<b>Opening Prayer</b>	Youth	
<b>1.2</b>	<b>8:40 - 9:30 AM</b>	<b>Temples as Anchors of Identity in the Diaspora</b>	<b>Moderator</b>	<b>Sri. Kumar Dave</b>
<b>1.2.1</b>		Karya Siddhi Hanumna Temple - waiting response for the Gita Chanting session info	Panelist	TBD
<b>1.2.2</b>		Ekta Mandir	Panelist	Sri. Manoj Chopra ji Abhishek Bansal ji
<b>1.2.3</b>		Radha Krishna Mandir - Mukundaanand ji (Youth program)	Panelist	Sri. Madhan Thirukonda
<b>1.2.4</b>		Home is where the Murti is: Faith, Family and the Faraway Temple	Panelist	Sri. Madan Gopal Dasji, ISKCON
<b>1.2.5</b>		Dharam and Deshaachar	Panelist	Sri. Rutvij Holey
<b>1.2.6</b>		Swaminarayan Gurukul Gives - to help broader American community	Panelist	Sri. Alpesh Patel

1.3	9:30 - 10:00 AM		Keynote Speaker	Svatmaanand Swami ji
1.4	10:00 - 10:30 AM		Keynote Speaker	Bhakti Rakshaka Swami ji
Break	10:30-10:45 AM	Break		
Session 2	10:45-11:35 AM	Reviving Sanatan Traditions in Modern Times	Moderator	Sri. Sanjay Mehta
2.1		Simple Agnihotra rituals	Panelist	Smt. Chitra Pargaonkar
2.2		Performing Satya Narayana rituals at devotee homes	Panelist	Smt. Anju Bhargava
2.3		Youth oriented programs at S3 Gaushala TN	Panelist	Sri. Purushottam ji
2.4		Dev Foundation - Embracing Innerself	Panelist	Sri. Vasudev Acharya ji
2.5		Role of Samskrita Bharati (Youth)	Panelist	Kum. Sravya Vemulapati
2.6		9 Day Challenge	Panelist	Dr. Laxmi Ji
Session 3	11:35 AM to 12:25 PM	Role of Performing arts in promoting the dharma in the youth.	Moderator	Smt. Anita Gupta
3.1		Tuning into the Divine: Veena Sadhana and Spiritual Exploration	Panelists	Guru Vasundhara Kikkeri (Veena Guru confirmed)
		Melodies of Meaning: Infusing Dharma into Youth Through Performing Arts	Panelists	Vidushi RajRajeshwary Rao (Vocal Guru)
		Brushstrokes of Dharma: Inspiring Youth Through Sacred Art	Panelists	Smt. Neelima Chikkodi
		Nritya for Dharma: Inspiring Youth through the Spirit of Bharatanatyam	Panelists	Smt. Bhuvana Venkatramana
		Steps of Grace: Reflections on Arangetram and Sacred Journeys	Panelists	Kum. Siddhi Tantry; Kum. Ashrita Murali
		Echoes of the Divine: Bharatanatyam Journeys	Panelists	Sri. Dhruva Sudershan
Lunch Break	12:30-1:30 pm	Lunch Break		
	1:30 to 1:40 PM	Bhav Geet		
Session 4	1:40 - 2:20 PM	Preservation of Mandir architecture (stapathya) and vigrahas	Moderator	Sri. Shashank Bhattar
		Vigraha Restoration	Panelists	Smt. Himani Shukla ji
		Significance of Temple Architecture	Panelists	Sri. Prem KV



HMPC		Priest Session (HMPC)		
Session 5	2:20 - 3:20 PM	Priest Session	Moderator/ Panelists	Sri Murali Bhattar ji; Sri Laxmi Bhamidipati ji
Session 6	3:20 - 4:10 PM	Youth & Dharma: Bridging Generations	Moderator	Sri. Shajive Jegannath
6.1		Sacred & Social: Transforming Mandirs into Vibrant Youth Hubs	Panelists	Sri. Chirag Lal
6.2		Harnessing Social Media to Boost Youth Participation in Hindu Mandirs and Organizations	Panelists	Sri. Akhil Manda Instagram Influencer: Sammyvada
6.3		Focusing on how the essence and future of mandirs lies in the presence of priests, acharyas, and gurus who preserve vedic knowledge and ritual practice without them, the deeper function and purpose of mandirs can't truly sustain. what it means to support thme in a changing world - and how sustaining the guru shishya parampara in this day and age is key to keeping our mandirs spiritually alive	Panelists	Kum. Meenakshi Sundarrajan
6.4		Kaivalya Gyan Mandir - youth programs	Panelists	Sri. Krunal Patel
6.5		Host Family	Panelists	Smt. Priya Amresh
6.6		Connecting the Mandir's with college students Shreyas Joshi	Panelists	Sri. Rasraj ji
	4:10 - 4:30 PM	Break		
	4:30 -5:00 pm	Parallel session - overview	Moderator	TBD
Session 7	5:00 to 6:00 PM	Parallel sessions		
7A		Mandir Management & Sustainability	Panelists	Sri. Prem K. V.
			Panelists	Sri. Shekhar Vemparla
			Panelists	Sri. Tushar Barot
7B		BalVihar Network	Moderator	Dr. Priya Menon
7D		Priest	Moderator	Sri. Laxmi Bhamidipati
7E		Youth	Moderator	Kum. Sohini Sircar
	6:00 - 6:30 PM	Break		

<b>Evening Program</b>	6:30 - 8:30 PM	<b>Community Dinner</b>		<b>MC: Smt. Tejal Shah</b>
	6:30 - 6:45 PM	Networking		
	6:40 - 7:30 PM	Sarva Dharma Prarthna		
		Welcome Address		<b>Sri. Vigyan Gotewal</b>
		Blessings - Dr. Prakasarao ji; Pankaj Kumar ji		<b>Dr. Prakasarao ji; Sri. Pankaj Kumar ji</b>
		VHPA Gen. Secretary remarks		<b>Sri Amitabh Mittal, Gen Sec VHPA</b>
		Elected Officials & Stage recognition of Sponsors		
		Honoring Bhutanese community		
		Skit or Bhajan		Sri. Bibudutta Mishra ji and students
	<b>7:30 Onwards</b>	<b>Bhojan Mantra and Dinner</b>		
	<b>9:00 PM</b>	<b>"Caste Rush" - movie screening</b>		
<b>Sunday September 14, 2025</b>				
	<b>8:45 - 9:00 AM</b>	<b>Prayers - Ganesh and Deepak Shloka</b>		<b>Youth</b>
<b>Session 8</b>	<b>9:00 - 9:50 AM</b>	<b>Temples as Connectors - Civic and Social duties of the Mandir</b>	<b>Moderator</b>	<b>Sri. Mohinder Gulati</b>
<b>8.1</b>		Vadtal Gadhi - will explain how he got the polling booth for his Temple	Panelists	Sri. Madan Mohan Patel
<b>8.2</b>		Hindu Matrimony Hindu Vivaah	Panelists	Sri. Nainan Desai Sri. Vigyan Gotewal
<b>8.3</b>		Empowering the Community: The Synergy Between Hindu Temples and HUA	Panelists	Sri. Kalyan Vishwanath
<b>8.4</b>		Making Hinduism overtly welcome to the non-hindus	Panelists	Sri. Fred Stella
<b>8.5</b>		Sacred Spaces and Scholarly Pursuits	Panelists	Smt. Prema Sundarajan
<b>8.6</b>		Activities of Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur	Panelists	Sri. Ketan Mehta; Sri. Sameer Shah
	<b>10:10 -11:00 AM</b>	<b>Award Ceremony</b>	<b>HMEC.HMPC</b>	<b>Sri Laxmi Bhamidipati, Smt Vallabha Tantry</b>
	<b>11:30 -12:15 PM</b>	<b>Closing Remarks and Action Items</b>	<b>Program Team</b>	<b>Smt Anita Gupta Sri Sanjay Gupta</b>
		<b>Vote of Thanks</b>		<b>Sri Laxmi Bhamidipati</b>
		<b>ENDING</b>		

# THE SALUTATION TO THE SACRIFICES AND ENDURING SPIRIT OF HINDU ANCESTORS



We pay our deepest pranām to the illustrious Hindu ancestors—Rishis, Munis, Siddhas, Āchāryas, Gurus, Sadhus, Sants, Warriors, Leaders, Kings, and Queens—who, across centuries of relentless foreign invasions, stood as unyielding sentinels of Dharma. With unwavering courage, they embraced sacrifice and martyrdom, faced death with divine resolve, and rose in heroic defense of our civilization, culture, and people during the darkest epochs of our history.

It is through their indomitable spirit, steadfast devotion, and supreme sacrifices that the eternal flame of Hindu Dharma was preserved, so that we, their descendants, may walk today with dignity, identity, pride, and purpose.

With hearts full of reverence and gratitude, we bow before them in eternal remembrance.

## *Convenor's Message*

It is with great **enthusiasm and humility** that I welcome you to the **18th Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council (HMEC)** and the **15th Hindu Mandir Priest Conference (HMPC)**, to be held from **Friday, September 12 to Sunday, September 14, 2025**, at **Ekta Mandir** in **Irving, Texas**.



Coming from a **priest-family**, I consider it a heartfelt duty and a profound privilege to serve on the HMEC team over the years. This event also coincides with the **second anniversary of my beloved mother's passing**, and I feel her guiding presence and blessings as I undertake this sacred responsibility of being the HMEC Convenor.

**Theme: "Hindu Diaspora – Mahakumbh of Sanatan Traditions"**

Inspired by the sacred spirit of the **Kumbh Mela**, this year's theme envisions HMEC as being a **modern-day Mahakumbh**, a vibrant convergence of **temples, priests, volunteers, and devotees** from all walks of life. It is a celebration of **unity in diversity**, rooted in the eternal values of **Sanatan Dharma**.

Just as the Kumbh Mela unites millions in spiritual harmony, HMEC aspires to bring together **temples and Hindu organizations** across North America, transcending regional, linguistic, and sectarian boundaries, under the shared banner of our sacred traditions. It serves as a **platform for thought leadership, meaningful dialogue, and collective action** to uplift the Hindu diaspora.

**Listed below are some of the many topics of HMEC 2025**

1. Temples as Anchors of Identity in the Diaspora
2. Youth and Dharma: Bridging Generations
3. Mandir Management and Sustainability

This year's conference will also feature:

- **Plenary sessions and parallel tracks** focused on **youth engagement and leadership**,
- Special emphasis on **Priest and Management collaboration**, for the long-term **well-being of Mandirs** and their communities.

I extend my **sincere and heartfelt gratitude** to the **volunteers of VHP-America, Dallas chapter, and Ekta Mandir** for their unwavering support. Their dedication and tireless efforts are the true backbone of this conference. We extend our **deepest gratitude to all our Sponsors** for their generous support, and to our **valuable delegates** who have traveled from across the country to be part of this meaningful event.

Your presence and participation are what make the **HMEC and HMPC** a truly enriching, inspiring and meaningful gathering. Now, more than ever, there is a strong need for our temples to be connected and united. Thank you for being a part of this collective journey in service of **Sanatan Dharma**.

**In Service of Dharma,**

**Vallabha Tantry**  
Convenor, HMEC





## *VHPA President Message*

Wednesday, August 20, 2025



Namaste & Hari AUM.

It is with great joy and pride that I welcome you to the **18th Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference (HMEC)** and the **12th Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference (HMPC)**. This year's theme, "*Hindu Diaspora – MahaKumbh of Sanatan Traditions*", reflects both the timeless heritage and the living spirit of our Dharma.

Just as the MahaKumbh Mela in Prayagraj unites millions in a sacred confluence of devotion, service, and learning, this conference aspires to bring together voices from across the global Hindu diaspora. From Mandir executives to priests, from youth leaders to community elders, from various sampradayas and traditions—we come together as one family to reaffirm our commitment to Sanatan values.

Our Mandirs serve center for Shardha (faith), Buddhi (wisdom), Karuna (Compassion) and Ekta (Unity). They are the anchors of identity in the diaspora, nurturing future generations while embracing the richness of our ancestral traditions. In all aspects of Hindu Life a Mandir play very important role where an individual finds community, purpose, and spiritual strength.

This year's conference will explore vital questions: How can we preserve and revive our traditions in modern times? How do we bridge generations, ensuring youth connect deeply with Dharma? How do we sustain our sacred art, architecture, and Vighraha with reverence and innovation? These conversations will guide us toward building resilient communities rooted in Dharma and open to the world.

I warmly invite you to participate—whether by sharing your voice as a speaker, joining as a panelist, or contributing through workshops and articles for *Mandir Vani*. Your presence and contributions will enrich this MahaKumbh of ideas, devotion, and service. Together, let us celebrate the unity, inclusiveness, and spiritual wealth of Sanatan Dharma, and let us carry forward the light of our traditions for generations to come.

With best wishes and prayers,

Tejal Amit Shah, NJ





## D/FW Hindu Temple Society Ekta Mandir

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### Welcome Message from the President - DFW Hindu Temple Society

Om Shanti and Namaste,

On behalf of the DFW Hindu Temple Society, it is my honor and joy to welcome you to the Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council (HMEC) Conference and the Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference (HMPC) 2025. This distinguished gathering brings together Hindu leaders, priests, scholars, and visionaries from across North America and the Caribbean—uniting us in our shared mission to serve, protect, and strengthen our mandirs and communities.

Hosting this conference in our beloved DFW Hindu Temple, is both a privilege and a blessing. For decades, our temple has been a hub for devotion, culture, education, and service. This weekend, it also becomes a center for thought leadership, where ideas will be exchanged, relationships deepened, and collective visions shaped for the future of Hindu dharma in the West.

May Lord Ganesha, remover of obstacles, and our deities enshrined here at DFW Hindu Temple bless these proceedings with wisdom, harmony, and success. Let us together carry forward the timeless values of Seva (selfless service), Sanskriti (culture), and Samskar (values)—ensuring they flourish for generations to come.

On behalf of our Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, volunteers, and the entire temple family, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the organizers, speakers, sponsors, and delegates who have made this conference possible.

Welcome to HMEC & HMPC 2025.

Welcome to DFW Hindu Temple.

May our time together be spiritually uplifting and truly transformative.

Dhanyavaad & Om Shanti

Manoj Chopra

President - 2025

DFW Hindu Temple Society

**स्वामी गोविन्ददेव गिरि**  
आचार्य- डी.लिट. (मानद)

उपाध्यक्ष, श्रीकृष्ण जन्मभूमि ट्रस्ट, मथुरा  
कोषाध्यक्ष, श्रीरामजन्मभूमि तीर्थक्षेत्र (न्यास), अयोध्या

॥ श्रीहरिः ॥



‘धर्मश्री’, सूर्यमुखी दत्तमंदिर के समीप,  
पुणे विद्यापीठ मार्ग, पुणे ४११०१६  
दूरभाष : (०२०) २५६५२५८९  
फैक्स : (०२०) २५६७२०६९  
swamigovindgiriji@gmail.com

## Swastivachan

The 18<sup>th</sup> joint Convention of HMEC and HMPC is indeed a welcome happening that calls for congratulations. Down the ages, from big holy places of pilgrimage to the tiniest villages, mandirs have played a vital role in the cultural Bharat that stretched from far eastern Asia to the middle east and continue to do so even today on a still broader canvass over the globe.

Mandirs, not just places of worship and prayer, play a rainbow of roles - spiritual, social, psychological, economic. In modern jargon, they are the centers of ‘connecting’, boosting the ‘we’ feeling in the community- a need that is more acutely felt on the distant shores where the Bharatiya diaspora is in a relative minority.

This year, in the Maha Kumbha at Prayagraj, the world witnessed a unique and unprecedented mammoth gathering of Hindus world over. But, in a way, getting together, celebrating our cultural and spiritual brotherhood is in our very genes. That’s how you find such gatherings all over Bharat round the year, a constantly ongoing celebration of being human, being manifestation of divinity.

On this backdrop, it is very heartening that the torchbearers of the Sanatan tradition are continuing it on the foreign soil of USA.

I congratulate and thank the organizers of this event and wish it every success.



In the service of Bharatmata

*स्वामी गोविन्ददेव गिरिः*

Swami Govindadev Giri

। महर्षि वेदव्यास प्रतिष्ठान । गीता परिवार । संत श्री ज्ञानेश्वर गुरुकुल । श्रीकृष्ण सेवा निधि ।  
Email : dharmashree123@gmail.com | Website : www.dharmashree.org

“श्री हरिनारायणो जयति”



*Hiss Holly Highness Shree 108 Lalji Maharaj  
Shree Nrigendraprasadji Ajendraprasadji Maharaj  
Shree Swaminarayan Sampraday  
Shree LaxmiNarayan Dev Peetham  
Sansthan – VADTAL, Gujarat, INDIA.*

O. No: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: June 13<sup>th</sup> 2025

### LETTER OF APPRECIATION

On behalf of Shree Swaminarayan Sampraday, Shree Laxminarayandev Peetham, with the divine blessings of His Holy Highness Shree 1008 Acharya Maharaj Shree-Vadtal.

We extend our sincere congratulations to the members of HMEC and HMPC for arranging such a magnificent celebration of ‘Sanatan Dharm, Indian Culture and Heritage’

‘Sanatan Dharma’ has always been the guide for society. Our scriptures have emphasized more on values & quality, as it is said in Rigved ‘मनुर्भव’ i.e. become a human being. Also ‘कृण्वन्तो विश्वमार्यम्’ i.e. make all the people of the world have good qualities, actions and nature.

Also, we are inspired by the ideal of Upanishad ‘वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्’ i.e. the world is one family, and therefore we pray ‘सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः। सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः’ for the welfare and prosperity of all. Along with this, our spiritual consciousness paves the way for the soul to attain 'Moksha'.

It is important, especially in today's times, for us all to make strong, organized efforts so that the entire community can benefit from the invaluable heritage of Sanatan Dharma and its message of universal welfare. The true spirit and essence of our "Sanathan Dharm and great Indian Culture" are shared with both i.e.our community and the world through such events. These efforts help the younger generation learns the values and principle of our faith and traditions, allowing them to becomes more deeply rooted in our heritage,

The efforts made by **World Hindu Council of America**, on foreign soil in this direction are highly commendable. We heartly coregulate all of the participants on their exceptional and amazing services, hard work, devotion, and support in every manner.

We hope to see more enthusiastic activities of this nature, in the upcoming years.

With Prayers to the lotus feet of Vadtalvasi Shree Lakshminarayan Dev, Shree Harikrishna Maharaj for showering His divine blessings on all the participants. Once again, congratulations and Blessings.

With Blessings of H.H. Acharya Shree Ajendraprasadji Maharaj

Bhavi Acharya Lalji Maharaj - Vadtal



**HH MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ**  
(Swami Keshavjivandas)

13 August 2025  
Anand, Gujarat

“Hindu Diaspora: Mahakumbh of Sanatan Traditions”

With deep joy, I extend my warmest wishes and prayers to the organizers, participants, and well-wishers of the Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council Annual Meeting. The chosen theme, “Hindu Diaspora: Mahakumbh of Sanatan Traditions,” beautifully reflects the essence of our Sanatan Dharma heritage; uniting hearts across continents in the eternal stream of dharma.

Just as the sacred waters of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati converge at the Kumbh Mela, the coming together of Mandirs, organizations, and leaders in this Mahakumbh of Sanatan Traditions strengthens our collective resolve to live, preserve, and share the values of our traditions. In this age of rapid change, our mandirs are not merely places of worship they are sanctuaries for moral values, spiritual wisdom, cultural identity, and selfless service.

The Hindu diaspora in America carries a sacred responsibility. While we live in diverse lands and embrace the richness of many cultures, our roots remain deeply anchored in the eternal values of Sanatan Dharma: faith, compassion, unity, humility, devotion, and service. When lived with sincerity, these values become our greatest gift to the world.

May this gathering inspire stronger bonds among Mandirs, foster greater understanding between generations, and empower all to live as torchbearers of our faith. Together, let us work to ensure that the flame of dharma burns ever brighter, guiding humanity towards peace, harmony, and righteousness.

On behalf of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, I pray to Bhagwan Swaminarayan, all the Avatars and Devas of Sanatan Dharma, and Guruhari Pramukh Swami Maharaj to bless all of you with unity, clarity of purpose, and the inner strength to serve selflessly. May your noble efforts bear lasting fruit for countless generations to come.

With prayers and blessings,

*Sadhu Keshavjivandas*

Jai Swaminarayan from Sadhu Keshavjivandas  
(HH Mahant Swami Maharaj, Spiritual Head, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha)



## THE OFFICE OF GURUDEV SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

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July 29, 2025

I am glad to learn that the Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council (HMEC) is bringing together saints, sanyasis, scholars, priests, temple officials, and volunteers through the 18th Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council Conference (HMEC) and the 12th Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference (HMPC).

In these times when Dharma is being tested from many sides, such a confluence of spiritual leaders and practitioners is truly commendable. Temples and priests play a vital role in keeping the faith and culture of the people alive. A vibrant network of capable priests and well-managed temples functions as a sanctuary of comfort, support and guidance for devotees, seekers and the weary.

When people dedicated to the service of the Divine come together, it becomes a yagya that uplifts all of humanity. My blessings to the organizers and participants of the two conferences. May your efforts bring peace, carry forward the light of wisdom and strengthen the roots of Dharma.

Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu!

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



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### **Message from Sister Ranjan, Brahma Kumaris**

On behalf of Brahma Kumaris, it is our profound honor to extend warm greetings to all who will be gathering for the HMEC and HMPC in Dallas. This sacred assembly will present a unique chance to reflect upon our timeless heritage and uplift the eternal values that inspire humanity toward truth and transformation.

At the heart of our practice is soul consciousness (Atma Chintan) - a remembrance of who we truly are: peaceful, pure, and loveful beings. In a world often clouded by noise and division, returning to our original nature and divinity will be the highest form of service. Through Raja Yoga meditation, we reconnect with the Supreme Soul, restoring harmony within and radiating peace into the world around us.

This upcoming gathering will be a celebration of unity and awakening. It calls us to reaffirm that true dharma is not merely ritual, but living wisdom—expressed daily in compassion, humility, and spiritual strength. When our inner world aligns with divine truth, our outer actions become instruments of sacred service.

Let this moment be a beacon of renewal. May it plant seeds of courage, clarity, and spiritual vision that blossom far beyond the event itself. The Brahma Kumaris offer heartfelt blessings and unwavering support for the noble intentions behind this conference. May the time spent together be enriching, enlightening, and filled with divine inspiration.

**Om Shanti.**



7405 Stoney Point Dr  
Plano, TX 75025  
secretary@jkyog.org



Dated: 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2025

## II Shree Radha Krishnabhyam Namah II

Reverential greetings to the organizers and participants of the 18<sup>th</sup> Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference (HMEC) and the 12<sup>th</sup> Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference (HMPC). Heartfelt appreciation to the organizers who have toiled selflessly for many months to make this happen.

Within a span of six decades, the Indian community in USA has successfully established itself in the North American continent but has also significantly contributed to the quality of life of the American people. Hindus have sweetened the land with the best of our traditions, beliefs, values, and customs. Yet, simultaneously, we also face the inevitable gestation pain while asserting our constitutional right to self-dignity and self-preservation in a democratic society.

The 1200 plus temples in USA and Canada bear testimony to the fact that the Indian community has fared well. The challenge now is to pass the torch on to the next generation. Accomplishing this arduous task requires adherence to the principle of "Unity in Diversity" amongst all of us. In the age of *Kali*, there is great strength in unity, and what can be accomplished together can never be achieved by individuals. So in the true spirit of India's variegated society, while we all may adhere to our diverse philosophies, let us also not forget the commonality in the belief systems amongst all the Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh organizations, that have their roots in the holy land of Bharat.

The HMEC has provided the much-needed platform for Hindus to come together and share our experiences, ideas, resources, plans, visions and difficulties. Let us build on this platform in the coming years with a lofty vision, understanding, selflessness, patience and hard work. Wishing the HMEC and HMPC 2025 all success!!!

In humble service,

*Swami Mukundananda*

(Swami Mukundananda)

Founder, JKYog



Swami Shriji

Shravan Shukla Ekadashi  
September 05, 2025  
Brahmajyoti, UK



Anoopam  
Mission

**Pujya Vallabha Tantry**  
**Convenor, HMEC, &**  
**Pujya Laxmi Bhamidipati**  
**Convenor, HMPC,**



Namaskar !

Thank you for your gracious invitation to the 18th Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council Conference (HMEC), and the 12th Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference (HMPC), scheduled during September the 12th through 14th, 2025, at DFW Hindu Temple Society, Irving, Texas in the United States.

The Sadhus at Anoopam Mission offer their prayers for an enlightening success of these conferences.

While "Hindu Diaspora : A Mahakumbh of Sanatan Traditions" - the theme of these conferences appears to be so thoughtfully conceived, the Conference topics carry great relevance for further empowering the vitality of the rejuvenation of Hindu worldview and way of life.

I am sure the enlightened speakers on the conference topics shall enliven the interactions during the conference sessions and positively invigorate the thought process of the participants, especially the youth.

Anooooam Mission, a unique Sanatan Hindu spiritual organisation founded on the philosophy of Shri Akshar Purushottam Upasana, shares the vision and appreciates the service of the HMEC for empowering Hindu Mandir and feels privileged to support the initiative.

With prayers and goodwill of all the Sadhus and devotees of Anooooam Mission worldwide,

Blessings for everyone,

*Sadhu Jashudasji Jay Swaminarayan  
and all anoopam mission purivar-*

**Guruhari Sahebji**  
Anoopam Mission

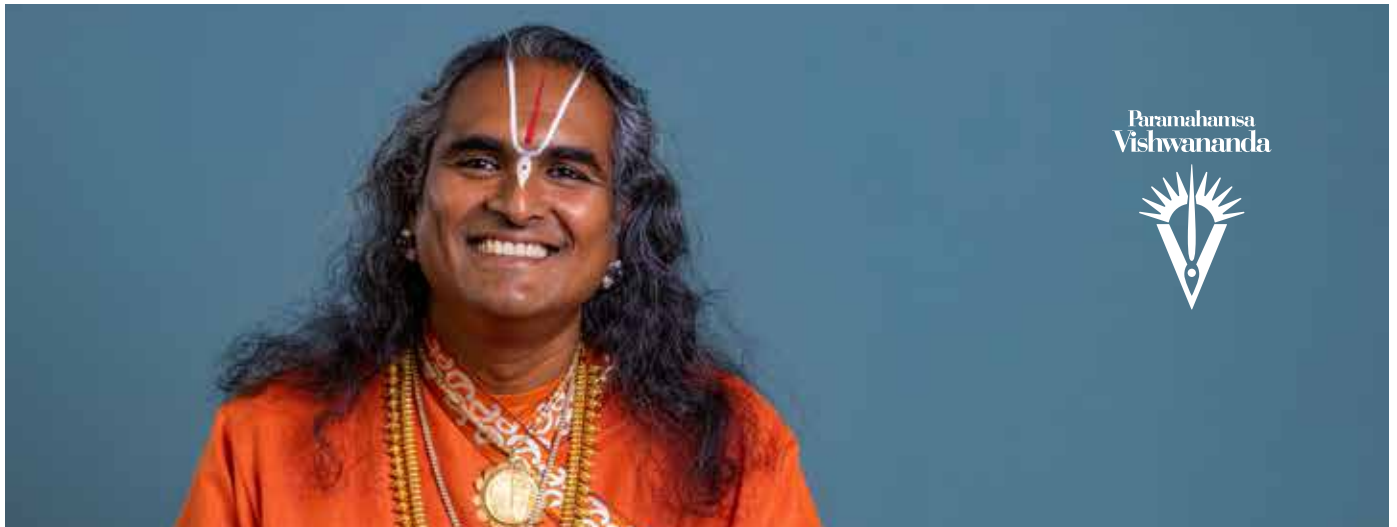
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JAI GURUDEV TO ALL,

It is with great joy that I am writing this letter today.

To come together and deepen everyone's love for the divine teachings of the Sanatan Dharma is a blessing beyond blessings. The work that you all are doing at the VHPA and HMEC is exactly that. Bringing everyone together with love, increasing awareness of timeless truths, as well as building and preserving sacred Mandirs.

A true Mandir is where everyone gathers to remember, adore, and grow together in love for God. To go beyond distinctions of the outside and see the same heart beating within everyone. To respect everyone's way of life while keeping universal peace and love at the forefront. To become an embodiment of Bhagavan's Unconditional Love and shine the light of Dharma. This is a true Mandir. A Mandir built in the hearts of all humanity. And through your service to the Sanatan Dharma, you are helping to create this.

May everyone who participates in your events be blessed to recognize and worship Bhagavan within the Mandir of their hearts, as well as help to build, protect, and nurture Mandirs around the world. Each one is a center of the most powerful energy; a center of Bhagavan's Infinite Prem. May those transcendental centers of His presence radiate their blessings forever.

I pray that Bhagavan Sri Hari's grace brings your tireless and unwavering efforts to fruition to spread His love and teachings of the True Dharma to all.

Jai Gurudev and Much Love,

PARAMAHAMSA VISHWANANDA



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## ॥ Shri Gopalprabhu vinayate ॥

With the boundless grace of Shri Vallabhadhish Prabhu, I extend my heartfelt blessings to Vishwa Hindu Parishad for their noble and selfless mission to protect, preserve, and promote the eternal values of Sanatan Dharma.

Your tireless efforts in uniting Hindus across the world, safeguarding our temples, traditions, and sacred heritage, and inspiring the younger generations to walk the path of Dharma are truly commendable.

May Shri Thakorji bless your organization with strength, wisdom, and divine inspiration, so that you continue to be a guiding light for our community and a source of unwavering service to our faith.

It is my prayer that the light of Sanatan values, rooted in truth, compassion, and righteousness, shines ever brighter through your seva, touching countless hearts across the globe.

With divine blessings,

Vaishnavacharya Pujya Shri Yadunathji Mahoday Shri

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय



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yadunathji@hotmail.com



# NĀLANDĀ UNIVERSITY: PAST AND PRESENT

By Surendra Nath Pandey, Ph.D. and Jai Bansal, Ph.D.

## In the Light of Shri Ram: The Rebirth of Nālandā, Bharat's Eternal Flame of Knowledge

In today's age of digital speed and concrete jungles, it's easy to forget that long before Oxford and Harvard ever came into being, there stood in the heart of Bharat a grand citadel of learning, Nālandā University (नालन्दा विश्वविद्यालय). Its story is not just one of bricks and manuscripts. It is a story of vision, wisdom, devotion, and loss. And now, blessed by the spirit of Shri Ram, it is a story of revival.



Long before the word “university” became part of modern vocabulary, in the year 427 CE, the ancient city of Rajgir in Bihar, Bharatvarsh saw the birth of something remarkable. Nālandā, under the patronage of the Gupta Empire, rose not merely as an institution of higher learning, but as a sacred ecosystem where young minds came from across Asia to seek not just education, but meaning.

The scale of Nālandā still stuns historians today. The campus stretched over 14 hectares, its monasteries, lecture halls, temples, and dormitories alive with the footsteps of seekers. Its libraries, yes, *plura*, were more than just rooms with scrolls. They were towering, multistoried sanctuaries of knowledge. The most renowned among them was the Dharmaganja complex, home to Ratnasagara (Ocean of Jewels), Ratnodadhi (Sea of Jewels), and Ratnaranjaka (Jewel-Adorned), each a temple of intellect housing millions of manuscripts on everything from medicine and logic to astronomy and Buddhist metaphysics.

What truly made Nālandā extraordinary wasn't just its size, but the sheer quality of its scholarship. When the Chinese monk Xuanzang (Huan Tsang) journeyed to India in the 7th century, he spent years at Nālandā, not just studying, but absorbing a way of life. He wrote with admiration that only 3 out of every 10 applicants were admitted, so rigorous were the entry standards. Nālandā wasn't just for the privileged, it was for the prepared. Those who didn't make the cut weren't turned away in despair. Instead, they often found a place at nearby universities that had sprung up to absorb the overflow, Vikramashila, Odantapuri, Jagaddala, each inspired by Nalanda's fire.

But Nālandā wasn't a quiet, inward-looking place. It was a thriving bridge between civilizations. From China and Japan to Sri Lanka and Indonesia, Nālandā's teachers carried the torch of Buddhist philosophy and dharmic wisdom. These weren't just religious missions, they were cultural conversations that shaped an entire continent's identity. The Dalai Lama, speaking in our time, once said, “The source of all the [Buddhist] knowledge we have has come from Nālandā.”

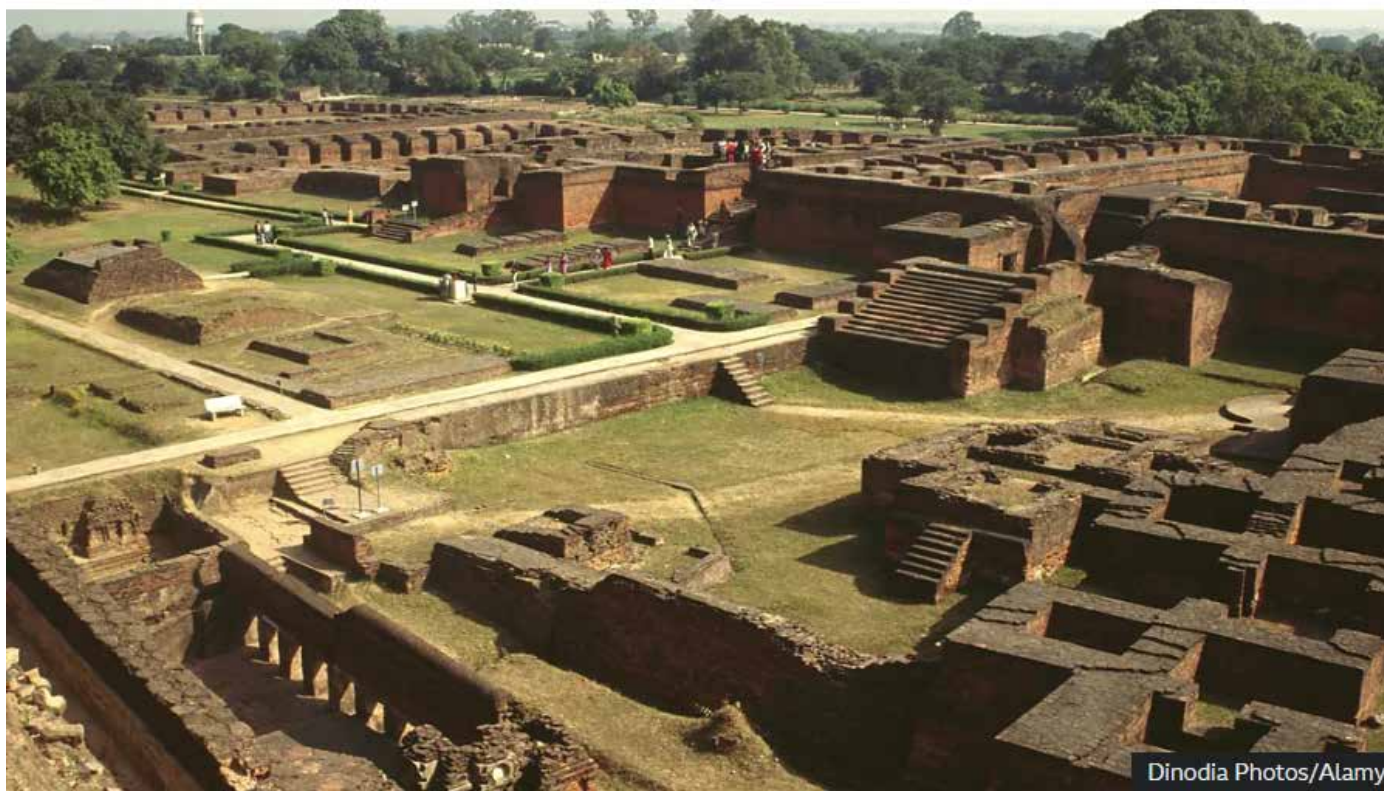
And in the middle of all this was Āryabhaṭa (आर्यभट्ट), the stargazer of Bharat. A mathematician and astronomer who likely walked Nalanda's courtyards in the 6th century CE, Āryabhaṭa gave the world a gift so revolutionary that its impact still echoes today, the number zero. Think about it: no zero, no computers, no coding, no modern science. He didn't stop there. He calculated the movement of celestial bodies, explained that moonlight was reflected sunlight, and applied trigonometry to spherical geometry, centuries before the West caught up. As Professor Anuradha Mitra from Kolkata put it, “Without zero, we wouldn't have computers.”

Unfortunately, like many sacred temples and civilizational institutions of ancient India, Nālandā University met a tragic fate, one that still echoes through the corridors of time. Once an eminent center of Buddhist scholarship and intellectual exchange, the University was reduced to ruins in the 12th century by Bakhtiar Khilji, a Turkish Muslim invader. His conquest was not limited to land alone; it was an assault on the very soul of India's knowledge traditions. When his army descended upon Nālandā, they not only toppled its majestic buildings but also set ablaze its great libraries, repositories of wisdom that held centuries' worth of manuscripts on philosophy, science, medicine, mathematics, and spiritual teachings.

So vast was Nalanda's collection that, as legend has it, the fires burned for nearly three months, swallowing up the accumulated brilliance of generations in smoke and ash. What was lost was not just paper, it was a living legacy of inquiry, debate, and profound understanding.

And yet, Nalanda's spirit could not be extinguished. Across centuries, its memory has continued to inspire reverence and reflection. From Nalanda's lecture halls emerged knowledge that crossed oceans and influenced entire civilizations, from Southeast Asia to Tibet to the Arab world. In the realms of mathematics and astronomy too, Nalanda was far ahead of its time, laying foundations that would shape global knowledge systems for generations.

Today, what survives of ancient Nālandā lies across roughly 23 hectares of excavated ruins, now protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Though just a fragment of what once stood, a grand



The excavated Unesco site extends for 23 hectares, but is likely a mere fraction of the original campus (Credit: Dinodia Photos/Alamy)

academic city that welcomed students from across Asia, the remnants of red-brick monasteries, classrooms, and stupas still seem to whisper stories of an era when India was the intellectual heart of the East. Walking through those silent ruins, one can still feel the hum of dialogue, the discipline of seekers, and the quiet dignity of a civilization that revered wisdom above all.



Recognizing Nalanda's timeless significance, the Government of India launched efforts to bring it back to life. Though the Nālandā University Act was passed in 2010, the project remained stagnant for years, mired in bureaucratic delays and allegations of mismanagement. It wasn't until Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure that this dormant vision found renewed purpose. Under his leadership, construction of the new university campus began in earnest in 2017, reflecting India's broader commitment to cultural revival and its 'Act East' Policy, which seeks to deepen ties with Asia, just as Nālandā once did centuries ago.

And then, on June 19, 2024, history turned a corner. Prime Minister Modi formally inaugurated the new Nālandā University campus. In a deeply symbolic gesture, he planted a sapling of the Bodhi tree, a living emblem of awakening and continuity. The ceremony, held under open skies in Rajgir, was attended by dignitaries including the Governor and Chief Minister of Bihar, spiritual leaders, and scholars from around the world. Along with India, there are 17 Participating Countries in this endeavor - Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Mauritius, Myanmar, New Zealand, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. Ambassadors of these countries came to Nalanda to participate in the inaugural ceremony. It was not just a political event, it was a civilizational moment.

A phoenix had risen from the ashes.

Nalanda University (2025)

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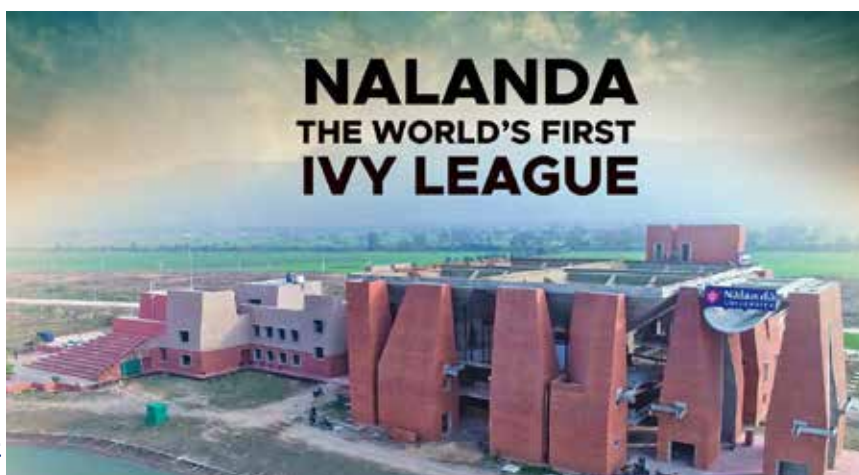
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## Authors



Dr. Surendra Nath Pandey is retired Professor of Physics, and Dean of Arts & Science, Albany State University. His past professional engagements include serving as President of Georgia Academy of Science, Chairman of Academic Advisory Committee of the University System of Georgia, Consultant for the College Board and Educational Testing Service. He has been the editor of Mandir Vani for over 15 years, and is a member of VHPA Governing Council. He served as Georgia State Coordinator for 5 years, and is now serving as Alabama State Coordinator for AARP Driver Safety Program. At the local level he served on the Boards of Dougherty Area Regional Transportation Study, Chehaw Park Foundation, Albany Tomorrow, and Albany-Dougherty Recreation Advisory Board.



Dr. Jai Bansal is a scientist, author, and community leader with a keen interest in Indian history and in exploring the contributions of the Hindu civilization to the world. He currently serves as the Vice President of Education for the World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), as well as a member of its executive board and the governing council.

After a distinguished career spanning 38 years, Dr. Bansal retired in 2014 as the Chief Scientific Officer and the Global Technology Development Advisor of a global petrochemical company. From 2014 to 2018, he served as an advisor to the Argonne National Laboratory, Chicago, and the US Department of Energy. He holds a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Waterloo, Canada. He has published widely and holds over two dozen scientific patents.

# Preservation, Protection, Promotion and Perpetuation of Vedic Culture

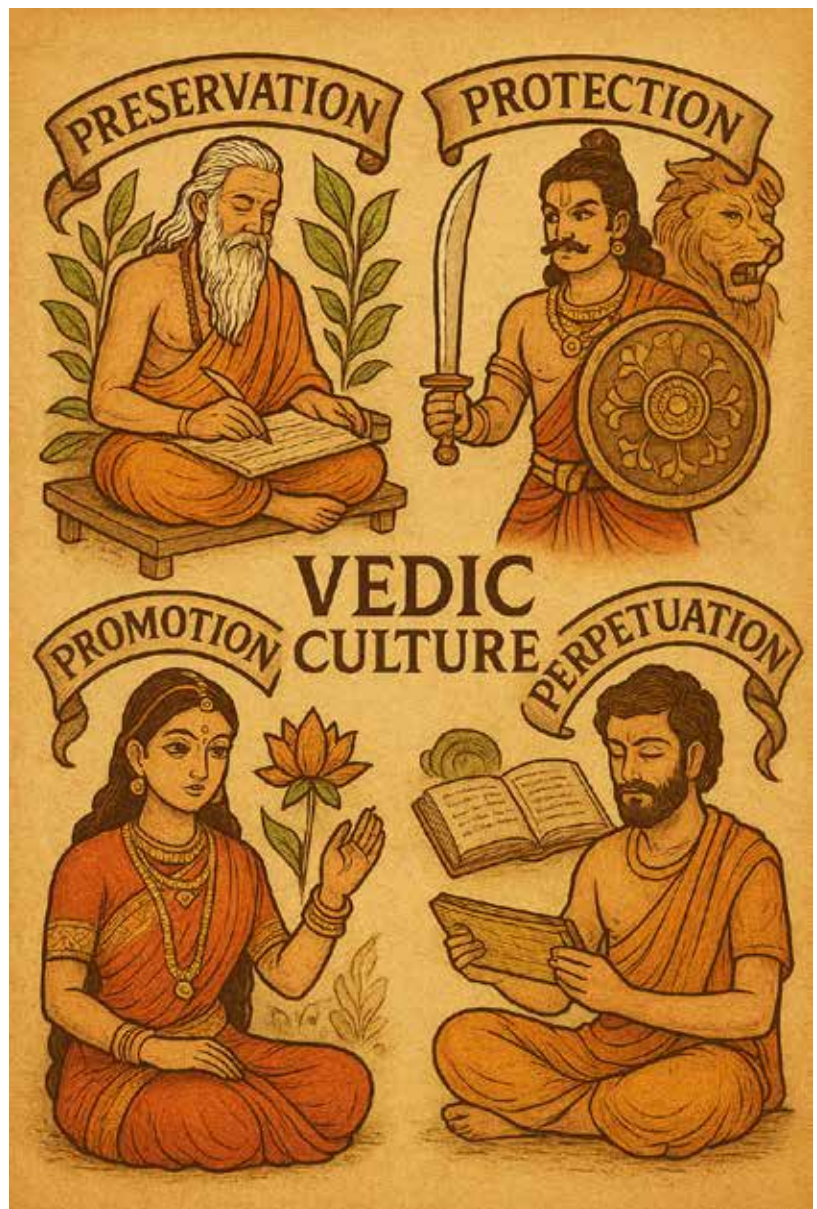
by Stephen Knapp

Often times I am asked what to do to make sure we can secure the future of Vedic culture, Sanatana-dharma. So, I have developed this formula which I have repeated for years, and I am surprised how others have also adopted, or agreed with, or use variations on this formula in their own articles or talks. It consists of the following steps of preservation, protection, promotion and perpetuation of Vedic culture's existence. I call these "the four pers".

One of the primary needs for Vedic culture right now, especially in places like India, is to follow this formula. Why? Because I have traveled all over India and have seen many situations where this formula is most needed. I have already written some reports on this, but let me elaborate a little more clearly on what is meant by this formula.

**PRESERVATION:** is the first step. You have to work in ways to preserve the culture to make sure it will also be around over the long term so others can learn about it, take advantage of its wisdom, and even follow it for their own spiritual progress. This may include, but not limited to, such things as:

1. Preserve the great and ancient Vedic texts. These all must be saved.
2. Preserve the main yoga systems, the dharmas that lead to God.
3. Preserve the temples and let them be freely maintained by those Hindus and devotees who are most sincere and qualified.
4. Keep the rituals intact and performed in the temples and allow others who are sincere to partake in them.
5. Make sure we can easily continue our practice of the Dharmic ways for spiritual upliftment.
6. Practice the traditions, such as the holidays and spiritual paths in everyday life.



**PROTECTION:** is the next step. This means to make sure that Vedic culture is never extinguished or taken away from us. Even if you do what you can to preserve the tradition, it may also come under attack in many ways. So, you have to help protect it by:

1. Overcoming negative impressions that people may try to use to unnecessarily criticize or demean it.
2. Be on guard for negative press in newspapers or television, and work to correct it.
3. Watch for the use of devious ways and false statements that are used to convert people from the Vedic path to some other religion.
4. Be careful even of politicians who have a disdain for God, or for the Vedic culture, and who try to work against it or promote some other ideology or religion at the cost of the Vedic institutions. This also means to make sure we vote for the right politicians who will help protect Vedic culture.
5. Work to maintain our freedom to allow ourselves the means to continually participate in the Vedic traditions.
6. Work to counteract any laws that are passed that force Hindus or devotees to limit their ability to partake in the Vedic traditions, or that penalize them simply for being Hindu.
7. We must realize that there are elements in society, whether they be certain politicians, certain religions, or even political parties who would love to see the diminishment or even the complete extermination of Hindus, devotees and Vedic culture. We need to make sure this never happens, which means we must work to maintain our freedom. Such freedom to engage in our Vedic traditions is not something that is easily handed to us, as the war of Kurukshetra clearly shows. But we must at times fight to maintain our freedom, in this case our freedom to practice Sanatana-dharma. Without that, then what will become of us? What is the purpose of life without it? There should be no question about its importance for one and all, and the need to protect it.

**PROMOTION:** this is important whether we like it or not. Many times Hindus feel there is no proselytizing in Vedic culture, so you have to be born into it or something like that, and there should be no process to convert others. However, in this day and age this is but a prescription for a slow extinction. Everyone and everything promotes what they have. Just like an author, he may have written the best book ever, but if no one knows about it, no one will buy it. Promotion of some form is a must. And the Vedic tradition is one of the most profound and dynamic cultures the world has ever seen. But if people do not know this, why would they be interested to investigate it?

Therefore, there is a great need to let others know about it. This does not mean that you have to be in a conversion campaign, but you can certainly share what you know of it. Many people are looking for deeper levels of spirituality, but they do not know where to look, or they do not know the depth of what the Vedic path or its knowledge has to offer. Someone has to be willing to tell them. In fact, we all should be willing. Therefore:

1. Everyone can be a Vedic Ambassador to simply share with other seekers the ways the Vedic culture has helped them and what they have gotten out of it, and point out the difference it has made in their life.
2. Promote it as a spiritual path that can help solve many of the world's problems.
3. Distribute to the masses the simpler portions of the Vedic texts, such as Bhagavad-gita, or various forms of introductory literature that can introduce and easily explain what the Vedic path is



so others can benefit from it and apply it to their lives.

4. Distribute this literature for colleges, schools, personal homes, so it can spread.
5. Educate people in this knowledge, especially the youth so they are aware of it and know it. And hold programs wherein the youth can be a part of it and learn how to practice it.
6. Open the temple doors to all who want to come and investigate it or be a part of it so others can see what it is and how to get started and join in.
7. Offer classes on yoga and Vedic philosophy for the same reason. Vedic culture is not just rituals, but it is a deep and profound philosophy that has answers to the questions about life that people have. It is also an integral system by which a person can reach their highest potential. This system incorporates yoga, pranayama, meditation, Ayurveda, Jyotish, Vastu Shastra, and other tools that can be used to help a person remain physically healthy, and in shape mentally, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.
8. Arrange for radio or even cable TV programs so everyone can learn from it or stay connected.
9. These days many are creating podcasts, youtube videos, or by using other forms of social media to reach thousands of people and help them learn the great wisdom within the Vedic traditions.

**PERPETUATION:** this is why we do all of the above. How can we keep Vedic culture a flourishing and dynamic path? By doing all of the above, and providing the means to show people how to practice it. Without the preservation, protection, and promotion of Vedic culture, it cannot be perpetuated. This is where such things as the following can be helpful:

1. Establish and maintain temples that help uphold and show how to practice the Vedic traditions (I have written a whole book on what can be done to help manage temples).
2. Hold classes and study groups, either at temples or at homes, wherein people get together to comfortably converse on various topics of the Vedic texts to help everyone understand it and how deep or practical it is, and then invite friends to join.
3. As mentioned above, spread this knowledge through book distribution, radio, social media, and various other programs, so people can learn about it and utilize it in their lives. Once their interest is piqued, they will continue their investigation of it.
4. Set yourself as an example for those who know you, but at least for your family and children so they begin to understand it, recognize its potential and practice it as well. If you take it seriously, it will leave positive impressions on others.
5. Perpetuation means to develop the ways wherein Vedic culture will continue to thrive for many generations to come. This means that the youth, our children, must be given the proper examples and motivation to learn about it. But it must be done in a way that is fun for them and in a way they can easily understand. The mantra for many of the youth is, "What's in it for me." Or "What am I going to get out of it?" So we, and especially the parents, must be able to explain this to them.
6. This requires that the parents must be educated in the basics of the Vedic philosophy because if they are not, the children will see this and take up the same indifference as their parents. This will certainly create a slow decline in the interest in Sanatana-dharma with each generation that goes by, and this must be corrected.

There are many other points that can be listed. I have already written detailed action plans elsewhere that can be used to carry these ideas much further. But the main issue is that we have to work to keep the Vedic culture very much alive and available for everyone. It is what I call the “last bastion of deep spiritual truth.” If this should ever disappear, the world will never know what it has lost, and it will never be the same.

Some people may say that it is an eternal religion, Sanatana-dharma, so it will never fade away. But have they really read the Bhagavad-gita, wherein Lord Krishna explains that one of the reasons why He appeared was to re-establish the Vedic Dharma, which had become lost?

Lord Krishna says, “I instructed this imperishable science of yoga to the sun-god, Vivasvan, and Vivasvan instructed it to Manu, the father of mankind, and Manu in turn instructed it to Ikshvaku. This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way. But in course of time the succession was broken, and therefore the science as it appears to be lost. That very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as My friend; therefore, you can understand the transcendental mystery of this science.” (Bg.4.1-3)

So, yes, it is eternal but can disappear from the face of the earth, and does at times. It is up to those of us who are serious and sincere to make sure that it can continue being a practical and thriving spiritual culture far into the future by applying the above-mentioned four principles.

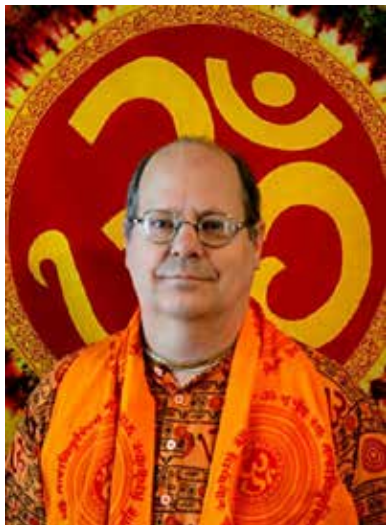
Dharmo Rakshati Rakshata, and Jai Sri Krishna

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Stephen Knapp won an HMEC Lifetime Contribution Award in 2024, a Lifetime Contribution Award from the VHPA in 2024, and the Padma Shri Award this year in the category of Literature and Education, all for:

1. Practically 50 years of temple management at various Krishna temples, including being temple treasurer, accountant, manager, landlord, and priest or pujari, and now Chairman of the Board at the Detroit Krishna temple in the mission of Srila Prabhupada.
2. Writing over 50 books to help present and spread the understanding of Vedic spirituality and history of India to people around the world.
3. Having written hundreds of articles on India's Vedic tradition.
4. Having gone on several extensive lecture tours across various parts of India, including two of India's northeast regions, to speak about applying the Vedic traditions to one's life at numerous colleges, universities and corporations, as organized by the RSS, VHP, Vivekananda Kendra, Kalyana Ashrama, and Iskcon, and on how to preserve and protect the Vedic culture of India.
5. Having attended and spoken at numerous conferences both here in America and in India and elsewhere about the Vedic culture and its traditions.
6. And for other things like being the past president of the Vedic Friends Association for 15 years.

# TIMELESS PRINCIPLES:

## Reviving Sanatana Traditions in Modern Times

By Srinivas Rao Mangu

Sanatana Dharma is the world's oldest living tradition that provides a framework for an individual, a society, and the environment at large to coexist, prosper, celebrate life, and pursue the greater goals of life that go beyond material well-being without undermining it. Its relevance in modern times cannot be overstated as we face large-scale environmental degradation<sup>1</sup>, a mental health epidemic<sup>2</sup>, an alarming increase in substance abuse<sup>3</sup>, decline of the family as a unit<sup>4</sup>, and many other challenges. Although Sanatana Dharma can play a major role in combatting each of these challenges, this article focuses on the issue of environmental degradation. According to the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), humans are using 1.6 times the resources that the earth can replenish every year. Clearly this is not sustainable and current efforts, although slowing the pace down, have largely been unsuccessful. The current growth-based development model has limitations. Humanity faces a dead-end in terms of fundamental assumptions that shape our lives, and a radical shift in current paradigm is imperative if we are to save the planet and along with it, the life that it inhabits.

इयं पृथिवी सर्वेषां भूतानाम् मधु, अस्यै पृथिव्यै सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु ।

*This earth is like honey for all beings, all beings are like honey for the earth.*

—Madhu Vidya (Honey Doctrine) of Sage Dadhyann. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad (2.5)<sup>5</sup>

Every society operates with an underlying philosophy of who we are, what is our purpose and what is our relationship with the world around us. The modern world was largely shaped during the colonial era and the industrial revolution. Industrial production, consumer-oriented economy, and geo-politics over the control of resources are the realities of human existence today. However, perhaps, the underlying philosophy was shaped by the Judeo-Christian ideas of man and his relationship with nature<sup>6</sup>.

*Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." - Book of Genesis 1:26*

As evident from the Madhu Vidya of Rishi Dadhyann, Sanatana Dharma emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life and the reverence for nature as a manifestation of the divine. Its teachings, rooted in the ancient Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas, provide a spiritual and ethical framework for environmental conservation. Sanatana Dharma prioritizes respect for the environment through everyday common practices that symbiotically embody a deep reverence for nature and its ecosystems over quantitative and academic understanding of these complex relationships.

Below, are some themes embodied in select shlokas that demonstrate how Sanatana Dharma can play a role in prioritizing nature in our consciousness and everyday life.

### Reverence for Nature as Divine

Sanatana Dharma views nature as a sacred expression of the divine, with elements like rivers, mountains, trees, and animals considered manifestations of Brahman (the universal consciousness). This reverence fosters a deep respect for the environment, encouraging sustainable practices.

यत्ते मध्यं पृथिवि यच्च नभ्यं यास्त ऊर्जस्तन्वः संबभूवुः ।

तासु नो धेह्याभि नः पवस्व माता भूमिः पुत्रो अहं पृथिव्याः पर्जन्यः पिता स उ नः पिपर्तु ॥१२॥

*Earth Mother, whatever is in the midst of your person, whatever is at the centre of your person, and your gift for us from the clouds and the sky, and all that is the nutrients and energy from your body, pray establish us therein, make us pure and strong.*

*The earth is my mother; I am a child of the Earth Mother's. The sky and the rain cloud from the sun and sky is my father. I am a child of Nature. May the father and mother give us total fulfillment. —Atharva Veda 12.1.11 (Translation by Dr. Tulsi Ram) <sup>7</sup>*

The above verse from the Atharva Veda underscores the filial bond between humans and the Earth, promoting a sense of responsibility to protect it as one would care for their own mother. It encourages sustainable land use and discourages exploitation. By treating the Earth as a mother, Sanatana Dharma inspires practices like organic farming, afforestation, and reducing pollution to honor and preserve the planet.

### Interconnectedness of All Life

Sanatana Dharma teaches that all beings (Jivatmas) are interconnected through the universal consciousness, Brahman. This worldview fosters a sense of unity with nature, discouraging actions that disrupt ecological harmony.

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।

सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥ ६ ॥

“He who sees all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings, feels no hatred.”

—Ishavasya Upanishad, Verse 6 (Translation by S. Sitarama Sastri) <sup>8</sup>

This verse highlights the unity of all existence, encouraging respect for all life forms. Recognizing the divine in every element of nature fosters actions that preserve ecosystems rather than destroy them. This principle supports biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource use, and community-driven environmental initiatives, as harming nature is akin to harming oneself.

### Protection of Natural Resources

Sanatana Dharma emphasizes dharma (duty) toward maintaining balance in the universe, including the responsible use of natural resources like water, air, and forests.

आपः शान्तिः पृथिवी शान्तिः औषधयः शान्तिः ।

विश्वं शान्तिः सर्वं शान्तिः शान्तिरेव शान्तिः सा मा शान्तिरेधि ॥



*May the waters be peaceful, may the Earth be peaceful, may the herbs be peaceful, may the universe be peaceful, may everything be peaceful, may peace itself be peace, may that peace come to me. —Yajurveda 36.17<sup>9</sup>*

This prayer for peace extends to all elements of nature, recognizing their role in maintaining universal harmony. It calls for protecting natural resources to ensure ecological balance. It underscores the importance of water conservation, soil preservation, and the protection of medicinal plants, encouraging practices like rainwater harvesting and sustainable agriculture.

### **Sacredness of Rivers and Forests**

Rivers and forests are revered in Sanatana Dharma as divine entities, with texts prescribing their protection to maintain spiritual and ecological balance. Rivers are personified as goddesses in Sanatana Dharma (e.g., Ganga, Yamuna). The reverence for rivers inspires movements like the Ganga cleaning initiatives, while the sanctity of forests encourages afforestation and the protection of sacred groves.

In Valmiki's Ramayana, Hanuman meets Rama & Laxmana for the first time to investigate whether they are Vali's spies or friends. He uses his Kamarupam Siddhi (shape shifting ability) in bhikshu-rupam (ascetic) and asks them in a somewhat concerned tone:

राजर्षि देव प्रतिमौ तापसौ संशित व्रतौ ॥  
देशम् कथम् इमम् प्राप्तौ भवन्तौ वर वर्णिनौ ।  
त्रासयन्तौ मृग गणान् अन्याम् च वन चारिणः ॥

*You look like tpsavis with daiva pratima, what brings you both to this desham (land) disturbing and scaring (trasayantau) animals/herds (mrug gaNaana) and other inhabitants of the vana? —Valmiki Ramayana 4.3.5,6<sup>10</sup>*

Readers familiar with Valmiki's Ramayana will notice a consistent undertone of concern for not disrupting the order/balance of nature throughout the narration. Upholding dharma means indulging in karma in a way that causes the least himsa or disruption to everything and everyone around you, i.e., minimizing your footprint on prakriti -- the very essence of Rishi Dadhyan's Madhu Vidya. The deep connection of overall well-being/ ecological preservation and powerful story telling that recognizes all aspects of nature as a living being just as real as oneself is deeply insightful. The fact that it does not attempt to inspire one to achieve material prosperity (nor discourage it) but instead aspires to transcend it in a joyful state as one traverses grihasta (house holder) stages of life is so progressive that many a modern mind, limited to using rational faculties alone, often dismiss it altogether as primitive superstition and becoming their own fatal impediment toward *Sarvesham Mangalam Bhavatu!*

### **Practical Applications in Modern Context**

As discussed earlier, Sanatana Dharma's principles can be applied to modern environmental challenges:

Sustainable Living: Practices like minimalism, reducing waste, and using renewable energy align with the principle of aparigraha (non-possessiveness).

Community Initiatives: Sacred grove conservation in India, rooted in Hindu traditions, preserves

biodiversity hotspots.

Policy Advocacy: The spiritual emphasis on nature can inspire policies for pollution control, wildlife protection, and climate change mitigation.

Education and Awareness: Teaching these shlokas and their environmental implications can foster eco-conscious mindsets in communities.

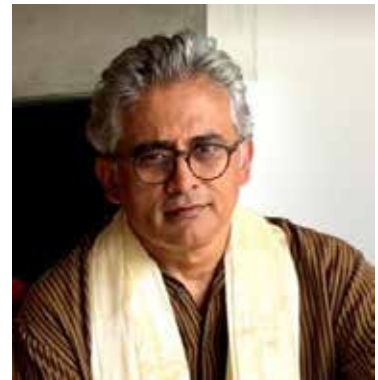
## Conclusion

Sanatana Dharma provides a robust framework for environmental stewardship through its reverence for nature, emphasis on non-violence, recognition of interconnectedness, and duty to protect resources. The quoted shlokas from the Vedas, Upanishads, and Ramayana illustrate a timeless ethos that goes above and beyond modern conservation efforts. By integrating these teachings into daily life, individuals and communities can contribute to safeguarding the environment for future generations.

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# ***Hindu Temples: Guardians of Civilization***

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For centuries, Hindu temples have stood as timeless beacons, connecting past to present and homeland to global Hindu communities. Across India and countries including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean, these temples unite Hindus beyond linguistic and cultural differences. By hosting shared rituals, festivals, and institutions, they sustain Hindu identity, heritage, and community across continents. Historically, temples also served as centres of education, culture, social welfare, and local governance, reinforcing their role as cornerstones of Hindu solidarity worldwide.

Today, the Mandir has been reduced to a venue for religious rituals and occasional social gatherings. The profound functions it once served have been neglected or outsourced under the combined pressures of colonial disruption, state interference, and societal complacency.

This narrowing of purpose raises urgent questions in the present context. We live in an era where [Hinduphobia](#) is rising in multiple countries. The Hindu diaspora's next generation is becoming increasingly disconnected from its heritage, anti-Hindu policies and state control of temples persist in India, and deceptive, large-scale religious conversions erode communities. Against such headwinds, the Mandirs need to serve as a civilisational anchor, a place where Hindus are spiritually nourished, intellectually engaged, socially connected to uphold Dharm.

To understand why, we must first revisit the temple's original role at the centre of Hindu society.

## **The Mandir's Historic Role as the Nucleus of Hindu Society**

In South Asia's history, Hindu temples were far more than sites of worship, they served as community hubs that united people across social and geographic lines. Hindu temples were vital centres of religious, social, cultural, and economic life. Even when the kings funded construction of temples, after consecration these were handed over to the community to manage. The State was not afforded any role in its management.

### **1. Temples as Political and Diplomatic Centres**

*Chola temples were not only religious centres but also major economic institutions, owning land, receiving endowments, and shaping the country's social and economic life. Under the Vijayanagara Empire (1336–1565 CE), temples in Hampi were central to state power, receiving royal gifts of money and gold to sustain services and commerce. They acted as landholders, employers, and trade regulators, redistributing tax revenues as charity, scholarships, and wages. Political authority flowed through temples, with rulers as protectors of dharma and markets, reinforcing legitimacy. The Vijayanagara rulers encouraged pilgrimages within their own empire, possibly to integrate the different language zones within the realm. Ahilya Bai Holkar (1725–1795), the Maratha queen of*

*Indore... revitalized sacred sites like Kashi, Somnath, Dwarka, and Rameshwaram, ensuring their survival after invasions... Her work helped knit together a Pan-Indian network of temples, reinforcing Hindu identity during politically turbulent times.*

**2. Temples as Socio-Political Catalysts** *In medieval Odisha, the Jagannath temple at Puri embodied Hindu unity by integrating tribal and local deities. Festivals like the Rath Yatra, with nobles, priests, and commoners jointly pulling chariots and sharing prasadam, “significantly impact the social fabric of Puri” and transcend caste barriers. Ahilya Bai Holkar, by creating pilgrimage facilities and connecting distant holy places, fostered inter-regional travel and cultural unity among Hindus.*

**3. Temples as Providers of Social Welfare** *Burton Stein in his study of medieval South India, describes how temples administered land grants, organized festivals, and provided relief for the poor, thus integrating social functions. The Brihadeeswara temple at Tanjavur exemplified how temples functioned as economic powerhouses, owning lands, employing hundreds, and supporting diverse professions. They acted as landholders, lenders, and patrons of education, healthcare, and the arts, binding rulers, guilds, and communities together. Community meals (Mahaprasad) were shared “irrespective of caste, creed and religion,”*

**4. Temples as Knowledge Repositories** *Temple complexes were the principal institutions that nurtured classical arts and education, thereby promoting cultural continuity and community identity. Many temples supported schools (agharas) for Vedic learning, Sanskrit studies, and local traditions, uniting people around shared knowledge and cultural values. Many, like those of the Chola Empire, were renowned seats of learning in philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. In Thailand, the 1,000-year-old Prasat Muang Tam, dedicated to Lord Shiva, featured ancient manuscript libraries. Cambodia’s famed Angkor Wat remains the world’s largest religious structure, yet others like 12th-century Angkor Thom are lesser-known. Indonesia’s 9th-century Prambanan Trimurti Temple reflects grand Hindu architecture.*

**5. Temples as Economic Engines** *Stein mentions, “Not only did these institutions directly fulfil the narrowly constructed religious needs of the most respectable (sātvik) groups in South Indian society, but... continued to have major economic importance, to be centres of learning, to be focuses of local pride and identity, as well as being theatres of every form of artistic expression.”*

*Through joint ritual and economic life, temples reinforced a shared cultural and religious identity, with festivals and carnivals drawing villagers of all castes into communal participation*

## **The Shrinking Mandir – Post-Colonial Decline and State Control**

The decline in the functional scope of Hindu temples did not begin in the 21st century; it was preceded by centuries of disruption, beginning with the large-scale destruction and plunder during Islamic



invasions and later Christian iconoclasm under European colonial powers. The mandir, once a sovereign institution of economic, cultural, and educational influence, was systematically stripped of its autonomy, first by foreign conquest, then by British policy, and finally by independent India's own state apparatus.

### **The British Dismantling of Temple Economies**

Under pre-colonial Hindu polities, temple wealth was not merely a matter of accumulated donations; it formed the basis of extensive land endowments and revenue streams that sustained elaborate temple economies, its role as social welfare and educational institution, and checks and balances on public policies. This model was deliberately undermined by British colonial policies. Beginning with the East India Company's assumption of temple administration in the early 19th century, notably through the *Madras Regulation VII of 1817* (The Madras Code, Charitable Endowments, Superintendent of Government print., 1876, page 82) colonial authorities justified their interference under the guise of "protecting" religious institutions from mismanagement. In reality, they restructured temple revenues into taxable assets, diverted resources to the state, and severed the organic economic link between temples and the communities they served<sup>1</sup>.

### **Continued State Control After 1947**

After 1947, state control over Hindu temples persisted, unlike the full autonomy granted to mosques, churches, and gurudwaras. Governments appoint trustees, manage assets, and divert surplus funds for secular uses, raising constitutional concerns. In Tamil Nadu, the HR&CE Department controls over 44,000 temples, handling vast wealth and ritual affairs. Persistent allegations include neglect, mismanagement, land encroachment, and diversion of funds away from Hindu purposes.

### **From Civilisational Centres to Ritual Spaces**

Decades of external control have shrunk the mandir's role to mainly rituals and festivals, eroding its historic functions in knowledge, welfare, and community defence. As the noted Historian Meenakshi Jain notes, dismantling its economic and cultural base has ruptured Hindu civilisational continuity.

While devotional life within temples remains vibrant, the institutional capacity of the mandir to address societal challenges has been curtailed. In an age when Hindu communities face both internal and external threats from targeted violence to cultural deracination, the mandir's narrowed role leaves a void no other institution fills.

### **Contemporary Temples as Global Anchors**

Hindu temples in the global community have become vibrant hubs of cultural preservation and solidarity. Beginning with small prayer gatherings in devotees' basements, the Sri Siva Vishnu Temple in Lanham, Maryland, was formally consecrated in 1991 (ssvt.org) and now serves over 11,000 families in the Washington, D.C. area's 65,000 Hindus (Washington Post, 2002). Its ongoing expansions, including a towering rajagopuram, have transformed it into a cultural and spiritual hub

Similarly, the BAPS Swaminarayan network, with over 500 mandirs in 45 countries, fosters transnational connections through language classes, scripture study, music, dance, and festivals. Youth programs like Maryland's "Aakaar" group and BAPS Charities' 13 million annual volunteer hours ensure heritage transmission and community service.

Temples unite diverse regional, linguistic, and caste groups under a shared Hindu identity, participate in interfaith dialogue, and engage in civic initiatives ([ijrtssh.com](http://ijrtssh.com)). In Britain, the National Council of Hindu Temples connects over 200 mandirs ([thenchtuk.org](http://thenchtuk.org)), while in Malaysia and Singapore, historic temples like Kuala Lumpur's Sri Mahamariamman sustain Tamil heritage through schools, festivals, and arts programs.

Contemporary diaspora temples thus continue ancient traditions, linking Hindus across continents and generations, and embodying the unifying and adaptive spirit of Sanātana Dharma through art, culture, and education.

### **Why the Mandir Must Rise Again – From Ritual Space to Civilisational Hub**

The functional scope of the mandir has historically extended far beyond worship, encompassing the dissemination of dharmic ethics (Dharma Shiksha) in people's daily lives as well as governance by the State, preservation of heritage (Itihasa–Purana studies), and the cultivation of skills within a culturally anchored framework. Restoring this multi-dimensional role is imperative in the current era, when Hindu communities globally contend with challenges such as intensifying Hindu phobia, organised religious conversions, and the erosion of inter-generational cultural transmission.

Re-envisioned as centres of cultural education, community dialogue, and value transmission, mandirs can also serve as strategic nodes of global Hindu solidarity, connecting the diaspora with Bharat through advocacy, humanitarian relief, and heritage exchange. Modern exemplars such as ISKCON illustrate the potential of blending traditional worship with youth engagement, educational initiatives, and service projects, while historical precedents like the Chola maritime temple network demonstrate the integration of religious, economic, and diplomatic functions across geographies.

A "Global Network of Hindu Temples" ([www.ghtn.in](http://www.ghtn.in)) a platform for shared awareness, advocacy coordination, and crisis-response, would enable temples worldwide to transcend their current isolation and reclaim their historic function as cohesive guardians of Hindu civilisation.

### **Introspection, Action, and the Call for Civilisational Renewal**

If the mandir is to reclaim its stature, temple boards and leadership must first engage in critical self-reflection:

- Are we preparing the next generation to defend and live Hindu dharma?
- Are we addressing social, ethical, and political challenges facing Hindus?
- Are we managing temple wealth with transparency and using it for dharmic causes?

Actionable steps follow naturally from these questions:

- **Reclaim education** - weekend Sanskrit, shastra, and Hindu history classes.
- **Use temple halls for advocacy** - host talks on civilisational issues, legal rights, and cultural pride.
- **Fund advocacy, legal aid and relief efforts** - support persecuted Hindu communities globally.
- **Foster diaspora-Bharat partnerships** - enable mutual learning, resource pooling, and cultural exchange.

The historical record is unambiguous: the temple once integrated the political, social, cultural, economic, and spiritual life of the Hindu world. To confine it to ritual is to imperil civilisational continuity. This is not a sentimental appeal but a strategic necessity. Mandirs must once again become the coordinated guardians and generators of Hindu civilisation, ensuring its unbroken vitality for millennia to come.

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# LORD KRISHNA'S DWARKA: THE UNDERWATER DISCOVERY

By Dr. Jai G. Bansal

Across the world, civilizations have recognized that recovering and honoring their ancient past is essential to affirming their national identity and cultural confidence. In Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and beyond, archaeology has become a means to rekindle national identity, stitch together broken histories, and reclaim cultural destiny.

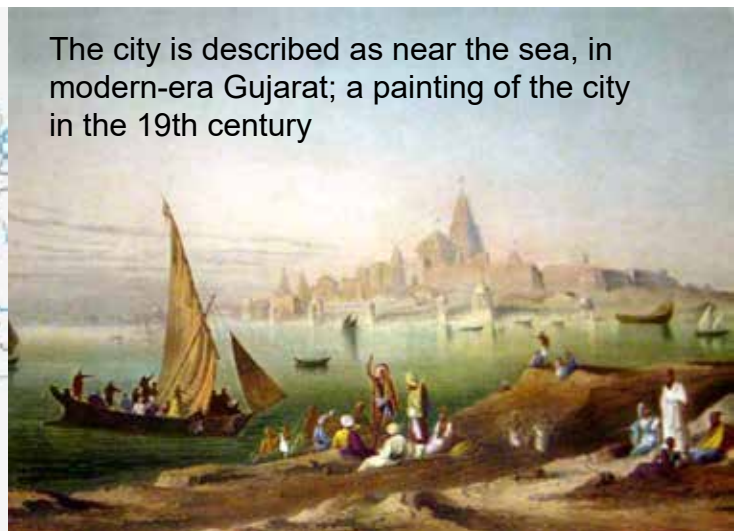
Yet Bharat, home to one of Earth's most ancient and continuous civilizations, remains a glaring exception. Even after gaining independence from colonial rule, Bharat squandered several decades systematically neglecting, downplaying, and even discrediting its sacred history. Where others unearthed pride from their soil, Bharat buried its memory deeper, trapped by a post-colonial mindset that feared its own roots. Sacred texts, ancient cities, and epic traditions were reduced to relics of embarrassment rather than being celebrated as living pillars of identity. This was not an innocent oversight but a cynical effort to propagate the colonial narrative that viewed Hindu pride in its cultural heritage as dangerous, irrational, and politically subversive.

The story of Dwarka—lost to the sea, found through science, and then buried again by silence—is a powerful case in point.

## Dwarka's History

A town steeped in ancient lore, Dwarka is traditionally identified as the resplendent capital of Lord Krishna—revered not only as a divine incarnation but also as a statesman, strategist, and philosopher. Mentioned extensively in the Mahabharata, Harivamsa, and Bhagavata Purana, Dwarka was no ordinary city; it was a magnificent, fortified kingdom built to safeguard the Yadavas from the ceaseless political turmoil and assaults in Mathura. Surrounded by the sea and rendered in vivid detail across sacred texts, the city stood as a testament to Krishna's sovereign vision and civilizational genius. [1,2]

According to the scriptures, Dwarka was submerged into the ocean shortly after Krishna's departure from the mortal world—a divine exodus seen as a cosmic turning point that marked the end of the Dvapara Yuga and ushered in the Kali Yuga. This cataclysmic event did not erase Dwarka from the Hindu psyche. Instead, it enshrined the city as a spiritual symbol and a civilizational cornerstone,



The city is described as near the sea, in modern-era Gujarat; a painting of the city in the 19th century



where itihasa, sacred geography, and archaeological inquiry converge. For centuries, its location remained a mystery, suspended between myth and reality, yet alive in the collective memory of a people. Saints journeyed to its coast, pilgrims revered the temples raised upon its memory, and poets immortalized it as the earthly realm of the Divine. [3]

### **Dr. Rao's Underwater Discovery**

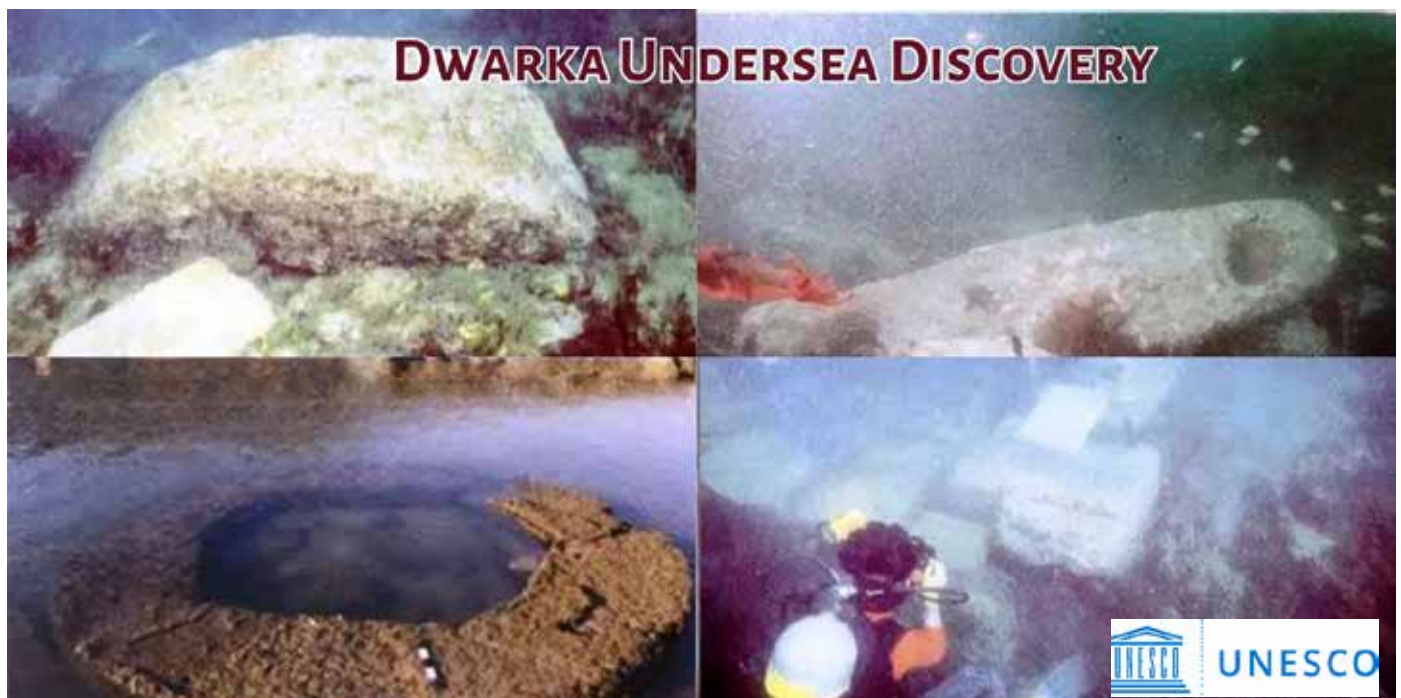
However, it wasn't until the 1980s that the first tangible proof of this legendary city began to emerge. Under the pioneering leadership of Dr. S.R. Rao—a renowned archaeologist and one of Bharat's foremost experts in marine archaeology—the Marine Archaeology Unit of the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) conducted underwater explorations off the coast of modern-day Dwarka in Gujarat. What they uncovered was astonishing: submerged stone structures, massive anchors, and the remains of a planned settlement beneath the Arabian Sea, dating back to around 1500 BCE or earlier. [4,5]

Dr. Rao's mission was simple—to bring ancient myth into the realm of historical reality. As he led his team into the depths of the Arabian Sea, their discoveries grew increasingly compelling: fortifications, architectural remnants, and maritime artifacts that closely matched descriptions in ancient texts. The scale, precision, and location of these submerged ruins strongly suggested that they could indeed be the long-lost city of Dwarka.

Among the findings were bastions, protective walls, and a gateway—hallmarks of an advanced port city, strategically constructed to support maritime trade and withstand both environmental and human threats. These features were strikingly consistent with epic portrayals of Dwarka as a fortified, thriving hub of commerce and culture. [6]

### **Reception of Rao Discovery**

Dr. Rao's discovery held the potential to revolutionize our understanding of history. If proven true, it would validate the Mahabharata as a historical narrative, demonstrate ancient Bharat's advanced



urban planning, and place Bharat civilization among the earliest in the world. Such a finding could have disrupted Eurocentric timelines and affirmed the historical truth embedded in Hindu traditions.

Yet, this groundbreaking moment was met not with enthusiasm but with denial. Rather than celebrating the discovery, much of the academic world responded with skepticism. Critics dismissed the ruins as natural formations or labeled the Mahabharata a mere myth. Dwarka's possible reality challenged long-standing Western binaries—myth vs. fact, sacred vs. secular—and posed a threat to intellectual frameworks that had marginalized Bharat's civilizational voice. Government apathy, academic resistance, and ideological biases stifled further exploration. The city was buried again—not beneath the ocean, but beneath silence and indifference.

The neglect of Dr. S.R. Rao's discovery of submerged Dwarka was not merely academic oversight; it was part of a deeper ideological resistance. Since Bharat's independence, a dominant Nehruvian vision shaped the nation's intellectual landscape, one that sought to separate religion from history in pursuit of a secular, socialist identity. Under this model, Hindu epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana were dismissed as mythology—symbolic, not historical—thus sidelining Bharat's sacred traditions from its official historical narrative.

This framework, heavily influenced by Marxist historians and Western-educated elites, viewed Hindu civilizational pride with suspicion. Any claim that rooted Bharat history in its ancient spiritual texts was considered regressive, even dangerous. The ruling establishment feared that validating such traditions might fuel religious identity-based movements, particularly among Hindus, and challenge the secular foundations of the modern Bharat.

Dr. Rao's findings posed a direct threat to this status quo. If Dwarka were indeed real, it would lend historical weight to Krishna and the Mahabharata—upending the myth-history divide. For those invested in a Westernized, secular historiography, this was unacceptable. Far from being embraced, the discovery was buried under political discomfort and ideological bias. Dwarka wasn't just submerged in water; it was drowned in silence to protect a fragile intellectual consensus.

## **Colonial Roots of Dwarka's Second Burial**

The suppression of Dwarka's discovery cannot be fully understood without tracing its roots to colonial-era narratives. During British rule, there was a deliberate effort to delegitimize Bharat's past by branding its rich traditions as myth. Scholars like Max Müller were central to this effort, portraying Hindu scriptures—such as the Vedas and epics—as late, primitive compositions unfit for historical inquiry. This suited the colonial agenda: the British justified their so-called civilizing mission by denying Bharat a credible history.

Bharat, they argued, lacked rationality, scientific thought, and historical consciousness—traits that only Western intervention could provide. This portrayal not only diminished Bharat's civilizational achievements but also legitimized the imposition of Western institutions and values.

Ironically, after independence, Bharat's Nehruvian elite continued this colonial framework. Influenced by Marxist and Western academic traditions, they dismissed Hindu epics as allegories and discouraged any attempt to link them to historical or archaeological evidence. Institutions like the ICHR marginalized scholars like Dr. Rao, whose work threatened to validate Bharat's sacred texts as historical records. Thus, the denial of Dwarka's significance was less about science—and more about preserving an inherited ideological orthodoxy.

## Toward a Civilizational Reawakening

Bharat, unlike many ancient civilizations, has too often met its own sacred history with skepticism. Discoveries like Dwarka—findings that should inspire national pride and civilizational reaffirmation—have been met with institutional silence. Shaped by Nehruvian secularism and Marxist historiography, the post-colonial Bharat came to view civilizational continuity not as a source of strength but as a challenge to its ideological foundations. While other nations have built museums to honor their antiquity, Bharat built walls of denial, treating its rich cultural memory not as a legacy to cherish, but as a burden to erase.

The story of Dwarka is, in many ways, the story of Bharat itself: a timeless civilization submerged beneath the waves of conquest, colonization, and historical amnesia—now beginning to resurface, gleaming with forgotten wisdom and latent strength.

We must no longer be captive to imposed narratives that dismiss our epics as mere mythology. To walk the ancient streets of Dwarka—real or remembered—is to restore the sacred thread that binds identity to ancestry, and spirit to soil.

The sea has returned Dwarka to us confirming the historical event, not a mythology.

### Underwater Explorations in Dwarka Waters by Archaeological Survey of India

<https://thetruth.one/underwater-archaeology-wing-begins-explorations-in-dwarka/>



Numerous ancient artefacts were found, as well as the submerged remains of the ancient Dwarka during the next excavation led by an underwater archaeologist. Between 1983 and 1990 the archaeologists discovered a fortified foundation on which the ancient city walls must have been built along the river banks.

<https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/silk-road-themes/underwater-heritage/dwarka#:~:text=Numerous%20ancient%20artefacts%20were%20found,built%20along%20the%20river%20banks.>



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Dr. Jai Bansal is a scientist, author, and community leader with a keen interest in Indian history and in exploring the contributions of the Hindu civilization to the world. He currently serves as the Vice President of Education for the World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), as well as a member of its executive board and the governing council.

After a distinguished career spanning 38 years, Dr. Bansal retired in 2014 as the Chief Scientific Officer and the Global Technology Development Advisor of a global petrochemical company. From 2014 to 2018, he served as an advisor to the Argonne National Laboratory, Chicago, and the US Department of Energy. He holds a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Waterloo, Canada. He has published widely and holds over two dozen scientific patents.



# MY MANDIR PROGRAMS

## IRVINE HINDU MANDIR-SERVING THE COMMUNITY

By Suresh Lohiya

Mandirs are the most visible surviving social centers of Hindu identity, heritage, and unity. The dharma of a Mandir is to question, evolve, sustain, support, upgrade, and adapt to meet the needs of the Hindu community. Mandirs must become community-friendly, inviting, participative, and experiential, places that project and promote Dharma.

For this to be realized, mandirs should grow into devotee-owned, full-service Hindu institutions with programs that serve all segments of the community. They must be managed by hands-on, visible, responsive, and selfless service-oriented leaders. Mandirs should be **“for, by, and of”** devotees, ensuring transparency, accountability, and efficient operations without influence from private interest groups. Unfortunately, in many places, pujaris are not equipped to explain rituals. They only recite Sanskrit that devotees cannot understand, leaving worship disconnected from meaning.

Usually, mandirs are started by one or more Hindu leaders and pundits. In the beginning, the community wholeheartedly supports with seva. But over time, founders retain control, operations shift to pundits who may not be adequately trained, and the needs of devotees get sidelined.

Hindus must build strong protection for mandirs by donating **TTT** (Time, Talent, Treasure) along with **KSA** (Knowledge, Skills, Abilities), through active participation of the whole family. Hindus are always in the middle of this *Kurukshetra* of identity and survival.



*Irvine Hindu Mandir*

Mandirs must evolve with the changing expectations of the diaspora. Programs should be packaged as educational centers, directly or indirectly serving the Hindu community. Innovative, tailored activities for a multi-generational base will attract and retain devotees by giving them a sense of connection and ownership. Beyond rituals, pooja, and aarti, a mandir can feel like a **“theme park of Dharma.”** It should also welcome non-Hindus with offerings like yoga and vegetarian food. Mandirs are the best agencies to share this heritage.



**Encyclopedia of Hinduism  
donated to University  
Libraries**



### **Irvine Hindu Mandir: How does this Mandir serve the community?**

**Vision:** A dharmic, spiritual, social, and cultural activities center.

**Mission:** Grow awareness and devotee participation while offering a superior experience.

Mandirs are the last visible centers for unity through bhakti and shakti, sustaining eternal dharma and Hindu identity. All Hindus must connect, participate, and support mandirs by contributing at least 6% of income as spiritual and cultural insurance.

### **Key Features of Irvine Hindu Mandir**

1. Over 20 years old, most popular, full-service, devotee-owned and managed by an all-volunteer Executive Team, selfless, motivated, highly **qualified professionals, including women leaders**.
2. Prudent financial management with **transparency**, accountability, and regular reviews.
3. Mandir truly “**of, for, and by**” devotees, no personal or group control.
4. Building a multi-purpose Hindu institution, trusted by over 200 founding donors.
5. Worship of the formless Brahman/Parmaatma/Ishwar/Prabhu/Bhagwan in 16 deities, including Jagannathji, Navgrah, and Jain deities Parswanathji Padmavatiji.
6. Multi-lingual, well-trained pundits for all regional pujas, festivals, and services.  
Daily morning and evening live aarti with fresh flower garlands, followed by sanctified prasad.
7. Regular Mataji Chowki, Holika Dahan, Holi, Ravan Dahan, Vijayadashmi “Ayudh–Laptop–Cellphone Puja,” Garbas, Rathayatra, and other meaningful celebrations.
8. Hindu-style honors for Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Teacher’s Day, Student promotion day, Bharat Mata Pujan (Aug 15, Jan 26), fun Hindu games (Kho Kho, Dharma quizzes), plus July 4th celebrations.

9. Cultural visits by elected officials, Irvine Police Department leadership, and interfaith leaders.
10. Activities promoted in print and social media.
11. Participation in Interfaith, VHPA, HMEC, IPD-ISP (Interfaith Security Partnership), etc.
12. Creative fundraisers: “Run for Mandir,” “Cricket for Mandir,” plus golf, carrom, chess, and more.
13. CA time-zone Panchang Calendar with educational insights.
14. Exhibition of **Darshana posters** on Hindu heritage; 7,000-page **Encyclopedia of Hinduism donated to major university libraries.**
15. Tours, Q&A, and educational sessions for schools, universities, and non-Hindu groups.
16. Youth and Scouts as volunteers, blood/food drives, scholarships, and community projects.
17. Classes in yoga, Hindi, classical music, Bharatanatyam, Odissi, and more.
18. Sessions with visiting Swamis, Yogis, and Kathakars for cultural-spiritual immersion.
19. Sewa team of dedicated volunteers, deity leads, and speakers.
20. Hindu Youth Chapter for social, political, and voting awareness in collaboration with like-minded groups.
21. Recognition for parents of 3+ children and publication of an annual “My Mandir” book.

Save the mantra: **1-800-BE-HINDU. Om Shakti.**



**Author:**

Suresh Lohiya has decades of experience in writing and speaking on Hinduism at various forums. He is a certified Dharma Ambassador (HAF and HSS) and actively offers sewa through multiple Hindu organizations. After a long career in executive leadership roles in the corporate world in Bharat, he dedicated two decades in the U.S. to serving the disabled population in the non-profit sector. He currently serves as Director, Irvine Hindu Mandir, Irvine, CA.

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# SANTANA DHARMA IN DIASPORA USA

## SHARING SPIRITUAL ICONS BY MANDIRS

by Akkaraju Sarma, MD, PhD, FAAFP.

The impact of Sanatana Dharma has been, and continues to be, present in our lives. Many of us, following Sanatana Dharma, had a worship place in our homes, whether we live in a room, a house, or an apartment.

The Immigration Act changes signed by President Johnson in 1965 resulted in the influx of many Indians who applied for and received the coveted “Green Card.” The rapid increase in Hindu immigrants led to the building of Hindu Temples in the continental USA and Canada. One must recognize the multiple issues and circumstances in which the Hindu Diaspora and Temple buildings are considered.



Figure 1. Puja Center at Home

The concept of a Ranganatha Temple in Pomona, N.Y. was one such thought-provoking step. (Sri Krishna Desika Jeeyar Swami had Pancha Loha worship idols in his own home until the Ranganatha Temple was built [<http://www.ranganatha.org>] by the committed devotees.) The result overall is that the Hindu Diaspora in the USA is something many can look upon with satisfaction.

We must also recognize a few key individuals, foremost among them being Dr. Alagappan Chettiar (AC), a United Nations employee in the Economics Division for many years. He was the Founder-Secretary of the Hindu Temple Society of North America, now known as the Ganesha Temple in Queens, NY (<https://nyganeshtemple.org/>). Indian diplomat Dr. C.V. Narasimhan (CVN) was another central figure who gave strong support to secure the first Hindu Mandir in 1977 in NYC, the Ganesha Temple in Queens.

In all these efforts, the financial generosity of devotees made these landmark events succeed. There has been substantial financial support from many devotees. Looking beyond financial contributions, spiritually rewarding efforts must also be mentioned. It has been my family’s divine blessing that we could do *kainkaryam* (कैन्यकार्यं – Sanskrit word meaning worship or tribute to the Gods). The point to be emphasized is that there are many concepts in Hinduism beyond just the scriptures (primarily in Sanskrit).

My divine life partner, Devi Garu, and I, along with my cousin Ramabhadraiah (a Kanchipuram resident), went on a pilgrimage to the Ashram in March 2013. At that time, Devi Garu and I requested approval to organize and set up the Temple for Mahaperiyava and requested Swami’s padukas for our family worship. Within a few minutes, an *Anugrahapatrika* (approval document) in Sanskrit and Tamil was provided and entered into the Kanchi Ashram records.



Figure 2. Padukas for Home worship 2023



Fast forward to July 4, 2023: the Mani Mandapam had *prāṇa pratiṣṭhā* in Flemington, NJ. My family received word that if we completed the *kainkaryam* of the Padukas to the Mani Mandapam, they would be placed for worship for thousands of devotees for many years. We gladly accepted this spiritual request, and in return, we were blessed with two silver miniature padukas for Puja in our home.

What can this spiritual experience teach and guide for many mandirs? Among the personal spiritual possessions of thousands of devotees are materials that can be added as *kainkaryam*. This will strengthen Hindutva and help many (adults and children) gain divine benefits.

I pray that this write-up will inspire readers to contribute and strengthen the growth of Hindu Dharma in the continental USA.



Figure 3. Miniature Padukas Feet of Maha Periyava



**About the author:** Akkaraju Sarma, MD, PhD, FAFP, has been a resident of Philadelphia, PA, since 1970. Dr. Sarma has been closely involved in activities promoting Hindu Dharma. He chaired the Health and Human Services Committee from 2007 to 2019. He is the recipient of several prestigious awards, including the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2016, which is awarded to individuals who have made significant contributions to both their native and adopted countries..

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# HINDU DIASPORA IN GUYANA AND THE CARIBBEAN

By Ramnarine Sahadeo

Over the years HMEC has been able to bring the hundreds of temples and their priests together on an annual basis to discuss issues not just about temples but those affecting the entire community. There is ample evidence that North America is now a permanent home for many who can trace their ancestry to Bharat and temples have been an essential part of their lives. Once a community gets together the magnificent structures go up.

South America and the Caribbean is different is that most Hindus are descendants of Girmitiyas and the general direction now is to move North.

Girmitiya refers to those who signed agreements or contracts as laborers who were recruited by the plantation owners with the help of the colonial powers to work on projects, particularly sugar and cotton plantations, outside India.

This article would not delve into issues as to whether the parties were equal and free to negotiate terms of the contract or even whether they understood what they were signing. In most cases they could not read nor write in any language but simply indicated their consent with an X on a document in the English only.

The overwhelming majority who left India as Indentured Servants between 1834 and 1917 were Hindus irrespective if they went to Africa, Asia or the Caribbean.

How their communities survived and developed over the years meant adjusting to local conditions existing at the time. Some of which remain even today.



Indian Indentured Labourers in Trinidad, Guyana and the Caribbean

A few comparisons may be helpful.

Mauritius is part of the African continent in the Indian Ocean and still has a vibrant Hindu community. As the largest religious group on the island at about 48%, their culture and languages remain intact even though English is the official language. Commencing in 1834 it received about 453,063 the largest number of girmitiyas in the world.

Guyana on the other hand received the second greatest number at about 239,909 and the most of any in South America and the Caribbean country. It's a country where Hindus they cannot speak Hindi. Compared to the rest of the population their numbers are dwindling due to migration and other social factors. They continue to be the target of rapid conversion, and bedeviled by domestic violence, suicides and alcohol abuse.

Much of this was confirmed when Fred Stella ([Fred@hafsite.org](mailto:Fred@hafsite.org)) when on behalf of The Hindu American Foundation where he sits on the National leadership Council he spent 9 short days on a fact-finding mission in 2019. Those interested in his reports and podcasts can visit HAFSITE.ORG

Contrast this with neighboring Surinam which is one of the few countries in the world where Hindi is still spoken. One reason is because the Dutch unlike the British kept their hands off culture.

HMEC in its effort to hold conferences throughout the region have held successful meetings in Trinidad and Surinam but have been unable to get ground support to hold one in Guyana.

The other countries in the Caribbean have just a smattering of Hindus although a few celebrate dates of Arrival and maintain ties with India.

## **EDUCATION**

There is no dispute that much more has to be done to promote Vedic knowledge in all Caribbean countries and the temples in North America can help with technology and manpower as many retired highly qualified devotees who can volunteer their skills on short visits. In South America many villages have simple structures for temples where devotees meet for a few hours each week. A lecturer on ancient Indian traditions and temple architecture including the temple design and layout as per Agamic scriptures will be an invaluable assistance for future temples are now being built.

Can HMEC arrange for someone with the skills of Shri Prem K V Ji to visit the region to share his knowledge of temple architecture?

## **DHARMIC PROJECTS**

The connection with larger organizations seems to be one way to buttress support for Hinduism in the smaller nations. HindumediaGuyana.com has recently reported on a unique effort to enlighten Hindus about the message of the Gita. In a region where the Ramayan is favoured and many giant sized murtis of Hanuman ji dot the landscape the universal lessons of Lord Krishna are a welcome change.

108-night Bhagavad Geeta Maha Jnana Yajna, which took place across 108 temples in Guyana, concluded in May of this year. Swami Prakashananda ji from Chinmaya Mission Guyana visited a different temple each night, presenting the Bhagavad Geeta in a consistent verse-by-verse method and offering commentaries on the fundamental teachings of the Holy Geeta. He was assisted by Chinmaya Mission Guyana's teachers Devji and Ginaji. Prior to this country wide sessions, the group had visited several Caribbean countries to spread the message of the Gita.

The journey, which started on January 14th, 2025, at the Chinmaya Ashram in Mon Repos, East Coast Demerara, saw the attendance of several high-ranking officials, including the High Commissioner of India to Guyana, Dr. Amit Telang and Guyana's Minister of Human Services and Social Security Dr. Vindhya Persaud. The inauguration was presided over by Pujya Swami Prakashananda, Head of Mission in Guyana as well as in Trinidad & Tobago.

Chinmaya Mission is a worldwide organization specialized in the teaching of the Hindu Scriptures from the Advaita Vedanta school of thought. It was founded by Pujya Swami Chinmayananda in 1951 with its current headquarters located in Mumbai, India. The mission has over 300 centres worldwide. In 2023, the Mission was established in Guyana and conducts various programs throughout the year.





Canadian resident Jagdesh Singh and his entire family actively supports the ultimate aim which is to establish a private Hindu learning institution similar to Swami Aksharananda's initiative Saraswati Vidya Niketan one of the best not only in Guyana but the entire Caribbean. In January 2025 both Swami and the school were jointly honored with India's Parvasi Bharatiya Samman award for their contribution to culture and education.

Shri Jagdesh ji is also involved with others in updating the curriculum for Hinduism for all students in the Caribbean.

The Badrinath Ashram on the Essequibo Coast, Guyana where youths are trained to be priests has recently consecrated the largest Bhagwan Shiva Murti in all of South America. The entire family of chief priest Dr. Dhanrajh who hails from this area are also the founding members of the Brampton Triveni Mandir in Ontario one of the most spacious and active in Canada.

These are just recent examples of the progress possible when the more established institutions of North America and India expand to other less fortunate areas of the world.



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# Tribeni Sangam and Kumbh Mela in Bengal

By Dr. Kanchan Banerjee

To understand the importance of Tribeni in the Hooghly district of West Bengal, one does not require elaborate historical records or foreign testimonials. The very name *Tribeni* means “three braids,” referring to the confluence of rivers, just like Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh. Both are called *Tribeni Sangam*, meaning the sacred meeting of three rivers. For Hindus, such places have always been centers of pilgrimage, and bathing here has been considered purifying for centuries.

## Tribeni in Scriptures and Traditions

The confluence of rivers associated with the Ganga is central to Hindu tradition. Bengali scholar Raghunandan in his *Prayaschitta Tatwa* referred to Tribeni as the “Prayag of the South.” Brindaban Das in his *Chaitanya Bhagabat* also glorified the sanctity of the Saptagram Tribeni ghat, describing how sages and saints worshipped here. Poet Madhabacharya of *Chandimangal* proudly identified himself as a resident of Tribeni, highlighting its spiritual reputation.

Local legends further connect Tribeni with the Saptarishi, who are said to have performed penance on its banks. Archaeological traces and temple ruins also indicate its significance as a vibrant religious hub long before foreign invasions disrupted Bengal’s sacred landscape.

## What is Kumbh?

The Kumbh is not just mythology but deeply rooted in Hindu astrology and the *panchang*. When the Sun moves from Makara Rashi (Capricorn) to Kumbha Rashi (Aquarius), it marks *Kumbh Sankranti*. This holy day is celebrated with ritual bathing in sacred rivers, known by various names like *Maghi Sankranti Snan* or *Kumbh Snan*. Unlike the grand *Mahakumbh* held every 12 years at Prayagraj, smaller or *Anu Kumbh* events occur annually.

Such ritual bathing is not confined to Prayagraj. South India has its own *Kumbh Melas*, such as at Tirumakudalu Narasipura in Karnataka and the Godavari Maha Pushkaram in Andhra and Telangana. The principle is the same—wherever a sacred confluence exists, the Kumbh spirit can be celebrated.

## Tribeni as Bengal’s Prayag

Alan Morinis, a modern researcher, observed that Tribeni in Hooghly has a strong claim to antiquity. He noted that priests distinguished Prayagraj as *Yuktaveni* (close braid) while Tribeni was *Muktaveni* (open braid), because the Saraswati is visible at Tribeni but not at Prayag. This underlined Tribeni’s equal sanctity as a pilgrimage site and a once-flourishing seat of Sanskrit learning.

Indeed, what Prayagraj is to North India, Tribeni has been to Bengal. If Prayagraj is defined by its Kumbh festival, then Tribeni too carries the right and tradition to hold its own Kumbh Snan.

## Historical Disruptions

Tribeni’s history, however, is not free from turbulence. Chronicles like *Tabakat-e-Nasiri* record repeated invasions of Bengal from the 13th century onwards. The sacred temples of Triveni, Saptagram, and nearby regions were demolished, with mosques and dargahs built using their remains. The Zafar Khan Gazi dargah at Tribeni still shows Hindu carvings embedded into its walls, evidence of temples

destroyed during that era. Despite centuries of suppression, the sanctity of Tribeni as a Hindu tirtha never disappeared.

## **Revival of Kumbh at Tribeni**

For over 700 years, the Kumbh at Tribeni lay forgotten. However, local devotees, inspired by historical research, revived the festival in 2022 under the guidance of Kanchan Banerjee. In 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi acknowledged this effort. Today, Tribeni's Kumbh is once again drawing saints, sadhus, and pilgrims from across India, reconnecting Bengal to its spiritual roots.

## **Conclusion**

The dates of the Kumbh are determined by spiritual and astrological tradition, not historians. Whether or not it was documented earlier as "Kumbh Mela," bathing festivals and pilgrimages at Tribeni have been part of Bengal's heritage for centuries. In 2026, the *Kumbh Mahotsav* at Tribeni will continue this sacred tradition, affirming that every Hindu has the right to observe, celebrate, and preserve their dharmic practices at holy confluences. All are invited to 2026 Kumbh Mahotsav to be held on February 12-14.

For details: [www.tribenikumbho.org](http://www.tribenikumbho.org)

## ***Kumbh Mela at the Confluence of Rivers***



# In Search of Hindu Icons in Kashmir

By Renu Rajvanshi Gupta

Kashmir has been the center of attraction, attention and assessment for all Bhartiya. We had a long-time dream to visit Kashmir region but due to continued political instability and insecurity, we waited till the removal of article 370.

Now in Kashmir I have been searching for Hindu icons wherever I am traveling. Kashmir is the land of Bhagwan Shiv and Jagdamba Parvati. It is also home of Saptrishi, the most ancient saint Kashyap ji and his wives. Maharishi Kashyap is the first rishi of all 21+ household Rishis. All the Gotra of every Hindu is derived from it. Kashmir's original name is Kashyap Mira (lake of Rishi Kashyap) which has changed to Kashmir now.

As we landed at Srinagar airport, the name Sri Nagar stuck me. According to Kalhan's Rajatarngini epic it is Shree (Laxmi) Nagar. We may all be aware of the long troublesome historical journey of Kashmir from Maurya rulers to the last brave Hindu Queen Kota Rani, then it went in the hands of Muslims, in-between Afghans and Sikhs also took over.

## 1) Pahalgam (Bull (Bail) Gram)

Our first destination was Pahalgam – in Kashmiri it means shepherds village. But ancient meaning is Bail Gram (Bhagwan Shiv left his Nandi Bull here before entering Amarnath Caves. Local Gourishankar Mandir confirms this belief; there is statue of Nandi facing the mandir.



**Gouri Shankar Mandir (Bail Gram)**



We visited very ancient Mammal or Mamaleshwar Mandir in Pahalgam (Bail Gram). It is situated on the banks of Lidder River at an elevation of 2,200 meters (7,200 ft). According to the history, this is the mandir where Parvati asked Ganesha to stand as a door keeper, not allowing anyone to enter the premises without her permission. This is the place where Shiva cut the head of Ganesha. There are 2 murtis inside the temple. One is a Shiva Linga at the center of the temple and a small two face murti of Nandi on the right corner. Mam Mal means *don't go*, and thus it is also known as Mammal temple. The surroundings of the mandir is very serene, it speaks of very rich and ancient glory of Hindu Dharma.

## 2) Ananatnag

Our next destination was Ananatnag. As the name speaks, Ananatnag is believed by historians to be one of the earliest settlements in the world. Dating back to 5000 BCE, the town has its mention in Nilmat Purana as well the town was also a business center at the time. There is one Parvati mandir which we could not visit, it was closed for visitors. The Martand Sun Temple in Ananatnag is a testament to ancient civilization in Kashmir. Martand means sun, Mandir of Surya Bhagwan. This Mandir is also dedicated to Martand Muni. Temple is spread in a large compound with a pond, several small temples, many rooms for guests and a large office.



This temple was destroyed by Sikandar Shah Miri (1389-1413) [in a zeal to Islamize the society under the advice of Sufi preacher Mir Muhammad Hamadani](#). Chief-counsel Suhabhatta, a Brahman neo-convert is also responsible to spread Islam and was party to the destructions in Kashmir.

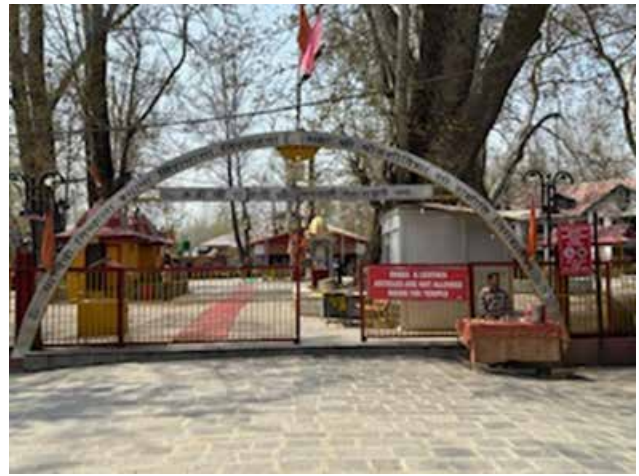
## 3) Anantapur/ Avantipur

It is the ancient capital of Kashmir established [by King Avantivarman of the Utpala Dynasty, who ruled from 855 to 883 AD](#). He built twin temples in Avantipur, one dedicated to Lord Vishnu, known as Awantiswami and the other dedicated to Lord Shiva known as Awantisvara. This temple was destroyed in 14th century by [Sultan Sikandar](#). In 18th century the Awantiswamin temple was excavated by the British and rich antiquities like coins of that era, some murtis etc. were found. It is a cluster of ruined temples and broken sculptors of kings and palaces, protected by Archeological Survey of Bharat. Though small in the area, but ruins tell lots of history.

## 4) Sonmurg (Sona Marg)

As the name speaks is meadow of gold. Very beautiful with snow, mountains and forest. Sindh river flows through the valley and is believed to have originated from the pristine waters of the Amarnath Cave, a revered pilgrimage site dedicated to Lord Shiva. King Pravarasena II, who governed Sonamarg 2000 years ago, is the earliest known ruler. Following him, the monarchs who ruled it alternated between Mauryas, Kushanas, Huns, Chaks, Mughals, and Sikhs, becoming a critical part of Sonamarg's past.



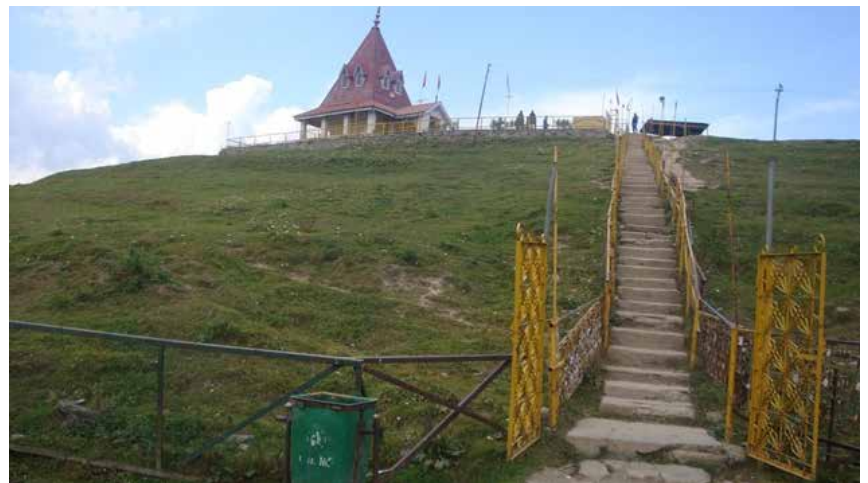


### 5) Kheer Bhawani Mandir

Kheer Bhawani Temple is a celebrated Hindu shrine, situated in the Tulla Mulla village near Srinagar. The temple is constructed above a sacred spring, which is said to change its colors. Goddess Ragnya Devi – an incarnation of Goddess Durga – is the presiding deity of this temple. The temple attributes its unique name to the famous Indian dessert kheer, which is the main offering to the goddess. Maharaja Pratap Singh built this temple in 1912, which was later renovated by Maharaja Hari Singh. The shrine has a hexagonal spring and a small marble shrine where the goddess' murti is installed. The compound is surrounded with residential apartments, offices and shops. Hindu devotees visit here in large number. Many old trees are testimonial to the divinity of the mandir.

### 6) Gulmarg (Gouri's Marg)

Original of Gulmarg is (Mata Parvati's Path). Sultan Yusuf Shah changed to Gulmarg (Path of roses) in 16<sup>th</sup> century. While Gulmarg is a known destination for Golf Course, skiing and honeymooners, it is also home of the Shiva and Gauri Mandir, also known as the Maharani Temple. It was built by Maharaja Hari Singh in 1915 as a royal temple for his wife, Maharani Mohini Bai Sisodia. Now the temple is going through major renovation. It was very pleasing to see so many devotees climbing 100 some stairs to worship.



**Shiv Temple of Gulmarg (Gouri Marg)**

### 7) Baramulla (Boar's Moler) “सूअर की दाढ़ का स्थान”,

Baramulla, the gateway to the Kashmir Valley, has a rich history dating back to ancient times. It's believed to have been founded by Raja Bhimsina around 2306 BCE. Baramulla, in the Kashmir Valley, is named after the Varaha (boar) incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and the town is associated with the Adi-Varaha shrine. The town's ancient name was Varahamula or Varahaksetra.

I requested our driver to make sure we visit this mandir. Without realizing that he was



Muslim and he will never go to Varaha Mandir. He kept delaying, threatened us, demanded lots of money and warned that he will not be responsible of our safety.

#### 8) Srinagar (Laxmi Nagar)

We kept the last one for Shree Nagar. In Srinagar, the “Swayambhu Devi” is commonly understood to refer to Goddess Sharika, also known as Chakreshwari Devi, who is the presiding deity of Srinagar. The eighteen-armed Goddess Sharika is regarded as the Presiding Deity (Isht - Devi) of Srinagar city. [The Goddess Sharika is represented by a Swayambhu Srichakra, also called Maha Sri Yantra which consists of circular mystic impressions and triangular patterns with a dot \(bindu\) at the center.](#) A large formation of Devi Sharika is covered with red cloth; it was also built by Maharaja Hari Singh ji.

Adi Guru Shankaracharya Mandir and his penance platform is the ultimate destiny of all Hindus in Srinagar. After climbing about 300 feet straight hill, we arrived at a very large Shivalinga. Apart from having very divine experience, we admired total control and discipline of CRPF.

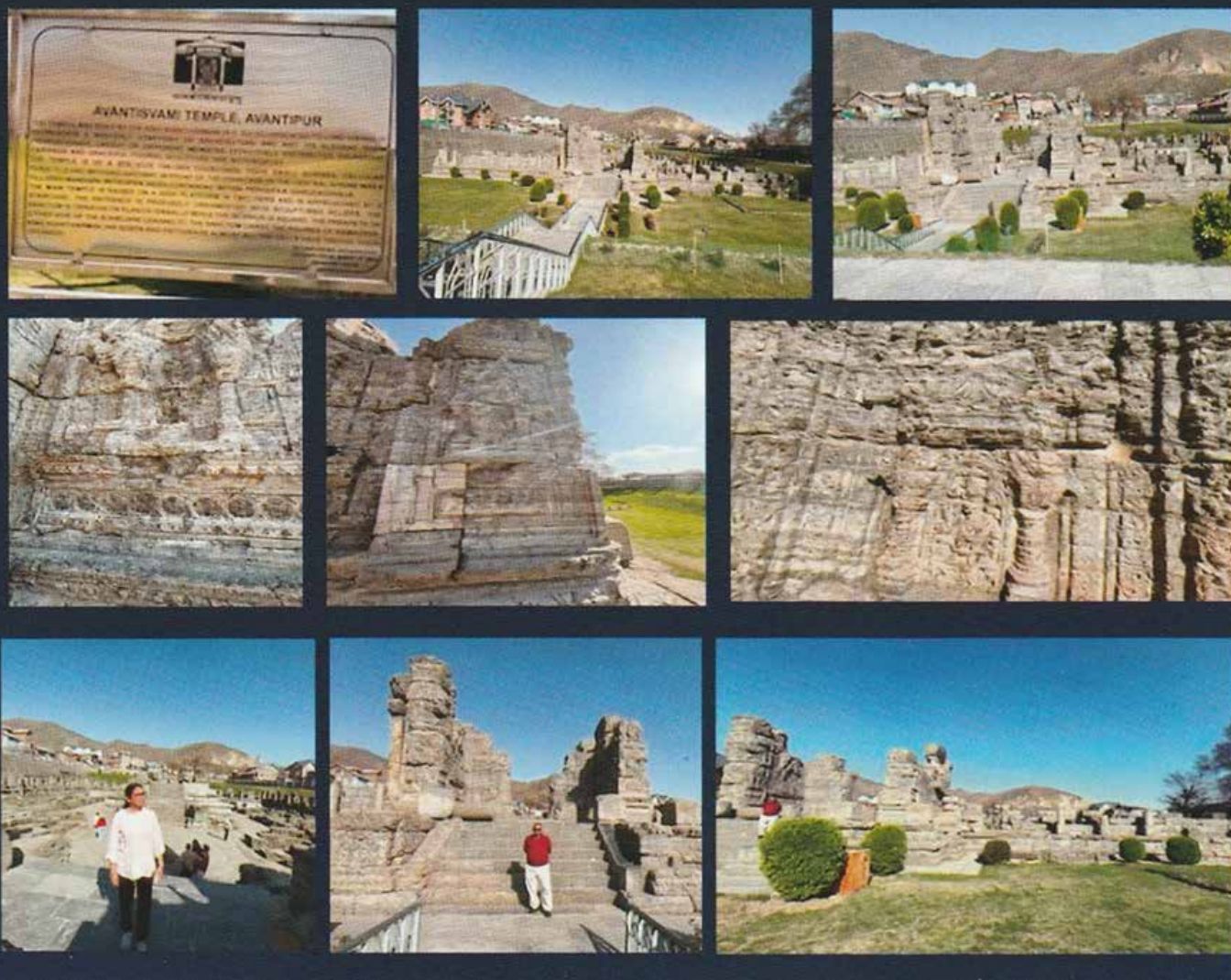
I wanted to visit Rosa Bal, a controversial dargah, supposed to be samadhi of Jesus Christ. I kept on insisting our driver to visit Rosa Bal, but he kept on denying it. First, he said there is no place like this, when we showed it on google, he got very upset but took us in front of the Dargah in the center of the city. He warned us to go alone at our own risk and not to mention name of Christ there.

Our driver even complained that we should have gone to Jammu to visit Mandirs, why did we come to Valley?

Valley region has predominantly stayed in the hands of Kashmiri Muslims, who take big pride of being Kashmiri. I realized during our trip that local Kashmiris now enjoy being part of Bharat, they want to avail all the benefits of being Indian, but don't want to change. They don't want people from the other parts of Bharat to settle in Kashmir; they want to ensure all the resources belong to them alone. With 90% or more Muslims, how this region will integrate with rest of Bharat, needs to be seen.



# Anantipur Ruins



Location: The twin temples are in Avantipur (modern-day Awantipora), Kashmir, built by King Avantivarman (r. 855–883 CE) of the Utpala dynasty.

Temples:

Avantiswami Temple – dedicated to Lord Vishnu.

Avantisvara Temple – dedicated to Lord Shiva.

Destruction: Both temples were destroyed in the late 14th century during the rule of Sultan Sikandar (1389–1413 CE), often referred to as “Sikandar Butshikan” due to his policy of temple destruction.

Note: Originally published in Hindu Vishwa. Printed with permission.

## About the Author

Smt. Renu Gupta is based in Cincinnati, Ohio and is ex Vice President of Seva, VHPA. She is currently involved in VHPA's Support-A-Child program (serving the educational needs of underprivileged children in Bharat), which continues to thrive in her able leadership. She may be contacted via email: [renurajvanshigupta@gmail.com](mailto:renurajvanshigupta@gmail.com)



## Journey of the Global Bhutanese Hindu Organization (GBHO) in the United States

The story of the **Global Bhutanese Hindu Organization (GBHO)**, a non-profit organization, is inseparably tied to the painful history of Bhutanese citizens of Nepali ethnic descent who were forcibly uprooted from their homeland in the early 1990s. Nearly one-sixth of Bhutan's total population of approximately 750,000 was compelled to flee under the deeply discriminatory policies of the royal government. Predominantly followers of Hinduism, along with some Buddhists, they were persecuted and displaced simply because their language, culture, and religion differed from those of Bhutan's ruling Ngalung-dominated regime under King Jigme Singye Wangchuck.

### The Refugee Journey

When Bhutan's government stripped them of nationality and forcibly displaced them, tens of thousands of Bhutanese Hindus and Buddhists sought refuge in neighboring India. Tragically, India denied them shelter, compelling the refugees to cross into Nepal in search of safety and survival. With the support of the **Government of Nepal**, and through the involvement of organizations such as the **UNHCR**, the **International Committee of the Red Cross**, and many humanitarian NGOs, refugees were housed in camps in eastern Nepal.

For nearly two decades, they lived in extreme uncertainty and despair, awaiting a just resolution that never came. Despite numerous rounds of bilateral negotiations, Bhutan refused to repatriate its displaced citizens. Finally, in 2008, a **third-country resettlement program** was launched under the leadership of **the United States**. Alongside the U.S., countries including **Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Denmark, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Norway** opened their doors as part of a humanitarian burden-sharing solution. The United States accepted the largest share, while other countries welcomed smaller numbers.

Even today, nearly **6,000–7,000 refugees** remain in camps in Nepal, living with utter uncertainty.

### Resettlement and Early Struggles

Arriving in their new homes with authorized only **16 kilograms of belongings**, resettled refugees faced enormous challenges: language barriers, differences of food and culture, and difficulties in preserving their traditions and religious practices. Adjustment was difficult. Yet, one of the first priorities of the community elders was to find a **place of worship** where they could gather, pray, and sustain their faith.





## Founding of GBHO

In response to this need, a group of like-minded youth leaders, under the leadership of **Shri Kamal Dhimal**, founded the **Global Bhutanese Hindu Organization (GBHO)** in 2013 in Charlotte, North Carolina. Over time, other religious organizations also began to take root in states where Bhutanese refugees had resettled, providing the community with spiritual solace and a renewed sense of belonging.

## Spiritual and Cultural Growth

In 2019, as the world grappled with the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, GBHO turned to virtual platforms to continue serving the community. By connecting devotees with renowned yoga and meditation gurus from India, Nepal, and Australia, the organization provided solace and strength during a time of fear, stress, and isolation. These sessions not only nurtured spiritual resilience but also became a lifeline for many across the diaspora. When restrictions were eventually lifted, devotees strongly urged GBHO to establish a permanent spiritual center for worship, satsang, bhajan, and kirtan - an enduring sanctuary for individuals and families alike.

## Establishment of Om Center Divya Dham

Determined to realize this vision, GBHO sought land to establish a temple and community center. When traditional banks refused loans due to limited financial capacity, the community devised its own solution. We coordinated with **108 families each contributed \$20,000**, raising over **\$2 million** within three weeks. On **July 14, 2022**, GBHO purchased **150 acres of land in Ohio**, establishing what is now known as **Om Center Divya Dham**.

Since its founding, Om Center Divya Dham has hosted numerous transformative programs, including:

- **Seven-Day Chakra Sadhana (2022 & 2024):** Attended by over 500 participants, offering deep healing and rejuvenation.
- **Virtual Yoga & Meditation:** Reaching more than 1,500 participants nationwide during the pandemic and continuing daily even today.
- **Panchakundiya Hawan (2023):** A major spiritual ceremony, purifying the land for its role as a sacred gathering place.
- **Shrimad Bhagavat Katha (2023):** A historic event led entirely by women, highlighting devotion and women empowerment.
- **Yoga Training Collaboration (2023–2024):** In partnership with the **International Yoga Alliance of Australia**, GBHO trained over 40 certified instructors, who are now providing free yoga and meditation services to the community.
- **US Yoga Alliance Registration:** Recently, GBHO received official recognition from the **Yoga Alliance USA**, marking a milestone in its commitment to holistic well-being.

## Vishwa Shanti Gyan Mahayagya 2025

The pinnacle of GBHO's achievements came in **2025**, with the historic **seven-day Vishwa Shanti Gyan Mahayagya** at Om Center Divya Dham. More than **50,000 devotees** from across the country participated, joined by guests from **India, Nepal, Australia, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand**. On this occasion, GBHO also installed the **Vishwa Shanti Maha Kalash**,

meticulously crafted in Nepal under the supervision of GBHO's Founding President **Kamal Dhimal Ji** and esteemed Hindu scholars based in Kathmandu. Today, it stands as the central spiritual attraction for the devotees visiting on a daily basis.

One of the foremost purposes of the Mahayagya was to express our **deepest gratitude** to the **Government of Nepal**, which generously sheltered our stateless brothers and sisters for decades with compassion and dignity. We also extend sincere appreciation to the **United Nations** and all international agencies whose support has been invaluable. Our heartfelt thanks go to the governments and people of the **United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, and the United Kingdom** - not only for granting sanctuary, but also for helping preserve our cultural identity, ensuring security, and bestowing the gift of dignified citizenship. During the Mahayagya, we also honored **Bhutan**, the land of our origin, and **India**, the eternal seat of **Sanatan Hindu and Buddha Dharma**.

### **Organizational Structure and Governance**

To ensure transparency, accountability, and effective leadership, GBHO is guided by a robust governance structure:

- **7-member Executive Body** – overseeing daily operations and decision-making.
- **15-member Board of Directors** – providing vision, policy direction, and oversight.
- **9-member Trustee Board** – safeguarding the long-term mission and resources.
- **National and International Advisory Councils** – comprising distinguished leaders, scholars, and well-wishers who offer wisdom and guidance.

This structure enables GBHO to balance grassroots community needs with long-term strategic growth.

### **A Thriving Center of Faith and Learning**

Today, **Om Center Divya Dham** has blossomed into a hub of daily devotion and community life, attracting visitors from across the country. Its current online programs include:

- **Tabla and Music Classes**
- **Bhagavad Gita Study Sessions**
- **Ayurveda and Sanskrit Language Classes**

GBHO has also expanded into publishing, producing sacred texts such as a **Sanskrit language learning book** and a **trilingual edition of the Bhagavad Gita** (Sanskrit, Nepali, and English).

In a nutshell, the journey of GBHO is a testament to **resilience, unity, and the enduring power of spiritual faith**. From displacement and despair, the Bhutanese Hindu community has built not only new lives in foreign lands but also a thriving global spiritual organization. With **Om Center Divya Dham** as its foundation, GBHO continues to promote devotion, culture, yoga, meditation, and timeless Vedic wisdom - a beacon of hope and inspiration for generations to come.

*Report By Narad Adhikari, Board Chair, Global Bhutanese Hindu Organization*

# SANATANA DHARMA: POSITIVE PATH FOR POSITIVE LIFE

By: Dr. Seshadri Ramkumar,

Adjunct Professor, International Hindu University, USA

Life is a gift, and it should be lived to the fullest. Sanatana Dharma is the foundation that guides us to live a good and happy life. The value that holds us together and helps us move forward is *Dharma*. These righteous principles help us gain happiness in this world (*abhyudaya*) and also the highest bliss (*niḥśreyasa*), as explained in the scriptures.

Sanatana Dharma, in its true sense, is a way of life. It allows flexibility in worship, which is known as *matha*. The guidebook for this way of life is the Veda. The word *Veda* means “knowledge,” and it covers both spiritual and worldly matters.

## The Veda – Our Guidebook

People usually think of the Veda as only a religious text, and it is indeed respected all over the world as the scripture of Hinduism. But the Veda is much more. It not only gives directions for rituals but also shares knowledge about how society developed, how people lived together, about higher powers, and about living a good and balanced life.

It is very important, especially for the younger generation, to know about these treasures. The Veda is written in a special form of the Sanskrit language. Some parts are in poetry (like in the *Rig Veda*) and some are in prose (like in the *Yajur Veda*). This style made it easier in old times to recite, learn, and memorize, since writing was not common.

When foreign invasions happened, learning and spreading of the Veda was disturbed, and much of its meaning was hidden. But with the growing trust and interest in Sanatana Dharma today, there has been a strong revival of Vedic recitation and memorization of the *mūla* (root) texts. Now, along with reciting, efforts must also be made to explain the meaning of the Veda so that the world can see its true value.

The *Rig Veda*, the oldest text in the world, describes how life grew and flourished on the banks of rivers like the Sindhu, Ganga, and Yamuna. It shows how people lived with values like caring for others, kindness, and protection of society. For example, in the first *mandala* of the *Rig Veda*, Rishi Kakshivan writes about the young king Bhavya Sunaya, who ruled on the banks of the Sindhu and protected his people.

While praising the devas, the Vedas also speak about the need for good health, safety, and prosperity. The very last hymn of the *Rig Veda* calls people to come together, think alike, and work with unity for the good of the whole world.

So, the Veda is not just a book of rituals—it is a guide for living a good life. It inspires us to live fully, with good values, for 100 years. Sanatana Dharma is truly a path to a positive, enriched, and meaningful life.

***Vedokhilo Dharma Moolam Jagath!***



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### The Nav Ratna of Saurashtra

- 1 Maitraka (475–770 CE, 400 yrs) –**  
Capital: Vallabhipur – Bhatarka → Vallabhi Univ., shielded dharma after Arab raids.
- 2 Solanki/Chaulukya (942–1244 CE, 300 yrs) –**  
Capital: Patan – Kumarapala → Rebuilt Somnath, golden age of temples.
- 3 Chudasama (875–1472 CE, 600 yrs) –**  
Capital: Junagadh – Mandalik III → Defended Girnar shrines, resisted Sultanate.
- 4 Gohil (1150–1950 CE, 800 yrs) –**  
Capitals: Sihor & Bhavnagar – Mokhadaji → Fortified Piram, martyred protecting Somnath pilgrims.
- 5 Jadeja Nawanagar (1540–1948 CE, 400 yrs) –**  
Capital: Jamnagar – Jam Raval → Secured Dwarka, patron of Vallabhkul saints.
- 6 Jethwa (1193–1948 CE, 700 yrs) –**  
Capital: Porbandar – Rawal Khimji → Protected Sudama Mandir & coastal dharma.
- 7 Jadeja Gondal (1634–1948 CE, 300 yrs) –**  
Capital: Gondal – Bhagwat Sinhji → Modernized state, education + dharma.
- 8 Gaekwad (1721–1948 CE, 200 yrs) –**  
Capital: Baroda – Sayajirao III → Free education, hosted Vivekananda & Aurobindo.
- 9 Kathi Darbar (18th–19th CE, ~100 yrs) –**  
Capital: Gadhada – Dada Khachar → Offered palace to Swaminarayan, global bhakti hub.

These Nav Ratnas are the shield & soul of Saurashtra — their courage and saintly guidance ensured our dharma lives on. Sakar Trust pays heartfelt tribute to these eternal protectors of Sanatan Dharma.



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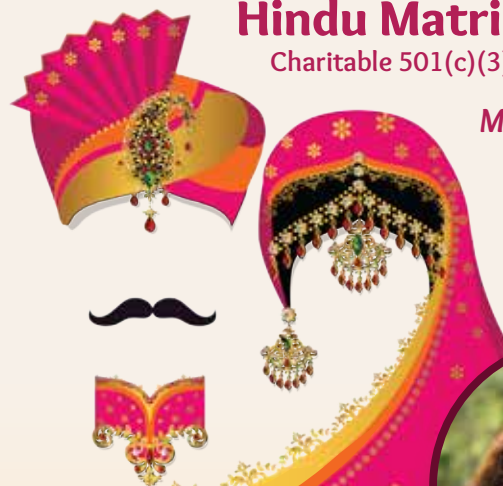


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*From*

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570 992 2339  
ashram@arshavidya.org

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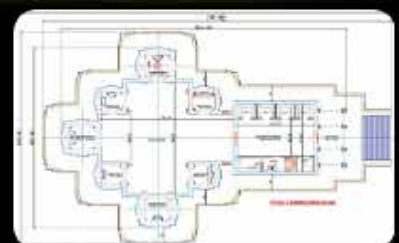
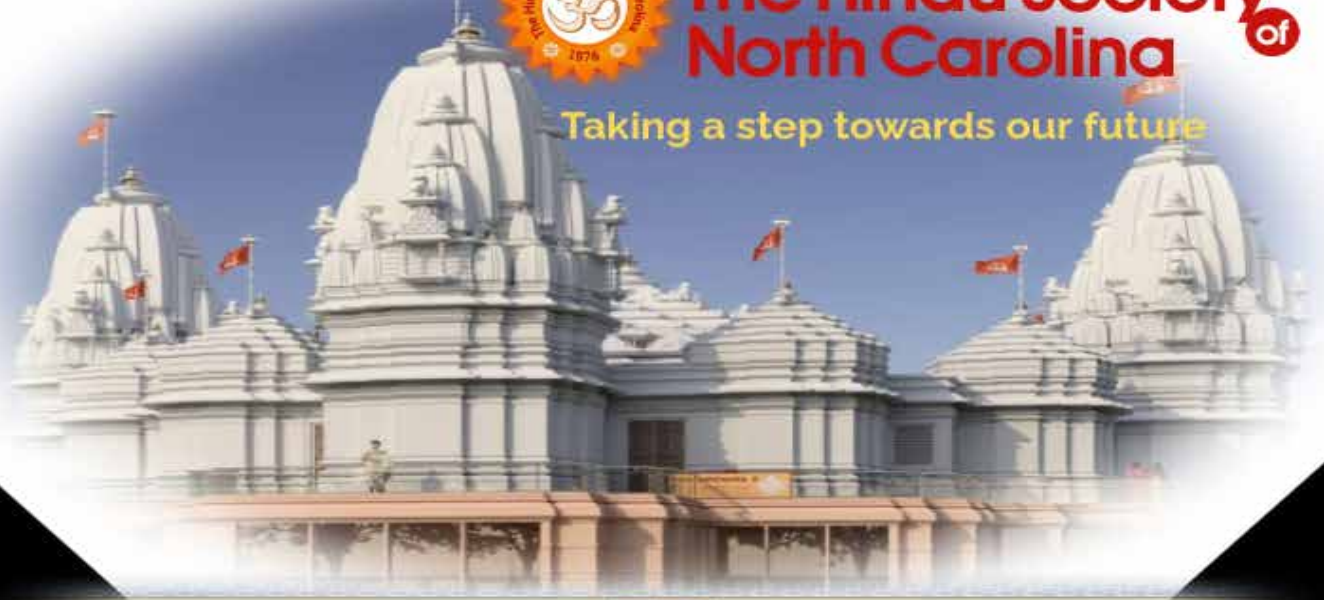






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Morning: 9:30 am - 1:00 pm  
Evening: 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm  
Bhog: 12:00 pm; 6:45 pm  
Aarti: 12:15 pm; 7:00 pm

## **Saturday - Sunday**

Darshan: 9:30 am - 8:30 pm  
Aarti: 12:15 pm; 7:00 pm



**To The Conference Delegates at the  
18<sup>th</sup> Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council  
and the 12<sup>th</sup> Hindu Mandir Priests' Conference**

*Warmest Greetings*

**and**

*Best wishes for a very successful conference*

*from*

**Gita and Sant D.  
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# Best Wishes & Deepest Prayers

FROM

BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha and  
His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj

संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं  
सं वो मनांसि जानताम् |  
समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी  
समानं मनः सहचित्तमेषाम् ||

May we move forward with a common goal.  
May we be open-minded and work together in harmony.  
May our prayers be one.  
May we belong to one brotherhood.

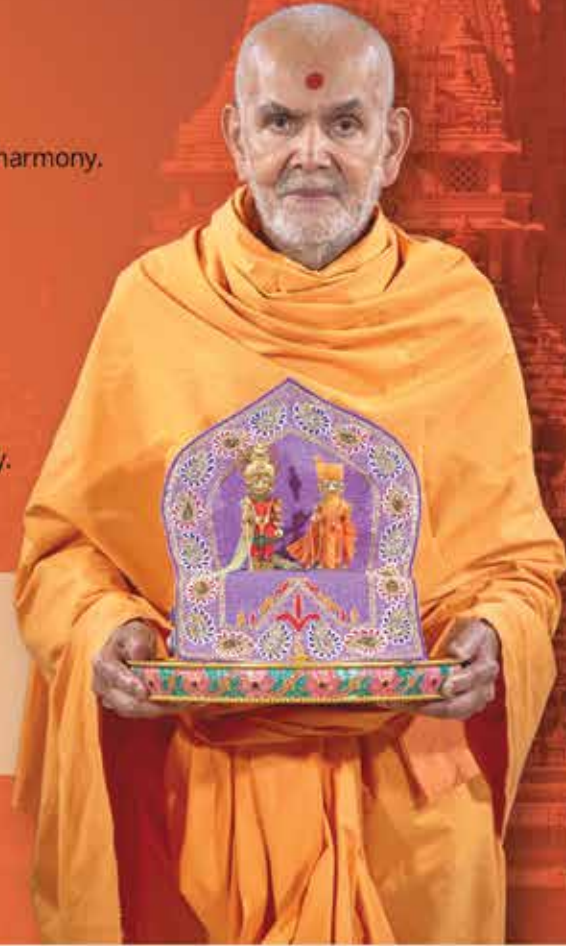
समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानिवः |  
समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ||

May our aspirations be harmonious.  
May our minds be in unison.  
May we strive to reduce disparity.  
May we be bound in strong fellowship and unity.

ॐ शांतिः शांतिः शांतिः

*"God resides where there is unity,  
goodness and compassion."*

His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj



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Padma (72.5 Hrs.) | Shiv (42.7 Hrs.) | Skand (91.2 Hrs.) | Vaivatra (50.7 Hrs.) |  
Vaman (16.9 Hrs.) | Varah (19.9 Hrs.) | Vishnu (18.1 Hrs.)

## Mahakavya

### Hindi

Sankshipt Mahabharat Part-1 (73.3 Hrs.) / Part-2 (75.2 Hrs.) |  
Shri Ramacharitamanasa (22.6 Hrs.) | Patanjali Yoga Pradip (37.4 Hrs.) |

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Srimad Bhagvad Gita | Ramacharitamanasa

## Ved

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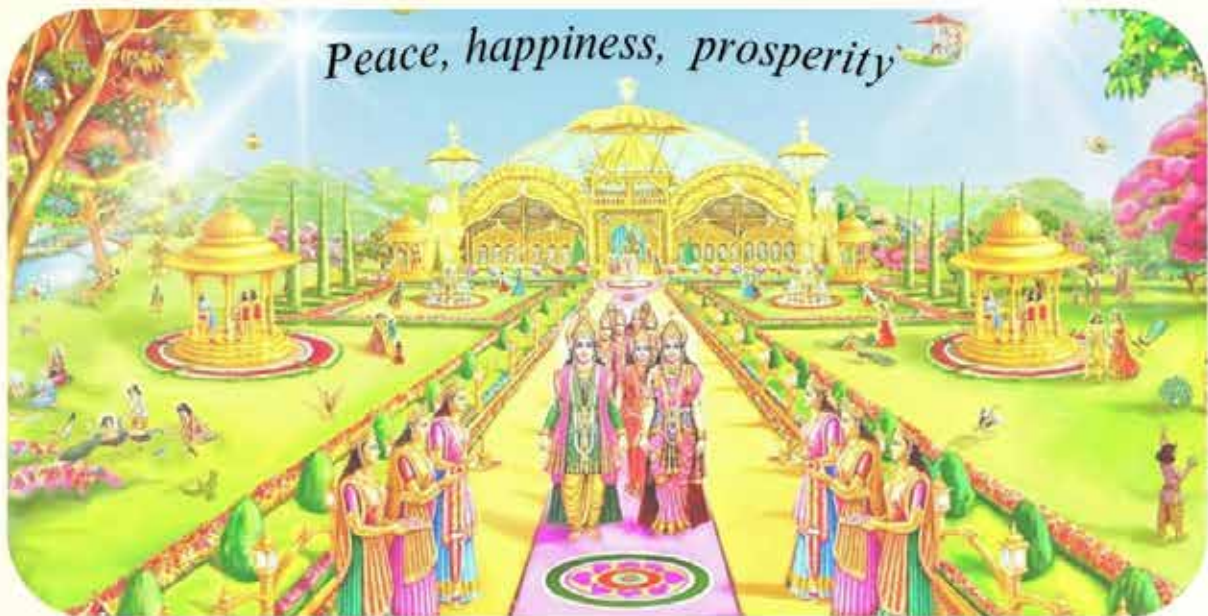
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