

# Hinduism



# Now

Issue 1 Vol. 3, May 2016

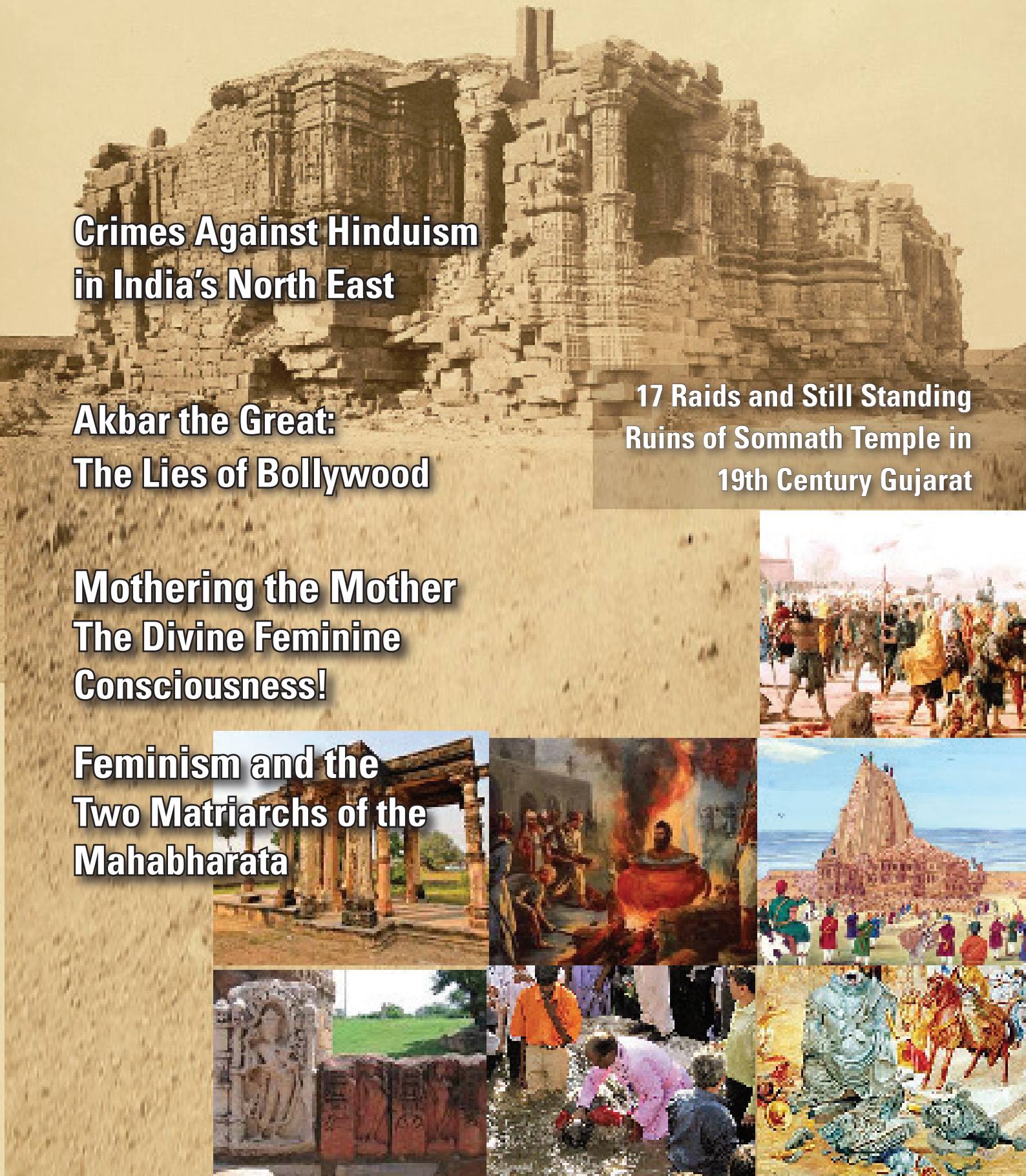
## Crimes Against Hinduism in India's North East

## Akbar the Great: The Lies of Bollywood

## Mothering the Mother The Divine Feminine Consciousness!

## Feminism and the Two Matriarchs of the Mahabharata

## 17 Raids and Still Standing Ruins of Somnath Temple in 19th Century Gujarat



## Hindu Calendar—May 2016

- 03rd May : Varuthini Ekadashi, Vallabhacharya Jayanti
- 04th May: Pradosh Vratam, Agni Nakshatram Begins
- 05th May: Masik Shivaratri
- 06th May: Vaishakha Amavasya, Darsha Amavasya
- 07th May: Chandra Darshan, Masik Karthigai, Rabindranath Tagore Jayanti
- 08th May: Parashurama Jayanti, Tagore Jayanti \*Bengal region, Rohini Vrat
- 09th May: Akshaya Tritiya, Varshitap Parana, Matangi Jayanti
- 10th May: Vinayaka Chaturthi, Ramanuja Jayanti
- 11th May: Shankaracharya Jayanti, Surdas Jayanti, Skanda Sashti
- 12th May: Ganga Saptami
- 14th May: Masik Durgashtami, Bagalamukhi Jayanti, Vrishabha Sankranti
- 15th May: Sita Navami
- 16th May: Mahavir Swami Kevalgyan
- 17th May: Mohini Ekadashi
- 18th May: Parashurama Dwadashi
- 19th May: Pradosh Vrat
- 20th May: Narasimha Jayanti, Chhinnamasta Jayanti
- 21st May: Vaishakha Purnima, Kurma Jayanti, Buddha Purnima, Purnima Upavas, Vaikasi Visakam
- 22nd May: Jyeshtha Begins, Narada Jayanti
- 25th May: Sankashti Chaturthi
- 28th May: Agni Nakshatram Ends
- 29th May: Bhanu Saptami, Kalashtami
- 31st May: Hanuman Jayanti \*Telugua



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# *Message from the Avatar*

## ***My Dear Ones,***

People time and again ask this question to me—“Is there life after death?” I tell them that “There is life after death if you had life before death.” Understand, ‘life before death’. Just because you are breathing, do not assume that you are living a life. Only when you start seeking the Upanishadic thought currents such as ‘Who am I’ (Isavasya Upanishad) and ‘By whom am I’ (Kenopanishad) does life even start in you.

Seeking getting established in you is the signpost for life happening in you. Before seeking, anything that you do and call as ‘lifestyle’ may have style, but it has no life. Therefore, for a seeker, comparing your way of living before and after seeking happened is like comparing the life of a kid to that of an adult. The life of a kid appears to have its set of advantages but it is not a mature lifestyle. Similarly, living without seeking is an immature lifestyle. Comparing the two does not help you in your progression.

When seeking happens in you, if you compare how you are able to work with different Kundalini thought currents such as ‘you are your intention’, ‘creating your own bliss chemistry is your birthright’, ‘everything in your life is your own expression and you are the source’, ‘the space where all psychological, physiological, neurological ups and downs happen is you’, then you are progressing. Vakyartha Sadas should be done on your experiments with Kundalini thought currents.

Now having the cognition that seeking is the real sign of life in you, let us see what is a power and its utility in life and spiritual progression. I would define ‘power’ as a circuit that gets established from your bio-energy to bio-memory and muscle-memory and becomes permanent in you. For the mechanical parts of your brain to function, a certain level of connection is sufficient. To awaken the non-mechanical parts of your brain, an opening / connection at a different level is required. This is where the initiation from an Enlightened Master becomes critical.

For example, an awakened Third Eye manifests different powers such as ability to see when blindfolded, ability to see long distance, healing others etc. The utility of such a power in day to day life is to be able to respond to life with a deep listening. Such a person will be compassionate knowing that they are connected to everything around them.

When one practices such siddhis or powers a number of times, few things happen. They live in more and more connection with the bio-energy or pure consciousness which is one’s real nature. This connection establishes one in an ultimate security about life itself. This is the path for being established in restful awareness.

Come to Kumbh Mela. I am going to establish 70 power circuits in you as revealed by Sadashiva in the Shivajnanopanishad. Powers can possibly distract those who do not have the guidance of a living master. You have that rare gift in your life.

Live the powers of Mahadeva. Live the life of a Shiva gana - one who is infused with Shiva.

Kumbh Chalo!

Be Blissful!

***His Holiness Paramahansa Nithyananda***





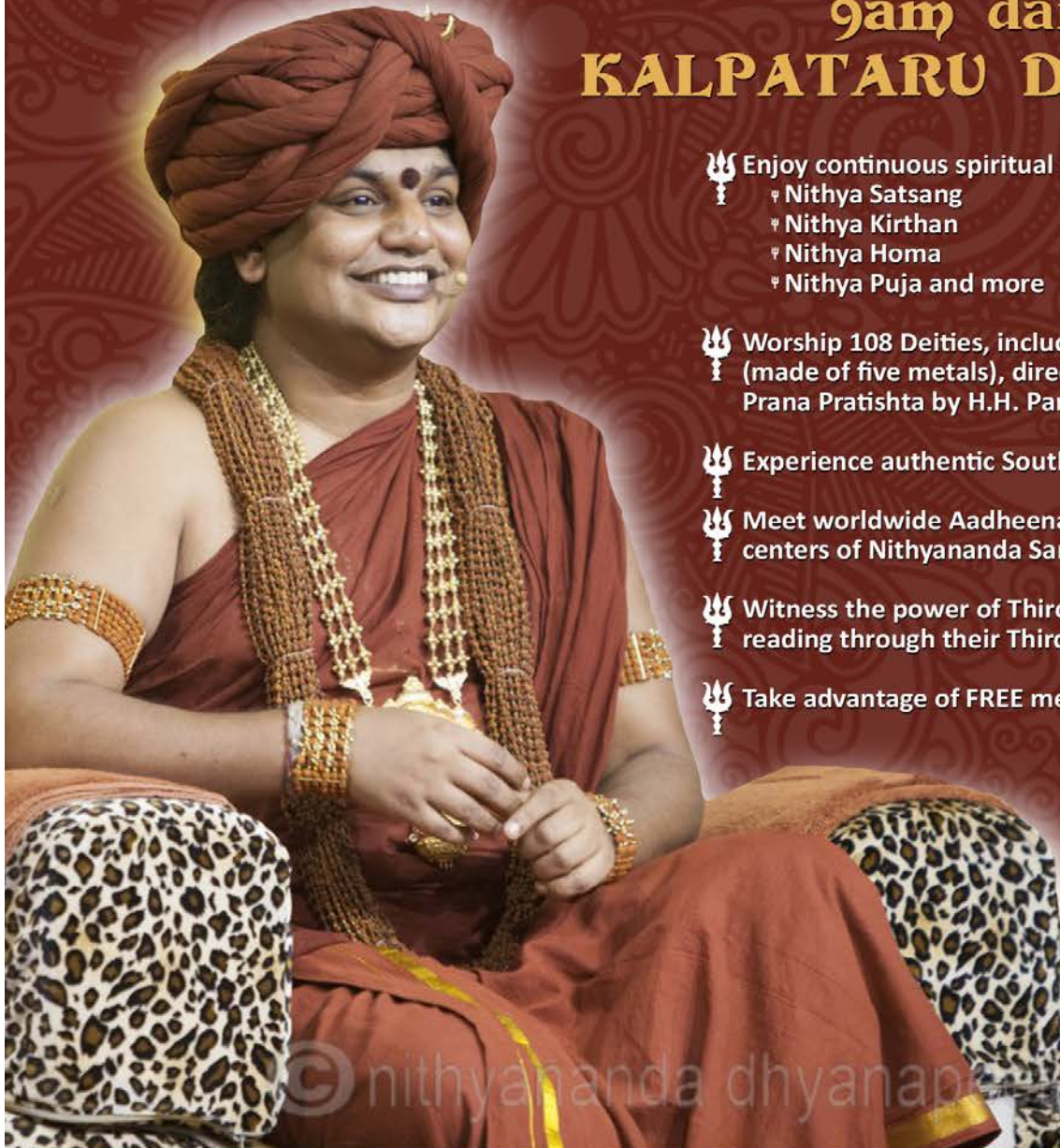
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His Holiness Paramahansa Nithyananda is recognized today as a clear, legitimate, apolitical voice of Sanatana Hindu Dharma, and revered as a living incarnation of superconsciousness by millions worldwide. He is a Mahamandaleshwar [spiritual head] of Mahanirvani Peeth, the world's most ancient apex body of Hinduism. He is the most watched spiritual teacher on YouTube.com with over 21 million views, and the author of more than 300 books published in over 20 languages. His lectures are watched live every day on <http://www.nithyananda.tv>, as well as on multiple international television channels and via video conferencing.

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# *From the Editor's Desk*

As a growing girl in a Hindu family, I was only dimly aware of the real stories behind the history of Bharat. A passion to know more about its rich culture and heritage led to a specialization in Ancient Indian History. But even this did not quite provide the true information required to get an authentic understanding of the past.



All books and reference material were interpretations by western "educated" scholars, where Hinduism was shown as rigidly caste-ridden, idolatry, primitive and barbaric. Atrocities and genocides committed on Hindus were often marginalised and reduced to mere footnotes of history. The textbooks invariably ended with "India was partitioned and we got independence on August 15, 1947"; as if to say we were always an enslaved people! Thirty years on, this western biased academia still influences our education and continues to mortify our past!

In this issue we focus on one such aspect of marginalization in Bharat's history - the worst genocide and plunder ever unleashed on a minority race - Hindus! So began a mind-numbing journey into the loot, plunder, desecration of temples, murder, jauhars and conversions during the Islamic rule in India - which repeatedly plunged a once glorious people to depths of despair, poverty and famines. As it turns out, even Akbar "the Great" was barbaric enough to carry the title of Ghazi, Slayer of non-Muslims - indicating the extent to which textbooks, media, films and even Bollywood lied to the world about his "glories".

The methods of conversion of Akbar are echoed in Stephen Knapp's expose' of the initially-benign-then-deviuous methods of Christian missionaries in targeting the indigenous tribes of North East India.

In the last few weeks the appointment of Sanskritist and philologist Sheldon Pollock as editor of the Murty Classical Library of India has raised the ire of many staunch scholars, professors, and followers of Hinduism. Rajiv Malhotra gives us a pragmatic view of the same in "The Challenge of Understanding Sheldon Pollock."

In "Mothering the Mother", we discover how enlightened eN pregnancy care program raises the divine feminine consciousness in an expectant mother. On the other hand, two great matriarchs Kunti and Gandhari exemplify how sacrifice (tyaga), dignity, and immense grace can shine through even as their families annihilate each other on the battlefields of Kurukshetra.

We continue the series on insights into various aspects of Hinduism - be this about Hindu sanskaras, the wisdom of Sri Vaishnava Alvars and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the relevance of Bhagavad Gita for today's world.

The areas to explore about Hinduism are limitless and we have only just begun. Come join this glorious treasure hunt to rediscover the greatness of Bharat Varsha!

Nithyanandoham!

Usha K Kent

# HOLDING ONTO HINDUISM

SRI NITHYA MUKTHANANDA

Last year I visited Trinidad and Tobago - a tiny island country in the Caribbean, just off the coast of South America - and was pleasantly surprised to see a very strong Hindu community there. Trinidad and Tobago has 240,000 Hindus – almost 22% of the total population. The people there practice passionate Hinduism. They have built beautiful temples with large statues of Lord Shiva and Lord Hanuman.

Trinidad and Tobago is not the only country – Guyana has over 225,000 Hindus, making up almost 28% of the population, and Suriname (French colony) has 150,000 Hindus making up about 30% of the population.

I was intrigued to find out how such a strong Hindu community and culture grew so far away from India. In 1834, slavery was abolished in the Caribbean countries and looking for a way to replace the slaves in the sugar plantations, British, French and Dutch governments all brought in indentured workers from India. Over the next 150 years Hindus grew into the largest ethnic group in the island, making up to 40% of the population, but were treated as second class citizens. Christianity was forced upon them through conversions.

The fierce determination to protect their identity drove these Hindus to hold on to their religion even stronger. They built Hindu communities with strong Hindu identities. They built temples. Trinidad also has one of the largest statues of Hanuman in the world at 85 feet. The government tried its best to suppress Hindu symbols and impose Christian ones – the highest honor in Trinidad was the Trinity Cross. Through this all, the Hindus cherished and practiced authentic Hinduism – which sailed through 150 years of oppression and harsh lifestyle.

One specific temple is all about the Hindu spirit and one man's love for Hinduism. Sewdass Sadhu was his name. Brick by brick, he built a beautiful temple on the shores of the ocean with a garden with eleven kinds of flowers. In the 1930s the sugar company saw that the temple was built over their land, and even though they had no use for this swamp land near the sea, they demanded that Sewdass demolish the temple. Sewdass Sadhu refused – they put him jail, fined him more than two years of his wage – but he never agreed. Finally, the company got hired gun to demolish the temple.

As soon as Sewdass was released from jail, he was



back at the site of the destroyed temple, staring out into the sea, planning his next step. He hit upon an idea – he got a bike, collected broken bricks from a nearby factory and truded them bag by bag into the ocean, dumping them into the sea to form a path into the water. He filled barrels with cement and sand, and built a foundation in the middle of the water. On top of the foundation, he built one of the most beautiful temples anywhere – as beautiful as it was unique. Today thousands visit this temple; they sing and dance, and celebrate the devotion and love of a Hindu for his religion.



Today, there are over 300 Hindu temples in Trinidad & Tobago. So it is only fitting, that in October 2015, Trinidad & Tobago hosted the Hindu Mandir Executive Conference (HMEC), where executives from over a hundred temples from all over North America gathered to discuss how to preserve Sanatana Hindu Dharma through temples.

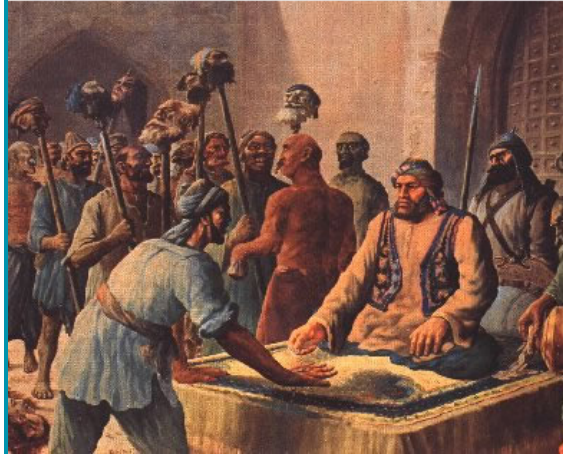
Hinduism all over the world owes a debt to this one man's love, devotion and indomitable spirit that itself stems from Hinduism itself.

This is one of the qualities we like to embody in Hinduism Now, on our mission to inspire the world on how to be activists – how to have passion, and how to work hard, and how to preserve the invaluable light of life we call Hinduism.



# THE ATROCITIES OF THE DELHI SULTANATE ON HINDU TEMPLES

PRERNA DUSIJA



## *The Suzerainty of the Delhi Sultanate*

**T**he period beginning from the year 1206 marked the establishment of the Muslim rule in India (which came to be known as the reign of the Delhi Sultanate), that spread over the far reaches of the Indian subcontinent for three centuries until 1526. This period was no less edifying, as it was characterized by looting, plundering, widespread temple desecration, murder and dishonor of the sacredness of Hinduism.

Five dynasties ruled during the Delhi Sultanate period. The first four were of Turkic origin—namely, the Mamluk dynasty (1206-90), the Khilji dynasty (1290-1320), the Tughlaq dynasty (1320-1414), the Sayyid dynasty (1414-1451)—the last was the Afghan Lodi dynasty (1451-1526).

The political structure of the state was in shambles, with pilferage abounding, coupled with torture that cast a pall of gloom on the Hindu consciousness. On the whole, the Delhi Sultanate came to be recognized as having an ideology with the aim of ‘cultural appropriation,’ to bring Hinduism to its knees, but failed in realizing its objective.

### ***An Encapsulation of the War on Temples by the Five Dynasties***

#### **1. The Mamluk Dynasty (1206-1290 AD)**

The Mamluk dynasty also known as the ‘Slave Dynasty,’ was directed into Northern India by Qutb-ud-din-Aibak, a Turkic general from Central Asia. As a result of the splitting of Muhammad of Ghor’s empire (after his assassination in 1206), Qutb-ud-din-Aibak became Sultan of Delhi and he and his successors continued in Muhammad of Ghor’s legacy to desecrate temples.

He ordered the “destruction of twenty-seven Hindu and Jain temples to furnish building materials for the construction of Delhi’s first mosque, ‘Quwwat-ul-Islam’ (meaning, the glory of Islam). The materials of the twenty-seven idol temples, on each of which 2,000,000 Delhiwals (a high denomination

coin, current at that time in Delhi) were spent, were also used in the construction of the Qutub Minar.

Shamsuddin Iltutmish succeeded Aibak at Delhi and invaded Malwa in 1234 AD. Not only did he destroy a very ancient temple at Vidisha but also destroyed the six hundred year old Mahakal temple of Ujjain, leveling it to its foundations.

This pattern of iconoclasm continued, but despite such wanton cruelty, Muslim power began to decline until Jalaluddin and Allauddin Khilji revived it and perpetuated religious terrorism after 1290 AD.

#### **2. The Khilji Dynasty (1290-1320 AD)**

On the way to Ranthambore in 1291 AD, Jalaluddin Khilji destroyed temples at Chain. The broken idols were sent to Delhi to be strewn before the gates of Jama Masjid to be trampled upon by the Muslims. In 1292, his nephew Allauddin conducted a similar feat by leading an expedition to Vidisha and caused the broken temple idols worshipped by Hindus, to be spread before the Badaun gates for Muslims to kick them around.

After murdering his uncle Jalaluddin, Allauddin led another expedition to Gujarat in 1298 AD under his generals Ulugh and Nusrat Khan. Apart from plundering the ports of Surat and Cambay, the temple of Somnath which was rebuilt by the Hindus (after destruction by Mahmud Ghazni in 11 CE), was plundered and destroyed and the idol taken to Delhi to suffer the same fate - to be trodden upon by the Muslims.

Further, the army commanders of the Khilji dynasty, apart from

Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan, Khusro Khan and Malik Kafur, attacked, killed looted and enslaved non-Muslims from the West, North, Central and South India. These regions, especially housing Hindu temples were all subjected to larceny and fire and Hindus were butchered to death and slaughtered en masse.

For instance, the army general, Malik Kafur entered the Srirangam temple in 1311 AD, massacred the Brahmin priests of the temple who resisted the invasion for three days, plundered the temple treasury and vehemently destroyed umpteen religious icons. Similarly Malik Kafur attacked Halebid and laid a siege on the famous Hoysaleswara temple there. He also ordered the destruction of the Meenakshi-Sundareshwar temple at Madurai as well.

#### **3. The Tughlaq Dynasty (1321-1394 AD)**

The Muslim population crumbled after the death of Allauddin Khilji in 1316 AD, but it was soon revived by the Tughlaqs. By this time, most of the temples, over the length and breadth of Islamic occupation in India had been razed to the ground and the imposition of the accursed Jizyah tax made it worse for Hindus to practice their religions and worship in temples peacefully.

When Firuz Shah Tughlaq came to power, he led an expedition to Orissa in 1360 AD and destroyed the Jagannath temple at Puri and desecrated many other Hindu shrines. Under his rule, Hindus who built a temple or erected a deity and those who practiced their religion in public, such as close to a water tank,

were disdainfully arrested, brought to the palace and executed. In his autobiography he wrote:

“Some Hindus erected a new idol-temple in the village of Kohana and the idolaters used to assemble there and perform their idolatrous rites. These people were seized and brought before me. I ordered that the perverse conduct of this wickedness be publicly proclaimed and they should be put to death before the gate of the palace. I also ordered that the infidel books, the idols, and the vessels used in their worship should all be publicly burnt.”

There were further horrific actions by Firuz Shah Tughlaq at Nagarkot (Kangra) where he pillaged the shrine of Jvalamukhi. There is a record by Firishta that says the Sultan, “broke the idols of Jvalamukhi, mixed their fragments with the flesh of cows and hung them in nose bags round the necks of Brahmins. He sent the principle idol as a trophy to Medina.”

#### **4. The Sayyid Dynasty (1414-1451 AD)**

After the Tughlaq dynasty, came Timur’s massacre of Delhi in 1398, whose sole aim was to massacre or enslave the Hindu population. Temple desecration continued even during his reign, apart from the atrocities and systematic slaughter of non-Muslims.

It was not long before ‘Sikander the Iconoclast,’ (known to be part of the early years of the Sayyid dynasty) earned the title ‘but-shikan’ or idol-breaker because of the sheer scale of desecration and destruction of Hindu and Buddhist temples, shrines ashrams and hermitages, especially in Kashmir. He also denigrated Hindu and Buddhist books, and banned Dharmic followers from praying, dancing, creating music and observation of religious festivals. To escape this religious terrorism, many Hindus converted to Islam and many fled Kashmir.

The Sayyid dynasty under Khizr Khan’s generals such as Muzzafar Shah, Ahmad Shah and Mahmud saw the depredation of temples in places such as, Paraspur, Bijbehara, Tripuresvara, Idar, Diu, Manvi, Sidhpur, Delwara and Kumbhalmer in the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan.

#### **5. The Lodi Dynasty (1451-1526 AD)**

Bahlol Lodi, belonging to the Afghan Lodi tribe was the last to rule over the Delhi Sultanate. Like his antecedents, he spread terror and religious violence where the Hindus were concerned.

After he died, his son Sikandar Ghazi Lodi took over and devastated several temples, especially those in Mathura, which was a “minefield of heathenism” according to him.

In 1499, a Brahmin attracted huge support among Muslims and Hindus through his teachings of embracing both the religions claiming they were two different paths to approach the same God. Sikander ordered him to change his views and convert to Islam. After the Brahmin refused, he was killed.

Similarly, in the historical text, *Wakiat-i-Mushtaki*, there is a reference where stone idol parts of temples were used to weigh meat, which was broadly deemed as a sacrilegious act by Hindus (who were mostly vegetarian).

Soon after this, Ibrahim Lodi, the second son of Sikandar Lodi assumed power after his father’s death in 1517, but was eventually defeated by Babur in the Battle of Panipat in 1526 (with temple desecration continuing until 1526). This brought the disgraceful reign of the Delhi Sultanate to a grinding halt.

#### ***An Ignominious End for the Sultans***

Although the period of the Delhi Sultanate was typified with social unrest and bloodshed, not only did the sultans fail to create a pan-Muslim nation, but also floundered in proselytizing Hindus. Each dynasty that rose to power during 1206 to 1526, was inevitably crushed despite so much religious bigotry, sectarianism and spite directed towards non-Muslims.

The chilling horrors against Hindus continued with the rise of the Mughal empire and the British colonisation, after the ignominious rule of the Delhi Sultanate. But, India and its Hindus stood tall owing to a firm moral foundation, rooted in nonviolence and religious tolerance. No sultan with his annihilating ambitions could shake the core of Hindu consciousness, which was nurturing, all-embracing and given to pluralism.

Destroying temples, religious manuscripts and books and replacing temples with mosques were obtuse ways of obdurate sultans to buttress their Islamic authority. However, their attempts to subjugate an entire nation standing on the principle foundation of Dharma (righteousness), was but all in vain.

### A Tabular Representation of Temple Desecration During the Delhi Sultanate Period

Sultan/Agent	Dynasty	Years	Temple Sites Destroyed	States
Mohammad Ghuri, Aibek	Mamluk	1193-1290	Ajmer, Samana, Kuhram, Delhi, Kol, Benaras	Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh
Bakhtiyar, Iltumish, Jalaluddin, Allauddin, Malik Kafur	Khilji	1290-1320	Nalanda, Odantapuri, Vikramashila, Bhilsa, Ujjain, Jhain, Vijapur, Devagiri, Somnath, Chidambaram, Madurai	Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu
Ulugh Khan, Firoz Tughlaq, Nahar, Muzaffar Khan	Tughlaq	1320-1395	Somnath, Warangal, Bodhan, Pillalamarri, Puri, Sainthali, Idar, Somnath	Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Haryana
Suhrab, Begdha, Bahmani, Khalil Shah, Khawwas Khan, Sikandar Lodi, Ibrahim Lodi	Lodi	1457-1518	Mandalgarh, Malan, Dwarka, Kondapalle, Kanchi, Amod, Nagarkot, Utgir, Narwar, Gwalior	Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya

In this seemingly iconoclastic rhetoric, what can be ascertained is that by accommodating the infidels, and after they were ousted, India regained its spiritual strength. With renewed fervor and creativity, they rebuilt some of the old temple structures (such as Somnath and Meenakshi temples), which stand testimony to our true innate instinct to reunify and reassemble all that had been sundered.

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# THE LUST OF ALLAUDDIN KHILJI & RANI PADMINI'S JAUHAR

SHIVANI KHETOO

**J**auhar or Sati, widow immolation, is the tradition where Rajput women would wear their wedding dresses and jump into pits of sandalwood flames in mass while the priests would chant Vedic mantras. Jauhar was committed to escape rape and torture by Islamic invaders. The next morning the men would proceed for Saka, that is the palace gates would be set open and the men would ride out to annihilate the enemy. They would perish during the battle but would never be captured alive. Jauhar or Saka was never performed when Hindus fought against other Hindus because the defeated were treated with dignity. Rani Padmini committed the first Jauhar in 1303 AD.

### ***Rani Padmini:***

Rani Padmini is known even today for her bravery, wisdom and enormous beauty. She was the daughter of King Gandharvasen and Queen Champavati. Rani Padmini was married to King Rawal Ratan Singh of Mewar. Mewar, situated in the modern south central Rajasthan state, was one of the Rajput kingdoms of India.

### ***Allauddin Khilji:***

The Sultan of Delhi, Allauddin Khilji, made repeated attacks on Mewar, but Mewar was very difficult to vanquish. However, after hearing about Rani Padmini's extraordinary beauty, the lustful Khilji changed strategy. He sent word to King Rawal Ratan Singh that he would offer friendship if he would be allowed to see Rani Padmini, who he claimed to consider as his sister.

Rani Padmini was smart and initially refused. Upon the King's insistence she agreed to show only her reflection. While Khilji was waiting to see Rani Padmini, his soldiers thoroughly examined the fort. Later, as King Ratan Singh accompanied the Sultan out of the fort, Khilji's men took him prisoner. In return of the king's freedom, Khilji demanded Rani Padmini as his mistress. The queen outwitted Khilji by sending soldiers in royal palanquins and the king was saved. A year later, Khilji again launched an attack but this time he was better equipped.

### **Rani Padmini's Jauhar**

Rani Padmini was aware her husband would be defeated in this battle. She had been living a highly respectful and revered life as per the Vedic culture and thus she preferred death to daily torture and rape by the Mughals. She chose self-immolation because the Islamic invaders were notorious for raping even the dead bodies.

On August 26, 1303, a huge pyre was lit. Rani Padmini and all other women jumped into the pit of flames. The next morning the men committed Saka. Disappointed not to have conquered any woman, dead or alive, Khilji then ordered the massacre of 30,000 Hindus in a single day.

### **Subsequent Jauhars**

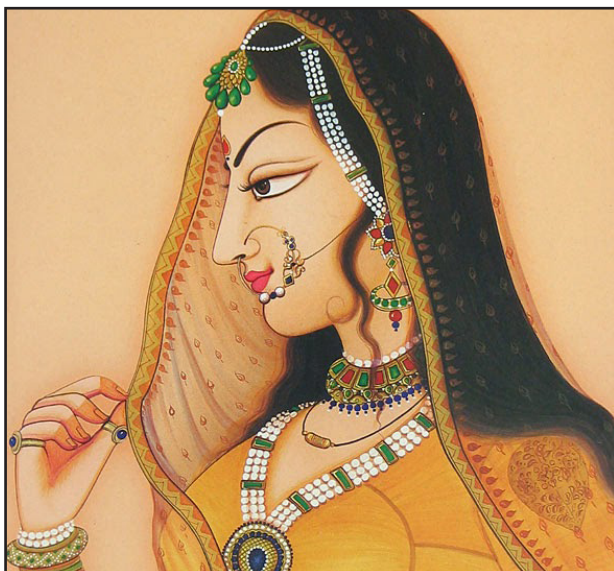
Hammir Singh recaptured Mewar in 1326. In 1535 Bahadur Shah, the Mughal Sultan of Gujarat besieged the fort causing immense carnage. Again, the women committed Jauhar led by Rani Karnawati and all 32,000 men living in the fort proceeded for Saka. Jauhar was performed for the third time after the Mughal Emperor Akbar captured Mewar in 1568.

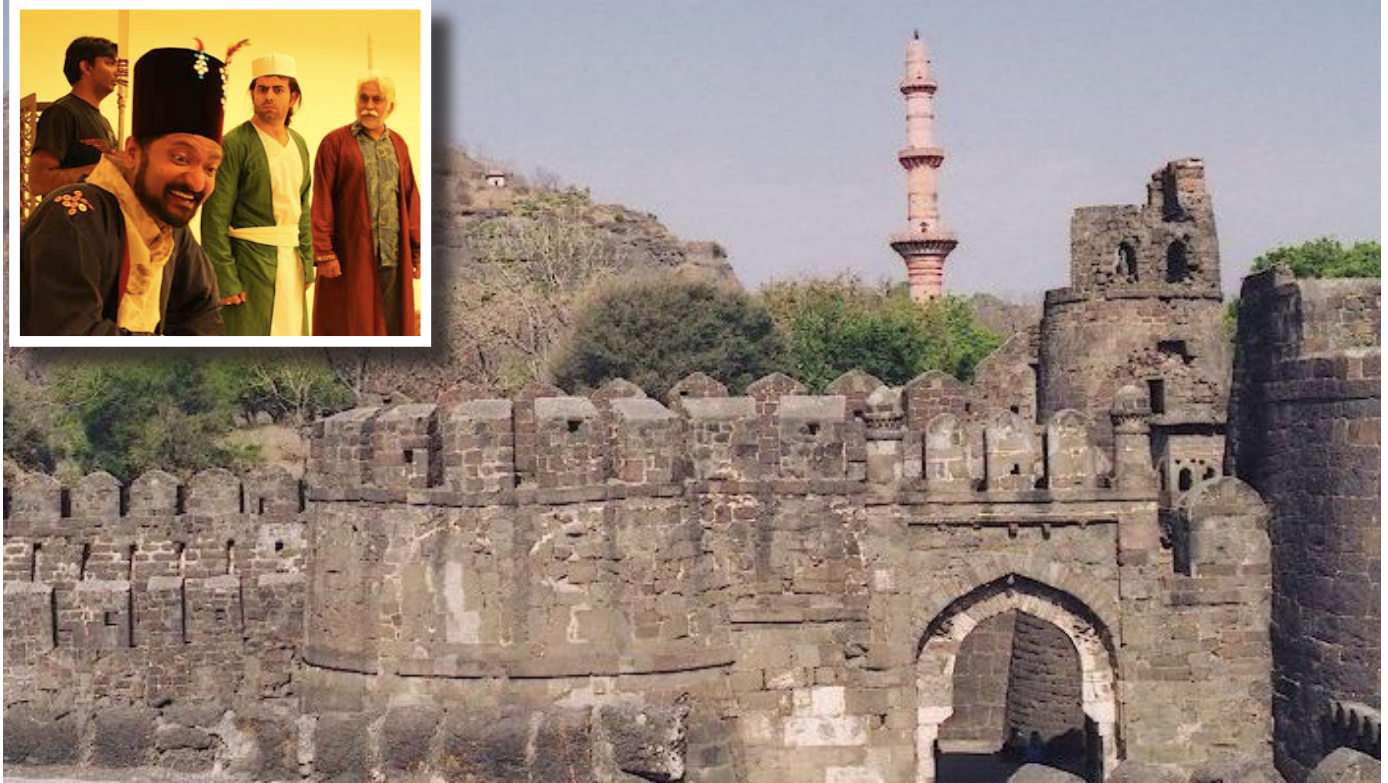
Jauhar is not a Hindu religious practice. It was forced upon the Hindus by the barbaric Islamic invaders. Jauhar is not mentioned in any Hindu texts. On the contrary, various Vedic verses state women are to be revered, respected and treated equally as men. The Rig Veda (X, 18.8) quotes, "Rise woman,

and go to the world of living beings; come, this man near whom you sleep is lifeless; you have enjoyed this state of being the wife of your husband, the suitor who took you by the hand." Yet, Jauhar or Sati is one of the concepts most often used to stigmatize Hinduism by misrepresenting the Vedas. We need to start looking deeper into its origin.

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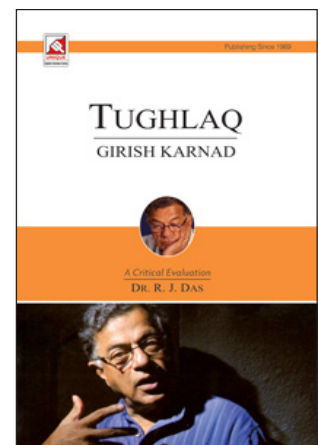
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# THE WHIMS OF MUHAMMAD BIN TUGHLAQ AND THE IMPACT ON BHARAT

VARSHA SINGH



**M**any years ago in 1964, renowned playwright-writer-actor-director Girish Karnad wrote an iconic play in Kannada, (later translated into many Indian languages) which went on to make him world famous - Tughlaq. For as many years it was debated whether Muhammad bin Tughlaq, on whom the play is based, was a genius ruler or a plain mad man, who brought great misery to the subjects under his rule. Here we examine some of his whimsical decisions and their impact on

Bharat, in the period of his rule from 1324-1351 CE.

Muhammad bin Tughlaq is very politely mentioned as a ruler of great knowledge and a slight bias towards Muslims, in many modern day history books. The details of what actually happened during his rule shows the injustice done to the people of Bharat, and specifically to Hindus. He was not only impatient and lacked judgment, but also enjoyed watching the suffering of his people.

## ***The Rise of Muhammad bin Tughlaq***

Muhammad bin Tughlaq was originally known as Ulugh Juna Khan. His ruthlessness came to light when he assassinated his own father, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, and took over the throne of Delhi. After assuming his father's position, he renamed himself as Muhammad bin Tughlaq. Like his father, he raised the taxes on Hindus so that they could not afford to become wealthy or rebellious. After a point, he raised taxes on all non-Muslims by ten to twenty

folds, leaving most non-Muslims incapable of paying them.

The raise on agricultural and land taxes did not allow Hindu farmers to grow anything or work. As a result, they had to flee into jungles in a mass. Many of them had no choice but to join robber clans, while others starved. In response to the robbery and famines, the foolish Sultan arrested many of them, and tortured them to death.

### ***Migration to Maharashtra***

Muhammad bin Tughlaq founded a new city, called Jahanpanah (meaning, "Protection of the World") in Daulatabad (modern day Deogir, Maharashtra). Once the city was built, he decided to make it his capital, and so move southwards from Delhi. This in itself was not a problem.

What was whimsical though was he wanted the population of Delhi to move too, along with his entourage! He started a mass migration for the whole of Delhi to move to Daulatabad, most of them by force. Anyone who refused to do so was slaughtered, irrespective of whether they were Muslims or non-Muslims. One blind man who was incapable of making his way was tied to a cart and dragged for 40 days. The cart reached there safely but only one leg of the blind man which was tied to the cart made it to Daulatabad.

After shifting to the new capital, it could not survive for long due to the shortage of drinking water. So Tughlaq decided to move back to Delhi. Many of the Delhi Muslims got tired of the Sultan's rule and remained in the Deccan region.

### ***Rebellions Against the Sultan***

Muhammad bin Tughlaq had to face rebellion from his own family. His nephew, Bahauddin Garshasp, along with a few Hindu rulers, led a rebellion against the Sultan, but was soon captured and flayed. His skin was stuffed and put up for display in many cities, while his flesh was fed to elephants. He executed the governor of Multan when he refused to put up the skin for display in his city.

Muhammad bin Tughlaq annexed the empire of Kampili and tried to convert many of its elite members to Islam. Out of them, two brothers, Harihara and Bukka, were sent to the south as governors. They stood up for Hinduism by reconverting to its fold, and laid the foundations of a kingdom which went on to become the great

Vijayanagara Empire. The Vijayanagara Empire was responsible for restoring and preserving Hindu heritage by abolishing the Sultanate in southern India and building several temples.

### ***Poor Economic Decisions***

Due to the wastage of several resources for wars and migrations, Muhammad bin Tughlaq had to find a new form of currency. He therefore introduced silver coins but this system failed as many citizens forged them out of household silver objects. He then tried to introduce copper coins. This system was even worse. The Hindu citizens easily started to mint copper coins worth crores to pay the large amount of taxes imposed on them. This led to the abolishment of copper coins too.

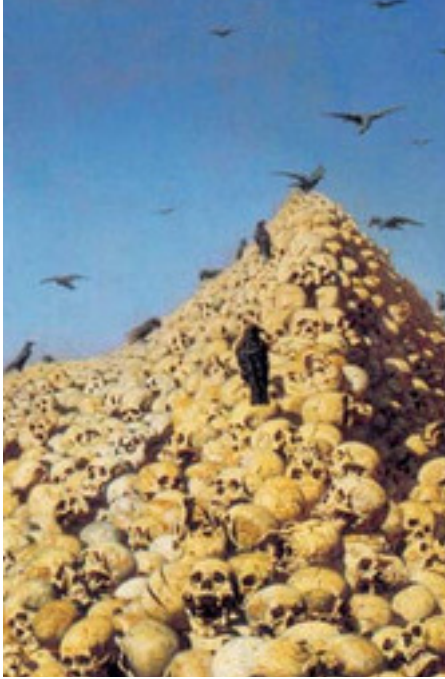
These poor economic decisions of the Sultan led to a large number of famines all across Bharat which took a toll on the empire as well as its citizens. In fact, these famines were recorded to be some of the worst that India has faced so far.

### ***His Death***

Muhammad bin Tughlaq had a habit of chasing people who did not pay their taxes and then executing them. He died while doing so in Gujarat, in 1351, leaving the throne to his 45 year old nephew, Firuz Shah Tughlaq. Like many aspects of Indian History, most school and university textbooks brush aside the impact of the mad decisions of Muhammad bin Tughlaq and its impact on Bharat at the time.

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## THE MONGOL INVASION: TIMUR LANG IN INDIA

POORNIMA VENIGALLA

**B**y the late 1300's, invasion and conquest were not foreign concepts to India. She had already suffered at the brutal hands of the Delhi Sultanate years before. Raids, looting, destruction, plunder, desecration. However, the attacks did not stop there. The Mongol invasions superseded the reign of the Delhi Sultanate. The initial invasion was led by the callous Turko-Mongol conqueror, Timur Lang or Tamerlane. His quest to restore the glorified Mongol Empire of Genghis Khan was ruthless. Much like his predecessors, he was violent in his attack against India, targeting specifically Hindus.

### ***Timur Succeeds where Genghis Khan Failed!***

Genghis Khan was the original founder of the Mongol Empire. He was a nomad from Northeast Asia and after unifying the nomadic Mongol tribes, he began his conquests of Eurasia. He was notorious for his brutality and genocide. At the height of his empire, he reigned over most of the Middle East and Central Asia. However, he was never able to conquer India. In 1222, he had considered it in order to complete his empire, but India's geography and climate provided the perfect protection against the invader. The heat and humidity were too much to bare for the Mongol warriors, who were accustomed to the cold, dry climate of the mountains. Furthermore,

because the weapons were not designed for the weather, the bows were ineffective in the moist air. Realizing these complications, Genghis Khan and his warriors retreated back into the safety of the mountains, leaving India relatively untouched by the Mongol empire, until Timur Lang came to power.

### ***Targeted Attack on Hindus***

Though Timur Lang was not a direct descendent of Genghis Khan, he considered himself a successor of his empire. During his rule, he expanded the empire to Persia, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor. After occupying Afghanistan, he moved onto India. Like many before him, he was attracted to India because of her riches.

However, according to his autobiographical memoirs, Malfuzat-i-Timuri, his "great objective in invading Hindustan had been to wage a religious war against the infidel Hindus." Though the Delhi Sultanate had already established Islamic rule in India, they were beginning to falter. Timur Lang felt they were not harsh enough on the 'infidels'. He claimed that he received an omen from the Koran with the verse "O Prophet, make war upon infidels and unbelievers, and treat them with severity." With these, he set out to wage a war on the Hindus.

### ***Relentless Loot & Plunder***

Timur Lang set out on a mission to desecrate and exterminate all the 'unbelievers' in India, sparing only the Muslims. In one incident, he pursued Hindus who sought refuge in the mountains after hearing of his campaign. After reaching them, he murdered all the men and imprisoned all the women and children, pillaging their property. He ordered that his notorious tower of skulls be constructed using their heads. He plundered the cities and took Hindu prisoners everywhere he went. He recounts in his autobiography:

"My entire army, no longer under control, went off to the city and thought of nothing but killing, plundering, and making prisoners. The sack was general during the whole day, and continued throughout the following day, Saturday, the seventeenth (Dec. 27), the spoil being so great that each man secured from fifty to a hundred prisoners, men, women, and children, while no soldier took less than twenty. There was likewise an immense booty in rubies, diamonds, garnets, pearls, and other gems; jewels of gold and silver; gold and silver money of the celebrated Alai coinage; vessels of gold and silver; and brocades and silks of great value. Gold and silver ornaments of the Hindu women were obtained in such quantities as to exceed all account."

### ***"Food for the Sword"***

Throughout his time in India, he had taken over a 100,000 prisoners and looted the cities and women of all their riches. However, he could not continue to bring the prisoners along into battle and "it would be entirely opposed to the rules of war to set these idolaters and foes of Islam at liberty, so that no course remained but to make them all food for the sword." In one day, his men slayed the 100,000 Hindu prisoners egregiously.

In the eyes of Timur Lang, this was a righteous act in the name of God. His invasions triggered the founding of the Mughal Empire in India and continued the crimes against Hindus.

In the words of Timur Lang, "My object in the invasion of Hindustan is to lead an expedition against the infidels that, according to the law of Muhammad (upon whom and his family be the blessing and peace of God!), we may convert the people of that country to the true faith and purify the land itself from infidelity and polytheism, and that we may overthrow their temples and idols and become conquerors and crusaders before God."

### ***Historians Marginalize the Horror***

Current historians claim that the theory of Islam being a religion of the sword is outdated and inaccurate. Richard Eaton states that there is never any mechanism of conversion laid out and it is debatable that you can force someone to change their religious identity simply with the threat of death. Historic records prove otherwise, particularly in the case of Timur Lang. Offering a choice between death and conversion was hardly a choice for Hindus! Only with complete submission would he spare them. Many would agree and purport their allegiance to Allah.

### ***Brutality – "God's Grace"***

Timur Lang believed that he was carrying out the word of God by persecuting the 'infidels'. He thought he was assuring God's grace with his brutality against the Hindus. For Richard Eaton to claim that Islam is not a religion of the sword, doesn't just invalidate, but is downright absurd and a complete denial of the atrocities committed by Muslim invaders on the Hindu population throughout history. They may have fallen on their faces in their quest to convert Bharat to Islam, but they brought immense damage and suffering to the people in their pursuit, which is a big red clot in the history of Hinduism till date.

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# 'AKBAR THE GREAT': THE LIES OF BOLLYWOOD

KAVEA PANEERASELVAM

**A**kbar, or Abu'l-Fath Jalal ud-din Muhammad Akbar was the third emperor of the Mughal dynasty. He ruled from 1556 until his death in 1605. Akbar ascended the throne when he was just twelve years old, under the care of Bairam Khan, a Turkish nobleman. He safeguarded the throne until Akbar came of age and reclaimed full control of the government.

In historical records, to this day, Akbar is referred with the nomenclature 'the Great'. He is said to have ushered in a period of "religious tolerance" in India during his rule. Instead of using the power of the sword for conversion, he used the power of alliances and slowly integrated Islam into Indian culture. He was also far more successful in converting large parts of the population than his predecessors purely because people did not know that they were slowly being converted to Islam. The obvious hit would come later with Akbar's successors.

## ***Covert Conversion***

In his book, *Conversion to Islam in India*, Richard Eaton puts forth the theory of accretion and reform as the main way in which conversion

happened in India. While Islam was mildly successful as the "religion of the sword" in converting local populations, the main success of Islam came from integration and then purification. The theory suggests that the first step was accretion, or integration of Muslim practices with Hindu practices under the name of tolerance.

This was especially true under Akbar's rule. Poets and artists subtly integrated Hindu ideas and themes into Islamic thought in order to make Islam easier for the Hindus to digest. For example, they added the idea of goddess worship into Islam. Robert Eaton describes how in the sixteenth century, Sayyid Murtaza, a Bengali poet, addresses Fatima (Prophet Mohammad's wife) as the jagat janani (Goddess of the World). This mixture of cultures was easier for the Hindus to digest and eventually imbibe. Hindus picked up the culture of their Mughal

"Akbar like all Mughal rulers had the holy Muslim title of 'Ghazi' (Slayer of Kaffirs)"



kings and under Akbar, they lived somewhat peacefully with a mixture of their Hindu and Muslim practices.

### ***Akbar was Barbaric and a Ghazi***

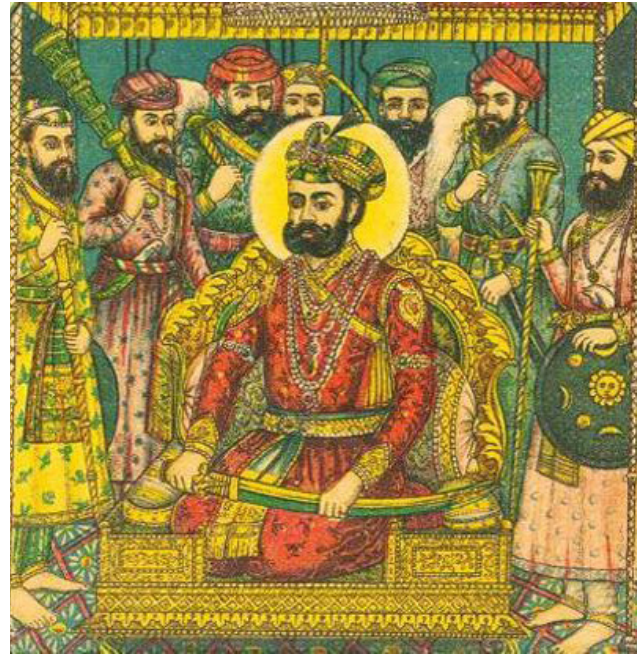
Although Akbar did abolish two obnoxious taxes on Hindus namely the pilgrimage tax in 1563 CE and Jizyah in 1564 CE, (the latter being reinstated and abolished many times by him), his rule was barely better than other Mughal and Turko-Afghani rulers. Two historical events clearly prove Akbar was no better than his ancestors Genghis Khan and Timur Lang.

For one, Akbar like all Mughal rulers, had the holy Muslim title of 'Ghazi' (Slayer of Kaffirs, non-Muslims or infidel). In Mughal era, slayer of Hindus were considered as Ghazis. Like Timur Lang and Nadir Shah, Akbar too had a victory tower erected with the heads of captured/surrendered soldiers of the army of Hemu, the Hindu ruler defeated in the 2nd Battle of Panipat in 1556. Hemu, who was felled unconscious by an arrow shot into his eye, was taken to the court where he was beheaded on Akbar's orders - Hemu's head was sent to Kabul as a sign of victory, to the ladies of Humayun's harem, and Hemu's torso was sent to Delhi for exposure on a gibbet. Hemu's aged father, who refused to convert to Islam, was beheaded too.

In 1558, after a 4-month siege and fall of the Chittorgarh fort (in Rajasthan), Akbar captured and slaughtered more than 30,000 unarmed Hindu peasants and enslaved the artisans for his use! To escape shame, rape and slavery in the hands of Muslim soldiers, 1000s of Rajput women committed Jauhar within the walls of the fort. This was the third time that women of Chittor had resorted to Jauhar, following in the footsteps of Rani Padmini and Rani Karnavati in earlier times.

### ***Lies Spread by Bollywood***

There is a belief prevalent in present day India that Akbar's rule was secular and tolerant of the native Hindu faith. This belief is fostered by Indian history texts, Hindi movies like Mughal-e-Azam, Jodha-Akbar, and the fictional tales of Akbar and his Hindu court jester Birbal. The movie Jodha Akbar depicts Akbar as a caring friend of the Hindus and even as a supporter of Hindu culture. It also depicts Jodha as his only wife, whom he loved dearly. The reality was far



from the truth. In fact, there never was a Jodha, let alone her being the mother of the heir to the throne, Jehangir! She is entirely a product of Bollywood's warped imagination, nothing more.

Present-day Hindus rejoiced as they watched Akbar defeat the Hindu kings. He was, after all, the protagonist. Thanks to Bollywood depictions, Hindus celebrated his victories in movie theaters across the world. In fact Bollywood propagated the false idea that most of the Mughal rulers were sympathetic to the concerns of Hindus. Hindus regard Akbar's victories as their victories, when in reality, he was an invader who quietly integrated Islam into the fabric of the lives of Hindus.

### ***Expansion by Mutta—Marriage in Name Only***

Akbar used marriage alliances with various royal houses as a way of expanding his empire. Akbar had a harem of 300 wives and countless concubines, amazon guards and slaves, many of whom were captives from wars he waged.

As per the Persian Shia interpretation of Muslim scriptures (and also by the present day 'Mohammedan Act of India'), a Muslim can have a 'mutta' marriage with a free women of OTHER religion. A mutta marriage involves no ceremony, but is a private pact between a man and a woman for, officially, 'a limited period of time (as short as one night)' agreed between them. As per Shia interpretation, mutta constituted a legal Muslim marriage. Akbar used mutta principle to justify his 300 wives.



### ***Akbar's "Navratna"***

In the 4th-5th CE, the great Hindu Gupta ruler Chandragupta Vikramaditya (ruled circa 380-415 CE), had nine incomparable talents in his court (foremost among them being famed Sanskrit poet Kalidasa), who were called the Navratnas or Nine Gems. Akbar emulated this, by having his own version of navratnas. The big difference though was, Vikramaditya never had flattery as the eligibility to promote a deserving person to this title. Akbar's navaratnas contained his stooges and fawners, foremost of them being Raja Birbal, Raja Todar Mal, Raja Man Singh and Abul Fazal. One of the navaratnas in Akbar's court came by the title after conversion to Islam. This was well known musician Miyan Tansen (formerly Ramnatu Pandey). Another noted veena player Raja Misar Singh was converted to Islam, and became Naubat Khan. Naubat Khan was gifted money and felicitated as official Veena Vadak for his conversion.

### ***The Aftermath of Akbar's Reign***

After Akbar came the period of reform. Shah Jahan succeeded Jahangir who succeeded Akbar. Shah Jahan moved away from the relatively "liberal practices" of his grandfather, and by the time Aurangzeb ascended the throne, religious tolerance was a story of the past. Many people who were followers of both Hindu and Muslim practices became labeled as Muslim. Aurangzeb

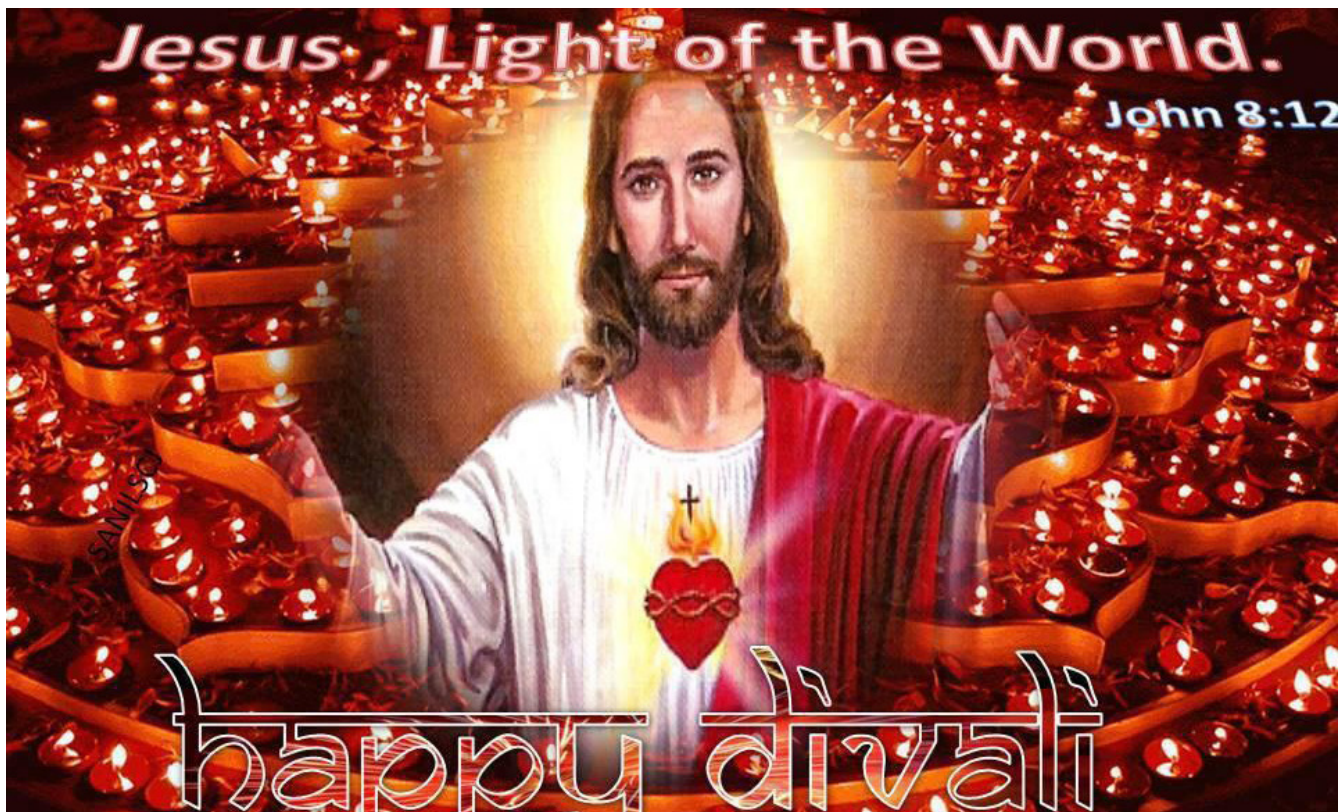
began to obsessively expand the empire and "purify the population." Many Hindus who had integrated some parts of Muslim culture were forced to abandon their Hinduism and fully embrace Islam. He strictly enforced Sharia law and many Hindus were converted to Islam.

Under Akbar's rule, a confusing blend of Hinduism and Islam came into play. With his successors, the people who practiced this blend were forced to "purify" their religious practices and become completely loyal to Islam. In this way, Akbar started a wave of conversion across his empire. Interesting, the very same methods of conversions are being used by neo Christian missionaries in India today. But, this is a story for another day!

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## CRIMES AGAINST HINDUISM IN INDIA'S NORTHEAST

STEPHEN KNAPP (NANDANANDANA DASA)

This is about my experience of touring Arunachal Pradesh (in December of 2002) and lecturing about the glories of Vedic culture, which was not only inspiring, but was also a terrific adventure.

However, in personally interviewing the local people about the situation, this is what I learned: The northeast region has become so infected by Christian militants and conversions that at the time they wanted to secede from the rest of India and become their own Christian country, against the wishes of those who want to remain a part of the Vedic or indigenous cultures.

Assam, for example, has 30 major tribes of people while the nearby state of Arunachal Pradesh has 24 major tribes. However, the current political situation in Assam was unstable with groups like the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) fighting a low intensity but widespread guerrilla warfare

for independence from India. Although the Indian military has tried to quell the insurgents with a large presence for more than ten years, they have not been very successful.

Mizoram is another state that is now mostly converted to Christianity, but whose people have shunned the path of violence and are peace loving. They are, nonetheless, reviving their age old culture, traditions and festivals after feeling the dreaded impact of westernization which invaded their land with the alien religion.

Manipur, south of Nagaland and north of Mizoram, still remains attached to its old Vedic culture, especially through its song and dances, many of which tell the stories of Lord Krishna. However, many changes have also been felt here as well.



### ***The Seeding***

Christians entered Nagaland and Mizoram in 1860-70, and Arunachal in 1952. Because of the influence of western evangelists, the local traditions are now in the process of being transformed beyond recognition or wiped out totally. Taking advantage of the poverty, lack of employment and education, these foreign missionaries have lured away a large part of the people from their traditional moorings. Types of food, drink, dress, songs, dances and festivals are all being lost or forgotten because of recently being regarded as unrighteous, and being replaced by modern western pop songs and dances. However, the people have not completely snapped the bond with the culture of their forefathers.

Conversion tears the individual away from his or her family, and from the rest of the community. Acts of conversion, therefore, create social unrest and clashes in an area that has until recently been a place of community peace and cooperation. What is now appearing is the typical form of

competition found in western society, and a class struggle emerging in the once classless society. In this way, we can understand that the work of religious conversion in the guise of social service is a form of violence of the worst sort. It is, therefore, all the more necessary to think of ways and means to stem the tide of this so called modernism which is producing the loss of the Vedic indigenous cultures in the area.

### ***The Operandi - Creating Separateness***

1. One of the methods of the missionary schools to make Christian converts is that they offer free education to the local children. They educate them freely for one or two years and then begin charging them for books and clothes. However, if the parents cannot pay the costs, the schools tell them that if they make four or five boys into Christians, then they do not have to pay the school tuition. Thus, the education narrows their views of their own culture to the point where they willingly give it up.
2. The people are also told that they are not Indian, and should not think they need to be loyal to India or the Indian traditions. They are told by the schools that they are actually "austromongoloid" (by anthropologists) to inspire a feeling that the people do not belong here since they do not look like other Indians. Or since there is a difference in food habits, as some people eat beef in Arunachal Pradesh, they should not identify with other Indians. The missionary schools then focus on differences, and people become influenced because they do not have a deeper understanding of the unifying principles of their own culture.
3. The idea is given that unless the people become Christian, they will not become qualified to develop themselves like America has done. They are told that becoming Christian is the way to become more materially successful. It was only a few of us westerners that came to the Northeast

region with the message that not everyone in America follows the Christian path, and many are those Indians who have moved to America and remain dedicated to the Vedic traditions and have made great contributions to America. This is a message that surprised many of the tribals because they had never heard that before.

### ***Vilifying Local Culture***

Another method is that when the Church comes in, the missionaries say that the people and their ancestors have been practicing evil. Sometimes they are even told that they and their customs are Satanic. Thus, all traditions, worship, festivals, etc., must stop since it is equal to devil worship. However, when people listen and adopt the ways of Christianity, the harmonious community living ends and the people become divided. The new Christians no longer participate in community activities, such as festivals, town meetings, or in respecting the land when a section is cleared for farming for a few years and later replanted with trees for future balance. Nor do they help with community housebuilding. All this stops among the Christian converts.



For example, in the villages people are so united that, as previously explained, when a house burns down, everyone helps to build a new house for the people who had been living there. Some people will also give utensils, others give blankets, and so on, so that in a few days the people whose house burned down will have a new place to live and everything they need to go on as normal. So when this cooperation ends because some of the townspeople have become Christian, people become selfish and alienated from age-old traditions and from each other.

The missionaries, as part of their campaign for conversion, have also called the gods and goddesses of the communities "spirits." The people were told, "You do not have God, you only worship spirits. What you have is only primitive ideas of religion and a bundle of

superstitions. If you want to be saved, you must follow our One True God." Thus, they took away the people's confidence in their culture, but by using the word "spirit" they also philosophically separated the local Vanavasi people from their Hindu or Vedic connection.

### ***Manipulating Number to Attract Western Funding***

At many times the church has not made any attempt to hide what they are doing. Actually, they have to include the number of converts they are making because that helps increase the funding they receive from the West. Thus, local people have been hearing and reading in the Christian propaganda that third world countries like India are the prime missionary fields. They declare their intention through radios, literature, or in church services, of turning India into a "land of Christ" by hook or crook.

A few other things that the church uses as techniques for conversion is explained by Naga Rani Gaidinliu. In 1978, the people of Lungkao village in Manipur had been approaching the state government

for establishing a medical dispensary. As it could not happen for a long time, the men from the Christian church began visiting the people and would tell them that God could fulfill their desire for a dispensary only if they all stopped pursuing their age-old indigenous faiths and accepted Jesus Christ only as their personal savior. They began to repeatedly tell the simple and innocent villagers that as long as they were on the side of "Satan" (meaning the indigenous faith) they would not have their desired dispensary but worse, they would also be burnt in hell fire before long. They were about to begin succeeding in this process when the State Government of Manipur gave approval to allow for the medical dispensary and saved the situation.

### ***Manipulating Children***

Failing to convert adult Hindus, the economically powerful American Baptist Church, which had been working in the Kiriba town, as well as the Roman Catholic Church elsewhere, entice the minor children to join their school. Thereafter, they work to convert them by baptizing them without the knowledge of the parents. As soon as a tribal child is converted, his or her indigenous name is changed in the school register the next day to something like that of John, Joseph, Mary or Margaret. Such conversions of minor children invariably lead to disharmony, unhappiness and eventual shattering of the families, along with their ageold traditions and culture. This could be compared more closely to psychological warfare against the people and communities in which such churches have been allowed to exist, rather than social service, welfare and upliftment.



### ***Funding Militancy & Forced Conversions***

The northeast region of India, especially around and in Nagaland, has 40 different missionary groups, all quarreling and competing for converts to Christianity. But it also has 18 major Christian militant groups, which are extremely dangerous. The Nagaland militants get church money and then buy guns, such as AK47s and AK57s from Burma or Bangladesh. They will also go into villages and threaten people to pay a tax to them. Then they use the money to buy guns and weapons. The Indian Army is helping to stop such activities, but the secular press writes against the Army activities, making them appear to be villains working against the freedom of the people.

These militant groups travel throughout the area and kidnap people for ransom money. They patrol Arunachal towns to make them Christian. They tell the people that their lives are in danger if they do not build a church or pay a tax to them. Some people may argue that these are not real Christians, but "Nagaland for Christ" is the name they use, which is stamped on the

notes that demand tax. These groups may also say that they are servants of the government, and thus collect a tax which they use for their own purpose, and few are those who can speak out against it. It is similar to the days of the witch hunts in Europe several hundred years ago when thousands of innocent women were tortured and burned at the stake. If anyone said something against it, that person would also be accused of being sympathetic to the witches, and maybe of being one of them, and then subjected to the same treatment.

What the militants do is that groups of 20 to 30 men will come from places like Nagaland and then travel through the forest into towns of Arunachal Pradesh. They take food and rest, and then demand that the people should become Christian and threaten them with guns. They may even establish blockades on jungle roads, demanding that the people become Christian. Due to fear, people then convert in "gunpoint conversions". In fact, while I was traveling through the jungles of Arunachal, where this kind of activity was known to take place, I had to travel with a military convoy truck with soldiers in case we ran into such a blockade so I would be protected.

There are both Catholic and Baptist militant groups. Though these groups are all Christian, they still have no respect for each other and often fight amongst themselves. One such group, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland had two factions. One is the Kaplan group, and the other is the Isak Muria group. On December 14 of 2002, the Kaplan group attacked the latter group when they were at church during a Sunday gathering.



# THE CHALLENGE OF UNDERSTANDING SHELDON POLLOCK

RAJIV MALHOTRA

## ***A generic purva-paksha of a diverse group is not sufficient***

To do purva-paksha of a towering Western Indologist like Sheldon Pollock, one must develop an appreciation of what is new, unique and challenging about his works. Just as Indian knowledge advances and evolves with new schools and commentaries, so also western thought systems are very diverse, complex and evolve with time. In fact, aspects of Pollock's ideas that align with other westerners thoughts are less important to critique, because they are repetitious.

Imagine there's a person who assumes that his knowledge of purva-paksha of one specific school of Vedanta is enough to critique all of Vedanta. The superficiality of his study might impress someone who is ignorant of Indian thought. But to any Vedantin, such a purva-paksha would be considered shallow and inadequate to address the numerous schools and commentators of our vast traditions.

Our purva-paksha tradition requires that we critically study each of our main opponents to understand their assumptions, lenses, doctrinal beliefs, and resulting arguments. We cannot simply apply generic knowledge for a group with similar views (in this case, Orientalists).

One of Pollock's most revealing statements is cited below. He writes:

"... you transcend inequality by mastering and overmastering those discourses through study and critique. You cannot simply go around a tradition to overcome it, if that is what you wish to do; you must go through it. You only transform a dominant culture by outsmarting it.

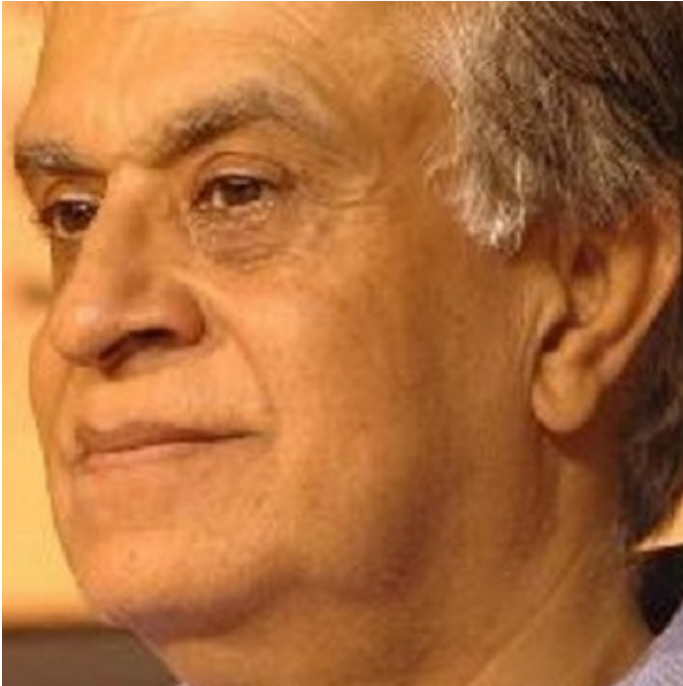
That, I believe, is precisely what some of India's most disruptive thinkers, such as Dr Ambedkar, sought to do, though they were not as successful as they might have been had they had access to all the tools of a critical philology necessary to the task." (Pollock, Sheldon. 'Crisis in the Classics.' *Journal of Social Research*, 78 (1). Page 39.

He asserts that to defeat a tradition one must go *through* it and not *around* it. This is the strategy he is fructifying when he tells his students to first go *through* the study of Indian sanskriti. Pollock considers Vedic culture to dominate over shudras and women, and he wants to help the masses overcome its inequality. Only by mastering it (through study) could his team of liberators "overmaster" (i.e. outsmart) it.

Pollock considers Ambedkar's success inadequate in disrupting Indian sanskriti because Ambedkar did not learn "all the *tools* of a critical philology necessary to the task". Pollock is referring here to the tools that he (Pollock) has developed for the critical analysis of Indian traditions.

We must do the same yet in reverse: Before we can respond to Pollock's conclusions, we must first understand his critical analysis. But even before being able to understand his critical analysis, we have to study the assumptions and lenses he uses to view our traditions. This requires us to study his writings critically. There are no shortcuts in this endeavor. As Pollock says in the above quote, "one simply cannot go around" the opponent's work, and one must go "through" it.

Our purva-paksha tradition demands a critical



study to arrive at a deeper understanding of an opponent's arguments. Given that Pollock is unlike the Orientalists who came before him, the lazy approach of relying upon one's preconceived "opinions" of previous Orientalists leads to wrong conclusions. My book, *The Battle For Sanskrit* (TBFS) highlights his major tools, ideological beliefs and biases, thus paving the path for a comprehensive purva-paksha of his works.

Interestingly, Pollock's former colleague at University of Chicago, Richard Schweder, is well-known for championing the approach now called "thinking through cultures". This was based on Schweder's anthropology research studying Hindu sacred sites and activities in India. The strategy being promoted by him and Pollock is for westerner scholars to first immerse themselves in a foreign culture in order to develop a psychological map of how the natives think. Only after the scholars have mapped it in their own western framework can they succeed in "outsmarting it".

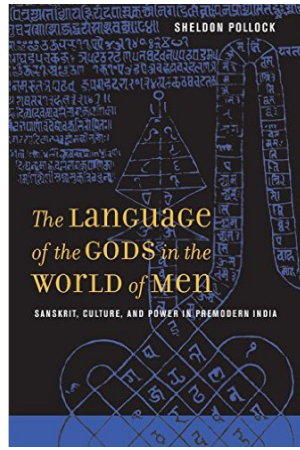
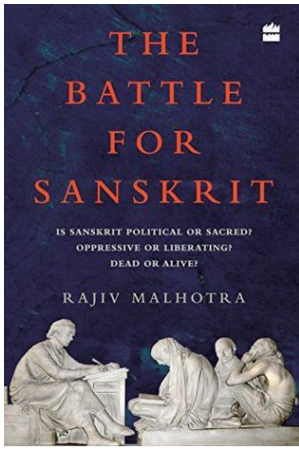
There is also an interesting parallel with Al Biruni whose writings on India, Indians, and their manners and customs were in the form of a purva-paksha that he had carried out for his master—Mahmud of Ghazni. Yet, many Indian scholars love Al Biruni because he, like Pollock, praised certain aspects of our culture.

### ***Some novel and key ingredients of Pollock's lens***

TBFS explains some of the signature theories of Pollock that must be understood before any purva-paksha is attempted on him. These theories and interpretations include the following:

1. His interpretation of paramarthika and vyavaharika: Pollock builds on the foundation of Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), an Italian thinker who influenced many great westerners including Karl Marx. Pollock translates 'paramarthika sat' as Vico's idea of 'verum'. He translates 'vyavaharika sat' as Vico's 'certum'. I was unable to find any publication (certainly not by any Indian traditional scholar) that pointed out the consequence of these deliberate mappings of Indian thought onto Western notions, leave alone identifying serious misinterpretations which follow from such mappings. From this mapping follow many of Pollock's sweeping conclusions about the nature of transcendence in Indian systems. (See TBFS, pages 102-105, for my analysis.)

2. Literarization: This is one of Pollock's novel ideas which he uses as a key building block for his theories. The term has an extra 'ar' in the middle, and is not to be confused with 'literation'. Literization (without the extra 'ar') is a well-known term that refers to a language being written down, i.e. its users are literate. But Pollock's signature contribution is his theory that after Sanskrit starts to be written, it passes through a subsequent stage of development



called literarization (with extra 'ar'). This is when Sanskrit gets endowed with certain structures that make it an elite language of power over the masses. Predictably, he finds the Vedas as the source of such structures, and it is this literarization according to him that allows the social oppression of Dalits/women. One can recognize Pollack's ulterior motive only by understanding his view on the nature of these 'toxic' structures. (TBFS, pages 213-14)

3. Theory of the aestheticization of power: Pollock borrows an influential theory developed by Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) and the Frankfurt School of Marxism. Its original intended purpose was to interpret the role played by aesthetics in the rise of the Nazis: How could Nazis dupe so many people to vote for them and support them? This theory became an important extension of the original doctrine of Marxism. Pollock makes academic history among his western Marxist peers by applying it to develop his original theory on the oppressiveness of our sanskriti. He uses this theory to explain how and why Sanskrit helped the social elites to achieve their power over the masses. (TBFS, pages 210-17. See diagram on page 216.)

4. Political philology: While philology has been a formal discipline for a long time and has many kinds of approaches that different scholars use, once again Pollock has developed his own original variety. The prefix "political" is what differentiates his method from prior philology. To give an indication of the importance of this building block, Pollock's book "*The language of the gods...*" uses the term "power" about 600 times and the word "politics" about 900 times. With evangelical zeal he endorses a central argument that Indian texts must be studied

not for their spiritual/sacred content but for the purpose of rooting out their subtext of social exploitation and political domination. Before he can show the texts to be political, he has to devalue (and debunk) the legitimacy of the sacred dimension; then he can substitute the political motive as the reason for the successful spread of Sanskrit. In item (1) above he has identified the tools to remove the sacred content. Then, in item (4), we find his tool which he uses to develop his heavily politicized lens.

5. Liberation philology: If one side of the coin of Pollock's interpretation is political philology, the other side is liberation philology. This is the tool that his followers (such as Ananya Vajpeyi) use to intervene in Indian society and claim to remove the social oppressiveness diagnosed in (4). Such intervention is consistent with his strategy of going *through* and not bypassing the tradition. Ultimately, it is this disguised intervention that makes Pollock dangerous to the tradition and its followers. While political philology is used to diagnose, liberation philology is used to liberate the Indian masses from the diseases being carried in their sanskriti for thousands of years.

6. Ecosystem of Marxism and postmodernism: Pollock's (1) through (5) analytical tool kit is embedded within a broad spectrum of postmodern thinkers. His analysis includes ideas incorporated from Gramsci, Habermas, various feminists, subaltern theorists, among others. These theories are simply assumed by him, with no compunction to elaborate or prove them. Pollock's work is couched in a veneer of broader Western idiom and theories.

Hardly any Indian traditionalist I came across has an in depth knowledge of his lens. His target audience of readers is clearly the Western Indologist, a term that must also include ethnic Indians who have been trained to think in the same manner as Western Indologists.

### ***Added complexity in decoding Pollock***

What is even more challenging than the idioms and theories that Pollock employs is his writing style; it is very opaque, arcane and loaded with jargon that even most English readers with experience will be unable to properly understand. He may contradict himself, not only between two of his own publications, but also within the



same publication. At times he plays both sides of an issue to seem balanced. But eventually, he quietly assumes one of the postures without explaining why it is superior to the other.

To decode him, one has to read him multiple times. After you understand one theory of his, you need to go back and re-read the prior works you already went through. In places, only after connecting the dots with his other scattered writings can you realize what he wants to say. If his individual points are at times murky, murkier still are the links among the dots to make sense of the big picture. One gets the impression that only a few fellow-travelers subscribing to his ideology are meant to understand him.

In other words, one cannot do purva-paksha of Pollock surgically by random citation; it must be done holistically. But to uncover the entire intellectual quagmire that Pollock is a part of, one must go beyond his own writings and also examine his cohorts. Even more broadly, one has to also study the contextual backdrop of the three layers that make up American culture in order to get the complete picture:

1. At the top is the pop culture layer in which everything is nice, all a part of the so-called global village.
2. Beneath this surface is the middle layer where the institutions lie. The institutions provide continuity, infrastructure assets, and a

robust transparency defined within the values of Western Universalism.

3. The lowest of the three layers is what I term the deep culture. Here, the notion of American Exceptionalism is well established and protected. This deep layer comes out publicly and violently at times of duress – such as the xenophobia of white males that Donald Trump has tapped into. The veneer of civility is very thin indeed, and crumbles under duress.

The deep layer is Judeo-Christian. The middle layer of institutions is based on modernity. The top layer of pop culture projects postmodernity. One must understand all this as a unified whole, in dynamic equilibrium. The methodology to do purva-paksha of Pollock has to be multi-disciplinary. We cannot have narrowly limited experts but build teams across specializations .

### ***Traditional scholars have not done purva-paksha on Pollock's school***

Traditional scholars in general have not performed any such purva-paksha on Pollock yet. While doing the research for TBFS, I tried hard to get help from some well-established traditional scholars. But in the end, despite sincere efforts by some traditional scholars, not a single one was able to deconstruct Pollock, much less be able to develop a response.

Here is an excerpt from my book on the challenges our traditionalists face. This is not a matter of my opinion but is based on my experience that includes extensive interviews and conversations. Most senior Sanskrit leaders in India that I discussed with have confirmed my views as expressed below:

Unfortunately, many traditionalists live in silos. They tend to dismiss the views of the opposing ideological camp, seeing them as irrelevant to the 'real' tradition. They are unaware of, or indifferent to, the fact that they are the objects of study from the 'outside'. Some of them are so naïve and insecure as to feel flattered when representatives of the Western elite show an interest in them. In addition, the scholars using the 'outsider' lens are highly vocal and public in championing their point of view whereas the insiders often prefer to remain private about their allegiances and shy away from defending their tradition even in important forums. [...]

I sent drafts and overviews of this book to some persons who I felt would be supportive, only to discover that several of them vehemently opposed the very idea of investigating this new elitist [Pollock] school of Sanskrit studies. Their general attitude is that we should instead be grateful to those Westerners who are 'taking the time to study us'.

A lot of traditional scholars are oblivious to the fact that their 'adhikara' (authority) as experts on Sanskrit is being systematically eroded. Many outsiders have appointed themselves as new authorities for the interpretation of Sanskrit traditions. Their tentacles penetrate deep, not only into the psyches of young scholars but also into several traditional and modern institutions. This book is meant, in part, to serve as a wakeup call for insiders, to force them out of their slumber and isolation.

Chapters 10 and 11 of TBFS go further in discussing the blockages and handicaps that the traditionalists contend with. I explain the nefarious forces at work and what ought to be done to give back the traditionalists their adhikara. Each of my previous four books is also focused on showing that our traditional/insider view is being suppressed in the academy, media and elsewhere. I do what I do because of my immense respect for our knowledge systems, traditions, and civilizational contributions.

I elevate the issue of hitherto lack of purva-paksha by traditional scholars in order to raise their awareness on two matters of utmost importance: (a) the need for their immediate attention; and (b) the need for a team effort.

The real goal of TBFS is not only to alert and awaken traditional scholars to the nature of systematic attacks from outsiders, but also to encourage them to join a collective effort to develop an ecosystem for insiders. Western Indologists do not shy away from getting help from Indian traditionalists. Indian insiders, too, should not shy away from getting help from one another and even from Westerners where applicable. Once such an ecosystem reaches a level of self-sustenance and growth, I would consider TBFS a success. Traditionalists should not shy away from any source of knowledge or help for their shared cause. Tradition weakens when it is not united - as we witnessed in the

form of a near-debacle with the Adi Shankara Chair at Columbia University. The existence of an unified and integrated ecosystem would have prevented the rise of such a dangerous situation.

My book is a serious initiative, but yet a humble beginning. It ought to be superseded by writings that will go even deeper. I believe that I am providing a guide to undertake purva-paksha of the Pollock school, and my book invites others to join me in developing utara (responses) to him.



### *Continued from Page 27*

Four people were killed and others injured. So we have to ask ourselves; how can social harmony come from such disharmony? How can unity come from such disunity? So how can we combat this chaos and clean up this dilemma?

These are but a few examples of crimes against Hinduism in the Northeast region of India. I could give many more examples. But the thing is to be aware of what is happening, and to create stronger means for people to follow their own indigenous and Vedic traditions without the threat of losing them altogether because of Muslim and Christian demands for conversion.



# MOTHERING THE MOTHER

## THE DIVINE FEMININE CONSCIOUSNESS!

DR. MA NITHYA DEVAROOPANANDA

All lifestyle practices in Vedic tradition are aligned towards the ultimate purpose of enlightenment. Pregnancy and birthing are the best opportunities provided by the Cosmos for women to experience enlightenment. Paramahansa Nithyananda elaborates, "Women have a very important role to play in human consciousness. They are models of intense passive life energy!"

All beings, male and female are endowed with sacred feminine energy. A being with awakened sacred feminine energy is an enlightened being. 'It is the sacred feminine consciousness that is responsible for everything we see and experience. For any object to retain its shape, the energy necessary is supplied, handled and maintained by mother energy'.<sup>2</sup> All creative energy in the world is from Prakriti, the divine feminine energy.

Women carry a very high possibility of awakening the sacred feminine energy in them during pregnancy, a time when creativity is maximally expressing in their system. 'All women experience creativity when they carry a child. The process that the female body endures during pregnancy optimizes the possibility of experiencing sacred feminine energy. As the soul matures or evolves, the possibility of experiencing the Sacred Feminine Energy<sup>3</sup> increases. Going through pregnancy consciously, working on her consciousness ensures that she prepares the womb to invite highly conscious, evolved souls onto planet earth.



Chandi, the sacred chants on Devi quotes,

*"Yaa Devi Sarvabhooteshu Maatru Roopena Samsthitha,*

*namasthasmai, namasthasmai, namasthasmai namo namaha";*

meaning "I bow down, surrender to Devi who is residing in all beings as the mother."

The creative energy that expresses during pregnancy is the sacred feminine energy. "The Cosmic mother mothers the mother during the nine months of gestation!"

The practices offered as part of eN pregnancy care program designed by Paramahansa Nithyananda aimed at mothering the mother, help in preparing the baby's body with positive bio-memories. The frequency of the bio-memories in the created body thus attracts a highly conscious, evolved soul which will radiate all the qualities of a Jeevan Mukta, a living enlightened being!

The couple work towards identifying their limiting patterns rooted in unconscious, immature cognitions and liberate themselves from the same through the practice of

'Completion', Poornatva Kriya. The practice of completion by both partners ensures that the baby's body is laid with positive bio-memories, bereft of powerless patterns. It is from such a body, that the omnipotent nature of the consciousness finds its right expression.

It becomes necessary that an environment conducive to such a happening is facilitated

around the pregnant mother. Research in the field of prenatal and perinatal psychology reiterates these Vedic truths. We begin this life before conception in the physical, mental and emotional ecology of our parents. Their health and balance of body and mind, but very importantly their emotions, come together to create our physical, mental and emotional selves. Gestation is the first and most vital environment we will ever have.<sup>4</sup>

The space of perpetual completion creates a peaceful, calm and loving internal milieu for the growing fetus. There is ample scientific evidence about the effect of stress and anxiety in pregnancy. High pregnancy anxiety is associated with growth restriction, impaired immunity and decreased gray matter density in the fetus.<sup>5</sup> This directly translates to cutting short the intelligence of the child by 50%!

The importance of a satvic vegetarian lifestyle cannot be stressed upon enough. "You become what you eat. The anxiety, fear, suffering, torture which the animal experienced while it was killed will become part of your bio-memory and muscle-memory" says Paramahansa Nithyananda.<sup>6</sup> These in turn form the bio-memories of the baby. Avoiding exposure to violence based and other



disturbing audiovisuals is also in the interest of birthing such divine babies. The ill effects of smoking, alcohol and drugs during pregnancy has been documented beyond any doubt, and need to be avoided as well.

All the Vedic practices offered through the eN pregnancy care program not only ensure a joyful, healthy period of pregnancy, they also enable the parents to manifest the child of their dreams. The vibrations generated by chanting of mantras, divine chants enhance whole brain learning by rewiring the circuits. The pregnancy yoga works towards a normal birthing at physical level, improvement of breath to handle the active stage of labour at the breath level and in reducing the thoughts and patterns at the mental level, which are an important source of negative bio-memories.

Listening to music facilitates whole brain neuronal synaptic pruning and networking, with increased intelligence and memory in these calm, blissful babies. Music therapy has been found to be equivalent to Omega3 fatty acids in terms of promoting fetal growth.<sup>7</sup>

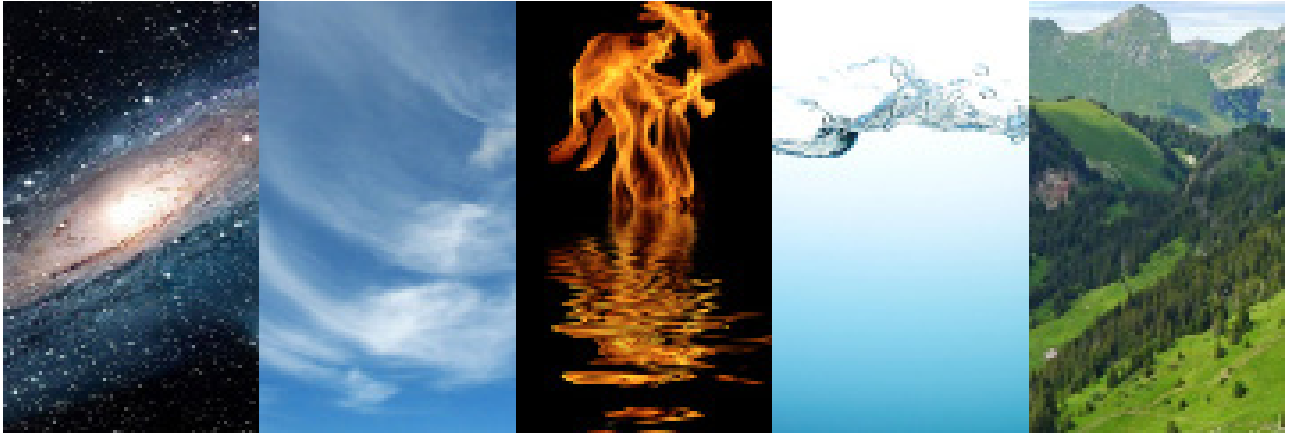
The practice of Mahamantra meditation reduces inner chatter, and brings awareness to our thoughts. The vibrations created by the sound improves the neuronal circuits and rewires the fetal brain. Garbha Samwad, communing with the fetus in utero lays the spiritual truths of life/death as their basic cognition at the bio memory level. Intense visualisation techniques shared in the program, helps the mother carve her dream child.

Keeping the science of enlightenment alive is the greatest service a woman can offer to mankind. It becomes the ultimate responsibility and the greatest dakshina that parents can ever dream of giving back to Existence.

In essence, the care provided to maternal wellbeing in pregnancy actually translates to the quality of human consciousness on planet earth.

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# CONCEPT OF TRIDOSHA IN AYURVEDA

DR. SHUBHAMANGALA ACHARYA

**A**yurveda is the oldest science of health, which has a different view of human anatomy and physiology. When a person visits an ayurvedic doctor, words like *prakruti*, *doshas*, *vaata*, *pitta*, *kapha* are commonly heard. These are the basic terms used in Ayurvedic science.

## **What are Tridosha?**

Tridosha are the vital energy forces which control the activities and govern the physical, mental and intellectual structure and function in an individual. These are present all around us. Vaata, pitta and kapha are the tridoshas. These are not substances and we cannot see or feel them through our senses.

*dUshaNaat doshah (Charaka Vimana 1/4)*  
"That which causes imbalance is *dosha*."

This shloka explains that doshas are the one which keep the body, mind and spirit in balance. Due to improper food and lifestyle, doshas get imbalanced and this causes diseases.

## **How are Tridosha formed?**

According to Hindu philosophy, the whole universe is made of five basic elements called *pancha mahabhuta*. *Tridoshas* are also made of these elements.

Vaata dosha is made of air and ether (space) and element (vaayu and aakaasha).

Pitta is made of fire and water (agni and jala).

Kapha is formed by earth and water (pruthvi and jala).

Everyone has a unique balance of all three of these energies. Each individual has permutations and combinations of the tridosha and this unique combination determines the physiological constitution (*prakruti*) of an individual.

## **Vaata or Vaayu (air & wind)**

As the name itself suggests, vaayu or vaata means wind in Sanskrit. Mobility is the main characteristic of vaata. Qualities like roughness, cold and light are associated with vaata. It is also responsible for movement and pain, nervous system in the body and balancing of mind. It controls and governs the other two doshas. People with predominant vaata have dry skin and hair, are light in weight, tend to be hyperactive with a prominent bone structure. They are emotionally fragile and are prone to anxiety. They can grasp a subject easily but also forget quickly.

People with dominant vaata should avoid cold (frozen) and dry food. Tastes like bitter and astringent are also not good for them.

Too much of exercise, lack of sleep, over exposure to cold weather and wind also causes imbalance of vaata in the body.

To keep vaata in balance regular intake of oily food, sweet, sour and warm food, body massage with oil, warm bath, good sleep and moderate exercise is necessary. Meditation helps the mind to remain under control.

### ***Pitta (fire & water)***

Pitta is responsible for transformation. Main function of pitta is digestion and absorption. Qualities like hot, oily, sharp, light, sticky and liquid are often associated with Pitta. The main responsibility of pitta is to control the metabolism in the body. It maintains the temperature of the body. Person with predominant pitta prakruti will have a warm body, sharp features and a reddish eye. Mentally the person will be brave, intelligent but gets angry easily.

People with predominant pitta should avoid spicy, salty food. Oily food also does not help them. Exposure to extreme heat and lack of sleep also causes imbalance in pitta.

To keep the pitta in balance, one should eat sweet and astringent food. Intake of ghee is very useful. More fluid intake will also help in balancing pitta. Staying in cool and pleasant environment and lukewarm water bath is good for pitta prakruti. Pitta prakruti people need meditation to keep their mind calm.

### ***Kapha (earth & water)***

Kapha is responsible for moisture and lubrication in the body and gives stability to the body and mind. Qualities of kapha are heavy, dull, cold, moist, soft and stable. Person with a predominant kapha will be stout (heavy), cold to touch, of light complexion, slow and steady. Mentally, they are very patient, make decisions very slowly and have a very good memory power.

Factors that imbalance kapha are too much intake of sweets, oily food and eating in excess. Not doing exercise, sleeping in the daytime and too much of sleep can also cause kapha imbalance.

To balance kapha, having spicy, bitter, less oily and light food is suggested. Regular exercise, taking hot water baths, regular body massage using herbal powders regulates kapha. One should avoid excessive sleeping and exposure to very cold and damp weather.

The body becomes fit and healthy only when the tridoshas are in balance. Every person should study oneself and decide the food and lifestyle, which will keep their body and mind healthy.

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# BRINGING YOGA BACK TO ITS ROOTS

SRI NITHYA MITRANANDA

Yoga is as common as major food chains in today's world, even more so after Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and the United Nations declared June 21<sup>st</sup> as the International Day of Yoga. Everybody knows about yoga, with almost as many studios as coffee shops! Practiced by over 30% of the population in USA at some point in their life, and a multi-billion dollar industry, yoga is spreading like wildfire.

But as usual, with wide practice comes dilution. What kind of yoga do you practice? "Hatha", "Vinyasa", "Power", Antigravity, Harmonica Yoga (correct, doing yoga while playing the harmonica), Karaoke Yoga (sing to your favorite song while stretching your body!), Yoga Raves ("drug-free fun"), Hula Hoop Yoga, you name it! It seems that anyone can brand their own whims and fancies and label it "yoga".

## **What is Yoga?**

Is yoga just a system of exercises for mental and physical health, as per the common definition? Or is it something deeper than just body and mind?

Yoga is a science that has evolved over thousands of years in India, by groups of saints - rishis and sages - to expand our consciousness and achieve the space of Oneness. Mahadeva's definition about Yoga is – "experiencing Oneness with Oneness itself. Union with Oneness is Yoga."



Many authentic scriptures explain the whole system of yoga, from purifying the body through cleansing techniques, to preparing the body through the right postures and breathing to enter into the deeper states of meditation and consciousness.

We need to understand yoga as a path to transcend the body, and not be caught in it. As a way to dissolve the ego and not boost it. It starts with the body, but it does not end there. Many schools of yoga and modern trends have "customized" yoga, for the sake of creating customers. What we call yoga is now limited to the one hour we spend in moving and bending the body on the mat. Then we roll the mat and carry on with our lives!



That is definitely not what yoga is meant to be.

### **Customization Does Not Need Dilution**

In a breakthrough webinar on October 12, 2015, Paramahansa Nithyananda gave a clarion call to the world, to bring yoga back to its authentic Vedic roots. See webinar here.

He explained, "Yoga can be customized. The great news: It does not need to be diluted. You can customize it for your office, for your field, for your department, for your purpose, for your need, but you do not need to dilute it or lose the original strength of it.

Yoga is designed, developed, shared with the world, not by one individual, but by a group of great enlightened beings who were specimens of all types of human-beings. Because it was designed by a group of human-beings who represent various possibilities and specimens, they themselves have customized it without diluting it."

There are different paths to achieve Oneness: jnana yoga - the path of knowledge, bhakti yoga - the path of devotion, karma yoga - the path of action, hatha yoga - the purification of the body and mind, and raja yoga - the path of introspection and meditation.

Different paths, but ultimately one goal: Oneness.

### **Bringing Yoga Back to its Roots**

Paramahansa Nithyananda explained, "Every movement you are asked to do, whether it is standing up and doing namaskar, or inhaling and exhaling, or some visualization or verbalization, whatever action, the moment you enter into the Yoga Studio, until you leave the Yoga Studio, whatever action you are asked to perform, ask for the original Sanskrit reference, verse for those actions. The teacher should be capable of giving you the original reference in the original Sanskrit language, quoting the original text."

There are authentic Yogic literature thousands of years old, like Hatha Yoga Pradeepika, Pranayama Paddhati, Laya Yoga Pradeepika, Yoga Sutra, Yoga Shaastra Tattwa Kaumudi, and Hatha Yoga Kaumudi, Gheranda Samhita. At least forty great books. The original Yogic texts are available, authentic translations done by the great translators like Sathyananda Saraswathi, and

published by very authentic publishers like The Lonavala Yoga Institute, the original verses with the original texts are available to the world now.

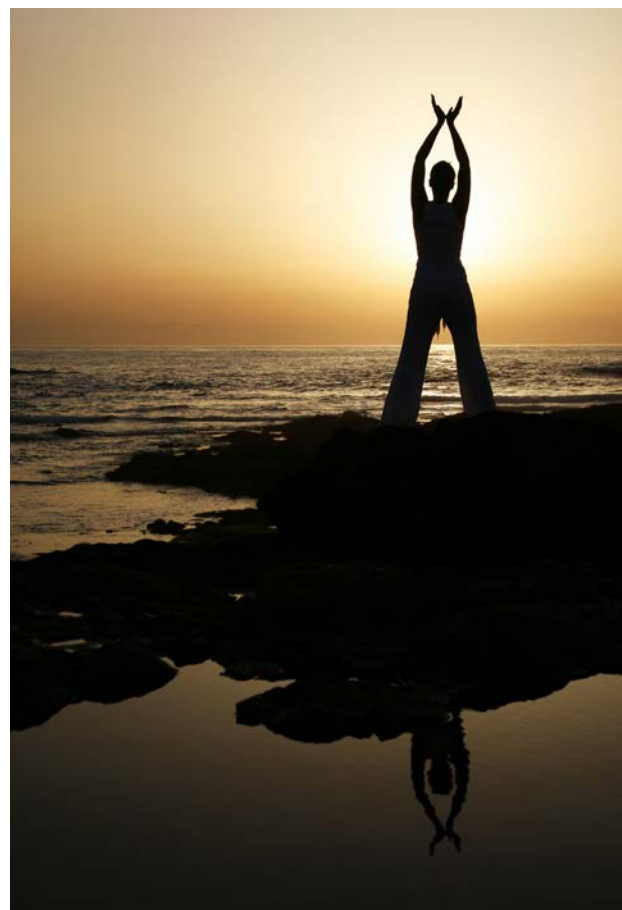
We need to understand that Yoga is the great heritage of India and Hinduism. Likewise, Yoga belongs to the whole world. It is not copyrighted. But that should only lead us to take responsibility to honor the people and tradition who developed it, and go back to the original verses that were passed down the ages. Only then the world will achieve the purpose for what the system of yoga was developed.

It is time to get back to the roots of yoga, and it is our responsibility to show the world where yoga comes from, what it should be and where it will ever be, eternally.

Visit [www.NithyaYoga.org](http://www.NithyaYoga.org) for more information on the authentic sources of yogic literature.

#### Reference

Nithya Yoga webinar: <http://www.onlinemeetingnow.com/register/?id=ugp37qrf2&>



# NITHYA KRIYA - CURE FOR OBESITY

## **What is Nithya Kriya?**

Nithya Kriya are a series of unique yogic healing processes revealed by Paramahansa Nithyananda. While the knowledge and techniques are drawn from the most authentic and sacred yogic scriptures of India, the specific combinations are expressed from the personal experiences, research and development of Paramahansa Nithyananda, with the objective of curing various ailments.

Here we discuss the Nithya Kriya to cure obesity.

## **Cure For Obesity**

Steps to be followed:

1. Anjaneer Asana
2. Uddeeyaana Bandha
3. Agnee Soma Kumbhaka
4. Vyaana Kumbhaka
5. Dakshinaavarta Chakra Kumbhaka
6. Gomukha Asana
7. Gadhaa Kumbhaka
8. Kumbha Raaja
9. Ujjaayee Kumbhaka

1. Anjaneer Asana

Joga Pradeepikaa, verses 283-286  
*Angushta Cheedhaa Raakhai Dhoyee  
 Punaha Hatheli Pishti Ju Joyee |  
 Thaapari Mooladhvaari Tik Baivvvse  
 Bahujyau Jugathi Karai Ek Baise ||284||  
 Kahunyaa Mahilee Aakhi Milaavai  
 Haath Udhraasau Lagyaa Rahaavai |  
 Bahuro Laambaa Paav Pasaare  
 Phanaa Oordhva Edi Bhoo Dhaarai ||285||  
 Angushta Avara Gulpha Maahilaa  
 Raakhai Judayaa Karai Nahee Khulaa |  
 Saadhai Naasaa Dhrishti Lagaayee  
 Thaako Harasa Rog Sab Jaayee ||286||*

Translation and Technique

1. Sit with legs stretched keeping the heels on the ground and toes pointing upward
2. Place both the hands under the buttocks, palms facing upward and fingers closed together
3. Bring the elbows close to the body as much as possible
4. Gaze at the center of the eyebrows – Ajna Chakra
5. Settle in this posture for 60 seconds

In Anjaneer Asana, Next-  
 2. Uddeeyaana Bandha  
 Gheranda Samhita, Upadesha 3, verse 10  
*Udare pashchimam taanam  
 Naabheroordhvam tu kaarayet |  
 Uddaanam kurute yasmat  
 Avishraantam mahaasragaha |  
 Uddeeyaanam tvasau bandhaha  
 Mrutyu-Maatanga-Kesaree || 3.10 ||*

Translation

One should contract the bowels above and below the navel so that the abdominal organs touch the back. The one who practices this Uddiyana Bandha continuously becomes a conqueror of death. The great bird (Kundalini) flies up in the Sushumna and flies there itself constantly.

Technique

1. Sit in same Asana
2. Keep the spine straight. Head should be up and eyes open
3. Take a deep breath in and exhale completely
4. After exhaling, perform jaalandhara bandha by moving the chin down to the chest and raising the shoulders
5. Pull the abdominal muscles inward so that the organs of the abdomen touch the back muscles
6. Hold as long as you can
7. When you can't hold anymore, Before inhaling, relax the abdomen and relax your chin and jaalandhara bandha
8. Then inhale through the nostrils slowly
9. Before repeating another round, breathe normally for a minute or two
10. Initially start with 3 times and gradually increase upto 10 times

In Anjaneer Asana, Next-  
 3. Agnee Soma Kumbhaka  
 Kumbhaka Paddhathi, verse 87  
*Sooryena Poorayeth Praanam  
 Kumbhayithvaa Yathaavidhihi |  
 Rechayeth Anya-Maargena  
 Punas-Thena Prapoorayeth ||  
 Yena Thyajeth Thenaapoorya  
 Chaagnishomaakhya-kumbhakaha ||87||*

Translation

Prana should be inhaled through Surya-naadi(right-nostril) and after retaining the same as prescribed, one should exhale through the other nostril, and

again inhale by the same side through which one has exhaled. It is known as agnee-shoma-Kumbhaka

#### Technique

1. In Anjanees Asana perform Agnee Soma Kumbhaka
2. Use your fingers to control the breath
3. Inhale through the right nostril
4. Hold the breath as long as you can
5. Exhale through the left nostril
6. Now inhale through left nostril
7. Hold the breath as long as you can
8. Exhale through right nostril
9. Do this 21 times

I

In Anjanees Asana, Next-

4. Vyaana Kumbhaka

Kumbhaka Paddhati, verse 66

*Poorayitvaantharaa Samyak*

*Hrujjagad-Vyaapti-Yogathaha |*

*Sarvaagaya-Aakunchanena*

*Kumbhitha Sookshma-Chinthanaath ||*

*Paarvathee-Vakthra-Bhenokthaha*

*Samyak Vyaanasya Kumbhakaha ||66||*

#### Translation

Completely filling the chest and contracting the whole body during Khumbaka, with subtle concentration is termed as Vyaana Kumbhaka by Devi Parvati.

#### Technique

1. Take a deep breath, fill your chest and stomach
2. Hold the breath and contract the whole body
3. Have intense awareness and visualize the whole body contracting: abdomen, throat, chest, back, the whole body
4. Slowly relax and exhale when you can't hold anymore
5. Do this 21 times

In Anjanees Asana, Next-

5. Dakshinaavarta Chakra Kumbhaka

Kumbhaka Paddhati, verse 170

*Sooryenaapoorya Marutham Kumbhayeth*

*Udharasthitham*

*Rechayeth Indhuna Bhooyaha Thathaa Dakshena*

*Poorayeth ||107||*

*Kumbhayeth Idayaa Richyaath Dakshinaavarththa-Chakrakaha |*

#### Translation

One should inhale through the right nostril and fill the abdomen with breath, exhale through the left nostril, and again one should inhale through the right nostril and hold and exhale through the left nostril. This is Dakshinavarta Chakra Kumbhaka.

#### Technique

1. Inhale through right nostril
2. Hold the breath as long as you can judiciously
3. Exhale through the left nostril
4. Again inhale through right nostril
5. Hold the breath as long as you can judiciously
6. Exhale through the left nostril
7. Do this 21 times

Next- 6. Gomukha Asana

Hatha Pradeepikaa || 2Nd Upadesha || 6<sup>th</sup> verse

*Savye Dakshina-Gulpham Thu Prushta-Paarshve*

*Niyojayeth |*

*Dakshine'pi Thathaa Savyam Gomukham*

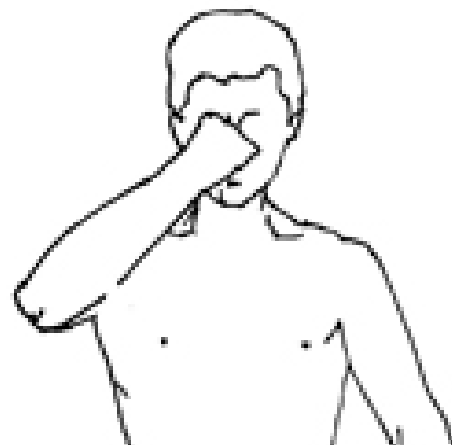
*Gomukhaakruthihi ||2.6||*

#### Translation

The right ankle should be placed near the left buttock and the left ankle to be placed near the right buttock. This is called Gomukhasana resembling the cow's face.

#### Technique

1. Bend the knees and place the right foot so that the left heel touches the side of the buttock.
2. Then bend the leg over the right thigh so that the heel is placed close to the right buttock.
3. Rest the hands on the upper knee, on top of the other.
4. Stay on this pose for 60 seconds



In gomukha asana, next-

7. Gadaa kumbhaka

Kumbhaka paddhathi || 112<sup>th</sup> verse

*Ubhaabhyaam Pooranam Yathra Rechanam Soorya-  
Vartmanaa|*

*Gadaakumbhaha-Shivenoktho Yogino  
Balakaarakaha||112||*

Translation

Then the inhalation is performed through both the nostrils and exhalation through the right one, it is called Gadaakumbhaka explained by Shiva and strengthener of Yogis.

Technique

1. Inhale through both the nostrils
2. Hold the breath
3. Exhale through the right nostril
4. Do this 21 times

In Gomukha Asana, Next-

8. Kumbha Raaja Kumbhaka

Kumbhaka Paddhathi || 134<sup>th</sup> verse

*Balaadhaakarshayeth Vaayum Yaavath Ghraana-  
Sumudranam|*

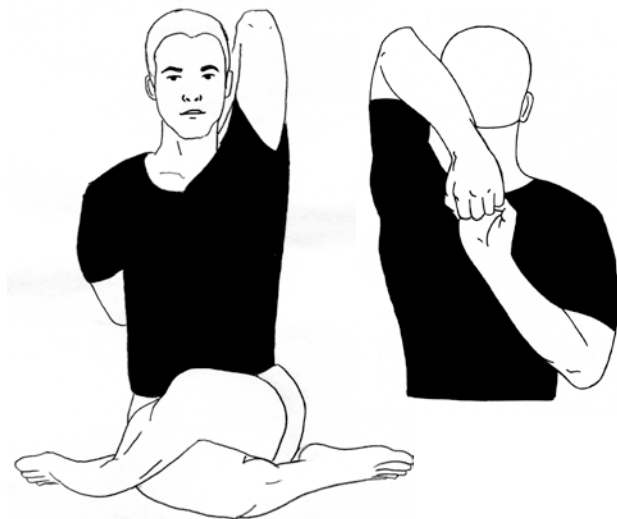
*Kumbhayechcha Thathaa Vaayum  
Kumbharaajo'yameerithaha||134||*

Translation

One should forcefully inhale air till the lungs are full and hold the breath. This is called Kumbha raaja.

Technique

1. Inhale Forcefully
2. Hold the breath to the maximum capacity by closing the nostrils



3. Exhale when you feel you can not hold more.
4. Do this 21 times

In Gomukha Asana, Next-

9. Ujjaayee Kumbhaka

Kumbhaka Paddhathi || verses 131 & 132

*Mukham Niyamya Naadeebhyaam Aakrushyaasum  
Niyojayeth |*

*Kundalee-Paarshvayoho Pashchaath Kumbhayeth  
Udharasthitham ||131||*

Rechayeth Idayaa Vaayum Gachchan Thishthan Yadhaa  
Chareth |

Ujjaayee-Kumbhakaha Prokthaha Shivenaakhila-  
Vedhinaa ||132||

Translation

One should inhale through both the nostrils and closing the mouth and retain the breath along the Kundalini and exhale through the left nostril. This is the Ujjaayee Kumbhaka explained by Shiva.

Technique

1. Close your Mouth
2. Inhale through both the nostrils
3. Hold as long as you can judiciously
4. Exhale slowly through the left nostril
5. Do this 21 times

Reference:

<http://www.nithyananda.org/nithya-kriyas/cure-obesity#gsc.tab=0>



# SHANKARA'S CONCEPT OF ADVAITA: THE FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPT OF HINDUISM

KANAKA NAGARAJ SABAPATHY

## **Origins of Advaitic Philosophy**

**T**he Advaita School of philosophy or Nondualism is believed to have existed long before the 7th century saint Adi Shankara propounded it. Centuries before Shankara, the Advaita School existed both as a philosophy and a dogma. Its roots can be traced to the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita and many schools of Shaivism.

The distinction Shankara achieved was to make Advaita more contemporary and popular by giving an easy-to-grasp logical and scriptural base to the philosophy. Shankara's actions were considered timely as it saved generations of Hindus from confusion and conversion during the Islamic onslaught based on the One God concept.

It is to the credit of Shankara's followers that they continued the exposition of the philosophy even after his short life span of 32 years. His disciples and their disciples added a rich body of religious literature in support of this school and preserved its tradition and philosophy for the modern world.<sup>1</sup>

## **Shankara's one-line Summary of Advaita**

Shankara summarized his entire philosophy of Advaita in his work *Brahma Jnanavali Mala* as follows:

*Brahma satyam jagat mithyaa, jivo brahmaiva naparah*

"Brahman is the only truth, the world is illusion, and there is ultimately no difference between Brahman and individual self." This, in a nutshell, is Advaita Vedanta.

In an excerpt from his book "Non-dualism - A Brief History of a Timeless Concept", author Michael W. Taft recites from the English

translation of Shankara's work *Crest Jewel of Discrimination*, Shankara's understanding of Advaita. In this work Shankara states that "Brahman is the one and only reality, the one existence, the one without a second. It is pure consciousness, free from any taint, beginningless and endless. It is joy, forever beyond the reach of pain, indivisible, immeasurable, formless, nameless, and immutable." According to an article in the Wikipedia, Advaita Vedanta "is the infinite, omnipresent, omnipotent, incorporeal, impersonal, transcendent reality that is the ground of all being."

Taft says that although such words are all attempts at describing the Brahman, the highest Brahman is actually completely without any attributes whatsoever. This highest Brahman is called nirguna brahman, which literally means "Brahman without attributes." Any appearance of a God or deity of any kind (saguna brahman - "Brahman with attributes") is merely Brahman taking on a mask or persona, and does not represent the actual nature of Brahman.

As one can clearly see, in the early centuries of this millennium, Advaita became a powerful tool against conversion of Hindus into other monastic religions which preach the concept of One God.

## **Advaita – The Individual and the Universal Soul**

According to Taft, Shankara's formulation is that the individual soul and Brahman are identical. The soul (atman) is not some small part of Brahman that eventually merges back into Brahman. The soul is actually the entirety of Brahman. According to Shankara (unlike in the Western religions, and some forms of Hinduism), each person does not have a unique,

individual soul that then returns to Brahman upon enlightenment or death. Instead there is no individual soul whatsoever.

There is only one Atman, and it is identical with Brahman. The false idea that there are many souls, arises from the tricks of maya. Individuals (jiva) live in a state of ignorance in a body with senses, which causes the delusion that we feel as if we have an individual soul. The author says in Shankara's metaphor, "it is as if the one moon in the sky were reflected by many bubbles."<sup>22</sup>

### **Advaita Practices for Moksha or Liberation**

Taft's book says Enlightenment (Moksha or Liberation) is possible, according to Advaita, by overcoming the delusion of maya, and thereby seeing the identity of Atman with Brahman. We see that there is absolutely no difference, that they are one and the same.

There are several well-known Advaita techniques for achieving liberation. Probably the most famous traditional practice is that of neti-neti. As we saw in the Upanishad section, this is a statement from the Brihardaranyaka Upanishad, describing Brahman as "not this, not that." The practitioner applies this statement to any and all sensory experiences (including thoughts) that arise in consciousness. This is done as an active, phenomenological inquiry, not the rote repetition of a mantra. Whatever arises is seen to be the product of maya, of something other than perfect, nondual awareness. It is just an illusion. This practice functions as a kind of pointing out instruction that constantly draws attention to awareness itself, rather than the object of awareness.

### **Aham Brahma'smi**

Another practice is the mantra *aham brahma'smi*, which means, "I am Brahman," (also found in the Brihardaranyaka Upanishad). This sentence is called the "great proclamation," because it not only represents the philosophical understanding of the essence of Advaita, but it is also said to be the realization or proclamation of a yogi at the moment of enlightenment: "Eureka! I am Brahman!"<sup>3</sup>

### **Advaitic Practices of Ramakrishna Paramahansa**

Taft recounts what he terms as a "fascinating story" about the Advaita practices of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the most famous Indian saint of the nineteenth century. At the time of the story, Ramakrishna was already a master of dualistic mysticism, fully steeped in the meditation of the Goddess Kali. Nevertheless he agreed to receive the Advaita teachings from a wandering, naked, ash-besmeared master of nondualism named Totapuri.

Totapuri regarded all forms of worship which were so dear to Ramakrishna, as childish and ridiculous. He instructed Ramakrishna the basics of Advaita Vedanta, saying:

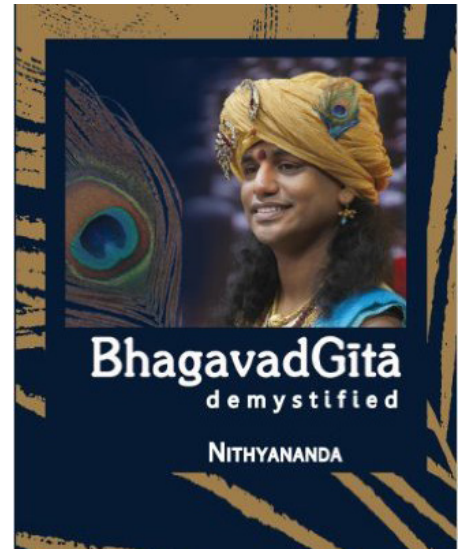
*"Destroy the prison house of name and form and rush out of it with the strength of a lion. Dive deep in search of the Self and realize it through Samadhi. You will find the world of name and form vanishing into void, and the puny ego dissolving in Brahman-Consciousness. You will realize your identity with Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute."*

He also taught Ramakrishna the practice of formless meditation (technically different from nondual meditation, but nevertheless a major step in that direction). But that first night as Ramakrishna sat to meditate, he was immediately lost in dualistic absorption of the Goddess Kali. When he reported this failure to Totapuri the next day, his teacher picked up a tiny shard of glass from the ground and stuck it into the skin between Ramakrishna's eyes, ordering him to concentrate on that spot. So Ramakrishna sat in meditation, and when Kali arrived again, he – in his own metaphor – picked up the "sword of nondual wisdom and cut her down with it." She instantly disappeared and Ramakrishna was thrust into a nondual absorption that lasted several days. He thanked Totapuri, saying, "If you had not come, I would have lived my whole life with the hallucination. My last barrier has fallen away."

#### **References**

1. file:///C:/Users/Owner/Desktop/What%20is%20Advaita%20or%20Advaita%20Vedanta\_.html
2. <http://www.scienceandnonduality.com/nondualism-a-brief-history-of-a-timeless-concept/#sthash.cPejSVpL.dpuf>
3. <http://www.scienceandnonduality.com/nondualism-a-brief-history-of-a-timeless-concept/#sthash.qPPQMEsm.dpuf>

# TWO WAYS TO LIVE LIFE



[This column shares excerpts from the commentary on Bhagavad Gita by Enlightened Master and rare living incarnation Paramahansa Nithyananda. The intention is to highlight the eternal relevance of Bhagavad Gita in addressing challenges, issues and dilemmas faced by human beings in the present day.

*Verses 1.8 to 1.12 of the Bhagavad Gita describe the scene of Duryodhana exhorting his army to protect his commander in chief – Bhishma - and Bhishma blowing his conch in support of these statements.]*

## **Resist or Surrender – Choice is Yours**

It is our constant conflict with Nature that leads to our suffering. If we learn to flow with Nature like the reeds in a river, we will always do the right thing.

There are two ways to live life. One is to avoid resisting the world and life as it is, what in Sanskrit is termed *srsti drsti*. The other way is to try to make circumstances evolve according to our viewpoint, called *drsti srsti*. The first attitude, one of non-resistance, brings happiness; the second, one of resistance, brings suffering. Resistance is an exercise doomed to encounter failure.

In this article, we will see how Bhishma and Duryodhana are examples of these two ways of living life.

## **Duryodhana Needs Support**

Duryodhana was a coward by nature. He was especially afraid of Arjuna and Bhima who were physically stronger and more skilled than him.

Therefore, he felt secure only when surrounded by his cronies.

His strength and valour arose from the feeling of being supported by his clan and the army around him. On the positive side, Duryodhana was an extremely generous friend who gave his all for someone he trusted. This quality had attracted strong men to him like Karna who swore undying loyalty. This made him claim that there were a number of great warriors who would willingly lay down their lives for him.

Duryodhana then began to boost his own morale by saying that the power of the Kaurava army led by Bhishma was immense, whereas the Pandava army with Bhima as one of the commanders was limited in power. His reference to Bhima alongside Bhishma was due to the fear of the oath that Bhima had taken – to break Duryodhana's thigh and drink his blood to avenge the insult to Draupadi. Duryodhana knew that only Bhishma could protect him from Bhima.

Bhishma was the first Kaurava Commander-in-Chief and Duryodhana wanted to make sure that the entire Kaurava army was committed to his leadership. Duryodhana wanted to take no chances that his past hatred towards Bhishma would affect his assembled supporters. Duryodhana knew that he could not afford to antagonize Bhishma. Had it not been for his strong bonds of duty, Bhishma would have gone with the Pandava princes and Krishna. Duryodhana knew this.



From the above, we see that when one operates from ego, they are afflicted with worry and fear and they need support to thrive. Duryodhana gets this from:

1. Comparison: the size of the armies
2. Ability of others: the valour of others kings who are with him
3. Track record of his commander-in-chief: Bhishma was undefeated

### ***Bhishma Goes with the Flow***

Bhishma was the grand sire and patriarch of the Pandava and Kaurava clan. He was born to Ganga as Devavrata. Bhishma was highly respected for his valour and sagacity. It is one of the greatest ironies of Mahabharata that wise men like Bhishma chose to be on Duryodhana's side, knowing fully well that whatever path Duryodhana was following was morally incorrect.

In the highest spiritual sense, there is no right or wrong, morally. Everything is neutral. Bhishma was highly learned in the scriptural truths. Moreover, he was fully aware that Krishna was a divine incarnation. The very fact that Krishna sided with the Pandavas was a clear indication to him how the war would unfold. He had no fear about his own death and more importantly, he had no guilt about what he had embarked upon.

To a great warrior, dying on the battlefield was the duty of a kshatriya. What was more important to him was that he was rooted in the awareness of the present moment, carrying out his duty. His awareness transcended the moral rights and wrongs established by society and religion. He disapproved of Duryodhana instigating this war and yet took his side, knowing fully well that what lay ahead was destruction.

This was not foolishness or resignation. This was surrender to the inevitable, to the Divine. He allowed Nature to take its own course and allowed himself to be swept along with the tide. To relax and allow whatever happens to happen is the sure sign of an evolved spirit. Only such a being can be compassionate and understand the desperate fears running through Duryodhana's mind and felt the need to reassure him. Bhishma blew his conch as a sign of resounding affirmation of whatever had been said by Duryodhana.

Duryodhana was worried and fearful of life – resisting way of existence. Bhishma was avoiding any resistance and going with the flow of life.

All of us have this choice to make moment to moment. Choose wisely.

# LISTEN TO THE DIVINE IN YOU



**C**onches, called sankha in Sanskrit, are the shells of molluscs that live in the sea. From time immemorial, Hindu scriptures have referred to the use of conches during ritualistic, devotional and celebratory occasions. Blowing the conch signified joy.

Each and every great warrior in the Mahabharata War had his own, personal conch. Most of the great warriors had their own flags that flew on their chariots, and their weapons, especially their bows, had great spiritual significance. The Divine often bestowed upon the warrior after a long penance.

It is said that even if his flag were masked by dust and distance, Arjuna's presence in any part of the battlefield would be known by the sound of his conch and the twang of his bow.

When Bhishma blew his conch in support of Duryodhana, the response was tumultuous on both sides. Every warrior on the battlefield took out his conch and blew his signature note. Of all the sounds that emanated at that moment, a few were heard above the rest. Krishna sounded his Panchajanya, which drowned all other sounds on the battlefield. It was an announcement that the Divine was already present with the Pandava army.

Vyasa, through Sanjaya, says that Krishna sounded His divine conch. This is significant since Vyasa attributes divinity only to Krishna's conch, not to anyone else's. He refers to Krishna as Madhava and later as Hrsikesa. Madhava signifies that Krishna is an incarnation of Vishnu. In this context, it signifies that whoever Krishna sides with would be invincible.

Krishna is then referred to Hrsikesa, controller of the senses, the superconscious who has created the maya, the illusion that is the great war of

Mahabharata. Vyasa implies that all that happens is a creation of Krishna.

It is as if Sanjaya, the narrator of the incidents of war, repeatedly tries to impress upon the blind king Dhritarashtra the calibre of the Pandava warriors and their glorious antecedents so that the shock of the impending disaster of the Kuru clan of Dhritarashtra would not be so unexpected. Sanjaya specifically refers to these warriors as 'aparajita', invincible with the clear implication that they would be victorious in this war that they had embarked upon as well.

It is significant that as Commander-in-Chief, Bhishma's conch sound was responded to by Krishna and not by anyone else. Krishna's was a response to the challenge issued by Bhishma. It was an acceptance of the fact that whatever was thrown at the Pandava army was being directly accepted by Him, Divinity Incarnate.

Krishna, as the superconscious guide of the Pandava princes, absolves them of any guilt or wrongdoing by taking upon Himself the responsibility for whatever is to happen. The rest of the Pandava army, including Arjuna, follow His lead by blowing their conches.

*It is seen from these verses that if life in itself is the Mahabharata war, we have the ability to listen to the part of us who has seeking (Arjuna) at any point in our lives. Also, whatever challenges and incompletions (Kauravas) throw at us, if we are keen to listen to the Divine (Krishna) in us, victory is assured for us because Krishna takes complete responsibility for those who seek His guidance.*

References:  
Bhagavad Gita Demystified by Paramahansa Nithyananda;  
p. 24 – 31



**S**hanti mantras roughly translated are mantras of peace. The Shanti mantras are a perfect example of how Hindus set the context of their everyday life - whether it is starting their day, ending a meeting, or just beginning a day at school. By invoking the various Shanti mantras, it is clear to see that peace and harmony, the scent of Advaita, is a part of the very makeup of the lifestyle of a Hindu.

Here we explore two of the most well known Shanti mantras. The following is the Shanti Mantra of the Kathopanishad, one of the source books of Hinduism.

ॐ सह नाववतु ।  
 सह नौ भुनक्तु ।  
 सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।  
 तेजस्व नावधीतमस्तु मा वद्विषावहै ।  
 ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥  
*Om Saha Nav-Avatu |*  
*Saha Nau Bhunaktu |*  
*Saha Viiryam Karavaavahai |*  
*Tejasvi Nav-Adhiitam-Astu Maa Vidvissaavahai |*  
*Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ||*

This means<sup>1</sup>

- 1: Om, May God Protect us Both (the Teacher and the Student),
- 2: May God Nourish us Both,
- 3: May we Work Together with Energy and Vigour,
- 4: May our Study be Enlightening and not give rise to Hostility,
- 5: Om, Peace, Peace, Peace.

This Shanti mantra is usually chanted before starting a day at school or an Indian system school or gurukul. In ancient India, gurukul was a learning facility. Gurukul translates as guru's home. By living with the guru, students can pick up the subtle nuances, the practical applications and deep unspoken truths, to achieve mastery of whatever subject they are studying.

By chanting this Shanti mantra, student and teacher both set the context of their engagement. All their previous thoughts and intentions are left at the door, as they enter into a new space - the space of learning. It is a very subtle but powerful practice. If it is practiced authentically, the students learn to create the space where learning can happen. Let us look into some aspects of this mantra that may be missed at first glance.

First, it is important to notice the invocation of God. It is known to a Hindu that Advaita, or enlightenment, is the purpose of life. Chanting the first line sets the direction of this engagement to enlightenment. It is as if to say "may we not stray away from this path." With the initial goal declared, now they can attend to whatever follows.

The guru and the student are here to enrich each other. This is evident by the inclusion of the teacher in the invocation. The word "we" is used. It is no longer an energy flowing from teacher to student. Gurukul is education-centric, not teacher-centric. The teacher is there to help set the direction for the creative energy of the student to flow.

It is also known that only with completion can any real progress and relationship be established. Look how the prayer encourages that no hostility, at any level, shall remain between student and teacher. This way an intimate learning experience is nurtured.

The following Shanti mantra is from the Ishavasya Upanishad, another source book of Hinduism.

ॐ पूरणमदः पूरणमदिम् पूणात् पूरणमुदच्यते |  
पूरणस्य पूरणमादाय पूरणमेवावशष्यते ||  
|| ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ||

*Om Poornamadhah Poornamidham Poornaath  
Poornam Udhachyathey |  
Poornasya Poornamaadhaaya  
Poornamevaavasishyathey ||  
|| Om Shanthi Shanthi Shanthih ||*

This translation means:<sup>2</sup>

“Completion, this is Completion, that is Completion.

If this is removed from that, both remain, continue as Completion. When the Completion merges into Completion, Completion alone remains. If the Completion is removed or perceived to be removed from Completion, again Completion alone remains as Completion. (Om, peace, peace, peace.)”

This mantra explains the context of YOU - how you relate with everything else. How you relate with the whole. The whole confusion happens when we start perceiving ourselves as incomplete.

For this mantra, completion can be synonymous with: whole, infinite, the entirety. But the word completion is used here for a reason. The word completion is used to contrast the idea of the things that make you feel incomplete - your incompletions.

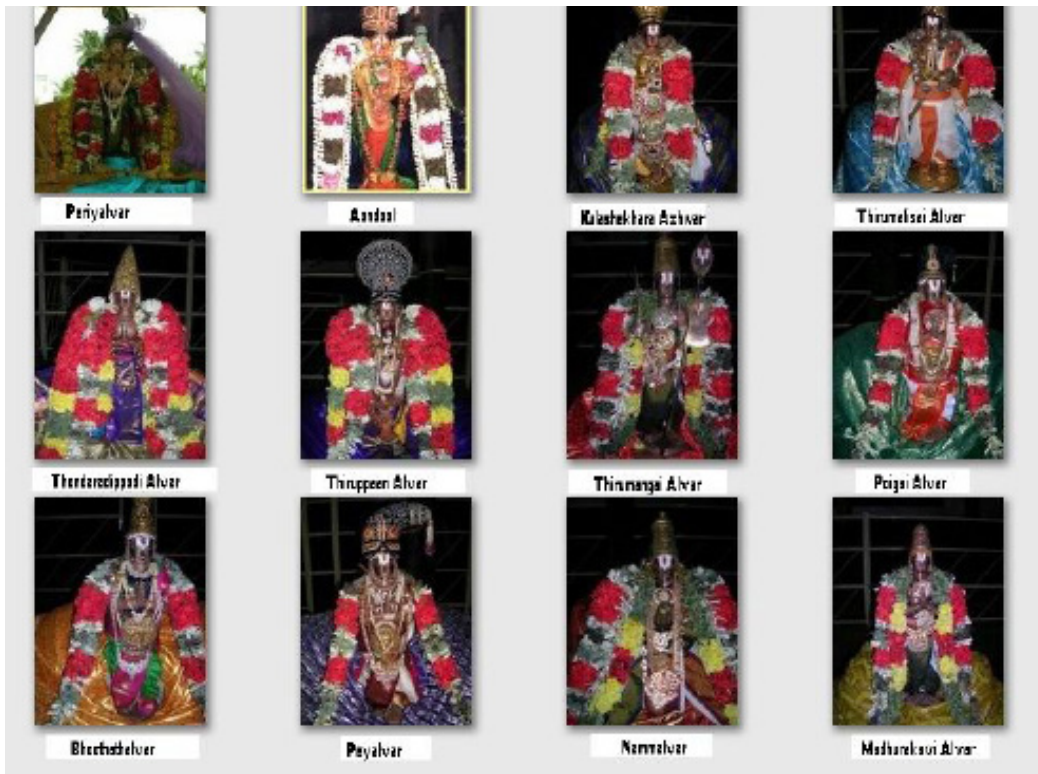
With the context that only completion can come out of completion, we are encouraged to contemplate why we have assumed we have been torn apart from the whole. It is as if that we are made out of the very fabric the whole is made of, which is completion. So completion removed from completion, both can only remain as completion!

By chanting this regularly, especially at the conclusion of any occasion, we are reminded to not take anything away from the event that would lead us away from the feeling of completion. This benefits us greatly as it reminds us to free ourselves of any bondages and any reasons for bondages that might come up from any experience. It reminds us to stay in our powerful space of completion, for that is our natural state.

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# DIVYA PRABHANDAM

## THENMOZHI KALIYAPERUMAL

Over its long history, Sri Vaishnavism has influenced nearly every aspect of Indian religious life, as Sri Vaishnavism has both popular and philosophical aspects. This page attempts to present a glimpse into one of the gems that came out of this religion: the Divya Prabhandam.

The Divya Prabhandam, literally meaning, divine songs, sings the praise of Lord Vishnu and his many forms. We are simple beings and we cannot understand or realize the great truths revealed by God. For that reason, the Alvars, the great Vaishnavite saints, came to this world as incarnations to help us understand the nature of the Supreme One and to propagate bhakthi marga to this world. The Divya Prabandham is the philosophical love poetry of the Alvar saints. The devotion of the Alvars oozes from each verse.

In many temples, like the Sri Ranganam temple for example, the chanting of the Divya Prabandham

forms a major part of the daily service. There are some male dancers who are trained only to dance for the Pasurams (hymns). There are 12 Alvars who are the main authors of Naalaayira Divya Prabandham (4000 sacred hymns).

### *Glory of the Alvars*

An Alvar is someone who is immersed in devotion for God and someone who makes the listener also become immersed in that devotion. Many followers of Sri Vaishnavism believe that since they have the great wealth of Alvars' verses, they need nothing more.

The 12 Alvars saints are Poigai Alvar, Boothathalvar, Peyalvar, Thirumalisai Alvar, Thiru Mangai Alvar, Thondar Adipodi Alvar, Kula Sekara Alvar, Thirupaanalvar, Perialvar, Andal, Nammazhvar, and Madhura Kavi Alvar. The Alvars are Nithya Suris or Divya Sariris, those who reside permanently with Lord Vishnu in his abode.

The Alvars wrote songs and lived on earth for a certain period of time and then left to Vaikuntha (heaven). For some time, no one knew about Divya Prabandham. Then, Nathamuni, who was born in the eighth century revealed these verses to the world. He heard some Vaishnava Munis singing the hymns while he was on a pilgrimage. The pasuram that they were singing ended with the words "aayirathul ippathu" (which means 10 out of the 1000) When he asked them if they knew the rest of the thousand verses, they answered "no."

### ***Nathamuni Reveals the Divya Prabhandam to the World***

Nathamuni then proceeded to kshetra Thiru Kurugoor and asked the people there about Nammalvar's 1000 verses. They did not know about the 1000 verses and he was disheartened. That same night, he was blessed by Sadagopan (Nammalvar). He blessed him to recite Kanninun Siruthambu written by Madurakavi Alvar 12,000 times. He did the parayanam 12,000 times as he was told, so Nammalvar was pleased with his penance and blessed him with all the 4000 pasurams of all the Alvars. This is how we got the 4000 pasurams of Divya Prabandham. We should all pay our respects and gratitude to the great saint Nathamuni.

### ***Importance of Divya Prabhandam***

This sacred book is at par with Vedas. It is even said that if Sanskrit Vedas make up one eye of Hindus, the Divya Prabhandam in Tamil make the other eye. Divya Prabandham is like a shower that the Lord is bathed in. Life became meaningful only after the Alvars infused life into us.

It is the nectar given by the Alvars. Even the Divine feels happy when it is chanted. When we know about the greatness of Divya Prabandham and chant it, communion with god is attainable by self-surrender and undivided loving meditation. It is a nectar which can be continuously consumed.

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1 <http://alwarsandacharyas.blogspot.com/2007/02/senai-nathan-vishwaksena.html>

# CHAITANYA MAHAPRABHU

SATHISH SELVAKUMAR

**T**o those who have not experienced devotion in their lives, we can say that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was a Hindu Saint. He lived from 1486 to 1534. To those who have had a glimpse of devotion and who have experienced the living presence of the divine, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is an avatar (incarnation) of Lord Krishna. As an avatar he is an ever living presence not limited by time and space.

### ***Scriptural References***<sup>1</sup>

The advent of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is mentioned in the Srimad Bhagavatam (verse 11.5.32), the Narada Purana, Atharva Veda (time, location, looks), and Sama Veda (advent as an Avadhut Brahman Sanyasi). The Vayu Purana mentions his parents' names, the city of birth, the path of bhakti that he will teach, his name (Krishna Chaitanya), and the outcome of his mission (shall make this earth fearless).

The Kurma Purana mentions his birth in the age of Kali; Padma Purana mentions the city where he would be born and the name of his mother (Sachi); the Garuda Purana also mentions that he will be a Grihasta and then become a Sannyasi. The Narasimha Purana says that he will delight in chanting the Lord's holy names and his name will be Chaitanya. The Agni Purana describes his appearance and that he would be surrounded by many saintly devotees. The Bhavisya Purana describes how his body would react (tears in eyes and hair standing on end) when he is doing Sankirtan (chanting divine names).

### ***Birth***

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, was born to Pandit Jagannath Misra and Sachi Devi at Nabadwip, on the full moon (lunar eclipsed) evening of February 18, 1486 (23rd day of the month of Falgun in the year 1407 of the Sakabda era).

## **Growing up**

As a baby, he would be quiet only when he heard the words 'Haribol'. Therefore, the house had 'Haribol' being constantly chanted. When he was 6 months old, during his anna-prashana ceremony (first solid food) he chose the Srimad Bhagavatam instead of coins.

He had mastered Bengali before he joined formal schooling under Ganga Dasa Pandita. He mastered Sanskrit grammar and rhetoric in two years.<sup>3</sup> He studied Nyaya (the ancient Indian science of law and logic) at the school of Vasudev Sarvabhauma, a reputed professor of Nyaya. He became a scholar of great repute when he defeated Keshava Kashmiri in a debate.<sup>4</sup>

## **Meeting his Guru**

In 1509, he met Isvar Puri of the order of Madhavacharya and took him as his Guru.<sup>5</sup> He transformed from a scholastic exponent to one dissolved in devotion. He was forever lost in Sankirtan (chanting and dancing in love for Krishna).

## **Sannyas**

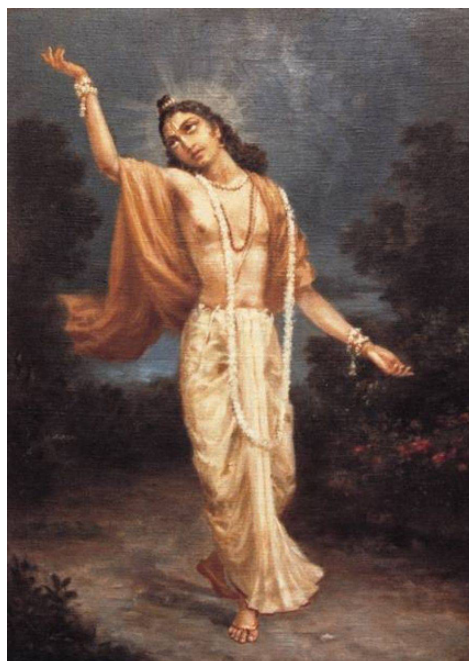
When unaware people raised a controversy over him chanting the names of Gopikas (he did not see any difference between them and Krishna), he made the choice to choose the Sannyas ashrama, that was held in respect by most men. This was to ensure that human beings did not miss his message of pure devotion to Krishna. He entered Sannyas at the age of 24.

## **Travels**

Between 1510 and 1517, he travelled to different sacred sites across India (including Vrindavan, Srirangam and Kanyakumari) and easily made many learned scholars his followers. From 1517 to 1533 he stayed in Puri and was lost in the devotion of Krishna.

## **Teachings**

He knew that only the name of Krishna can deliver people from the vicious cycle of births and deaths in the age of Kali. His first teaching to his disciples was "Go, friends, go through the streets of the town, meet every man at his door and ask him to sing the name of Hari with a holy life, and you then come and report to Me every evening the result of your



preaching."<sup>6</sup> By this, he makes it clear that spreading spiritual knowledge is the way to ensure spiritual progression.

He only wrote eight verses (Sri Siksastakam<sup>7</sup>) in his whole life. These verses beautifully expound his teaching of Sri Krishna Sankirtana (chanting the name of Krishna while sitting, standing, walking, eating, in bed and everywhere, at any time<sup>8</sup>), and the unconditional devotion and surrender he had towards the divine. The rest of his teachings were documented by his devotees and disciples.

Let all those who read about Chaitanya Mahaprabhu be established in his inner space of prema (love of God).

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# LISTENING IS GOD

AVINASH NARRIKKADAN



## Are you listening or waiting to speak?

**S**ravana or listening is the first step towards spirituality in the Vedic tradition. Sravana does not refer to just hearing the sounds to understand them. It is a state of high awareness or a space of being available to the sound or event with our whole being.

### ***Inner Chatter***

There is always an inner dialogue or chatter going on within each of us incessantly. We become aware of this chatter when we try to sit still. The experience is generally not pleasant and as the chatter never dies there is a constant effort to escape from it or deny it. This is the real reason why any product or activity that provides easy distraction sells well. Talking or outer chatter, media entertainment etc. provide an easy escape. Cell Phones and tablets enable us to escape the inner chatter at any time and we see that they are the most popular and used products.

The inner chatter is rooted in incorrect cognition of some conflicts in our life. They are always sustained by fear or greed coupled with a deep sense of powerlessness. These wrong cognition around some past incident or incidents, when left uncorrected, crystallize into reality defining rules for our lives. The self denying rules always keep us at disadvantage as we live out our life. Inner

chatter is only the symptom of this self-imposed restricting framework that we unwittingly allow to shrink our experience of life. Using distraction through entertainment or other means is just running away from the real problem.

### ***Listening and Completion***

Listening to oneself with deep compassion is the first step to confronting this unpleasant inner chatter. Listening reveals the uncured root causes of the inner disturbance. The root causes can be understood and permanently cured through a powerful cleansing process called 'Completion' (see reference 2 for link to the actual process) that is based on listening. Listening to our inner chatter and completing with the causes leads to silence. This silence that is the fertile space devoid of all greed and fear is ready for intuition driven creation. Operating solely from this space is Living Enlightenment.

Only after we learn to listen to ourselves will we be able to truly listen to others. Most of the time when someone talks we are busy working on our response instead of listening. A person's words are modulated by the projected ego and its motives. If we provide true listening to someone, we can see beyond the words of the person. We will be able to catch the space from which the words are being

uttered and respond directly to that space. We can truly help or enrich anyone only if we are able to speak to their space of listening.

### ***Listening to Life***

Existence, as an entity, is always creatively expanding with new and higher expressions. The human body is built with the hardware for the possibility of the highest experience - Enlightenment. This is the realization of oneness of Existence as your identity. All humanity is moving towards this ultimate fulfillment. Existence has a compassionate auto correction mechanism that aligns us toward this fulfillment.. Life teaches us all, pushing us towards higher possibilities and maturity. Without proper listening, this mechanism will feel as if it is unjust, judging and imposing. Listening reveals the real reason or teaching behind each experience allowing us to mature with the understanding. Listening means embracing life as it happens without resistance. In that space we see that we are not only responsible for our experience of life but also can be in control of it with awareness.

### ***Listening and Omniscience***

Pure listening reveals all. In the space of pure listening there is no gap between the event and the observer. The truth of oneness experienced between them makes all the knowledge about the observed available as intuition. There are no blind spots. Enlightened masters are in this space of pure listening and hence able to provide the best solution to any problem or situation they are confronted with. This is the power of Sarvajna meaning omniscience.

### ***Listening Heals***

Listening is also attention. Attention is energy. Many of our maladies are just because of the lack of attention or listening we provide to ourselves. Listening closely to our body's pain signals and completing with them works miracles with healing them. Similarly people often find solutions to their problems just when provided the space of true Listening.

### ***Significance in Vedic Tradition***

Piercing the ear to wear earrings is an important religious ritual in the Vedic tradition. The child is taught

to listen and in turn the child commits that from then on she will start listening. Sravana Deeksha - initiation of the disciple into listening, is one of the initial spiritual processes performed by spiritual masters, at the beginning of spiritual training.

Paramahansa Nithyananda says beautifully: *"When you listen, you understand, you become God. Only God can make you God. Listening makes you God. Listening is God."*

The individual ego is born from the ego-defining words we utter in our inner space. All further life experiences carry the hue of the definition as an underlying cause. With listening we become aware of these defining words and chose them carefully thus designing and deciding the life we want. Listening provides us with this power to create our reality. Listening truly is God.

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# KUNTI AND GANDHARI: FEMINISM AND THE TWO MATRIARCHS OF THE MAHABHARATA

MA NITHYA SWAROOPAPRIYANANDA

## ***Modern Women Fight for Rights!***

Modern society likes to fancy itself as feminist, giving equal opportunity to women by dissolving the social and economic barriers that have divided the sexes from the dawning of this age. The proverbial glass ceiling that caps a woman's business and earning potential is being shattered by those who will no longer tolerate men being paid more for the same jobs done; Ivy League universities, which less than a century ago scarcely admitted a handful of female students per year, now accept an equal number of male and female applicants - in fact, 2015 statistics revealed 49% male and 51% female student bodies.

Even family dynamics are shifting, with a rising popularity in "stay at home dads" who care for their young in domestic roles while mothers opt, instead, to go to work and pay the bills. Because of all this, modern society labels itself as advanced in gender politics, proud of the acquiescence it's making to the aspirations of women. Modern culture now shuns the old fashioned expectations for women to be relegated to the realm of supporting roles in the lives of their husbands and sons, living half lives of domestic duty and obedience. We're now evolved. Women have never had it better. Or have they?

## ***Vedic Women were Simply Equal to Men!***

Vedic society didn't bother assigning itself labels like "equal opportunity" to describe the rights it provided women, because in the Vedic era, there was no struggle between genders. Policies

for fairness weren't implemented, because in that idyllic time, everyone simply rose into his or her own dharmic path regardless of social conventions or outer expectations. There was an alignment between the individual's prarabdha, (the quasi-predestined karmic results of his or her past actions,) with the infrastructure of society. There were no women's groups fighting to gain status in a man's world. Besides the clarity provided by the ancient rishis' understandings of astrology and karma, the women of Vedic times didn't need to assert their rights in a man's world because the world of the Vedas did not belong to men.

The ancient Puranas are abundant with tales of strong women who shaped the course of civilization itself with their decisions, and who led by example, living the principles and vows they took with poise, grace, and often ferociousness. Modern society offers little girls beauty queens and movie stars, but the Puranas offer Goddesses.

## ***Matriarchs of Two Warring Clans - Kunti & Gandhari***

Two such divine matriarchs of ancient India are Kunti and Gandhari, the heads of the warring families, the Pandavas and Kauravas, respectively. Unlike western tales of family war, the Mahabharata, which, of course, is no mere literary work but is, in fact, sacred history, is rich and layered. During the battle of Kurukshetra, even as bloody battle ripped through each of their families at the hands of the other's men, Kunti and Gandhari shared a tent on the battlefield. Even when her own sons' lives were at risk, Gandhari said not, "Let my family win," but, "Let victory go to the side of righteousness."



### ***Dignified Bonding Despite Adversarial Family Ties***

We could learn a lot from the example of these powerful Mothers; modern psychiatry likes to pigeonhole girls and women with the stereotype of pettiness and rivalry. In an article titled 'Feminine Foes: New Science Explores Female Competition', Dr. Noam

Sphancer, Ph.D states that "a woman who tries to distinguish or promote herself threatens other women and will encounter hostility." The article's point is that women are incapable of friendships with each other, since the driving force behind any woman's life is finding and keeping a good man, and other women are merely competition. To understand the depth of

"A woman in whom divinity is expressing will be reluctant to reduce her state by indulging in petty feuds, and it's clear that both Kunti and Gandhari had truly awakened their inner divine natures."



Left: Illustration by Alfred Manzano

love between Kunti and Gandhari, the fact that neither one perceived the other as competition, even as their own beloved sons' lives hung in the balance, is a testament to their independent strength, and an example to the world of the possibility for genuine connection beyond selfish jealousies or rivalry.

Fueling the friendship, free from jealousy and competition between Kunti and Gandhari, stand each woman's uniqueness and divine grace.

### ***Tyaga - A Study in Contrasts***

Kunti, from a young age, was so devoted to the service of God, spiritual beings and guests that her sincerity inspired the rishi Durvasa to initiate her into a mantra that would allow her to invoke any God of her choice to conceive a child. Gandhari was an incarnation of the goddess of intelligence, Mati, and used her wisdom as she saw best fit. Each woman also acted differently, of course, and in fitting with the state of their respective families.

Kunti displayed the strength of pure tyaga, sacrifice for a greater good, and bore the pain felt by any mother who must raise her children with tough love. Her sacrifice was enriching to her life and the lives of others. Even to call her love "tough love" may be an understatement; she, in fact, told her own son not to be a mild ass, and that there is no point for him to be alive unless he is willing to fight even to the death!

Gandhari, on the other hand, though well intentioned, sacrificed in a wrong way. In effort to prove her devotion to her blind husband, she took a vow to live her entire married life blindfolded, renouncing her own vision that may well have proven useful to him.

Kunti's sacrifice was that of her son's love for the sake of his own higher well being; she was complete within herself whether he reciprocated with love or anger. Gandhari's sacrifice came from a desire for her husband's approval and affection, to prove herself, and thus went off balance; it was a sacrifice out of a deep insecurity.

In a beautiful discourse on January 6, 2014, Paramahansa Nithyananda explained, "Self-Destruction always looks like sacrifice. Please

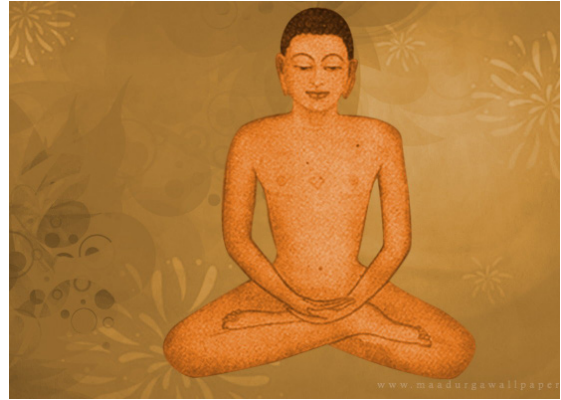
listen, any sacrifice out of incompleteness will only be self-destruction; it will not be tapas. Kunti is also sacrifice, but out of completeness. Gandhari is also sacrifice, but out of incompleteness. The Kunti and Gandhari are complete opposites. Sacrifice out of completeness is tapas. Sacrifice out of incompleteness is self-destruction."

### ***Moksha by Fire***

Beautifully, though, both women, in their sincerity and inherent quest for dharma, attained grace. These two figures were more inspiring than any modern day so-called feminists, whose friendship transcended even the battle waged between their clans, remained strength and support to one another through the end. Together, they were consumed by a Himalayan forest fire where they attained Moksha, Liberation.



# THE SOCIO POLITICAL CULTURAL MILIEU FOR BIRTH OF JAINISM



SHUBHANGI DESHPANDE

**J**ainism has prehistoric origins dating before 3000 BCE. The people of the Saraswati River civilisation worshipped the idols of Yogis, figures of the 'Kayotsarga' posture, which is acknowledged as a Jain posture for meditation. Jainism prevailed during Vedic era, as all the four Vedas have made references to the 'Tirthankaras' or Jain Prophets. These include Rishabhadeva, Arishtanemi and Ajitanatha. In the Vedas, Rishabhadeva was considered as one of the forms of Vishnu. There were a total of 24 Tirthankaras, the last of whom was Vardhamana Mahavira.

## ***What is Jainism?***

The term Jain (in Sanskrit Jaina) means someone who venerates the 'jinas' (the conquerors). Jinas in this context refers to one who conquered desires/aversions and achieved liberation from bondage of worldly existence, attained through the elimination of accumulated karmas.

## ***Jainism and Hinduism***

Jainism and Buddhism are considered to be heterodox Hindu systems, in that they do not accept the divinity of the Vedas, but rather use Upanishadic thought as a basis for their systems. Jainism's popular doctrines of ahimsa, karma, satyagraha all have their roots in Hinduism.

## ***Socio Political and Cultural Factors that led to rise of Jainism***

Before 6<sup>th</sup> BCE there was religious unrest in India. The original Vedic religion lost its purity and became very complex. Religion misplaced

its inner substance and more importance was attached to ceremonies and sacrifices. Also Brahmins had monopoly on Vedic religions and superstitions superseded spirituality.

Intelligent men had no freedom to read the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Upanishads, as it was perceived as rights of only Brahmins. Common people could only worship god through priests, denying them the right to find their own path to higher spiritual goals. The inner meaning of the Creator and the Creation of life, soul and salvation remained submerged in the unintelligible mantras of the priests, slaughter of animals and blind beliefs. Ignorance, not wisdom, dominated the atmosphere.

A reaction against such religious and social evils became inevitable. There were saints and preachers who openly raised their voice for a rethinking. It was in this climate that Jainism and Buddhism rose as two mighty religious movements to usher in an era of enlightened progress.

Jainism advocated to attain "Moksha" or Liberation by gaining "true knowledge" that was not restricted only to higher caste people. "Sacrifices" were dropped and doctrine of karma cleansing or salvation was adopted. Jainism preached asceticism and self mortification to attain salvation.

## ***Vardhamana Mahavira***

Mahavira, also known as Vardhamana is the 24<sup>th</sup> and the last Tirthankara of the Jains. He was born in a royal family. At the age of 30, he left

his home in pursuit of spiritual awakening, and abandoned worldly things, including his clothes, and became a Jain monk. For the next twelve-and-a-half years, Mahavira practiced intense meditation and severe penance, after which he became kevali (omniscient).

Mahavira taught that the observance of the vows ahimsa (non-injury), satya (truth), asteya (non-thieving), brahmacharya (chastity) and aparigraha (non-attachment) is necessary to elevate the quality of life. He introduced Jainism to kings, merchants and laymen. He travelled in South East Asia for the next 30 years, preaching Jainism. The teachings of Mahavira were compiled by Gautama Swami (chief disciple) and were called the Jain Agamas. Most of these Agamas are not available today. Mahavira attained moksha at the age of seventy two.

Over the centuries, Jainism evolved into a cultural system that has made significant contributions to Indian philosophy and logic, art and architecture, mathematics, astronomy and astrology, and literature.

### **Indifferent Patronage**

Around the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> CE, a revival of Hinduism began. Dynasties such as the Guptas as well as kingdoms in South India patronised Hinduism and built many temples. Around the 8<sup>th</sup> CE, Hindu philosophers such as Kumarila Bhatta and Adi Shankaracharya began an intense revival of Vedic traditions, and restoring it to its original glory.

Jainism went through revival and decline at several times in India's history. It was dominant in Magadha (Eastern India) during the reign of the Nandas (364-324 BCE) and the Mauryas (324-

300 BCE). In the Gupta period, Jainism received no royal patronage, and therefore declined. In South India, Jainism flourished because of the patronage of several ruling dynasties, especially in Karnataka. The period from the 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century CE is regarded as the golden period in the history of Jainism because many Jaina monks, statesmen and merchants contributed to its growth, backed by royal patronage.

Jainism received a setback during Islamic rule, due to the mass scale destruction by the invaders. Jainism suffered further damage during the Lingayat movement in Karnataka in the 12<sup>th</sup> CE, under the leadership of the Shaiva reformer Basava.

### **Why did Jainism not Grow in Popularity?**

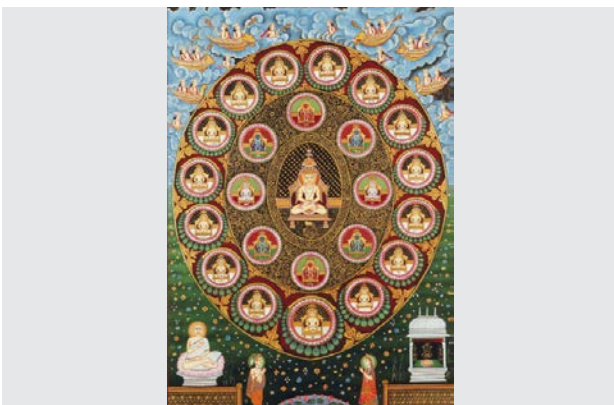
Jainism largely remained restricted to India.

Jain teachings and scriptures were passed on by teachers to students and were not documented well. The handwritten manuscripts became objects of ritual veneration. The Jain reformers faced huge resistance to printing of scriptures due to its cruelty to single-celled organisms. This did not permit free transmission of religion to masses. Even today, certain sections of the Agamas are off limits even for nuns and junior monks. Few people have access to the original scriptures like bhaṅgāras and they are written in the ancient language Prakrit which is not even taught to Jain monks.

The teachings of Jainism such as non violence, vegetarianism etc. makes huge sense in modern day life. However one laments that the glorious Jain scriptures were not popularised amongst the masses.

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# RUDRA HOMA

## **What is Homa?**

**H**oma, also known as Havan, is a Sanskrit word referring to sacred fire ritual in ancient Vedic tradition. The science of Homa is a Vedic ritual that invokes fire, one of the five sacred elements of nature – earth, water, fire, air and ether. In Hinduism, Homa is a religious ceremony, consisting of offerings that vary depending upon the intended outcome, to the consecrated element of fire invoking one or more divinities while chanting powerful mantras (sacred sound vibrations). For instance, Ganapati Homa is done to overcome obstacles in one's life, Chandi Homa for victory in all endeavors, and Vishwa Shanthi Homa for universal peace and harmony, as also harmony between the self and the universe.

## **Rudra Homa**

Rudra is one of the many energies of Shiva. Lord Rudra is a ferocious aspect of Lord Shiva, who is the embodiment of destruction, rejuvenation and unlimited love. Rud means sorrow. Ra means destroyer. Rudra is the one who destroys our sorrows and eliminates all negative influences in our life, purifying our system enabling us to see reality more clearly.

Rudra homa connects us to the fire (agni) element while awakening the inner fire (jataragni) within each of us - this is responsible for proper digestion and dissemination of food energy in our system. Performing Rudra homa cleanses our deep rooted disorders and rejuvenates our energy as well as the surrounding environment by allowing an abundant flow of prana (life-force) into the atmosphere.

## **Rudra Mantra**

*Om Namo Bhagwate Rudraya  
 || Katame Rudra iti Dasheme purushe praanaa  
 atmaikadashah te yadasmad  
 martyaacchreeradt kramanti atha rodanti tad  
 yad rodayanti tasmad Rudra iti ||*

## **Sri Rudram - Answer to Anti Aging**

Found in the ancient Yajurveda, Sri Rudram is renowned for its healing vibrations. It is chanted to invoke Lord Shiva's energy, intelligence and blessings. In Sri Rudram, the Cosmic form of Shiva is described.

Rudra is the deity of anti-ageing. It is the form of Shiva's rejuvenating energy which makes us younger day after day. Sri Rudram is also called



the Namakam. In it there are 300 repetitions of the word Namaha which means 'salutations' in Sanskrit. It has another interpretation, which is 'not me'. Again and again repeating the word 'not me' – namaha - directly hits at the root of the ego, which is the sole culprit responsible for all our problems. Our brain is designed to respond differently to different words. Whatever word we repeat in our inner space gets recorded in our brain and bio-memory and also decides the circuit of brain signals. Repeating the word namaha in your inner space breaks the unconscious part of our mind where the root cause of all the health problems resides. Simply chanting the Sri Rudram with awareness can directly destroy the root of all mental and physical health problems.

### ***Rudram & Nadis***

The human body has over 72,000 subtle energy channels known as nadis. The nadis are closely linked to the functioning of the nervous system. Negative energies can block the full flow of prana (life-force) in these nadis, resulting in many 'incurable' or so-called 'karmic' diseases, including nervous and mental disorders. When performed with devotion and awareness, the energy of Rudra Homa can directly penetrate our deepest energy layers, energize the nadis and flush out the negative samskaras (engraved memories) which influence our health and mental states. Most importantly, the high consciousness pervading the atmosphere in an energy field put us naturally into a meditative state.

Meditation directly activates the self-healing mechanism of the body and acts as both a curative and a preventive remedy for disease. Rudra homa causing healing to happen, adding joy, peace and good health to the practitioners and their families.

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# HINDU SANSKARAS

## - OUTING, FEEDING, EAR PIERCING & TONSURING

USHA K KENT

**S**anskara refers to the diverse rites of passage in Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. In Hinduism, the sanskaras vary in number and details according to regional traditions. The Gautama Dharmashastras details as many as 48 sanskaras while the Grihyasutra texts from centuries later give a list of 16 sanskaras. Hindu sanskaras include both external rituals such as those marking a baby's birth and naming ceremony, as well as inner rites of resolutions and ethics such as compassion towards all living beings and positive attitude.

The sanskaras are a series of sacraments, sacrifices and rituals, that mark the various stages of human life (ashrama), and entry into the next significant stage. These samskaras involve oblations to gods, ancestors and guardians in accordance with the Vedic dictums for a Dharmic or righteous life.

In the April issue we dealt with sanskaras relating to the birth of the child - Jatakarman and Namakarna. We now move onto the next series, post the first 4-6 months of a Hindu child's entry into this world.

### ***Nishkramana (First Outing)***

Nishkramana relates to taking the child for the first time outside the house. On the day of the Nishkramana, a square area in the courtyard from where sun can be seen is plastered with cow dung and clay and the sign of swastika is marked on it. The mother of the child scatters grains of rice over it. The child is brought by a nurse, and the ceremony ends when the father makes the child look at the sun with the sound of

the conch-shell and the chanting of Vedic hymns. As per the scriptures, the month in which this is done differs - per Manusmriti (II.34), in the fourth month after birth, while the Yamasmriti, indicates that the child should see the sun in the third month after birth.

### ***The Annaprasana (The First Feeding)***

The next important stage is the intake of the first solid food or Annaprasana, after the initial months of breastfeeding. After 6-7 months the child's body requires greater quantity and different types of food for it to develop a healthy mind and body. Also, the baby needs to be gradually weaned away from breast milk. Thus this sanskara is connected with the satisfaction of the physical need of the child.

The ceremony is performed in the sixth month after the birth of the child. The growth of teeth is the visible sign that the child can take solid food. Giving food before sixth month is strictly prohibited. For a weak child, a further extension of time is allowed. Depending upon the strength of the child, it can also be held in the eighth, ninth or tenth month, with one year being the upper limit. Any further postponement of this impacts both the physical well-being of the mother as well as the digestive capability of the child. The scriptures suggest even months for boys and odd months for girls, for the Annaprasana sanskara to take place.

### ***Chudakarna (Tonsuring the Head)***

The purpose of Chudakarna is the achievement of a long life for the recipient. Life is prolonged by tonsure. According to Sushruta, shaving and cutting the hair and nails removes impurities and

gives delight, lightness, prosperity, courage and happiness. At the basis of the tonsure ceremony is the idea of health and beauty for the child.

Verses in the Vedas and Sutras give details such as wetting the head before the tonsure. The razor is praised and requested to be harmless for the tonsure. The father is to carry out the ritual for abundance of food, progeny, wealth and strength. The barber who is seen as the very personification of Savita or the sun, is welcomed. Finally, the head is tonsured with the chanting of Vedic mantras.

The Chudakarana ceremony should be done before the child reaches the age of one year and latest before the age of three. However, later texts show leeway to tonsure even at the age of five or seven years and even at the stage of Upanayana or thread ceremony!

### ***Karnavedha (Ear-Piercing)***

Karnavedha or ear piercing is done for both male and female children. The piercing is carried out with a particular thorn and butter is applied over the wound for quick healing. Ear piercing can occur in the third or fifth year for Hindu

children. But can be performed in later years too.

The purpose of Karnavedha is to open the inner ears of the child for receiving sacred sounds. This rite has deep mystical and symbolic significance. It is believed that merely hearing sacred sounds has merit in that it cleanses sin and nurtures the spirit.

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# DHARAMSHALA & BYLAKUPPE

SONA KAMAT, M.D.

The largest two Tibetan Settlements outside of Tibet are located in India, some 2,300 Kms away from each other. The settlement of Dharamshala is located in Himachal Pradesh while the town of Bylakuppe is in Karnataka in the South.

## **DHARAMSHALA**

Eighteen kilometers from Kangra in the state of Himachal Pradesh sits the scenic town of Dharamshala. It is the current residence of the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso; and serves as the headquarters of Central Tibetan Administration (the Tibetan government in exile).

The city is divided into two distinct sections: Upper Dharamshala and Lower Dharamshala. Kotwali Bazaar and the surrounding markets are referred to as "Lower Dharamshala" or simply "Dharamshala."<sup>1</sup>

McLeodGanj, located further up the mountain is often referred to as "Little Lhasa" and is found in Upper Dharamshala. Several thousand Tibetans live in and around McLeodGanj. It is home to several Buddhist monasteries, temples and schools and has become a tourist attraction for Indian and foreign travelers, alike.

## **History**

In 1959 H.H. The 14th Dalai Lama fled from the Tibetan government and was offered sanctuary by the Indian Prime Minister Nehru. In 1960, the Tibetan Government in Exile was formed while in India.

One of the most important Buddhist site in the town is Tsuglagkhang or Tsuglag Khang, the Dalai Lama's temple. It houses statues of Shakyamuni, Avalokiteshvara, and a statue of Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche).

## **Current**

Dharamshala is currently home to some fifty-three thousand people. It is comprised of multiple suburbs and most famous for being the home of the Dalai Lama in exile. It is visited by many international tourists yearly and is notable for its spiritual and majestic venues.

## **BYLAKUPPE**

Ninety kilometers from Mysore, in Karnataka, sits the largest Tibetan population in India outside of Dharamshala in a town called Bylakuppe.

## **History**

This town, aptly nicknamed "Mini-Tibet", began as a Tibetan refugee settlement in the 1960's and has now become a town of seventy thousand Tibetans.

The town is special as it houses one of the largest Tibetan settlements in India — the Lugsung Samdupling settlement and the Dickey Larsoe settlement. The Lugsung Samdupling settlement was first established in 1960, after the 14th Dalai Lama came to India, with just 3,000 residents. Nine years later, in 1969, the Dickey Larsoe settlement was set up.<sup>2</sup>

## **Current**

Bylakuppe is comprised of a number of agricultural settlements, colonies, monasteries and temples of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. The three most notable are the Sera Monastery, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and Namdroling Monastery. Sera belongs to the Yellow-Hat Gelugpa sect of Buddhism and is the local seat of education. More than 5,000 Buddhist monks study here. Bylakuppe also has many Buddhist universities for advanced Buddhist practices.

Tashi Lhunpo Monastery is one of the four great monasteries of central Tibet and the original seat

of the Panchen Lama. This was re-established in Bylakuppe in 1972. There are 250 resident monks who study sutra (a Sanskrit word that means "string, thread". In Indian literary traditions, it also refers to an aphorism or a collection of aphorisms in the form of a manual or, more broadly, a condensed manual or text) and tantra (an ancient Indian tradition of beliefs and meditation and ritual practices that seeks to channel the divine energy of the macrocosm or godhead into the human microcosm, to attain siddhis and moksha).

### **Tourism**

The main tourist attraction in Bylakuppe is the Golden Temple housed at the Namdroling Monastery. Three forty foot statues of Lords Padmasambhava, Buddha and Amitayus are assembled on the dais. Tourists are welcomed to visit the monasteries and temples. Photography is allowed even inside the temple.

Despite the Dalai Lama's popularity and visibility, little is known in the general public of the thousands of Tibetan refugees living in exile from their native land. India has housed Tibetans and welcomed Buddhist practices for over sixty years in two main settlements. Dharamshala

and Bylakuppe together house over one hundred thousand Tibetans and are picturesque venues with strong spiritual visits making them must visits in a trek through India.

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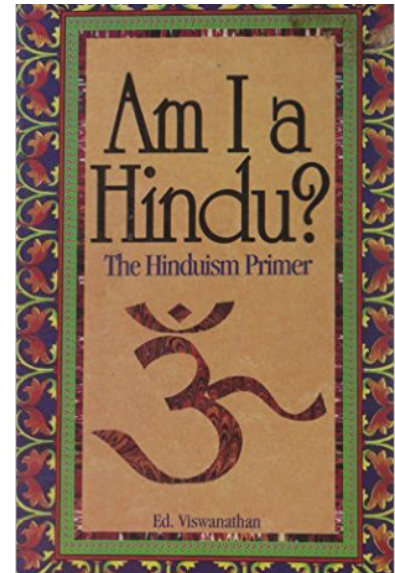
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# AM I A HINDU? - ED. VISWANATHAN

BOOK REVIEW BY BARBARA LIPPMAN



**W**hat does it mean to be a Hindu? What are the different aspects of Hinduism? How is it different from other religions? These are the questions that are answered in this book. It is the reason the book is subtitled: "The Hinduism Primer." One of the author's major points is that Hinduism is the pursuit of truth above all else. It is a quest to live the truth, to realize the truth and to leave illusion behind.

### ***The Scope of Hinduism***

This book is for those readers who have very little or no background in Hinduism. The author declares that Hinduism "is not a religion, but a way of life... Hinduism is more a culture than a religion."<sup>1</sup>

Viswanathan gives a comprehensive chronicle of this faith. He explains how it ranges from the celebration of Kumbh Mela and other religious festivals to the practice of pranayama, kriya, yoga and transcendental meditation. He writes about how it is an all-embracing religion allowing for the worship of many gods and goddesses yet there is still the underlying belief in the one God. Hinduism even tolerates and envelopes the concept of atheism as another point of view. It encompasses the concept of Maya (the world is an illusion) and at the same time includes an instruction on how to live a dharmic life.

This is a book that clearly details the unique qualities of Hinduism while enabling the reader to appreciate its nuances and values. The author goes on to say that it is a way of life not based on the principle of telling the person what not to

do, but rather its focus is on an explanation of all aspects of the Cosmos - from understanding what worship is, to understanding the facets, and scientific underpinnings of architecture, temple construction, music, mathematics, astrology, astronomy, engineering and more. This information, Viswanathan says, is contained in the ancient scriptures called the Vedas (Vedas itself means knowledge).

### ***The Treasures of Hinduism***

The author explains that Hinduism is the research output of many learned men known as rishis. The rishis heard eternal truths during meditation and transmitted those truths telepathically to their disciples. These truths eventually were written down and became the Vedas.

As the rishis worked on different riddles of the universe, they presented varied perspectives on how to envision and comprehend the infinite. Hinduism includes the supposition that every being is a center and focal point of creation. In addition, the human being is the microcosm of the universe as macrocosm. They both reflect each other. The God-realized being sees the 'I' as the universe and the universe as "I." Ramana Maharshi reflected this message because he expressed that the search for the real 'I' was and is the greatest goal in life for each person on this earth.

## SCRIPTURES MENTIONED

### **The Rig Veda**

One of the many revelations of Hinduism comes from the Rig Veda, the first sacred text that was downloaded by the rishis. It was wise of the author to pick this particular section in the Creation Hymn because it reminds the reader of the preciousness of existence and its underlying mystery.

Creation Hymn: Rig Veda X,129,6-7

After all, who knows and who can say  
From whence it all came, and how creation takes  
place?

The Gods (powers of nature) themselves came  
after the creation

So who knows truly when it happened?<sup>2</sup>

### **The Upanishads: The Brihad-Aranyaka**

The Brihad-Aranyaka is one of the Upanishads. The Upanishad were teachings that were given by the Guru. The disciple sat very close so that not only was it very intimate, but nobody else could overhear.<sup>3</sup>

Viswanathan is, also very astute in quoting the great sage Yagnavalkya in the Brihad-Aranyaka. Because in this quote, lies the quandary that makes for the seeker in us; it is that which spurs many of us on the path:

“You cannot see the seer of all things: you cannot hear the hearer of all things: you cannot think the thinker of all things: you cannot understand the knower of all things. That which is beyond all comprehension is the self within you.”

### **The Bhagavad Gita**

According to the author, the Bhagavad Gita is equivalent to the Bible in importance to the Hindu worshipper. It is also the summation of the Upanishads (Sacred Hindu treatises). It deals with all the Yogas or ways of God-realization. The Gita addresses many of the problems that a person may face in life. It never tells a person what to do. It gives the advantages and disadvantages of every conflict, but the decision of how to deal with the conflict is ultimately left to each individual.

## OTHER CONCEPTS EXPLORED

### **Reincarnation**

If there is one major tenet of Hinduism that all Hindus share, it is the belief in life after death. The body dies, but the soul goes on life after life. The past actions of the soul are carried into the next life. This determines the path that will be taken by the incarnated soul.

### **Maya**

Another main tenet of Hinduism is that the world is Maya. This world is illusion because it is in constant flux: what is seen in the moment, is never seen again, because within every second existence becomes something else. We are actually caught in the paradigm of time. The truth is that reality is beyond time. We live in illusion because we are limited in how we perceive by our five senses. As we are bound by our senses we can never get a glimpse of what reality really is.

### **Conclusion**

Viswanathan brings the reader an introduction to another way of life that most westerners do not often get exposure to. The information shared in this review is an indication of the broad spectrum that he covers. His book is a taste, a dip into a religion that is awe inspiring in its complexity and humbling in its expression of elemental truths.

References:

1. Page 1
2. Page 45
3. Page 47



# TRADITIONAL USES OF HONEY IN AYURVEDA



The traditional uses of honey in healthcare stretch back into antiquity. Modern research indicates this substance does possess unique nutritional and medicinal properties.

The sugars in honey are glucose, fructose and sucrose. Glucose is the simplest of the sugars. It occurs in the blood of live animals, in fruit and vegetable juices. It restores the oxygen that is replaced by lactic acid when fatigue sets in.

Fructose, which is also known as levulose or grape sugar, crystallizes more easily than glucose and builds up tissues. Sucrose is a combination of glucose and fructose. Dextrin, which is a gummy substance, is found in small amounts in honey, but it makes honey so digestible.

The latest research indicates that the pollen in honey contains all 22 amino acids, 28 minerals, 11 enzymes, 14 fatty acids and 11 carbohydrates. Unfortunately, much of these nutritive qualities are lost by heating the honey for commercial use.

Honey is one of the finest sources of heat and energy. Energy is generated mainly by the carbohydrate foods, and honey is one of the most easily digested forms of carbohydrates. It enters directly into the bloodstream because of its dextrin content, and this provides almost instantaneous energy.

Traditionally, honey is a boon to those with weak digestion. The texts state that all the organs in the body respond favorably when honey is eaten. Honey is considered as an all-purpose medicine for all types of diseases.

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# DAKSHINAMURTHY SWAMIGAL

This is the story of a great saint called Dakshinamurthy Swamigal, a Paramahansa who always lived a life of freedom and a very highly evolved enlightened being from the southern part of India who used to sit in the forest under a banyan tree. His presence was so intense and powerful that one could touch and see God.

One day the official poet of the king's court sang thousand verses on Saint Dakshinamurthy praising the power and the heroic qualities of that Master, conferring upon him the honor named 'bharani' which is the honor given to great warriors who kill one thousand elephants in the war. When the king came to know about this his ego got hurt because the king was the only person who had killed thousand elephants in the war in the whole region and so he was the only person who had that song and title. Now the deeply hurt king called the poet and asked him to justify his decision of singing the same thousand songs about that naked beggar who was sitting under the banyan tree and threatened him that else he would cut the poet's head. The poet calmly explained that he did not have any reason or justification but was not afraid to die since his body and mind had already experienced whatever maximum peak could be experienced in the saint's presence and in the best interest of the king asked him to visit the saint just once and sit in his presence.

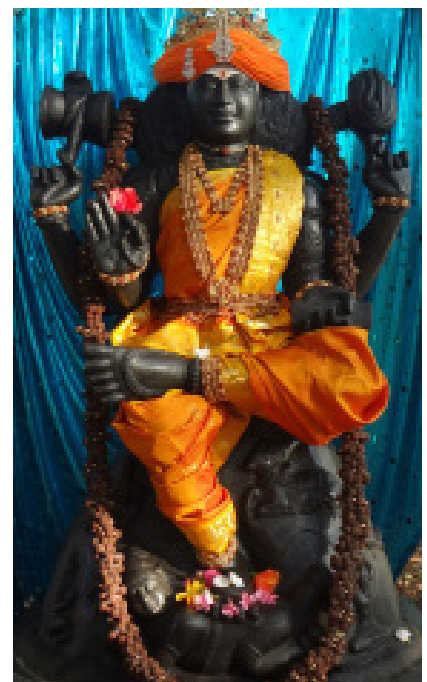
Fortunately, even though the king was caught by ego, he got inspired by the many stories he had heard about enlightened beings in the earlier times and decided to visit the saint. The king went with his whole paraphernalia to visit the saint sitting under the banyan tree. There was such an intense vibrating silence. The moment the king entered the Banyan tree's shadow, something happened in him. If a person observes an intense silence in the master's body language, whether they want it or not, it would penetrate their inner space. This is what happened to the king who had

originally come with the idea of shouting at or questioning the saint.

The transmission of silence happened between the Master and the king. All that the king received was one nod by the Master indicating 'sit'. The king sat and because the king sat, the whole army sat and Master again resumed into the silence. The silence was so intense that neither did the king want to break it nor he had the energy or guts to break it. Even after a week had passed, beyond logic the king did not feel any thirst or hunger or even the idea of time. And the story says after one week, the Master was so compassionate that he just moved his eyes, looked to his poet, his disciple and in a very jovial way said that he thought the kingdom needed the king back. He smiled and suddenly all of them came back to the normal mind or mood. They realized one week had passed; there was no thought, no communication, no food or water or sleep, but only deep fulfillment physically, mentally and spiritually.

History says that the king built a beautiful huge temple and mutt under the same banyan tree in the place in southern India known as Thiruvavur. And in the temple he had this whole story engraved with his earnest sharing of how he ended up requesting the poet to write more on the saint since one thousand verses of 'bharani' looked too less for him.

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Nithyananda Times



# LIFE IS BLISS

VARUN K. RAO

*The joy of 'I'  
Not understood right  
keeps us swindling  
with no guiding light*

*For years and years  
we render on  
seeking pleasures  
of ephemeral sound*

*We wonder why  
the things exist,  
We wonder why,  
The suffering*

*We want; happiness  
We all do  
Amidst life's turmoil's  
And joyous dances too*

*I too wondered  
the very same  
for years I blamed myself,  
the world with hate*

*A mere boy I was,  
To know is, what I wanted  
Found no answer  
In spite of all my asking*

*I thought for long  
No Source exists  
To all my questions  
Any answer; pure myth*

*But a guiding light  
is all we need,  
is all that can  
show us the unseen*

*He lands on earth  
and calls our name  
Fortunate are those  
who surrender to the same*

*The 'I' he is  
is the same as that,  
who has three eyes  
or the flute on hand*

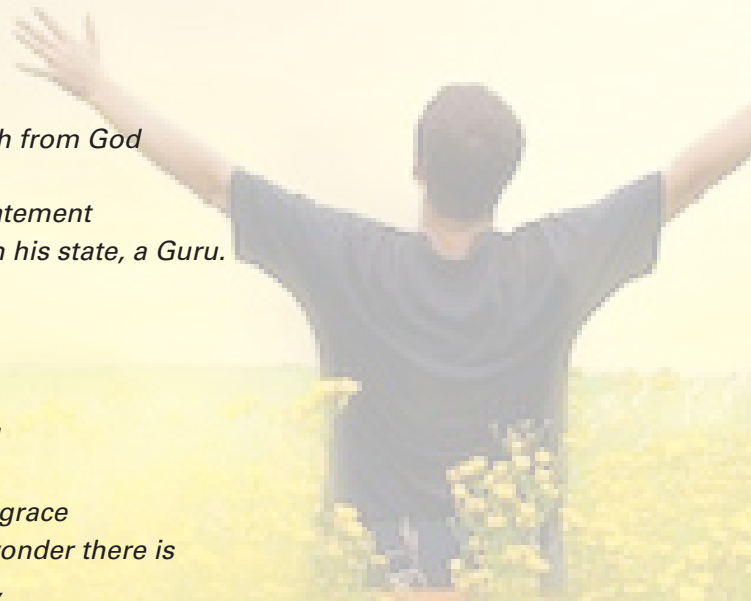
*The joy of dance  
and the bliss of life  
is celebrated only  
after he arrives*

*The 'I' he is  
is the 'I', I am  
is all that is  
and ever exists*

*Therefore, a wish from God  
if I was gifted,  
I'll ask for his statement  
and one who's in his state, a Guru.*

*Once HE is IN  
Life takes a turn  
A new window  
or door or world*

*To flow with his grace  
Is the greatest wonder there is  
Life then is Bliss,  
A "Wonder", itself  
At His Feet*





*Narasimha Jayanthi - May 20<sup>th</sup>*



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