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INDIA & HER CULTURE

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Benediction

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The culture of India is not separate from its native religion and spiritual wisdom. In every form that is cultural, there is religion.

For instance, in the form of greeting each other saying “*namaste*”, there is a recognition of *Iswara* in the other. This recognition implies the wisdom that everything, every living organism is one all-knowing *Iswara*’s manifestation.

This is true with all other forms.

There is so much to know – there is so much here in this booklet.

Om

Dayananda

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DHARMA SUMMIT 2005

This brochure is offered in conjunction with the inauguration of the First Dharma Summit (2005) in the US.

It was more than a century ago that Swami Vivekananda set foot on the American soil and planted the seeds of an integrated vision of scientific spirituality in the U.S. The intensive spiritual and intellectual service rendered by that Great Hindu Monk generated much receptivity in the American mind for India's age-old science of spirituality. The seminal contribution made by that Noble Swamiji has also been complemented over the years by other Seers of India who came to these shores to highlight and spread the ethos of the pluralistic Hindu culture and its religious heritage based on freedom of enquiry, universal relevance and the pursuit of truth. All of those are subsumed under the Hindu tradition of Sanatana Dharma.

Unfortunately, of late, we are witnessing concerted attempts worldwide to propagate distorted views about the Hindu faith as well as other Dharmic traditions, mostly undertaken by proselytizing Christian missionaries and ill-informed Islamic militants. The redemptive features of Sanatana Dharma which is the only religious tradition in the world which espouses the freedom to perceive God in whatever form one chooses to do so, often becomes a casualty at the hands of many fanatics of the Abrahamic faiths.

Therefore, it is high time that we initiated recurring efforts to reveal to others the all-embracing message of universality of Dharma. It is indeed our hope that Summits such as these and the actions that we initiate henceforth, will remove the distortions about not only Hinduism but all other Dharmic faiths as well. The great sages of ancient India have provided to the world many other Dharmic traditions other than Hinduism as exemplary proof of the tolerance integral to Sanatana Dharma. People and organizations dedicated to promote the cultural heritage of India and its rich pluralistic traditions should develop a unified program to usher in true peace and understanding between people of diverse faiths and traditions.

Therefore, it is an appropriate responsibility of all Indian Americans who see the merits and virtues of Sanatana Dharma to meet at the Dharma Summit of 2005 and begin charting an action plan to convey to the Western world the quintessential features of pluralism and religious tolerance propounded by all Dharmic traditions. Hopefully, our works will reveal the spiritual values enshrined in the inspiring visions of all the Dharmic traditions which originated in ancient India. May many similar Summits ensue in future years.

Swami Jyotirmayananda Puri

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New York, August 8, 2005.

* * *

India -- the cradle of the human race, the birth-place of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and the great grandmother of tradition.

-- MARK TWAIN

India was the motherland of our race and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages. India was the mother of our philosophy, much of our mathematics, the ideals embodied in Christianity... of self-government and democracy. In many ways, Mother India is the mother of us all.

-- WILL DURANT

It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race.... At this supremely dangerous moment of human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way... and in the Atomic age this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves."

-- ARNOLD TOYNBEE

Our overall impression is that in no other part of the ancient world were the relations of man and man, and man and the state, so fair and humane. In no other early civilization were slaves so few in number and in no other ancient law book are their rights so well protected as in the Arhntashastra, no other ancient lawgiver proclaimed such noble ideals of fair play in battle, as did Manu. In all her history of warfare Hindu India has few tales to tell of cities put to the sword or of the massacre of non-combatants. The ghastly sadism of the kings of Assyria, who flayed their captives alive, is completely without parallel in ancient India. There was sporadic cruelty and oppression no doubt, but, in comparison with conditions in other early cultures, it was mild. To us the most striking feature of ancient Indian civilization is its humanity... India was a cheerful land, whose people, each finding a niche in a complex and slowly evolving social system, reached a higher level of kindness and gentleness in their mutual relationships than any other nation of antiquity.

-- A. L. BASHAM

Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was and, mark my words, it never will be. But there has been the other mission given to us, which is to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate as it were into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race and that concentrated energy is to pour forth in a deluge on the world whenever circumstances are propitious. Let the Persian or the Greek, the Roman, the Arab, or the Englishman march his battalions, conquer the world. The Hindu's calm brain must pour out its own quota to give to the sum total of human progress. India's gift to the world is the Light Spiritual... As I look upon the history of my country, I do not find in the whole world another country which had done quite so much for the improvement of the human mind and that India was the homeland of invisible powers that ruled the destinies of men and nations and its ancient scriptures could make it the teacher of the world.

--SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Through the science of yoga, India has given the West a far more valuable gift than all the material wealth or technology the West could give in return. Even today, India offers great inspiration to those persons who are seeking oneness with God and through yoga anyone can find the direction; he or she needs to succeed. That is India's gift to the world... Of all the nations in the world, India is the most spiritually blessed. More and more Americans are learning that materialism does not give lasting satisfaction, and they are turning to India for spiritual guidance...

-- ROBERT ARNETT

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‘The Indian way’ for the mankind

“It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race.... At this supremely dangerous moment of human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way... and in the Atomic age this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves.” These are the prophetic words of Arnold Toynbee, the world-renowned historian. And, the eminent nuclear physicist Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer amplified this sentiment of the historian, while paying homage to Dr. Albert Einstein during his birth centenary, in 1979, thus: “If I had to think of a single word for his attitude to human problems, I would pick the Sanskrit word *Ahimsa*.”

‘Mother India, the Mother of us all’

Every cultured mind feels that the younger generation of America is being deceived and misled by some of the textbooks in the schools and colleges that present India as a backward-thinking country with pagan beliefs – a flagrant injustice to a land which Mark Twain described as the “cradle of the human race, the birth-place of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and the great grandmother of tradition”. And the people of America should contemplate on the following observation of Will Durant: “India was the motherland of our race and Sanskrit the mother of Europe’s languages. India was the mother of our philosophy, much of our mathematics, the ideals embodied in Christianity... of self-government and democracy. In many ways, Mother India is the mother of us all.”

‘The Most Striking Feature of Indian Civilization’

Compare the denigrating stuff in the textbooks, evidently written by people incapable of in-depth study, with the observation

of another eminent western historian, A. L. Basham, in his book, *The Wonder That Was India*: “Our overall impression is that in no other part of the ancient world were the relations of man and man, and man and the state, so fair and humane. In no other early civilization were slaves so few in number and in no other ancient law book are their rights so well protected as in the *Arthashastra*, no other ancient lawgiver proclaimed such noble ideals of fair play in battle, as did Manu. In all her history of warfare Hindu India has few tales to tell of cities put to the sword or of the massacre of non-combatants. The ghastly sadism of the kings of Assyria, who flayed their captives alive, is completely without parallel in ancient India. There was sporadic cruelty and oppression no doubt, but, in comparison with conditions in other early cultures, it was mild. To us the most striking feature of ancient Indian civilization is its humanity... India was a cheerful land, whose people, each finding a niche in a complex and slowly evolving social system, reached a higher level of kindness and gentleness in their mutual relationships than any other nation of antiquity.”

A disgrace to the American System of Unbiased Education

Despite such in-depth studies on India and its contributions to human culture by the best minds of the world, it is unfortunate that such derogatory materials find place in U.S. textbooks, in encyclopaedia and even on TV and in other mass media. Evidently the directors of these projects must be employing people who are not well-read or well-informed and who do not have the faculties necessary to give vital and authoritative information about India and Hinduism. This is a disgrace to the American system which prides on offering unbiased education. It biases the minds of students who flock to schools and colleges to gain knowledge. The employers of such purveyors of biased education should think aloud and ask themselves whether they would be pleased if other countries presented in their textbooks only the dark and dismal past of America, while hiding information about the best and noble of America’s past and the many creditable contributions America has made for the emergence of a freer humanity? Are the heads of the textbook committees or editors of encyclopaedia in collusion with

the offerings of so-called experts on India who are engaged to peddle only its poverty and some of the social iniquities that India itself is struggling to erase as it is trying to emerge as a new and vibrant nation?

Need for a Two-pronged Educational Effort

A two-pronged educational effort has to be launched to curtail this sort of misrepresentation. The heads of institutions should be made aware of the disservice they are doing to learning by employing the ignorant to write text books, and special educational campaigns have to be launched to bring to the attention of the new generation the nobler facts about India and its Hindu heritage. In the best interests of humanity educators should inspire the new generation to give serious thought to what Arnold Toynbee highlights as ‘the Indian Way’.

The Universal Relevance of Indian Culture

In the Western countries, especially in the United States, there has been much progress, of course, in its quest for material wealth and amenities. But when one comes by such statements as, “We have a lot of economic advantages but there is very little peace of mind and true happiness here,” from the very people who enjoy such a state of progress and opulence, it indicates the shortage of something vital in human life, for the very goal of progress cannot be but peace of mind and happiness. It is only through an in-depth understanding of human life along with material progress that one can ensure a peaceful and harmonious human life.

Wherefrom can modern man get this deeper understanding? Modern science so far has been sticking only to the peripherals of physical existence and has not made any mentionable headway beyond the materialistic point-of-view. The modern man while seeking an integrated vision of life and universe finds it hard to accept the dogmatic views of Abrahamic religions.

The spiritual wisdom of Hinduism is founded on a perspective, which is harmonious with the rational and scientific worldview. It was more than a century ago that Swami Vivekananda, the great Hindu Monk of India, set foot on the American soil and planted there the seeds of an integrated vision of scientific spirituality.

Those seeds have in fact, sprouted as plants of hope within the American heart and its mind. The intense spiritual and intellectual works of Swamiji undertaken here during four years have created a receptive climate in the American mind, to delve deep into the wisdom of Hindu philosophy, look beyond the surface level and discover the deeper facts of life as enunciated by our sages. It is this invaluable cultural infusion that many Americans still cherish, while a few misdirected Western academicians and some Indian intellectuals who follow in their footsteps are trying to uproot it by presenting a distorted and maligned image of Hindu spirituality.

What disturbs the narrow-minded religious dogmatists and the materialistic intellectuals is the fact that people in the West have begun looking towards Hinduism for a philosophy which can beget them a more meaningful life. This prompts the detractors of Hinduism to launch malicious propaganda against India and its ancient religious traditions steeped in Dharma. They are trying to block the Source of Light emanating from Sanatana Dharma by inculcating and fostering ignorance in the minds of people who are conditioned by the Abrahamic faiths to self-flagellate as sinners without hope unless they embrace the modes of salvation prescribed in the exclusivist dogmas of Christianity and Islam.

On the other hand, India's spiritual wisdom was evolved as a result of the deepest explorations of generations of earnest seekers of Truth and therefore it has a universal character that can embrace all the life-enriching ideas of every religion and all the philosophical traditions of the world if they result in the freeing of human mind. Ancient India's mode of enquiry was such that it rejected all that fettered the human mind and accepted from all quarters ideas which would expand it. As the *Rig-Veda* declares, "Let noble thoughts come to us from all quarters." Because of this inherent commitment to higher possibilities of human life, whenever its culture was threatened, it overcame such threats by resurgent transformations. The eminent scientist Dr. Jagdish Chandra Bose had pointed out this unique capacity of Indian civilization in the following words: "By a continuous living tradition of rejuvenescence this land has readjusted itself through unnumbered transformations."

The Tactics of Some Indian Intellectuals who Malign Their Mother Culture

In the presence of such a spirit of open enquiry, there is no place for dogmatism and fundamentalism in Hindu culture. It has ever been anchored to an enquiry of the deepest Truth of Life, which it discovered from ancient times as all embracing revelation of truth in its absolute. The spiritual vision of Hinduism therefore is universal in every respect. It aims at the refinement and reformation of human nature and its expansion to embrace universality. It is this all-embracing message of universality of Hinduism that the few narrow-minded academicians in the U.S.A. and their Indian hirelings are trying to undermine with their distorted and puerile views which have no relationship to the actual facts of Hindu philosophy. Such detractors are doing immense disservice and injustice to humanity.

It is regrettable that some Indian intellectuals are even more enthusiastic than their sponsors in defaming their own mother culture. Their thinking seems to be patterned after the superficialities of the West and its scanty knowledge of the new trends of modern science and the latter's congruence with the deeper facets of Indian philosophy. Therefore, it is not surprising that western detractors of Hinduism will co-opt a few Indian intellectuals to project their shallow and confused ideas about Indian culture and Hinduism as legitimate explications about India's heritage and its religious traditions based on Sanatana Dharma. When we study the utterances of these brain-washed Indian intellectuals we will realize that they neither have an interest nor have they made any in-depth study of the Indian heritage. They try to hide their ignorance through the usage of clichés and by characterizing earnest promoters of Hindu culture and its noble traditions as 'Saffronists', 'Fundamentalists', 'Fascists', 'Nazis' and what not! But anyone with a modicum of intelligence can easily see that such detractors themselves are the best followers of the Gibbelsian tactic of the Nazis, which asserts that by repeatedly telling a lie, the lie itself can be made to appear as Truth in the minds of gullible people!

Those who thus misinform and mislead are the arch criminals of the information field. They hide noble facts of India by masking them with the veneer of their mischievous fancies in order to fool the people. They are afraid of projecting such significant facts as pointed out by Albert Einstein: “We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made.”

They are reluctant to tell the new generation that Indian steel was the finest steel known as far back as the 5th century B.C., that the Iron Pillar of Delhi remains as fresh today as it was 15 centuries ago, that when the people in the West were only nomadic forest dwellers, the Indians were establishing the cities of Harappan Culture 5000 years ago, that the decimal system, etc., were developed in India in 100 BC and that modern scientists marvel at the scientific suitability of Sanskrit as a language for computer software, that Sushruta is the father of Surgery and that Ayurveda, the earliest school of medicine, is spreading rapidly today everywhere, that Columbus accidentally discovered America during his exploration to reach India, the richest country of his times, that the art of navigation originated in India 5000 years ago and many such facts about India’s great past..

There appears to be an effort to erase from the mind of the new generation of Indians in the U.S., any trace of information about India’s great achievements as a traditional culture. India is frequently portrayed as a land rooted in some primitive ideas which spawned an antiquated culture. This poses a serious challenge to the cultural and spiritual development of the next generation of Indian Americans. The persistence of such false and defaming notions about India’s ancient culture if left unchallenged, it will only result in the spread of very wrong notions about one of the best cultural traditions that humanity has ever generated. Therefore, we have to adopt powerful educational methods to present true pictures of India’s cultural and spiritual traditions, their relevance to our new generation growing up in the West.

The Elder and the Younger Generations of Indian Americans

The elder generation of Indians in America who had migrated to the U.S. had direct links with their culture and spiritual heritage. Therefore, many of them continue to follow their traditional customs and rituals in order to preserve their inner strength, cultural orientation, creative faculties and peace of mind. Although some of them may not be well aware of the significance and the rationale of these rituals, customs, etc., they very much wish that the younger generations would also imbibe the spirit of these traditions and practice them for their own physical and mental benefit.

But those belonging to the new generation are growing up in a different educational and cultural milieu. It is difficult for their parents to convince their children why they should follow the traditional customs. For example, let us take temple worship. The first generation of Indian Americans while they were in India had the direct experience of the benefits of temple worship, viz., the lessening of mental tensions, smoother expression of inner faculties, acquiring of spiritual strength as well as intuitional guidance to face difficult junctures of life, communion with the transcendental realms of consciousness, etc. Although many of them had such experiences, they might not have realised the fact that there is a superbly coordinated science behind the temple worship which yielded the unique effects that they experienced. However, when their children who have grown up here question the rationale of temple worship, the parents are unable often to convey to them their own positive experiences consequent to temple worship from a perspective that the children can easily relate to. The new generation has to be brought to a deeper understanding of these self-validated and experiential facts (*atma vidya*) by suitable methods (*satsang, japa, dhyana, yoga, etc*) which will link their scientific background of education with the spiritual insights of their ancestors. Otherwise, the future generations will lose their intellectual and spiritual links with their ancestral treasures, with which the first generation of Indian Americans still have linkages. Without such interactive and mutually reinforcing personal experiences made possible within

the precincts of our temples, the temples here may become mere curious architecturally interesting structures for the new generation. Subsequent generations may not even find it worthwhile to financially support their maintenance.

But, by adopting suitable intellectual and educational methods, the new generation can be trained to appreciate the personally edifying soul-satisfaction that is possible through a humble spirit of inquiry which was the hallmark of their ancestors. The youth of our communities should be made aware that their religious and cultural legacies will equip them for greater accomplishments in schools, colleges and universities and cope with the vicissitudes of life with greater equanimity. They should be made to feel proud of these facts. The elder generation has made a serious omission by not creating circumstances to promote among the new generation a deeper understanding of such possibilities. But there is no use in lamenting over lost time. Let us make a beginning for adopting concrete steps at this Conference: Dharma Summit 2005.

Get the Services of the Well Informed

We have to evolve effective means to inculcate enthusiasm among the new generation for study and research to rediscover their cultural moorings. They should be motivated to compare the superficial stuff in their textbooks with the more objective observations about India and her culture made by not only eminent Western intellectuals and historians like Will Durant, Arnold Toynbee, and A. L. Bhasham but also by great Indian philosophers and saints like Adi Shankara, Swami Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Jiddu Krishnamurti etc.

Efforts for the elimination of the dross about India's past and present and promotion of knowledge of her pristine legacy with her life-enriching essence of Hinduism have to be launched in all earnestness. This calls for an immediate launching of educational campaigns at the grass roots level both in the U.S. and in India to make the general public aware of the nobler facts of Hinduism. In fact, many are inquisitive about such facts, but such seekers often complain that they have no easy access to educational materials

which will serve as antidotes to some of the maligning campaigns of Hinduism's detractors.

A Commendable Research Work

In this context I would like to specially mention the efforts of 'Integral Books', a research-oriented publishing mission in India, for a reassessment and updated presentation of India's heritage. Their publications offer convincing books which will clear many pestering doubts of the modern mind. Their publications integrate the ancient insights within a modern scientific perspective, which is gradually veering towards discovering anew the wisdom of the ancient spiritual explorers of India. Humanity is seeking today an integrated philosophy of life which will both satisfy the intellect and also help with the realization of its highest potentials. As an example of the relevance of Hindu philosophy to our times, I may mention here the book, *Power in Temples: A Modern Perspective*, which is very popular for its presentation through scientific reasoning the existence of a spiritually vibrant environmental fields within the precincts of Temples and the efficacy of temple worship. *Sri Ganesha*, another book published by them in the series: 'Significance of Divine Forms' presents the rationale of the profound form of Sri Ganesha and the inner meaning of the legends associated with that Deity. That book has been widely accepted as an antidote to the grossly misleading views of Prof. Paul Courtright, who portrayed Ganesha in a grotesque manner within a puerile framework of Freudian sexuality. Courtright's book on Ganesha hurt the religious sentiments of millions of people. (Information about 'Integral Books' can be obtained online at: <<http://www.integralbooks.com>> and they can be contacted at <sri@integralbooks.com> or by post at: Integral Books, Anandashram P.O., Kanhangad, Kerala 671531, India).

India has a tradition of deep learning derived through spiritual inquiries of thousands of years and therefore the Indian psyche has acquired a special aptitude for discovering modes of self-actualization within a framework of spirituality. It is this distinctive quality of the Indian mind and its cultural orientation which may be assisting the Indians abroad to succeed in all walks

of life. It may be because of this background that Indians residing overseas are functioning as expert professionals in many fields. However, most of them have not thus far become earnest promoters of India's cultural and spiritual values. And, such reluctance in advancing India's traditions within their respective overseas communities wreaks havoc on the next generation of the Indian Diaspora.

We must admit that it is because of the apathy shown by the first generation of Indian Americans that their children are allowed to consume the distorted versions of their faith, culture and traditions imparted by their school teachers. Many of the teachers themselves may not be aware of the deeper facts of the Indian heritage. But, many Indian parents themselves may not be of much help to the teachers for acquiring a true appreciation of India's culture and its Dharmic traditions. Therefore, self-styled experts with scanty knowledge of Hindu culture are able to present much misinformation about Hinduism in textbooks, reference books, encyclopaedia, etc without eliciting prompt rebuttals from most parents of Indian children studying here. It is urgent that we put an end to this absurdity by revealing the intrinsic merits of Sanatana Dharma directly to the younger generation in an updated way so that it can get inspired and feel proud of its traditions.

A Redeeming Feature of Overseas Indians

However, one must concede that there are also several Indians here who are adhering very much to their cultural traditions. They have also become remarkably successful in several professions contributing to the economic and cultural development of their adopted country. Never the less, some of their children are also being misguided and getting alienated from their traditions. This may be due to the inability of such parents to find sufficient time to spend with their children because of their own struggles for professional advancements. In order to make time for their children, they have to start experiencing themselves the value of Hindu rituals and traditions. The new generation in the U.S. should be inspired to feel proud of the intellectual and spiritual explorations that had taken place in their ancestral land from the

very ancient past. Otherwise, the petty theories and the silly stories that are written by the ignoramuses in the western text books and encyclopaedias will continue to make an unhealthy impact on the new generation.

Benefit from the New Trends in India

The new trends in India indicate that despite all the misconceptions spread by the west-oriented intelligentsia about the Hindu culture and its traditions, there is emerging in India and to a lesser extent overseas, a new class of thinkers and explorers having deep interest in India's spiritual insights and their relevance to the emerging discoveries of modern science. To promote a deeper understanding of India's cultural and religious traditions among the new generation of Americans, we should draw upon the efforts of research undertaken by the new class of intellectuals mentioned above.

The Relevance of the Dharma Summit

The Dharma Summit 2005 in the U.S. can contribute much towards this vital need. It can initiate an exchange of views among scholars, intellectuals and spiritual savants to face this challenge and develop effective methods to defeat the vilifying campaigns against our Dharmic traditions. The universal model of spirituality advocated by Sanatana Dharma should be presented as the only beacon of hope for a World that is being destroyed by militant religiosity generated by the Abrahamic faiths.

While helping to evolve a common platform for the various means of spiritual pursuit in Hinduism and other faiths in the Dharmic traditions, the Dharma Summit 2005 can also evolve measures to help the younger generation to integrate the best values of the Indian and American cultures. It is precisely this harmonious integration that Swami Vivekananda advocated a century ago: "I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others...Give and take is the law; and if India wants to raise herself once more, it is absolutely necessary that she brings her treasure and throws them broadcast among the nations of the earth, and in return be ready to receive what others have to give her." This has

been the cultural heritage of India and its Sanatana Dharma which we should bring to the attention of the new generation.

In fact the overseas Indians are in a highly advantageous position to take active steps for the promotion of the universal values of Indian culture. In India, some of its politicians with selfish motives are whipping up caste feelings making people forget the larger cultural and spiritual values which unite them as a single cultural entity. In this confusion and neglect of spiritual values, the materialists are also trying to influence the minds of common people. Most Indians in the U.S are educated and do not fall easy prey to such divisive loyalties. Therefore, in a more organized way they can contribute much more actively for the promotion of cultural and spiritual values on a larger scale. In fact, their voices of late are having a strong impact in India as well. This can eventually turn out to be voices of sanity to effect attitudinal transformation in India.

In this context, the handing over of the cultural tradition to the new generation of Indians assumes even greater importance. The future well-being of humanity is inevitably contingent on the emergence of a closely-knit entity as envisaged in the ancient Rig Vedic dictum: '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' – 'the World is verily one single Family'. The world unity and human welfare can be made real only to the extent that mankind realizes the ultimate, absolute Vedantic Truth that 'All is One'. Furthering harmony among the various and diverse characteristics of humanity has been our special contribution to the world-thought. Sri Aurobindo, who envisaged a more elevated stage of mass spirituality, has elucidated this Hindu concept elaborately. Some advanced spiritual souls from the West are also inclined to endorse such a Hindu vision of the future. For example, the French savant Paul Martini Dubost proclaims: "After two thousand years, India is on the agenda. India belongs to everybody. The melody of the Indian soul is something which never ceases to move us"

"Vedanta as the typical philosophy of Bharat, envisages a vision of the universe steeped in spirit, fulfilling a life of eternal joy. Individual souls as sparks of such a supreme cosmic spirit have the divine destiny of realizing universality and becoming

god-like. This assures equality of spirit among all souls. What higher basis for democracy can we have than this spirit? ...It is the grand world-unifying thought of Hindus alone that can supply the abiding basis for human brotherhood, that knowledge of the Inner Spirit which will charge the human mind with the sublime urge to toil for the happiness of mankind, while opening out full and free scope for every small life-speciality. Verily this is the one real practical world-mission, if ever there was one.” (Sri Guruji M. S. Golwalkar). “If India were ever to fail to live up to this Indian ideal which is the finest, and therefore, the most exacting legacy in your Indian heritage, it would be poor look-out for mankind as a whole. So a great responsibility rests on India.” (Arnold Toynbee)

“The raised level of national consciousness would remind us of the Bharatiya traditional values of life which were distinct from and superior to the current western values. They were capable of revolutionising the inner self of a man by convincing him that the material and the non-material are the two faces of the same coin and the lopsided emphasis on the material aspect would create imbalance in the individual as well as social life. The Renaissance of Hindu Culture and Dharma is necessary not only for expediting the process of our national reconstruction but also for bringing peace, harmony and happiness to the tormented mankind. The maladies of humanity in general and India in particular could be remedied only on the strength of Hindu Culture. Is it possible for the West to reconcile individual liberty with social discipline? In the materialistic West, liberty soon degenerates into licentiousness, and discipline into regimentation. The West could never conceive of a basic organic unity in the midst of apparent diversities, for it mistook uniformity for unity.” (Dattopant Thengadi).

A new generation of Indian Americans well informed in their traditions and also trained in the efficacy of American life will be well equipped to give effective guidance to their ancestral country, when required. They will also be equipped to clear from the American minds, the many misinformations that are being imposed on them by the vested interests of Abrahamic faiths.

The role Temples can play

One of our important responsibilities is to give special attention to remove the dross that has gathered around Hindu spirituality through the ages. It is these superficialities which the vested interests highlight to obscure the valuable roles that temples can play in the ethos of the Hindu community.

The temples, religious institutions and cultural organizations can be effectively made to become the focal points for inculcation of awareness of the cultural traditions for the new generation. For this, first of all we have to clear many misconceptions about temple worship amidst our youth. They should be adequately informed about the well-coordinated science evolved by the Rishis of India based on subtle facts of the evolution of the universe and the interconnections among the human life, universe and the Ultimate Reality. Once the new generation is educated about these facts, they will be liberated from the misconceptions that they may have acquired from the false propaganda about the Dharmic religious traditions. Once that is accomplished, the Indian youth will themselves become the best ambassadors of their cultural heritage.

Weekly and monthly classes on Sundays (to take advantage of the weekly holidays) can be held in temples intended for the new generation. Factual information about Indian history, the intellectual and spiritual explorations which have taken place from ancient times, traditional arts and sciences of India should be in the syllabi for such instructional sessions. In the beginning, most of our youth may not understand the information thus imparted from the viewpoint of the traditional logic of India's ancient methods of learning because of the farmer's mental conditioning by the west-oriented scientific logic. However such efforts if undertaken by Acharyas and Dharmis with a special talent for teaching, it is possible to bridge all such impediments. Temples can and should establish suitable environments for discussing and exploring various aspects of the concepts of Dharma and its relevance to everyday life.

The temples should be maintained with utmost care for cleanliness and order. They should function as centres of solace

and wisdom in every respect. The priests should be well trained, should have modern education, should be well-versed in traditional knowledge, be service-oriented and well-paid. They should at least have a modicum of knowledge of the Abrahamic faiths so that they can converse with curious westerners who come to our temples. There is much virtue and value if a practicing Hindu can share his or her own insight of Sanatana Dharma with a westerner just as the latter will often share his or her faith tradition with an Indian walking into a church or a mosque.

Another special role, which the temples of Dharmic traditions can adopt overseas, is in initiating “inter-faith” dialogs with people of the Abrahamic faiths, just as the latter do in the western countries. In recent years, Churches and Mosques have initiated interfaith meetings, often with an ulterior motive of identifying future prospects for possible conversion to their own faiths. While the Dharmis and Acharyas of our traditions have no mental reservations about attending such meetings in churches or mosques or any place of worship, it is not often easy for people of Abrahamic faiths to visit our temples. They often have mental blocks about our places of worship because of the behavioural and intellectual conditioning that they have had through their western education, their parents and their religious teachers, about religions arising from the Dharmic traditions. It is here that the religious traditions arising from Sanatana Dharma have greater advantage over the Abrahamic faiths since our traditions are devoid of such inhibitions and confer no special virtue on those who attract others to our faith traditions. No doubt, we also welcome those who want to earnestly explore our paths to self-realization. By ourselves initiating a monthly or quarterly inter-faith dialog sessions within the portals of our temples, we can perhaps dispel many misconceptions, which are spread by the adherents of Abrahamic faiths about our forms of worship and our religious traditions. We can also thus be effective communicators with our neighbors who are of the Abrahamic faiths.

In this context, it is worthwhile to quote here a few lines from the book, “*Power in Temples -- A Modern Perspective*”, by Srikant (vide <<http://www.integralbooks.com>>):

“Modern man should develop a rational and scientific understanding of the use of temples in refining his spiritual, mental and physical life. It is in the absence of such understanding that these institutions evolved by the sages to elevate man have often degenerated into centres of priest-craft and empty ritualism or business centres. A priest who just parrot-like recites some Sanskrit verses without any understanding of their content steep himself and others in ignorance. About people who just repeat scholastic lines to impress the gullible without knowing their inner significance, the *Rig-Veda* says, ‘Such people are like those who tend sterile cows feigning that they are tending milch cows.’ Rituals are meant to discipline the mind, to refine it and tune it to the higher facts. They give a sublime, artistic quality to worship. To that extent they are desirable. But when they are given more importance than the human factor itself, making them an end, they degenerate into empty ritualism.

“The priests should be well trained and well paid. Are not we paying psychiatrists a big sum even for a single consultation? Then why should we hesitate to provide a decent livelihood to priests and others who serve in temples, which help maintain the inner health of the society? On their part, the priests should equip themselves with modern education and specialization in ancient knowledge. They should be able to give spiritual solace to people and give them guidance.

“All those who are to be employed in temples should be carefully selected, for they should have special cultural ability to serve. They should reflect brightness, love and divine grace, which are the fundamental characteristics of the atmosphere in a temple.

“Those who do not have a philosophical bent of mind and faith in the greatness of their duty are unfit to be employed in temples. The vital purpose of the temple will be defeated if it is managed by the narrow-minded and the ignorant.

“As one spiritually advances, naturally the rituals become less important. Over-emphasis on ritualism is unhealthy. Medicine

helps cure illness, but its overdose causes injury and if continued even after the cure, the same medicine may create further complications. Everything has to be examined and accepted with a balanced frame of mind. Blind acceptance and blind rejection are both irrational.”

Sri Ramakrishna highlights the great significance of temples thus: “Know that there must be manifestation of God in places where countless people have practised austerity. From time immemorial numerous devotees and men of realization have come to these holy places to have a vision of God. Therefore, God though equally present everywhere, manifests in temples in the same way as water though can be found anywhere by digging the ground, it is certain one can find water more easily at the site of a tank or a lake”. Let us maintain each temple in North America as a Spiritual Dynamo that bestows solace and strength to thousands.

* * *

Appendix:

SPIRITUALITY

India's Greatest Contribution to the World

[Based on the Paper presented at the International Conference on 'India's Contributions and Influences in the World', July 12-14, 2002, organized by the World Association for Vedic Studies (WAVES) Inc., at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, MA, U.S.A.]

India's Vedantic wisdom is the most profound heritage bestowed on mankind by the great *rishis*. It was evolved after generations of intense explorations by the ancient seekers of Truth. This presentation highlights this background of the earnest enquiries in different directions, which eventually integrated themselves resulting in the Vedantic vision of the Reality. Also, the presentation emphasizes the necessity of research to give the modern world a deeper idea of these links that exist among the various disciplines of traditional sciences and philosophy. The presentation gives a general survey of the acceptance and reverence India's Spirituality gained in many parts of the world from the days of yore, influencing the cultural life and artistic expressions of many nations.

India's Spirituality had exerted a creative influence on the inquisitive minds in several parts of the world in ancient times. And the Indian philosophy succeeded in inspiring and influencing the best scientific minds of today. Any sensitive person who makes a study of the Vedantic wisdom will quickly realize that it is a super-science of human evolution and fulfilment. The presentation emphasizes the relevance of the Vedantic wisdom in the present-day world context of overbearing materialism, to enable the modern man to get a deeper perspective of human life and its fulfilment.

Many a Western intellectual points out the dilemma of the people of the 'developed countries' troubled with a sense of having reached a dead end and their existential crisis. The presentation points out the urgent need of intensive research into many ancient spiritual disciplines and traditional sciences and the necessity of presenting their rationale in modern terms so that the people the world over can be inspired with a new creative vision and urge by inculcating in them the Vedantic knowledge about the deeper facts of human life, man's relation with the universe and his higher destiny and fulfilment.

I would like to highlight the world impact of India's spirituality that was evolved after intense explorations and the experimentations of the sages of yore through diverse paths of inquiry and their integration. I would also emphasize the need of all-embracing research to bring to light the links that exist among the various disciplines of traditional sciences and philosophy, and today's need to harmonize the ancient knowledge with the modern scientific perspective so that the world at large can get a clearer idea of the life-evolving wisdom of our *rishis*. Any serious student of the evolution of India's spirituality will realize that all the branches of spiritual exploration including Dwaita, Vishistadvaita, Advaita, Yoga, etc., based on Vedanta, are not contradictory but complementary paths that integrate themselves resulting in the Vedantic vision of Reality. This ancient spiritual vision of India, as we see today, is being accepted as in attunement with the philosophy emerging from the most modern scientific trends. Our times call for a review of the extensive acceptance of India's

message for the evolution of a greater humanity. Today we have to take effective methods to spread this life-harmonizing message throughout the world for the cultural and spiritual evolution of all.

As early as in the very beginning of the British domination of India, the thoughtful minds of Europe were quick to realize that besides the material wealth she possessed, India was eternally rich with her spiritual treasures. It is this realization that inspired Sir Warren Hastings, the first British Governor General of India, to write in his introduction to the first translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* in English by Charles Wilkins, the following prophetic words: “The writers of Indian philosophies will survive when the British domination in India shall long have ceased to exist, and when the sources which yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance.” In the midst of plenty and prosperity the people of ‘developed countries’ are in a dilemma. With an overbearing sense of having reached a dead end, they have started asking whether human life has no other destiny other than repeated indulgence in sensate pleasures, which wane with age and season. They desperately seek a glimpse of inner peace and aspire for freedom from insatiable desires. The intensity of this existential crisis of the West was highlighted by the German philosopher Dr. Graf K. Von Durekheim in his ‘Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture’ (1974) in the following words: “The people of the West are suffering from many kinds of maladies which are caused by the hectic way of modern life, resulting in what we call stress. Last year in Germany alone 500 top managers committed suicide because they could not find a way out of the blind alley into which they had been pushed by the stress of everyday life. But the real source of these maladies is not external stress, but the loss of contact with the true self. The deepest frustration in this wholeness is that western man, being occupied one-sidedly by the materialistic activities in the outside world, has lost the living contact with his inner self, his soul. This also is the cause of a deep, widespread suffering for which there is no outward reason.”

Basically, the history of mankind is the history of the development of the human mind. The destiny of man, his possibilities, progress and fulfilment are linked with the positive

transformation of the human mind. The western mind focuses on the gratification of the physical senses and the resultant mechanistic view of life makes man subservient to external circumstances and a slave to insatiable desires. Therefore, amidst the all-round luxury, but devoid of a sense of the higher destiny of human life, the western mind does often suffer from a sense of misery, of purposelessness, as indicated by the above-mentioned statement.

This alienation of the western mind from a higher vision of life, and unlimited desires provoke the Occidental man to evolve a heartless system of exploration that results in cruelty and war. In contrast, the great *rishis* of ancient India looked at life in its totality and evolved from their own experience of true illumination a science of human fulfilment. Such an insight garnered by India's seers makes it a core corner stone for buttressing the science of human evolution. From the very ancient times, this science of human evolution (atma vidya) based on one's ability to alter one's perception of "reality" gave India a unique status in the history of the world. The current western attempts to market it as "bio-feedback" and or "neuro-psycho-immunology" are all based on facets of "atma vidya", the science of internal validation of a human's ability to control and modify the functioning of the supposedly involuntary faculties of the human body and mind.

India's spiritual message is clear as declared by the *rishis* that the true happiness comes from the spiritual dimension, which transcends all changes. One could experience divine bliss by undertaking one's own inward journey and one's own persistence in the application of one's determination to attain spiritual enlightenment.

India's *rishis* did not deny the need for material advancement but they reconciled material advance with spiritual elevation. They said that the model of development must be need-based, not greed-based. There can certainly be material advance without resorting to crude materialism. They declared that '*jiva*' (man) must not end up as '*shava*' (corpse), but evolve as he has the potential to become '*Shiva*', the Universal man. Their aim was not any exclusive specialization in any subject but to explore the underlying

connections in all fields of apparently fragmented existence and to know the total relationship between man and nature. They delved deep into their subjects of inquiry, which opened up the wondrous dimensions of Reality. The various branches of their enquiry, even though sometimes they may appear contradictory, have an under-current of unity. For instance, one who makes a deep study of the philosophies of Dwaita, Vishistadvaita and Advaita will realize that they are in fact complementary, not contradictory, as some people would think. This complementary nature of these philosophies is so well highlighted in the following words of Sri Hanuman in Valmiki *Ramayana* when Sri Rama asks Sri Hanuman about his true nature. Sri Hanuman replies, “When I identify myself with the body, O Lord, I am Your humble servant, (*Dwaita perspective*), when I identify myself with the individuality I am part of You (*close to the Vishistadvaita perspective*) and when I identify myself with the Atman (the indwelling Divinity) I am Yourself (*Advaita perspective*)”.

This step by step ascendance of inquiry from various angles, their integration and further reaching to higher dimensions of Reality and ever greater concepts about man and Nature, and their relationships, have been the unique characteristic of India’s inquiry into Truth. In the fields of traditional sciences like astronomy, astrology, Ayurveda, and a host of other traditional sciences a researcher would become aware of their inter-connections and their basic relationship with the spiritual concept of life. While in the West an unbridgeable gap exists between religion and science, in India the traditional sciences and spirituality integrate themselves opening the doors to the supreme wisdom of Totality.

It is this evolutionary orientation of India’s spirituality that has attracted the intellectual classes of many countries from ancient times. Swami Vivekananda highlighted this special characteristic of India’s approach in the following words: “Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was and, mark my words, it never will be. But there has been the other mission given to us, which is to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate as it were into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race and that concentrated energy is to pour forth in a deluge on

the world whenever circumstances are propitious. Let the Persian or the Greek, the Roman, the Arab, or the Englishman march his battalions, conquer the world. The Hindu's calm brain must pour out its own quota to give to the sum total of human progress. India's gift to the world is the Light Spiritual."

It is this emphasis on the development of the true human potentials that caused the spreading of India's spiritual vision to several countries even before the beginning of the Christian era, and today draws the serious attention of the thinking sections all over the world.

One who directs one's vision into the ancient past will find the surprising fact that the life-elevating ideas of India's spirituality had reached the far corners of the world despite the limitations of the means of communication and distance in those far off days. He will find the monasteries with Indian images and silken scrolls of Tantric Deities on the banks of Lake Baikal in the central regions of Eastern Siberia. Coming down to Mongolia he will find the translations of thousands of Sanskrit works and rare icons of the Divinities of India like *Mahaakaala*, *Kaali*, *Ayushi*, *Taaraa Devi* and others.

India's spiritual heritage, it is well known, had a great impact on Chinese culture and thought and the mainland of China was inspired by the rich heritage of the art, literature and philosophy of India. The influence of India's spiritual heritage on Japan's cultural evolution are well evident in the stories adopted from the *Mahabharata* in the classical Japanese theatre, in the influence of the artistic tradition of Ajanta in the Horyuji temples and in the recitations of the Sanskrit Mantras in the rituals.

There are many evidences indicating that the spirit of Indian culture spread widely in the Central Asian and Middle Eastern regions

In philosophy as well as in traditional sciences India had always kept a close link with Tibet.

In the languages of Thailand and far off Indonesia, there is a remarkable presence of Sanskrit words. The Thai theatre maintains a passion for the theme of *Ramayana*. The ceremonies of the Royal

Court of Thailand show powerful influence of Indian culture. Hindu culture is a dynamic way of life in Bali even today.

Indian culture had maintained closer links with Persia, countries of the Middle East and the Arabian world. There existed constant exchange of traditional sciences. Some scholars opine that there are reasons to believe that there existed cultural relations between India and South America's Mayas and Incas. Such matters are potent fields for study and research.

There is much scope for further study of the cultural relations of India with Afghanistan, Central Asia, China, Korea, Japan, Nepal, Tibet, Mongolia Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Middle East, Africa, Europe and the Americas.

Central Asia, Tibet, China, Japan, Burma, Indo-China and Indonesia formed very powerful strongholds of Indian culture. According to an eminent scholar, Dr. S. P. Gupta, "the dispersal of Indian culture, at least in Soviet Central Asia, can be traced from the Early Stone Age which takes us back to about half a million years."

The renowned historian, Dr. R. C. Majumdar, says, "Our definite knowledge of the spread of Indian culture in all its aspects, beyond India, begins from the third century B.C., and we are in a position to say that in the course of ages, that culture was spread almost all over Asia, from Armenia to Japan, and from Eastern Siberia to Ceylon and the islands of Indonesia: even further beyond, it left its impress upon other cultures."

Dr. Majumdar also says that it would be news to many that there was an Indian colony in the region of the Upper Euphrates river, to the west of Lake Van, as early as the second century B.C., and the temples of Hindu Gods, like Krishna, erected there, were destroyed by the Christian monk St. Gregory, early in the fourth century A.D., after defeating the Indians who stoutly resisted the iconoclastic fury of the Christians. It is hardly necessary to refer to the numerous magnificent remains of Hindu temples in Indo-China and Indonesia to prove the nature and extent of the missionary zeal of the Hindus in remote parts of Asia.

The wealth and wisdom of India was an alluring attraction even to the people of the West. According to the biblical legends, King Solomon had adorned his palace with ivory, peacocks, etc., which evidently might have been brought from Kerala, indicating that Solomon's merchant fleet might have frequented Kerala coast as early as 1000 B.C. Ancient Roman coins were discovered from many parts of South India. There are indications that lots of goods were transported in Indian ships as well as in Roman ships to the Roman ports.

It should be remembered that Columbus accidentally discovered America in his misdirected wanderings in search of the Indian shores.

The Arab had a flourishing trade with India and much of the scientific knowledge they acquired from India, was spread to Europe. The philosophy of India has been a great lure for many intellectuals, poets and writers of the West, like the German philosopher Schopenhauer and others. Walt Whitman's passion for Indian thought and wisdom is well known as expressed in his books such as "*Passage to India*" and in the poem "*Brahman*".

In the modern age, as if by a programme of Mother Nature, great Masters like Sri Ramakrishna and his illustrious disciple Swami Vivekananda, were born among us to shower the light of India's spiritual wisdom the world over. This was supplemented by the teachings of the great saints like Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramana Maharshi, whose presence also graced our times.

Today the world is happily getting aware of the fact that the new philosophical trends of modern science are coming closer to the spiritual wisdom of the ancient seers of India.

A study and research into various branches of inquiry of India's sages would help reveal to the modern world the undercurrent of unity in the material and spiritual dimensions of life and universe.

It would help the modern scientists to be aware of the scientific temper of the ancient seekers of India and would speed up the integration of science and spiritual values. There is a great scope for research in this direction and such conferences (like that of the WAVES) would inspire many to take to the path of this essential inquiry, which will bring to the modern man greater knowledge

about the deeper facts of human life, his relationship with the universe, his destiny and fulfilment.

Let me conclude by quoting a few highly significant lines pertaining to the subject matter, from a recently brought out book, titled "*India Unveiled*" authored by Robert Arnett. Let me quote his words: "In December 1988, destiny set my path toward India. Without itinerary or expectations, I began the first of the three solitary journeys, each of which would last for six months. It was during that short span of time on my second trip that my life was transformed. Not only was Indian subcontinent unveiled to me, but also in the process, I discovered the true essence of my being.

"For thousands of years, the basic cornerstones of Indian culture had changed very little, and probably account for why some historians believe India to be the oldest continuously surviving civilization on earth.

"Through the science of yoga, India has given the West a far more valuable gift than all the material wealth or technology the West could give in return. Even today, India offers great inspiration to those persons who are seeking oneness with God and through *yoga* anyone can find the direction he or she needs to succeed. That is India's gift to the world.

"Of all the nations in the world, India is the most spiritually blessed. More and more Americans are learning that materialism does not give lasting satisfaction, and they are turning to India for spiritual guidance.

"When Albert Einstein said, 'Science without religion is lame, and religion without science is blind', he could have been describing the contemporary America and India. India has become overbalanced spiritually and cannot adequately provide for the material needs of its own people. America leads the world in consumer comforts, but veered sharply off course morally. Each culture would benefit from adopting the best qualities of the other. It is my belief that the United States and India can give the world a new direction: a materially efficient democracy that is spiritually guided. For this to become a reality, each of us must do our part." (Excerpts from "*India Unveiled*", by Robert Arnett, Atman Press, Columbus, Georgia).

Do we not find here an echo of what Swami Vivekananda, the great Hindu Monk of India, said long ago, that the science and spirituality should shake hands for the redemption of humanity, and that India needs America, its vast and advanced knowledge of science and technology for the material redemption of its people, and that the materially and scientifically advanced America needs India, its hoary spirituality and eternal values to redeem it from the disaster of crude materialism, sensate and shallow life resulting in broken houses and all the attendant evils of a wayward life.

Let me draw your attention to Swami Vivekananda's highly significant words on the subject matter. Let me quote, "As I look upon the history of my country, I do not find in the whole world another country which had done quite so much for the improvement of the human mind and that India was the homeland of invisible powers that ruled the destinies of men and nations and its ancient scriptures could make it the teacher of the world."

As we all know, Swami Vivekananda made history in this country more than a century ago (in 1893) when he addressed the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, with his endearing words, "Sisters and brothers of America", and indelibly stamped on the consciousness of the West, the age-old Hindu vision: "*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*", that the world is one family, of which we are all brothers and sisters. In a short span of life, that too in a very short period of his public life of only nine years (of which he was only for about four years in the U.S.), his contribution to and influence in the world was stupendous. To put it in his own words: "I have given humanity enough for next fifteen hundred years."

In fact, most of the writings and speeches of Swami Vivekananda were aimed at highlighting India's greatness, India's immortal contributions to the world in the field of religion and spirituality and the consequent spiritual influence in the world.

In the centenary year of Swami Vivekananda's *mahasamadhi* (Swamiji left his mortal coil exactly 100 years ago, on the July 4th, 1902) may we all invoke his divine blessings, and may we all dedicate ourselves to the cause that was very dear to his heart, namely, to live up to the great spiritual ideals of India, and to

spread, in our own humble way, the knowledge of India's great contributions, for the happiness and welfare of one and all.

AUTHOR

Swami Jyotirmayananda hails from South Kanara, Karnataka, India, had his school and college studies at the Mangalore Ramakrishna Mission Students Home, got the Mantra Diksha in 1966 while serving in a firm in Madras, from Swami Vireswarananda, the Tenth President of the Ramakrishna Order, joined the Vivekananda Kendra, a Service Mission at Kanyakumari in 1973, and after service, took to monastic life independently in 1976.

The first edition of his book on Swami Vivekananda (986 pages) was published in 1986, and its fifth edition, entitled "Vivekananda -- His Gospel of Man-making" was released at New York in the context of the UN Millennium World Peace Summit 2000. This book chronicles the important events in the life and times of the great Son of Modern India, and highlights his mission and the message to the world. It is now available as an e-book on CD-ROM, with an audio-visual presentation (one hour) titled "Swami Vivekananda -- The Great Hindu Monk of India and His Lasting Spiritual Legacy to Humanity". This presentation was developed in 2002, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Mahasamadhi, and specifically to address the needs of the student community in the US Universities and Colleges.

Swami Jyotirmayananda has been visiting the U.S. since 1993 and has attended the 'Parliament of Religions', Chicago (1993), 'Global Vision 2000' Program in Washington (1993), 'UN Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders', New York (2000); 'Vedanta in the Third Millennium' conference organized by the Chicago Vedanta Society (2001), the 'Vishwa Dharma Prasaar Yaatra' Program (2001) in Chicago, and the Fourth International Conference of the World Association of Vedic Studies, at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, MA, (2002), where he presented a paper on "India's Spirituality and its World-wide Impact". In early July 2004, he participated in the "Konkani Sammelan" at Los Angeles, and also in the fifth International Conference organized by the World Association of Vedic Studies, at the University of Maryland, Shady Grove Campus, Maryland, where he presented a paper on "India's Intellectual Traditions in Contemporary Global Context". He was one of the Program Coordinators of the Dharma Summit Conference (<http://www.hinduismtoday.com/hpi/2005/8/17.shtml>) convened by Swami Dayananda Saraswati and held at the Rutgers University, New Jersey (Aug. 13-15, 2005). Also, he was one of the Coordination Committee Members, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha Convention, Mumbai (October 16, 17 & 18).

He can be reached at: swamijyoti@vivekanandagospel.org. The web page: <http://www.vivekanandagospel.org/> deals with his publication and the blogspot: <http://www.vivekajyoti.blogspot.com/> is a resource on various issues facing the society.

Promoting a Better Understanding of India an & her Perennial Culture

From time immemorial India has been a land of earnest inquirers who have probed into the mysteries of human life and the universe. The Master Minds of ancient India, the Rishis, could discover the deepest facts that give us an in-depth understanding about ourselves and greater meaning to human life.

It is this exploration and wisdom which distinguishes Indian culture from all other civilizations in the world and that is the secret of its sustaining power.

However, it is quite unfortunate that this salient fact is not adequately highlighted from an educational point-of-view and it is not often brought to wider public attention, especially in the U.S. This situation leads to the spread of much misinformation about India and her culture, often propagated by vested interests

In this context, this booklet by Swami Jyotirmayananda will certainly serve as an eye-opener and inspire many to evolve ways to promote a better understanding about Indian civilization. The thought-provoking points systematically presented here ought to draw the serious attention of all Indian Americans. Many ideas expressed herein may inspire them to take appropriate steps to propagate the life-nourishing values of their mother culture. The perusal of the booklet will convince individuals and organizations about the need for an urgent and coordinated effort for promoting a better understanding of India and her perennial culture of Sanatana Dharma.

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