

“INDIA’S GIFT TO THE WORLD IS THE LIGHT SPIRITUAL”

Reviewed By

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Editor, '*India Tribune*', Chicago, August 15, 2009.

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Yuva Bharati, January, 2010

UNDERSTANDING INDIA, ITS CULTURE & SANATANA DHARMA

– J. V. Lakshmana Rao

Editor, '*India Tribune*', Chicago, August 15, 2009.

<http://www.indiatribune.com/>

Interest of the world countries in India as a global player

"India's Gift to the World is the Light Spiritual" by Swami Jyotirmayananda is a timely publication at a time when the interest of the world countries in India as a global player is growing. It is a collection of the papers presented in various forums and the articles written in various brochures by the learned Swamiji.

Westerners admire India's eminence

While all eyes are centered on modern India, there is a growing interest among many people to know its spiritual and religious beliefs. The West always looks at India as an enigma. While some Westerners admire India's eminence, some others look at it as a nation of myths and poverty.

Ancient India's influence had spread far and wide

There is ample evidence that ancient India's influence had spread far and wide touching all corners of the world. Ancient India was invaded for its material riches and intellectual wealth by several countries.

Ancient India's glory in science and technology

India's glory in science, technology, metallurgy, medicine, astronomy, space science, even nuclear science has been revealed through its ageless Vedas, Upanishads and other well-researched works. Perhaps the decline of Indian's eminence has been visible since external invasions. These invaders had not only denuded India of its material wealth but also of its rich literature, and denigrated its culture. The invaders tactfully made Indians feel inferior to the Westerners through their

manipulation of history and theories like the mythical Aryan invasion. The Westerners derived pleasure in projecting India as a country of ash-covered naked *sadhus*, snake charmers and rope-trickers. While Sanatana Dharma, which the Westerners called as ‘Hinduism’, is purely based on universal spirituality, the colonial rulers’ “divide and rule policy” magnified the non-existent racism, profession-based caste (rather, *jaati* or *varna*) system, the so-called ‘untouchability’, and even interfered with the well-established history by inducing unbelievable untruths. Everything that was Indian was made to be projected as inferior to the Western culture. This was successfully achieved through the Westernized administrative and education systems.

Unethical acts of invaders & evangelists

While Hinduism affirmed the existence of ‘One God’ (without a second), and respected all religions, Islamic invaders indulged in mass forceful conversions by threats/terror, and Christian evangelical workers proselytized mostly the poor and gullible so-called low-caste people, with allurements as also by fraud.

Contents of the book

Discussing various issues for which India has been looked down, Swami Jyotirmayananda’s book consists of 11 articles extensively dealing with issues like: “Worldwide impact of India’s Spiritual Wisdom,” “India’s Intellectual Traditions in Global Context,” “The Crying Need of the Hour,” “Realizing Swami Vivekananda’s Dream of Unity,” “Swami Vivekananda on the Need for Unity,” “Be Better Informed About Indian Culture,” “Relevance of Hindu Dharma for the Modern World,” “The Renaissance of Hindu Dharma in the New Millennium,” “Sustaining Dharma through Mandirs,” “The Role of Mandirs and Religious Institutions,” and “Media’s War on Hindu Dharma.”

The scheme and the source of the book

The book also consists of “Benediction by Swami Dayananda Saraswati,” “Benediction by Swami Muktananda” (of

Anandashram, Kerala), “Author’s Note,” “Editor’s Note,” “Scheme of the Book, and “Synopsis of the Articles.”

These papers were presented at various conferences, including the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Biennial Conferences of the ‘World Association of Vedic Studies’ (WAVES), a paper presented at the symposium in Chicago organized by the ‘Foundation for Hindu Religious Studies’ (FHRS), the articles published in the brochures released at the ‘Hindu Unity Day’ celebration in New York, at the First ‘Dharma Summit’ in New Jersey, at the Anniversary of ‘Arsha Vidya Gurukulam’ (www.arshavidya.org), Saylorsburg, PA, and at the ‘Second Hindu Mandir Executives’ Conference’ in New Jersey. It also contains his article published in *India Tribune* and another article compiled from the writings of Swami Vivekananda.

Relevance of the Vedantic wisdom

In his paper, “Worldwide Impact of India’s Spiritual Wisdom,” Swamiji 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 fulfillment.

Preservation of India’s Sanatana Dharma and its transmission

Swami Jyotirmayananda, who edited a voluminous book on Swami Vivekananda titled “*Vivekananda – His Gospel of Man-Making*” (www.vivekanandagospel.org) a few years ago, and now in the present book two articles on him – “Realizing Swami Vivekananda’s Dream of Unity” and “Swami Vivekananda on the Need for Unity” – believes in the preservation of India’s Sanatana Dharma and its transmission to the rest of humanity as a means to contain the violence and mayhem and bring unity among all human beings in the world.

Inspiration to spread the real and perennial values of the age-old Hindu culture

Writing another article, “Be Better informed about Indian Culture,” Swami Jyotirmayananda says that *rishis* of yore had

the deeper understanding and meaning of human life but unfortunately this fact is not adequately highlighted from an educational point of view in various countries including the US. This has led to misinformation about India and its culture. The article serves as an inspiration to spread the real and perennial values of the age-old Hindu culture.

Efforts being made for the revival & resurgence of the Hindu Dharma

In the article, “The Renaissance of Hindu Dharma in the New Millennium,” the author describes the efforts being made by the institutions and organizers of various conferences and meetings in India and in the North America for the revival and resurgence of the Hindu Dharma.

Importance of temples for the promotion of Hindu unity

In another article, “Sustaining Dharma through Mandirs,” Swamiji explains the importance of temples as altars of worship and as halls of learning for the promotion of Hindu unity.

The Indian media explicitly hostile to Hindu Dharma

Writing about “Media’s War on Hindu Dharma,” Swamiji says that the Indian media is explicitly hostile to Hindu Dharma, culture and the traditions of India. In the guise of ‘secularism’, the media is playing a very adverse and prejudiced role against the Hindu point of view. The Hindu Dharma, the Hindu Ahcaryas and the Hindu Samaj are passing through a critical period and Hindus in general are being dis-empowered socially, religiously and politically in the post-Independence era.

The Author and his work

Swami Jyotirmayananda, who is a Swami Vivekananda scholar, has been visiting the US regularly and addressing various conferences and forums, since 1993, when the centenary of Parliament of World Religions was held in Chicago.

The other books that Swamiji has written include “*Vivekananda – His Gospel of Man-making*”; “*Hanuman*

Chalisa and Ashtaka"; "Beloved Mother Amritanandamayi – A Sketch"; and "A Pilgrim Guide to Some Holy Places of Dakshina Kannada and around."

Swami Jyotirmayananda hails from South Kanara in Karnataka state of India. He had his schooling and college studies at the Mangalore Ramakrishna Mission Students Home. He got the *mantra diksha* in 1966 while serving in a firm in Madras, from Swami Vireswarananda, the 10th president of the Ramakrishna Order. Swamiji joined the Vivekananda Kendra in Kanyakumari in 1973, and took to monastic life independently in 1976.

For those who want to know about India, its spirituality, its spiritual history and Sanatana Dharma, "*India's Gift to the World is the Light Spiritual*" is a "must read."

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WHAT IS INDIA'S GIFT TO THE WORLD?

– Dr Mrs. Hilda Raja

'Arsha Vidya News Letter', July 2009.
<http://www.arshavidya.in/newsletter.html>

A well scripted and logical thesis and its four parts

"*India's Gift to the World is the Light Spiritual*" is a well scripted and logical thesis by Swami Jyotirmayananda. It can be broadly divided into four parts:

1. Swami Jyotirmayanada presents us with a rich spread of the hoary and glorious heritage of India's Vedantic wisdom and India's intellectual traditions – the impact these have globally.
2. The crying need of the Day to not only retain these but to put these into practise to make the world a better place.
3. Towards this the author makes a passionate call for Unity – a Unified Force and a Unified Leadership, education and re-education on the relevance of Hindu Dharma.

4. To achieve this Hindus need to be better informed of Indian culture, relevance of Hindu Dharma and the need of Mandir worship – The place of the Mandirs in sustaining Dharma, their role, and the role the religious institutions are also highlighted.

The war that is waged against the Hindu Dharma

Swami Jyotirmayananda rightly cautions us on the war that is waged against the Hindu Dharma by the media. It is apt that he substantiates by profusely quoting Swami Vivekananda – his Dream and his call for Unity – making his thesis not just a presentation but a mini-library with all the references for further research. As a true son of Swami Vivekananda he has effectively defended every aspect of his script by profusely quoting this Great monk. His quotes from Swami Dayananda Saraswati reveal a soul fully imbibed with the spirit and the teachings of the way of life which he has opted for.

Take up the torch, keep it ever lit & pass on that light to others

The reading of this book is a must for it covers crucial areas which today stand out as challenges to every Hindu. In a succinct way Swami Jyotirmayananda has succeeded in capturing the richness of Sanatana Dharma and exposes it as the only path to peace and harmony. Its salvic and redemptive substance makes it all powerful and a '*marga*' which needs be accepted and adhered to. For those who are new to this ideology and philosophy it is an effective learning – for those who are already fully conversant with it, it recapitulates and further injects an urgency to effectively put it in practice. For those who are fence sitters this book should incite their curiosity to look into the legacy and the richness of this country and its ancients – To all, then, this book is an invitation to take up that torch, keep it ever lit and pass on that light to others....

The book has a direct appeal & awakens the Indianness within

At the outset I must confess that I am ill-equipped to do full justice to Swami Jyotirmayananda's labour because I do not

even have a working knowledge of Sanskrit which is essential for doing justice to a book which focuses on Sanatana Dharma. That has not prevented me from reading through the book. I am immensely grateful for this opportunity because I was able to remove some of my misconceptions and gained knowledge. I would strongly recommend this book for those like me at the doorsteps of this great centric value which guides life – Sanatana Dharma, for those who have the knowledge but has not fully utilized its power, and for those who are passive, to energize them. It has a direct appeal and awakens the Indianness within!

India's spiritual message to the world is the attainment of true happiness

History of a people and their country is linked from the prehistoric time to the present and proceeds to the future. It is this which makes the book relevant because one should know of the past to understand the present and take the present to its spiritual future. The relevance lies, then, in this task. India did not stand in isolation – but this wisdom of it had its impact globally and continues to send its vibrations across the world. Rightly the author has traced all the branches of spiritual exploration including Dwaita, Vishistadvaita, Advaita, Yoga etc which are not contradictory but complementary paths that integrate themselves resulting in the Vedantic vision of Reality. This complementary nature the author effectively brings out by quoting the words of Sri Hanuman in Valmiki Ramayana: ‘When Rama asks Sri Hanuman about his true nature the latter 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 is a unique exploration from the innermost recess to the sublime. It links the prehistoric man’s search for the Reality which leads on to today and out reaches to the tomorrow. This is what makes Vedantic Vision of cosmic Reality because it takes into its continuum – both man and

nature, and gives a totality whole. It also reveals how the Indian soul was attuned to seeking the Ultimate – the discovery that man is not a separate entity but a unit of all that was and is and will be. Within the cosmic reality – in the crucible lies both the fire and the heat – the heat cannot be separated from the fire. No religion is so all embracing. India’s spiritual message to the world is the attainment of true happiness which can be reached not through greed, not through self-aggrandizement but in a holistic development based on need and not greed. The *rishis* have propounded this “that ‘*jiva*’ (man) must not end up as ‘*shava*’ (corpse) but evolve, as he has the potential to become ‘*Shiva*’, the Universal man.”

The quest for truth and the spirit of free enquiry gave India an intellectual sharpness

There is a misconception that Hinduism is not progressive and modern. The quest for Truth was not restricted to mere meditation but oriented to the explorations and scientific enquiry into the universe, thus emerged the *Tharkashastra*. The intellectual basis of India’s heritage continues. The quest for truth and the spirit of free enquiry gave India an intellectual sharpness. This stands in contrast with the Abrahamic religions with their monolithic structures and dogmas stifling and banning the freedom of enquiry. One leads to the other – where there is freedom there is greater knowledge and where there is greater knowledge there is greater prosperity. Little wonder that India attracted people from all over the world. A. L. Basham’s description of this land in “*The wonder that was India*” unfolds the tapestry with its beautiful colors and patterns – that was India. The rights of the people and their protection were coded in the *Arthashastra*. No country in world can boast of a heritage where the rights of the people were safeguarded and coded at a time when slavery existed. Yet the world thinks, and even educated Indians think that civilization came from outside – that law was brought with the British and that India was steeped in ignorance.

It is almost staggering to find that there was an undying and unending quest for Truth. This, marked with the spirit of free

enquiry, etches the refined contours of India's culture. What is fascinating is how the aim of intellectual knowledge in India expanded in ever widening circles like ripples. The need to penetrate ignorance and enlighten all the aspects of living seems to be the pursuit India's ancients were engaged in.

India's spirituality is intertwined with its quest into all fields of science

I was curious with Dr Siu's differentiation between ignorance and no-knowledge: 'Having-no' knowledge is ignorance and having 'no-knowledge' is one of ultimate enlightenment. I am still not able to comprehend this! With such a refined culture, a rich heritage of both knowledge and spirituality it is the obligation of India to pass the beacon. This cannot be done unless the present generation of Indians, irrespective of religious affiliations, becomes aware of India's spiritual heritage. It is saddening that even education had completely overlooked this aspect. India's spirituality is intertwined with its quest into all fields of science – astrology, astronomy, psychology, fine arts, banking system, irrigation systems etc. There is a misconception when one talks of India's spirituality to think of Hinduism as antiquated and outdated. This has led to political and social misunderstandings. The inclusive pluralism and holistic Catholicism to which the Hindus and Hindu religion is wedded must be expounded. It is this which makes the Hindu soul secular and it is this which accommodated all religions of the world in India.

It is totally unjust to fault the Hindu religion & distort its very secular basis

When the politicians today talk of secularism and think that the Hindu religion is not secular they only betray their ignorance. It is totally unjust to fault the Hindu religion and distort its very secular basis. The need then is to revive this quest for learning – to provoke intellectual curiosity as the two fold objectives – one cannot give what one does not have. So unless the present generation of Hindus, be they in India and or in other lands, learn what Sanatana Dharma is all about they cannot realize

that they are the inheritors of a rich spiritual and social heritage. They are then obliged to hand this over to the future generations. To learn the past is vital for the present and essential for the future.

Hinduism is inclusive pluralism, in opposition to the prophetic exclusivists' faiths

This is aptly echoed in the author's poignant 'Crying need of the Hour'. Hinduism is inclusive pluralism, in opposition to the prophetic exclusivists' faiths. In today's context it is imperative to take stock of the coercive proselytization of the Christians and the Muslims. Right from the entry of these two religions in India through the invaders/traders it has been through compulsion, coercion and force that these religions make converts. The persecution of the Hindus, the levy of a special tax on those who were not of the Islamic faith – the destruction of thousands of temples, the devaluation of Hindu norms, the ridicule to which they were exposed went unabated down the centuries. Hindu Dharma and the ancient rich civilization of ours was totally buried and forgotten because it did not find a place in education. There are various reasons for this. The new generation of Hindus grew with little or no knowledge of Hinduism and its spirituality. This is relevant not only for those in the USA but also for those in India. English education, English media negated all that Sanatana Dharma stood for.

Hindus need to become aware of the dangers they face

The grave danger Hinduism faces today is from within the country. With political support and international lobbies the Minority religions are spreading fast. This has its own ramification on the whole concept of India as a nation. Hindus need to become aware of the dangers they face – the country faces and must rise as a Unified Force. This Force can become powerful if only it is equipped well and has clarity of its ideology; an understanding that the past, the present and the future are linked – for Sanatana has no beginning, or end.

Hindus must understand the strength and weakness of the forces they have to face

To counter the forces against Hinduism, Hindus must understand the strength and weakness of the forces they have to face. While Christians have scholars who are well versed in Hindu scriptures and can hold forth, one wonders if Hindu religious leaders are well versed in the Christian scriptures and in its theology. Another aspect towards this Unified Force is becoming staunch Hindus. We have staunch Christians – staunch Muslims, but rarely do we come across staunch Hindus. This is not to be mistaken for fanaticism. Hindus take their religion and religious rites lightly. According to convenience they go to the temples or never go. One cannot say that he/she is a good Hindu but one can say that he/she is a good Christian. This in a way does not make others respect the Hindus. They find the Hindus themselves take their religion so lightly. This has to change.

What does Hindu religion mean to Hindus?

Yet another disturbing fact is that the Hindu priests/*purohits* are not respected. While they perform the rites the assembly of Hindus indulges in chit chatting and is so distracted. Take for example a house warming / or naming ceremony. The family and the relatives – all use the occasion to update information – and gossip while the poor priest is chanting the prayers. The first question the Hindus should ask themselves is: ‘What does Hindu religion mean to them?’ The answer to this then is essential – to structure a Unified Force, and a Unified Leadership.

The Hindus need to be better informed of Indian culture & the relevance of Sanatana Dharma

“Be thou all of one mind, be thou all of one thought” (Rig Veda, 10.191.1-4), “Being of one mind is the secret of Society”, “Secret of Power lies in Unity and organization”, said the great Hindu monk of India – Swami Vivekananda. To achieve this Unity and to heed that clarion call the Hindus need to be better informed

of Indian culture, the relevance of Hindu Dharma, the need for Mandir worship.

It must be clearly understood that Hindu culture and Hindu religion are interlinked

Though the call to be better informed of Indian culture is directed by Swami Jyotirmayanada to the Indian Americans in this book, I think it is equally valid to the Indians in this country irrespective of religion. The difficulty comes when the non-Hindu Indians associate everything to a strict sphere of Hindu religion and discard it. It must be clearly understood that Hindu culture and Hindu religion are intertwined and when properly studied and understood there would be greater appreciation and respect for it. For what was inherent in this country – the people of the Sindhu region – what was their way of life – what motivated them – what were their aspirations and what was their god orientation – what were their norms etc cannot be put in separate compartments. Culture encompasses everything that transpires within the human activity – both interpersonal and community wise. At the same time Hindu religion is Sanatana Dharma which guides the life and life style of people. We thus say Hinduism is not merely a religion but also a way of life and this is correct. This is the legacy and the heritage of all Indians. Its relevance to the world can be gauged only if we are able to understand what this great heritage and legacy is all about.

Quest for the Eternal Truth

It is the spirit of enquiry, the acceptance of different opinions, the underlying principle of equality, and the unwavering and untiring quest for the Eternal Truth. This is what engaged our ancients. There is democracy, there is a scientific temper, there is humanism and there is a spirituality which guides the materialism. Can there be a greater compendium of subjects, of values, of directives, of motivation in the world other than what is encapsulated in Sanatana Dharma?

Significant role of temples in concretizing the people as a whole

The collective expression of a people guided by this Sanatana Dharma is the congregating in the Mandirs. The Mandirs/temples play a significant role in concretizing the people as a whole. Apart from the scientific layout of the temple – the science involved in its architecture, the energy the *murti* of a Deity does emanate a power. The psychological impact on the devotee, who goes to the Mandir and seeks blessings from that personified aspect of Brahman, not only heals the soul but invigorates the whole body. This from my own experience I can differentiate from going to a church and a temple. One enters a temple, it sucks you in – it almost makes you one with the whole – a kind of a comfort feeling of belongingness wrapping you in warmth. The thronging crowd becomes strength – ‘these are my people...who for generations kept alive a heritage – a God-longingness, and were always attuned to the Ultimate Spirit’. Towards that Spirit, then, all move. In a world so troubled and beset with materialism, one suddenly discovers the Maya and the reality.

Mandirs need to reach out to all

The Mandir can become a rally place – a point where learning must take place. The present situation must change and the Mandirs need to reach out not only to the Hindus but to all. The openness to all – the readiness to impart basic scriptures and its meanings, the explanation of worship – both the *saguna* and the *nirguna* forms – the need to have scholars and learned persons available for counseling and for spiritual advise, are areas that need to be filled. For, the seeking of the Eternal Spirit is not separate from the other aspects of development of the whole personality. Somehow this is lacking in the present day Mandirs and its managements. The parroting of mantras must be replaced by slow well articulated recitation with devotion. For all this the priests must be well trained. In the Catholic Church it takes minimum 7 years, and for the Jesuits it is 12 years of training to be ordained priests.

Mandir – central to the faith expression

The Mandir is central to the faith expression according to Sri Ramakrishna: “Know that there must be manifestation of God in places where countless people have practiced 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.”

‘Ishwara’, rather than God

I was also enlightened by the word ‘Ishvara’ than God. A word which knocked at memories door, which is uttered when the soul seeks solace or cries out in pain, joy, astonishment is ‘Ishvara’. That God has no image, but in my childhood I was taught that all are created in the image of God. But then God has no image is not been questioned. Such a distortion is instilled into tiny tots’ minds. Logic is simple and yet how unquestioningly we allow ourselves to be misled. It is some years since I have shed the concept of such a god who stands outside me and the creation story.

God is unity, not a unit

Another gem of knowledge which I discovered is that “Hindus do not believe that there is only one God’, Hindus believe that ‘God is one’, a unity, of all, inclusive of all things, manifest and unmanifest...for God is unity, not a unit”. The freedom to perceive God in whatever form one chooses is a redemptive feature of Sanatana Dharma. Is not God everything – is not God the Omega and the Alfa? Is not God omnipresent in everything? God is not only outside me but within me – as the innermost core of my being. This is empowerment. This was not only enriching but an insight which makes me see the world, its events, people and the struggles in one cosmic reality – God.

A civilization with spirituality at the core

It is inexplicable how such a rich heritage of Hindu Dharma did not find a place in our education curriculum. A civilization which was not

only Spiritual but which gave to the world from the Zero – the decimal system, to the sciences like chemistry, astronomy, medicine, surgical know-how. Here was a civilization with spirituality at the core but with sciences of all branches developing in harmony. This rational spirituality of Sanatana Dharma gave greater vision of life and an impetus towards a well balanced growth of the family, society, nation and the world. The majority of the Indians are unaware of this rich mine of theirs. The Vedic concept, ‘may all be safe, peaceful and happy in the world’ speaks volumes of a philosophy that reaches to all and wishes all safety, peace and happiness. In a world with so much of violence and brutality, when man is against man – nation against nation, this stands out as beacon beckoning all nations to be knit as a family in brotherhood.

The path of Sanatana Dharma for the world bodies & national governments

Sanatana Dharma seeks unity in diversity, non-violence, inner peace and tranquility of the mind, respect for womanhood, preservation of the environment and ecology – these are the same concerns which obviously elude the world bodies and national governments which spend billions towards these issues. Successful attainment of these will be based on the acceptance of the path of life – individually, nationally and globally – the path of Sanatana Dharma.

Mischievous propaganda unleashed against Hindu Dharma

A mischievous propaganda has been unleashed against this Hindu philosophy by accusing it of ‘caste system’ and its oppression. It is true that there was *jaati/varna* system – be it to regulate society – or to organize it on the basis of occupation. Yet the so-called ‘caste system’ was no doubt used by some for exploitation; it was more an aberration than the general rule of living. But the ‘caste system’ was not an inevitable part of the Sanatana Dharma. There are great saints who emerged from different strata of society and are worshipped by all. It is important to name some of them: Namdev a tailor, Sadna was a butcher, Kabir a weaver, Ravidas – a cobbler, Sena a barber, Nabha a pariah, and Dadu a cotton-ginning. These worked for social reforms and are revered. But it cannot be denied

that the 'caste system' did segment society in water tight compartments. These saints worked towards reforming such a society. But what is not accepted is the fact that today in this modern age with all the 'secular' education, the politicians and the people, by and large, uphold caste and seem to perpetuate it for vested interest. So the 'secularists' cannot blame the Hindu philosophy or the ideology for the evils of 'caste system' that prevail today. The situation has been worsened by the 'secular', anti-Hindu forces.

Too long false propaganda & propagandists have been allowed to rue the day

Reading through the *'India's Gift to the World is the Light Spiritual'* has reinforced within me this – the Hindus and the Hindu leaders – both political and religious, must proclaim from the housetops that 'Hinduism, Hindutva and Hindu Nationalism are identical' and that every Hindu must necessarily be a patriot first and last. It is imperative to educate the masses at large that Hindutva is not a communal concept – that it is not a narrow religious out look but a patriotic nationalism of unity of all Indians. This calls for equality to all – and a pluralism and inclusiveness which embrace all religions. This cannot and should not be branded as communal. Then, it is as though truth is branded as evil and the perception so warped as to state that white is black and black is white. Too long this has been mildly taken and such false propaganda and propagandists have been allowed to rue the day. It must be fiercely opposed and a very aggressive media put in place to demolish this falsehood and uphold Sanatana Dharma – The struggle is on....with greater vigor, conviction, insights and purpose, for Ishvara is within me and outside me – this is what I fervently wish all readers of this book, for that's the *"India's Gift to the World is the Light Spiritual."*

– Dr Mrs. Hilda Raja

(Development Consultant, Former Professor, and Member of the National Advisory committee of the CBCI, Dr Hilda Raja, a Roman Catholic by faith, is an outspoken critic of religious conversion as it is practiced by Christian missionaries in India. Retired as Professor of

Social Science from 'Stella Maris College', a Minority managed Catholic college in Chennai; she regularly writes letters to the editors and occasionally writes columns too. Her writings are forthright but balanced, precise, incisive, thought provoking and informative. Apart from being a practicing Catholic Christian, she is a true nationalist, who values the cultural heritage of this great country and respects the Hindu tradition too. She can be reached at pachake@yahoo.com)

('Arsha Vidya Newsletter', July 2009)

<http://www.arshavidya.in/Newsletter/Jul09/book-review.pdf>

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SPIRITUALITY – THE SOUL OF MOTHER INDIA

Sri V. Sundaram

'News Today', <http://www.newstodaynet.com/>

26-28 Aug, 2009.

(The writer is a retired IAS officer)

An inspiring and moving treatise on the glory and grandeur of Sanatana Dharma

Swami Jyotirmayananda's latest book titled "*India's Gift to the World is the Light Spiritual*" is an inspiring and moving treatise on the glory and grandeur of Hinduism, Hindu culture, Hindu society, Hindu thought, Hindu wisdom – in short Sanatana Dharma. In my view, the perennial words of John Milton (1608-1674), the peerless English poet, are wholly applicable to this recent book of Swami Jyotirmayananda: 'A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.'

Seemingly insurmountable problems confronting the Hindu Samaj

This book is an anthology of the deeply analytical, incisive and seminal papers presented by Swami Jyotirmayananda (Swamiji) at various Indological Conferences on various facets and aspects on Sanatana Dharma as well as the seemingly insurmountable problems the HINDU SAMAJ is confronting today in India and abroad. We can clearly see from Swamiji's book that the Hindu religion, Hindu society, Hindu culture, Hindu ethos and Hindu

civilization are under the siege of certain lethal international forces like Global Christianity, Global Islam and International moribund Marxism, apart from politically mercenary India-centric Nehruvian anti-Hindu pseudo secularism. Against this background, the pointed observation of Swami Dayananda Saraswati that this book consisting of all the papers of Swami Jyotirmayananda is being made available solely for promoting the awareness of the need for a united and harmonious Hindu Voice gains a special significance.

Eternal message for all mankind

Any reader of this book can see that Swami Jyotirmayananda is one of the great torch bearers of the light and wisdom of Swami Vivekananda in our generation today. Every page of this book bears the imprint and soul of Swami Vivekananda's deathless and eternal message meant not only to India but for all mankind. Swami Jyotirmayananda has dedicated this book to the hallowed memory of Swami Vivekananda whom he has described as a great Patriot-Saint of Modern India.

Swami Jyotirmayananda in his introductory note sets the appropriate stage for this book by giving the following message of Swami Vivekananda: '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 land of invisible powers that ruled the destinies of men and nations and its ancient scriptures could make it the teacher of the world 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.'

In my view, Swami Jyotirmayananda has endeavoured to translate the above ideals of Swami Vivekananda into a concrete reality. I can testify from my personal experience of

my close association with Swami Jyotirmayananda that just as Acharya Drona was the *maanaseeka* guru for Ekalavya, so also for Swami Jyotirmayananda, Swami Vivekananda is his *maanaseeka guru*.

Reading the recent book of our Swamiji, I am reminded of what Swami Vivekananda told the citizens of Madras soon after his return to India from Chicago in the last decade of the 19th century:

‘In India, new circumstances at the same time are persistently demanding a new adjustment of social organizations. For the last three-quarters of a century, India has been bubbling over with reform societies and reformers. But, alas, every one of them has proved a failure. They did not know the secret. They had not learnt the great lesson to be learnt. In their haste, they laid all the evils in our society at the door of religion; and like the man in the story, wanting to kill the mosquito that sat on a friend’s forehead, they were trying to deal such heavy blows as would have killed man and mosquito together. But in this case, fortunately, they only dashed themselves against immovable rocks and were crushed out of existence in the shock of recoil...Those galvanic shocks of reformatory zeal were necessary to rouse the sleeping leviathan. But they were destructive and not constructive, and as such they were mortal, and therefore died.’

The crying need of the hour amidst the encircling gloom

I am recalling the above words of Swami Vivekananda because Swami Jyotirmayananda in his book has brought out the paramount importance of promoting the awareness of the need for creating a consolidated and united Hindu Voice which he calls the crying need of the hour amidst the encircling gloom. According to him, anti-Hindu forces which are inimical to Hindu Dharma and the Hindu Samaj, are merrily on prowl all over India. These forces are being aided and abetted by the unfortunate alien, secular (read anti-Hindu) dispensation, hell bent on de-Hinduising and de-Nationalising the Hindu populace, fragmenting the Hindu Samaj in the guise of the so-called secularism (a form of rabid anti-Hinduism), disempowering the

majority Hindus in every possible way and Balkanizing the country and destroying the Hindu Dharma altogether.

In this context Swami Jyotirmayananda quotes the words of Swami Dayananda Saraswati: “Faced with militant missionaries and jihadis, Hinduism has to show that its plurality and all-encompassing acceptance are not signs of disparateness or disunity. For that a collective voice is needed. ... Unless the country is protected, the Hindu Dharma cannot be protected and unless the Hindu Dharma is protected, the country cannot be protected. ... Also, protect the Dharmi to protect the Dharma.’

Contents of the book

Sri Srikant, the editor, has written a brilliant summarizing note covering all the eleven chapters of this book.

In Chapter 1, titled as, ‘Worldwide impact of India’s Spiritual Wisdom’ gives a breezy survey of the importance, acceptance and reverence of India’s spirituality in different parts of the world from the days of antiquity, greatly impacting on the cultural life and artistic expressions of many nations. In today’s sordid world of unchecked materialism, the contemporary relevance of Vedantic wisdom has been clearly and categorically brought out by Swami Jyotirmayananda.

In Chapter 2, titled ‘India’s Intellectual Traditions in Global Context’, we get a general survey of the glorious intellectual traditions of India, their role in the evolution and development of the scientific and philosophical wealth which our country has come to possess through the ages since the Vedic Age and their modern relevance.

Chapter 3 is titled ‘The Crying Need of the Hour’. According to Swami Jyotirmayananda, it is the bounden duty of all the Hindus to arise, awake and unite together to protect and safeguard Hindu Dharma. Sri Srikant says that Swami Vivekananda exemplified that kind of ardent martial spirit by acting on it over a hundred years ago by relentlessly calling on

all of us to play our part with dedication and commitment and shine brilliantly as resplendent stars of pluralism.

Chapter 4 deals with the subject of 'Realising Swami Vivekananda's Dream of Unity'.

Chapter 5 relates to 'Swami Vivekananda on the Need for Unity'. This is a very interesting and useful compilation of the timeless sayings and quotations of Swami Vivekananda.

Chapter 6 is titled 'Be Better Informed about Indian Culture'. The greatest Rishis -- Master Minds of Ancient India -- were able to discover relevant, true and sublime facts in different fields of knowledge and wisdom. They enable us to get a deeper understanding of the intangible ecstatic mystery of human life and existence. This vital aspect of Indian culture is not suitably highlighted in the curriculum of American schools which leads to the spread of much misinformation about India and her culture. This lapse is cleverly exploited by firmly entrenched evangelical vested interests in the United States.

Chapter 7 deals with the 'Relevance of Hindu Dharma for the Modern World'.

Chapter 8 is devoted to 'The Renaissance of Hindu Dharma in the New Millennium'. In this chapter, the Vision and the Mission of the Acharya Sabha, the Plan of Action and the Seva Activities under the auspices of the Acharya Sabha have been eloquently outlined by Swami Dayananda Saraswati.

Chapters 9 & 10 are vitally linked and should be read together. Chapter 9 is concerned with the subject of 'Sustaining Dharma through Mandirs'.

Chapter 10 describes 'The Role of Mandirs and Religious Institutions'.

Chapter 11 talks about 'Media's War on Hindu Dharma'.

Two core values in Hindu thought and culture

The most brilliant paragraph in this book is ‘The present dilemma for Hinduism is that the community is eager to define it, while the experts fear that any attempt to define it is politically motivated. I believe that we should make an attempt to better understand and represent Hinduism now, for ourselves, and for the world, and we should do this in a manner that befits an ‘Eternal Dharma’, rather than in a wounded, reactionary manner. To do so, I would like to suggest that we think about two core values in Hindu thought and culture as defining precepts, and ideals we can focus on when we are called up to explain Hinduism to our children, and to the global community. The first of these is the ideal of Universalism ... The second ideal in Hinduism I believe, we need strongly to identify with is that of Ahimsa.’

The book is simple and great

I am overawed by the beauty of simplicity of Swami Jyotirmayananda’s comments and observations in this book. Perhaps it is a proof of high culture to say the greatest matters in the simplest way. The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak. The greatest truths are the simplest: and so are the greatest men. Simplicity of character is no hindrance to subtlety of intellect. The great American poet Walt Whitman (1819-1892) wrote: ‘The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters, is simplicity.’ In my humble opinion Swami Jyotirmayananda’s book is both simple and great. His message to us in this book is this: ‘Strive, then, constantly to purify the eye of your attention until it becomes utterly simple and direct.’

II

Above I have given a brief summary of the vital points made by Swami Jyotirmayananda in his recent book ‘India’s Gift to the World is the Light Spiritual’.

Vedantic wisdom – a super science of human evolution and adjustment

He makes us understand how the acceptance of and reverence for India's spirituality was gained in many parts of the world right from the days of yore and how it influenced the cultural life and artistic expressions of many nations. India's spirituality is exercising a great influence on the inquisitive minds in many parts of the world even today. Our philosophy has succeeded in inspiring and influencing the best scientific minds of today. According to Swami Jyotirmayananda, any sensitive person who makes a study of the Vedantic wisdom will quickly realize that it is a super-science of human evolution and adjustment.

It was the full realization of the spirit of Vedanta that really inspired Sir Warren Hastings (1732-1818), the first Governor General of India, to write the following words in his introduction to the first English translation of the Bhagavad-Gita done by Charles Wilkins (1749-1836) in 1785: 'The writers of Indian philosophies will survive when the British domination in India shall have long ceased to exist, and when the sources which it yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance.' Anyone can see that these prophetic and clairvoyant words of Sir Warren Hastings have come true today.

The grave intensity of existential crisis

In the midst of plenty and prosperity, the people of the so-called 'affluent and developed' countries are in the vicious grip of a dilemma today. With an overbearing sense of having reached a unique dead end, they have started asking whether human life has no other destiny than repeated indulgence in sense pleasures which wane with age. They seem to be desperately seeking a glimpse of inner peace, aspiring for freedom from the death trap of endless and insatiable desires. The grave intensity of this existential crisis was highlighted by the German philosopher Dr Graf K. Von Durekheim in these words: 'Last year in Germany alone 500 top managers committed suicide because they could not find a way 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.'

Alienation of the western mind from a higher vision of life

Swami Jyotirmayananda fully endorses the above view of Dr. Graf K. Von Durekheim. He says that the Western mind focuses on the gratification of the physical senses and the resultant mechanistic view of life makes Western man subservient to external circumstances, putting him in the slave bonded labour of unquenchable desires. Let us hear his words: '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 and exploitation that results in cruelty and war'.

Prosperous nations and the 'Affluenza Virus'

I totally agree with Swami Jyotirmayananda that most of the prosperous nations today have been afflicted by what is called the Affluenza Virus – the placing of a high VALUE on money, possessions, appearances (physical and social) and fame. Many international studies done by WHO and other organizations have come to the conclusion that people who hold such VALUES are at a greater risk of being emotionally distressed, depressed, anxious, substance-abusing and personality-disordered. Here I would like to quote Oliver James who says: 'I would use existing scientific studies of national rates of such problems as my starting point, and then see how 'Affluenza' was panning out locally, around the world. I also pictured myself as itinerant Marie Curie returning triumphantly clutching vaccines which

immunize us against the virus, phials of tactics for making the best of the very bad job that the world has become.’

While getting richer and richer, we are also getting to be less and less happy

Something has gone wrong in our society and many of the news programmes—both print and electronic—are not noticing it: while we are getting richer and richer and yet at the same time, simultaneously, we are also getting to be less and less happy. Those who dare to dismiss this global phenomenon would find their theories blown apart by Oliver James in page after page of his book on the virus of what he calls ‘Affluenza’. In today’s world of crass and selfish commercialism, most people, regardless of their level of education are unable to distinguish between the quality and the quantity of what appears to make life good and worth living. The search for the good life, the endless race for a higher standard of living, is so often defined by the new generation in terms of ‘THINGS’ and the means to get as many ‘Things’ as possible. This approach has turned into a dead end as more and more people have more and more. This ‘Midas Culture’ has not provided the joy or happiness that it would appear to have promised at the beginning. We seem to be living in a land of fractured families, poisoned personal relationships, and unfulfilling work totally devoid of any job satisfaction, disloyal corporations, fragile self-esteem, and social distrust. Against this background, Swami Jyotirmayananda comes to the conclusion that the only way out for the modern man is to seek solace and refuge in India’s Vedantic Wisdom.

India’s spiritual message: True happiness comes from the spiritual dimension

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 fulfillment. This rationale of India’s spirituality makes it a true science of human evolution. From the very ancient times, this science of human evolution gave India a unique status in the history of the world. The uniqueness of India’s traditional knowledge is the remarkable

interconnections that exist between various branches of knowledge. Astronomy, Astrology and Ayurveda complement one another and they blend with spirituality. There is a science called Marma-Vidya, which is still prevalent in some parts of Kerala, but almost getting extinct because of our sad negligence of our great treasures under the impact of western education. A most important fact to remember is that all these sciences are closely linked to the spiritual concept of life. Thus India's spiritual message is clear as declared by the Vedic Rishis that the true happiness comes from the spiritual dimension, which transcends all changes. One could experience blessedness by one's own inward journey. India's Rishis did not deny the need for material advancement but they reconciled material advance with spiritual elevation. They concluded that the model of development must be need-based and 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 inherent potential, to become 'Shiva', the Universal Man. Swami Jyotirmayananda rightly concludes that it is this emphasis on the development of the true human potentials that was responsible for the spread of India's spiritual vision and culture to several countries even before the beginning of the Christian Era, and still continues to draw the attention of the thinking sections all over the world.

What is India's Gift to the World?

Against this background, the following glorious and radiant words of Swami Vivekananda are very relevant even today: '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, preserve, to accumulate as it were into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race and that concentrated energy is to pour forth into 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 the sum total of human progress. India's Gift to the World is the Light Spiritual.'

III

Above I have commented on how Swami Jyotirmayananda has presented different aspects of Hindu religion, Hindu culture, Hindu society and Sanatana Dharma in his recent book 'India's Gift to the World is the Light Spiritual'.

The intellectual traditions of India and their relevance in the larger global context today

In Chapter 2 of this book, he has given a general survey of the intellectual traditions of India, their importance in the heritage of scientific and philosophical wealth of our country ever since the Vedic Age and their relevance in the larger global context today. According to Swami Jyotirmayananda, mind, intellect and spirit or self, according to Indian philosophy are the vital constituents of man and India's traditions give overriding importance to suitably attune the mind and the intellect to the spirit. From the dawn of history, India has been engaged in an unending quest for truth behind the phenomena of life and universe. This exciting search inspired our ancient ancestors to raise different types of intellectual questions about the inscrutable ecstasy and mystery of human existence.

The Hindu attitude to religion vis-e-vis Abrahamic faiths

The Hindu attitude to religion is interesting. While fixed intellectual beliefs mark off one religion from another in Abrahamic faiths, Hinduism sets itself no such limits. In Hinduism, intellect is subordinated to intuition, dogma to experience, and outer expression to inward realization. Religion is not the acceptance of soulless academic abstractions or the regimented celebration of ceremonies, but a kind of life or experience. It is insight into the nature of reality (*darshana*) or experience of reality (*anubhava*). Religion is a specific attitude of the self, itself and no other, though it is mixed up generally

with intellectual views, authentic forms, aesthetic visions and moral valuations.

Hindu religious faith has its roots in experience

Religious experience is of a self-certifying character. It is *svatassiddha*. It carries its own credentials. The mechanical faith in the Abrahamic religions, which depends on authority and wishes to enjoy the consolations of religion without the labour of being religious, is quite different from the ancient Hindu religious faith which has its roots in experience. Hindu thought has no mistrust of reason. There can be no final breach between the two powers of the human mind, reason and intuition. In order to be able to say that religious experience reveals reality, in order to be able to transform religious certitude into logical certainty, we are obliged to give an intellectual account of the experience. But, like all perceptions, religious intuition is that from which thought has to start and to which it has to return. This kind of approach resulted in a breakthrough for a meditative quest and discovery of profound secrets of life by the great Rishis of ancient India.

The sacred scriptures of the Hindus record the spiritual experiences of the experts in the field of religion

The chief sacred scriptures of the Hindus, the Vedas, register the intuitions of the realized and perfected souls. They are not so much dogmatic dicta as transcripts from life. They record the spiritual experiences of souls strongly endowed with the sense for reality. They are held to be authoritative on the ground that they express the experiences of the experts in the field of religion. If the utterances of the Vedas were uninformed by spiritual insight, they would have no claim to our belief. The truths revealed in the Vedas are capable of being free-experienced on compliance with ascertained conditions. We can discriminate between the genuine and the spurious in religious experience, not only by means of logic but also through experience.

The distinctive character of India's intellectual pursuit can help evolve a new line of thought

Swami Jyotirmayananda says that the distinctive character of India's intellectual pursuit can really help evolve a new line of thought in the modern world. In order to highlight the distinctive character of India's spiritual and intellectual traditions, he quotes the observations of Mr. R. G. H. Siu, the Chinese scientist at MIT, USA. In his "Tao of Science", he has said: "Rational knowledge is rational only because it is obtainable through reason. The others obtainable through means other than reason are not irrational; they are extra-rational....We should contrast rational knowledge and intuitive knowledge. The role of discovery is quite different in these two forms. In rational knowledge it plays a promotional part. In intuitive knowledge, discovery, of the patent office variety, plays a minor role. Science has not accelerated human development in this area. If anything, she may have dulled man's sensibilities to intuitive riches by passive and, in some instances, antagonistic attitudes."

Sage-knowledge in the great Eastern tradition vis-e-vis pursuit of knowledge in the western tradition

Logicians may run down the fuzziness of intuition; the intuitionists decry the strictures of logic. Discursive reasoning is not possible without intuition. In the western tradition pursuit of knowledge involves the selection of a certain event or quality as the object of knowledge. Sage-knowledge in the great Eastern tradition does not do so. Mr. Siu distinguishes between ignorance and no-knowledge; between "having-no" knowledge and having "no-knowledge". The former is merely a state of ignorance; the latter is one of ultimate enlightenment and universal (sometimes even cosmic) sensibilities. With rational knowledge, the scientist is a spectator of nature. With "no knowledge", he becomes a participant in nature. There is a communion of understanding. Mr. Siu concludes "to plumb the depths of no-knowledge, one must rely on his own ineffable awareness of the ineffable".

India's intellectual and spiritual message to the world

Swami Jyotirmayananda says that in Indian culture the pursuit of intellectual knowledge, in fact, was considered as the means to reach 'sage-knowledge'. When intuitive knowledge is added to scientific knowledge, one becomes a man of culture with a sense of commitment to his fellow beings and nature and reaches near to perfection. This should be the goal of the common people. Then human society will evolve into a truer, purer, nobler and greater dimension of existence. This is India's intellectual and spiritual message to the world.

The modern-day descendants of Western Imperialism & their unlimited potential for endangering the safety, security & integrity of India

The people of present-day world can be conveniently classified into three distinct groups, each with an inherent special trait of its own: 1) The Exclusivist Group consisting of Abrahamic Faiths. 2) The Pseudo-Secular Group and 3) The Victimized Group consisting of peace-loving Hindus of the mighty and majestic Hindu Nation, well-known from time immemorial as 'Bharath'. That glorious name was discarded by the 'shrewd' British Imperialists in favour of 'India', a colonial appellation given by Europeans to our sacred land. The modern day descendents of Western Imperialism—global Islam, global Christianity and Marxism—continue to pursue their policies for global dominance, which have an unlimited potential for endangering the safety, security and integrity of our motherland. Swami Jyotirmayananda says: "In order to prevent it, we have to reenergize ourselves to protect and preserve our Dharmic Mores in the tradition of our Great Monk, Swami Vivekananda".

The Hindus never made an effort to learn the inner workings & the psyche of their adversaries

I fully endorse the view of Sri Vijay Kapoor: "The Hindu failure is that we have never made an effort to learn the inner working and the psyche of our adversaries. What motivates them to attack and kill the Hindus?Remove the Bible, Torah and the

Koran from the landscape and there will be no perpetual wars. How is it, that Hindus cannot grasp this daily event? Hindus walk in sleep! If we Hindus fail to define what inflicts us, we can never get rid of the 'VIRUS', which is killing us. To my mind, that 'Virus' is our ignorance of what motivates Christians and Islamic forces to keep attacking Hindu culture either through guns or via missionaries. The anti-dote to the 'Virus', which inflicts us, is to read and absorb the causes of daily carnage carried out by the Abrahamic Faiths.”

Need for the propagation of the all-inclusive, spiritual, pluralistic Hindutva

Professor Babu Suseelan is right in saying that HINDUS have no choice but to UNITE, if they ever hope to regain dignity, strength and political power to confront the evil forces ranged against them. Aggressive assertiveness is required to project their desire for peace and coexistence. Hindus should be active, not passive. Hindu unity and activism will rectify and prevent injustices and abuse whenever and wherever they occur. Our survival, indeed that of the whole world, demands the propagation of the all-inclusive, spiritual, pluralistic Hindutva.

The imperative need for bringing together the various scattered spiritual forces working on Indian soil

Swami Vivekananda clearly understood the imperative national need for unifying the nation by bringing together the various scattered spiritual forces working on the Indian soil. With tremendous insight and vision, he showed the way for achieving both national solidarity and collective national vision. Let us hear the bracing words of Swami Vivekananda in this context: “National union of India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces. A nation in India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune.” In another context he said: “Secret of power lies in unity and organisation. Bring out life-giving common principles, we have to build upon the common ground of Dharma.”

A primer for understanding the dynamic forces of Sanatana Dharma and Hindutva pervading the west

Swami Jyotirmayananda's book can be used as a primer for understanding the letter and spirit of the dynamic forces of Sanatana Dharma and Hindutva pervading the West, more particularly the USA today. The spiritual process is a day-by-day, step-by-step unfolding of our consciousness, a process of breaking down stale, conditioned and dead parts of ourselves to allow rebirth to take place. We are our own inveterate enemies stuck in stagnant pools of self-righteousness. We are afraid to step into the unknown. We are afraid to be touched by creative energy. Anyone who reads this great book by Swami Jyotirmayananda will get filled and inspired by a new creative energy. HE IS A GREAT GURU. The Guru/Disciple dynamic takes place because both surrender to higher energy. Each demands the other to go deeper. It is a question of how much the Guru and disciple want enlightenment. They reflect each other's tireless need to open to higher energy in the universe. Let me conclude with a mystical poem:

Lightly, lightly—
Soaring above the dread of the waters,
In the moment of dedication,
All strength gathered, all life at stake
Plunging into the deep.
But no rest on the waves, constrained by currents.
Again over the waters, stillness over the swell,
Borne by the wind with the strength of our own wings.
Never land, never nesting place-
Until the final plunge when the deep takes back its own.

* * *

IRREFUTABLE CLAIM ON INDIA'S GIFT TO THE WORLD

– K. P. Shivkumar

Yuva Bharati, November, 2009.

<http://www.vkendra.org/>

An attempt at presenting the tone and tenor, the spirit of the content

The title of the book has its roots in Swami Vivekananda's words "India's gift to the world is the light spiritual". Swami Jyotirmayananda has put his heart and soul into the task of establishing through a series of chapters, this irrefutable claim of Swami Vivekananda on India's gift to the world. The book is a collection of several seminar papers presented by the Swamiji at various indological conferences in USA together with a couple of articles published there, and some brochures brought out there for specific occasions. With a Benediction from Swami Dayananda Saraswati of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, and Swami Muktananda of Anandashram, and an Editor's Note followed by a summary of each topic by Srikant of Integral Books, Anandashram, Kerala, the central theme of the book opens up. This review is not strictly a topic-wise analysis of the book, but an attempt at presenting its tone and tenor, the spirit of the content.

Considering the relevance in the context of the global scenario

The book is a well thought out publication considering its relevance in the context of the global scenario in the name of religion. It is, in a way, an appeal to the Hindus all over the world to come together and stand firm, as they are in great danger of being overrun by other religions, namely those of the Abrahamic faith. With their gospel of exclusivism, and conversion as their watch-word, the fundamentalists are targeting the Hindu faith, which clearly means the destruction of the followers of Hinduism and those of the other faiths that are a close ally of Hinduism. And towards this end, what means they adopt is immaterial. This is the grave situation we Indians

(say Hindus) are in. And, as if adding fuel to the fire, our secular media play to the gallery. Some seculars in India, for example, are shamelessly siding with the ISI in their hatred campaign against Hindus. Hindus are not sufficiently united, and they don't aggressively defend their religion as others do. This is their greatest weakness.

Sanatana Dharma has its pre-eminent role in respect of its contribution to spiritual wisdom

Against this background, it is very essential to know that the Sanatana Dharma (more conveniently called Hinduism) has a pre-eminent role in respect of its contribution to spiritual wisdom. But to grasp this truth, one should have an impartial vision. The fact is not that Hinduism is faulty, but the unaccommodative and unassimilative nature of other religions simply cannot tolerate any religion outside their purview. Therefore, Islamic fundamentalists call non-Muslims, that is, Hindus, as Kafirs, and Christian fanatics call them as Heathens. Strangely, even the followers of the various Abrahamic faiths don't see eye to eye with each other though they all profess Monotheism. World peace hangs by the sword of Damocles.

The ancient wisdom of India aims at the holistic development of man

India's spiritual legacy springs from the Vedas which are revelations of eternal truths experienced by the Rishis or Seers. The Vedanta, that is, the end portions of the Vedas are the Upanishads. The Bhagavad Gita is the essence of the Upanishads. The thoughtful minds of Europe were quick to realize that India is abundantly gifted with spiritual wealth. Charles Wilkins translated the Bhagavad Gita into English. Warren Hastings, the first British Governor General of India wrote a fitting introduction to it praising India's spiritual glory. Scholars like Schopenhauer and Walt Whitman were eloquent in their acknowledgement of India's spiritual wealth and its antiquity. The ancient wisdom of India aims at the holistic development of man. The author-Swamiji says: "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" (p. 35). This fact is also clearly reflected in what the renowned historian Dr. R.C. Majumdar said: "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" (p. 37). In the chapter on 'India's Intellectual Tradition', the statement: "the quest for truth and the spirit of free inquiry have been the hallmark of Indian culture", sums up the central idea of the chapter. But for such freedom of inquiry, there would not have emerged so many systems of Philosophy, each system touching a level of intellectual excellence, one system proving the better of the other. This freedom of thought, this spirit of fearless inquiry is the greatest boon the Hindu tradition, the tradition of India has bequeathed to the people. The *Puraanas* and the *Itihaasas* have moulded the national psyche of India. In short, as the author puts it, "India's intellectual wisdom is oriented to evolve and develop the inner resources of man."(p. 59)

We have a duty to present facts in the proper light

Dharma is, generally speaking, common sense ethics. It is based on universal principles. For example, one does good because he knows good begets good and bad begets bad. "As you sow, so shall you reap." The norms of good behaviour have the same moral sanction. "Do as you would like to be done by." The banes of the modern world, when enumerated, will be a very long list. It is because Dharma, that is, righteousness, has been relegated to the background. Inherently Dharma is universal in its embrace. Dharma has its roots in Vedic wisdom. That is how we have the concept of Sanatana Dharma. Respect for all life is ingrained in Sanatana Dharma. "Live and let live" follows as a natural corollary. The Rig Veda which proclaims 'let noble thoughts come from all directions' cannot teach

fundamentalism to Hindus. In the light of these facts, it is indeed saddening that self-proclaimed rationalists and materialists attack the Hindu faith on as many fronts as possible, and they don't spare the tradition of temple worship either. But we have a duty to present facts in the proper light.

Temples and their significant role as cultural and spiritual centers

Unlike churches and mosques, the Hindu temples are not just prayer halls. The consecration of Deities in the shrines and regular *mantric* chants, rituals, *abhisekams*, etc help to sustain the divine vibrations in the temples. Whether devotees come or not, it is mandatory on the part of the temple priest to perform worship daily. They call it *Trikaala Pooja*. It is not without this faith and devotion that there are so many temples in India and abroad. The author says: "Today there are more than 700 Mandirs in North America. Of these, USA has more than 400 Mandirs, the remaining being in Canada. New York has the largest number of Mandirs – 85. California comes next with 55 Mandirs." In the words of Pujya Swami Dayanandaji, "The Mandirs have to play a significant role in the growth of the Hindu community in terms of its capacity to uphold the Hindu Dharma." Those of other faiths dub Hindus as idol worshippers. This is because they don't have proper understanding of temples and their significant role as cultural and spiritual centers.

The concept of Ishwara is different from the anthropomorphic concept of God as upheld in Christianity. The Monotheistic concept of God as one all-powerful monarch sitting at some distant corner high above in the heaven is different from the Hindu concept of Ishwara. As Swami Dayananda puts it very succinctly, "we don't say there is only one God, we say there is only God." In the chapter on 'The Role of Mandirs and Religious Institutions', among other things, the concept of Ishwara has been elaborated.

Temples as sacred places for the dissemination of higher values of life

Temples should be treated as sacred places for the dissemination of higher values of life; they should be ideal grounds for spiritual training. Our temples should spread some minimum knowledge to the people. One should know, for example, that the Hindu tradition is not found just in temples. It is founded on life-elevating values – values that help one evolve intellectually, morally and spiritually. There is a war on Hindu Dharma. Therefore, it is essential that Hindus, and Hindu youths in particular, equip themselves with a minimum knowledge of their spiritual tradition. This is part of their Dharma. Appendix 2 deals with Swami Dayananda's prescriptions for a minimum knowledge. "Minimum knowledge is knowledge that this *jagat*, world, which includes my body, my mind, is *srishti*, intelligently put together. The whole thing is called *jagat*, which has no equivalent in English because it includes your body-mind-sense complex. And this entire *jagat* is Ishwara" (p. 221). Temples, whether in India or abroad, have a great role to play in this direction. About 25 per cent of the book is devoted to the importance of the role of temples and religious institutions in the upkeep of the Hindu culture and spiritual values. Temples can also function as centers of inter-faith dialogues so that there can be more scope for religious harmony, peace and friendship.

In a world that seeks to profit by undermining the glory of Hindu Dharma

The review will be incomplete without reference to 'VivekaJyoti', an online paper launched in 2005. Its importance cannot be underestimated in a world that seeks to profit by undermining the glory of Hinduism in all possible ways. 'VivekaJyoti' is rising in its popularity. Those interested are welcome to the site: vivekajyoti.blogspot.com.