

**THE RELEVANCE
OF
HINDU DHARMA
FOR
THE MODERN WORLD
& ITS
RENAISSANCE
IN THE
NEW MILLENNIUM**

With an Appendix:

An eminent US academic scholar
& a popular Danish columnist
strongly react against
the denigrating
anti-Hindu propaganda
of vested interests.

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PREFACE

This brochure pointing out the special relevance of the Sanatana Dharma In the modern world, seeks to highlight the recent efforts for a renaissance of the Dharma in the New Millennium, both in India and the USA. Due to space constraint, all the details of the latter could not be accommodated here but online and other references are provided at the end so that one can go through them and be thereby benefited.

An attempt is made herein to present the ever-modern significance of Sanatana Dharma and the Dharmic traditions originated in India and the principles of the Dharma, which are the natural outcome from the divine dimensions of life designed to reinforce mankind culturally and spiritually.

Though we have the track record of thousands of years of the Dharmic traditions in promoting the concept of non-violence (*ahimsa*), based on the Supreme Truth of the unity of existence and the consequent deep interest in the welfare not only of mankind but of all living beings, there is also an ignorance and misrepresentation of the infinite wisdom of Hinduism, which highlights the Oneness of the Many, founded on the all-pervasive Supreme Truth.

There is a special relevance of Sanatana Dharma, particularly after September 11, 2001, to promote everywhere the concept of universality and unity of all mankind as a Human Family, which has its eternal foundation on the Supreme Truth. There is also a special responsibility of Sanatana Dharma to help unify and maintain the concepts of the Dharma present in diverse human cultures and thus spread the gospel of World Peace and the welfare of all in all nations. This will be based on the universal approach of Hindu culture which ensures the freedom of enquiry and the freedom to pursue one's suitable path for spiritual realization.

A special mention has been made of the services being rendered for bringing about co-operation among all the Dharmic paths under the leadership of Swami Dayananda Saraswati (an erudite scholar, an eminent teacher of Vedanta, and the Founder of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, both in India and in the USA), which

have their growing impact in India and abroad, and of the ongoing efforts of such organizations as the Hindu Council in UK. Also a mention has been made of the possibilities and opportunities for the Hindu diaspora in Canada, Fiji, South Africa, West Indies, Guyana, Surinam, Mauritius, etc., and above all, the hurdles to be faced in unifying the Dharmic efforts in the light of the political and social misrepresentation of secularists and the fundamentalists of the Abrahamic faiths.

Nevertheless, there are ample opportunities for the Hindu diaspora to use the media for popularizing the message of the universality and love for all mankind and all living beings, highlighting them as the diverse expressions of one Supreme Truth.

It must be mentioned here that the content of this brochure is from the paper presented by SJ at the Sixth Biennial Conference on 'Vedic Ideas for Global Harmony & Peace in Modern Context' organized by the World Association of Vedic Studies (WAVES), and held from July 8th to July 10th at the main campus of the University of Houston in Houston, Texas.

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“The Indo-Aryan civilization is an extraordinary pristine civilization which we Europeans have never yet surpassed. It is a civilization without a parallel that India has given to the world.

“O! Ancient Land of India, O! Protector of mankind, I bow to thee. O! Sacred Land, centuries of horrible atrocities have not been able to destroy you, welcome to thee. O! Originator and Mother of faith, love, art and science, I bow to thee.”

-- M. Louis Jacolliot

THE RELEVANCE OF HINDU DHARMA FOR THE MODERN WORLD & ITS RENAISSANCE IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

At the very outset, it must be pointed out that 'Dharma', a unique Sanskrit word, has been wrongly translated by the so-called intellectuals, in the field of sociology and politics, particularly in India and abroad as well. Hence a clarification is warranted.

Dharma is the foundation, as it were, of the inherent laws involved in the process of transition from the un-manifested to the manifested realm of name and form. The laws are eternal, and not bound by the linearity of past-present-future in the time axis. The intrinsic and inherent spiritual laws are revealed to the exalted consciousness of ancient Indian Seers (*Rishis*), not products of intellectual/logical deductions -- not social values/theories/hypothesis. Therefore a correct understanding of its meaning is a 'must' for right living. Consequences of our wrong living are already evident on this planet.

Let us now have a glance of the present state of humanity which an eminent psychiatrist highlights in his thought-provoking book, "*A Journey in Consciousness*".

"Our modern civilization has all the negative black spots on it. Anyone who reflects seriously would realize that it is a barbaric and dehumanizing civilization with all its ugly heads. Relentless and greedy exploitation of mother nature, consumerism, abuse of audio-visual media for the detriment of society, economic agenda without any altruistic motive, political philosophy with sinister hidden designs, progress without the noble intention to help every being on earth, unprecedented torture of animals, a military technology to annihilate each other, corruption in every walk of life, vulgar exploitation of women, pornography, skyrocketing violence and crime, uncontrolled spread of AIDs, uneven economical prosperity which concentrates power in the hands of a few malicious nations or individuals, ferociously indulgent life style, callous disregard to the downtrodden and the

miserable, extreme self-centeredness, competitive rat-race, lack of complementarity with a 'live and let live' ideal, morbid interpersonal relationship based on mutual exploitation etc., are the examples. At this crucial juncture, revival and regeneration of our innate spiritual instinct is the need of the hour. Whatever nation or religion we may belong to, our final spiritual goal is the same: love and compassion to every being on earth and a reverence to our Mother Nature and peaceful co-existence with each other."

As Sadguru Swami Ramdas rightly says, "Dharma means that which upholds and elevates.... Dharma therefore signifies the knowledge of the great truth which upholds all things.... From the light of this knowledge alone can the life of a human being be harmoniously adjusted in all its various aspects." Therefore a right understanding and knowledge of Dharmic laws in nature and its earnest and effective application in our day to day life is the need of the hour. It is the inability of this so-called modern civilization to enable man to adjust harmoniously with the various aspects of life, -- that has posed a great threat to existence of beings on our planet.

Dharma is the central core of spirituality and being universal in message, it won't antagonize any religion. Dharma is inherent in all religions, as sweetness is there in all sweet drinks, but Dharma itself can't be equated with religion. Dharma is not 'religion', not 'moral codes', not 'teachings of personalities', not 'a bundle of opinions', and it has nothing to do with doctrines and dogmas. To put it in a nut shell, Dharma is the art and science of harmonious living and peaceful coexistence. Dharma is the right way of living, with a 'live and let live' attitude. Only Dharma can save our planet, which seems to be on the brink of a disaster.

The universal and all-embracing principles of the Sanatana Dharma, popularly known as Hinduism, are the most effective means to combat the ills of war and religious fanaticism that affect the humanity today, causing untold suffering and wanton bloodshed. The world needs today the solace of the Vedic dictum, "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" -- "The whole world of life is verily a family." The modern world has to imbibe the Hindu model that recognizes and accepts the plurality of religious approaches.

It is the perfect scientific approach of the Vedantic wisdom to human development, that is highlighted in the motto of Hinduism, "*bahujana hithaya, bahujana sukhaaya*", which aspires for the welfare and happiness of all people. It advocates and aims at the human expansion to universality. Never indulging in parochialism or pessimism, it always has a universal outlook with optimistic thoughts and presents a noble world-view for the advancement of mankind.

It declares the highest goal of humanity as "*asato maa sadgamaya*" -- "lead me from untruth to Reality", "*tamaso maa jyotirgamaya*" -- "lead me from darkness to Light", "*mrityor maa amritangamaya*" -- "lead me from death to immortality." It looks forward for a world free from wars and degrading religious conflicts.

It is this universality of Hinduism that inspired the Western thinker, Lord Morley, to observe: "What is found in the Vedas can not be found anywhere else", and Manning to emphatically highlight the fact that "the philosophy of the Hindus is another proof of their superiority in civilization and intellect to the moderns. The Hindus had the widest range of mind of which man is capable."

"India is culturally the Mother of Japan", says Prof. Nakamura of Japan. "For centuries she has in her own characteristic way been exercising her influence on the thought and culture of Japan."

"The Vedas exalt our life. All philosophies and science of Europe appear insignificant before the Vedas," says Prof. Emerson. Certainly, Hinduism is universal enough to influence the culture and the thought of the modern world.

It is the ever relevant concept of Dharma that had dawned in the consciousness of the Seekers of Truth of India thousands of years ago which can lead humanity to greater dimensions of cultural progress and expansion. The following is the full quotation from Sadguru Swami Ramdas highlighting the essence of Dharma: "Dharma means that which upholds and elevates. Hence the basic principle underlying all manifestation of life is, in the real sense, Dharma. This principle is what we call God or

Truth. Dharma therefore signifies the knowledge of the great Truth which upholds all things. From the light of this knowledge alone can the life of a human being be harmoniously adjusted in all its various aspects. So the aim of Dharma is to infuse into all activities of life the splendor, bliss and peace of the Divine Reality".

This scientific principle of human progress was dawned in the mind of the incomparable explorers of ancient India, who probed deep into every aspect of man and universe. And about this exploration, the famous American historian Will Durant observes: "India's work in science is both very old and very young.... Religion being the core of Indian life, these sciences were cultivated first as contributory to religion -- astronomy grew out of the worship of the heavenly bodies; grammar and philology developed out of the insistence that even prayer and formula should be textually and phonetically correct. The greatest of Hindu astronomers and mathematicians, Aryabhata, discussed in verse such subjects as quadric equations, solstices, sines and value of π . He explained eclipses, solstices, and the earth and its diurnal revolution on its axis, and wrote in daring anticipation of renaissance sciences. The sphere of the star is stationary, and the earth by its revolution, produces the daily rising and setting of planets and the stars".

Nimous Laplace was inspired to observe: "It is India that gave us the ingenious method of expressing all numbers by ten symbols, each receiving a value of position as well as an absolute value, a profound and important idea".

It is indeed interesting to have a glance at the various aspects of their profound explorations:

The Arabs borrowed the use of zero from India. The decimal system was known to Aryabhata and Brahmagupta, long before its appearance, in the writings of the Arabs and the Syrians. It was adopted by China from Buddhist missionaries; Aryabhata drew up a table of sines and, Suryasiddhanta, a system of trigonometry, more advanced than any thing known to Greeks; In 200 B.C. Nagarjuna devoted an entire volume to Mercury; Kanada, founder of the Vaiseshika Philosophy held that the

world was composed of atoms as many in kind as the various elements; Vachaspati, like Newton, interpreted light as composed of minute particles, emitted by substances and striking the eyes; Anatomy and physiology like some aspects of chemistry were by-products of Hindu medicine; Charaka composed a Samhita of medicine and gave his followers an almost Hippocratic conception of their calling: "Not for self, not for the fulfillment of any earthly desire of gain, but solely for the good of suffering humanity should you treat your patients and so excel all"; Sushruta described many surgical operations -- cataract, hernia, lithotomy, caesarian section, etc., and 121 surgical instruments, including lancets, sound forceps, catheters and rectal and vaginal speculums; Vaccination, unknown to Europe before 18th century, was known in India as early as 550 A.D.

"In the times of Alexander", says, Ganison, "Hindu Physicians and surgeons enjoyed a well deserved reputation for superior knowledge and skill".

All scientific discoveries of the followers of Sanatana Dharma were aimed at the cause of human well-being and prosperity. For the all-round development of human life our ancient rishis felt the need for the integration of scientific approach and spiritual life.

Names of the noted works of the great sages of ancient India are mentioned here with reverence, for your information:

Vedic Mathematics of Vedic Rishis compiled by Swami Bharati Krishna Thirtha; *Kaala Sastram* of Rishi Shaunaka; *Brahat Samhita* of Varahamihira; *Amsu Bhothim* of Maharishi Bharadwaja; *Golaadhyaaya* of Bhaskaracharya, *Akshara Laksha Ganitha Sastram* of Maharishi Valmiki; *Soudamini Kala* of Maharishi Matanga, *Anukarana Sabda Sastram* of Rishi Kandika; *Chitra Karma* of Rishi Bhima; *Brahmanda Sastram* of Maharishi Vyasa; *Shakti Tantram* of Rishi Agastya; *Anda Koustubham* of Maharishi Parasara; *Arya Bhatteeyam* of Arya Bhatta; *Megothpatti Prakaranam* of Maharishi Angirasa, and so on, can be only some names and they are dealing with all the modern sciences only.

We should remember that it is in the mind of such great explorers the wisdom of Vedanta, which forms the highest concept of universal spirituality, emerged.

In our modern times, mankind is passing through a kind of mindless skepticism and destructive despair. No sensible person in this scientific age can accept and adore the out-dated dogmas and theories of salvation propagated by some fanatic theologians. As the very basis of Hindu Dharma is founded on logic and reason, mankind is today naturally looking towards the rational spirituality of Sanatana Dharma for a greater vision of life. It is right time for the Hindu Dharma to take the initiative to promote its principles as it can bestow a greater destiny to mankind. "*Tamaso maa jyotirgamaya*", the clarion call of Vedas which means, "Lead me from darkness to Light", should inspire the whole humanity.

Hindu Dharma is the science of human harmony and all-round development. It not only aims at the development of the mind and body of the individual, but also strives for the collective welfare of the entire family, the society, the nation and, ultimately, of the whole world, in perfect harmony.

While the Abrahamic religions follow the dictum of "the survival of the fittest", which is the root cause of all sorts of exploitation and violence on the weak and poor nations, Sanatana Dharma very much believes in the policy of "live and let live" i.e. "*Jeevatha Jeevyasam*" (*Atharva Veda*). According to the historical accounts, India never invaded any country in the past.

And again, while the Abrahamic faiths consider man as a born sinner, and they love to divide the humanity into two hostile camps of 'believers' and 'non-believers' wherein the latter need to be converted to be saved from perdition and eternal hellfire, the principles of Sanathana Dharma are designed to unite the people of the world into one international family. It declares: "*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*", the whole world is one family. While the materialistic viewpoints of the West consider the world as an accidentally emerged stage of meaningless life forms and man as a mere toy of a blind Nature, Hindu Dharma emphasizes

the fact that all beings are the expressions of the One Supreme Reality and that man is equipped with the innate spiritual strength and freedom of discovering, realizing and manifesting his true divine nature. And consequently, Nature is not something meant for human exploitation, consumption and self-aggrandizement but for adoration as the veritable manifestation of the Divine, by extending universal love and service to one and all.

Because of its universality, Hindu Dharma is inherently equipped to proclaim itself to be the finest way of life for the whole mankind, i.e. *Maanava Dharma*. It is a fact that all modern, liberal and noble thoughts like democracy, universalism and religious tolerance, etc., have their origin in Sanatana Dharma. The *Rig-Veda* emphasizes the spirit of this culture in the following words: "Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions" (*aa no bhadraah kratavo yantu vishvathah*).

Of course, Sanatana Dharma and India have ever been supporting the natural principle of "unity in diversity" and it respects the noble values of all religions, thereby generating universal peace and harmony. Since Sanatana Dharma is the mother of all ancient cultures, it stands for the co-existence and peaceful evolution of all religious, social, and economic systems of the world.

Sanatana Dharma has never established its colonies or forced people to become slaves as done by many western religionists.

Sanatana Dharma has never committed inhuman atrocities like inquisition -- burning people alive for refusing to get converted or committing fraud and tempting with allurements for changing the faith of the masses. Religious conversions have resulted in tension and hatred among different communities and races. The Sanatana Dharma never indulges in the inhuman act of converting others and destroying their places of worship. "*Ahimsa paramodharmah*", non-violence is the supreme Dharma -- man's foremost obligation -- is the watchword of Sanatana Dharma, and it is the sheet anchor of all the saints and sages of India, who invariably exemplified in their life the teachings of Ahimsa.

“May all be safe in this world” is the Vedic concept of safety and world peace. The Vedic dictum is: *“sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramayaah, sarve bhadrani pashyantu, maa kashchit dukha bhaagbhavet,”* and *“loka samasta sukhino bhavantu, sarve janaa sukhino bhavantu, Om shanthih, shanthih, shanthih”*, meaning, may all be happy, may none suffer, may all be free from afflictions, may all be endowed with resources and necessities of life, may all behold what is good and auspicious, may all be wedded to the vow of commonweal, and may none suffer from sorrow. May the world be happy and peaceful, may all people be happy and peaceful, and may peace be unto all”.

The twin tenets of Hindu Dharma -- Satya and Ahimsa (truth and non-violence) -- adopted by Gandhiji throughout his political career have changed the course of history and prompted many countries of the world to get their freedom in that way. Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the greatest disciple of Mahatma Gandhi says, “If science and violence are allowed to exist together they are bound to destroy the world sooner or later.”

Non-violence should be the motto of the whole world. Therein lies the salvation of the mankind. In fact that is the ‘sacred gift’ of Sanatana Dharma to the whole of mankind.

War in this atomic age can lead mankind to extinction. Such a disaster should be averted at any cost, and Sanatana Dharma can play an important role today in this regard. “Prevent the disaster before it strikes you” is the significant saying of the Vedas.

Arnold Toynbee and other learned people have repeatedly stressed that the non-violence of Sanatana Dharma should take the initiative to lead the world so that the world can progress peacefully and prosperously. The 'Atom for Peace' and the foreign policy of India is one of the modern outcomes of the ancient philosophy of Sanatana Dharma.

Schilling has rightly pointed out: “Through the Upanishads the wisdom of mankind matured. Today that wisdom is essential not only for the rebirth of the Indian nation but also for the re-education of the human race.”

Sanatana Dharma seeks to make specific contribution to the proper and powerful advancement of science without any kind of destructive motives and degenerating methods.

Sanatana Dharma is a science for the betterment of humanity. Hence it could produce great scientists, mathematicians, artists, poets, musicians, statesmen, businessmen, philosophers, warriors and persons distinguishing themselves in all walks of life, those who could enrich humanity through development of spiritual powers. This is the reason why the followers of Sanatana Dharma are intelligent, generous and hardworking.

The dire need of this space age are universality of outlook, recognition and appreciation of 'unity in diversity', yogic tranquillity of mind, non-violence and the philosophy of 'live and let live', respect for womanhood, a mastery over the developing modern science to lead it in the right direction, preservation of ecology and natural environment.

The vested interests spread many misconceptions about this unique human culture that is Hinduism. One of their cherished indulgences to derogate Hinduism is their overemphasis of caste differences in the Hindu society. The ancient law-makers devised an efficient, welfare society by organizing it on a professional basis. Even some of the western social scientists have held that it was an efficient social and vocational system. However, later it got degenerated into casteism with its attendant social evils. However, there have been always sincere efforts at social reformation, from time to time, to end this social evil and social inequality based on caste. However, we should also remember that there have never been in India such bloodshed and sufferings caused to millions through religious wars known as crusades, the cruelest incidents of inquisition that took place in the West dominated by Christianity and the havoc played by jihadi movements of the Islamic countries.

Caste system was not at all an inevitable part of Sanatana Dharma since saints have emerged from all castes and strata of life and they are worshipped even to this day by one and all, irrespective of their caste. Inter-caste marriages took place even during Mahabharata times, and it has been a continuous process

in the history of Hindus ever. All right thinking people have always condemned casteism or narrowness of any kind. Saints have always proclaimed the equality of castes and exhorted the people to unite.

Some of the great saints who strove for social reformation were: Namdev, a tailor; Sadna, a butcher; Kabir, a weaver; Ravidas, a cobbler; Sena, a barber; Nabha, a pariah; and Dadu, a cotton-ginning Muslim. In our own times, Swami Adbhutananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, was an illiterate domestic servant in his pre-monastic days. And the renowned woman saint, Mata Amritanandamayi, who is adored by the whole world today, was born in a humble family in a remote place in Kerala, as the daughter of a poor fisherman.

Ramanujacharya, the proponent of Dwaita philosophy rebelled against the caste restrictions in the 11th century. Basava, the founder of the Lingayat movement, rose against casteism in the 12th century. And, Ramananda, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Sri Narayana Guru and many other great saintly personalities took effective steps to eradicate the system of discrimination. Two centuries ago, Rammohan Roy in Bengal became vocal against caste system, eventhough he belonged to a so-called upper caste. Actually each day the citadel of caste hierarchy is being demolished and shattered by the followers of Sanatana Dharma of today. It is high time that the essential nature of Hinduism, which is based on the highest values of life, is projected to the world through all effective means to defeat the wileful campaigns of the detractors.

Sanatana Dharma is the one common ground for the whole humanity to unite irrespective of religious and national differences. It is a common ground upon which we shall have to build the modern world. 'Unity' is in fact a synonym for 'Sanatana Dharma'. Therefore it is a necessary condition for the harmonious progress of India as well as the world. There should be recognition of Dharma throughout the length and breadth of the world.

The world has witnessed the most terrible human tragedy of the present century on the 11th September, 2001, brought about

by the religious fanaticism of the worst kind. It highlighted the terrible fact how man became a veritable barbarian in the name of the "All Merciful God" of the "Religion of Peace."

As Arnold Toynbee has rightly pointed out: "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."

Today, the world is passing through a critical period. Forces of disruption supported by the fundamentalist nations are hell-bent upon destroying the social fabric of human brotherhood and unity. Some of these forces have access to nuclear weapons of mass destruction. Mankind is passing through a phase of skepticism and despair. How can it accept in the present scientific age the imposition of outdated dogmas and theories of salvation? At this critical juncture, mankind needs the help of Hinduism because it is a culture which believes in logic and reason. It is the most scientific and modern religion in the world. Now the time has come for Hinduism to take its proper place in the world because it can change and ennoble the destiny of mankind and can lead it from darkness unto light, because Hinduism is the science for the development of the mind and body of the individual, the family, the society and ultimately of the entire world, in perfect harmony.

The important factor for the relevance of our Dharma today is that war in this atomic age will lead to the extinction of mankind, but Sanatana Dharma can help avert this disaster because it believes in '*Ahimsa parmodharma*', and has produced apostles of peace like Shankaracharya, Buddha, Mahavira, Vivekananda and others who have not only preached but also practiced non-violence to perfection, in thought, word and deed.

Sanatana Dharma embraces all the noble ideas that have emerged in the whole world. What is needed today is to bring out its life-giving principles, and let every man, woman, and child, throughout the world understand them, know them, and try to

apply and practise them in their lives. This is the most necessary, important step which has to be taken.

In this context, I would like to make a special mention of the services being rendered for bringing about co-operation among all the Dharmic paths under the leadership of Swami Dayananda Saraswati (the Founder of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, both in India and abroad), which have their growing impact in India and abroad, and also of the ongoing efforts of such organizations as the Hindu Council in UK.

In the Fall of 2003, history was made in Chennai, India, when for the first time in the annals of modern Hinduism, over fifty of the spiritual leaders from different parts of India met and discussed for three days the future of Sanatana Dharma and the many issues facing those who are born and raised in the Dharmic traditions of India. The conclave took place under the banner of "Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha" since it brought together many *Peethadipathis*, *Matadhipathis*, and *Mahamandaleshwars* to deliberate and garner their energies for addressing the many issues confronting Hindus in India. Swami Dayananda Saraswati was the principal spirit and coordinator for this Acharya Sabha Conference.

It was an exceedingly well-organized meeting. It was heart-warming for all to see for the first time the emergence of a collective realization of the urgent need to seek solutions for the problems confronting Hindus both in India and overseas. Several issues, such as, deregulating the Hindu Religious and Endowment Act in conformity with the freedom and autonomy that the Government of India accords to non-Hindu places of worship, the abusive practices of Christian evangelists promoting religious conversions as essential to their faiths, governmental use of funds from Hindu temples to defray the costs of Hajj pilgrimages, denigration of beliefs and deities of Hindus by preachers of both Christianity and Islam, the absence of a uniform civil code for all Indian citizens, the perpetration abroad of unsavory images of India's Hindu traditions etc., were the topics discussed by scholars and reacted to by the Acharyas who offered their wisdom and guidance to deal with them.

In this context it should be noted that earlier there was another conference of all Dharma Samsthas of India, which took place in Hyderabad during December 4th and 5th, in 2002, under the banner of “Dharma Samstha Pramukh Sabha”. Representatives of 13 Dharma Samsthas participated in the Conference and at its concluding session, 19 Dharma Samsthas had given consent to become members of a Federation of the Dharma Samsthas in India. In a historical context, one could say that the Acharya Sabha conference in Chennai was a sequel to the Hyderabad Conference. For both the Hyderabad conference as well as the Chennai Sabha conference, Swami Dayanandaji was the catalyst.

The Acharya Sabha’s success in Chennai and its radiating effects reached the shores of the United States to kindle a similar move for the Indian diaspora there to come together as a united community to safeguard the interests of Sanatana Dharma through the fostering of solidarity among the leaders of Hindu Organizations and representatives of the Hindu temples there. For the first time in North America, 400 participants representing more than 80 Hindu temples and religious organizations came together for a Dharma Summit from August 13-15, 2005. The conference included Hindus, Jains and Sikhs.

The theme of the Summit was: “The Future of Dharmic Traditions in North America.” The concern that many young generation Hindus in U.S.A. are not learning and maintaining Hindu traditions was clearly evident throughout the conference that brought together presidents and boards of trustees of many temples, spiritual institutions, and organizations, together with many intellectuals and committed volunteer leaders from throughout the U.S.A. The rich mix of Swamis, intellectuals, temple trustees and youth leaders provided a unique opportunity to exchange different viewpoints, thoughts and ideas and share experiences on how to impart spiritual and cultural education to future generations. They also discussed the serious problem of distortion and misinformation about Hinduism and India prevalent in schools, colleges, and in the media.

The positive experience of this conference resulted in overwhelming demand for a “Hindu Collective Initiative” that will allow all Hindu religious organizations to work together to shape the future of Hinduism in North America, raise awareness of issues, and provide a platform for a united Hindu voice. Together they will address issues such as promoting changes to enhance the participation of the new generation, correcting biased and distorted views of Hindu traditions in educational institutions and the media, improving temple management, developing resources, enhancing the role of the temple, and helping the temples and religious organizations to reach out to the larger community with voluntary services (*Seva*) and education.

In the second Conference of the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha (held at Mumbai, from October 16 to 18, 2005, at the initiative and under the convenorship of Swami Dayananda Saraswati), Heads of ancient Sampradayas, which collectively constitute Sanatana Dharma (Hindu Dharma) deliberated on various issues of importance to Hindu Society. Sixty-four members comprising Acharyas and Mahamandaleswars of several Peethas and Akharas, from different parts of the country representing seventeen Sampradayas participated in the Conference. Three major issues relating to the sense of self-esteem and health of the Hindu Society were discussed: The control of temples by the governments treating them as merely charitable institutions and not as places of worship and cultural values to Hindus world-wide; the rampant religious conversion in the country, that is taking place unabated, without let or hindrance from governments; and the unjust reverse discrimination to which Hindus are subjected by organs of State in the country under a wholly untenable pretext of 'secularism'. The three day conference concluded after passing unanimously several resolutions for future action.

The above chronology of events are presented here, so that you can appreciate the energy, enthusiasm and expectations of the efforts so far expended by the devotees and the Acharyas in furthering the renaissance of Sanatana Dharma both in India and among the Hindu communities in North America. We realize that there may be movements in other parts of the world where

Hindus live and work. We know for certain that in the United Kingdom, Hindus are well organized. Hopefully, in the years to come, Sanatana Dharmis everywhere will come together globally at regular intervals much as other religionists do to protect diverse modes of worship in the preservation of their respective cultures and heritages. As Sanatana Dharmis we applaud all such conclaves of other religions but often neglect to recognize the wisdom in uniting ourselves to highlight our innately pluralistic approach to Godhead and faith without ever having to belittle or nullify the faith of others.

As already mentioned, apart from USA, in U.K also efforts are made to establish Sanatana Dharma, in the form of Hindu Council in U.K. We have to search for the possibilities and opportunities for the Hindu diasporas in Canada, Fiji, South Africa, West Indies, Guyana, Surinam, Mauritius, etc.,

There are so many hurdles in unifying the Dharmic efforts in the light of the political and social misrepresentation of so-called secularists and the fundamentalists of the Abrahamic faiths. We have to create opportunities for the Hindu diaspora to use the media for popularizing the message of the universality and love for all mankind and all living beings, highlighting them as the diverse manifestation of the One Supreme Truth.

It is time for wide-scale campaigns to be launched worldwide to promote a deeper intellectual understanding about this unique culture that has survived millennium. It is mainly through promoting an intellectual understanding about Hindu heritage that we can defeat the efforts of vested interests to denigrate Hinduism and to convert its followers to the lesser religions. We should never be complacent about this as the effort of the present generation of the Hindus alone can fulfill the great culture for the future generation.

Let me conclude with the significant words of M. Louis Jacolliot highlighting the unique contributions of India to the whole world and hailing and saluting her as the Protector of mankind, Originator and Mother of faith, love, art and science:

"The Indo-Aryan civilization is an extraordinary pristine civilization which we Europeans have never yet surpassed. It is a civilization without a parallel that India has given to the world.

"O! Ancient Land of India, O! Protector of mankind, I bow to thee. O! Sacred Land, centuries of horrible atrocities have not been able to destroy you, welcome to thee. O! Originator and Mother of faith, love, art and science, I bow to thee."

* * *

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Appendix:

AN EMINENT US ACADEMIC SCHOLAR & A POPULAR DANISH COLUMNIST STRONGLY REACTS AGAINST THE DENIGRATING ANTI-HINDU PROPAGANDA OF VESTED INTERESTS:

In these thought-provoking articles two eminent intellectuals of the West highlight the rationale of Hindu Dharma. They are illuminating, which all Hindus, all those who are eager to know about Hindu Dharma and all those who are misled by the mindless negative propaganda against Hindu Dharma by the vested interests, should read. They contain comprehensive points that would prompt the thoughtful to discard with due contempt the anti-propaganda of the ignorant 'scholars' of the West and their Indian counterparts.

HINDU DHARMA & ACADEMICS

-- AN ANALYSIS

Vamsee Juluri

<http://www.hinduismtoday.com/hpi/2006/7/19.shtml#3>

San Francisco, California, July 17, 2006:

*(HPI Note: Vamsee Juluri is an Associate Professor of Media Studies at the University of San Francisco and the author of *Becoming a Global Audience: Longing and Belonging in Indian Music Television*. His insightful article may be reprinted with due attribution to the author. Vamsee's e-mail is juluri@usfca.edu)*

Just like how Lord Siva asked Sage Markandeya's parents to choose between the boon of a son with a long but average life and that of a son with a short but noble one, maybe some God or Goddess asked the sages to choose whether Hinduism would be a religion well understood by the world or one that would understand the world beautifully.

The gap between how Hinduism sees the world and what it is being made out to be in the media and the academy is as painful to me as any cosmic riddle. It has become important to clarify not only how Hinduism understands the world, but also how the

world understands it. What is at stake is not only the sanctity of a great religion, or the well being of those who respect it, but much more. What is at stake is whether a world in which cruelty is a way of life, violence the language of communication, selfishness the touchstone of culture, and falsehood truth, can survive if it turns its back on the great truths enshrined in Hinduism.

As an academician, that, to me, is the most important reason to ensure that Hinduism's useful lessons to humanity are not lost under an avalanche of misrepresentations. It is therefore not just as a Hindu concerned about his religion that I am writing this article, but also as a student of society who is deeply pained by the grotesqueries and injustices of our times and sees Hindu thought and culture as a great resource for fighting these.

Living Hinduism and Defining Hinduism

Hinduism has largely been a matter of how we live it and less a question of how we define it. Perhaps that is why we seldom bothered in the past about the laughable gap between what the media and textbooks said Hinduism was, and what it meant to us. The oldest example of a media dig at Hinduism I can think of from my life is a British children's book about "monsters" which listed our beloved Ganesha as one! Even as a child, I was annoyed, but eventually forgot all about it. Now, as the media have grown more pervasive but their content not much better, it has become imperative that we act to better define our cultures and traditions. I believe that the time has come to take on the task of representing Hinduism accurately and rewardingly not just for Hindus, but for the whole world.

One challenge for us is that Hinduism has often been defined by the outside, and that has often surpassed what it means from inside, a fact even more complicated by how richly diverse this inside is. I cannot speak for everyone about what being a Hindu means to them, but I know at least one etymology which means far more to me than the academic tales about what Hinduism supposedly is. "Hindu," according to one saying, is derived from a combination of "Himsa" (cruelty) and "Duramu" (distant), and means "one who is distant from cruelty." When I think of myself as a "Hindu," this is the saying that has meaning for me, and not what the academics or the politicians say it is.

Unfortunately, the issue of what Hinduism means to us has been lost in the academic community. I will not suggest that academic accounts of Hinduism should be merely replaced by a devotee's account, but there should be some conversation between the two. Not only has this not happened, but instead, a large number of academics recently signed a petition that effectively held that insulting misrepresentations of Hinduism can continue in the California textbooks. As an academic, I was hurt by what I believe is the fundamental error of this position, and even more so by the disrespectful language of some of its advocates. I would therefore like to propose some ideas on how this tremendous error has taken place, and how the Hindu community and the academy can better engage with these problems in the future.

Hinduism in the Western Academy

Hinduism had very bad press in the West in the past, notwithstanding the occasional recognition of Gandhi and others, and it is these terrible misrepresentations that are still the bedrock of Western perception not only of Hindus but also of India. Gory violence, bizarre rituals, inhuman oppression, lack of hygiene, lack of free will, wily priests, decadent kings, passive natives, and of course, noble European masters, are what have tainted the Western imagination. My students, for example, often start their classes with me with their only knowledge of India and Hinduism being these assumptions, but they are smart and know that many of these myths are untrue and racist, and expect a better picture from me than what they suspect is a lousy media stereotype any way. Given such a situation, I see it fit to first balance out the misinformation about Hinduism in the popular Western imagination, and then to address the critical concerns about Indian society. To illustrate, if a student asks if it is true that Hinduism calls for the immolation of widows, I have no hesitation in saying "no," despite the fear in the academic community that denying this is tantamount to supporting a fundamentalist agenda.

This and many other ugly misrepresentations about Hinduism in academics and also the media are pervasive and powerful because they were created at a time when all the might of

imperial power could sustain them and impose them around the world. The obsession with equating Hinduism with "caste" and "gender," and of course, the infamous Aryan invasion theory, all come from this time, when writing about Hinduism and India was part of a larger project of Orientalism, and Hindus could have very little authority in speaking against such lies. Despite the end of official colonialism, the Orientalist tendency still persists in academics and in popular culture, and cannot be ignored.

The second intellectual context in which Hinduism and India were further twisted out of shape is that of the post-World War II phase of the Cold War. Interestingly, although decolonization had at least nominally liberated much of the world, in the mind of the Western academy (and its postcolonial extensions), the stereotypes remained. This was the period in which the Hindu would figure, if at all, in examples like the "Hindu rate of growth," a cultural stereotype used to evoke the notion that Indian poverty was largely because of Hindu superstition and not the aftermath of nearly half a millennium of plunder.

An interesting geopolitical angle is also apparent in this phase, and is discussed eloquently by Andrew Rotter in his book, *Comrades at Odds*. Rotter shows that the United States foreign policy establishment leaned towards Pakistan at this time not merely because of India's perceived pro-Soviet tilt (as is widely assumed), but primarily because the Christian conservative elites of Washington identified more closely with the Islamic military elites of Pakistan. Specifically, Rotter says that their perception of Hinduism as a polytheistic vegetarian religion led them to see Islam as a closer natural ally to their own monotheistic, non-vegetarian and hence tough and such culture.

The third and present context in academics that has further hurt the representation of Hinduism is, disappointingly enough, the critical tradition, which encompasses Marxism, Feminism, and Postcolonialism, and has many noble goals. This is a tradition committed to speaking against power, and as someone trained in it, I have professional faith in its promise. However, I feel that a fundamental error has distorted how it deals with Hinduism. It has failed to see that fighting imperialism on a

global scale is not the same thing as fighting Hindu political groups in India. Worse, it lost sight of the difference between Hinduism as a religion, and the political groups it was concerned about. It made Hinduism the bad guy, the "hegemon" as it were.

Much of the recent research on Indian media and culture, for example, while being very astute in its analysis, settles on "Hindu fundamentalism" as a master concept for explaining many undeniable social and cultural problems. I do not disagree with the criticisms of inequities and injustices that this academic tradition poses, but I am deeply pained by its almost cliched return to "Hindu" this or that as the source of all evil in India. In the West, scholars in the critical tradition typically have focused on political or economic factors as the master concepts for their critiques, using concepts like capitalism, or patriarchy, and not "Christian" this or that. However, when this approach turned to India, the bad word seems to have become simply Hinduism.

Not only is this inaccurate, it also ends up making the critical academic enterprise guilty of the same sort of racism and oppressiveness as that of the old Orientalists. In an imaginary world in which Hinduism had the sort of power its critic impute to it, these allegations would have been more apt, but in the real world, the world in which Hinduism has indeed been the big "Other" and the historical victim of foreign aggressions, and has in spite of this by its very nature sought not to assert itself on a primal political level, these allegations are hurtful, and harmful.

What they are harming most of all is not only Hindus, but the very heart of humanity itself. Hinduism is not just one more raggedy ideology with the blood of nations on its hands. It is even beyond religion in the conventional sense; we may have started calling it "Hinduism," but it is far more than one religion, it is actually nothing less than the striving of humanity for some truly great social and spiritual goals which the world sorely needs today. It is an ancient endeavor that says these goals, and the actions one must take to achieve them, are more important than the labels, names, and identities one affixes to them. It is a religion that doesn't even claim to be one. It is just a peculiarity of our time that we have to treat it as one, and evolve a coherent definition for it that is true to its spirit.

Hinduism for the Global Media Age

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 indeed 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. We should always remember that Hinduism is that religion which refuses to claim it is the only true or correct religion, or that there is even one correct tradition within its folds. We may have our own personal inclinations about what paths to follow, or perhaps even to invent, but we must not stoop to thinking of Hinduism in a competitive marketplace sort of way. I think that the liberality of Hinduism is something the world needs to know about. The second ideal in Hinduism I believe we need to strongly identify with is that of Ahimsa. We must live our lives in full consciousness of the amount of violence the modern world is based on, and actively strive to minimize it. I say this not only because the significance of ahimsa, and vegetarianism, in Hinduism has been obfuscated, but simply because that is what the world needs. We should at least stop being oblivious to cruelty, and minimize it. The writings of Mahatma Gandhi are more relevant than ever before on this point, and I think we should continue to give his thought the respect it deserves, even if some people from the Left and the Right disagree with his political choices.

Armed with a strong focus on universalism and ahimsa, and using these to navigate our own inexhaustible well of stories, sayings, and sacred customs, we can not only live Hinduism as a force for spiritual and social change in the world today, and also easily protect it from slander and from harm.

I think one reason for the deep chasm between the academics on the one hand and the Hindu community on the other has to

do with the lack of appreciation of what Hinduism can achieve in the world today. The academics want to make the world a better place, but fail to see the vast role that a great religion's traditions can play in making this possible, or even that it would be very difficult, especially in India, to achieve social justice without tapping into its cultural and spiritual resources. Academics concerned about religious extremism can do more to end it by being aware of the global context in which Hindus find themselves very vulnerable, and keeping that separate from the local contexts in which their concerns may be more appropriate.

The academy has gone almost directly from the Orientalist myth of Hindu superstition to the postmodern concern about Hindu fundamentalism, without even a notice of the great Hindu religion in between, and what it means to its followers and admirers. The academy must engage with Hinduism more positively, and one way this can happen is if there are more young people from the community who go into the liberal arts and social sciences, in addition to the usual engineering and medical fields.

The Hindu community on the other hand may appreciate the significance of Hinduism, but needs to be clear about what it wants to protect and cherish in Hinduism, and how it will do this. In recent years, the community has been led by political lines of thinking about Hinduism rather than by how Hindu values would inform the course of action needed today. Hindus, I feel, would better safeguard their religion by being clear about what they want to safeguard. Is it the values, or the labels? The delight of ceremonies or the tedium of rituals? The exultation of prayer or the hard cries of slogans?

I believe that Hinduism will be safeguarded as long as we remember its greatest lessons. There is no place for fear in Hinduism, and those of us who adore our myths know that there is no violence too, notwithstanding the shallow charge sometimes made by critics that our gods carry weapons, or that the Mahabharatha was bloody. Our images and stories represent the vast spectrum of the human condition, but also exhort us to do what is right with it; to minimize cruelty and violence, to practice universal tolerance. It is to these that we must turn, with

our hearts noble and minds clear, and then we may find that the ignorance that has shrouded the truths of Hinduism will melt away. If academics and the media accuse Hinduism of being something that it isn't, it is their loss, and I say that not in a condescending way at all, for Hinduism will surely find a way to heal them too. It is for that healing that devout Hindus must work for.

* * *

HINDU DHARMA AS A DANISH WRITER SEES IT

By Dhamu Chodavarapu

Other day I went to buy morning bread, there a lady, said to me, "Are you not the person who writes in Nordjyske, a Danish newspaper? I could not deny. She went on, "You put words on our thoughts. Keep it on, why not write on Hinduism, we know nothing of it." I said, "If I am to write on Hinduism, the newspaper has to give special addition, but I will see if I can within the space allotted to me."

Hinduism is not a religion in its traditional understanding. All religions have a God and people worshipping in submissive way, following do's and don't do's, dictated by Him in their daily life. But Hinduism does not prescribe any such.

Hinduism is life style, where human beings are exalted to God himself. Thereby it is atheistic religion, no God, everyone is God. All living beings, human, animals and plants do have an element of God, the soul and again a part of a kind of suzerainty.

Before 1829, there was no word as Hinduism. It was Christian missionaries that coined the name Hinduism to corner and identify of the religion.

It was known to Indians as lifestyle according to Vedas. Then term "Veda" means wisdom to understand and to know oneself. In Vedanta, popularly called as Hinduism, maya, the unwisdom, a kind of mental darkness, covers the Godly element, as ash covers the embers, needs to be blown out to come to it.

Therefore, we have no 10 commands nor any do this and that. It is all left to each individual how to blow the ash away.

It is both very good and very bad. It promotes individual capabilities but the collective society weakens, looses. It was therefore completely incomprehensive in any religious understandings. If the man can control himself, what God is to do? Muslims gave up to understand and used sword to convert Hindus and Christians.

Very heinous and barbaric crime is to deprive human to think and take decision. It was/is exactly why Indian society was so much divided, never was a unique unit. Every individual made a stall for himself, it is what we know now is caste system. Indian society was divided in various stalls without contact to the other. Wiser exploits unwise. This was the backside of the medal. All religions try to create a uniform society at the cost of individual freedom and have a rigid central control.

The present Christianity in the West, is slowly moving towards Vedanta understanding while Islam still waiting.

The central element in Hinduism is all moves in cycle around suzerainty, with no beginning and no end. There was nothing that evolves into another soul. It was time when dinosaurs were dominating, now it is human beings are dominating the earth. No indication that human beings were not there, at dinosaurs' time.

The Hindu trinity, the creator, Brahma, did not create the human being on one fine morning at 5 o'clock, but a thought is created, an action is taken, a possibility opens up by Brahma, and Vishnu sees it conducted perfected, while Shiva ends it. Then all start again, that is how mathematical zero, was born in Hindu thinking. Karma ones behaviour, decides ones future.

Rebirth, therefore, is not ununderstandable thought but a natural part of life. A man is born again as man, cow as cow, likewise, as we all know there are no DNA between man and animals.

Dharma, another central point in Hinduism, is a kind of human behaving plan. It is neither, nor was decided by any central body, but by every individual for himself. It needs

wisdom. It can be achieved by studying, listening and understanding the epics of Hindu and performing certain rituals, meditation and puja. It gives clarification to clarify the behaviour of humans in all situations.

What praying means to me: It is to get contact with God, who is in me. The few seconds contact, I achieve, gives me a state of mind, where I can identify myself completely with God and feel His presence in me, knowing fully well I am too a part of Him. As if some thing of me comes out as God and sometimes I talk to Him. It always ends with "I can do it."

Hinduism demands all to carry their duties and take responsibility; therefore anybody can be a Hindu. It is, therefore, causing many suffocations and indigestion to Muslims and Christian Missionaries to convert Hindus by augmentations.

(The author who contributes frequently in Danish newspapers has sent the English version of his latest article. He can be contacted at Kajmunksvej 21, DK 9600 Aars, Denmark.)

* * *

AUTHOR

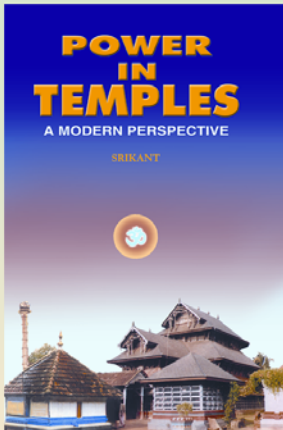
Swami Jyotirmayananda hails from South Kanara, Karnataka, India; had his school and college studies at the Mangalore Ramakrishna Mission Students Home; got the Mantra Diksha in 1966 while serving in a firm in Madras, from Swami Vireswarananda, the Tenth President of the Ramakrishna Order; joined the 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), and a Coordination Committee Member, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha Second Convention, Mumbai (October 16, 17 & 18). Recently, he participated in the Sixth Biennial Conference on 'Vedic Ideas for Global Harmony & Peace in Modern Context' organized by the World Association of Vedic Studies (WAVES), and held from July 8-10, 2006, at the main campus of the University of Houston in Houston, Texas, where he chaired two sessions, and presented two papers, which are now clubbed together in this brochure.

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.



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It is time that all should become familiar with the greater facts of Hindu Dharma and this brochure invokes the attention of readers and inspires them for deeper study.
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India's cultural and spiritual heritage dates back to millennia. It was from the great *Rishis* of yore, the explorers of every aspect of human life and the universe, the spiritual light of Sanatana Dharma emanated. The wealth of their knowledge and wisdom is a precious treasure of the whole mankind. Today, the world is in such a critical juncture that for the very survival of humanity we have to rediscover the great facts of this universal heritage and thus equip ourselves to be guided by that luminous lore.

In this brochure, Swami Jyotirmayananda Puri makes an ardent effort to remind us about this exploration of the great *Rishis* of India by presenting a brief and in-depth introduction of the different facets and many branches of their knowledge and how this wisdom is very much relevant to enrich materially and spiritually the people of the new millennium. Such brief presentation of the facts is very relevant today when many a misleading propaganda is being unleashed by vested interests. The articles by two eminent Western intellectuals given as an *Appendix* are very revealing in this context, reinforcing and ratifying the message of this brochure. It is time that all should become familiar with the greater facts of Hindu Dharma and this brochure invokes the attention of readers and inspires them for deeper study.

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