



आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः - ऋग्वेद संहिता १.८९.१

“Let noble thoughts come to us from everywhere
and from every direction”, Rig Veda 1.89.1

पर्वण्य उदय

— D A W N —

Hindu Mandir Association, Vienna, Austria
Silver Jubilee Commemorative Publication (1991–2016)



प्रवेद्य उदय

— DAWN —

Hindu Mandir Association

Lammgasse 1, 1080 Vienna, Austria





Notion Press

Old No. 38, New No. 6
McNichols Road, Chetpet
Chennai - 600 031

First Published by Notion Press 2017
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Dedication

The selfless service by many devotees to make this souvenir publication a reality is a tribute to the Hindu community and its well wishers and is humbly offered at the lotus feet of Lord Narayana.

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FOREWORD

Twenty-five years ago, a group of Hindus had a dream of building a beautiful Sanatan Dharma spiritual centre in Vienna. The beginnings of this endeavor were indeed modest. Initially, they worshipped together in private homes and then in rented community halls all the while nurturing their dream of a spiritual abode where everyone could come meditate, pray and seek solace. The years passed, the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) grew in size, and the range of activities offered at the Mandir continued to increase. This steady growth of the HMA was celebrated by the publication of a souvenir booklet to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the organization's founding. The hope and optimism of the founders and well-wishers was reflected by the many articles in the booklet, including a keynote message from former President of India Shri R. Venkataraman.

The noble endeavor that started a quarter of a century ago with a handful of people has now received a major boost with the acquisition in 2016 of a plot of land in Vienna's 21st District for the construction of a magnificent temple. The HMA was indeed fortunate to acquire this land on the 25th anniversary of its founding, a truly auspicious omen from our presiding deity, Ganesha.

To commemorate its silver jubilee, the HMA Executive Committee decided to publish a souvenir book, setting up a subcommittee to oversee its compilation and publication. Containing congratulatory messages and spiritual articles from dignitaries and members, as well as Vedic prayers from our scriptures, this commemorative volume also outlines the origin and history of the organization and sets forth the HMA's goals for the future.

The subcommittee solicited, reviewed and consolidated a wide range of interesting contributions, in English, German and Hindi. A special effort was made to include articles, written by knowledgeable individuals, that describe and explain various aspects of Hindu religion and philosophy, as well as the significance of many festivals. The HMA felt that such articles would help those not born and raised in India learn more about their glorious and rich religion, culture and heritage.

The HMA Executive Committee wishes to thank the members of the subcommittee for their efforts in producing this souvenir book. It also thanks the authors for their time and effort in contributing articles and congratulatory messages for inclusion in this book.

In conclusion, the HMA Executive Committee hopes that this commemorative publication will have a wide audience, and will serve as a "visiting card" of the Mandir as the HMA seeks to widen its base of support. We hope that by the grace of Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles, our Mandir will be completed soon.

Members of the HMA Subcommittee for The Silver Jubilee Souvenir Publication

(in alphabetical order)

Mr. Triloki Nath Ahuja

Mr. Bhaskar Dobhal

Ms. Seema Kalia

Mr. Nilesh Nathwani

Mr. Ghandikota V. Ramesh

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The members of the HMA Subcommittee for the Silver Jubilee Souvenir Publication would like to thank the following people and organizations who supported us in this worthy endeavor.

Our special thanks go to the HMA Executive Committee (EC) for its strong support, encouragement and cooperation. We take great pleasure in noting that all current and former EC members significantly supported our undertaking. They all united to contribute in substance.

Above all, we thank the many authors who contributed messages and articles for this publication. We were touched by their warm congratulatory messages and greatly impressed by their erudite, scholarly articles. They expressed the universal principles of Sanatan Dharma, and in so doing have made it possible for readers from all religions to enjoy the content of this publication.

Needless to say, this souvenir publication would not have been possible without the many donors and advertisers, all of whom have provided generous financial support. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the Indian Ambassador to Austria, Her Excellency Madam Renu Pall and the entire staff of the Indian embassy in Vienna. Our thanks also go to the previous Indian Ambassadors, who have always been very kind to the Indian community in Vienna. Many of them demonstrated their continuing support by contributing messages, making our endeavour richer.

Many people worked behind the scenes, providing us with invaluable encouragement, guidance and inspiration. As it would be impossible to name them all, we reach out to them in silent, sincere thanks. Taking a cue from Shakespeare, we would like to say, "Thanks, thanks and thanks again even though good turns are often shuffled off with such uncurrent pay."

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Mr. Koehler, Gottfried

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(Listed in Alphabetical Order)

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Mr. Chhibber, Devinder
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Mrs. Kumar, Nivedita
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Mr. Sachdeva, Prem
Mr. Sahni, Vijay (*President*)²
Mr. Sankaran, Raghupathy²
Mr. Tikoo, Lalit
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(Listed in Alphabetical Order)

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Mr. Bhatia, Amrit²
Mr. Chawla, Mohit
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Mr. Digwal, Ramchandra
Mr. Dobhal, Bhaskar²
Mr. Gandhi, Satish Kumar

¹ Many also served on various HMA Executive Committees over the years.

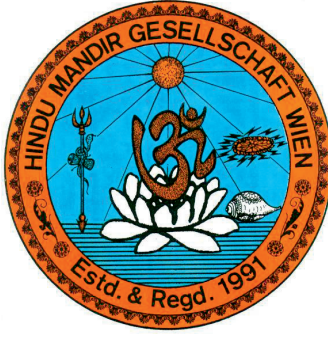
² Member, HMA Board of Trustees.

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Mr. Sheetal, Naresh
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Mr. Tikoo, Vijay

Former HMA Auditors
(Appointed by the HMA Executive Committee)
(Listed in Alphabetical Order)

Mr. Arora, Sarat
Mr. Mishra, Prakash
Mrs. Rengarajan, Kalavathi
Mr. Sugavanam, Bala²

³ Deceased.



APPEAL FOR FUNDS

Dear friends!

The Executive Committee of the Hindu Mandir Association is pleased to inform you that it has acquired a plot of land in Vienna's 21st District. This major achievement will bring us much closer to our dream of building a beautiful temple in Vienna which will serve as a haven not only for Hindus but also for people of other faiths, in accordance with the ancient principles of Sanathana Dharma.

However, the HMA cannot achieve this dream by itself. We need the generous assistance of each and every one of you — in terms of donations and seva — to make this vision a reality. Please note that all donations, including those made at the annual Diwali Mela and pujas conducted throughout the year, go to the Mandir Construction Fund.

You can place your donations in the 'Daan Paatra,' located in the Mandir, or through transfers to the Mandir's bank account in Oberbank:

Oberbank

IBAN: AT961515000501302848

BIC: OBKLAT2TL

Through your generous donations you will be helping current and future generations of Hindus living in Austria to enjoy the benefits of their great religion and traditions.

We thank you in advance for your generosity. Jai Shri Ganesh!

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भव्य हिन्दू मंदिर का निर्माण ही हमारा लक्ष्य



Parkash Sehgal

President, HMA,

Vienna, Austria

प्रिय मित्रों मुझे यह बताते हुए अत्यंत हर्ष होता है जब वीएना में रहने वाले हमारे हिंदू समाज के लोग अपने परिवार और बच्चों के साथ अपनी अपनी धार्मिक आस्थाओं के साथ मिलकर एक छत के नीचे एकत्रित होकर भगवान के नाम का गुणगान करते हैं। वैसे तो मैं हिन्दू मंदिर संस्था से कई सालों से जुड़ा रहा हूँ और मंदिर की सेवाओं में बराबर का सहयोग करता रहता था। मेरे मन में बस एक ही बात हमेशा आती थी की कब वीएना में एक भव्य मंदिर का निर्माण होगा, जहाँ एक पंडित होगा और पूरे हफ्ते मंदिर खुला रहेगा? अचानक ही भगवान की ऐसी कृपा हुई कि साल २०१२-१३ में मैं, मेरा छोटा भाई संजय (नोनी) और मार्केट फ़ॉरर के कुछ सहयोगी सक्रिय रूप से मंदिर की और अपने हिन्दू समाज के लोग भगवान के प्रति आस्था, श्रद्धा और विश्वास रखने वाले भक्तों के साथ सेवा में संलग्न हो गए। लेकिन बार-बार मन में एक ही विचार आता था कि हमारा मंदिर केलर में क्यों है? हमें अपना मंदिर बनाना चाहिए। मंदिर का अपना बैंक खाता भी है और पहले की कमेटियों ने पैसे भी सभी भक्तों के सहयोग से इकट्ठा किया है लेकिन शायद वो पैसा काफ़ी नहीं था। साल २०१४ के अंत में HMA के चुनाव हुए और भक्तों की सहमति से मुझे अध्यक्ष चुना गया और मेरे साथ एक सक्षम टीम का चुनाव भी हुआ। हम सब का एक ही लक्ष्य था की हमने अपने और हमारी आनेवाली फ़्यूचर जेनरेशन के लिए एक भव्य मंदिर का निर्माण करना है और उसके लिए हम सब तन, मन और धन से ज़मीन ढूँढ़ने में लग गए। काफ़ी प्रयत्नों के बाद हमें २०१६ में २१ डिस्ट्रिक्ट में मंदिर के लिए जगह का हमारा और सभी लोगों का सालों पुराना सपना साकार हुआ है। और हम आप सबको ये जानकर अति प्रसन्नता



The Altar at the Hindu Mandir Vienna

होगी की अब हमारा एक ही संकल्प है कि सभी हमारे हिन्दू भाई और कोई भी हमारा मंदिर बनवाने में सहयोग करने वालों का मैं और मेरी टीम तहें दिल से धन्यवाद, करेगी। भगवान की इच्छा से हमारा ये कार्य अवश्य ही सफल होगा। मंदिर का निर्माण करते समय हमें सभी भक्तों की आस्था और भावनाओं का प्रमुखता से ध्यान रखना होगा। वीएना में हम थोड़े से हिन्दू समाज के लोग रहते हैं इसलिए वो चाहे भारत के किसी भी कोने से हो हमें सबको एक साथ लेकर चलना होगा। मंदिर सिर्फ एक मंदिर ही नहीं एक शिक्षा का केंद्र भी बने। जिससे दूसरे समाज के लोगों में हम ये संदेश देने में कामयाब हों कि हमारा धर्म कितना विराट है जो सुख, शांति और भाईचारे की अनुभूति कराता है। वीएना में रहने वाले भक्तों से मेरा निवेदन है कि जितनी जल्दी आप लोग अधिक से अधिक वित्तीय सहयोग करेंगे तो ही हम एक भव्य मंदिर का निर्माण कर सकेंगे। “जय भोले नाथ की”।



SILVER JUBILEE MESSAGES

FELICITATIONS ON THE HMA's SILVER JUBILEE



Sadhu Yogvivekdas

Head Sadhu, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha,
UK and Europe, Neasden, London, United Kingdom

Namaste and Jai Swaminarayan.

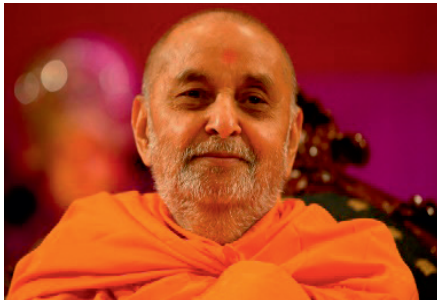
Greetings from all your friends at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Neasden, London.

We are delighted to hear that the Hindu Mandir Association has come together to make the vision come true of a Hindu Mandir in Vienna. A place of worship benefits not only the current generation but generations to come as well as the wider community. It is a place of prayer and peace where one and all can come to offer their devotion and seek blessings.

Our late spiritual leader His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj — who passed away in August at the age of 94 — worked tirelessly and built such Mandirs to cultivate peace, love, understanding and good will amongst diverse communities.

On behalf of our spiritual leader His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj and our entire fellowship of devotees in Europe, we pray to Bhagavan Swaminarayan and all our Hindu deities, sages, teachers and elders: May they bless this project so that it inspires us towards a world of peace based on mutual understanding and co-operation, where everyone's right to follow their chosen path to spiritual elevation is accepted and respected.

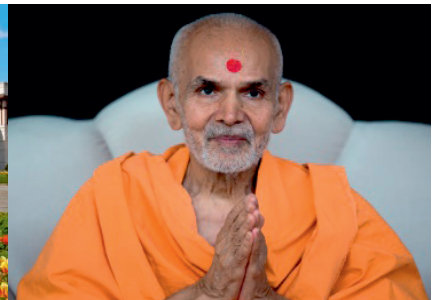
We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the HMA for so kindly allowing us to use the Lammgasse Temple for our weekly satsang sabha, for the the past 16 years.



HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj

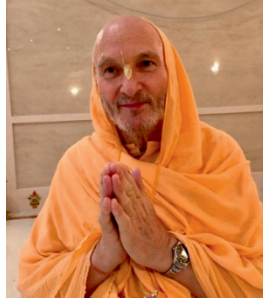


BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London



Mahant Swami Maharaj

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE HMA's SILVER JUBILEE



B.S. Muni Maharaj

Sri Sri Radha Govinda Gaudiya Math,
Tridandi Swami Bhakti Sadhak Muni and members, Traiskirchen, Austria

Haribol, dear members of the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA), Vienna.

All glories to Sri Guru and Gauranga. We are happy to hear about the plan to build a Temple in Vienna. We are inspired to support and help you to our best capacity. The temple should be a place to inspire Indians and Western people for worship and meditation and hear about the timeless absolute truth given by the Vedic scriptures. May this temple become a place of enlightenment, peace and good fortune. May the Lord bless this project and all His members.

The Glories of the Holy Name

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare,
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

Evidence from the Srimad Bhagavatam for Lord Caitanya:

Kṛṣṇa-varṇaṁ tviṣākṛṣṇaṁ
sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārṣadam
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair
yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ

In the age of Kali, Kṛṣṇa appears in a golden form, chanting the two syllables kṛs-na. He descends along with His weapons, limbs, saktis, and eternal confidential associates. Those with intelligence worship Him with the sankirtana yajna (Bhagavatam, 11.5.32).

Mahabharata's Prediction

Suvarṇa-varṇo hemango
varangas candanangadi
saṁnyāsa-kṛc chamah santo
nistha-shānti-pārāyanah

In His early pastimes, He appears as a householder with a golden complexion. His limbs are beautiful, and His body, smeared with the pulp of sandalwood, seems like molten gold. In His later pastimes, He accepts the sannyasa order, and He is equipoised and peaceful. He silences the impersonalist and non-devotees.

Nāma-kirtana is the only way in the Kali Yuga:

Harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam
kalau nasti eva nasti eva nasti eva gatiṛ anyatha

The name of Hari, the name of Hari, the name of Hari is the only way, the only way, the only way in this age of Kali. There is absolutely no other way. (Cc. Adi 17.21).

Sei nama sarva arthe yojana karibe
sarva artha sakti haite sakala-i milibe

The Holy Name can be utilized for all purposes, because from the power and opulence of the Holy Name everything becomes easily obtained.

Sarvartha- sakti -yuktasya devadevasya cakṛinah
yac cabhir ucitam nama tat sarvarthesu yojayet
hrsikṣa-sankirtane jagad anandita
anurage hrsta-citta sarvada sampṛita (Source: Brahmanda Purana).

The whole world becomes happy by the performance of sankirtana while chanting the name of the Master of the senses. Attachment for this process makes one fully satisfied and always joyful.

The holy name is to be chanted in the stage of practice and in perfection

Etan nirvidyamananam icchatam akuto-bhayam
yoginam nrpa nirnitam harer namanukirtanam

O King, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the way of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all, including those who are free from all material desires, those who are desirous of all material enjoyment, and those who are self-satisfied by dint of transcendental knowledge. (Source: Bhagavatam, 2.1.11).

Sri Hari nām sankirtana yajna ki jay!



The Altar at the Sri Sri Radha Govinda Gaudiya Math in Traiskirchen, Austria.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE HINDU MANDIR ASSOCIATION



H.E. Ambassador Ms. Renu Pall¹

Ambassador of India to Austria and Permanent Representative of India
to the International Organisations in Vienna, Vienna, Austria

The officers and staff of the Embassy of India in Vienna join me in congratulating the Hindu Mandir Association on its 25th anniversary and its landmark achievement of securing land for the construction of a Hindu Temple in Vienna.

The activities of the Hindu Mandir Association have been an important aggregator for the Hindu community in Vienna, cementing current and future generations in the spirit of diversity and tolerance which is so synonymous with Indian culture and civilisation. We hope the spiritual strength emanating from the Temple will facilitate the further integration of the Hindu community into the Austrian mainstream and strengthen its role as a bridge that joins two countries, two cultures.

Once again, our warmest felicitations to the Hindu Mandir Association and its members on this special occasion!

¹ The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Government of India.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE HINDU MANDIR ASSOCIATION ON ITS SILVER JUBILEE



H.E. Ambassador Dr. Suhel Ajaz Khan¹

Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of India,
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

I am delighted to note that the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) of Vienna, Austria, is bringing out a souvenir publication on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. It is also heartening to note that the HMA has been able to procure land for a new temple.

During my four-year long stint in Vienna from 2013 to 2017, I interacted with the HMA and was able to see their activities from close quarters. I am happy to share that the HMA is a pioneer Indian religious and cultural organization based in Vienna and has been carrying out its mandate of spreading to all the beautiful messages of Sarva Dharma Sambhava and Vasudhaive Kutumbukum, and the rich religious and cultural philosophy of Hinduism.

I would like to congratulate the HMA Executive Committee for its untiring efforts and hard work that eventually led to the procurement of the land. I am positive that the Committee will continue to work hard to support the devotees in Austria.

I wish the HMA all the best as it embarks on the new journey to build a new temple in the years to come.

¹ The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Government of India.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE HMA ON ITS 25th ANNIVERSARY



Ambassador (Retired) Rajiva Misra

New Delhi, India

I am delighted to learn of the impressive progress achieved in the efforts of the Hindu community in Austria towards construction of a Hindu temple in the country. The recent acquisition of land for the purpose is an important milestone indeed, which would facilitate completion of the project at an early date.

The Hindu community of Austria has been an integral part of the Indian community in the country. It has made a major contribution to the easy integration of the Indian community in the Austrian national mainstream. At the same time the Hindu community — indeed the larger Indian community — is known and respected for the close cultural ties it has maintained with India. The timeless values of tolerance, and respect for diverse cultures and religions, have been a hallmark of the Indian way of life. They have helped the Indian diaspora win respect and recognition in different countries globally.

The construction of a Hindu temple will meet a long-felt need, and address a major lacuna in the religious and cultural life of the Hindu community of Vienna. I warmly felicitate the community on the progress achieved in the fulfilment of the Hindu temple project, and convey my best wishes for its early completion.

I also take this opportunity to commend the tireless efforts of many who have contributed generously through their organizational initiative, commitment, and, of course, financial resources, to advance the Hindu Mandir project. Their leadership deserves appreciation and support.

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE HMA's SILVER JUBILEE



Ambassador (Retired) R. Swaminathan

Nairobi, Kenya

My wife Suchitra Durai and I are delighted to learn that the construction of the Hindu Mandir in Vienna has become a reality!

We do recall the numerous occasions that we have visited the temple at Lammgasse and also our visit to the temple soon after our marriage and when our son Ram was born in Vienna.

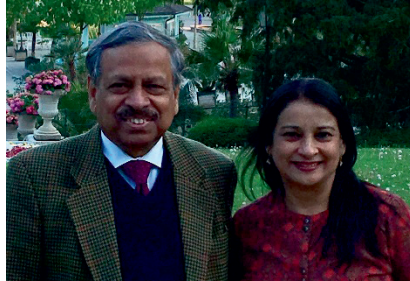
The first time that I visited the Lammgasse Mandir was during my visits to Vienna when I was working with the Department of Atomic Energy, Mumbai, from 1991 to 1995. Then again from 2001 to 2006, when I was working in the IAEA Secretariat and when Suchitra was a Counsellor in the Indian Embassy in Vienna. We have participated in the aarti and have partaken of the delicious prasad. I also became a life-member of the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) during that period.

When I came back to Vienna as Indian Ambassador in 2012, I was happy to take the Mandir project forward.

I am aware of the challenges in getting the project through and my heartiest congratulations to all the office-bearers of the HMA, both the present and past, for making the project a reality.

Vienna has a special place in our hearts! Suchitra and I wish the Indian community further success and happiness!

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE HMA's SILVER JUBILEE



Ambassador (Retired) Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma, PhD

New Delhi, India

As someone who has lived in Vienna for a long time, I am happy to learn that the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA), after many years of effort, has acquired a piece of land to build a temple for the benefit of devotees living in Vienna and Austria. My wife Meenu and I have many fond memories of the HMA's weekly satsangs in the Burggasse premises and, later, in the Lammgasse Mandir. We also recall attending the annual Diwali Melas held in Lugner City.

As Ambassador it was my pleasure to offer my moral support for this worthy endeavor. The road has been long, but after 25 years of determined effort the HMA has achieved a major milestone. Meenu and I would like to record our deep sense of appreciation for the work done by the HMA so far and wish the Association all success for the future as it continues to serve the Hindu community.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE HINDU MANDIR ASSOCIATION ON ITS SILVER JUBILEE



Ambassador (Retired) T.P. Sreenivasan

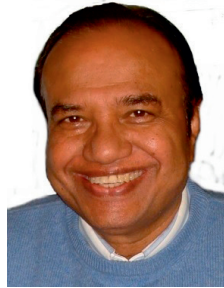
Thiruvananthapuram, India

I am most delighted to know that, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA), construction will begin of a Hindu temple, which has been a dream of the Hindus in Austria. I hope that the project will be completed soon to add another place of Hindu worship to the many temples built by overseas Indians around the world. I have had the privilege not only to worship in many of them, but also to open three of them in the United States alone. Among the worshippers in these temples are believers of different faiths and citizens of different countries.

Indians carry their religions wherever they go and sustain and nourish them to retain their unique identity and cultural heritage. Many years ago, Indian immigrants to Fiji, the Caribbean and South Africa carried with them nothing but copies of the Ramayana. Even after they became prosperous and merged with the local communities, the Ramayana occupies a pride of place in their lives and temples. In many countries, Hindu temples are even more elaborate and ornamental than modern temples in India. Indian temple architects and priests are invited to these lands to create authentic places of worship.

Our association with the Hindu Temple in Vienna was close even when it functioned from private homes. My family also did not miss any of the festivals, particularly the Deepavali festival. My wife and her students had the privilege of performing on several occasions for the Association. As the Ambassador of India to Austria from 2000 to 2004, I did my best to take the temple project forward. I recall writing to the Mayor of Vienna, who responded helpfully to my request. I am glad to see all those efforts coming to fruition finally. My congratulations to the Hindu Mandir Association.

LOOKING BACK AT MY TIME AT THE HINDU MANDIR ASSOCIATION



Satish Kumar Aggarwal

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, Treasurer, HMA, and former Vice-President, HMA
Vienna, Austria

It seems a long time ago, but I think it was in the year 1990 when one of my oldest friends in Vienna, Mr. Vijay Tikoo, told me about the formation of a Hindu Mandir Association. Bringing a part of our culture and religion to Austria was an exciting idea and something I wanted to be part of. Therefore, I decided to become a member.

It all started for me in a cellar in Vienna's 6th District, where we conducted our Puja each Sunday. The association grew steadily, with several members joining in. When Mr. Liu allowed us to use a room in his Chinese restaurant on Burggasse, in the 7th District, we could also invest in a small Mandir.

Our first Diwali celebrations took place in the parish hall Pfarre Akkonplatz in the 15th District.

We were keen to have our own Mandir, but financial resources were not available! So I took the initiative to donate a substantial amount to the organisation, as did Mr. Yudhvair Jairath subsequently. Several other members also joined in. The increased membership allowed us to rent the first independent premises in the name of the HMA, an area of 145 m² on Lammgasse in the 8th District that is still being used today. It took me around three months to adapt the premises for this purpose. My personal highlight was the construction of a large and well decorated altar in the Mandir. At its inauguration, a large sum was donated by me and we requested further donations by other members.

We are very thankful to Mr. Lugner for allowing us to use the facilities of Lugner City for our annual Diwali celebrations.

As the HMA continued to become larger we hoped to receive a plot in Liesing from the City Council of Vienna to build our own temple. Many discussions and negotiations took place but nothing materialized, so we decided to look for our own plot independently. This took a lot of time but in 2016 we ultimately managed to acquire a plot in the 21st District with our own resources.

As a loyal member of the HMA, I am very keen that this dream of ours — of having our own Hindu temple — come true soon. I therefore request generous donations from our members and friends.

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE HMA's SILVER JUBILEE



Mrs. Kanta Ahuja

Vice President, VIWA

Vienna, Austria

I have been associated with the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) for the last 25 years. Even today I remember, having just arrived from Nairobi in 1991, how interested we were in visiting a Hindu temple. After much investigation, we found out about a little single room temple at the Afro-Asiatische Institut being run by Dr. Bimal Kundu. Slowly we started to learn more about the community in Vienna and were quickly made members of the HMA.

One of the very earliest HMA Diwali functions was celebrated at the Haus der Begegnung on Mariahilferstrasse, and I was requested to compere the programme by Dr. Pranab Dastidar, the President of the HMA at that time. We were so new and were keen to find a spiritual place where our children could learn more about their faith.

After waiting for 25 years finally now, with God's blessings and efforts of the Mandir Executive Committee, we have purchased land to construct a Hindu temple. Many congratulations to one and all in the community and good wishes to accomplish this temple project for an authentic and distinguished place of worship and culture in a reasonable timeframe.

Kind regards and best wishes.

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE HINDU MANDIR ASSOCIATION'S SILVER JUBILEE



Prajesh Bhakta

Chief Country Programme Officer,
The African Development Bank,
Cairo, Egypt

One of the most wonderful memories for our family (Prajesh, Jagruti, Shivang and Nishant) of our 12 year stay in Vienna was our connection to the Hindu Mandir Association, which happened to be only a ten minute walk from our apartment in Vienna. It was a special place for us, and we visited the Mandir as much as we could on Sundays. It was the place where we reconnected with our roots, our Indian culture and Hinduism. It was where my children, who were born and raised in Vienna, learned the different traditions of our culture and where they interacted with other members of the community.

For myself and my wife, the Mandir was where we met dear friends from the Indian community, singing bhajans, helping in the kitchen, talking and getting to know people. It was a place where we were able to connect with others outside the UNO city, and this gave us a sense of the size of our community. We looked forward to attending and participating in all the events taking place. One event that I remember vividly, and which required gathering my inner strength, was to read the Ramayana in Hindi during the annual Akhand Ramayan Paath, especially in the night when it was difficult to find volunteers. We were so inspired by the bhajans and singing that we also organized readings of the Hanuman Chalisa at the Mandir, which gave us much spiritual strength.

The Mandir also fostered a spirit of togetherness, making it easy to get help, advice and valuable tips from members of the community. Furthermore, having been an active member, I gained the courage to serve on the Executive Committee as Co-Treasurer, which enabled me to give back something to the Mandir.

In summary, my family and I benefited tremendously from the Mandir and the many friends that we met and with whom we are still connected. It is a special institution and I wish all success for its growth and eventual expansion into an authentic Mandir with the support of the community.

Best of luck.

OUR MANDIR IS A PLACE OF PURITY, PEACE AND LOVE



Sukhdev Singh Chib

General Secretary, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

I was introduced to the Hindu Mandir about eight years back when I first moved to Vienna. I remember how the first time I attended our Mandir, sitting there hearing the bhajans, I was welcomed with open arms by my friend for life, Shri Hoshiyar Mal.

Throughout the week we wait for Sunday, the day decided by the Hindu community to worship. Men, women of all ages, children and families come together in the Mandir premises to offer prayers to the Almighty. We sing to praise the Lord and prepare a vegetarian meal (bhog). After prayers all of us have the meal together.

The Vienna Hindu Mandir is more than a place of worship in a traditional sense. It is a common platform for the Hindu community where we share each other's joy and success as well as offer consolation and support to our brethren in need.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that it is a 'home' away from home. Being in a foreign country, which has undoubtedly been generous and kind to me, the opportunity to spend a few hours every weekend among the people sharing the same roots and culture as I do makes me miss my country a little less.

The sound of the dholak, the soulful bhajans, men and women dressed in traditional attire, children playing around with joy, the fragrance of incense and fresh flowers, the food made with love and service takes me back to my mother's meals for a few hours every week.

My only wish is that we get a bigger and better building so that we can welcome more people. We need a bigger area with parking facility and grounds for children to play, as well as a proper kitchen and pantry. It would help us manage the affairs of Mandir better.

Apart from this small issue, the Hindu Mandir is an inseparable part of my life now. It is a place where I have found friends for life, linking with the Almighty, respect and a sense of belonging. Our Mandir is a place of purity, peace and love.

THOUGHTS ON THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE HMA



Niranjana Das

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former Cultural Coordinator, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

Since its inception in 1991, I feel fortunate to have served as Cultural Coordinator on the Executive Committee of the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) for more than 16 years. During that time, it was an honour to co-organize the yearly Diwali Mela at which we had the pleasure of celebrating Diwali and sharing our culture with members of the diaspora as well as the local and international community.

It was a blessing to participate in and lead the weekly bhajans held at the various temple premises over the years, culminating in Lammgasse, where we also had the good fortune of receiving the teachings of many spiritual leaders. The 25 years have passed in a flash, but wherever I may be every Sunday afternoon my heart returns to the Hindu Mandir and its congregation.

I take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the founding members and every member of the Executive Committee since then for working tirelessly to make the dream of a temple in Vienna a reality.

हिन्दू मंदिर की रजत जयंती की सभी को बहुत-बहुत शुभकामनायें



रामचंद्र डीगवाल

Ramchandra Digwal

Vienna, Austria

मैं रामचंद्र डीगवाल बी.ए. बी.एड. एक अध्यापक हूँ। यहाँ मैं वीएचएस में हिंदी और संस्कृत भाषा पढ़ाता हूँ। हिन्दू मंदिर लामगासे में पूजा पाठ आरती सभी कार्यों में सेवा देता हूँ। मैं परमात्मा शिव को मानता हूँ एक ज्योति, शक्ति, ऊर्जा के रूप में मानता हूँ शिव का मतलब कल्याणकारी होता है और ज्योति के रूप में सभी धर्मों में माना जाता है। वही सृष्टि का मालिक है, करनकरावनहार है, त्रिलोकीनाथ है, और वही त्रिकालदर्शी है। सभी आत्माओं का पिता एक है और वो परमपिता परमात्मा शिव है।

हिन्दू मंदिर की रजत जयंती (Silver Jubilee) की सभी को बहुत-बहुत शुभकामनायें और मंदिर निर्माण के कार्य में सभी अपना-अपना सहयोग दें।

धन्यवाद

OUR WISHES HAVE FINALLY COME TRUE...



Bhaskar Dobhal

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former General Secretary, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

At the outset, I want to convey my heartfelt wishes to all founders, past and present Executive Committee (EC) members of the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) and the Hindu community residing in Vienna and Austria. We have completed 25 years and commemorated the Silver Jubilee during the Diwali Mela function in 2016. It is appropriate that we are publishing a souvenir booklet on this important occasion.

I recall that when I came to Vienna in 1996 I was looking for a temple because when I was in India I used to regularly visit temples and pay my obeisance to God. It is in my nature to visit a temple frequently. After a long time I found our Mandir, where I listened to melodious bhajans, and where I could meditate. The bhajans gave me a lot of solace and joy. A great singer, Mr. Niranjan Das, sang a pleasing mix of classical and traditional bhajans which gave joy and exuberance to devotees. I cherished the feeling of peace and harmony and enjoyed the sight of devotees singing bhajans, chanting mantras and performing aarti in the temple.

I believe that when Mag. Mr. Mukundrai Joshi and Dipl. Ing. Triloki Ahuja were holding the post of President of the HMA it was a golden period when everything was well organized and disciplined. Whenever important religious festivals like Mahashivaratri, Ganesh Chaturthi, Krishna Janmashthami, Navarathri and Diwali were celebrated, the Indian ambassador as well as devotees from the Vienna International Centre and the Indian embassy were invited to grace the occasions. There was a huge gathering of devotees in the Mandir during these events. I should also mention that Mr. Ahuja initiated the Akhand Ramayana Paath, which was very soothing and lasted for many years.

The HMA continues to organize many different religious and cultural activities and events, such as the annual Diwali Mela function and Mata Jagran, all of which attract large numbers of devotees. These events help in increasing the size of the Mandir Construction Fund and also serve as reservoirs of information and knowledge for our community.

I have been given the opportunity to render seva as a General Secretary and Cultural Co-ordinator of the HMA, and during this period many new activities were introduced such as Vishal Bhagwati Jagran, Mata ki Chowki and Bhagavad Gita Paath.

The present HMA EC has fulfilled the dream of acquiring land for building a temple, in the 21st District of Vienna. This is a great achievement for our Hindu community and fulfilled a major goal of the HMA's founder members, former EC members and all devotees. However, let us not forget that we require a great deal of money, and a lot of effort, for the construction of a temple.

I pray that Almighty God bless us so that we turn the possibilities of today into the reality of tomorrow. Our temple should be a place where religious and spiritual education can be imparted to devotees. A pandit should be appointed who can conduct our pujas and rituals.



The HMA Diwali Mela 2016 Held in Lugner City.

SHRI KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI

AND THE SIGNIFICANCE IT HOLDS FOR ME



Mrs. Shalini Dobhal

Vienna, Austria

Krishna Janamashtami, also known as Janamashtami or Krishnashtami, is one of the most popular Hindu festivals and is celebrated with great enthusiasm all over India. It celebrates the birth of Lord Krishna. People ask, Why was Shri Krishna born? What was his main purpose on Earth? What has led to the celebration of Janamashtami across the length and breadth of India and in many other parts of the world? The answers to these questions tell us the significance of Janamashtami.

Lord Krishna was born to free the Earth of evil. He was ordained to kill all demons on Earth. He was born on 'ashtami,' the eighth day, of Krishna Paksha in the month of Shravana. According to our holy books, he was exchanged with the baby daughter of Yashoda and Nand. This was done to save him from the clutches of his maternal uncle Kansa, who was determined to kill the Lord at the time of his birth. This is why Kansa had imprisoned his sister Yashoda and Nand. However, Lord Krishna killed Kansa and saved Mathura. From then on, people have been celebrating the birthday of the Lord. It is said that when Lord Krishna was born there was turmoil in nature, symbolizing the fury and turmoil in the city of Mathura as well as in every heart. Lord Vishnu decided to be born on Earth to relieve everyone's suffering.

There are innumerable gift ideas to mark the birth of Lord Krishna. Pooja accessories are one of the most loved gifts on Janamashtami. These accessories can include anything that can be used for the purpose of performing pooja, for example pooja diyas (lamps), pooja thalis (platters), incense sticks, idols, sculptures, and candles.

There is a rich collection of Hindu deities images and sculptures that can also be presented on the occasion of Janamashtami. For example, a soapstone idol of Lord Krishna would make for a memorable gift item. It looks simply amazing with a sweet smile on its lips. The bright yellow and red colours look beautiful and are very festive. Another possibility is Radha-Krishna images and photos depicting them in Vrindavan in 'raas leela.' The 'Syamrang' (dark coloured) God looks beautiful in white marble

Celebrate the occasion of Janamashtami by giving your loved ones dried fruits and sweets. They will bring happiness and will bless you and your family on the birthday of Lord Krishna. Finally, some of the best Janamashtami gifts are hampers containing all the ingredients required for pooja. A hamper full of traditional sweets can include kaju barfi, ladoos and sohan halwa.

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE HMA's 25th ANNIVERSARY



Peter Haider

President, Universal Peace Federation Austria,
Vienna, Austria

Congratulations on the realisation of your long expected dream to build a spiritual centre representing the Sanatan Dharma principles of the Hindu religion. I had the great honour of getting to know Dr. Bimal Kundu as the first representative of the Hindu religion in the 1980s when I visited his temple in the Afro-Asiatic Institute. At that time, he was giving a lecture about Indian culture and religion in an interreligious conference, which I organized with like-minded friends in the “Forum Religion und Weltgestaltung.”

The introduction of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) initiative for interreligious dialogue states “This age of globalization needs enlightened leaders in each faith who can examine their sacred writings and traditions and identify the aspects that can benefit all humanity as well as those that preserve each religion’s identity. We call on people of faith to honour the divine indwelling in a way that encourages understanding, respect, and cooperation among people of all faiths for the well-being of our communities and peace in the world.” Whenever I met representatives of the Hindu religion I always felt that such a spirit was present in encounters with them. I recall a joyful Holi festival, which my wife and I attended in the temple in Lammgasse. There was always generosity towards all the visitors and we were invited to taste the sometimes spicy Indian food.

I cannot name all the noble representatives of the Hindu religion in Vienna, but I would like to mention Dr. Naresh Sheetal, Mrs. Amita Lugger, Mr. Amrit Bhatia, Mrs. Geetha and Mr. Dinesh Nayak, Mrs. Aruna and Mr. Mukundrai Joshi and Mrs. Kanta and Mr. Triloki Ahuja with whom my wife and I were able to establish a closer friendship. We had the privilege to be introduced to the importance of the family culture of India by Mr. Ahuja last year during a conference commemorating the UN International Day of Families.

Several times I was invited to celebrate the Diwali festival in Lugner City with the Indian community in Vienna. Besides being a joyful celebration of so many happy people, it introduced traditional aspects of Indian culture as well as the Bollywood version of it. In 2003, I got to know the Ambassador of India to Austria, H.E. Mr. T.P. Sreenivasan. Later, we were pleased to hear him addressing a speech at a conference organized by the UPF. He delivered a powerful plea for peace and religious tolerance: “I represent India, the

nation, which has with the exception of China the largest population of the world. Our population is more than twice as big as that of Europe, including its new membership states. Considering the size of India, our nation is relatively peaceful. There is a lot to learn from this. India encourages religions to flourish without discrimination. Hinduism is an all embracing way of life that has enabled us to absorb everything that is good in each religion.”

I can only humbly express my best wishes that the temple can be completed in the very near future and I am confident that it will be a great enrichment in presenting the religious traditions and cultures of India in Vienna.



Föderation für Weltfrieden
Universal Peace Federation Austria
www.weltfriede.at

FOND MEMORIES



Amit Jairath

Vienna, Austria

Since my early childhood the Hindu Mandir in Vienna was more of a community to me, where I felt a sense of belonging and togetherness. In the beginning the community was small and inevitably one felt the spiritual essence of God bringing us together like a family.

Once, at a Diwali Mela, when I was only 18 years of age, I was asked to step in for someone and host the show. I felt so diffident and did not know how to proceed. God helped me. I got a big round of applause. Since then I have been invited to host the Diwali Mela almost every year which is a great honour for me. It is something I really enjoy doing because I remain connected to the community.

My parents have ardently supported and donated to the construction fund for a Hindu temple in Vienna since this idea was born. So naturally I feel it is my responsibility to help and support the Mandir whenever needed.

Sometimes I feel that politics creep into the Mandir constructions activities, but I may be wrong. Where religion reigns, politics has no place. I love to be a part of the Mandir activities as it enriches my spiritual growth.

I am very happy that a piece of land has been acquired and a beautiful temple will be built in Vienna. To me, it is evidently a symbol of God's presence in human beings working together in harmony giving a form to a very fine dream.

I am happy for all of the people at the HMA and also for my parents who have been working very hard with full devotion to make this happen. With God's grace, this will be a new dawn for the Hindu community in Vienna working towards a single purpose — divinity.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE HINDU MANDIR ASSOCIATION



Sunit Jairath

Vienna, Austria

It has been a pleasure and honour to have seen this journey of the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) and its members. My whole family has been associated with the HMA since the early days. In my own humble way, I have supported HMA and the project of building of a temple in Vienna. Today, I can only reiterate with all force that it is a great step to establish Hinduism in Vienna, a strong need of the hour.

It has been fascinating to see people who have come so far away from home build unity through religion. It is not only a belief, but a way of life that has kept us together. I have seen love, compassion and support in this rather small but strong community. I feel proud to be a part of this community and wish HMA all the best in commemorating its 25th Silver Jubilee through this souvenir publication. I remain a strong supporter.

HINDU HARMONY AND THE HMA IN AUSTRIA



Tina Jairath

Former Treasurer, HMA

Vienna, Austria

It is a great privilege to be a part of this HMA souvenir publication commemorating the 25th anniversary of the HMA in Austria. It was a greater privilege for me to have served the HMA in my capacity as Treasurer and accountant.

Our HMA, since its formation, faced new challenges in the conservative society of Vienna where Hinduism was unknown and mysterious. The HMA succeeded in popularising Hinduism in a remote place like Austria. When I landed in this country from Uganda, where I was born into a very religious Hindu family, the situation was different. We were totally lost in establishing the Hindu way of life, with all its values and spirituality. There were not many Indians living here at that time. Vienna, where I had decided to settle down, looked dark and depressing due to the aftermath of the Second World War. We needed our Gods desperately to help us. As we were a small Hindu community, we decided to meet in small groups to pray. Our inner strength grew day by day and so did our vision to build a temple. Now we have a concrete plan to build a Hindu temple in Vienna. I take this opportunity to congratulate everyone who worked hard to lay the foundations of Hinduism in Austria.

In my capacity as the Treasurer of HMA, I found the people to be very kind and charitable to our mission of building a temple. I pray to God that with His blessings we remain united and soon succeed in realizing our dream. We intend to leave a permanent and inedible mark of peace and harmony in this country by creating a Sanatan Dharma Mandir with all intentions of spreading peace in this country. I wish everyone all the best.

THE HMA'S SILVER JUBILEE: AN OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT



Yudhvir Jairath

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and Vice-President, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

It remains an undisputed fact that the Hindus living in Vienna have always aspired to have a proper Hindu temple just like in other cities of Europe and America. It is also true that we, who live in Austria, have been confronted with a massive obstacle as we did not have sufficient funds to fulfil our dreams. But we have to appreciate the fact that no other group has made such an impressive, effective and consistent contribution to generate a feeling of unity to build a temple in Vienna. Indians from diverse groups, the UN group of expatriates, the staff of the Indian embassy, the business community of Austria, the group of IT experts living here, the entire Sikh community, and even many Muslims in Vienna have enthusiastically supported our project of building a temple in Vienna. At this time, I wish to express my deep gratitude to all of those who have supported us.

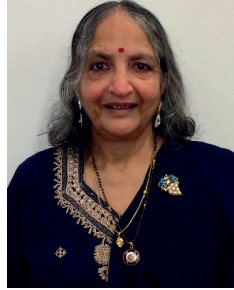
I have fond memories of the many HMA Diwali Melas over the years. The programmes were always colourful and attractive. Of course, it was a lot of work arranging such a big function, probably still the biggest regular Indian gathering in Austria, but everybody came together as a team and worked hard to make it a grand fundraising success.

Death in a foreign country, away from childhood friends, far from our families and neighbours with whom we had spent our early years, is always a nightmare. One of my duties as a Vice-President of the HMA was to assist those families who were in this desperate situation. In Austria, the ashes of those cremated cannot be dispersed in waters. Hence, Hindus needed support and clearances from the Austrian authorities. The Indian Embassy also provided much needed assistance in taking the last remains of the dear departed ones to India for the last holy ritual. My sincere efforts were always directed to help them clear these formalities. I tried my best to build a bridge between the various groups.

Now our dream of building a temple is coming to fulfilment. We will have a place where all the rituals of the Hindu religion will be properly followed. I take great pride in the present leadership of the HMA which has acquired land to build the temple of our dreams.

My dedication and cooperation for the construction of a new temple is unflinching and I will put all my strength to see this vision realised. I feel privileged to be associated with the HMA. My spirits and my strength are all for HMA to finish this great undertaking. We are all committed to this end. I sincerely hope that the Hindu community in Austria will come together and join hands with the HMA in this endeavour. My best wishes to all Hindus.

OUR DREAM IS COMING TRUE



Aruna Joshi, BA, B.Ed

Former Co-Treasurer, Hindu Mandir Association,
Vienna, Austria

I express my delight and joy on the occasion of the Hindu Mandir Association's 25th anniversary. I am very glad our vision of having a Hindu Temple in Vienna is being realized soon. Looking back many years since the Mandir's opening, I am heartened by the progress that we as a community have made in realizing our common dream of building a temple here in the heart of central Europe. Certainly, years ago such a dream did not seem to be possible. However, our achievement gives me confidence that the 30th anniversary of the Mandir will be celebrated with pomp and ceremony in a glorious temple, with its distinctive gopuram gracing the skyline of Vienna. To all devotees, let us continue to work together in harmony and with selfless dedication so that one day we can see our beautiful temple.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

The meaning of the prayer is as follows:

The first Shanti says, may we enjoy peace for the body. It means that the body should not be affected by feelings of jealousy, hatred, attachment and the like.

The second Shanti pertains to the mind. To keep peace, you must resolve to speak the truth and be true to your own nature.

The third Shanti refers to the peace of the soul. This peace is to be realized through love. This world has to be brought back on to the rails, and it is love and peace alone that can achieve this.

If we practice peace in day to day life, we will be able to build a Mandir in Vienna. This will be our positive contribution for the coming generation. It will be an everlasting present to them from us.

OUR VISION OF A HINDU TEMPLE IN VIENNA



Mag. Mukundrai Joshi

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former President, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

I am glad that the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) has acquired a piece of land for a temple in Vienna. I am delighted that our vision of having a Hindu temple is being realized.

When the HMA moved from 1070 Burggasse to 1080 Lammgasse in February 1999, I wrote in our first souvenir booklet, issued to mark the HMA's 10 year anniversary, that until our own dedicated temple was built, the Lammgasse site would serve as the Mandir and the official address of the Hindu Religion Organisation of Austria.

I appeal to all to show determination and positive thinking in creating a team spirit. The feeling of "I am" ("Aham," "Ich") should be put aside.

It is the responsibility of us all to engage together in promoting the religious welfare of the Hindu community residing in this part of the world.

This will be our contribution for the coming generations.

Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah

Sarve Santu Nir-Aamayaah

Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyantu

Maa Kashcid-Duhkha-Bhaag-Bhavet

Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih

May all be happy. May all be healthy. May all experience what is good and no one suffer.

I wish and pray for completion of our Mandir soon.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

CONGRATULATIONS ON 25 YEARS OF THE HINDU MANDIR ASSOCIATION



Sandeep Kumar

Film Director, Actor and Producer

Vienna, Austria

At the outset, I would like to congratulate all the members of our Hindu community in Austria on the 25th anniversary of the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) on Lammgasse in Vienna. Since its inception, different management teams have worked very hard to set up this place of worship in the heart of Vienna and maintain it with very limited means at hand.

Apart from visiting the temple for praying occasionally, I also had the privilege and honour of incorporating it in the story of my Austro–Bollywood film “Servus Ishq,” which was the first film of its kind to be screened in theatres all over Austria in 2014. During 2015–2016, we also shot in the temple for a documentary film “Without Denomination” showcasing the life of Hindus in Austria.

With both our films we hope to provide insights about the Hindu religion and Hindu temple to the Austrian audience on a very broad scale. We are positive that with this endeavour Austrians will attain a better understanding of Hinduism. Also, we hope this will lead to the required support and understanding during the building of a new Hindu temple in Vienna.

On behalf of my entire production team, I would like to thank the HMA management for being extremely supportive during our film shoots, and wish them all the best for the challenging task of construction of the new temple.

I further assure my support of any kind which could help in the new temple project and urge everyone to provide whatever help they can to make this dream project a reality.

Jai Mata Di!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE HMA ON ITS SILVER JUBILEE



Murli Lalwani

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, former General Secretary, HMA, and
former President, HMA
Vienna, Austria

On the occasion of the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) Silver Jubilee, my heartiest congratulations to everyone.

I became a member of the HMA in 1992. From 2005 to 2009, I was General Secretary. Just before becoming General Secretary, I started the Langar Seva system every Sunday after Aarti. All devotees could have a full meal as prasad, which was appreciated by everyone and has been continued till the present day. Many other activities were also introduced during my tenure as General Secretary.:

From 2012 to 2014, I was President of the HMA. During this period, I represented the HMA at the King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, among many other interfaith celebrations, and meetings with Austrian authorities. During my tenure I tried my best to follow a consensus approach and develop the Mandir according to the principles contained in the HMA Constitution.

There were many ups and downs and disagreements, but I now offer my best wishes to the HMA for the future and for the benefit of the Hindu community in Austria.

HERZLICHEN GLÜCKWUNSCH ZUM SILBERNEN JUBILÄUM



Dr. Michael Lugger

Ehemaliger ehrenamtlicher Rechtsberater von HMA und HRÖ

Wien, Österreich

Verehrte Mitglieder und Freunde der Hindu Mandir Gesellschaft Österreich! Seit 25 Jahren stellt Ihre Vereinigung in Österreich lebender Hindus eine wichtige Plattform der Darstellung der Aufgaben und Ziele der In Österreich lebenden Hindus dar. Die HMA steht am Beginn der religionsgesellschaftlichen Organisation der Hindus in Österreich im Rahmen der Hinduistischen Religionsgesellschaft in Österreich und ist nach wie vor ihre bedeutendste Mitgliedsorganisation.

Mit der Planung und Durchführung der alljährlichen Diwali Mela vermittelt die HMA eindrucksvoll eine der bedeutsamsten Feste des Hinduismus und der indischen Kultur. Der Erwerb eines Grundstückes stellt einen wichtigen Schritt auf dem Wege der Verwirklichung eines schon seit vielen Jahren geplanten Vorhabens: der Erbauung eines repräsentativen Hindutempels in Wien dar.

Meine persönlichen Beziehungen zur HMA reichen bis in das Jahr 2002 zurück und beruhen auf meiner Verheiratung mit meiner hinduistischen Ehegattin Amita. Diese meine Beziehung zur HMA und damit auch zur HRÖ wurde verstärkt durch den Aufbau persönlicher Freundschaften und die ehrenvolle Berufung durch die HRÖ, bei der Neufassung ihrer Verfassung als juristischer Berater mitzuarbeiten.

Das freudige Ereignis des Silbernen Jubiläums der HMA nehme ich gerne zum Anlass, allen Mitgliedern und Freunden der HMA, wie auch der HMA herzlich zu gratulieren.

Ich wünsche weitere erfolgreiche Jahre und die baldige Erfüllung des langjährigen Traumes eines eigenen Mandir in Wien.

Gottes Schutz und Segen sei mit Ihnen allen!

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE HMA's 25th ANNIVERSARY



Dr. Pradeep Monga, PhD

Deputy Executive Secretary,
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,
Bonn, Germany

I am delighted to know that the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) is celebrating completion of 25 years of its founding in Vienna, and a souvenir magazine is planned to commemorate this happy occasion. It is a matter of great pride and achievement for the HMA and its members to see that the dream of a group of dedicated devotees living in Vienna, who saw the need to serve, preserve and enhance the principles of Sanatan Dharma in Austria, is getting fulfilled in the shape of a Mandir for which a piece of land has been acquired in 2016. It is a milestone event which needs to be celebrated and supported by all.

Having participated in activities of the Hindu Mandir Association for the past 15 years, I have seen it growing from its humble beginning to a vibrant group of devotees, which continues to move ahead despite so many challenges, and enjoy support and recognition from all quarters. For me, the commitment, inclusiveness and selfless devotion of members of the Executive Committee of the HMA to promote Hindu culture and construct a Mandir in Vienna embodies the core virtues of Hinduism. Hindu festivals and Satsangs, which are organized regularly, have now become a part and parcel of the fabric of the Hindu community and followers of Hinduism in Vienna. I feel privileged and blessed to be associated with the activities of the HMA during my stay in Vienna.

I am pleased to send my best wishes and prayerful greetings to the Hindu Mandir Association on the occasion of its silver jubilee celebration. Let me conclude my message with a quote which signifies the essence of prayers and devotion of all members of the HMA in Vienna:

“Prayer is the very soul and essence of religion and therefore prayers must be the very core of the life of man, for no man can live without religion.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

FELICITATIONS TO THE HINDU MANDIR ASSOCIATION ON ITS SILVER JUBILEE



Muthalagappan Muthiah

Vienna, Austria

Coming from Chidambaram, one of the Pancha Bhoota Sthalams of Lord Shiva, I am grateful for the opportunity to write for the Hindu Mandir Association, Vienna, on its 25th anniversary. In Chidambaram, Lord Shiva is said to have filled the sky with His cosmic dance. As a result, the temple gopuram is more than 134 feet in height and the temple is spread over 40 acres. However, the population of Chidambaram town is only 80,000. This is the same situation in most of southern India. In my native village we have more than 5 temples for 250 people.

After coming to Vienna, I missed those temples. I was still under the impression that temples have to be big in size until we came to the “Lammgasse Amman temple” in Vienna. Yes, that is what we used to call the Hindu Mandir. Though I cannot understand Hindi and we have been listening for the first time to many of the bhajans, this is where we feel the presence of the Mother Goddess.

Hopefully, I’m motivating most of the Indians who are not participating in the Mandir for one reason or the other to try and feel the Goddess inside you, transcending state, cultural and language barriers

I am sure all the deities are currently displayed in the new Mandir. I thank people like Mr. Trilok Ahuja for their continuous service, especially sending emails with slokas, their meanings and the importance of each festival.

A MILESTONE ACHIEVED



Sunil Narula

Vice President,
Hindu Mandir Association,
Vienna, Austria

Namaskar.

First of all, I would like to congratulate everyone on completing 25 wonderful years of the establishment of the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) and its successes.

The year 2017 is very lucky for all of us not only because we are celebrating the Silver Jubilee year, but also because the current Executive Committee has acquired an approximately 1170 m² plot of land for the Mandir in the 21st District of Vienna.

It was not an easy task finding this land. It has taken many years of hard work. There were many criteria that the HMA Executive Committee had in mind. One of the more important was that the site had to be near to public transport for the convenience of many devotees. However, the biggest problem was that we did not have sufficient funds. In the end, by the grace of God, we were able to raise enough money and also fulfil many of the criteria.

We will soon be starting with the planning for the construction of the Temple. We have engaged an architect who is knowledgeable about Austrian law. We have also set up a subcommittee consisting of former and current members of the HMA Executive Committee. The plan is to build a temple with a covered area of 600 m². I hope that by the end of 2017 we will complete the planning of the temple.

As soon as we have collected more funds we will start with the construction of the temple. To achieve this goal I would request all of you to come often to the temple and support us by donating as much as you can so that the work can start as early as possible. Hopefully our temple will be one of the landmarks of Austria.

HMA SILVER JUBILEE 2016



Dipl.-Ing. Dinesh Nayak and Mrs. Geetha Nayak

Vienna, Austria

According to a BBC documentary, our ancestors first walked out of Africa only seventy or eighty thousand years ago, around the shores of the Arabian Sea and down to South India. Here some of them stayed. All the non-Africans on this planet can trace their descent from this migration into India; the rest of the world was populated from here.

Some of the ancient chants performed even today in Kerala have no possibility of being written down. They have no interpretable meaning and analysis of recordings of these mantras, performed for an ancient Vedic ritual for Agni by a Brahmin sect there, has led to speculation that they may even pre-date human speech. Thus, they could be the forerunners of all spirituality anywhere outside of Africa.

Now jumping to more modern times, the Upanishads are said to be the oldest scriptures on self-knowledge. Even before many religions had taken root in the various lands, it was known that self-knowledge was the ultimate realization since it was essentially the realization of the divinity itself.

Religion comes from the Latin word ‘religare,’ which means to bind or tie. This is nothing but our yoga. Binding of the consciousness to the inner heart (or soul, or Atma) is the purpose of true yoga. The Upanishads, being the earliest literature of the binding, it seems to be the oldest regarding the meaning of religion, and religion thus is related to realization — realization of the ultimate through true yoga. As such, India has been the forerunner of this, even before the word Hinduism came along.

Whereas all the religions have extroverted, the essence is to be inward looking and introverted, where the Upanishads have led the way. We have been blessed with many saints and sages who have constantly striven to lead us towards the inner journey, the true connection, the true religion.

One poem from a saint in southern India puts this in the proper perspective. “Look. You are not the Pancha Bhootha (the five basic elements comprising every physical entity in this world). Look carefully. You are not the senses, nor the thoughts. Contemplate deeply; you *are* an experience. My Master spoke these words with a lot of love, and I rejoice.” This poem confirms that when the Chit dwells on Sath, there is automatically the experience of Ananda — the experiencer is the experience; really the true Yoga, the true union, indeed the true religion.

Dreams are not what you see in your sleep; they are those that will not let you sleep. This was said by a famous Indian statesman. How true! Most of us would accept this fact.

From the beginning, the Hindu community of Vienna has had its temples accommodated within simple four walls. The fact that the community is still waiting for an authentic temple building was the driving force for me to dedicate ourselves to that cause. Since then, i.e. over the last ten years, we have received offers for several plots/buildings, but none of them met our requirements for one reason or another. It was frustrating. Being the General Secretary for HRÖ, one has to be often in the forefront during the meetings, plot inspections, etc. These events led sometimes to sleepless nights. Our moral and emotional support came from The Almighty.

It was a tremendous relief when we heard of the successful purchase of a suitable plot. Congratulations to all those involved in the purchase. God bless all!

Geetha has been holding classes on religion to Austrian school children of all age groups for the last 30 years. In question and answer sessions, the children were informed about the practice of Hinduism. In the beginning, Mrs. Christina Kundu and Geetha approached the school authorities to offer their services, including talks on Hinduism. Both came to our temple and held lectures on the practice of Hinduism today, demonstrated the Hindu marriage ceremony, the Diwali festival, innumerable Gods, etc. They answered questions as to the holy nature of the cow and other animals in Hinduism, Hindu Gods with four heads, etc. It was never ending.

Over 500 non-Hindu children have attended these lectures so far. We feel that this knowledge acquired at this young age will go a long way in promoting intercultural understanding, leading to less conflicts and more tolerance, which will provide a good foundation for peaceful coexistence.

Sarveśām Svastir Bhavatu

Sarveśām Shāntir Bhavatu

Sarveśām Pūrnām Bhavatu

Sarveśām Mangalam Bhavatu

Meaning:

May there be happiness in all

May there be peace in all

May there be completeness in all

May there be success in all

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE HMA



Dr. Niraj Nathwani, PhD

Programme Manager, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights,
Vienna, Austria

Congratulations to the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) on its Silver Jubilee and on purchasing a piece of land to build a temple in Vienna.

In July 2016, I was requested by the HMA to review the constitution of both the HMA and HRÖ. I consulted the former legal advisor of the HMA, Dr. Michael Lugger, and benefited from his experience. I also went to the Ministry of Interior to meet Dr. Stifter to find out first-hand what the requirements and expectations of the Austrian Government were for the HMA. I presented my comments on the existing constitutions of both the HMA and HRÖ and suggested alterations as required. I promised that though my position in the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union did not permit me to hold a position in the Mandir affairs, I would be very happy to support the HMA and HRÖ in the background.

I only really lived in India for a brief period of my life in early childhood, but Hinduism is my living link to Mother India. I am proud to be a Hindu. Hinduism is so diverse and it takes account of the natural diversity of people and offers something for everybody. I appreciate that many of the key concepts of modern human rights standards have found maybe their earliest expression in key teachings of Hinduism. The teachings of ahimsa and of vegetarianism as a daily living symbol of the respect for all life are ancient, but they strike me as being of particular significance today. Also, the teaching that there can be no force in religious matters and that true religion comes from within and that all true religions connect with the divine, no matter what the label is, strike me as key teachings which will help the whole of humanity to find a path to a better future. It is almost a miracle that Hinduism survived at all after such a long period under foreign rule and it is a testament to its tenacity and its deep roots in India that Hinduism continues to grow. As the Gayatri Mantra so beautifully expresses, we Hindus have always been seekers of light, truth and knowledge.

My father is an avid supporter of the HMA and had at one stage held a position on the Executive Committee of the HMA. He has studied philosophy, and hence he is actively engaged in spreading the true philosophy of Hinduism in Austria. We, as a family, are well-wishers of the Mandir and wish all Hindus in Austria all the best in building a temple in Vienna.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE HINDU MANDIR VIENNA



Mag. Varghese Panjikaran

Vienna, Austria

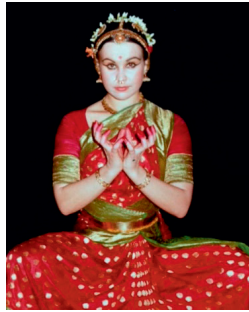
Born to traditionally strict South Indian Christian parents and brought up in a close Hindu milieu, I came in contact with non-Christian Indians early in life. I was lucky to observe and experience their love and care for me and their devotion to this universe. However, it took me decades until I was able to grasp the greatness of Hinduism such that I do not consider it as a mere 'religion' any more — that would be a degrading of Hinduism. I consider Hinduism as a complete way of life and culture of a great nation.

This lifeblood has been circulating from time immemorial and the great Indian soul has stood firmly with its age-old traditions, principles, philosophy and spirituality. Hinduism gave birth to the great men and women of India: Adi Shankaracharya, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sri Narayana Guru, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi, just to mention a few.

Many dedicated Indians in Vienna and Austria have worked hard to construct a Hindu Mandir in Vienna. In days to come it will be recorded that the Indians in Vienna were loyal to their traditions even when they were far away from their Motherland, India. For many generations to come the young men and women in Austria will be able to imbibe and live the unremittingly transmitted ethos of their forefathers. After many generations, people will be able to permeate Europe and the whole world with the universal values of Indian Vedic tradition and its spirituality.

The pioneers of the Hindu Mandir Vienna have done great work in making this tradition known in Austria. I have had the privilege to be in close contact with many of them. May the Hindu Mandir become a great centre of true Vedic spirituality. That is my most sincere wish on this auspicious occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Hindu Mandir Association.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE HINDU MANDIR ASSOCIATION ON ITS SILVER JUBILEE



Radha Anjali

Natya Mandir,
Vienna, Austria

When I started my career as a classical Indian dancer in the early 1980s in Vienna, the Hindu Mandir was one of the important places where I performed. My Bharatanatyam dance performances, as an offering, were part of many festivals like Diwali, Holi, Durga Puja and others. Later on, I danced at Mandir functions along with my students and the Natya Mandir Dance Company.

What had begun on a small scale has been growing in the last years through the sincere efforts and work of many individuals.

My heartiest congratulations to the Hindu Mandir Association on its Silver Jubilee and my best wishes to all devotees for the future!

May everyone stay blessed, happy and healthy.



CONGRATULATIONS ON THE HMA's 25th ANNIVERSARY



Ing. Chandan Rajpal

Vienna, Austria

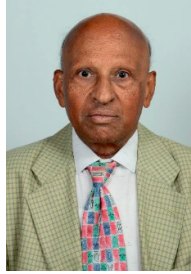
I am happy to have been given an opportunity to write this congratulatory message on the occasion of the Hindu Mandir Association's 25th anniversary. I would like to sincerely thank everyone for the affection and respect shown to me as one of the comperes of the HMA's biggest event, known to all as the famous Diwali Mela in Vienna.

My special thanks to all responsible for having chosen me and finding me worthwhile to execute this task, namely the HMA President, Cultural Coordinators and those working silently in the background. I have always enjoyed it and will continue to do so as long as my health allows it.

Now the HMA has acquired a plot of land and has concrete plans to build the long awaited Hindu temple in Vienna. My appreciation goes to all who worked hard to lay the foundations of Hinduism in Austria.

With humble regards, namaste!

UNITY OF HINDU GROUPS IN AUSTRIA



Dr. Sundaresa Ramakrishnan

Brunn am Gebirge, Austria

I am proud of our country India not only because I was born there but also because it is the largest democracy in the world, with people belonging to various religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Islamism, Christianity, Jainism, etc., living side by side peacefully in our country.

Each of these religious groups has many sub-groups depending upon the faiths, beliefs, method of praying, etc., that each of them practices in life. I will not elaborate further on the sub-groups since my interest and intention is to achieve unity among people in Austria.

There are lots of Indians in Austria like in many countries in the world. Like in India, they belong to different groups depending on their mother tongue, and this has divided them into groups. Each group is maintaining its own internal functions celebrating holidays, etc. Each group has people belonging to different religious beliefs (Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim), but they are bound by the common language they speak.

The smaller groups are not recognized by the Government of Austria since the number of members of each group is relatively small, and as a result they are not eligible for the special benefits provided by the Austrian Government.

As it is well known to all of us, a thick rope consists of hundreds of thin threads all wound together to form the rope. The threads are not so strong and can easily be broken with bare hands, but the rope is much stronger and needs something more powerful, like a pair of scissors, to cut it.

We all know about the strength of unity in India as most of us stood together at times of crisis like war and natural and man-made calamities and maintained the peace and calmness of the country without much effort.

Our people living in Austria should unite under the leadership of the Hindu Religious Organisation Austria (HRÖ) in order to be recognized by the Austrian Government and to get the dignity as such an Association. The benefits could be then enjoyed by all of us living in this country.

I would like to appeal to all the sub-groups living in Austria to join hands with the main association, the HRÖ, by becoming a member and by electing a committee to run it normally. It would be very nice if we all could join hands to strengthen our HRÖ, thereby creating a better atmosphere among us besides enjoying some other benefits.

Jai Hind.

THE SEARCH FOR A PLACE OF OUR OWN



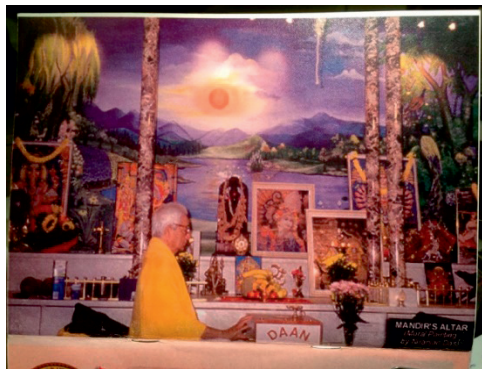
Ghandikota Ramesh

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former General Secretary, HMA,
Hamilton, New Jersey, USA

The 25th anniversary of the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) carries a special meaning for me. I have watched this organization grow from a handful of people to a great many dedicated and hard-working devotees, all of whom share the same dream.

The HMA was registered as a ‘verein,’ or association, with the Austrian authorities in 1991. That simple act was preceded by quite a lot of work by the nascent (and informal) Mandir Executive Committee. As someone who was ‘present at the creation,’ I would like to offer some recollections of those early days.

So what did we do to further our project? Not having our own premises, we were forced to organize monthly bhajans/satsangs in the party rooms of apartment buildings where our members lived. These bhajan sessions were led over the next 20 years by Sri Niranjan Das whose melodious voice proved to be the binding force that kept the Mandir together. In addition to his wonderful singing, he was also a talented artist. Did you know that he painted the beautiful wall mural behind the altar? Though a number of idols are now in front, the photo below gives a view of the mural, with Sri Janakiraman performing a puja in the foreground.



As our membership grew, we began looking for a bigger place. Some of the places we looked at were, in retrospect, amusing and impractical: a converted stable near Mariahilferstrasse, and a basement — also in the 6th District — that looked like a cave.

As always, Lord Ganesha showed us the way. A strong supporter of the Mandir, Mr. Liu, offered us the empty annex to his restaurant on Burggasse. Finally, we had a place where we could meet, pray and sing without disturbance. This place served us well until we moved to our current location on Lammgasse.

As the search for suitable premises continued, the Executive Committee sought to generate support for our project from the City of Vienna. Not many people these days realize that at one time the HMA received the enthusiastic support of the Mayor of Vienna, Mr. Helmut Zilk, who exhorted us to build a temple that would grace the skyline of Vienna (his words)! Indeed, at one time there was a proposal to *grant* land to the HMA on the banks of the Danube River! I remember one meeting of the Vienna City Council that I attended with then HMA President Mr. Vijay Sahni at which the heads of the 23 districts in Vienna offered their support for this proposal. Unfortunately, it got bogged down over various administrative and procedural issues. But just imagine if we had built our temple along the banks of the Danube!

While continuing to look for a suitable place, the Executive Committee also focused on drafting a constitution for the HMA, a requirement under Austrian law. This was an arduous and lengthy process.

The Executive Committee then addressed the important issue of the official recognition of the Hindu religion by the Austrian Government. Such recognition, which was already accorded to Buddhism and Islam, was necessary to obtain, for example, tax-exempt status to facilitate donations or registration of new-born children as Hindu Austrians. This process was complicated and time-consuming, and involved long meetings with senior officials of the Ministry of Education. At one such meeting, convened to approve the draft constitution for the new ‘umbrella’ Hindu Religious Organisation in Austria (HRÖ), our delegation (comprising the HMA President Mr. Mukundrai Joshi, Vice President Mr. Satish Aggarwal, myself as General Secretary, and Mr. Niranjana Das, Cultural Coordinator) was asked by a senior Ministry official if there was a “Pope” in India who could serve as the ultimate authority on all matters pertaining to Hinduism who could be contacted to verify our claims! As you can imagine, this provoked much amusement among the members of our delegation.

As in most such endeavours, the steady support of certain key individuals in those early days was crucial in moving the Mandir project forward. Strong, wise and inclusive leadership was provided by HMA Presidents Mr. Pranab Dastidar, Mr. Vijay Sahni, Mr. Mukundrai Joshi, Mr. Trilok Ahuja, and Mr. Murli Lalwani. Two Vice Presidents, Mr. Satish Aggarwal and Mr. Yudhvir Jairath, contributed very large sums of money to the Mandir Construction Fund, for the annual Diwali Melas and for the renovation of both the Burggasse and Lammgasse premises. They also made sure that the Diwali Melas were conducted without a hitch. Another generous devotee who made a substantial donation was the late Mr. Andy Tharani. Mr. Niranjana Das towered over everyone else as the voice of the Mandir, regularly leading the bhajans and organizing cultural and religious events. General Secretary Dr. Amrit Bhatia introduced a monthly newsletter describing Mandir activities. Dr. Bimal Kundu served on the first Executive Committee of the HMA. Mr. Raghupathy Sankaran was one of the early founders of the HMA and served as General Secretary and Auditor. Our Treasurer during those early days was Mr. Salappan Kandasamy. Mr. Bala Sugavanam provided wise and level-headed counsel. He made it a point to never miss Sunday bhajans when he was in town and never sought any office on the Executive Committee. Another strong supporter of the Mandir was Mr. V.P. Ahuja, a prominent businessman living in Vienna. Many other selfless individuals gave their time and money to help the Mandir. And then there was the late Yogacharya Sri S. Janakiraman, who performed regular pujas in our temple and instilled a sorely needed sense of discipline and order in our religious activities.

This spirit of cooperation has helped us to reach this milestone of 25 years. In celebrating the HMA’s Silver Jubilee, let us also recognize the hard work and dedication of the members of the current HMA Executive Committee who acquired a plot of land in the 21st District for our future Mandir in 2016, our Silver Jubilee year! My hearty congratulations to the Executive Committee for this outstanding achievement. This committee built effectively on the work of every single Executive Committee that came before it and achieved a successful result.

We have come a long way from the monthly meetings of the late 1980s and 1990s. Let us hope that this spirit of cooperation will continue, with Lord Ganesha’s blessings, so that we can celebrate the 50th anniversary of the HMA in our own glorious temple building!

AMRIT VANI AND CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF THE HINDU MANDIR ASSOCIATION



Anita Sahni

Member, HMA Board of Trustees and Former President, HMA, Vienna, Austria

Heartiest congratulations to all the Hindus who have supported the growth of our beloved Hindu Mandir and are celebrating this important landmark with me. This Silver Jubilee marks the trust and faith that all of us together have bestowed on the ethos of our Mandir, which is to welcome all from every walk of life and, through faith, strengthen the beliefs amongst each one of us.

With this thought in our hearts it is important that I make note of the immense contribution of the ladies who have taken time out from their busy routines to help in achieving this milestone. During my tenure as the President of our Hindu Mandir Association, I have not failed to notice that most of our ladies are entangled in their daily routines and hence need some time to break away and come together to relax in a spiritual setting where they can come together to find strength. This was the reason for starting the Amrit Vani group. We decided to meet on the first Tuesday of every month. In the beginning, not many ladies used to come, but gradually it gained momentum and has now become a regular feature. I can never forget the time when quite a few ladies used to come in spite of heavy snowfall and am thankful to them for making this group a success.

Now, the question for consideration is why Amrit Vani? Shri Purshottam Ram was born in the Treta Yuga and it is his Amrit Vani which set the virtues of discipline, time management and commitment. So I thought, what better than to follow the teachings of an exalted soul.

Amrit Vani is the eternal vani/voice of love, devotion, knowledge and strength. It teaches us that the true spiritual potential of a devotee can be reached through chanting the sacred name. The true potential enables the devotee to experience blissful peace and joy enveloped in the consciousness of the divine. The Eternal Voice is equivalent to the wisdom contained in the Vedas combined and is the source for eternal wisdom.

Chanting Ram Naam and meditating on Ram in thought enables the devotee to become one with the divine and establishes a bond with the divine consciousness. This consciousness surrounds the devotee even in silence and the divine presence can be felt all around till the core. The brain and heart harmonise and pure energy resonates throughout the body and empowers the self.

The regular Paath of Amrit Vani enhances the intellect and helps in internalising the external. The intellect expands and connects with the supreme consciousness, allowing the devotee to clearly identify his aspirations and goals and work towards them. The path becomes clear.

Therefore, the importance of Amrit Vani should not be lost and all should adhere to the teachings of Shri Purshottam Ram. Best wishes.

DOWN MEMORY LANE



Dipl.-Ing. Vijay Sahni

Member, HMA Board of Trustees and former President, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

Dear friends. I have been asked to go down memory lane and write a few lines about our Mandir's history. When I first came to Vienna in 1974, there were very few Indians here. Life was dull and boring because one had very little possibility of meeting people from our country. Things changed when a few Indian families who had come from Uganda started meeting at each other's homes for prayers and get-togethers. It was during this time that we all felt the need to create a common place where we could meet regularly to meet our sacred cultural and religious needs. We Hindus here in Vienna felt that if we did not take any action now, our children may lose touch with our religion and culture.

I would like to mention the names of a few persons who took the initiative in the early 1980s to establish a temple (Mr. Yudhvir Jairath, Mr. Satish Aggarwal, Mr. Pranab Dastidar, Mr. Prem Sachdeva, Mr. Liu, Mr. Niranjana Das, Mr. Naresh Maria, Mr. Subhash Sethi, Mr. Vinod Dutta, Dr. Bimal Kundu, Mr. Mukundrai Joshi, Mr. Ghandikota Ramesh, Mr. Raghupathy Sankaran, the Tikoo brothers Vijay and Lalit, Mr. Devinder Chhibber and many, many more). Our idea of a temple was that it should be a place where we bring human beings and God together, using symbolism to express the ideas and beliefs of Hinduism. This place of worship should present all elements of the Hindu cosmos showing the good, the evil and the human, as well as the elements of the Hindu sense of cyclical time and essence of life, symbolically presenting dharma, artha, kāma and moksha.

Our first temple was in the cellar of a restaurant near the Naschmarkt in Vienna's 6th District and Mr. Dastidar was our first elected President. We were there for a year or so, meeting once a week on Sundays. The biggest problem we had in this place was that the ground floor occupied by the restaurant was always full on Sundays and was very noisy. We decided to shift and found a person who was prepared to help us. It was Mr. Liu, who owned a huge Chinese restaurant on Burggasse in the 7th District.

Mr. Liu not only gave us a huge room next to his restaurant but also built a beautiful altar and prayer hall for us with his own hands. We will always be thankful to him for this great gesture. We stayed here for a few years and then moved to Lammgasse.

I sincerely wish that our dream of having our own Mandir, which started in 1980, will soon be fulfilled.

विदेशों में मंदिर का महत्व



संजय सेहगल Sanjay Sehgal

Member, Temple Management Committee

Venna, Austria

हिन्दू धर्म के अनुसार मंदिर वो स्थान है जंहा तेतीस कोटि देवी देवताओं का निवास होता है। हम हिन्दुओं की मान्यता है मंदिर में साक्षात् भगवान् का वास होता है। हम बहुत से भारतीय विदेशों में आकर बस चुके हैं और हम सबको ऐसा लगता है की धर्म और धर्म स्थान कहीं बहुत पीछे भारत में छूट गया है। सो इसलिए सभी प्रवासी भारतीयों की तीव्र इच्छा है की विदेश में भी वे अपने धर्म का अनुसरण करें। इसलिए जंहा भी हम रहें वंहा हमारा धर्म स्थान होना अतिआवश्यक है और विदेश में रहने वाले सब हिन्दू मिलकर धर्म स्थान अर्थात् मंदिर का निर्माण करना चाहते हैं।

मंदिर का होना हमारे जीवन में इसलिए भी आवश्यक है क्योंकि विदेश में रहकर जीवन एक अलग तरह का हो जाता है क्योंकि जिंदगी पर परिवेश और वातावरण का असर सा हो जाता है। जब हम भारत में रहते हैं या जाते हैं तो हमें प्रत्येक नगर या स्थान मंदिर गुरुद्वारे या धर्म स्थान के दर्शन रास्ते में कहीं भी आते जाते होते रहते हैं। परन्तु यंहा परदेस में मंदिर कहीं कहीं ही देखने या दूढ़ने पर ही मिलते हैं। और भारत में मंदिर जाने का कोई समय भी निश्चित नहीं होता - आप सुबह शाम किसी भी समय धर्म स्थान पर जा सकते हैं परन्तु विदेश में रहने से व्यस्त दिनचर्या में से समय निकाल कर रोज मंदिर जाना सभी के लिए संभव नहीं है। क्योंकि यंहा विदेश में सभी रोजगार को प्राथमिकता देते हैं। इसलिए मंदिर जाने के लिए अपनी अपनी सुविधा अनुसार समय निश्चित करना पड़ता है और इसलिए विदेशों में मंदिर सप्ताह में एक ही दिन खुलता है और सभी हिन्दू परिवार उसी दिन अपनी श्रद्धा अनुसार भगवान के दर्शन करने आते हैं।

हम सब हिंदु मिलकर ऑस्ट्रिया में एक भव्य मंदिर का निर्माण करना चाहते हैं जिससे हम अपने सालाना पर्व त्यौहार विधि अनुसार मना सके। वैसे तो मंदिर बहुत बड़ा या भव्य ना भी हो तो कोई बात नहीं। बात तो मन में विश्वास की है और विश्वास यह है की जंहा आपको भगवान् के दर्शन हों, जंहा आपको सकारात्मक ऊर्जा मिले, जंहा आप श्रद्धा और भाव से नमन कर सके, वही मंदिर है। मंदिर में त्यौहार मनाने का एक कारण यह भी है हम अपनी संस्कृति से जुड़े रहे और हम भारतीय हैं तो भारतीय ही बनकर रहे, विदेशी न बन जाए। दूसरा कारण मंदिर से जुड़े रहने का यह भी है की हम अपने परिवार और बच्चों को अच्छे संस्कार दे सकें।

हमारे बच्चे विदेशी बच्चों के साथ विध्यालय में शिक्षा ग्रहण करते हैं और बड़े होने पर विदेशियों के साथ ऑफिसों में काम करते हैं। इसलिए उनको यंहा अपनी संस्कृति और सभ्यता का वातावरण और परिवेश नहीं मिल पाता और इसलिए कभी कभी पथ भ्रष्ट भी हो जाते हैं।

बच्चों को संस्कृति और सभ्यता सिखाने के लिए दो ही स्थान हैं - पहला घर परिवार और दूसरा धर्म स्थान मंदिर। इसलिए दोनों का परिवेश भारतीय होना चाहिए। यदि हम मंदिर नहीं जायेंगे तो इन सब से वंचित रह जायेंगे। हमें अपने व्रत, उपवास, त्यौहार, संस्कार और संस्कृति कुछ भी पता नहीं चलेगा और अगर पता भी हो तो मंदिर न जाने से धीरे धीरे भूल जायेंगे और आगे भी किसी को इसकी शिक्षा नहीं दे पाएंगे। यदि हम मंदिर जायेंगे तो हमें अपने अंदर परिवर्तन स्वयं दिखाई देगा, और हमारे अंदर स्वतः ही सकारात्मकता आ जाएगी। भगवान को या अपने इष्ट देव को तो हम अपने घर में रह कर भी याद कर सकते हैं, घर में भी पूजा-अर्चना कर सकते हैं परन्तु मंदिर में बैठकर सब लोगो के साथ मिलकर किये जाने वाले सत्संग का अपना ही महत्व है। इससे हमें लोगो से जुड़ने का मौका भी मिलता है, लोगो में विचारों का आदान प्रदान भी होता है और अच्छी बातें सीखने को मिलती हैं। मंदिर जाने का सबसे बड़ा लाभ यह है की हमें सभी देवी देवताओं का आशीर्वाद एक साथ मिल जाता है।

MY MOST SINCERE FELICITATIONS TO THE HMA IN VIENNA



Meenu Sharma

New Delhi, India

I am delighted to learn from Mr. T.N. Ahuja that the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) is celebrating its 25th anniversary by publishing a souvenir booklet. For me, it is an honour to have the opportunity of expressing my felicitations to the HMA and offer my best wishes for its project of building a temple in Vienna.

During my husband's tenure as India's ambassador to Austria, I had the privilege of living in the beautiful and musical city of Vienna and came in contact with the Indian community there. The Hindu community, although small, was very active. Amongst my many interests, music remained dominant all through. My frequent visits to the small Mandir in Vienna were crowned by the beautiful bhajans sung at the temple by our very dear friend Mr. Niranjan Das. I also liked the lovely ambience during the frequent and regular gatherings. Once I was asked to preside as the judge of the mantra recitation competition in the Mandir. It was a thrilling experience for me and a very rare privilege too. This wonderful memory has remained with me till the present day, when I heard young children reciting verses with a beatific smile on their faces, full of grace and love for the ancient Indian literature in Sanskrit.

Amongst my other interests, reading of Indian literature was also dominant. In the Mandir we had, at times, recitation of the Ramacharitmanas for the whole night. It was a great privilege to recite the text of the Ramayana in a group for a long period of time. Then different readers continued the reading.

I have been residing now in India for many years. Still, whenever I think of Vienna so many beautiful memories pass before my eyes. The more I think the more the memories accrue. I wish the HMA all the best for building a beautiful temple there, befitting the beauty of the land. This is the best we can do for Austria. My best wishes are always with you.

जागरण — JĀGRAN OR JĀGRATA



पंडित रवि शर्मा

London, United Kingdom

जागरण का अर्थ है जागते रहने की अवस्था या भाव। जागने से अभिप्राय है जानना। माँ भगवती शक्ति के चरणों में रात्रि पर्यन्त जागने की तपस्या एक साधना है, मात्र संगीतमय आयोजन नहीं। मन का तुष्टिकरण तो हम दिनभर करते रहते हैं, वह मनोरंजन होता है। जागरण में तो आत्मा के तुष्टिकरण का प्रयास होता है। जैसे तन की खुराक भोजन है, मन का मनोरंजन तो आत्मा की खुराक है भजन। भजन कीर्तन के माध्यम से हम उस आध्यात्मिक परिवेश में जाना होता है जहाँ हमें भीतर का विशाल भवन प्रवेश के लिए आमंत्रित कर रहा होता है। इसी भवन में माँ भगवती का दरबार सज़ा है। ज्योति स्वरूपा माँ हमारे जीवन को आलोकित करने के लिए अपनी प्रकाश किरणें हम पर बरसाती है। हम जितना माँ के निकट जाते हैं उतने ही अधिक संतुष्ट और आनंदित होते जाते हैं। सरल शब्दावली में कहें तो ईश्वर का स्वरूप आनंद का अहसास है। यदि आप खुश हैं, मस्त हैं तो आप माँ की गोद में हैं।

माँ से दूरी यानि अपने आत्म स्वरूप से दूरी, अर्थात आनंद से दूरी। जब हम सच्चिदानंद की पूजा करते हैं तो हमारे जीवन में आनंद यानि सुख की कमी क्यों है? सारा विश्व दुखी क्यों है? दुःख क्या है? सुख की अनुपस्थिति। प्रकाश का न होना ही तो अंधकार है। जागरण के माध्यम से हम इसी प्रकाश पुंज अर्थात आनंद के अथाह सागर, परम पिता परमात्मा की कृपा प्राप्त करके सुखी हो सकते हैं।

शास्त्र कहते हैं संसार एक सपना है। सपने में हम तरह-तरह के कष्ट भोग रहे हैं। यद्यपि ये कष्ट वास्तविक नहीं हैं। सपना है, पर भयानक दुखदाई है। ये दुःख कैसे दूर हो?

आवश्यकता है जागने की - अर्थात सत्य को, स्वयं को, अपने आत्म स्वरूप को जानने की और इसके लिए हमें पूरी श्रद्धा, निष्ठा और संयम के साथ जागरण करना है। संगीत नृत्य गायन तो साधन है उस आनंद तक पहुँचने के लिए हमारे अपने भीतर ही हमारे आनंद का खज़ाना है, हमें जागकर अर्थात ज्ञान के नैविगेशन का सहारा ले कर सद्गुरु और सद्ग्रंथों से मार्गदर्शन ले कर इस कोष अर्थात खज़ाने को प्राप्त करना है। सोते रह जाएँगे तो कुछ प्राप्त नहीं कर पाएँगे। इसीलिए जागरण के अन्तिम पहर में जीवात्मा की स्थिति आनन्दमय होने लगती है। ये आनंद जागरण का प्रसाद है, प्रसाद चाहिए तो जागिए और जगाइए।

जो सोवत है सो खोवत है।

जो जागत है सो पावत है।

THANK YOU HMA...



Asha Singhania

Director, Vienna Holdings (Pty) Ltd,
Vienna, Austria



Manoj Singhania

Managing Director, Vienna Holdings (Pty) Ltd,
Vienna, Austria

The Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) was a beacon of light in my instance, bridging the gap of community, identity, and religious uniformity, sharing a collective memory/vision/myth about the original homeland and culture, applicable even to me, a South African of Indian ethnicity.

When I contacted the HMA in 2005 seeking to join a Mandir, the President, Mr Triloki Nath Ahuja, was extremely welcoming and professional in his response. Impressed by his swift reply and HMA's commitment and vision, my husband and I from that point, lent our support from our Hotel Park Inn by Radisson, in the form of financial contributions, Tombola prizes and accommodation for HMA guests. People often underestimate how difficult it is to navigate the stress of relocating to a new country and transitioning into one's new life. Through the HMA, we were introduced to the Indian community in Vienna, establishing new friendships, and were encouraged to attend the Mandir regularly, actively participating in Mandir activities and celebrating and sharing special occasions in the Mandir offering langar prasad. The annual Diwali Mela has become an institution as it proudly showcases Indian culture, food, dress, language and entertainment aligned to celebrating not only Diwali and our heritage but also the HMA's fundraising activities.

Manoj and I would like to congratulate the HMA on the purchase of the Mandir land for the building of the new temple. This spiritual sanctuary will be HMA's greatest contribution and legacy for generations to come.

THE LONG JOURNEY OF HINDUS IN VIENNA TO ACHIEVE THEIR DREAM OF HAVING A HINDU TEMPLE OF THEIR OWN



B. Sugavanam

Former Director, United Nations Industrial Development Organization,
Member, HMA Board of Trustees, former HMA Auditor,
Vienna, Austria

When I joined the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in 1984, I met one Mr. R. Sankaran who told me an old saying in Tamil Nadu, “do not live in a city where there is no temple.” As we could not afford to leave Vienna due to our jobs, the only option was to find ways and means of building a temple of our own. A small group of people got together and used to meet in a room on Rennbahnweg, in Vienna’s 22nd District and at the Vienna International Centre (VIC). I still remember people like Pranab Dastidar, Krishnaswamy Venkataraman, Raghupathy Sankaran, Ghandikota Ramesh, Vijay Sahni, Anita Sahni, Naresh Maria, Salleppan Kandasamy, Niranjana Das and others discussing the future of the Hindu community which, though small, still had need of a place to worship.

As the population of Hindus in Vienna increased, this group, in collaboration with other pioneering individuals like Mr. and Mrs. Kundu and others, established the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) with the long-term goal of constructing a full-fledged Hindu temple in Vienna.

During the 1990s, the Hindu population continued to slowly increase, but the numbers did not reach the critical point of 10,000 required to obtain recognition of the Hindu religion by the Government of Austria. However, despite a number of problems, our vibrant Hindu community managed, with the help of donors, to rent premises and converted it into a small, makeshift temple.

With more funds starting to flow in regularly from members, as well as generous donations from individuals, we managed to rent the present premises at Lammgasse 1, which to this day has been serving the long-held desire of Hindus in Vienna to offer their prayers, obeisance and oblations to our Gods. With the help of learned members of the Hindu community, the Constitution of the Hindu Mandir Association was written and registered with the Government of Austria.

Despite great efforts by the Government to integrate different religious denominations, the Hindu religion is not fully recognized in Austria. Also, many opportunities were missed to acquire land for the construction of a temple.

In the late 1980s, our funds amounted to around a meagre 2000 Schillings (around €150)! At the beginning of the millennium, thanks to an increase in the number of members and corresponding increase in membership fees and donations, we reached almost €400,000, which enabled HMA to buy the current parcel of land in the 21st District. Though modest in size, it represents a good opportunity at last for the Hindu community to build a proper temple for the next generation to enjoy and to carry on the rich, pluralistic culture of our religion. For this positive situation, we have to thank in particular those people who initially sowed the seed to establish a Hindu temple.

Our new temple should represent an all-India character to represent people coming from the South, North, East and West of India so that the international community in Vienna can benefit for years to come. In this endeavour, a few people have played a key role in pushing our efforts. The people who came forward to sing and chant bhajans in front of the altar every Sunday and those who took the trouble to organize jagrans and the annual Deepavali function form the very soul of the temple that is likely to become a reality.

I remember the famous saying of Winston Churchill, “Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.” Our challenge was to make the Hindu temple a reality in Vienna against many odds. It was indeed a small conflict, but very important and essential for the Hindu community in Vienna. After more than 25 years of ups and downs, a few people played a key role and the Churchill quote is appropriate, though in a small way.



A Typical Temple in Thiruvaiyar, Tamil Nadu, South India.

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE HMA's SILVER JUBILEE



Lalit Tikoo

Former Vice-President, HMA

Vienna, Austria

It is a great pleasure that the HMA is celebrating its silver jubilee and that the Executive Committee has bought a piece of land using the funds collected over the last twenty-five years for the construction of the much longed for Hindu temple in Vienna.

Although I am no longer an active member, I recall its modest beginnings, with meetings in restaurants, in members' houses and in the Afro-Asiatic Institute. I consider myself fortunate to have served the community through the HMA for some years and will continue my support in the future. I hope the Executive Committee will maintain the momentum and steer the construction project to its completion with the blessings of God and the co-operation of the community and its well-wishers.

I wish all the success to the HMA in building a beautiful Hindu temple in the coming years which will serve the religious and spiritual needs of the present and future generations of the community.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE HMA ON ITS SILVER JUBILEE



Vijay Tikoo

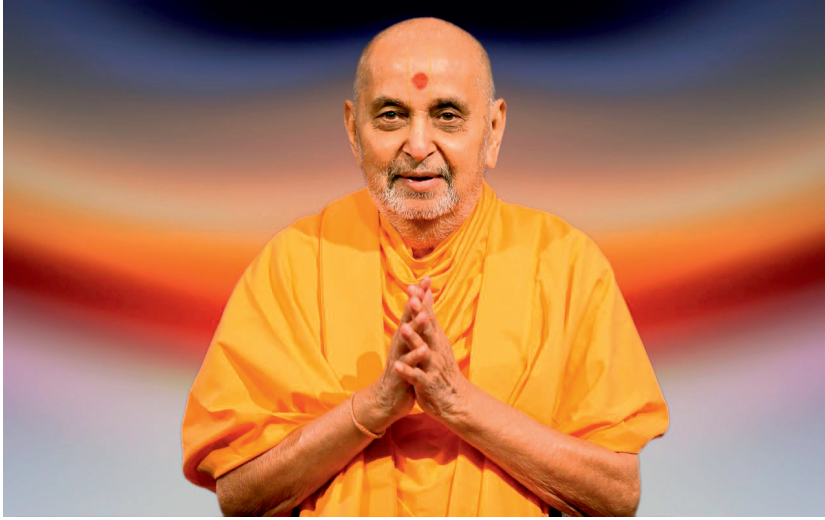
Former Vice-President, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

Congratulations to the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) on acquiring a plot of land in Vienna. As a founding member, I am glad that the HMA has made this progress in achieving our long-cherished goal of building a beautiful Hindu temple in Vienna for the Hindu community now and for future generations.



SILVER JUBILEE ARTICLES

HIS HOLINESS PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ: LIFE AND WORK



BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha

Ahmedabad, India

Internationally revered Hindu leader His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj passed away on Saturday 13 August 2016 at 6 p.m. IST in Sarangpur, Gujarat, India. He was 94.

His Holiness, celebrated for his worldwide socio-spiritual services, was the fifth spiritual successor in the Guru Parampara tradition of Bhagawan Swaminarayan and the head of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS). For more than seven decades, he had travelled tirelessly, visiting over 17,000 towns and villages in India and abroad. For the last two years, because of old age and frail health, he had been residing at the BAPS Swaminarayan temple in Sarangpur. He passed away there peacefully due to his longstanding heart problems.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was born on 7 December 1921 to a humble farmer's family in the small village of Chansad, near Vadodara in Gujarat. In 1939, at the age of 18, he renounced his home to become a sadhu and received initiation into the monastic order from his guru Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj. He was named Swami Narayanswarupdas.

On completing his Sanskrit studies, he was appointed as the kothari (head swami) of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Sarangpur in 1946 at the age of 25. Then, in 1950, aged 28, Shastriji Maharaj appointed him as the president (Pramukh) of BAPS in his place. Since then, he had been fondly known as 'Pramukh Swami.'

Shastriji Maharaj passed away in 1951, revealing Yogiji Maharaj as his spiritual successor. Thereafter, Pramukh Swami served under the guidance and blessings of Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj. In 1971, after the departure of guru Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj succeeded him as the fifth spiritual guru of BAPS.

Over the next 45 years, his unremitting satsang travels, selfless services to society, saintly virtues and profound devotion to God earned him the respect and reverence of countless worldwide.

Some of his many outstanding services to society include uplifting the needy, liberating thousands from vices and addictions, providing relief and rehabilitation in times of calamity, and inspiring character and faith in hundreds of thousands of children and youths.

As a leading representative of the worldwide Hindu community and a keen proponent of interfaith dialogue, Pramukh Swami Maharaj addressed the United Nations Millennium Peace Summit in 2000 at the UN General Assembly in New York. He stressed, “True religion is that which inspires love for one another.”

He created over 1,100 temples around the world, including Europe’s first traditional Hindu temple, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London (popularly known as the ‘Neasden Temple’). He also created the ‘Swaminarayan Akshardham’ temple complexes in New Delhi and Gandhinagar to portray the spiritual heritage of India. He inspired and initiated over 980 youths into the Hindu monastic order.

Renowned religious leaders and heads of state have been deeply touched by his simplicity, humility, saintliness and edifying works. These include His Holiness The Dalai Lama, HRH Prince Charles, the late Sheikh Isa bin Salman al Khalifa of Bahrain, India’s late president Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and many other royal, religious and national leaders, and dignitaries.

He lived by and preached the message: “In the joy of others lies our own.”

Pramukh Swami Maharaj is succeeded by His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj (Swami Keshavjivandas), now the sixth guru in the spiritual lineage of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the current head of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha.

To learn more about the life, work and teachings of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, please visit pramukhswami.org.



The Magnificent Akshardham Swaminarayan Temple in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India.

MANTRA PUSHPANJALI (मंत्र पुष्पांजली) AS CHANTED IN OUR MANDIR



Dipl.-Ing. Triloki Nath Ahuja

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former
President, HMA,
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Nilesch Nathwani

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former
Vice-President, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

Background

Devotees in every Hindu temple recite a set of mantras before and/or after Aarti, though which mantras are recited vary from temple to temple. This practice has also been a feature of the HMA temple for a long time. However, it was not followed consistently, nor was there documentation that people could follow, leading to much confusion among devotees. Noting this omission, a number of devotees launched an initiative in 2006 to produce a complete, harmonised set of mantras for the Aarti. Several learned devotees participated in the exercise, which also included advice from highly reputed priests from India.

This set of mantras was approved by the Executive Committee at that time. New booklets were prepared (sincere thanks to Mr. Kishore Jetwani for formatting the mantras) and launched in August 2006 after an explanation to the devotees. The importance of proper pronunciation of the mantras was also highlighted. Mr. Nilesch Nathwani guided devotees in the proper recital of these mantras by applying the appropriate musical notes, meter and rhythm which, over time, became the de facto standard — a huge contribution indeed. The group recital of mantras, when pronounced correctly, charges the atmosphere with spiritual vibrations which many have experienced. I recollect Nileschbhai's comments on its launch, "We are all blessed with these new mantras that produce a very harmonious Aksharbrahmand at our Mandir." Today, Mantra Pushpanjali and Aarti are the most attended and liked part of the Satsang in the temple.

One thing still needed for our devotees is documentation giving the meaning of the mantras and Aarti itself, though we explained parts in some of the Satsangs. I hope this will fulfill a long-felt need and will become a reference to pass on to the next generation.

Mantra Pushpanjali

Mantras have a sacred phonic power that when uttered create spiritual efficacy. Their repeated utterance brings to the devotee help from divine spheres. There are Bija mantras (a single syllable sound) that represent the essence of universal truth such as Om or Aum. The Bija mantras are the most powerful mantras as the concept of the deity they represent become real with all the powers of the deity. Vedic science is a spiritual science, its central knowledge in which all Vedic disciplines converge, is the knowledge of the Self (Ātma Yidya). Vedic science is essentially the science of self-knowing. At the end only self-knowledge liberates the mind, filling the heart with bliss and the realisation of immortality. That is why mantras are chanted at the beginning of any religious ceremony. In our Lammgasse temple, the collection of mantras and shlokas given below are recited by all devotees during the Jai Jagadish Hare aarti after lighting lamps. Since our temple is a Sarva Devata institution (dedicated to all gods and goddesses), the collection includes prayers for the main Hindu deities, as well as gurus, the kshama prayer and a universal peace prayer. The first part is recited before the aarti, while the second part is recited after the aarti.

Part One

We begin by invoking Lord Ganesha — the destroyer of all obstacles and the source of welfare for all devotees.

सर्व विघ्न विनाशाय सर्व कल्याण हेतवे।

पार्वती प्रियपुत्राय गणेशाय नमो नमः॥

ॐ श्री गणेशाय नमः। ॐ श्री गणेशाय नमः। ॐ श्री गणेशाय नमः।

Sarva Vighna Vinaashaaya Sarva Kalyaana Hetave

Parvati Priya-putraya. Shree Ganeshaya Namoh Namah

Om Shri Ganeshaya Namah, Om Shri Ganeshaya Namah, Om Shri Ganeshaya Namah.

Meaning

I prostrate myself to Lord Ganesha, the beloved son of Goddess Parvati who is the destroyer of all obstacles and the source of welfare for all.

The next three shlokas are addressed to Guru (गुरु) — the spiritual teacher or mentor. They glorify the Guru for his God-like attributes. The true meaning of Guru is: one who dispels darkness or ignorance. ‘Gu’ means darkness or ignorance and ‘ru’ means “one who removes.”

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः।

गुरुःसाक्षात् परब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः॥

Gururbrahma gururvishnuh gururdevo maheshwarah

Guruhsakshat parabrahma tasmai shrigurave namah

Meaning

Guru is the creator (Brahma), sustainer (Vishnu) and the destroyer (Shiva). He is Supreme God — the timeless principle of life, the very essence of the creation. To Him my reverential salutations, who is a glorious teacher and who is verily the Supreme God.

The essence of this shloka is that the Guru is the representative of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva as he creates, sustains knowledge and destroys the weeds of ignorance.

ध्यानमूलं गुरुर्मूर्तिः पूजामूलं गुरुपदम्।
मन्त्रमूलं गुरुर्वक्यं मोक्षमूलं गुरुकृपा॥
Dhyaana-Moolam Gurur-Murtih
Pujaa-Moolam Gurur-Padam
Mantra-Moolam Gurur-Vaakyam
Moksha-Moolam Gurur-Krpaa

Meaning

The root of meditation is the Guru's form. The root of puja is the Guru's feet. The root of the mantra is the Guru's speech. The root of liberation (from cycle of birth and death) is the Guru's grace.

अखण्डमण्डलाकारं व्याप्तं येन चराचरम्।
तत्पदं दर्शितं येन तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः॥
Akhandamandalaa Kaaram Vyaaptam yena Charaacharam
Tat Padam Darshitam yena Tasmai Shri Gurave namah

Meaning

My Salutations to that Guru who revealed to me that Truth, which is One, infinite, timeless divinity, and which pervades the entire cosmos, animate and inanimate.

The next three shlokas and mantra are prayers to invoke the blessings of Divine Mother Durga.

सर्वमङ्गलमाङ्गल्ये शिवे सर्वार्थसाधिके।
शरण्ये त्र्यम्बके गौरि नारायणि नमोऽस्तु ते॥
शरणागत दीनार्तपरित्राण परायणे।
सर्वस्यातिहरे देवि नारायणि नमोऽस्तुते॥
सृष्टिस्थिति विनाशानां शक्तिभूते सनातनि।
गुणाश्रये गुणमये नारायणि नमोऽस्तु ते॥
ॐ श्री दुर्गायै नमः। ॐ श्री दुर्गायै नमः। ॐ श्री दुर्गायै नमः।
Sarva Mangala Mangalye Shive Sarvartha Sadhike
Saranye Tryambake Gauri Narayani Namostute
Sharanaagat Deenaart Paritraanaparaayane
Sarvsyartihare Devi, Narayani Namostute
Srishtisthiti Vinashaanam Shaktibhute Sanaatani
Gunaashraye Gunamaye Narayani Namostute
Aum Shree Durgaayai Namah, Aum Shree Durgaayai Namah Aum Shree Durgaayai Namah.

Meaning

Goddess Durga is the most auspicious one and the one who bestows peace upon the world, fulfilling all the goals of the devotees (Purusharthas — Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha). She is powerful and protects those who surrender to Her and is also called the Mother of the three worlds. We prostrate to Mother Durga.

You (Goddess Durga) are the saviour of all who seek refuge in you,

You remove all the pain of life, protect the weak and the poor and remove their misery.

Salutations to you, Narayani!

You are the creator, protector and the destroyer,

The centre of divine energy,

The essence of nature,

Salutations to you, Narayani!

Part Two

The next shloka is a prayer to invoke the blessings of Lord Vishnu.

मंगलम भगवान विष्णुः, मंगलम गरुडध्वजः।

मंगलम पुण्डरीकाक्षः मंगलाय तनोहरिः॥

हरि ॐ! हरि ॐ! हरि ॐ!

Mangalam Bhagwan Vishnuh.

Mangalam Garuda Dhvajah.

Mangalam Pundareekaksham.

Mangalaya Tano Harih

Hari Aum! Hari Aum! Hari Aum!

Meaning

May auspiciousness be unto Lord Vishnu,

May all auspiciousness be unto the one who has the Garuda (the king of birds) as flag symbol,

May all auspiciousness be unto the Lord whose eyes are like the lotus flower.

Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu) is the abode all auspiciousness.

‘Hari Om’ is a universal mantra that removes suffering. Hari means remover. This mantra contains within itself the cosmic vibration. Through Hari Om meditation, soul energy moves from one centre to the other (root chakra to Sahasrara).

Shlokas Recited After Aarti

त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव।

त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव।

त्वमेव विद्या द्रविणम् त्वमेव।

त्वमेव सर्वम् मम देव देव॥ (source: Pandava Gita, verse 28)

Tvameva Maataa cha Pita Tvameva,

Tvameva Bandhu cha Sakhaa Tvameva,

Tvameva Vidya Dravinam Tvameva,

Tvameva Sarvam Mama Deva Deva.

Meaning

You alone are my mother, you alone my father; you alone are my kinsman, you alone my friend; you alone are my knowledge, you alone my wealth!

You are everything to me, Oh Lord of Lords, you alone!

The next two shlokas are prayers to Lord Shiva.

कर्पूरगौरं करुणावतारं संसारसारं भुजगेन्द्रहारम्।

सदा वसन्तं हृदयारविन्दे भवं भवानीसहितं नमामि॥

karpūragauram karuṇāvatāram

saṁsārasāram bhujagendrahāram

sadāvasantaṁ hṛdayāravinde

bhavam bhavānīśahitaṁ namāmi

(source: Yajurveda: Śivayajurmantra शिवयजुर्मन्त्र)

Meaning

The one who is as pure white as camphor;

The very incarnation of compassion;

The one who is the very essence (consciousness) of the world;

The one who wears the king of serpents as his garland;

Who always resides in the lotus heart (or Anahata chakra) of every being;

I bow to the Bhava (Lord Shiva) accompanied by Bhavani (the Goddess Uma or Paravati).

Namaskar Mantra

ॐ नमः शम्भवाय च मयोभवाय च।

नमः शंकराय च मयस्कराय च।

नमः शिवाय च शिवतराय च॥

(source: Shukla Yajur Veda Samhita, XVI/41).

Om Namah Sambhavaay Cha Mayobhavaay Cha

Namah Shankaraay Cha Mayaskaraay Cha

Namah Shivaay Cha Shivtaraay Cha

Meaning

Salutations to Him (Lord Shiva) who is the source of happiness here and hereafter.

Salutations to Him who is inherently of the nature of conferring happiness directly in this world and the world hereafter.

Salutations to Him the auspicious one, who is more auspicious than all others.

Note: In this mantra, Lord Shiva has been described in six forms, namely Shambhav (well-being); Mayobhav (manifested in the forms of delight); Shankar (creator of well-being); Mayaskar (creator of delight); Shiv (peaceful and unmanifested form of God); and Shivtara (the form further beyond the Shiva).

Universal Peace and Welfare Mantra

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः
सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु
मा मा कश्चित् दुःख भाग्भवेत्॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥
Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah
Sarve Santu Nir-Aamayaah
Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyantu
Maa Kashcid-Duhkha-Bhaag-Bhavet
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih
(source: Brihadāranyaka Upanishad).

Meaning

May all be prosperous and happy,
May all be free from illness.
May all see what is auspicious,
May no one suffer.
Om peace, peace, peace.

Mantra for Surrender of Actions

कायेन वाचा मनसैर्द्रियैर्वा
बुद्ध्यात्मना वा प्रकृते स्वभावात्
करोमि यद्यत्सकलं परस्मै
नारायणायेति समर्पयामि॥
(source: Mukundamala; also Srimad Bhagavatam 11/2/36).
Kaayena Vaachaa Mansendri-yairvaa
Buddhyaatmanaa Vaa Prakriteh Svabhaavaat
Karomi Yadyat Sakalam Parasmai
Naaraayana-Yeti Samarpayami

Meaning

(Whatever actions I do) with my body, speech, mind or sense organs;

(Whatever I do) using my intellect, or with my innate natural tendencies of my mind, either intentionally or unintentionally,

Whatever I do, I surrender them all at the lotus feet of Lord Narayana.

क्षमा प्रार्थना Kshama Prarthana (Prayers for forgiveness)

मंत्र हीनं क्रिया हीनं भक्ति हीनं सुरेश्वर।

यत्पूजितं मयादेव परिपूर्णं तदस्तु मे॥

Mantra heenam kriya heenam, Bhakti heenam Sureshwara

Yat-pujitam mayaa deva, paripoornam Tadastu Me

Meaning

If my worship is without (proper) knowledge of rituals, mantras and is performed without the right devotion, still O Lord! Forgive me and receive it as intact.

यदक्षरं पदं भ्रष्टं मात्रा हीनं च यद् भवेत्।

तत् सर्वं क्षम्यतां देव प्रसीद परमेश्वर॥

Yadaksharam padam bhrashtam, maatraa heenam cha yad bhavet,

Tatsarvam kshmyataam deva praseed Parameshwara.

Meaning

If I have made an error, omitted a syllable, faltered in my rhythm or have gone out of meter, forgive me my Lord for all those and accept my rendering as complete and without flaws.

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥

Om Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornaat Poornamudachyate

Poornasya Poornamaadaaya Poornamevaavashishyate

Om Shantih Shantih Shantih

Meaning

That (Brahman) is perfect - this (creation) is perfect. What comes from such perfection truly is perfect. What remains after perfection from perfection is yet perfect. May there be peace, peace and perfect peace.

Another interpretation: That (Outer World) is perfect (full with Divine consciousness); this (Inner World) is also perfect (full with Divine consciousness); from perfect comes perfect (from the fullness of Divine consciousness the world is manifested); taking away perfect from perfect, perfect indeed remains (because Divine consciousness is non-dual and infinite).

Note: This is a splendid prayer and it also shows the highest evolution that ancient Indian spiritual masters had reached. It says that Brahman, or consciousness, is complete by itself and out of it came this creation, which is also complete. Let us explain it in mathematical terms: if Brahman = infinity and this universe = infinity, then any mathematician will agree that infinity – infinity is still infinity. Thus, even if this creation is subtracted from Brahman, Brahman is still unaffected and remains intact.

Invocation of Universal Peace

Om Shanthi Shanthi Shanthihi

Meaning

(Let there be) Peace, Peace, Peace everywhere.

We always recite the word ‘peace’ thrice in this mantra. Why? According to Sanatan Dharma, the aim of human birth is to attain Brahman or infinite happiness or bliss. For achieving that state, one needs to have a peaceful mind so as to focus on the ultimate objective. However, our mind is always wandering and we are seldom peaceful. Peace can be disturbed by various afflictions. Our ancient seers have grouped them into the following three categories of sources:

- (a) *Nature (Ādhi-daivika)*. These are afflictions born due to natural calamities, e.g. floods, earthquakes, cyclones, droughts, famines, etc. They are not within a person’s control and are often termed as ‘acts of God.’ They can, however, have a devastating impact on the emotional stability of an individual.
- (b) *Environment (Ādhi-bhautika)*. These are afflictions like strikes, wars, battles, insect bites, epidemics or simply family environment, office, stock market, etc. A severe fight with the spouse can lead to emotional instability. A stock market collapse can create mental turmoil. We have some control over this category of afflictions.
- (c) *Internal (Ādhyatmika)*. These are afflictions stemming from our own self, i.e. originating from one’s own mind and body, e.g. ego, lust, jealousy, anger, hatred, sorrow. They destroy our own peace and the peace of people around us. We have total control over this type of affliction.



BHAGAVAN SHRI VISHNU (JAGDISH) AARTI

भगवान श्री विष्णु (जगदीश) जी की आरती



Dipl.-Ing. Triloki Nath Ahuja

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Nilesch Nathwani

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Vienna, Austria

Vishnu is the Supreme Deity, the preserver of the whole world. In Him, in His wideness, in His stability, in His substance all is supported. He is the Supreme and cosmic personality of the Divine.

Aarti is the waving of lighted lamps before Gods, gurus or even persons who are honoured. Aarti is the most frequently observed rite in temples and homes. In our temple in Lammgasse, Aarti is performed every Sunday and also on all religious celebration we have in the temple. Normally we perform Jagdish Aarti. This Aarti is referred to as the Universal Aarti. The epistemological derivation of the word “Jagdish” comes from the words Jagat (Universe) + Ish (Ishwara, Lord), meaning the Lord of the Universe. Hence it is called the Universal Aarti.

ॐ (Aum) is the greatest of all mantras. It is composed of three sounds, a-u-m, which represent three worlds — the Earth, atmosphere and heaven or/and the three gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. With Aum we invoke the cosmic energy from the ether and from within us.

ॐ जय जगदीश हरे, स्वामी जय जगदीश हरे।

भक्त जनों के संकट, दास जनों के संकट, क्षण में दूर करे।

ॐ जय जगदीश हरे॥१॥

Om jai Jagdish hare, Swāmi jai Jagdish hare

Bhakt jano ke sankat, Dās jano ke sankat,

Kshañ men door kare

Om jai Jagdish hare

Glory to You Lord Vishnu — Lord of the cosmos, Lord of the Universe,

He who lets our worldly sorrows and sufferings to disperse.

जो ध्यावे फल पावे, दुःखबिन से मन का, स्वामी दुःखबिन से मन का।
सुख सम्पति घर आवे, सुख सम्पति घर आवे, कष्ट मिटे तन का।
ॐ जय जगदीश हरे ॥२॥

Jo dhyāve phal pave, Dukh bin se man kā, Swami dukh bin se man kā
Sukh sampati ghar āve, Sukh sampati ghar āve, Kasht mite tan kā
Om jai Jagdish hare

*On Thy name whoever contemplates,
His misery immediately eliminates.
His house is bestowed with bliss
And with your glory
You reward him with a divine kiss.
Glory to You Lord Vishnu — the Lord of the cosmos, the Lord of the Universe,*

मात पिता तुम मेरे, शरण कहूँ मैं किसकी, स्वामी शरण कहूँ मैं किसकी।
तुम बिन और न दूजा, तुम बिन और न दूजा, आस करूँ मैं जिसकी।
ॐ जय जगदीश हरे ॥३॥

Māt pitā tum mere, Sharañ paḍoon main kiski, Swāmi sharañ paḍoon main kiski
Tum bin aur na doojā, Prabhu bin aur na doojā, Āas karoon main jiski.
Om jai Jagdish hare

*You are my mother and father; and my All,
Lord in you I take refuge and to You I call
Lord, I aspire for You Who dwells in my soul.
Glory to You Lord Vishnu — the Lord of the cosmos, the Lord of the Universe,*

तुम पूरण परमात्मा, तुम अन्तर्यामी, स्वामी तुम अन्तर्यामी।
पारब्रह्म परमेश्वर, पारब्रह्म परमेश्वर, तुम सब के स्वामी।
ॐ जय जगदीश हरे ॥४॥

Tum poorāṇ Paramātama Tum Antaryāmi, Swāmi tum Antaryāmi
Pār Brahm Parameshwar, Pār Brahm Parameshwar, Tum sabke swami
Om jai Jagdish hare

*You are complete and perfect
In you I wish to rest
You are in my heart.
In you I wish to dwell and never part.,
Glory to Vishnu, the Lord of the Universe*

तुम करुणा के सागर, तुम पालनकर्ता, स्वामी तुम पालनकर्ता।
मैं मूरख फलकामी मैं सेवक तुम स्वामी, कृपा करो भर्ता।
ॐ जय जगदीश हरे ॥५॥

Tum karuṇā ke sāgar, Tum pālan kartā, Swāmi tum pālan kartā
Main moorakh khalakhāmi, Main sevak tum Swāmi, Kripā karo Bhartā
Om jai Jagdish hare

*You are the ocean of compassion,
You are the nurturer of everyone,
You are Viraat, I am worldly and ignorant,
Shower Your grace on me, O Master
Lord, I remain Your servant here and hereafter.
Glory to Vishnu, the Lord of the Universe.*

तुम हो एक अगोचर, सबके प्राणपति, स्वामी सबके प्राणपति।
किस विधि मिलूं दयामय, किस विधि मिलूं दयामय, तुमको मैं कुमति।
ॐ जय जगदीश हरे ॥६॥

Tum ho ek agochar, Sab ke prāṇ pati, Swāmi sab ke prāṇ pati
Kis vidhi miloon Gosāi, Kis vidhi miloon Dayālu, Tum ko main kumati
Om jai Jagdish hare

*You are Omnipresent and still Unseen.
Lord, you are the Lord of my life, To meet you I am keen,
I want to see You everywhere and in every scene.
Glory to Vishnu, the Lord of the Universe.*

दीन-बन्धु दुःख-हर्ता, ठाकुर तुम मेरे, स्वामी रक्षक तुम मेरे।
अपने हाथ उठाओ, अपने शरण लगाओ द्वार पड़ा तेरे।
ॐ जय जगदीश हरे ॥७॥

Deen bandhu dukh harta, Thakur tum mere, Swāmi Thakur tum mere
Apne hāth uthao, Apni sharaṇi lagāo, Dwār paḍā hoon tere
Om jai Jagdish hare

*You are the friend of the defeated and the remover of every sorrow,
You are my Lord, yesterday, today and tomorrow.
Lord, You are my Protector. Let Your hands grant me a boon
And give me your light just as Sun does to the Moon.
Glory to Vishnu, the Lord of the Universe.*

विषय-विकार मिटाओ, पाप हरो देवा, स्वामी पाप हरो देवा।
श्रद्धा भक्ति बढ़ाओ, श्रद्धा भक्ति बढ़ाओ, सन्तन की सेवा।
ॐ जय जगदीश हरे ॥८॥

Vishay vikār mitāvo, Pāp haro Devā, Swāmi pāp haro Devā,
Shradhā bhakti baḍhāo, Shradhā bhakti baḍhāo, Santan ki sevā
Om jai Jagdish hare

*Annihilate my worldly desires,
Lord destroy my sins and sensual fires
Increase my faith and devotion towards You,
And help me reach the divine hue
Glory to Vishnu, the Lord of the Universe.*

The eighth verse emphasizes the yearning of the worshipper to become compassionate and loving so that he can render service to mankind.

तन मन धन जो कुछ है, सब कुछ है तेरा। स्वामी सब कुछ है तेरा
तेरा तुझको अर्पण, तेरा तुझको अर्पण, क्या लागे मेरा॥ ॐ जय जगदीश हरे ॥९॥

Tan man dhan jo kuchh hai, sab kuchh hai tera,
Swāmi sab kuch hai tera tera tujhko arpan, kya lage mera
Om jai Jagdish hare

*My body, mind and wealth everything is yours
As they are really your manifestations.
To You I offer All that was yours.
Glory to Vishnu, the Lord of the Universe.*

Our real blessings appear with our total surrender to the Supreme. In this way we merge completely with the Lord Vishnu. The physical body, attached to the Earth, is surrendered to the Lord without any reservation. The barriers of the mind and those of the body are eliminated. Then, the attachment to material wealth and worldly belongings dissolve so that the soul identifies itself completely with the Supreme Reality.



IN THE PRESENCE OF THE DIVINE MOTHER, SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE



Caroline Rosso Cicogna

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Words fail to express the all-encompassing knowledge and all-embracing love of the Divine Mother, but in every human heart there is a deep, essential aspiration to be reunited to that source of all love and knowledge. Some human beings, for various reasons, are more conscious of this quest than others, and so they are more receptive to Her call when they first hear it.

In my case, it happened when my husband was posted to the Italian Embassy in New Delhi in May 1979. That was when I was given the blessed opportunity to spend some years in India and be in the presence of Shree Ma Anandamayee, the great Bengali saint. One day, as we were having lunch with diplomats who wanted to show us the Polo Club, I heard an inner voice that said: “*You haven’t come to India to see horses, have you?*” I literally froze, with my fork in the air. The next day I found my way to Brindavan, where Holi was being celebrated in Her ashram. To my great dismay, I arrived too late for the morning darshan and as I had promised my husband to be back in Delhi before sunset, I realized that I would be missing the evening darshan. I can still see myself, as if it were yesterday, sitting despondently on the steps of the darshan hall and hoping that some “miracle” would happen and Ma would appear!

After some time, I was taken out of my silent brooding by an old man who started asking me many questions in his faltering English until he finally told me, “*Very well. Be back on these steps at 3 p.m. and I will take you myself to Ma. You need not wait till the evening darshan.*” So, at 3 p.m. sharp, I found myself back on the steps of the darshan hall, still wondering if the old man had not been a mirage in the morning. He appeared again and summoned me to follow him to Ma’s private lodgings behind the darshan hall. On our way, orange-clad swamis instructed us not to proceed any farther but, unmindful of their demands, the old man told them that Ma had requested him to take me to Her this very day. As if by magic, the Swamis opened the way and we found ourselves on a large, empty terrace in the beautiful light of a spring afternoon. There, brighter than a thousand suns, Ma was sitting, clad in her white sari, with those incredible eyes radiating such a deep and powerful love that nothing in this world would ever erase from me.

Although, in my heart and mind I was prepared for an encounter with Ma, I did not realise that I would be brought so close to Her. What happened afterwards was not prompted by my will. I was made to kneel down in front of Her, and when I straightened up again and looked at Her my eyes were drawn into Her all-loving and all-knowing eyes that penetrated my whole being to such a depth that it kept me there, locked into Her glance in a totally immobile, silent but very vibrant state.

This darshan in Brindavan was to be the first of a long series of encounters with Ma until She left Her body in 1982. Rarely did I put questions to Ma, as I intuitively felt that the moments in Her presence were so sacred and so unique that they were best savoured in a state of silent communion with the Divine Mother.



A Postage Stamp Honouring Shree Ma Anandamayee Issued by the Government of India



Mrs. Carolina Rosso Cicogna Sitting at the Feet of Shree Ma Anandamayee

DEVAYANA: THE THIRD UNKNOWN EPIC OF INDIA¹

(Consisting of twelve thousand pages of poetry in pure gold)



Amita Nathwani

Vienna, Austria

We are, consciously or unconsciously, under the influence of our past memories, culture and our legends. In India, we are guided and inspired by the traditions and stories that are included in the Ramayana and Mahabharata. These stories influence us in how we lead our life. They set for us, to a great extent, our standards, our principles, even our right conduct. They colour our relationship to society, to friends and family and to a great extent form the philosophy of our life.

We have now a third epic revealed to us through Dr. Hajari in the mid-20th century. Through Devayana, Dr. Hajari brings to us the legacy of the greatness of ancient India and combines it with an account of the historical period together with insights into our present and future. He was a close disciple of Sri Aurobindo—who was an amalgam of Western and Eastern thoughts. Sri Aurobindo came to elevate the entire humanity to the supramental level and to bring the Golden Age down to the Earth. Dr. Hajari became an instrument of the Divine as the Devayana was revealed to him for three years and four months after the passing away of Sri Aurobindo. In a powerful vision one night, he experienced the presence of luminous beings together with Sri Aurobindo around him. This brought spiritual force to him and enabled him to pen the story of the Four Ages—the epic “Devayana.” This narration is in Bengali as Dr. Hajari’s mother tongue was Bengali. Transcribing this epic into Hindi/Sanskrit is an attempt to universalise this epic. And the complete work has been attempted in Vienna, this beautiful city we live in. There can be no complete account of Indian philosophy of epics if Devayana is ignored.

In Devayana, the complex songs of the Vedas, the razor sharp arguments of the Upanishads, the tales of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the allegory of the Puranas, the symbolism of the Bhagwad Gita and the great mass of the very powerful Indian literature has been formulated in a new language that is a fusion of Sanskrit and many other Indian languages, including Bengali. This new language, at present, seems to be the only way to revive the old classical Sanskrit which has become inaccessible in its present rigid structure. Many ancient languages like Hebrew and classical Greek have also undergone this change in modern times.

One cannot emphasise often enough that India’s greatest gift to the world is its original philosophy, its vast and rich spiritual literature, its Yoga system, its traditional medical knowledge Ayurveda, as well as

¹ For more information on this epic, please refer to the website <http://www.devayan.net> www.devayan.net

its epics. This knowledge is available but spread out in many scriptures and we have no clue of the time sequence. In Devayana, we find, for the first time, the story of the complete cycle of human civilisation, including the beginning of creation, as well as the birth of the Gods and the Devils in a consecutive manner. That is why Devayana is new and refreshing, an epic that will accompany us as we approach Satya Yuga.

Many Indians, except for a highly educated few, have lost their knowledge of Sanskrit. The ancient Vedic mantras, still bright as ever, do not attract them anymore. Additionally, the Upanishadic way of argumentation is considered heavy and the allegories of Puranas have lost their significance as more and more Harry Potter admirers are being born under the influence of Western civilisation. We lead our lives occupied in a mad race to obtain the latest technological products for our enjoyment, forgetting our spiritual heritage. In this rushed life, we barely have time to glance even at modern literature. For providing the coming generations with the same solid foundation of values, it is imperative that our ancient heritage is brought out in a modern, simple style with the undying message intact. In this work, we find the vision of the ancient Rishis brought to us in a simpler language for those who find classical Sanskrit impossible to access.

Our happiness does not depend on obtaining materialistic goods. We need to pattern our life on our ancient culture that had influenced the entire world in times gone by. The whole world is looking up to India today to give them a spiritual message that may change the entire face of our globe in the near future. Only with balanced values, spiritual and material, together with an advanced consciousness, good health (through Yoga) and freedom of spirit will we be able to ensure the survival of our planet. It is important for us to remember that to live to our utmost today, we have to accept the legacy of our past and to increase its influence on our present. For this, Devayana has come to reaffirm these values in us. This epic will lead humanity to greater unity and prepare us for the approaching Golden Age. Whether we accept it or not depends solely on each one of us.



The Epic Devayana as Transcribed by the Author into Hindi and Sanskrit from the Original Bengali.

JIGSAW OF KARMA, DESTINY AND FREE WILL



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“It’s my fate, it’s my destiny, it was supposed to happen and it happened.” These are some answers we often give to ourselves when something unforeseen and disturbing happens in our lives. I can guarantee that no one knows why it happens and who has decided it will happen. Even atheists and non-believers agree on destiny and submit to the order of time. Nowadays, the word ‘karma’ is no longer purely Indian. It is being used all around the world.

Karma in simple words means ‘activity.’ There are three kinds of karma: vikarma, karma and akarma. Vikarma means performing activities against the principles of the scriptures which cause hardship and distress to other living beings. Vikarma activities create much mental and physical suffering in our current life and sometimes even in the next life. The second type, karma, means performing activities in line with the scriptures which do not cause any suffering to other living beings. Such karma creates happy moments in our current life and sometimes even in the next life. The third type, akarma, means performing activities which do not create any karma, or reactions. We will get neither good nor bad reactions from performing ‘akarmic’ activities. If we engage in good activities, then we have to be born again to enjoy the benefits of these good activities, and if we engage in bad activities we have to again take birth to suffer from the bad reactions. But when we perform akarma, there is no need to take birth again as there are no reactions from such activities. Akarmic activities includes those performed only for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord Krishna, and there is no personal motive for performing such activities. Devotional service, ‘bhakti,’ is akarmic activity. Arjuna killed millions of soldiers on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, but he did not suffer any reaction from such activities as he was performing them only for the pleasure of Lord Krishna. It was also devotional service, an act of *akarma*.

Astrology is part of the Vedas and it is a great science through which the future can be easily predicted for anyone. Astrology is a tool and not a solution by itself. It does not stop the pains from coming, but it helps us prepare our emotional state so we do not suffer. Pain is inevitable in this material world, but suffering is a choice. When we go to authentic astrologers, we can get to know almost every aspect of our future life with the dates. In India, we still have a few such genuine astrologers who live in the interiors of villages who do this

as a service to others. Astrology tells us what our destiny has in store for us. Almost every marriage in India in traditional families takes place after the astrologer checks the birth charts of the bride and the groom. Even in the 21st century, if any scientifically minded person spends some time with an open mind with these astrologers and understands this Vedic science, he will be shocked to see how it works.

We have briefly discussed about karma and destiny. Let us understand ‘free will’ before we jump into the next discussion. Free will is our choice to perform or not to perform any activity in this world. It is our desire to do anything. No one in this whole cosmic manifestation, including Lord Krishna himself, ever interferes with our free will. God never takes away our free will, he allows us to choose always. God, scriptures, devotees do explain to us what is beneficial in the short run and long run, but they never remove our ability to make a choice. Free will is our consciousness, it is the eternal nature of our soul, and there is no meaning to our existence if we are not having our free will. There are several factors which influence our free will, including our inert nature, our past habits, our society and trends and fashions imposed on us by the media. There is also the concept of three modes of material nature which also influence us at all times. Three modes make us choose between leading a life filled with ignorance (tamo guna), passion (rajo guna) and Goodness (sattva guna). These choices are always around us but we make the choice based on our level of consciousness, and that is what decides our destiny.

Now that we understand what is karma, destiny and free will, we are faced with some very contradictory questions regarding these three concepts. Let us discuss a few of them in this article.

Question 1: *If my destiny is already decided at the time of birth, then what is the meaning of my having free will? Since what I will do in the future is also predicted, where is the question of any free choice?*

Answer: Does this question make any sense to you? If not, read it again. We have to understand that destiny in this life is based on our past karma for unlimited lifetimes. God knows our ‘tendencies’ based on the choices we made in previous lives, so He also knows how we will react in different situations; in a way He knows what our next action will be. That still does not mean we do not have our free will. Our predicted behaviour as per our destiny will only burn our karma reactions and not create any new karma, but if we choose to act differently against our normal tendencies then we can also influence our future destiny. For example, let us assume that this life is a job and our appointment letter is our destiny. Our salary is our happiness in this destiny. To work at the job or not to work in the job is our free will. God knows that we will work for only five days, as that is our innate nature for many lives, so He has also written our destiny appointment letter accordingly. He has also fixed our salary based on our predicted working days. If we work for all the days as per the appointment letter, then we receive the portion of happiness that was planned for us. With our free will we can choose to work three days in a week, or we can even choose to work additional days on the weekends. The result is that our allocated happiness will either increase or decrease. In the same way, when we develop wisdom of God and understand our spiritual side, we start acting in a fashion which attracts God’s attention. Then, with the realization that our new actions are based on free will we can change our destiny. In summary, even though our actions are predicted we still have the free will to change them.

Question 2: *Why do we not know the reasons for our suffering in this life? Often, we are told that it is due to actions in the previous life, but this does not help us. We need to know why we are being made to suffer. Why is suffering postponed life after life, why can we not finish it all in the same life?*

Answer: Our destiny is designed for us to burn our past karma. But many times, in this life instead of just burning our past reactions we start creating new karma which will create new destiny. Even if we choose to burn everything in the present life we do not stop generating new desires even at the time of death. To fulfil those unfulfilled desires, we take our next birth. That is why it is known as the vicious cycle of birth and death, where karma and its reactions are unending. Our past deeds in millions of lifetimes are so many that God

mercifully combines the reactions and distributes them in multiple lifetimes based on our ability to absorb pain and happiness. If we get to know what misdeeds we have committed in previous lives, we cannot lead a normal life now. Lord Krishna gives us forgetfulness (Bhagavad Gita 15.15) of our past deeds and gives us a fresh start in this life so we can do something positive.

For example, we all had many fears of exams in our school days. Some had fear of failure, some had fear of a subject, etc. Now we have forgotten all those fears as we have grown up. Imagine that if we had not forgotten those fears, would we be able to sleep in the nights? If we do not forget the guilt that we felt while committing bad deeds, can we lead a fresh new life to correct those tendencies? We cannot lead a life if we remember our past completely, we need a fresh start where we can learn new wisdom so we do not repeat those mistakes again. Remember that just because we know something is wrong does not stop us from doing it again. A smoker knows that smoking is injurious, but helplessly keeps smoking again and again. In the same way, knowing our faults from previous lives does not guarantee that we will not perform them again. God wants us to have a new start and gain wisdom from the scriptures He has given to us so we can change our inner tendencies and avoid committing those sins again.

There are many more questions on this subject of destiny, free will and *Karma*. I request readers not to feel disheartened that there are no answers to their questions. We should not let these questions go from our hearts easily, we should find answers for them. People say, 'Life teaches all lessons.' But I say, 'Life brings questions in front of us and we learn the lessons when we seek answers for those questions from saintly persons.' This is a spiritual journey of the soul and a soul which stops questioning is considered to be dead even though it appears alive in a body externally. There is no question that cannot be answered when we take shelter with a Guru from a proper lineage, or parampara, as explained by Lord Krishna in the fourth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Let us begin our spiritual journey by surrendering our intelligence and incomplete knowledge at the lotus feet of a representative of Lord Krishna and obtain answers before it is too late. Hare Krishna!

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SHRI VISHNU SAHASRANAMA



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The Shri Vishnu Sahasranama Stothram (the thousand names of Shri Vishnu) is part of daily chanting in several temples of India, including the Badrinarayan Temple in Badrinath and the Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Tirumala. Many people regularly recite these thousand names as ‘nitya anusandhan,’ or as a part of their daily prayers. The Hindu religion is unique with its several Gods and Goddesses; and the intertwined interesting stories/legends about them enable ordinary mortals to relate to them as divinities with special powers. Although most Gods and Goddesses have been prayed and praised through ‘sahasranamas,’ the Vishnu Sahasranama is the most popular among these and perhaps the most chanted.

It is said that after the Mahabharata war ended and before taking the throne, Yudhishtira — the eldest of the five Pandavas — went to his grandfather Shri Bhishma Pitamah (who was lying on a bed of arrows awaiting death) to seek the path to salvation from the miseries of the world. As the answer to the six interconnected questions², Bhishma Pitamah recited the 1000 glorious names of Lord Vishnu, now known as the Shri Vishnu Sahasranama. This conversation appears at the end of the epic the Mahabharata (in the Anushasana Parva, i.e. the chapter dealing with governance or the rules and responsibilities of kings), as told by Bhishma Pitamah and recorded by Veda Vyasa (just as the Bhagavad Gita ‘told’ by Lord Krishna was ‘brought’ to us by Veda Vyasa). These 1000 names essentially describe Lord Vishnu’s virtues and most of the terms can be interpreted

¹ The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

² The six questions are:

In this universe who is the refuge (pārāyaṇam) for all? Who is the greatest Lord in the world? By eulogising whom can a person reach auspiciousness (peace and prosperity)? By worshipping (archantah) whom can a person reach auspiciousness (peace and prosperity)? What is the greatest dharma of all dharmas? By chanting whose name, can one be relieved from the bonds of saṃsāra?

in several ways. Numerous commentaries on the Vishnu Sahasranama have been written by saints and scholars, among which that of Shri Adi Shankara's is cited most often.

The main part of the Vishnu Sahasranama containing the names is preceded by a preamble — dhyana shlokas, setting the scene, and at the end 'phalashruti' that lists the benefits of chanting the holy names covering all things that we seek, from material gains to ultimate salvation: moksha. The list is indeed impressive, starting from worldly possessions, familial pleasures, commercial gains, intellectual supremacy, valour and victories, fame, riches, etc., and, most importantly, salvation or moksha too. The Vishnu Sahasranama is suitable for every person in the world: whether one is looking for worldly gains or for inner peace and salvation, *one gets what one seeks*. All of us neither have the same status of mind nor similar 'wish list.' Yet, prayers unite all and allow each one to indulge in individual pursuits. Perhaps this explains the habit of chanting the Vishnu Sahasranama daily by many devout Hindus. But, apart from the clearly mentioned list of benefits, it has also been mentioned by learned scholars that chanting the Vishnu Sahasranama improves one's health, for example the breathing patterns, purifies the environment and brings peace and tranquillity to the mind. The practice of chanting the Vishnu Sahasranama has been continued over thousands of years, perhaps due to the unseen tranquillity that pervades the lives of those who do so, in turn encouraging others to follow.

The list of Shri Maha Vishnu's names and their literal meanings as well as interpreted meanings can be obtained from published books, or these days from the internet. The benefits listed in 'phalashruti' can also be found in detail in the above sources.

Many of us play the shlokas in a music player and carry on with daily chores. While this is certainly better than not listening to the holy names, it would be even better to chant the shlokas with concentration. Further better and satisfying would be to understand the meaning and chant the shlokas.

One important aspect worth mentioning in the Vishnu Sahasranama is the conversation between the celestials narrated at the very end, after phalashruti. Arjuna asks Lord Krishna to be merciful to devotees who chant the Sahasranama, to which the Lord agrees, and adds that he would be satisfied even with just one stanza. Parvati Devi wants to know the simple way to chant the thousand names and Lord Shiva provides the answer in just one line and says that just chanting Shri Rama's name repeatedly would be equal to chanting the 1000 names:

“Shri RAma RAma RAmethi; Rame RAme Manorame;
Sahasranama Tat tulyam RAma nama varanane.”

This is indeed a real boon to us in this busy world; God has been extremely kind in also providing a short cut! However, there is no short cut to true devotion. Although the chanting of the Ramanama alone is also as beneficial as chanting the entire Sahasranama, this should not be done to avoid chanting the entire Sahasranama or to 'save' time. A true devotee chants the entire list of the Lord's beautiful names and enjoys the experience whenever possible.

The essence of the Vishnu Sahasranama points to the deeper philosophy of Hinduism that all beings are equal and the Lord resides in all of us. Further, it is implicit that the various Gods and Goddesses that we worship are one and the same power. Thus, the Shri Vishnu Sahasranama is considered to be the essence of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, which is itself an essence of all the Vedas. May all of us also have the good fortune to chant the holy names and be blessed by the Supreme Power!

HINDUISM: SANATAN DHARMA OR THE ETERNAL WAY OF LIFE?



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If the Sanskrit word ‘Dharma’ were to be called simply as ‘religion’ it would be a gross error. According to Hindu philosophy, it is a mistake for spirituality to be considered separate from life. In the West, religion is often divorced from the events of daily life. Religion is important in life but it has nothing to do with politics, science or commerce. One goes to church on Sundays, makes a confession and continues to live a normal life. In Hinduism, Dharma is the doctrine, the universal truth common to all people at all times, a moral law governing individual conduct at all times in all circumstances. The values are true for all times, remain spiritual and make up the empirical world. That is why the word ‘Sanatan,’ or Eternal, is added to Hinduism and is called the Eternal Way of life, Sanatan Dharma.

Sanatan Dharma’s basic principles are as follows:

1. *Accord of religions:* All paths lead towards Godhead. A man is free to choose his own path. Hence, Hinduism does not convert people of other religions to its faith.
2. *Incarnation:* Just as ‘energy’ cannot be destroyed, Hindus believe that the Supreme Consciousness is eternal and cannot be destroyed. It manifests itself again and again. Hinduism believes in reincarnation.
3. *Non-aggression:* Sanatan Dharma teaches the principles of peace and compassion for all forms of creation.
4. *Doctrine of Karma:* The spiritual principle of causality. We are all trapped in the world performing good or bad deeds. And so we are rewarded and punished.
5. *Unity of existence:* The one Supreme Consciousness underlies all forms of creation and is the essence of all that there is.
6. *Dharma:* Encompasses all forms of duty that an individual is supposed to perform. These duties are combined with your daily life and hence Sanatan Dharma is a part for you to progress and live in harmony.
7. *Atman:* The soul is eternal and the essential nature of each person. The soul is infinite, indestructible, indivisible and eternal.
8. *Reality:* The supreme reality (Brahman), which is the basis of everything, is both formless and with form, impersonal and personal, transcendent and immanent.

9. **Moksha:** The main goal of each Hindu is to achieve liberation from the cycle of birth and death (**moksha**). This is achieved by performing good karma and joining with the Ultimate Reality.
10. **Authority:** The *Vedas* (*Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda* and *Atharva Veda*) are the four pillars of Sanatan Dharma. Other scriptures, such as the *Dharma Shastras*, the *Puranas*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, were authored by individual saints and guide us to live a pious life.
11. **Monotheism:** The many Gods and Goddesses in Hinduism have always been misunderstood. Many gods are manifestation of ONE God and many manifestations represent the same reality. Just as Goddess Saraswati manifests as knowledge, Goddess Lakshmi manifests as harmony and prosperity, and so on.

Hinduism says that for the individual's progress and for world evolution, spiritual force or ब्रह्मतेजा (Brahmateja) is what we need most of all. This force is in fact spirituality from within, the force and energy of action arising from spiritual union or from self-surrender to that within us which truly rules our world. This force and energy can be directed to any purpose God desires for us. It is sufficient to enhance knowledge, love or service; it is good for the liberation of an individual soul or for the building of a nation. It works from within; multiplying the power of God and creating superhuman energy for one who opens himself to the Divine. Sanatan Dharma teaches us that religion is NOT above the struggles of this world. In the Bhagavad Gita, the recurrent cry of Shri Krishna to Arjun insists on the struggle, "Fight and overthrow the negative forces. Remember Me and fight."

द्रोणं च भीष्मं च जयद्रथं च
कर्णं तथान्यानपि योधवीरान्।
मया हतांस्त्वं जहि मा व्यथिष्ठा
युध्यस्व जेतासि रणे सपत्नान्॥

Droṇam cha bhīṣhmaṁ cha jayadratham cha
karṇam tathānyān api yodha-vīrān
mayā hatāms tvam jahi mā vyathiṣṭhā
yudhyasva jetāsi raṇe sapatnān

Chapter 11/34

Kill Drona, Bhishma, Jayadrata and Karna and the other valiant warriors; be constant and do not be hurt or concerned. By killing them, Thou conquers the negative in the battle.

There is a mighty law of life, a great principle of human evolution, a body of spiritual knowledge and experience of great Rishis that remains our guardian, in an exemplary manner. This is Sanatan Dharma. The average Hindu who practices the Dharma voluntarily lives according to the holy rule. This rule is not a mass of elusive and temporary customs. One has to live for the Truth in oneself and for others. Our entire life should be a discipline or sadhana, the object of which is to realise the divine in the world by work, love and knowledge. With this awakening, a concept of One World, One religion is born. Swami Vivekananda's speech in Chicago at the World Parliament of Religions on 11 September 1893, is a shining example of Sanatan Dharma: he addressed everyone as "Sisters and Brothers of America." We need to be united. We need a Sanatan Dharma to unite us. We are all related since Adam and Eve. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., wrote inspiring words, "What the world craves today is a more spiritual and less formal religion. To the man or woman facing death, great conflict, the big problems of human life, the forms of religions are of minor concern, while the spirit of religion is a desperately needed source of inspiration, comfort and strength."

Our goal in Austria remains to unite all people through Sanatan Dharma. That is why our Mandir on Lammgasse, in the 8th District in Vienna, is a temple dedicated to the universal force of Sanatan Dharma. This may enable us all to empower our basic instincts towards the good and change them to the Divine Force. May Lord Ganesha, the central deity in our temple, give us the force to fight the anti-divine powers and lead us to a Golden Empery.

SURYA NAMASKAR



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The sun is considered the ultimate energy provider. Almost all energy on Earth can be traced back, either directly or indirectly, to the sun. The Hindu scriptures and culture realized the importance of the sun as the prime energy source, composing various prayers and salutations. Surya Namaskar is one such salutation that is popular throughout the world. It is not only a salutation but also a complete exercise to keep the body well-tuned, disease free and full of positive energy. Of the yoga routines that are practiced all over the world, Surya Namaskar is the most popular and wholesome yoga routine.

Some scholars suggest that there was no written evidence of Surya Namaskar until the 20th century. They credit the practice of Surya Namaskar to the teachings of Tirumalalai Krishnamacharya (1888–1989). But it was the Raja of Aundh (1909–1947) who popularized Surya Namaskar as a simple physical exercise. There is also some mention that Shivaji and Ramdas Swamiji practiced Surya Namaskar to keep themselves and the army fit.

Surya Namaskar is performed using 12 steps. These 12 postures correlate with the 12 hours of the day and night, the 12 stages of the zodiac and the 12 years of the solar cycle. Irrespective of the debate about its historical origins, Surya Namaskar should be seen as a good practice to be followed by one and all, irrespective of religion, sex and age.

It is best to do the Surya Namaskar on an empty stomach. Some people prefer to drink half a glass of water before doing the exercise. Ideally, it is performed outdoors, facing the rising sun at dawn in a place that is peaceful and quiet.

Below is the Surya mantra that is a prayer to the sun:

*For those who salute the sun every day,
Life expectancy, conscious, strength, courage and vital power shall grow.*

आदितस्य नमस्कारान् कुर्वन्ति ये दिने दिने
जन्मान्तर सहस्रेषु दारिद्र्यं दोष नाशते
अकालमृत्युहरणं सर्वव्याधि विनाशनं
सूर्यपादोदकं तीर्थं जठरे धारयाम्यहम्

Before every namaskar, one of the 12 names of Surya mentioned below are chanted. For example, Om Suryaaya Namaha, Om Mitraaye Namah.

1	ॐ मित्राय नमः	7	ॐ हिरण्यगर्भाय नमः
2	ॐ रवये नमः	8	ॐ मरीचये नमः
3	ॐ सूर्याय नमः	9	ॐ आदित्याय नमः
4	ॐ भानवे नमः	10	ॐ सवित्रे नमः
5	ॐ खगाय नमः	11	ॐ अर्काय नमः
6	ॐ पूष्णे नमः	12	ॐ भास्कराय नमः

One Surya Namaskar consists of the following 12 asanas to be done in a sequence:

1. Pranamasan, or simply namaskar. In this step, stand erect, the body is straight with the feet together and palms pressed against each other as namaskar. In this posture, pull the knees, thigh muscles and belly. Expand the chest. Stay in this position for 1 min.
2. Hastauttanasan, where the arms are raised and bent backwards as much as physically possible. It is also good if you inhale deeply during this posture. Hold the curved, tall body for few seconds.
3. Hastapadasan, now slowly bend forward to try and touch your feet. In this process, exhale as much as possible. Keeping the knees straight, try to touch your feet. Stay in this position for few seconds
4. Ashwasanchalanasana, now breathing out, push one of your legs back. Bring the other knee forward as much as possible and look up towards the ceiling. Additionally, one might keep the foot that is forward between the hands.
5. Dandasana, now move the front foot back and make the body straight like a 'stick.' Inhale deeply in the process. Note that the arms are straight and perpendicular to the floor.



सूर्य नमस्कार करें, स्वस्थ रहें

6. Astanganamaskar, exhale slowly and bring the whole body down, essentially lying on the stomach. Ideally, only 8 (ashta) points should touch the floor: 2 hands, 2 feet, 2 knees, chest and chin. Relax for a minute in this posture.

7. Bhujangasana, as the name suggests, this is a cobra position. Inhale deeply in this step and slide forward. Pushing the floor with your hands, lift your torso or upper part of the body up. Your face should be looking at the ceiling. Try to stretch as much as possible without causing pain.
8. Parvatasan, as the name suggests, this is the mountain position. Exhale slowly and lift the hips up so that your body looks like a mountain with the hips as the peak.
9. Ashwasanchalanasana, inhale and repeat step 4 but with the opposite leg. For example, if you moved your right leg back in step 4, then you should move the left leg back.
10. Hastapadasana, repeat step 3 while breathing out.
11. Hastauttanasan, repeat step 2 while breathing in
12. Pranamasan. Repeat step 1 while breathing out.

These 12 asanas comprise one Surya Namaskar. Ideally, it is recommended that the Surya Namaskar be performed 12 times. Notice that breathing in and out alternates in every step of the Surya Namaskar.

Benefits

Surya Namaskar is an exercise that helps not only physically but also mentally. In the early hours of the morning, when there is general silence, performing the Surya Namaskar helps start the day with a calm mind and enhances concentration.

Various Rishis and Gurus have suggested the benefits of Surya Namaskar, and generations have confirmed these benefits. This technique improves general blood circulation and helps in maintaining good health, instils discipline and heightens confidence and spiritual well-being. With the improved blood circulation, the glow of the skin is increased and it has been noted that it even delays the onset of wrinkles.

Surya Namaskar can stimulate important parts of the body such as the head, neck, hands, legs, chest, knees and most joints, including the hip. The extensive inhalation and exhalation also helps in proper oxygenation and detoxification of the body. It is especially useful if it is not possible for an individual to spend too much time doing yoga. In addition, numerous scientifically proven benefits through clinical studies have been attributed to the regular practice of the Surya Namaskar. Pulmonary functions are known to improve significantly, preventing respiratory diseases. Studies have also suggested that due to the consequential improvement of cardiorespiratory fitness, this practice also aids in weight management

Investing half an hour every morning in this wholesome exercise will have far reaching positive effects on mind and body. Hence it is also important to teach children the Surya Namaskar. The exercise is relatively simple and can be done by everyone without any special equipment, support and expertise.

BHAGAVAD GITA FOR THE 21st CENTURY



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“Everyone is looking for Krishna, but they don’t know that they are looking for Krishna.” These were words I read from George Harrison of the Beatles when he wrote his introduction to the Krsna book published in the early 1970s. As I am living a Krishna conscious life, I am contemplating the depth of this statement, “Everyone is looking for Krishna.”

Lord Krishna is worshipped as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the God of all demigods or devatas. He and His teachings remain a confidential affair for anyone who is not interested in knowing Him, yet He stays in everyone’s heart as a supersoul or paramatma who gives everyone knowledge, remembrance and forgetfulness (Bhagavad Gita 15.15). He is the most difficult person to understand for people who have complicated minds, and He is the simplest person to love for people who have surrendered their hearts to Him in humility. His followers call Him Supreme Lord, but His close devotees just serve Him because they love Him as a beautiful young boy. He takes incarnations and comes to this mortal world where we live simply to remind us that we don’t belong here and we can go back to our eternal abode, Goloka Vrindavan, the spiritual world.

Whether it is the 2nd century or 21st century, one thing that has not changed is the means to find fulfilment of the heart. The heart finds fulfilment when it can serve and express love. If we can find anyone who will accept our offering of love, then we are the most fortunate persons. In the 21st century, people in general are becoming very self-centred and are losing trust in each other. **They are fearful of being exploited and misunderstood if they open up their hearts to anyone around them, including their near and dear ones. And this is the prime reason for depression in society.** Many have psychiatric problems and hypertension problems today from a very young age. Medical practitioners are making good money giving sedatives to calm people down who have such mental disorders, but they do not examine the reason for such disorders.

The biggest medical problem in the 21st century is not cancer, AIDS or diabetes. It is mental illness caused by prolonged depression. Everyone needs a person with whom he can completely open his heart and express

the unlimited love hidden within. Actually, it is not by receiving that we are satisfied, it is by giving that we are truly satisfied. When our connection with God is established, then we are satisfied, and depression is gone forever. Who does not want to be the richest person in the whole planet, but what will he do with his riches if he happens to be the only person alive on this planet! Unless we share our love with someone and that someone accepts it, we have no hope to be happy in life. And the only person who is with us at all times, waiting for our offering with love, is Krishna, the lover of his lovers.

In India, Lord Krishna is known for his pastimes of being an infant child or an ecstatic lover of his lovers. When there is any devotional poem it is impossible to not have a prayer dedicated to Lord Krishna. The same Krishna, who spoke the Bhagavad Gita to his dear friend and disciple Arjuna, revealed the knowledge of how to reach Him in this very lifetime. He spoke about so many aspects in 700 verses spread out in 18 chapters, but the essence is to help us surrender to His love and motivate us to go back home, back to Godhead. There are thousands of intellectuals, mystic yogis, and sentimental people who have written many translations of the Bhagavad Gita, but the conclusion of the Gita remains hidden and is revealed only to a person who becomes the devotee of the devotee of the devotee of Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna explained in the Bhagavad Gita (4.3) that only for His devotee does He reveal his true identity; everyone else remains in illusion to different degrees. He also explains (Bhagavad Gita 4.2) that access to Him can be obtained only when one surrenders to His devotees in a disciplined school, or parampara.

In the Mahabharata there is a verse:

Ahara-nidra-bhaya-maithunam ca
samanyam etat pasubhir naranam dharmo hi tesam adhiko viseso
dharmena hinah pasubhih samanah

“The propensity to eat, sleep, mate and defend is equal in animals and human beings. Only one extra thing is rewarded to humans, that is to establish their relationship with God. In other words, the only difference between human beings and animals is that human beings can be trained in the science of spirituality, whereas animals cannot. If any human being does not attempt to learn about spiritual life, he is considered to be equal to an animal.”

Only human beings have the intelligence to QUESTION. Only in the human body is the soul allowed to inquire and change its course before it takes the next body. Anyone who does not have questions about his spiritual existence is to the same as an animal. In the 21st century, a human has learned to question a lot but he is questioning only those things relating to his temporary mortal body. He is busy questioning “Can we somehow automate this so we don’t need to work hard?” He is busy trying to improve life instead of understanding life. **He is forcefully changing himself to become someone who will be respectable in this materialistic society which he expects someday will love him unconditionally. So his questioning is also within the ‘Box of Acceptability’ by society.** In the 21st century everyone is claiming to be thinking ‘out of the box’ but, unfortunately, we are sitting inside the box of bodily consciousness and claiming to be thinking outside the box!

More than 5000 years ago, when Arjuna also started giving moral and peaceful arguments to Lord Krishna for not fighting, the first thing Lord Krishna did is to bring Arjuna outside the box of bodily ignorance. All our decisions and thinking process are revolving around one single assumption that ‘We are the body,’ and so with this we develop so many attachments from the day we take birth to the day we die. We are busy finding personalities in the form of Yogis, mystics and even unauthorized Gurus who will make us believe that there is nothing serious to this life, we are these bodies and we are all fine if we just believe in them. Unfortunately, instead of taking shelter of the highest knowledge which Lord Krishna himself revealed to the ultimate benefit all human kind, the ignorant and foolish take shelter in literature and philosophies written by mortal humans

who are not in any way connected to disciplined schools or paramparas, as explained by Lord Krishna in the fourth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.

In the 21st century, we are very close to ‘robotizing’ every action of human beings but we don’t even know the meaning of words like ‘life’ and ‘death.’ The Bhagavad Gita explains in the eighth chapter that ‘Life means to inquire, in fact life’s only purpose is to inquire.’ “Athato Brahma Jijnasa (Vedanta Sutra 1.1.1) — now is the time to inquire about the absolute truth.” There is a difference between faith and truth. Faith changes as time passes, it can be changed if one seeks to change it. However, truth remains unchanged irrespective of time, place and circumstances.

So, if in the 21st century an international business school graduate becomes the youngest CEO of the world’s largest corporation and is working around the clock to expand its operations, in the words of Krishna such a person is ‘DEAD’ and not ‘ALIVE.’ That’s because one is considered ‘ALIVE’ only when he is questioning about self-realization and is willing to stop this vicious cycle of birth and death by taking to the advice of Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. Every position in this mortal world is temporary. The one who wants to experience being ALIVE has to start his journey of self-discovery under the guidance of Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. One has to take the humble position of Arjuna to understand the Bhagavad Gita As-It-Is.

There is no death for a devotee of Lord Krishna because he does not take birth again. For the one who takes birth again there is always going to be death. Even though externally a devotee of Lord Krishna seems to die like anyone else, Lord Krishna promises that his devotee does not take birth again in this mortal world and will eternally exist in His Spiritual Abode. Even in the 21st century fortunately there are a few institutions which still propagate this divine knowledge without any compromise for the ultimate benefit of human kind. We have a choice to start our spiritual journey even in the 21st century, and a choice to learn and surrender to the will of Lord Krishna as explained in the Bhagavad Gita. This journey will bring fulfilment to our heart. We will find everything we need to love and to be loved, because “Everyone is looking for Krishna, but they don’t know that they are looking for Krishna.” Hare Krishna!

GANESHA SHOWS THE WAY



Caroline Rosso Cicogna

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Ghandikota Ramesh

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One of the disadvantages of being an expatriate is that we are far away from the culture and traditions that were part of our lives when we were young. The Hindus living in Vienna, like most expatriates, felt that they needed a place of their own to worship. So, in the early 1990s, a small group of Hindus set up an organization with the goal of constructing an authentic Hindu temple in Vienna. That body, the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA), was registered in 1991. The HMA chose Lord Ganesha as the presiding deity.

By the mid-1990s, HMA members had graduated from meeting in private houses or public halls to more formal premises on Lammgasse, in Vienna's 7th district. Meeting on Sundays, HMA members conducted spirited bhajan programmes led by the talented Shri Niranjana Das. However, everyone felt that the Mandir needed a regular puja programme to complement the bhajans. At that point in time, however, it was very difficult for the HMA — with its very limited resources and its location in a part of the world not easily served by Hindu religious networks — to employ a priest to conduct regular services.

And then Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles, brought us Yogacharya Shri S. Janakiraman. A devotee of Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba and a recognized authority on Yoga, Shri Janakiraman was born in 1921 in an orthodox Mylapore Brahmin family. He practised yoga as a child and studied the Vedas and Sanskrit in a traditional way along with his normal schooling. Although he chose scientific studies, graduating in physics in 1941 from Madras University and pursuing an engineering career in Bengaluru at Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd until his retirement in 1979, the first formative years of his life were to leave a deep imprint on his soul. Throughout his professional career, he dedicated all of his free time to the pursuit of the inner quest, going on pilgrimages to the Himalayas — where he received the darshan of the great Swami Sivananda, founder of the Divine Life Society — and visiting the holy shrines of South India, where he received the blessings of saints and sadgurus. Together with the devotional path, Shri Janakiraman also received initiation in different yogic sadhanas and he perfected his scientific knowledge of Hatha Yoga with the view of teaching this discipline on a regular basis after his retirement.

In 1986, free from all his worldly ties, Shri Janakiraman moved to Italy, where he founded the International Aditya Yoga Association with Mrs. Caroline Rosso Cicogna, in Trieste. Thus began a deep spiritual connection between them which was to last until Shri Janakiraman left his body in 2001, and of which their joint book *Solar Yoga* (seven editions in five languages) is still a living testimony today.

Shri Janakiraman was not only an accomplished devotional singer, veena player, Yoga teacher and therapist, he had deep knowledge of Sanskrit and Hindu religious matters. But, most importantly, he felt that the genuine spirit and sanctity of a temple should be explained to the devotees, and this deep conviction inspired him, whenever he came to Vienna along with Mrs. Caroline Rosso Cicogna to give Yoga seminars, to graciously offer to conduct pujas in the Mandir and to participate intensely in rapturous bhajan sessions. As Mrs. Rosso Cicogna said recently of Shri Janakiraman, "...he had lovingly and unselfishly always sown the seed of what was to become the Hindu Mandir."

We were indeed fortunate to have had Shri Janakiraman in our midst in those early days. He taught us discipline in our worship and guided us on the correct arrangement of the murtis and the proper management of the Mandir. He remains in our hearts as our guru, spiritual leader and friend.

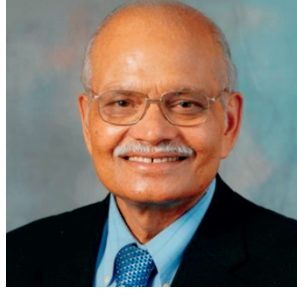


Yogacharya Shri S. Janakiraman



Shri Janakiraman with Mrs. Caroline Rosso Cicogna

MEDITATION



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Hinduism as Sanatana Dharma is without beginning or end and the Vedas remain the source of Sanatana Dharma. The scriptures say, Lord Vishnu — was alone. He said, एकोहम बहुस्याम — Ekoham Bahusyam. “I am one, let there be many.” Thus started the multiplicity on this globe.

The entire teachings of the Vedas can be summed up in one grand sentence: तत् त्वम् असि: अहं ब्रह्मास्मि “Tat Tvam Asi: Aham Brahmasmi — “Thou Art That” — I am Brahman” meaning, “I am the Spirit living in a body, I am not the body. The body will perish but the Spirit remains eternal.” The body is composed of the five elements: space, air, fire, water and earth. Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita (chapter II/23) says that, “weapons cleave it not, nor does the fire burn; waters drench it not, nor does the wind dry.” The soul is always divine, pure, perfect, immortal and infinite.

Om is the most powerful ultimate knowledge of Brahman (God). Before the existence of the Universe, there was the sound Om — *Aksharabrahman*. Om stands for the pure consciousness. The mission of men is to discover the Supreme “self.” The Spirit is all pervading. It alone exists as that which enlivens actions and perceptions, emotions and thoughts.

Meditation is focusing on the thought of the Supreme and in identifying with Him. To realise the Self within is to attain enlightenment and immortality. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says (Chapter X/20)

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥10/20॥

ahamatma gudakesa sarva-bhutasaya-sthitah-

ahamadish ca madhyam ca-bhutanamanta eva ca.

O Gudakesa (Arjuna) I am the Self, who abides within all things seated in the hearts of all creatures. I am the beginning and middle and also the end of all beings.

The regular practice of meditation leads to the conquest of the mind and to attach it constantly with God. As one can see the reflection of the man in water when it is still, one can only realize the self when the mind becomes tranquil. Meditation is the Science of realizing God. The best way to meditate is as below:

1. Sit in solitude with a mind of a Yogi and control your senses and free yourself from desires and attachments, try constantly to contemplate on the Supreme Being, as light in the center of two eyebrows.
2. Sit in a comfortable position. Inhale and exhale. Chant Om. Deep short meditation is better. Concentrate the mind on a single object controlling the thoughts and activities of the senses.
3. Hold the waist, spine, neck and head erect, motionless and steady; fix the eyes and the mind steadily on the tip of the nose.
4. Be serene and fearless, with a firm vow of celibacy. Fix the goal to reach the Supreme God, i.e. to realize God. Concentrate on the glory of the Lord. Shut your eyes to worldly affairs.
5. Constantly direct your thoughts on the Divine. With the mind thus subdued, one attains everlasting peace and supreme bliss.
6. Be moderate in eating, recreation, working, sleeping, walking and every aspect of life. Meditation destroys all sorrows, thus disciplining the mind. One becomes content in Parabrahman (God), with a purified intellect. Thus, one frees oneself from the feeling of “I and My.” We see that the same Atman is present in all beings. Grace from above is essential to make this meditation effort a success.
7. God’s grace is unlimited. He showers His grace on His devotee both in favorable and unfavorable circumstances.
8. All actions, spiritual and worldly, are to be carried out with absolute devotion to God. With this, all malice is removed. Behold the Lord everywhere and for everyone. Patanjali Yoga describes the methods of meditation in details.

The Ultimate aim of meditation is to invoke the energy centres in the body. There are seven chakras (energy centers) in our body. These are: Mooladhar (the root of the spine), Svadhishthana (the sacred prostatic), Manipura (the solar plexus — navel), Anahata (the heart), Viscidia (the throat), Ajna (the third eye), and Sahasrara Padma (the crown). With meditation, they are activated and balanced.

The benefits of meditation are manifold. It frees the soul from the bondage of worldly affairs, helps to heal all ills, removes misconceptions, achieves success, develops positive thinking, reduces stress, develops the faculty of intuition, eliminates addiction, if any, develops humility, promotes better control of emotions and physical well-being to allow the being to remain in perpetual bliss — Ananda.

SHRI SHIRDI SAI BABA



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Who is God or who is the Sadguru? This is a question which people generally ponder, particularly the devotees of Baba. Through the medium of books, mantras, temple priests, pandits and saints, they try to find the answer. Hinduism proclaims that through Karma Yoga, Gyan Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Raja Yoga, God can be realised and be understood through a process of spiritual evolution. The more pain and misery in society, the more people seek divine compassion. Some people approach Mantrics, Tantrics and astrologers to understand their future.

Taking the advantage of this situation, some people are offering new pseudo-religious solutions and giving wide publicity to attract simpletons. Some have produced advertisements to say that they can rouse the 'Kundalini' Shakti of anyone immediately. Others are selling various emulates which they proclaim can solve human problems and ensure spiritual evolution rather easily. Without the least understanding of the lofty, difficult and sadhana-based path of Hindu Yoga Sastras, some people are deceiving the people with self-created concepts many of which are adopted from Indian and Western occult vocabulary. The great saints had always warned people to be careful about such characters. Those who come under the influence of such people waste a lot of precious time and money.

Even when such knowledge about God had not evolved in the mind, human beings did exist in God's creation. They were experiencing God at the level of their consciousness and experience, even though human language had not been created to codify these. Surely the men of the Stone Age must have experienced God in them as much as the men of the Iron Age. The people of Mohenjo Daro must have experienced God in a certain way as the Aryans who tried to experience Him through Yagnyas and rituals. Even today, simple human beings are experiencing God at the level of their perception, even though they do not possess the language to describe their divine experiences. All this indicates just one thing: that God is what each person experiences. When we evolve tomorrow, we will perceive and experience Him differently. Anyone who has achieved some supernatural powers through Yoga practices will experience Him in yet another form. All other knowledge on God gained through here-say, or by reading books, etc., can be termed as 'relative knowledge,' because it is not experienced. Since 'relative knowledge' is not real knowledge, it does not benefit substantially till 'direct knowledge' is gained. The lives of saints like Kabir, Shri Sainath and Nanak became simple and pure because

they had direct experience of God. It is true that all rivers taking different paths, straight or crooked, will ultimately meet the sea. Similarly, all the paths that human beings adopt will ultimately lead to God. But will a traveler moving through a crooked, difficult and long journey reach the destination easily and safely when moving with a band of thugs and cheats? There is every possibility that he will be waylaid, and yet more dangerous are the chances of his being robbed by thugs both of his money and time. Since such people know the art of attracting the travelers, there is a good chance that spiritual evolution will be impeded. Hence a true guide is needed.

We worship our Sadguru Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi because, even after leaving His human form this great divine soul continues to give us some kind of divine experience and bliss. He came only to give and take nothing. If we closely study the life history of Shri Shirdi Sai Baba during his stay at Shirdi for nearly sixty years, it will become evident that he continues to give the benefits to His devotees just as he used to do when in Shirdi in physical form. Devotees of Baba, when constructing temples or doing any work in his cause or name, should not be proud of their actions as the faith and strength to carry out such activities are given only by Baba. The relation of the Sadguru with His devotees is not limited to one life but spreads over a number of lives. When a human being is attracted towards the Sadguru, it is certain that he has accumulated a lot of merit in his previous lives. The most important role of the Sadguru lies in his great vision to change the whole world into a family on this Earth. Experience has shown that those people who render maximum help to others and who have created Sai organizations, are the best recipients of Baba's blessings, if they have done so without seeking any returns.

Shri Das Ganu Maharaj spread the name of Shri Sai Baba in the nooks and corners of India, Kaka Saheb Dixit contributed his best in forming the Shirdi Sai Baba Sansthan as it is known today and brought harmony among people through the Sai Leela magazine, which he started. Shyama used to take part in functions arranged by many organizations/individuals on behalf of Baba. Mahasapati and Tatyia Kote Patel rendered immense service to Baba, being always with Him, and Shri Anna Saheb Davolkar, spread the name of Baba throughout the globe through his magnificent creation called "Shri Sai Satcharitra." The Sai devotees take the names of these people today, notwithstanding the fact that some of them did not have any formal education or degrees. But those unfortunate souls who even when working in Baba's temple and getting the blessings of Baba are not able to clear the mental cobwebs of negative thinking surely create differences among the devotees and disturb the pious vibration in the temples. Some of them are more demonstrative in their Bhakti to impress others, while nourishing ill feelings towards them. They will get inner happiness only if they correctly follow the path of Baba as reflected in "Shri Sai Satcharitra."

My advice is that people should focus their thoughts on Baba and His sayings as depicted in "Shri Sai Satcharitra" instead of running around here and there in search of God or for the evolution of their soul. Under all conditions of happiness and unhappiness they should always remember and depend on Baba as advised by Him. If they continue to do so with faith and concentration, slowly the deeper inner knowledge about Baba will be revealed and they will receive the divine experiences. Only then can their contribution to the human welfare be distinctive and others will learn from them. A candle will light many other candles.

INDIAN TEMPLES IN VIENNA: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC EXCURSION



Mag. Dr. Bernhard Fuchs

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Some Austro-Indians have known me for many years. But as a visitor in Indian temples in Vienna, I will always remain an outsider for some. I started to visit the sites of worship of Indian immigrants at the end of the 1980s, during research for my thesis. My ethnographic diploma thesis was about newspaper sellers, and my PhD thesis analysed the development of business enterprises by South Asian migrants in Vienna.

Thus, my original interest in temples was not spiritual or to study the Hindu religion. I was primarily attracted to temples as important nodal points of social and cultural life. I witnessed the development of temples in Vienna from the first Mandir in the Afro-Asian Institute (which has recently been closed), and attended meetings of bhaktas (devotees) in a cultural centre near the Naschmarkt (later in a Chinese–Indian restaurant). I followed these communities to the places of worship they founded later.

Over the years my own priorities shifted. My temple visits later were not just out of academic interest. Indeed, my motivation has never been exclusively academic. I am known for my enthusiasm for music, and I have been married for twenty years to Beena, a Nepalese Hindu. For personal reasons, I preferred to investigate other fields (e.g. media studies and Bollywood). As an Assistant Professor at the Institute for European Ethnology of the University of Vienna, I often integrated my long-time experience in social networks into my teaching.

Last winter term I took the students from the University of Vienna to different places of worship to introduce to them the issues faced by South Asian religions in the diaspora. We visited the Hindu Mandir in

Lammgasse, the Sanatan Dharma Mandir in Herbststrasse, the Radha Govinda Gaudiya Math in Traiskirchen and ISKCON Vienna, and attended the Vishaal Maa Bhagwati Jagran. We also visited the Gurdwara at Langobardenstrasse and the Ravidassia Temple in Vienna. We attended the Diwali Mela in Lugner City, which is always an occasion of happiness, and joy for South Asian immigrants. This year was a very special moment when the Silver Jubilee of HMA was celebrated and when the purchase of land to finally build a “real” Hindu temple in Vienna was proudly announced.

In the lecture hall of my department we discussed our experiences and watched documentaries on temples in the UK. Students were obliged to read scientific texts on diasporic Hinduism and Sikhism, and to give short presentations. They also chose special topics for an essay (e.g. caste and gender issues, cyber-worship, death rites). During our excursions students learned to investigate cultural practices, rituals and gestures and describe them in reports. Ethnographic methodology requires employing all senses: temple experience includes not only the visual (“darshan”), which is of major importance, but also sound, taste, odour, etc.

Students should experience the plurality of Indian religious traditions represented in Vienna. The “Sarvadevta Mandir” (Lammgasse) brings together people from various regions of India, Bangladesh and Nepal. They not only differ linguistically but also in their religious and cultural traditions. Usually this diversity is bridged during worship.

The establishment of a Hindu Mandir in Vienna will be a sign of strength and independence of ‘Austro-Hinduism.’ Certainly, such a material symbol will contribute to the cultural diversity of Vienna in a positive way and will become a new site of attraction. With God’s blessing the prayers of devotees will produce positive energy. I am looking forward to this bright future and wish that the new Viennese Hindu Mandir becomes a place of spirituality and peace.

DEEPA LIGHTING MANTRAS

दीप प्रज्वलन मंत्र



Dipl.-Ing. Triloki Nath Ahuja

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In Hinduism, light is a symbol of auspiciousness, prosperity and abundance. Light brings brightness with it which removes the darkness and makes it possible to see things clearly. In almost every Hindu home, an oil or ghee lamp is lit twice daily, once in the morning and once in the evening, before the deity in the home shrine. It purifies the environment as well as inviting divine vibrations in the surroundings. It is also customary to commence all auspicious, spiritual and social functions with the lighting of a lamp, which is usually maintained right through the occasion or ceremony. The following mantras are recited while lighting the lamp as part of the ritual:

शुभं करोति कल्याणमारोग्यं धनसंपदा।

शत्रुबुद्धिविनाशाय दीपज्योतिर्नमोऽस्तुते॥

Shubham Karoti Kalyaannam-Aarogyam Dhana-Sampadaa

Shatru-Buddhi-Vinaashaaya Deepa-Jyotir-Namostute

Meaning

I prostrate to the light of the lamp, which confers auspiciousness, good health, abundance of money and wealth and destroys the enemy of the intellect (i.e. inimical feelings or evil thoughts; ignorance). Salutations to the light of the lamp.

दीपज्योतिः परब्रह्म दीपज्योतिर्जनार्दनः।

दीपो मे हरतु पापं दीपज्योतिर्नमोऽस्तुते॥

Deepajyoti Parabrahma Deepajyoti Janardhana

Deepo Me Hara Tu Paapam Deepa Jyotir Namostute

Meaning

I prostrate before the light of the lamp, which represents the Supreme Brahman; the light of the lamp represents Janardhana — the maintainer of all living beings (that is Lord Vishnu). The light of the lamp destroys all my sins. Salutations to the light of the lamp.

THE IMPORTANCE OF YAJÑA



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The Sanskrit term yajña, popularly pronounced as yagya in modern Indian languages, is etymologically derived from the root yaj and has numerous closely related meanings, such as offering, sacrifice, oblation, worship, devotion, prayer and praise. A three-fold meaning — ‘worship of deities,’ unity and charity — of the term is also discussed and sometimes yajña also means ‘to convert the profane into the holy.’ Yajña primarily refers to a sacrificial rite, where offerings are made to the fire god Agni and other gods in Agni, ‘the sacred fire,’ and specific mantras are recited. Any form of manifested (fire, sun, etc.) and/or unmanifested (mānas, prāṇa, etc.) energy is considered as God, whose worship conveys the idea of indemnifying to the sources of energy forms from where the energy is drawn for the use of all life forms. Yajñas have been widely described as activities to maintain the ṛtam ‘cosmic order’ as an inquiry and discovery of the relationship of humans with the universal cosmic cycle. Therefore, it is seen as the re-enactment of the cosmic creation and its regeneration. It is also seen as a mode of connecting between several domains of creation and their respective deities through the eternal messenger Agni, or ‘fire.’ Yajña is not merely a rite; it is also an attitude, a resolve, a device, an initiation, an instrument and an act, which involves the whole being of the person who is engaged in the act, and transforms his psycho-physical form into a vehicle of divinity. In the Yajur Veda (16.1.31), yajña itself is regarded as a god.

Yajña is probably one of the oldest forms of rituals for propitiating the deities and one of the most important socio-religious activities in Vedic India. On top of that, it is one of the most sacred rituals followed by the Hindus in India and elsewhere. Performance of a yajña is prescribed in the śāstras, ‘scriptures,’ to atone for bad Karmas, ‘actions,’ that may wittingly or unwittingly cause harm to other beings. Five types of yajñas (pañca-mahā-yajña) are prescribed for a householder in Sanskrit literature — brahma-yajña ‘studying and teaching the Scriptures’; pitṛ-yajña ‘libations for the manes’; deva-yajña ‘fire-ritual or agni-hotra’; bhūta-yajña ‘feeding animals and birds, caring for the environment’ and manuṣya-yajña ‘honouring the guests and visitors.’ In general the deva-yajña ‘fire-ritual or agni-hotra’ is one of the most prevalent yajña that is performed by most of the Hindus even today. Agni is considered as the leader of all the gods (agnir vai devānām mukham), the forerunner (agranir bhavati, Nirukta 7.14.4) and the first divinity to arrive in yajña sacrifices (agram yajñeṣu praṇīyate) (Ramanujachari 2013, Sen 1978). The concept of yajña was widened in scope, and the sacrificial ritual of the Vedic times survived in the form of a homa or havan, which in households is performed in all

important life circle rituals of a person, such as, birth, wedding, death, house warming party and by some on birthday celebration.

One of the important reasons for performing the yajña mentioned in Hindu scriptures is chitta śuddhī, 'purification of thoughts.' The yajña is meant to purify and harmonize not only the individual but the environment as well. Make the world noble (kṛnvanto viśvam āryam, RV 9.63.5) and truthful (viśvam satyam kṛnuhi, RV 3.30.6). To unfold the spiritual potential in the human being and to secure prosperity and welfare too. Śukla Yajur Veda-Samhita gives a detailed account of the various benefits that result from the performance of a yajña. Among such benefits are abundance of tranquillity, longevity, enlightenment; mental acuity, and physical vigour, efficiency in work, health, food, sound sleep, wealth, fearlessness and friendship (Yajur Veda, Chap. 18; 1; 2 and 6, 9, 21). Further, the ostensible goal of the yajña is the attainment of heaven or bliss by means of the unprecedented meritorious potency that is acquired through the performance of the yajña. It eliminates all sins, purifies the performer of the yajña and bestows on him strength, vigour and agility (Yajur Veda 1.20).

The basic ingredients used for a yajña are rice (raw, popped and cooked), milk, flour, yoghurt, husk, ghee, parched barley, omentum, sesame seeds, betel leaf and nut, mango sticks, coconut, incense, camphor, dried fruits (almonds, cashews, raisins, figs, etc.), turmeric root, water from Ganges, etc.

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LORD OF TRUTH

SATYANARAYANA KATHA



Nilesch Nathwani

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Devarishi Narada on his visit to Earth felt very distressed to find mortals undergoing suffering beyond measure. He went to Lord Narayana (Lord Vishnu) and begged Him to provide them with succour. Narada then came back to Earth with the message from the Lord that if, on any day, people fast, pray to Lord Satyanarayana (Lord of Truth), hear the story of Satyanarayana and sing the songs of His glory, their sins would be washed away, their evils driven away and their sufferings vanish. Their lives would become blessed with delight, bliss and prosperity, especially when the narrator of the story is a Brahmin who is a man of austerity.

Lord Satyanarayana said that in order to overcome difficulties and problems either caused in this life or in previous births, one has to begin by worshipping the Truth. Worshipping Truth means remaining true to oneself and to others. Speak Truth, breathe Truth and live Truth. Even white lies are forbidden. The task is hard, but the fruits are sweet. The more truthful we grow, the closer we are to the Lord in ourselves. We recognise Him in others and realise that the same Lord dwells in them also. This is self-realisation. It has been observed that after the performance of this Satyanarayana Puja and Katha with deep faith and devotion, devotees benefit by discovering solutions to their problems and difficulties. Thus, the ailing regain their health and the troubled find unexpected relief from latent quarters. The aim is to lead the individuals to higher spiritual planes. The purpose of all human beings is to merge with the Highest. All living beings are programmed to achieve this goal consciously or unconsciously. By living the Truth, we accelerate the process.

So started on the Earth the narration of the Satyanarayana Katha, divided into five parts. ‘Satya’ means Truth. Truth exists above all. Lord means He who dwells everywhere. The whole of this Universe is the play of Narayana and Narayani. Sri Aurobindo has said so well in his magnum opus Savitri:

He makes the hours pivot around Her will,
Makes all reflect Her whims; all is their play
This whole wide world is only He and She.

Sri Aurobindo — Savitri, Book 1:4

The message conveyed through the Katha is that 'Truth always wins in the end. सत्यमेव जयते. *Faith* in GOD is very important to practice Truth.

Various stories in the Katha — the story of a wood-seller, that of a businessman and his daughter, that of an egoistic king, all demonstrate and confirm that *The Truth* (Satya Naraya) elevates you to a higher consciousness. It proves that as far as God is concerned, there are no barriers. It is only the **sincerity, faith and devotion** of the devotees that counts. All these stories are found on the internet.

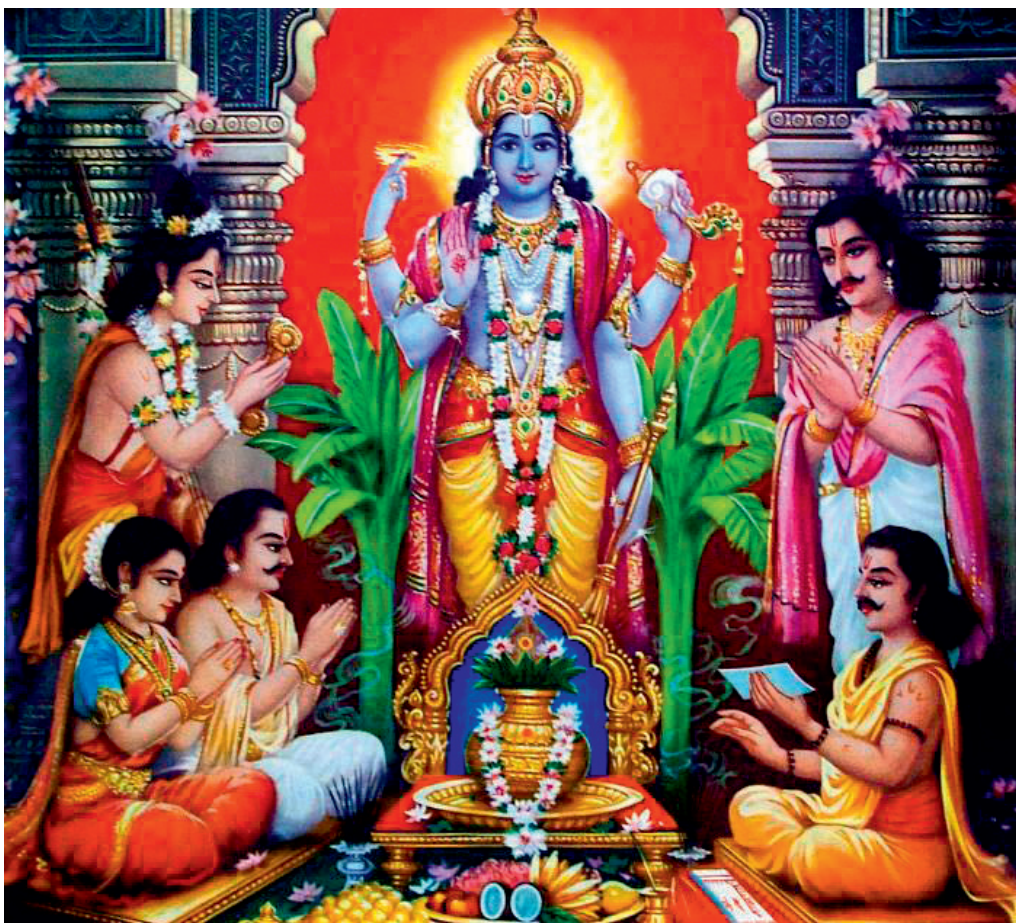
If you follow the message of the Satyanarayana Katha, you cannot go *off* track in your worldly affairs. Your victory is assured and the world is a better place to live. We have often heard this bhajan in our temple sung by our classical singer and Mandir Devotional Coordinator for many years, Mr. Niranjan Das:

Narayana jinke hriday me,
So kutch, karam kare na kare

(Swami Brahmanand)

नारायण जिनके हृदय में
सो कुछ करम करे ना करे॥

When Narayana dwells constantly in your heart
All the karmas you do are bound to be of good art.

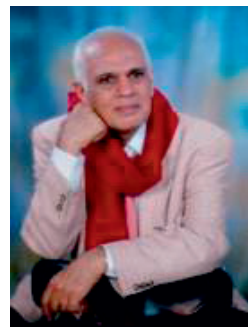


LORD GANESHA श्री गणेश — THE CENTRAL DEITY OF THE HMA TEMPLE



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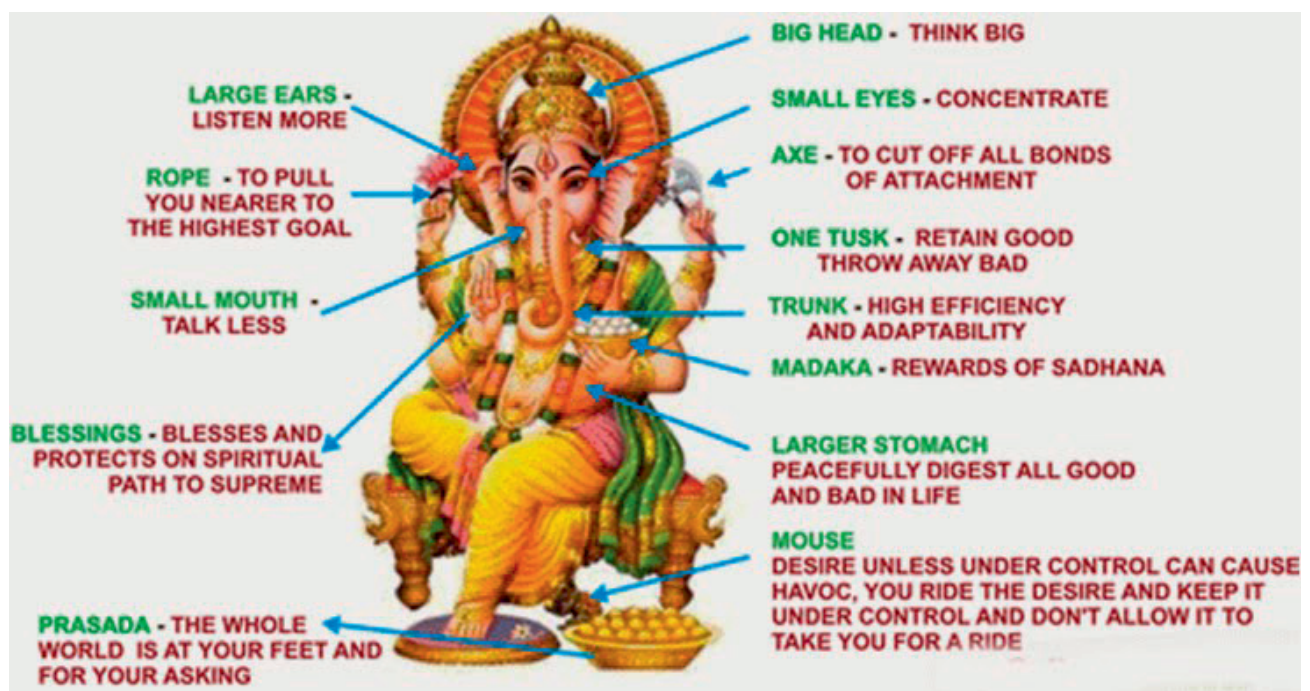
Ganesha (also spelled as Ganesh or Ganesa) is one of the five prime Hindu deities (Ganesha, Vishnu, Shiva, Devī, and Sūrya). He is the first son of Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati. Buddhi, Riddhi and Siddhi are his consorts and Kartikeya his sibling. Ganesha is known by several names, including Ganapati (Lord of the Group), Vinayaka (Lord of All), and those corresponding to his three primary functions, namely: (a) master of obstacles (Vighneshwar), i.e. the remover of obstacles (Vighnahartā) as well as the creator of obstacles (Vighnakartā); (b) the patron of arts and sciences, intellect and wisdom — Buddhipriya; and (c) the personification or incarnation of the primordial sound ॐ (Aum) (Om̐kārasvarūpa). As the remover of obstacles, he is the first deity to be worshipped in all religious ceremonies and life's major undertakings. He is the most adored Hindu god across the length and breadth of India and around the world, and his idols are invariably seen in Hindu homes (including many businesses and offices) and temples. There are several popular temples dedicated to Lord Ganesha alone, e.g. Shri Siddhivinayak and Ashtavinayak (Mumbai), Kanipakam Vinayaka Temple (Chittoor), etc.

A unique feature of the worship of Ganesha is that it is considered to be compatible and complementary with the worship of other deities, and Hindus begin prayers, important undertakings, and religious ceremonies with an invocation to Ganesha regardless of their devotion to other deities. Ganesha is thus a deity who overcomes religious sectarianism, as all Hindu groups, regardless of their specific affiliation, agree to revere Ganesha. Thus, Ganesha is not only the remover of obstacles but also a non-sectarian deity and remover of religious intolerance. The worship of Ganesha extends beyond the temple and is carried out in virtually all aspects of life. Ganesha is also invoked as a patron of letters and learning during writing sessions.

Though Ganesha is represented in multiple forms, he is one of the most distinctive Hindu deities. In his most common representation, Ganesha appears with a large elephant head, curved trunk, one tusk, big ears and a pot-bellied human body. He is shown with four hands:

- The first hand waves an axe (retrench all desires, strike and repel obstacles, prod people along the path of righteousness and truth);
- The second hand holds a whip (force devout person to tie to the eternal beatitude of God, getting rid of worldly attachments and desires);
- The third hand turns towards the devotee in a pose of blessing, offering refuge and protection (abhaya);
- The fourth hand holds a lotus flower (the highest goal of human evolution, the sweetness of the realised inner self).

He is usually, but not always, depicted wearing yellow clothes. Like most other Hindu gods he has a vehicle or mount (vāhana), a mouse usually shown near his foot. As the vehicle of Lord Ganesha, a mouse teaches us to remain always alert and illuminate our inner self with the light of knowledge. There are numerous interpretations of Ganesha's symbolism; one such example is shown here.



The HMA temple is blessed with a well-crafted wooden murti of Lord Ganesha adorning the central altar. The choice of Ganesha was deliberate — it was the intention of the founders to be non-sectarian and all-inclusive as we embarked on a momentous new project to serve the Hindu community.

All satsangs and aartis invariably start with an invocation to Ganesha. Several special pujas (e.g. Ganesha Sahasranamam, Ganapati Atharvashirsha, etc.) have been performed over the years with great enthusiasm by devotees, including celebrations of Ganesha Chaturthi (गणेश चतुर्थी).



The wooden Ganesha idol in the Hindu Mandir, Vienna.

Ganesha Chaturthi (also known as Vinayaka Chaturthi and Sankashti Chaturthi) is the birthday of Lord Ganesha, which falls on the fourth day of Shukla paksha — the waxing moon in the month of Bhadrapada (August–September). The festival is celebrated for 10 days to honour Lord Ganesha. During this time, every aspect of help is easily available from Him and therefore provides a unique opportunity to pray and seek His grace to solve problems that humanly appear to be unsolvable.

Ganesha Mantras for all

Ganesha is a Sanskrit word compounded by joining two words gana (gaṇa), meaning a group or multitude and isha (īśa), meaning lord or master. His other popular name is Ganapati (गणपति; Gaṇapati) which is composed of two words — gaṇa, meaning “group,” and pati, meaning “ruler” or “lord”; thus: “Lord of Gaṇas” or “Lord of Hosts.” Both names are frequently used in His Prayers and mantras.

Our scriptures provide hundreds of Ganesha mantras. We have provided a few of them which can be used by everyone to improve their life. It is important to recite them with full faith and devotion; you will experience their benefits: avoiding trials and troubles and developing a positive mindset, leading to a successful life. Evil spirits dare not enter the home or the mind of the devotees where Ganesha mantras are recited. Recitation of the Ganesha Gayatri, in particular, eliminates misfortunes, brings long-lasting good luck, and bestows prosperity. Use these mantras before beginning a journey, a new course in school, new career or job, or before entering into any new contract or business so that impediments are removed and your endeavour may be crowned with success with His grace.

ॐ गं गणपतये नमः।

Om Gam Gaṇapataye Namah

(Om, salutations to Lord of Hosts!)

ॐ श्री गणेशाय नमः।

Om Shri Gaṇeshāya Namah

(Om, salutation to the Illustrious Ganesha)

Gam is the Beej mantra of Lord Ganesha.

Another powerful mantra is the Ganesha Gayatri, which is recited for overcoming obstacles and succeeding in life.

ॐ एकदन्ताय विद्धमहे,

वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि,

तन्नो दन्ति प्रचोदयात्॥

Aum Ekadantaya Viddhamahe, Vakratundāya Dhimahi,

Tanno Danti Prachodayat

Meaning

Om. Let us meditate on Sri Ganesha, the Lord with a single tusk. May that great Lord with the curved elephant trunk inspire and illumine our mind and understanding (to right path).

You can chant these mantras 9, 11, 21, 33, 108, or 1008 times daily. However, 21 times is practical and also preferred for Lord Ganesha.

May Lord Ganesha bless you and all your loved ones.



GANGES



Malak Khan

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From the heavens the splendorous one descends
Flowing fast from Shiva's matted locks.
Then through the Gomukh cave she bends,
Skipping sprightly upon the rocks.

Down she goes, drinking gladly the rain
She meets, joins hands, with Alaknanda, her mate
Together they go through the plain.
At Devprayag they merge, form the river great.

For centuries she has mothered faith and life,
Has fed her many children from her bosom warm.
Giving water with mineral rife
To the people that her banks do swarm.

And having thus suckled the earth,
She watched the greatest empires build
Giving food to their folk upon their birth,
Giving moksha to their men when they were killed.

Through Rishikesh she goes;
Past the temples, ghats, even further down
Past worshippers who watch as she flows,
Into Haridwar, Rishikesh's twin town.

She visits Kanpur, of booming industry
Visits factories of leather and cloth.
And strolls through forests of striking imagery
Her arms laden with foam and froth.

Then to Allahabad she goes on
Excitedly greets her two old friends
Yamuna and Saraswati, meeting them each dawn.
At the Sangam where the two do end.

Her Sangam, the confluence of the three
Is too a confluence of the cultures of the nation
For united they are, different they may be
They symbolize a unity despite variation.

Further she runs to Kashi, the holy
Past the abode of world's lord
Kashi Vishwanath, she floats by slowly.
And on she goes o'er vale and ford.

On to Patna, home of the mighty Magadh throne
Upon which Chanakya had Chandragupta
installed
From the river's bank he ruled the great zone

That all across today's nation sprawled.

Past this empire she flows, on to Bengal in the east
Home of wise word and melodious song
Home too to the royal tiger, the regal beast
And to countless mangroves, with their roots long.

And thus having ran, crawled and skipped
Across the lands that she so long reared
She throws herself into the bays that wide span
Taking with her the sins of the people cleared.

The hallowed, holy mother is she
For those who touch her very hem

Are given fresh chance noble to be;
Their sins she takes away from them.

For some she is just a river
For some she solves their strife
For some she is the solace giver
For some she is the fishing life.

For all who by her banks do dwell
Is she the symbol of their faith old,
For when with rain she does swell
She feeds life into every soul.



OM NAMAH SHIVAY: SHIVA AT KAILASH



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For Hindus, Kailash is the Sumeru Parvat, the spiritual centre of the world around which all the earthly powers revolve. There is indeed a mystical power that lies behind the creation of our universe — visible and invisible, animate and inanimate. In Kailash, this power is inherent; it is without any shape, any magnitude or any duration. It is always there. Its perception is beyond any imagination.

So, devoted Hindus who go there attempt to make a “parikrama” (or circumambulation) of both Kailash and Manasarovar. It is generally known that aquatic life is the first concrete life form in the process of evolution. Perhaps Brahma, the Creator, also created the first life at Manasarovar. *Matsya avatar*, the fish incarnation of Vishnu, was also born at Manasarovar, as narrated in Hindu mythology. The geographical position of the sweet water lake is truly celestial. The blending of light and water is perfect there. The reflections of Kailash and the Gurla Mandhata in Manasarovar in the evening hours, when the golden slanting rays of the sun penetrate through the pure, unpolluted air, are a sight to wonder. When Manasarovar, Kailash and Gurla Mandhata are all lit up in the afterglow of the dusk, it is as if an Aarti (a religious worship) is being performed in the heavenly chambers of the sky. For the devotees, they experience being one with the celestial power on the Earth.

We understand the grand cosmic design, and man’s place in it through simple stories told in mythological tales. These explain to us the origin of the world, its complexities and the subtle worlds around us. Various festivals celebrated on religious occasions in India are based on these. Thousands of such tales are there of the unique and mighty Shiva living at Kailash, as recounted in the Shiva Purana. Shiva means ‘auspicious’ in Sanskrit and He is the Supreme celestial power; Shankar is His earthly personification.

Some holy men of India have narrated accounts of their authentic and personal encounter with Lord Shiva at Kailash Manasarovar. The *Darshan* (direct encounter) of God attracts the devout Hindu very much. He wants to see God, face to face, during his lifetime; that Shiva can easily be approached at Kailash Manasarovar is profoundly engraved in their minds. “I have seen the Eternal in a human face,” wrote Sri Aurobindo in Savitri. Therefore, Kailash is considered the most beneficial of the pilgrimages one can make during one’s lifetime.

When one sees Kailash from near, and particularly from the middle point of the base of the south face, one cannot fail to see a massive Shiva figure sitting in perpetual mediation. A Vedic chant describes this power thus:

There is nothing apart from Shiva.

There is nothing other than Shiva.

Whatever there is, is Shiva.

It is really fascinating how artists normally depict Him. Lord Shiva is shown wearing only a loin cloth. His neck, blue from holding and storing the poison thrown up during the churning of the cosmic ocean, His hair arranged in a coil of matted, curly locks adorned with a crescent moon dripping the nectar of eternal life and the river Ganga trickling through His hair. His third eye that concentrates on the occult inner micro-universe, if opened is capable of burning and destroying the material world. He wears a serpent around His neck. It is interesting to note here that the rarest of snakes, not to be seen anywhere else in the world, inhabit the humid caves of Kailash.

The serpent is featured in pharmacies as an emblem — serpents intertwined around the caduceus, the staff of the Greek god Hermes residing at Mount Cyllene. It is a well-known fact that snake venom is a very useful medicine. Kailash is also home to numerous other herbal medicines. Often Shiva's four hands are shown carrying symbols. One hand carries a trident; the second a *damaru*; the third holds a tongue of fire; and the fourth an open hand, which is a gesture of Divine grace flowing from above and indicating above all, *do not be afraid*.

Shiva, who resides at Kailash, also resides in the hearts of His devotees. His presence wins them celestial rewards. This is taught to us by our Gurus. To ignore Kailash as an ordinary mountain is a great loss. To remain suspicious of religion may affirm that one is rational. This may help feed one's ego. To accept Kailash as the abode of the Lord is the right approach. The immediate awards are bountiful. Nature is a sufficient boon to feel the Bliss-world as a concrete experience of reality right in front of us. It is proper to accept that a mighty power, Nature, exists. This has the power of changing the destiny of an individual, a nation or even the entire world. This becomes very evident when one sees Lord Shiva sitting at Kailash in perpetual peace. When we see Him as a paragon of peace, harmony will flow into us if we allow it to penetrate by way of meditation. Writes Sri Aurobindo in 'Thoughts and Aphorisms,' "Kalidasa says in a daring image that the snow rocks of Kailash are Shiva's loud world-laughters piled up in the utter whiteness and pureness on the mountain tops. It is true; and when their image falls on the heart, then the world's cares melt away like the clouds below into their real nothingness."



Mount Kailash in the Background with Manasarovar in the Foreground.

GANESHA WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR MY DEAR FRIEND NIRANJAN DAS



Ghandikota Ramesh

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former General Secretary, HMA
Hamilton, New Jersey, USA

The members of the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) have been very fortunate in having one person in their midst who has provided strong leadership for the Mandir's cultural and religious activities. In the process, he became the most important representative of the Hindu Mandir. This person is Mr. Niranjana Das, who was one of the founder members of the HMA. As Cultural Coordinator, he organized and led the bhajan programmes for decades and also organized the annual Diwali Melas held for many years at Lugner City. His vibrant, yet soothing, voice was instrumental in attracting scores of devotees over the years and without a doubt helped increase the Mandir's membership. He also trained many devotees in the proper techniques involved in singing bhajans.

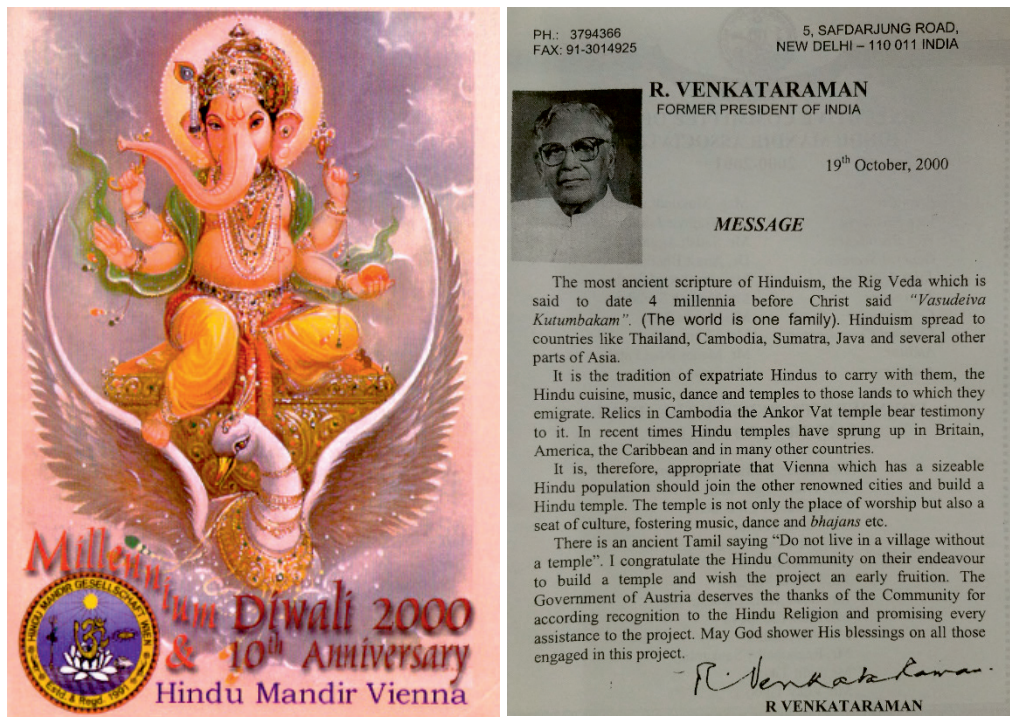
It must be noted that over the course of two decades, he hardly ever missed the Mandir's regular Sunday worship and bhajan sessions. If he was in Vienna, he would be at the Mandir on Sunday afternoons. As such, I consider him to be the HMA's single greatest asset, though such is his modesty and humility that he will never agree with such a description.

In addition to being an accomplished singer, Mr. Das is also a talented artist. It was only natural, therefore, for the Mandir's Executive Committee to entrust him with the responsibility of designing the Mandir's logo. This is his design, which has projected the Mandir's image for over two decades:

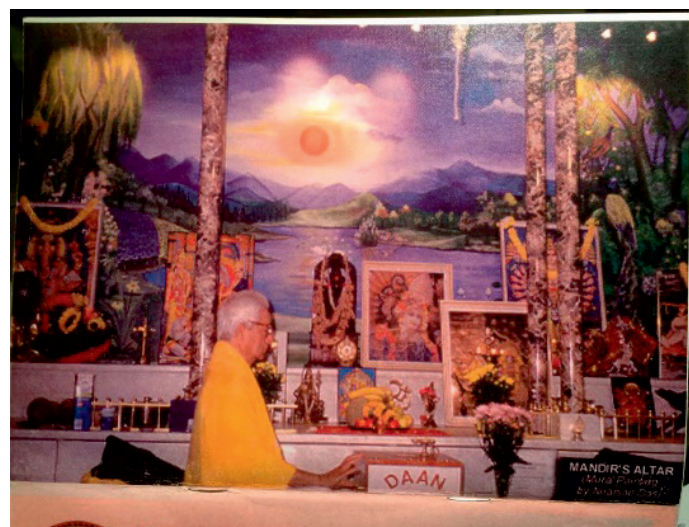


The next project for Mr. Das was the design and layout of the souvenir booklet commemorating the HMA's 10th anniversary. He and I worked on this project together for weeks during our spare time — I was

responsible for soliciting articles and editing and formatting them, while Mr. Das focused on the immense task of design, layout and printing. Here is the cover of the booklet, along with former Indian President the late Hon. R. Venkataraman's message.



Decoration of the altar at the Lammgasse premises of the Mandir was yet another major achievement by Mr. Das. He volunteered to paint a magnificent mural on the large wall behind the altar, presenting an idyllic backdrop for Ganesha and other deities in the altar. This mural took him many weeks to complete, working alone every day after a long day at the office, on weekends and on holidays. The result is shown below. It is enhanced by Yogacharya Shri S. Janakiraman sitting in the foreground conducting a puja. The HMA owes a huge debt of gratitude to Mr. Das for his many years of devoted seva.



**The Beautiful Wall Mural That Mr. Das Painted at the Lammgasse Mandir,
With Shri Janakiraman in the Foreground Conducting a Puja.**

SAMSKARAS THAT ENRICH THE LIVES OF HINDUS



Brijesh Kumar¹

Second Secretary (Press, Information, Protocol and Culture),
Embassy of India, Vienna, Austria

In Hinduism, samskaras are personal sacraments traditionally observed at different stages of a life, beginning from the moment of conception until the final scattering of ashes after the funeral. These are described vividly in the Puranas — Grah-sutras (ग्रह सूत्र). For Hindus, these austerity rituals are imperative and observed during the complete span of life, making life richer and giving it the right direction, i.e. on the path of Dharma. Apart from scriptural validation, Indian history has also proved their great effectiveness through many examples. Reference to these samskaras is also found during Vedic times and later during Vedantic times. For example, the Chhandogya Upanishad describes how a student ceremoniously holds three pieces of wood in his hands while being accepted as a student of Vedic teachings when entering the Brahmacharya stage. The most generally accepted list of the 16 samskaras begin with the ceremonies that must be held even before conception.

1. *Garbhadhana* is performed before conception. At the beginning of this samskara, the wife undertakes a purification ceremony and then dresses herself in rich clothes and wears ornaments. She looks like a queen and the husband recites Vedic verses invoking the gods to help his wife in conception, the true purpose of marriage.
2. *Pumsavana* is performed to favour the birth of a male as the first child. The male child holds the torch and ensures continuation of the family name.
3. *Simantonnayana* is performed to ensure the safe delivery of the newborn child. The Goddess Saraswati is invoked as the goddess of scholarship and perfection. This rite was called Simanta, as the hair of the pregnant woman is parted. The religious intention of the samskara is to bring about prosperity to the mother and long life to the unborn child, as indicated by the verses. Another purpose of the samskara is to keep the pregnant woman in good cheer, a very important factor receiving importance even in recent times.
4. The *Jatakarman* (birth) ceremony is performed before the cutting of the umbilical cord. The first born is preferred to be a boy, as mentioned above. He is expected to free the father from all ancestral debts. The birth of a girl is also a very joyous event, as giving her in marriage enables the parents to offer kanyadaan (the act of giving away their daughter). This is the highest offering that the parents can make.
5. *Naamkarana* (the naming of the child) is a very common celebration in families. The name influences the

¹ The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Government of India.

character of a person and attributes certain qualities to the person according to numerology.

6. *Niskramana* is the ritual of the child viewing the sun for the first time. The light of the sun influences him to be a virtuous person in life and become an instrument of the divine.
7. *Annapraasana* is the ritual first offering of grain or solid food to the child. It is understood that a man becomes what he eats. So, this is a very important ritual.
8. *Chudakarana* is the first tonsure of a boy's head, making him ready to absorb knowledge of the world.
9. *Karnavedha* is a samskara that is performed while piercing the ears for earrings. The ears are medically the points of acupressure and are connected to the brain centre.
10. *Vidyarambha* is usually performed at the age of five, when the child begins to learn the alphabet.
11. *Upanayana* is the ceremony that confers a sacred thread to the male child. It means initiation of the child as a seeker of knowledge.
12. *Vedarambha* signals the beginning of the studies of the Vedas, the sacred scriptures.
13. *Keshanta*, or *Godana*, symbolizes the first shaving of the beard, which marks the approach of manhood.
14. *Samavartana* is the ritual marking the return home from the house of the guru after completing the student phase of life.
15. *Vivah* is the sacrament of marriage, the next important stage in the life of a person.
16. *Antyeshti* is the final samskara performed at the funeral pyre to give the departing soul moksha.

Ancient Indian scholarship clearly gave much importance to speech (vak), the articulation of words. Hence, we have ritual speech in the form of mantras for every occasion. The German philosophy 'Das Wort' is adopted from the Indian philosophy of 'Aksharbrahman,' which means how the words and their sounds create a Universe. That becomes the reality. For Europeans, Sanskrit words are just dead counters which can be played with and thrown in places of choice for literary amusement. To Hindus, words and their sounds are living things and are the very soul of our temperaments, helping us to understand our life. Hence, though forgotten or pushed into the background, these samskaras have remained immensely powerful. Soon, humanity will realise their importance. At that time, they will come back and work for the betterment of the human race and its further evolution.

A CALL FOR A VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM



Rashmi Jois

Architect/Urban Strategist

Vienna, Austria

A CALL

Amidst, the technological world...

In the hustle and bustle of life...

There is a soul that speaks to itself...

In silence... In tranquility...

EMBRACE ME!

I am the root, the belief...

Your way of life...

A life that carry a light within you!

A life that embrace PEACE within and around!

A Call for a Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

(Sanskrit: “vasudha,” the earth; “iva,” is ; and “kutumbakam,” family) is a Sanskrit phrase that means that the whole world is one single family.

The concept originates in the Vedic scripture Maha Upanishad (Chapter 6, Verse 72):

अयं बन्धुरयं नेति गणना लघुचेतसां उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकं

Ayam bandhurayam neti ganana laghubhetasam udaracharitanam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam

Only small men discriminate saying: One is a relative; the other is a stranger. For those who live magnanimously the entire world constitutes but a family.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is not just about peace and harmonious life among the societies in the world, but also about a truth, that the whole world has to live by principles like a family, set by an unknowable source. Just by contemplating this idea in life and by at least trying to live by it and practice it in our lives, we could make this world a better place.

अहं ऋतम् मंत्र, मैं सत्य हूँ



अमिता नथवाणी

Vienna, Austria

स्वर्ण युग का प्रारंभ करने के लिए भगवान इंद्र ने दार्भ्य के रूप में मानव जन्म लिया।

दार्भ्य के रूप में, उन्होंने एक विशाल सभा आयोजित की जहाँ उन्होंने लोगों को सबसे शक्तिशाली मंत्र, 'अहं ऋतम्' के बारे में बताया। यह मंत्र उनके जीवन की दिशा बदल सकता है, साथ ही उनके शरीर को परिवर्तित कर सकता है।

यह मंत्र मनुष्य के अंदर समाहित आसुरिक प्रभाव के सभी तत्वों को दूर कर सकता है और मन एवं शरीर को पूरी तरह से निर्मल बना सकता है। देर तक इसका जप करने पर, यह हमारे तार्किक मस्तिष्क द्वारा खुद पर लगायी गयी बाधाओं को हटा देगा। कोई व्यक्ति इस मंत्र को जितना ज्यादा जपेगा, यह उतना ही ज्यादा निकट आकर एक शब्द बन जायेगा।

इस मंत्र के बारे में एक विचित्र बात यह है कि 'हा' अक्षर को हटाने पर यह 'अमृत' या अमृत बन जाता है। 'हा' अक्षर पीड़ा का सूचक है और, इसकी ध्वनि का हटना दैवीय अमृत में वृद्धि कर सकता है। यह व्यक्ति की चेतना की सबसे उच्चतम अवस्था तक पहुँचने में सहायता करेगा। इस मंत्र को मन में निरंतर और ताल-सहित दोहराने पर व्यक्ति के मस्तिष्क में अमर अमृत का लगातार प्रवाह होगा। जिसके परिणामस्वरूप, मृत्यु, बीमारी और वृद्धावस्था के भय के ऊपर भारी विजय प्राप्त होती है। इसके स्थान में, केवल सत्य प्रकाशित होगा।

इसके बाद, दार्भ्य ने सभा में इस मंत्र का सबसे प्रमुख रहस्य प्रकट किया। उन्होंने कहा, "यह मंत्र ब्रह्मा के समुद्र से उत्पन्न हुआ है। 'अहं ऋतम्' मंत्र की ध्वनि, समुद्र से आते हुए सुनाई देती है।"



'अहं ऋतम्' मंत्र के अंदर दैवीय ज्ञान का बीज मौजूद है। इस मंत्र से, प्रत्येक व्यक्ति जान जायेगा कि दूरस्थ दैवीय संसार दूर नहीं है, बल्कि बिल्कुल उनके ऊपर है। लोगों को अनुभव होगा कि यह हमेशा से उनकी अपनी आत्मा का अभिन्न अंग रहा है।

विशेष रूप से बंगाल में, लोग अपेक्षाकृत रूप से हमेशा ज्यादा निर्मल रहे हैं क्योंकि स्वर्ण युग में प्रकाशित सत्य सबसे पहले उन्हें ही मिला था। यह प्रत्येक कालचक्र में सत्य रहता है। अन्य युगों में भी लोगों ने इस दैवीय स्मृति को अपनी चेतना में बनाये रखा था। वे शरीर में आत्मा की महत्ता को समझते थे और उन्होंने देखा था कि अलग-अलग लोगों में यह कैसे प्रकट होता है। इस ज्ञान के साथ, उन्हें अपनी आत्मा की उपस्थिति का बोध हो गया था। इस सत्य का अनुभव करने के बाद, उनके शरीर दैवीय बन गए थे। इस प्रकार, उन्होंने अपने शरीर में देवताओं का स्वरूप प्राप्त कर लिया था। 'मैं' की भावना पर केंद्रित शैतानी ज्ञान या अहंकार समाप्त हो गया था। 'अहं ऋतम्' का जप करते हुए, उनके अंदर वास्तविक ज्ञान प्रकाशित हुआ था, उन्हें अपनी दैवीयता का ज्ञान हो गया था और उन्होंने अमरत्व प्राप्त कर लिया था।

इसके अतिरिक्त, इस शक्ति के साथ वे सभी रोगों पर काबू पाने में समर्थ थे। चाहे वो रोग कितने भी भयानक या जानलेवा क्यों ना हों, इस मंत्र में हर चीज को ठीक करने की क्षमता थी। उन्होंने यह समझ लिया था कि बीमारी उनके शरीर का अभिन्न हिस्सा नहीं है, बल्कि यह एक नकारात्मक शक्ति है जो बाहर से उनके ऊपर आक्रमण करती है। इस मंत्र ने उन्हें यह भरोसा भी दिलाया कि बीमारी केवल किसी शरीर पर आक्रमण कर सकती है, ना कि अनंत आत्मा पर।

यदि भय, क्रोध, इच्छा, लालच, मोह आदि जैसी नकारात्मक भावनाओं को समाप्त किया जा सके तो हमारा शरीर एक बेहद सुरक्षित किले के समान है। बीमारियां ऐसे शत्रुओं के समान होती हैं जो बाहर से हमला करते हैं और झूठ एवं कपट के माध्यम से व्यक्ति की सुरक्षा को तोड़ने का प्रयास करते हैं। वास्तव में, व्यक्ति की निहित सहमति और अनुमति के बिना, ऐसी कोई भी नकारात्मक शक्ति सुरक्षित शरीर के अंदर प्रवेश नहीं कर सकती है। अहं ऋतम्, अहं ऋतम् मंत्र के जप के साथ, व्यक्ति के अंदर बीमारियों का प्रवेश होने से पहले ही उनपर विजय प्राप्त हो जाएगी। प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को यह जानना और समझना होगा कि मनुष्य के रूप में वे अपने शरीर के स्वामी हैं और ऐसे बुरे आक्रमणों के सामने असहाय नहीं हैं।

यहाँ तक कि वृद्धावस्था भी किसी व्यक्ति की अनुमति के बिना उसे कष्ट नहीं दे सकती है। जब दृष्टि धुंधली पड़ जाती है, सुनने की क्षमता खराब हो जाती है, बाल सफेद होने लगते हैं और शरीर थका हुआ और बूढ़ा महसूस करने लगता है तो भी “अहं ऋतम्” मंत्र का निरंतर जप इस प्रक्रिया को उलट सकता है। इस मंत्र की शक्ति से मनुष्य के शरीर में मौजूद सभी देवता सक्रिय हो जाते हैं। इसके बाद, सभी अकल्पनीय चीजें सत्य हो जाती हैं; आँखों से सूर्य देवता देखने लगेंगे; कानों से रुद्र देवता सुनने लगेंगे; नाक से वायु देवता प्राण प्राप्त करने लगेंगे; मुँह से अग्नि देवता सक्रिय हो जायेंगे; बुद्धि से चंद्र देवता सोचने लगेंगे; मस्तिष्क से देवताओं के गुरु बृहस्पति सर्वशक्तिमान हो जायेंगे। अंतरात्मा में, इंद्र देव प्रकाशित हो जायेंगे और वह जीवन में शक्ति और आनंद की भावना पुनर्स्थापित कर देंगे। उनकी चेतना की गहराई के साथ, मनुष्य यह समझने में समर्थ होगा कि कैसे सभी देवता मनुष्य के शरीर के अंदर कार्य करते हैं। उस समय, सूर्य के पुत्र, दोनों अश्विन, वृद्धावस्था पर विजय प्राप्त कर लेंगे। इस प्रकार, मृत्युलोक से वृद्धावस्था समाप्त हो जाएगी।





FESTIVALS

हिन्दू मन्दिर विएना में मनाये जाने वाले पर्वों का संक्षिप्त विवरण



Seema Kalia

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हिन्दू मंदिर विएना की हमेशा से कोशिश रही है कि हर छोटा बड़ा त्यौहार मंदिर में मनाया जाये और हम सफल भी हुये है। वर्ष के शुरू से लेकर अंत तक सब पर्व मनाने की कोशिश होती है। जगह भरपूर न होने से उसे वो रूप तो नहीं मिल पाया परन्तु हमारी श्रद्धा में कोई कमी नहीं रही। वर्ष के आरम्भ से अंत तक क्रमांक रूप से त्यौहार मनाये जाते हैं हमारी कोशिश यही होती है कि त्यौहार उसी दिन मनाया जाये लेकिन कुछ पर्व हमें ऑस्ट्रियन समय एवं अवकाश देख कर या सिर्फ रविवार को ही मनाने पड़ते हैं।

संक्षिप्त विवरण

१. लोहड़ी का त्यौहार ; इसका बहुत बड़ा विवरण न देते हुए एक संक्षिप्त सा विवरण ये कि लोहड़ी पौष के अंतिम दिन, सूर्यास्त के बाद (माघ संक्रांति से पहली रात) यह पर्व मनाया जाता है। यह प्रायः १२ या १३ जनवरी को पड़ता है। पंजाब में प्रमुख त्यौहार माना गया है। इसी मकर संक्रांति के दिन तमिल हिंदू पोंगल का त्यौहार, असम में बीहू के रूप में यह त्यौहार मनाने की परंपरा है। इस प्रकार लगभग पूर्ण भारत में यह विविध रूपों में मनाया जाता है। हम विएना के सब हिन्दू मिलकर अपने मंदिर में भजन गान करते हैं। १ घंटा भजन के बाद अपने हवन कुंड में थोड़ी सी लकड़िया जला कर इस पर्व की रीति को रूप देते हैं। मूंगफली रेवड़ी तथा हवन सामग्री की आहुति देते हैं। हवन पूजा के पश्चात् पर्व को एक उत्साहित पारम्परिक जश्न रूप देने हेतु बाद में थोड़ा भंगड़ा भी आयोजन किया जाता है ताकि उसे पूरी तरह से रूप दिया जा सके।

२. बसंत पंचमी/सरस्वती पूजन: माघ महीने के पाँचवे दिन यानी फरवरी में ये पर्व आता है। बसंत का नाम आते ही जीवन उल्लास से भरता है, नयी उमंग नयी खुशिया हर तरफ महकते फूल देख कर मन यु ही खुश होता है और उसे पर्व का रूप दे दिया जाता है। परन्तु सबसे प्रमुख इस पर्व के पीछे ये माना गया है इसी दिन सरस्वती माँ का जन्म हुआ और जिनसे पूरे विश्व को वाणी, विद्या और संगीत से लिप्त कर दिया। हम भी इस पर्व को बहुत अच्छे से परन्तु रविवार को ही मनाने की कोशिश करते हैं ताकि सभी बच्चे आ सके। मंदिर में सरस्वती माँ का पूजन करते हैं भजन गाते हैं निलेश जी पिछले कुछ वर्षों से माँ सरस्वती के भजन बहुत अच्छे से निभाते हैं। हिन्दू परिवार के बच्चों को खास कर आमंत्रित किया जाता है ताकि वो भी माँ से आशीर्वाद पा सके।

३. महा शिवरात्रि: फाल्गुन कृष्ण चतुर्दशी की तिथि को शिवरात्रि पर्व आता है। अक्सर फरवरी और मार्च के मध्य में ही आता है। ये वो दिन है जिस दिन सृष्टि का आरंभ हुआ था। माना गया है कि इस दिन शिव और पारवती का विवाह हुआ। शिव जगत के रचयिता हैं और शक्ति पार्वती हैं अर्धनारीश्वर से शिव पूरण होते हैं। २५ वर्षों से मंदिर में भी इसका आयोजन प्रायः उसी तिथि में करने की कोशिश होती है। ऑस्ट्रिया के लोगो को आमंत्रित किया जाता है पिछले कुछ वर्षों से भास्कर जी विधिवत पूजा करते हैं सामान के आभाव से जो कि विएना में मिलना असंभव है फिर भी पूरी श्रद्धा भाव से शिवलिंग अभिषेक होता है। हर भक्त आकर जल दूध शहद दही पुष्प चढ़ाते हैं “महामितुन्जय मन्त्र” का १०८ जाप होता है शिव आराधना और भजन होते हैं। पूजा के पश्चात् पंचामृत का परसाद एवं भंडारा भोज वितरण होता है।

४. होली: यह पर्व फाल्गुन मास की पूर्णिमा को मनाया जाता है। यह एक मात्र त्यौहार है जो हर उम्र और हर वर्ग के लोग मनाते हैं। भारत ही नहीं बल्कि पूरे विश्व भर में जहाँ भी हिन्दू मूल के लोग रहते हैं, वहाँ पर मनाते हैं। आज के समय में विदेशी लोग भी

बहुत ही उत्साह से मना रहे हैं। होली के पर्व का अर्थ “प्रेम और मिलन” है। सब रंग बिरंगे रंगों में लिप्त हो जाते हैं जैसे कृष्ण राधा के रंग में और राधा कृष्ण के रंग में रंग जाती है इस प्रकार हर रिश्ता सब शिकायत भूल कर एक हो जाता है। मंदिर में बहुत ही अच्छे से इसका आयोजन किया जाता है। सीमा कालिया (मुझे) को इसकी जिम्मेदारी दी जाती है। सब रंगों के रंग गुलाल लाल पीला हरा भारत से खास तौर से मंगवाये जाते हैं, इस दिन खाने में भी खास तौर कि मिठाइयां बनवाते हैं। ऑस्ट्रेलिया के सभी लोगो को भी इस पर्व का इंतजार रहता है मंदिर में खूब कृष्ण भजन बड़े ही उत्साह के साथ गाते हैं। इसके पश्चात रंग खेला जाता है वातावरण उल्लास भरा रहता है मंदिर में बैठने तक कि जगह कम पड़ जाती है। ऑस्ट्रेलिया मूल के लोग भी इस दिन कि प्रतीक्षा करते हैं।

५. चैत्र नवरात्रे: रामनवमी विक्रम संवत् के पहले दिन अर्थात् चैत्र मास शुक्ल पक्ष की प्रतिपदा (पहली तिथि) से नौ दिन अर्थात् नवमी तक नवरात्र होते हैं। नवरात्र शब्द से ‘नव अहोरात्रों (विशेष रात्रियां) का बोध’ होता है क्योंकि ‘रात्रि’ शब्द सिद्धि का प्रतीक माना जाता है। इस समय शक्ति के नव रूपों की उपासना की जाती है। कई बार इन दिनों में रामायण का पाठ भी आयोजन किया जाता था सुबह से रात तक रामायण पढ़ते थे। मंदिर में भी 9 दिन माँ दुर्गा का पाठ होता है। अष्टमी नवमी में संगत बहुत बड़े पैमाने पर आती है खूब रौनक लगती है। कई बार माता की चौकी का आयोजन ५ बजे से ९ तक का होता है। जोकि संजय सहगल द्वारा किया जाता है, खूब माता की भेंट, दुर्गा आरती, कन्या पूजन एवं भंडारा का आयोजन होता है।

६. हनुमान जयंती: यह पर्व चैत्र माह की पूर्णिमा को मनाया जाता है कुछ सालो से मंदिर में उसी तिथि को आयोजन होता है इस दिन हनुमान जी का जन्म हुआ माना जाता है। इनको शिवजी का 11वाँ अवतार भी माना जाता है इन्हें बजरंगबलि संकट मोचन कहा जाता है क्योंकि भगवान श्री हनुमान जी प्रत्यक्ष देव हैं वह सभी के संकट दूर करते हैं। हनुमान जयंती के दिन श्रद्धालु जन अपने-अपने सामर्थ्य के अनुसार, सिंदूर, लाल वस्त्र, ध्वजा आदि चढ़ाते हैं। केशर मिला हुआ चंदन, धूप, अगरबत्ती, शुद्ध घी का दीपक का भोग लगाते हैं। मंदिर में 7 बार हनुमान चालीसा का पाठ लगाता होता है और स्तुति गायी जाती है।

७. गुरु पूर्णिमा: आषाढ मास की पूर्णिमा को गुरु पूर्णिमा कहते हैं। इस दिन गुरुपूजा का विधान है। यह दिन महाभारत के रचयिता कृष्ण द्वापायन व्यास का जन्मदिन भी है। वे संस्कृत के प्रखंड विद्वान थे और उन्होंने चारों वेदों की भी रचना की थी। इस कारण उनका एक नाम वेद व्यास भी है। उन्हें आदिगुरु कहा जाता है और उनके सम्मान में गुरु पूर्णिमा को व्यास पूर्णिमा नाम से भी जाना जाता है। मंदिर में इसका आयोजन रविवार को ही होता है। इस दिन सब अपने अपने ईष्ट और गुरुओं को याद करते हैं उनका गुणगान करते हुये उनसे आशीर्वाद लेते हैं।

८. कृष्ण जन्माष्टमी: श्री कृष्ण ने अपना अवतार भाद्रपद माह कि कृष्ण पक्ष कि अष्टमी को मध्यरात्रि में मथुरा में लिया भगवान् कृष्ण विष्णु जी के आठवे अवतार माने जाते हैं यह अवतार सोलह कलाएँ सम्पूर्ण अवतार है। इसे संक्षिप्त में वर्णित करना बहुत कठिन है। भगवान् कृष्ण ने श्रीमद्भगवद् गीता का दिव्य सन्देश देकर समस्त पृथ्वी लोक को जागृत किया। कृष्ण की कलायों की व्याख्याओं के लिए तो कृष्णावतार ग्रन्थ पड़ना होगा। हिन्दू मंदिर विषाण इस पर्व को बहुत ही उत्साह के साथ उसी तिथि को मानते हैं मंदिर को खूब सजाया जाता है झूला लगाया जाता है खूब भजन मस्ती और रास भरे भजन होते हैं प्रत्येक भक्त बाल गोपाल जी को झूले को झूलाते हैं और अभिषेक होता है। जगह के अभाव से और ऑस्ट्रेलिया के कानून के दायरे में रहते हुए १२ बजे तक न करके भारतीय समय अनुसार १२ बजे यानि ८.३० बजे अभिषेक कर दिया जाता है खास तौर से पंजीरी परसाद और भंडारा का वितरण होता है।

९. गणेश चतुर्थी: गणेश चतुर्थी हिन्दू धर्म का अत्यधिक मुख्य तथा बहुत प्रसिद्ध पर्व है। यह अगस्त या सितंबर के महीने में आता है। ये भगवान् गणेश के जन्म दिवस के रूप में मनाया जाता है जो माता पार्वती और भगवान् शिव के पुत्र हैं। ये बुद्धि और समृद्धि के भगवान् हैं इसलिये इन दोनों को पाने के लिये लोग इनकी पूजा करते हैं। लोग गणेश की मिट्टी की प्रतिमा लाते हैं और चतुर्थी पर घर पर रखते हैं तथा 10 दिन तक उनकी भक्ति करते हैं और उसके बाद अनन्त चतुर्दशी के दिन अर्थात् 11वें दिन गणेश विसर्जन करते हैं। हमारे मंदिर में भी पिछले कुछ वर्षों से इस प्रकार से स्थापना होती है और विसर्जन किया जाता इसका पूरा कार्यक्रम भास्कर जी संभालते हैं विधिवत पूजा की जाती है प्रतिदिन मंदिर खुलता है गणेश जी की स्तुति की जाती है।

१०. अश्विन नवरात्रे: अश्विन के नवरात्रे का बहुत महत्व है इस पर हिन्दू मंदिर में दुर्गा समिति विषाण कि तरफ से आयोजन होता है प्रतिदिन ५ से ८ बजे तक बंगाली हिन्दू समाज इसमें बहुत ही बडचड कर हिस्सा लेता है। प्रतिदिन पाठ होता है ढाक की थाप पे दुर्गा माँ को प्रसन्न किया जाता है। सब मिलकर पूजा अर्चना पुष्पांजलि देते हैं उल्लूक से वातावरण बहुत पवित्र लगता है एवं खूब नाचते हैं। विशेष बात यह भी है कि हर साल विशाल भगवती जागरण का भी आयोजन होता है जो कि मंदिर में न हो कर बाहर किसी बड़े भवन में रात १० बजे से सुबह के ६ बजे तक किया जाता है जिसमें हजारों भक्त आते हैं। मंदिर के लिए दान भी एकत्रित होता है। गायक भजन मण्डली भारत से खास तौर से बुलाई जाती है।

११. विजयदशमी: नवरात्र के दसवें दिन विजयदशमी होती है बंगाली समिति द्वारा माँ दुर्गा का विसर्जन और सिंधूर खेला जाता है। भारत में रावण दहन होता है पर यहाँ ऐसा कुछ न होकर सब मिलकर भजन गाते हैं राम स्तुति गयी जाती है मिठाई का भोग लगाया जाता है।

१२. करवाचौथ: यह उत्तर भारत में प्रमुख है कार्तिक मास की कृष्ण पक्ष की चतुर्थी को मनाते हैं यह पर्व केवल सुहागिन स्त्री अपने पति कि दीर्घ आयु के लिए कामना करती हुई इस पर्व को बड़े ही उत्साह से मनाती हैं। सुबह सूर्य उदय से पहले से लेकर चन्द्र दर्शन तक का निर्जल उपवास होता है दोपहर में पूजन होता है एक नयी दुल्हन जैसा श्रृंगार करती है मंदिर में इसका आयोजन ३ से ६ बजे तक किया जाता है कथा पढ़ी जाती है और सब विधिवत पूजन करती है।

१३. दीपावली: दिवाली भारतवर्ष का सबसे बड़ा पर्व है, अध्यात्मिक रूप से भी अन्धकारमयी रात्री को प्रकाशमयी बनाया जाता है। यह सदैव उसी तिथि को मनाया जाता है मंदिर को हम खूब सजाते हैं, रंगोली और दीयों से सजावट होती है, इस वर्ष हवन के साथ मन्त्र उच्चारण से आहुति दी गयी भास्कर डोभाल जी और त्रिलोकी नाथ आहूजा जी ने आयोजित किया। इस दिन विष्णु का हर हिन्दू मंदिर में आता है भजन कीर्तन भी जोर शोर से होता है। दीपावली से अगले रविवार को सन 1991 से बहुत बड़े पैमाने में रंगा रंग कार्यक्रम आयोजन का प्रचलन है जिसे वर्तमान में सीमा कालिया कपिला बहुत ही ब-खूबी से निभा रही हैं भारतीय राजदूत के साथ बहुत से मेहमानों को निमन्त्रण दिया जाता है। इसी सांस्कृतिक रंगारंग कार्यक्रम से मंदिर को बहुत दान भी इक्कठा होता है। यह पर्व विष्णु में हिन्दू मंदिर विष्णु की पहचान के लिए भी जाना जाता है। इसमें हर धर्म के लोग शामिल होना चाहते हैं। तथा यह वर्ष का अंतिम त्यौहार भी होता है।

१४. अतिरिक्त: इन सब पर्व कि अतिरिक्त “सुन्दरकाण्ड” का पाठ का आयोजन हुआ हर मंगलवार को कुछ औरते मंदिर में बैठ कर पाठ पढ़ती हैं।

“सत्यनारायण जी की कथा” का आयोजन किया जाता है

“महामृत्युञ्जय मन्त्र” का पाठ होता है तो सब कि सुविधा के अनुसार आयोजित किया जाता है। इसतरह गायत्री मन्त्र पाठ का आयोजन हुआ एवं “विष्णु सहस्रनामा” का जाप होता है। कई बार साईं संध्या का आयोजन भी होता है। सबकी श्रद्धा को ध्यान में रखते हुए समय समय पर हर छोटे बड़े त्यौहार को मनाने कि हमारी चेष्टा और कोशिश रहती है।

आने वाले दिनों में कोशिश होगी कि हर छोटे छोटे त्यौहार को बहुत खूबसूरती से मना सकें।



एकादशी व्रत का महत्व

SIGNIFICANCE OF EKADASHI



होशियार मल

धार्मिक समन्वयक

एच.एम.ए.

हिंदू धर्म में एकादशी का व्रत महत्वपूर्ण स्थान रखता है। एकादशी शब्द संस्कृत भाषा का शब्द है जिसका अर्थ होता है ग्यारह। यह प्रत्येक चंद्रमास (पंद्रह दिन) के ग्यारहवें दिन आती है। हर महीने दो चंद्रमास होते हैं, शुक्ल पक्ष और कृष्ण पक्ष। इसी के साथ ही हर माह में अमूमन दो एकादशी होती हैं। प्रत्येक वर्ष चौबीस एकादशियाँ होती हैं। जब अधिकमास या मलमास आता है तब इनकी संख्या बढ़कर 26 हो जाती है। मान्यता है कि हर वैष्णव को एकादशी के दिन व्रत अवश्य करना चाहिए। एकादशी व्रत वैष्णव गृहस्थों की तपस्या मानी गई है। यह भक्तिमयी जीवन के लिए अत्यंत लाभकारी भी है।

पापो की दवा (मरहम) एकादशी

भगवान की करुणा का कोई अंत नहीं है भगवान हमेशा हम जीवों के कल्याण के लिए ही सोचते रहते हैं की जीवों का कल्याण किस प्रकार हो। इसी सोच विचार से साथ योगनिद्रा की गोद में चले गए और सोचने लगे की मनुष्य बहुत से पाप करते रहते हैं और जाने अनजाने में भी उनसे बहुत से पाप होते रहते हैं जिनका उन्हें मालूम भी नहीं होता की उनसे पाप हो गया है। चलते फिरते ना जाने कितने जीव उनके पैरों के नीचे आकर मर जाते हैं उन्हें पता भी नहीं चलता। इसी प्रकार और दूसरे पाप भी खाते, पीते, सूँघते, सुनते, सोचते, विचारते, बोलते, काम करते आदि आदि। मन, वचन (वाणी) और कर्म से बहुत से पाप होते हैं और उन पापों के कारण उनको नरक की यातनाये भोगनी पड़ती है। इसी सोच के साथ उन्होंने एकादशी अवतार लिया।

एकादशी के दिन व्रत धारण करना कृष्ण भक्तों के लिए एक महत्वपूर्ण तप है और यह आध्यात्मिक प्रगति को बढ़ाने के लिए किया जाता है।

ब्रह्मवैवर्त पुराण में कहा गया है कि जो कोई भी एकादशी के दिन व्रत करता है वो सभी पापकर्मों से मुक्त हो जाता है और आध्यात्मिक जीवन में प्रगति करता है। मूल सिद्धांत केवल उस दिन भूखे रहना नहीं है, बल्कि अपनी निष्ठा और प्रेम को परमपिता पर और भी सुदृढ़ करना है। एकादशी के दिन व्रत का मुख्य कारण है अपने शरीर की जरूरतों को घटाना और अपने समय का परम ऊर्जा की सेवा में व्यय करना है। उपवास के दिन सर्वश्रेष्ठ कार्य तो भगवान गोविन्द की लीलाओं का ध्यान करना और उनके पावन नामों को निरंतर सुनते रहना है। जैसे श्रीमद्भागवतगीता का पाठ विष्णु सहस्रनाम भगवान् के भजन कीर्तन रात्रि जागरण दिप दान आदि।

एकादशी व्रत विधी

दशमी को सायंकाल भोजन के बाद अच्छी प्रकार से दातुन करें ताकि अन्न का अंश मुँह में रह न जाए। रात्रि को भोजन कदापि न करें, न अधिक बोलें। एकादशी के दिन प्रातः 4 बजे उठकर सबसे पहले व्रत का संकल्प करें। इसके पश्चात शौच आदि से निवृत्त होकर शुद्ध जल से स्नान करें। व्रत करने वाला चोर, पाखंडी, परस्त्रीगामी, निंदक, मिथ्याभाषी तथा किसी भी प्रकार के पापी से बात न करे।

स्नान के पश्चात धूप, दीप, नैवेद्य आदि सोलह चीजों से भगवान का पूजन करें और रात को दीपदान करें। रात्रि में सोना या प्रसंग नहीं करना चाहिए। सारी रात भजन-कीर्तन आदि करना चाहिए। जो कुछ पहले जाने-अनजाने में पाप हो गए हों, उनकी क्षमा माँगनी चाहिए। दोनों शुक्ल पक्ष और कृष्ण पक्ष की एकादशियां समान हैं इसमें भेद नहीं रखना चाहिए।

द्वादशी यानि बारस को भगवान् के लिए प्रसाद बनाकर भगवान को भोग लगाकर ब्राह्मणों को दान दक्षिणा देकर या उनके नाम का दान दक्षिणा निकालकर भगवान् से अपने इस जीवन में या जन्म जन्म में हुए पापों की क्षमा मांगते हुए भगवान् की आरती कर और प्रसाद वितरण कर भोजन ग्रहण करें।

एकादशी व्रत के लाभ

जो मनुष्य ऊपर लिखी विधि के अनुसार एकादशी का व्रत करते हैं, उन्हें शंखोद्धार तीर्थ में स्नान करके भगवान के दर्शन करने से जो फल प्राप्त होता है, वह एकादशी व्रत के सोलहवें भाग के भी समान नहीं है। व्यतिपात के दिन दान देने का लाख गुना फल होता है। संक्रांति से चार लाख गुना तथा सूर्य-चंद्र ग्रहण में स्नान-दान से जो पुण्य प्राप्त होता है वही पुण्य एकादशी के दिन व्रत करने से मिलता है।

अश्वमेध यज्ञ करने से सौ गुना तथा एक लाख तपस्वियों को साठ वर्ष तक भोजन कराने से दस गुना, दस ब्राह्मणों अथवा सौ ब्रह्मचारियों को भोजन कराने से हजार गुना पुण्य भूमिदान करने से होता है। उससे हजार गुना पुण्य कन्यादान से प्राप्त होता है। इससे भी दस गुना पुण्य विद्यादान करने से होता है। विद्यादान से दस गुना पुण्य भूखे को भोजन कराने से होता है। अन्नदान के समान इस संसार में कोई ऐसा कार्य नहीं जिससे देवता और पितर दोनों तृप्त होते हों परंतु एकादशी के व्रत का पुण्य सबसे अधिक होता है। हजार यज्ञों से भी अधिक इसका फल होता है। इस व्रत का प्रभाव देवताओं को भी दुर्लभ है।

रात्रि को भोजन करने वाले को उपवास का आधा फल मिलता है और दिन में एक बार भोजन करने वाले को भी आधा ही फल प्राप्त होता है। जबकि निर्जल व्रत रखने वाले का महात्म्य तो देवता भी वर्णन नहीं कर सकते।

सभी एकादशियों की बहुत ही रोचक अलग अलग कथाये हैं। एकादशी की कथा पढ़ने या सुनने का भी बहुत पुण्य है तो फिर एकादशी का व्रत करने से कितना पुण्य होगा। सभी प्रकार के व्रतों में एकादशी का व्रत सबसे श्रेष्ठ है। भगवान श्री कृष्ण ने स्वयं श्रीमद्भागवत गीता में यह घोषणा की है की “व्रतों में मैं एकादशी का व्रत हूँ”।

भगवान ने हम मनुष्यों के उधार हेतु एकादशी रूप में अवतार लिया फिर भी हम लोग एकादशी व्रत नहीं करते बहुत से लोगो को तो यह भी मालूम नहीं होता की एकादशी कब आई और कब गई। मुझे भी मालूम नहीं था लेकिन जब प्रभु की कृपा हुई तो मालूम हुआ की एकादशी क्या है। यह लेख पढ़ने वालो भक्तो से मेरा निवेदन है की यदि आप अपने पापों से डरते हैं और अपने पापों का प्रायश्चित्त करना चाहते हैं और भोग और मोक्ष की इच्छा रखते हैं तो मन में संकल्प करले की आने वाली एकादशी से ही एकादशी व्रत करूँगा। मैं इस बात का आपको पूर्ण विश्वास दिलाता हू की आनंद भी आएगा और पुण्य भी मिलेगा!

LOHRI



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Lohri is a cultural festival which is celebrated on 13 January every year to denote the end of the coldest days of winter (the last day of Poh or Paush month), primarily by the Punjabi community. The festival is observed as Lal Loi in the Sindhi community and is also synonymous with Uttarayan, Pongal, Bihu and Sankranti — all celebrating the harvest and bounty of Mother Nature in other parts of India. From the north Indian farmers' point of view, the Lohri celebration is associated primarily with the harvest of the rabi crop, since January is when sugarcane crops are harvested, and therefore it is seen to be a harvest festival. Punjabi farmers see the day after Lohri (Maghi) as the financial New Year.

Astrologically, Lohri coincides with the winter solstice, being the shortest day and the longest night of the year. It is the time when the sun heads back to the North and stays longer each day, warming the ground for the new crops soon to be sown.

According to legend, Lohri is also celebrated in remembrance of Dulha Bhatti who lived in the time of the Mughal emperor Akbar. It is believed that Dulha Bhatti (a Punjabi version of Robin Hood) robbed the rich and distributed the wealth among the poor. Most traditional Lohri songs are sung in praise of Dulha Bhatti which express their gratitude to him.

One tradition has it that groups of enthusiastic children visit every house and sing Lohri songs during the day, the most popular being:

Sunder mundriye ho!

Tera kaun vicharaa ho!

Dullah bhatti walla ho!

Dullhe di dhee vyayae ho!

Ser shakkar payee ho!

After singing, the children ask for Lohri gifts and are usually not turned away empty handed as it is considered inauspicious. People give them popcorn, peanuts, crystallized sugar, sesame seeds (til) or gur as well as money.

Later in the evening, people gather around a bonfire and throw gajak, rewri, peanut and popcorn into it as thanksgiving for good harvest and food. Men and women sing folk songs and perform Punjabi folk dances around the bonfire. The Lohri festival assumes particular significance for those families celebrating a happy event in the family during the year, such as the birth of a child, an engagement or marriage. The newly married couples and parents of newborn children take a Parikrama (round) of the fire and then take the blessings of elders. Eating of til (sesame seeds) and rorhi (jaggery) on this day is considered to be an essential ritual. The day ends with a traditional feast, including traditional sarson da saag, makki di roti and kheer.

Origin of the name Lohri

There are many beliefs about the origin of the name of this festival. Some people believe that the name Lohri is from 'Loi,' who was the wife of Sant Kabir. Some believe that the word Lohri comes from the word 'Loh,' which means the light and warmth of fire. Another belief is that the items 'til' and 'rorhi' were merged together to form the word 'Tilorhi,' which eventually got shortened to 'Lohri.' Yet others associate this festival with Holika. However in my opinion there is no association with Holika.

Social significance of Lohri

Lohri is a festival of social and cultural integration promoting unity, amity and harmony among different communities. The festival is believed to burn hatred and all moments of sadness and bring in the warmth of happiness and love.

Lohri is the first festival that is celebrated in the Hindu Mandir.



SARASWATHI AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HER WORSHIP ON VASANTH PANCHAMI



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In Sanskrit, 'Vasantha' is Spring and 'Panchami' is the 5th day of Shukla Paksha. Together they are celebrated as 'Vasant Panchami.' Celebrated on the fifth day of Magh, Vasant Panchami falls either in February or March according to the Gregorian calendar. The worship of Saraswathi, the Goddess of learning, is very important on this day since it is the onset of the Spring season. The origin of this festival dates back to the time of what is known as the Indus Valley civilization, which flourished along the banks of the ancient Saraswathi River. As this civilization developed, the river itself began to be associated with fertility and knowledge.

In mythology, it is said that when the poet Kalidasa was married to a beautiful princess through trickery, the marriage could not be consummated as the princess thought him to be foolish. Following this, Kalidasa tried to commit suicide, whereupon Goddess Saraswathi emerged from the waters and asked him to bathe in the river. After doing so, Kalidasa became knowledgeable and began writing poetry. Thus, Vasant Panchami is celebrated to venerate Goddess Saraswathi, the goddess of wisdom and learning.

Farmers also celebrate this festival in anticipation of the coming of the Spring season. It is celebrated all over North India with the offering of food and money to Brahmins, the priestly class, and with special rituals to venerate the Goddess. Yellow is the predominant colour associated with the festival, comparable to the mustard fields of Punjab and Haryana. The flying of kites is also commonly associated with this festival as a mark of celebrating freedom and enjoyment.

Young children often begin learning on this day, which is believed to be the reason why the school sessions start in the month of March. Donations of books and yellow sweets to the poor are also traditions during the festival.

The divine musical instrument veena is usually associated with Saraswathi. In the Navaratnamaala of Kalidasa, the Divine Mother, whom he addresses as Siva Kaanta, is also depicted as playing the veena, and as being immersed in the melody produced by the flight of the musical notes Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, and Ni, as the tips of her lovely fingers glide over the strings of the veena. In that state of ecstasy, her heart is tender (mridula, मृदुल) as a delicate flower, and she becomes the embodiment of peace (shaanti, शान्ति).

In this form in which she is conceived, Ambika is known as Shyaamala. The bliss that flows as a result of that internal peace is indescribable. While she is immersed in that bliss, the devotee who conceives of and concentrates on her in that attitude of bliss experiences the mercy (karuna, करुणा) that flows from her tender heart. The verse that gives expression to this sentiment is:

सरिगमपधनिर्ताताम्
वीणासन्क्रान्तकान्तहस्तान्ताम्।
शान्ताम् मृदुलस्वान्ताम्
कुचभरतान्ताम् नमामि शिवकान्ताम्॥

Sarigamapadhani rataam tam
Veenaa-sankraanta-kaanta-hastanantaam;
Saantaam mridula-svaantaam
Kuchabhara-taantaam namaami siva-kaantaam.

By surrendering ourselves to Siva Kaanta, radiating peace and bliss, in an atmosphere permeated with celestial music, our souls also find peace and happiness. The realization of God achieved through the hard path of Vedic study, yoga, dhyana, etc., is also achieved when the mind gets absorbed and lost in divine music. Saint Thyagaraja and other devotees who surrendered their hearts to God through the musical medium are witnesses to this truth.

Hindus worship Goddess Saraswathi to attain enlightenment directly through knowledge and also to rid themselves of sluggishness, lethargy and ignorance.

Here are some aspects and facts associated with Vasant Panchami:

- The day is marked by some as the birthday of Goddess Saraswathi. Hence, the festival is also rightly oriented towards Goddess Saraswathi.
- It is celebrated by some to honour Kamadeva, his wife Rati, and his friend Vasant.
- Girls collect colourful flowers and mango leaves from the garden.
- There is a religious connection of 40 days between Vasant Panchami and Holi.
- In Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and West Bengal, the day is celebrated as Sri Panchami.

SARASWATI PUJA AT THE MANDIR ORGANIZED BY THE SHRI DURGA PUJA SAMITI



Nilesch Nathwani

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former Vice President, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

On the 2nd of February 2006, the devotees of Goddess Saraswati got together at our Mandir to worship Her. She is the favourite deity of all who thirst for knowledge and strive for perfection. Usually dressed in gold, yellow, white and red garments, She sits on a lotus holding the veena and a book of verse.

It is narrated in our scriptures that Goddess Saraswati enabled Lord Brahma to listen to the 'naadabrahmana,' the primordial sound that is the source of all creation. The music from Her celestial veena awakens the power of the sacred monosyllable 'Om.'

Saraswati is divine knowledge personified. She possesses the sacred knowledge of the Vedas and all our scriptures. She remains the sole medium of reaching the Gods and the Absolute through the art of Yoga, as described in our scriptures. She is the Mother of all the arts: dance, music and poetry. She revealed to humanity the power of language and the capacity to write and express one's thoughts. She is wisdom, fortune, intelligence, nourishment, brilliance, contentment, splendour and devotion in their purest forms, as She is also the Goddess of purity and perfection.

Saraswati resides over the organisation and execution of the universal order. The science, craft and technique of things, as well as computers are Her province. The numbers and calculations are Her domain. She can give to us intimate and precise knowledge of subtlety and patience, as well as the accuracy of the intuitive mind. With Her worship we take up the transformation and building of our Divine nature. Her action is laborious and minute and often seems slow and interminable, much to our impatience. But She is persistent, integral and flawless. For the Will in Her works is scrupulous, unsleeping, indefatigable, leaning over us, correcting every little detail, every minute defect. Nothing is too small or trivial for Her. Carelessness and negligence and indolence She abhors. All short cuts, hasty and sloppy work, and all clumsiness, *à peu près* She does not tolerate. False execution and misuse of Her instruments, things undone or half done are offensive and foreign to Her.

She inspires you to be perfect. Those who strive for knowledge and perfection, She grants her boons and blessings. Those who adore Her are made Her instruments of divine work in this world and they alone gain and possess knowledge.

Despite cold Siberian winds blowing over Vienna, when the temperatures in the city dropped much below freezing point, more than sixty worshippers of Goddess Saraswati attended a puja organised by the Shri Durga Puja Samiti.

A young bright and handsome priest dressed up in yellow dhoti and kurta performed the puja. One needs to invoke Goddess Saraswati through sacrifice and worship to achieve perfection. As mentioned in the Upanishads, the sacrifices we perform in the puja have to progress from rituals till we can internalise this process. He invoked Goddess Saraswati in that spirit and all of us who were present at the puja plunged in our own inner world, to bring out in us the values that will govern our divine progress. Some of us had brought our books, musical instruments, and musical CDs which we offered at the lotus feet of Saraswati for Her blessings. We were blessed as an atmosphere of devotion love and of knowledge prevailed in the Mandir that radiated on the faces of all the devotees who then offered Pushpanjali to the adorable Goddess in great faith. Shri Triloki Nath Ahuja gave a short talk on the significance of Basant Panchami and Saraswati Puja, which was followed by a group recital of selected Saraswati mantras and shlokas. He also introduced the second edition of my book 'Kailash Manasarovar: Diary of a Pilgrim,' and my devotional musical CD 'Welcome to the Golden Age.' At the close of the puja, Shri Niranjana Das sang one bhajan in glory of the Goddess Saraswati.

Let us pray that She makes us Her instrument of perfection so that we may receive Her true knowledge. Let one and all of us be chosen to become Her instruments of knowledge.

As the Vice President of the HMA, I take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to the Durga Puja Samiti for having organised this beautiful and blissful occasion.



CELEBRATING MAHASHIVARATRI AT OUR MANDIR



Nilesh Nathwani

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former Vice President, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

The power we name as Lord Shiva is the Supreme celestial power that surrounds existence from eternity. Shankar is His earthly personification of this power. For those who failed to conceive of this metaphysical power, it became necessary to depict Him as the Shiva Linga or as One who sits in perpetual mediation at His abode at Kailash. Ash coloured, Lord Shiva is shown wearing only a loincloth, His neck is blue from holding and storing the poison thrown up during the churning of the cosmic ocean. Mythology recounts that He was the only Lord who could store this poison in suspension (between His mouth and abdomen), a poison so deadly that it threatened to destroy humanity. His hair is arranged in a coil of matted, curly locks adorned with a crescent moon dripping the nectar of eternal life and the river Ganga trickling through His hair. On His forehead, He has a third eye concentrating on the occult inner micro-universe. His third eye, if opened and focused outwards, is capable of burning and destroying the material world. He wears a serpent around His neck. The serpent is a symbol of the medical profession. In pharmacies, the snake is shown as part of an emblem — serpents intertwined around the caduceus, the staff of the Greek god Hermes residing at Mount Cyllene. It is a well-known fact that snake venom, or Lachesis, is a very effective medicine. Kailash is also home to numerous other herbal medicines besides Lachesis. That is why one of Lord Shiva's many names is Vaidyanath, or Lord of Healers.

Often, His four hands are shown carrying symbols. One hand is carrying a trident, the second a damaru (a small drum), the third a tongue of fire. The fourth, an open hand, is a gesture of Divine grace flowing from above. Now, let us briefly examine some of these aspects and draw parallels. The trident symbolises His power. The drum symbolises the rhythm of the universe and also characterises the Big Bang Theory. The tongue of flame on the left hand means that the transcendental nature of the universe is hidden behind the aspirations of men. The open palm of the right hand is a gesture of grace, telling us not to be afraid and reminding us that grace is constantly flowing from above and that there is no need for us to fear the destruction, which is inevitable.

His powers have no bounds. His power moves our universe. Why does He move the Universe? It is His Leela. It is His love for us that is the strength that moves the sun, the moon and the stars. He creates the Universal Order. The ancient rishis visualised this in the form of the dancing Shiva, or Nataraj. The name Nataraj means the King Actor. He is the king actor in the perfect play of our universe. The statue of Nataraj, much worshipped by artists, especially dancers, symbolises the Big Bang Theory of the Universe. It stands as a never surpassed sculpture of Eternity. No pose can better capture in one form the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe with the entire code of existence better than the dancing Shiva. We see Him at His abode in Kailash: Lord Shiva, Goddess Parvati and their two sons, Ganesh and Kartik (Subrahmanya).

In order for us to bring into our waking life a conscious heightening and widening transmutation of our present nature into divine values that would affect the transfiguration of our existence, we have to recognise and make use of this cosmic power. Meditating on this power makes it possible to realise our present existence in time as well as our eternal existence beyond time if we tune ourselves to this cosmic power of Shiva. This is essential if we have the right focus; for at present our entire consciousness and actions are vitiated by an erroneous perspective that prevents us from seeing our relation to this cosmic power. A belief in eternity and immortality is a vital necessity, but that alone is not sufficient to alter the prospect. The true self-knowledge of our being is to remain in His consciousness, which reveals to us the true immortality.

Researchers of esoteric studies have found that Mahashivaratri, meaning the 'Night of the Shiva,' is the most suitable and auspicious day to tune to this cosmic power of Shiva. On Mahashivaratri, the constellation of the heavenly bodies of stars and planets work as a turbo power for us to recognise Him and draw energy from Him. That is why on Mahashivaratri, all ardent devotees of Shiva fast for the day (to avoid any energy being used for digestion) and spend the whole night, either in meditation, japa, kirtan, puja or reading the Shiva Purana.

It is with the purpose of heightening our present being that we, the members of the Vienna Hindu community, gathered at the Lammgasse Mandir on 26 February 2006 to worship Him on this auspicious day of Mahashivaratri and to offer Him a special puja. The inspiration for performing this intense puja of chanting the names of Lord Shiva came to Sonal and Niraj Nathwani to commemorate their second son's first visit to a temple. Niraj is a Brahmin by karma and a true ardent seeker of esoteric knowledge, though he is not able to visit our temple regularly. He is a karma yogi in the true meaning of the word whose service to our Mandir is resolute. He is no procrastinator whenever the Mandir requires his legal advice. He is also a great worshipper of Shiva Shakti as he has named his second son Shivam. Amit, his elder son, is also a very ardent worshipper of Shiva Shakti and, at the young age of five, has understood, when I explained to him, the metaphysical concept of Lord Shiva.

After a short invocation to Lord Ganesha, the puja started with some Shiva bhajans sung by Mr. Niranjan Das, Mr. Bhaskar Dobhal, Mr. Hoshiyarmal and Mrs. Sita Subramaniam. Mrs. Subramaniam rarely sings at our temple, but the devotion in her voice is persistent and her knowledge of raga, taala and sur truly justifies the art of Karnatic style of music in which she sings. Her bhajans created an atmosphere of divine rhythms. His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma and his charming wife Mrs. Meenu Sharma, both great devotees of Lord Shiva, also attended the temple and took an active part in the puja and singing of bhajans. This added more power to the group. Mr. Ravi Joshi (Counsellor at the Indian Embassy in Vienna) and Mrs. Meena Joshi, who have recently arrived from Mumbai, also made their debut visit to the temple on this auspicious day. Mr. Niranjan Das, singing the bhajan 'Jai Shiv Shankar, Jai Gangadhar' in his honey voice in raga Shankra also glorified the mood, as did the backdrop — a striking painting of Kailash, Shiva's abode, that Mr. Das painted — further enhanced the spiritual atmosphere.

After the bhajans, we started the recitation of the Ashtotarshatanamavali, the meditation on the 108 names of Lord Shiva. The lead of this recitation was taken by the HMA President, Shri Triloki Nath Ahuja, whose knowledge of Sanskrit is bewitching and who organised the ritual. The atmosphere was chaste and everyone was meditating on Lord Shiva with intense contemplation. At the end, Rudrashtak was chanted, concluding with Shiva prayers. The atmosphere became vibrant with Lord Shiva's cosmic power. It was seen on faces of all the participants. The group recital of Lord Shiva's mantras, prayers and bhajans dominated the Satsang and indeed was most efficacious.

Then started the special aarti on Lord Shiva. This was again led by Mr. Ahuja who, though not a professional singer, sang so well, engrossed in deep meditation. There was so much devotion in his voice that raga (Desh), sur and taal all sounded perfect and the fidelity rose high in the air, so much so that I felt that Lord Shiva personally descended down to Earth to bless his bhaktas in the temple. The puja ended with the japa of Om Namah Shivai (Lord Shiva, I bow down to you). The Mother of the Shri Aurobindo Ashram, in Pondicherry, once gave a message, 'Où que soit notre corps, si dans notre cœur nous nous concentrons sur le Seigneur, Il est là avec nous' (wherever is our body, if we concentrate in our heart on the Lord, there He is with us). This gospel of the Mother proved correct for this occasion.

Ambassador Sharma and other devotees who had gathered then poured panchamrit on the Shiva Linga as part of the puja. Shri Ahuja welcomed our Ambassador and Mrs. Sharma, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Joshi, and wished everyone a happy Mahashivaratri in his speech. On this occasion, Pritibhoj was offered by Niraj, Sonal, Amit and Shivam Nathwani, and everyone was happy to take the prasada of such intense bhakti.

Normally much effort goes into the making of small results. But on Mahashivaratri the atmosphere was charged with power in our Mandir. There are surely moments in our lives when the spirit moving the breath of the Lord is abroad upon the waters of our being. During this period, even a little effort produces great results and charges us with the power of the Lord. This was such a moment. More than one hundred and twenty devotees attended the puja. Salute to all those who came on this special day, opened themselves to the divine power, and who looked radiant with the light of the Lord.

ॐ नमः शम्भवाय च मयोभवाय च।

नमः शंकराय च मयस्कराय च।

नमः शिवाय च शिवतराय च॥

Om Namah Shambhavya ch Mayobhavya ch

Namah Shankaraya ch Mayaskaraya ch

Namah Shivaya ch Shivataraya ch. (Yajurveda 16/41)

(Meditating...)

We bow down to Lord Shiva, who is magnificent,

Who is joy and bliss incarnate,

Who always gives us Joy, Bliss and is munificent

And who is ever compassionate.



Ambassador and Mrs. Sharma.



Mr. and Mrs. Nathwani.

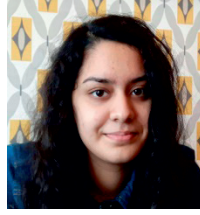


Mr. Niraj Nathwani and Family.



Mr. and Mrs. Joshi.

HOLI: FESTIVAL OF COLOURS



Malak Khan

Grade 12 Student, Vienna International School,
Vienna, Austria

Every year on the first day of Spring,
The Festival of Holi takes place.
People play pranks, they eat and they dance
With colored powder smeared on their face.

The previous night, a bonfire is lit
Neighbors and friends gather round
As they pelt it with chickpeas, corn and grain
And they dance around and around.

The next morning the children wake up excited
To the smell of gujias freshly fried
They eat the sweets, they wear white clothes,
And fill their guns with water inside.

They go out and seek friends on which they dump
Red and green with water blended.
Just like Lord Krishna said to the gopis,
They say 'Don't be offended!'

Meanwhile the adults, also painted and drenched
Enjoy another sort of celebration
As they take long sips from tall glasses of milk
With bhang mixed in the preparation.

It is hard to escape being painted yourself
As you swim through the colorful ocean
So sing, dance, grab a pichkari
And join them in their devotion.



NAVARATRI (नवरात्रि)



Dipl.-Ing. Triloki Nath Ahuja

Member HMA Board of Trustees, Former President, HMA
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Navaratri (Sanskrit: नवरात्रि) is a festival dedicated to the worship of the Goddess Durga. Navaratri is a Sanskrit word which means nine nights; *nava* means nine and *ratrī* means nights. During these nine nights, devotees worship nine aspects of divine femininity of Devi. There are five Navaratri — Vasant, Ashad, Sharad, Paush and Magh. However, Vasant and Sharad Navaratri are the most popular in terms of celebrations and puja rituals.

Vasanta (or Chaitra) Navaratri: Vasanta Navaratri falls in the month of Chaitra (March–April) and is observed during the Shukla Paksha (waxing phase of moon) of the Chaitra month. The beginning of this Navaratri also marks the start of the new year as per the Hindu lunar calendar (Vikrami Samvat). The ninth day of Chaitra Navaratri is celebrated as *Rama Navami* — the birthday of Lord Rama.

The Hindu Mandir Vienna have been organising Bhagwati Jagaran or Mata Ki Chowki during or around this period. In past years, Akhand Ramayana Path (continuous recitation of the entire Ramcharitmanas lasting for 24 hours) was also arranged, with its conclusion on Ramanavami.

Sharad Navaratri: This is the most significant Navaratri in terms of celebrations and popularity. It is also called Maha Navaratri (the Great Navaratri) and celebrated in the ‘pratipada’ (first day) of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Ashvini (September–October), which marks the beginning of winter (Sharad) season. Durga Puja is the most popular celebration during Sharad Navaratri, celebrated most notably by Bengalis around the world. In Vienna, the Sri Durga Puja Samiti has been organising pujas in the HMA premises for the past several years during this period. Sharad Navratri culminates in celebrations of Dussehra or ‘Vijayadashmi’ on the tenth day. Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated 20 days after Dussehra.

Many devotees fast during this period either on all nine days or, at least, on Ashtami (eighth Navaratri). It is also customary among the devotees to do Kanya Puja on Ashtami on one of the Navaratri. The devotees usually remain vegetarian and refrain from consuming alcohol and tobacco. In North India, many devotees visit one of the Shakti shrines like Vaishnodevi, Jwaladevi, Shakumbhari Devi, etc.

Spiritually, these are the best times to worship Maa Shakti (the feminine power) — the Divine Mother. Navaratri is divided into sets of three days. On first set of three days, Durga or Goddess of Energy is worshipped for the destruction of negativity. The next three days are devoted to Lakshmi (preservation) — the Goddess of wealth, beauty and prosperity. The last three days are devoted to Saraswati (creativity) — the Goddess of knowledge, wisdom and fine arts. Each day of Navaratri is also dedicated to nine different manifestations of Mother Durga, known as ‘Navadurga.’

The divine Mother’s grace is boundless and easily accessible during Navaratri. Her mercy is unlimited. Her knowledge is infinite. Her power is immeasurable. Her glory is ineffable. Her splendor is indescribable. She gives you Bhukti — the material prosperity as well as Mukti — liberation. Navaratri therefore offers a unique time for seekers of individual Sadhana. Meditating upon the divine Mother’s names with ‘bee’ mantras is one of the potent ways to worship her. This meditation helps devotees to heal by removing the deep-rooted energy blockages, which in turn solves their life problems.

Navadurga Mantras

1. First Day Sadhana: Sri Devi Shailputri. “Om Hreem Shreem Shailputri Durgaaye namaha Om Hreem Dum Durgaaye namaha”
ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं शैलपुत्री दुर्गायै नमः ॐ ह्रीं दुं दुर्गायै नमः
2. Second Day Sadhana: Sri Devi Brahmcharî
“Om Hreem Shreem Brahmcharî Durgaaye namaha Om Hreem Dum Durgaaye namaha”
ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं ब्रह्मचारिणी दुर्गायै नमः ॐ ह्रीं दुं दुर्गायै नमः
3. Third Day Sadhana: Sri Devi Chandraghanta
“Om Hreem Shreem Chandraghanta Durgaaye namaha Om Hreem Dum Durgaaye namaha”
ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं चंद्रघंटा दुर्गायै नमः ॐ ह्रीं दुं दुर्गायै नमः
4. Fourth Day Sadhana: Sri Devi Kushmanda
“Om Hreem Shreem Kushmanda Durgaaye namaha Om Hreem Dum Durgaaye namaha”
ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं कुष्मांडा दुर्गायै नमः ॐ ह्रीं दुं दुर्गायै नमः
5. Fifth Day Sadhana: Sri Devi Skandamata
“Om Hreem Shreem Skandamata Durgaaye namaha Om Hreem Dum Durgaaye namaha”
ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं स्कंदमाता दुर्गायै नमः ॐ ह्रीं दुं दुर्गायै नमः
6. Sixth Day Sadhana: Sri Devi Katyayani
“Om Hreem Shreem Katyayani Durgaaye namaha Om Hreem Dum Durgaaye namaha”
ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं कात्यायनी दुर्गायै नमः ॐ ह्रीं दुं दुर्गायै नमः

7. Seventh Day Sadhana: Sri Devi Kalratri
“Om Hreem Shreem Kalratri Durgaaye namaha Om Hreem Dum Durgaaye namaha”
ॐ ह्रीं श्री कालरात्रि दुर्गायै नमः ॐ ह्रीं दुं दुर्गायै नमः
8. Eighth Day Sadhan: Sri Devi Mahagauri
“Om Hreem Shreem Mahagauri Durgaaye namaha Om Hreem Dum Durgaaye namaha”
ॐ ह्रीं श्री महागौरी दुर्गायै नमः ॐ ह्रीं दुं दुर्गायै नमः
9. Ninth Day Sadhana: Sri Devi Siddhidatri
“Om Hreem Shreem Siddhidatri Durgaaye namaha Om Hreem Dum Durgaaye namaha”
ॐ ह्रीं श्री सिद्धिदात्री दुर्गायै नमः ॐ ह्रीं दुं दुर्गायै नमः

The divine Mother manifests as the Trinity of Goddesses (Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati) and as Navadurga, showers Her blessings upon Her devotees who pray to Her sincerely and with purity during this auspicious period and bestows upon them happiness, health, wealth, peace and prosperity.



AKHAND RAMAYAN PAATH अखंड रामायण पाठ



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Rajesh Mehta¹

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“As long as the mountains stand and the rivers flow, so long shall the Ramayana be cherished among men and women and save them from sins.”

The Ramayana, or Rāmāyaṇa (Sanskrit: रामायणम्, Rāmāyaṇam), is one of the two great Hindu epics, the other being the Mahabharata. Comprising 24,000 slokas, the Ramayana is considered the Adi Kavya, the first ever epic poem written. It forms an important part of the Hindu literature (Smṛti). The Ramayana is the story of the life of Lord Rama, the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Lord Rama is also known as “Maryada Purushottam,” which literally means supreme man, a paragon of virtue, and who has been described in the Ramayana as an example of truth and morality: an ideal son, an ideal husband and an ideal king.

The Ramayana explores human values, ethics, morality and the concept of dharma and propagates ideals for individual, social, political and cultural values. It inspires all to lead a noble human life. It can be said that the Ramayana in itself contains and explains the essence of the Vedas in a simplified manner.

¹ The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Whereas the original Ramayana was written by Sage Valmiki in the Sanskrit language, the Shri Ramcharitmanas (also popularly known as Shri Ramayana) was written in Awadhi by Shri Goswami Tulsidas, a Hindu poet-saint, reformer and philosopher from the 16th century. Tulsidas is renowned for his staunch devotion to God Rama. Shri Ramcharitmanas consists of seven kandas (literally chapters or episodes). There are a total of 10,902 verses in the Shri Ramcharitmanas.

Both the Ramayana and the Shri Ramcharitmanas are masterpieces of poetic revelation and speech. In particular, the latter is considered to be a brilliant example of poetic alliteration. When the Shri Ramacharitmanas is studied as a spiritual book it provides practical values from the Vedas for living and to further the process of evolution on Earth. It helps the practical development and organisation of life consciously, and with it the building of a strong and successful structure of society shaped to fulfil the daily issues of human existence. It provides guidance in organising the religious, ethical social order and the discipline so that the evolution of the soul of man leads to perfection and the attainment of spiritual freedom.

The Akhand Ramayan Paath (or Parayana) is a non-stop ceremonial recitation of the entire Ramayana which takes approximately 24 hours to complete. Both holy reading as well as listening are considered to be aradhana, or an act of worship of the Supreme. Though the Paath can be done throughout the year, the festivals of Ramnavami — the birthday of Lord Rama — or Hanuman Jayanti are considered to be the best days for conducting Akhand Ramayan Paath. If it is not possible to read the entire Ramayana continuously during these festive days, then at least the Sundarkand, which sings the praises of Lord Rama, should be read or heard. It is believed to help achieve all that is good and auspicious, both worldly and spiritual. Whoever hears it with devotion will be able to cross the ocean of life:

*“Sakal sumangal daayak raghunaayaka gun gaan
saadar sunabin te tarabin bhava sindhu bina jalajaan”*
सकल सुमंगल दायक रघुनायक गुन गान।
सादर सुनहिं ते तरहिं भव सिंधु बिना जलजान॥

The Akhand Ramayan Paath is considered to be highly auspicious and bestows innumerable benefits upon reciters, listeners and the place of recitation. Some of them are listed below:

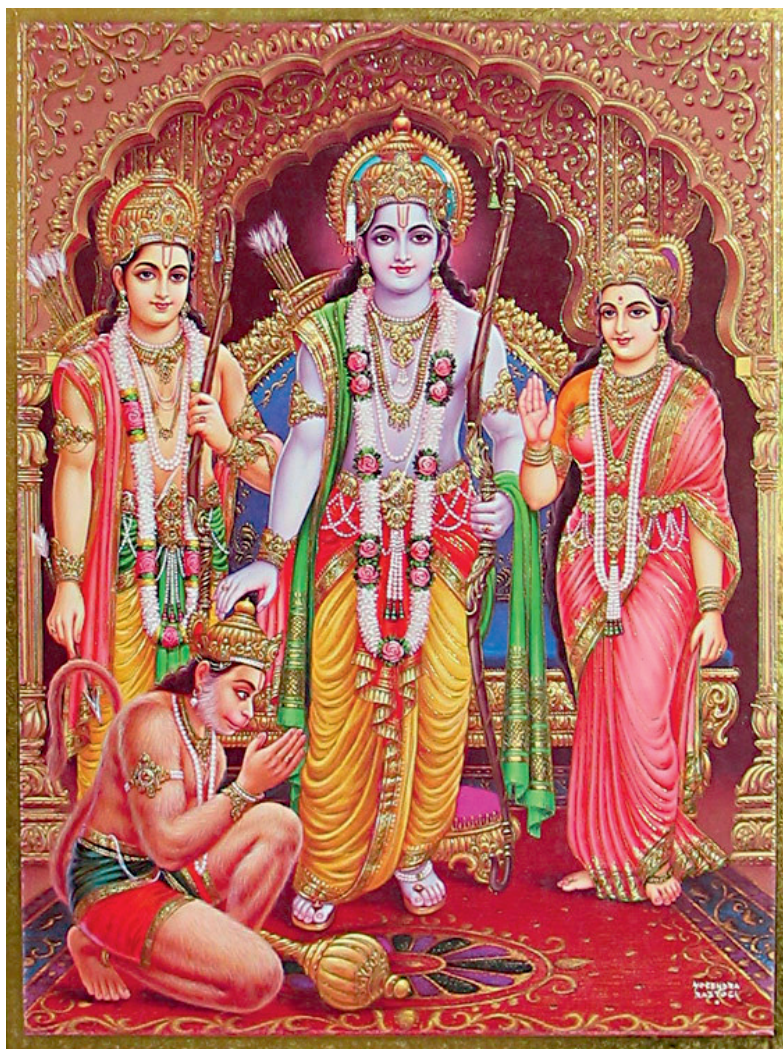
- Removes hurdles, wards off negative energies and creates a very pious and divine atmosphere at the place of recitation.
- Induces courage, truth and righteousness among readers and listeners.
- Invokes the blessings of Lord Rama and Shri Hanuman.
- It is considered auspicious for beginning any new venture, e.g. starting of a business, entering a new house (Griha Pravesh), birth of a child, marriage ceremony, etc.
- It provides peace, prosperity and happiness in the family and promotes healthy relationships.
- It prevents any unexpected harm and danger, especially related to health.

At the Hindu Mandir, we were blessed to be able to organise the Akhand Ramayan Paath for some years in succession (2004–2006). Though many of us had the opportunity to be a part of this divine venture back at home, it was a challenging and daunting task to organise such an event in Vienna, primarily due to the lack of sufficient number of reciters and enthusiasts, particularly during the night.

Some of us had the opportunity to participate in a recitation arranged by Mrs. Uma Tiwari, wife of the Indian Ambassador at the time, H.E. Shri Yogesh M. Tiwari, at the residence of the Ambassador. Seeing Mrs. Meenu Sharma and some others reciting the Ramayan so fluently, we gathered courage and decided to undertake this daunting task.

The Hindu Mandir's Akhand Ramayan Paath was arranged during Chaitra Navratri so that its completion would coincide with Ramanavami celebrations. It was a scene to behold as we approached the bhog (end of the recitation). The temple hall was full of devotees and all available copies of Shri Ramcharitmanas were being read simultaneously. Many dignitaries like H.E. Ambassador Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma, Mrs. Meenu Sharma, and (the late) Mr. Hemant Karkare participated in the recitation. It charged the temple atmosphere with devotion, divinity and spirituality. The Paath concluded with Ramayana Aarti, Ramdhun, Hanuman Chalisa, Ram Ashtotram and bhajans.

The epic text of the Ramayana is filled with constant lessons, teachings and reminders, which guides the readers to be on the righteous path of Dharma and Karma. The modern day man needs to follow its teachings in order to overcome the ills prevalent in the society. We sincerely hope that the present HMA Executive Committee and devotees will revive this holy recitation for the material and spiritual benefit of one and all.



THE GODDESS GAYATRI AND HER MANTRA

(The Source - The Epic Devayana)



Seema Kalia

Former Cultural Coordinator, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

The Vedas came from the source of Brahman, seen as cosmic Truth or light — called Aditya — that holds the complete memory of the creation. With this manifestation, a great power came as the ‘metre’ (chhanda) having the power of realisation. This was worshipped by the Rishis.

The Rishis saw the movement of the original verse known as Gayatri as having three padas, or lines, of eight syllables.

Au is for Brahma (the creator), **ou** for Vishnu (the protector) and **m** for Rudra (the destroyer). The nasal sound, the Anuswara, continues to flow even after the completion of the sound that manifests the process of creation.

The process of creation occurs with the light of Brahman, continues with the power of Vishnu, dissolves by the power of Rudra and again arises through the power of Pingal (on the Anuswara, which is the continuation of the nasal sound).

First, there is the encircling movement of these three letters (**au**, **ou**, and **m**) twice. On turning the third time, it will stop at the third letter **m** to create a pada of Gayatri of eight letters.

These eight letters, when repeated three times, will create three padas. Gayatri exists on the **aum**. The Rishis say that the conscious force Gayatri is the mother of the Vedas as she is the great power that manifests them. Thus, three turns of eight letters create the enlightened Gayatri chhanda.

Gayatri is the source of the Vedas. She is supreme, omnipresent, and is the great power that manifests all the other rhythms and metres. She is also known as Maheshwari.

The Rishis, who always meditate on the Gayatri mantra, have written that to them the power behind these three padas of verse of eight letters appears in three different colours and shapes at different times of the day.

Gayatri is first seen ablaze with the dawn — red colour — when immersed in the meditation of creation, giving the rhyme and the rhythm. Meditating on the universe in the morning, She manifests in red having four hands, seated on a swan. She is called Brahmani, the power of Brahma, the Creator.

She awakens the universe, holding in her hands clear water and grass. She sprays water over the unconscious human being in sleep, and leads him to consciousness, making him aware of his own force and the power inherent in him. In this way, She provides movement and the rhythm of poetry.

In her second form she appears dazzling in her golden colour, holding the thread of work and rhythm, manifesting with love and unity. Meditating at noon, she appears in golden colour with four hands, seated on Garuda (the eagle). In this form, she is named Vaishnavi, the power of Vishnu. She holds in her hands a conch (shankha), a wheel (chakra), a club (gada) and a lotus (padma). She nurtures and maintains the universe with a thread of divine love, pure joy (ananda) and the power of unity.

In the evening, she looks radiantly beautiful in a pure dusky shade, manifesting as the power of destruction. She has the power to destroy creation and plunge the soul into an unconscious state. Meditating in the evening, she appears to have a smoky sombre colour with four hands and is seen seated on the white bull. In this form she is the power of Maheshwara and is called Maheshwari.

In her hands, she holds the javelin to destroy evil forces and demons, by removing humanity's infatuation with worldly objects and in gratification through sensual pleasures. In this way, she spreads profound peace on earth.

Such are the powers of the Goddess Gayatri. The Gayatri Devi who is the giver of purity, through whose power the Vedas are uttered from the mouth of the Brahman. The Gayatri Devi upon whom one meditates.



108 RECITALS OF THE GAYATRI MANTRA AT OUR MANDIR



Nilesh Nathwani

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former Vice President, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts remains the same even today. It is also the highest which he can envisage. His desire is to know the power that manifests this universe and to witness the secrets of our inner being. What is this immense force behind this universe, who is the Mother of Gods? This knowledge cannot be realised with the faculties of our body alone. Our ancient Rishis realised that empirical knowledge can be deceptive. The air that surrounds us can neither be seen nor smelt, yet still it exists. All methods of knowledge are marginal to realise the source of this universe, the nature of ultimate power. That is why when the great Buddha was asked the question ‘What is the nature of Reality?’, He answered with silence, putting a finger on his lips. He refused to formulate it in words, knowing that speech would limit the limitless instantly. This power can only be realised through identification. Knowledge by identity is the highest source of knowledge. That is why a dogmatic religious tradition, though externalised into more or less sterile forms, cannot be experienced. Rationalists of all times fail to understand this. Neither religion nor life itself is or has been, or will ever be a matter of reason alone. One has to experience the ultimate from the depth of the psyche and its rational elements are only a part of its total content.

Our ancient Rishis found a simple way to this divine knowledge — the Gayatri mantra. This mantra is the sacred utterance of words or verses that have mystical or spiritual efficacy. They produce a cosmos by their magical sound effect, called ‘Aksharabrahman.’ The Gayatri mantra is an invocation to the Mother of Gods Savitur — the Creator. It is an invocation of the Tat — the absolute, transcendent containing all, limited by nothing. Gayatri is Annapurna, the Mother power-sustaining force that animates all life. It is through Gayatri that we recognise the unity that underlines the multiplicity of this universe.

Now let us examine the ‘surface’ meaning of the mantra. The Gayatri Mantra is attributed to the great sage and poet Vishwamitra:

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः
तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं
भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि
धियो योनः प्रचोदयात् ।

Om Bhur Bhuvaha Swaha
Tat¹ Savitur² Varennyam
Bhargo Devasya Dheemahee
Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayaat
(Let us meditate)
On the most excellent Light
Of the Divine Truth
That it may impel our minds
Without reserve.

Devayan, an epic written by Dr. Hajari in Bengali, describes Gayatri thus. Gayatri is first seen ablaze with the dawn — red colour — when immersed in the meditation of the creation, giving the rhyme and the rhythm. Meditating on the universe in the morning, the Goddess Gayatri manifests in red colour with four hands, seated on a swan. She is called Brahmani, the power of Brahma, the creator. She awakens the universe, while holding in her hands clear water and grass. She sprays water over the unconscious human being in sleep, and leads him to consciousness, making him aware of his own force and the power inherent in him, in this way providing the movement and rhythm of poetry. In her second form, she is dazzling in her golden colour, holding the thread of work and rhythm, manifesting with love and unity. Meditating at noon, she appears in a golden colour with four hands, seated on the Garuda (the eagle). In this form, she is named Vaishnavi, being the power of Vishnu. She holds in her hands a conch (shankha), a wheel (chakra), a club (gada) and a lotus (padma). She nurtures and maintains the universe with a thread of divine love, pure joy (ananda) and power of unity. In the evening, she looks radiantly beautiful in a pure dusky shade and she manifests as the power of destruction. She has the power to destroy creation and to plunge the soul into an unconscious state. Meditating in the evening, she appears to have a smoky, sombre colour with four hands and is seen seated on the white bull. In this form, she is the power of Maheshwara and is called Maheshwari. In her hands, she holds the javelin to destroy the evil forces and the demons — by removing the world's delusion that makes humanity believe in the reality of worldly objects and in the gratification of sensual pleasures. In this way, she spreads profound peace on Earth.

Such are the powers of the Goddess Gayatri. On that Gayatri Devi, who is the giver of purity, through whose power the Vedas are uttered from the mouth of the Brahman, on that Gayatri Devi that one meditates.

The recitation of the Gayatri Mantra 108 was performed on 27 November 2005 at our Mandir with great éclat for all those who came to peep into their own inner world and draw its light into the world. The inspiration for performing this puja came to Dr. Pradeep and Mrs. Anupama Monga and their mother, all ardent seekers of knowledge and truth. Here is a family that regularly visits our temple. Mr. Monga's seva for

¹ Tat-Savitur — The absolute, transcendent containing all, limited by nothing.

² The epistemological meaning of Savitur is derived from the word 'Su,' meaning in Sanskrit to give birth. Savitur — The Creator, here seen as the Mother Force.

the Mandir, especially in helping to draft the new HMA constitution, should be considered of the highest level. His family, including his daughter Malvika, were present for the puja. After a short Sri Ganesha prayer sung by me, the puja started. A photo of the five faces of Gayatri, called Panchamukhi, also having three eyes, adorned the Mandir altar. Mr. Triloki Nath Ahuja, the President, invoked the Gayatri Mata with a special prayer recited slowly in clean and clearly pronounced Sanskrit so that the personification of such a great universal power would come and reside in our temple. A Prāṇayām mantra was then recited with cyclic deep breathing to invoke the latent powers of our own bodies. This created an instant link of the personified Gayatri Mata present on the altar of the Mandir with our deep psychic being. Then started 108 recitations of the Gayatri Mantra with the sole purpose of realising the Divine Power.

I sat with my eyes closed, with my body, mind and soul concentrating on a huge ball of light from where walked out all the gods and goddesses. We were all concentrating on the most excellent Light of the Mother of the Universe, the Divine Truth. The mystical, subjective manifestation of Brahman through repetitive chanting of the mantra with the correct breathing technique and the right phonic utterances began. The sacred word combination in the Gayatri meter (chhanda), the non-stop chanting of the Gayatri Mantra, was an invocation to the Mother of Gods, Savitur — the Creator. It is an invocation of the absolute, the transcendent, limited by nothing. An atmosphere of magic prevailed. All were absorbed in the light that each and every individual received in the Mandir. The complete mala (rosary) of 108 recitations brought the light nearer to us.

The recitation ended with special slokas of visarjan (taking leave of Gayatri Mata), followed by a Mangal Kamana (well-being wish for everyone) and shanti prayers. By the end, everyone present was reflecting the light that we aspired for. In meditation, I saw my own Guru Sri Aurobindo walking towards the Earth from the great fireball of the Absolute.

After a few bhajans on Ma Shakti, led by our inimitable Cultural Coordinator Shri Niranjana Das, an aarti was performed. The puja that purified the minds of all the devotees in the Mandir ended with the distribution of Prashad organised by Family Monga. The sacred 108 recitals of the Gayatri Mantra indeed has the spiritual efficacy attributed to it.



GURU PURNIMA



Dipl.-Ing. Triloki Nath Ahuja

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former
President, HMA,
Vienna, Austria



Nilesh Nathwani

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former
Vice-President, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

Guru Purnima is the first full moon after the summer solstice, during the Ashadh month — on 9 July in 2017 and on 27 July in 2018. It is considered the most important full moon of the year as it represents a time for rapid material and spiritual transformation.

Origin of Guru Purnima

Guru Veda Vyasa wrote all the four Vedas that were recited by the Lord Brahma. He also wrote several Puranas and the Mahabharata. He is regarded as the key player responsible for disseminating ancient wisdom to humanity. Every human being in this world is therefore indebted to him for his prodigious work. From those times, a day was dedicated towards the Gurus to pay one's respect, express gratitude and reconnect to the guru. This day is called Guru Purnima, or Vyasa Purnima.

Who is a Guru?

The word guru means remover of darkness (in Sanskrit, 'Gu' means darkness, 'ru' means remover). Guru, therefore, is the one who removes the darkness of ignorance and leads the disciple towards the path of enlightenment. Traditionally, the guru is considered as an embodiment of the Hindu Trinity, namely Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Thus, Guru Purnima is the day of eradicating ignorance and illuminating our lives with knowledge.

The Saptarishis: The Seven Great Universal Teachers

Guru Purnima is also the day when Lord Shiva became the first guru after he began teaching yoga to his disciples, the Saptarishis, the seven great sages or seers of Hindu tradition. The Saptarishis (Angirasa, Atri, Bhrigu, Gautama, Marichi, Pulastya and Vasishta) are venerated masters who dedicated themselves completely to the pursuit of inner bliss and divine light. They are the primeval teachers — teachers of the entire universe who continue to guide humanity to the secrets of life and universe. They are known as 'seers' as they possessed perfect knowledge about the past, present and future of humanity. They guide us to acquire the finest qualities, such as unconditional love, faith, bliss and forgiveness. On the auspicious day of Guru Purnima, the grace from these universal Masters is easily accessible to all those who meditate upon them.

Guru Purnima in Other Faiths

This day is widely celebrated by Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists. Buddhists celebrate it in honour of Lord Gautama Buddha. It is believed that on this day Buddha gave his first oration, called Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, to five monks at Sarnath. According to the Jains, Lord Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara, made Indrabhuti Gautam, a Ganadhara, as his disciple and became a guru.

Glorification of Guru

The Guru Gita (Songs of the Guru) is dedicated to the glorification of Guru. The Guru Gita is considered to have been authored by Sage Vyasa and its text describes a conversation between Lord Shiva and his wife Parvati, in which she asks him to teach her about the Guru and liberation.

There are several versions and adaptations of the Guru Gita, varying from around 100 to over 400 verses. It is considered indispensable text by all traditional religious, spiritual institutions, ashrams, maths, etc., and selected verses form a part of their daily prayers. The following verse, which equates a true Guru with God, is one of the most commonly sung verse:

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः।

गुरुःसाक्षात् परब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः॥

Gururbrahma gururvishnuh gururdevo maheshwarah

Guruhsakshat parabrahma tasmai shrigurave namah

Meaning: Guru himself is the creator (Brahma), sustainer (Vishnu) and the destroyer (Shiva). He is verily the very transcendental divinity (Supreme God) — the timeless life-principle, which is the very essence of the Creator. My reverential salutations to that glorious teacher.

There is a popular doha couplet verse of saint poet Kabir in which he sings the glory of Guru, without whose help one cannot cross this ocean of worldly life:

गुरु गोबिन्द दोउ खडे काके लागूँ पाँय।

बलिहारी गुरु आपने गोबिन्द दियो बताय॥

Guru Govind dono khade kaake laagoon paany

Balihari Guru aapkne Govind diyo bataay. [Sant Kabir]

Meaning: If both Guru and God in the form of Govind were to appear at the door, whose feet will I worship first?" He answers: "It has to be the Guru's feet first, because without him, how would I have recognized (known) God?"

Conclusion

Guru Purnima is about worshipping your teachers, masters, mentors and universal gurus, and showing gratitude towards them for their hard work in teaching us, removing ignorance and providing knowledge. The day is celebrated as a symbol of guru-shishya tradition. Students of Indian classical music and dance also celebrate the day with much fervor.

Don't miss the opportunity to repay a tribute and offer your gratitude to your gurus whose grace is abundant on this day. May the divine light of the guru remove all darkness of ignorance from our life and keep guiding us to success in all aspects of a noble life.

JANMASHTAMI CELEBRATIONS IN OUR TEMPLE



Nilesch Nathwani

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former Vice President, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

Sri Krishna Janma (birthday) is always celebrated in our temple with great élat befitting such a great day. Sri Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, is also the Supreme God in His own right as He is considered the Poorna Avtar — Incarnation of Complete Perfection. As described in the Mahabharata and Bhagavatha Purana, the dark son of Vasudeva and Devaki was carried out from the jail where he was born in absolute secrecy. He thus escaped from the evil clutches of Kansa, his uncle and the wicked king of Mathura. He was a child with supernatural powers. He destroyed many demons terrorising the vicinity of Gokul. He had his childhood drenched in the love of Yashoda and Nanda of Gokul, his adoptive parents. The Balakrishna, or child Krishna, was adored for the mischievous pranks he played on his friends and the Gopis, his young female playmates. Established as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu in his own lifetime, Lord Krishna became the focus of Bhakti yoga, or the union of man with God through devotion, as described in the Bhagavad Gita. He is the Narayana and mankind the Gopis. Thus, Lord Krishna's youthful dalliances with the Gopis are symbolic of the loving interplay between God and the human soul and it is the core of the path of Bhakti that leads to a complete divine union between man and God.

On the day of Janmashtami, devotees keep a vigil and fast until midnight. At the stroke of midnight, the image of Krishna is bathed in water and milk. He is dressed in festive new clothes and ornaments and the birth celebrations start with rhythms of music and dance and distribution of sweets. A baby Krishna image is placed in a cradle and rocked by all the devotees at many temples and homes that are decorated with sweet, fragrant, colourful flowers and banana leaves. An atmosphere of Mathura is created where the Lord was born, and transported over the River Jamuna to Gokul to safety. In India, pots of milk are hung from tall poles in the streets, and men form pyramids to reach and break these pots. This is in imitation of Lord Krishna's childhood play with His cowherd friends when they stole the butter hung out of reach by their mothers. But it leaves a message for mankind. To reach these pots hung high is not easy and full of risks. The symbolic message is, have your goals high for God's grace is always there to help you reach them.

Lord Krishna is the complete and perfect (poorna) Avatar of Vishnu and His teachings in the Bhagavad Gita form the core of the Vedantic philosophy of Hinduism.

On this joyous occasion of Janmashtami, there is always an atmosphere of festivity, joy and divine love that envelop our celebrations in our Mandir. Loving songs in praise of Lord Krishna are sung and a cradle with the child image of Lord Krishna is rocked. All those who join the celebrations in our Mandir enrich themselves with the love of Lord Krishna, who never fails us as a friend, lover, musician and our Lord.



Celebration of Krishna Janmashtami at the Hindu Mandir.



The Divine Radha–Krishna.

SHREE SHREE DURGA PUJA IN VIENNA



Barun Roy

Durga Puja Samiti Vienna,
Vienna, Austria

Durga Puja, or ‘Durgoutsav,’ is an annual Hindu festival celebrated in the Autumn. The festival marks the victory of Goddess Durga over the evil buffalo demon Mahisasura, which epitomizes the victory of good over evil. It is celebrated as ‘Navarati’ in the Hindu community and ‘Durga Puja’ in the Bengali community. It ends with the grand ‘Dussehra’ or ‘Vijayadashami’ celebrations.

Durga Puja’s symbolism of the victory of good over evil is universal in its appeal. The Mother Goddess Durga is worshipped, along with her two sons Ganesha and Kartika and two daughters Lakshmi and Saraswati all of whom symbolize power, wealth, knowledge, devotion and courage.

Mythology of Durga Puja

To counter the atrocities of the demon king Mahisasura, the Gods collected all their individual powers and created the most powerful deity (Shakti), the Goddess Durga with ten hands (each with a different weapon). The battle lasted for nine days. On the eighth day, Aashtami, Mahisasura surrendered and eventually was killed.

According to the ancient Indian epic the Ramayana, Lord Ram a devoted worshiper, performed Durga Puja to get blessings and power from the Gods. The day when he killed Ravana is thus celebrated as Dussehra, which coincides with the tenth day of Durga puja —Vijayadashami (Victory day).

Durga puja encapsulates the spirit and culture of Bengalis all over the world. The puja is a time of renewal of spirituality. Parents, children, friends, relatives, strangers, young and old, are full of the spirit of fellowship and goodwill. Light transforms darkness, hope overcomes despair, and good conquers evil — these are the virtues of Durga Puja

Durga Puja: Culture

The rituals involved in conducting Durga Puja require great effort. Over the years, the Durga Puja has evolved from a personal celebration to a community celebration (Sarbojanin Puja), thereby integrating society. The five-day celebration is marked with feasting, cultural events, social gathering and fun. People from all religions and classes participate with an open mind, keeping alive the traditions and culture in this fast changing world.

Durga Puja in Vienna

The small Bengali Hindu community of Vienna has been celebrating Durga Puja since 2001 at the Hindu Mandir Association premises on Lammgasse.



The Altar for the Durga Puja at the Hindu Mandir Vienna.

The puja is organized by the Durga Puja Samiti Vienna and has been generously supported by the Indian Embassy, Hindu Mandir Association and the Indian community living in Vienna. Over the years, a steady rise in the number of visitors from various part of Austria and neighbouring countries has been noticed. The logo of the samiti is shown below.



The idols were created by the famous Indian artist Amar Ghosh of Kumartuli, Kolkata. They are made of fibreglass.



Dussehra and Vijayadashami

The tenth (last) day of Durga Puja is special, and is known as Vijaydashami, or Victory Day. This day is of particular significance for ladies. They perform aarti to the Goddess Durga, sprinkle sindoor, dance, sing and eat tasty Indian food. These activities bring to an end the Durga Puja, which is concluded with the song: 'Aashche bochor aabar hobe, maa ke aabar aashte hobe,' Next year we will have again, mother Goddess you have to come again.

The Durga Puja Samiti Vienna welcomes all devotees of Goddess Durga to visit the Hindu Mandir during Durga Puja and enjoy evenings full of culture, traditions, bhakti and fun.



Durga Puja at the Hindu Mandir Vienna, Lammgasse.



Members of the Durga Puja Samiti Vienna.

THE HMA's DIWALI MELA: CELEBRATION OF THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



Bhaskar Dobhal

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former General Secretary, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

The HMA has been conducting the “Diwali Mela” function every year for the past 25 years. In more recent years, the Mela has been held annually in Lugner City, and we are very thankful to Ing. Richard Lugner for allowing us to hold our grand multicultural function on such a large scale at Lugner City.

Diwali is a festival that, legend says, began with the triumphant return of Lord Rama to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile and defeating the dark forces represented by Ravana. As a celebration of the victory of divinity and light over darkness, it is characterized by the lighting of lamps, and by the brightly coloured clothes that everyone wears.

The idea for the Diwali Mela function originated with the founding members of the HMA and its first Executive Committee (EC) members as a way to raise funds for building a beautiful temple in Vienna. Over the years it has grown to be one of the largest, if not the largest, gatherings of Indians and Austro-Indians in Vienna. The Indian Ambassador to Austria has traditionally been the chief guest, with the relevant District heads, Austrian Federal Government officials, political luminaries and leaders of various religious bodies being the other VIP guests.

To encourage people from all sections of society to attend the Mela, the EC decided from the very beginning not to charge an admission fee. The costs of organizing and running the Mela have thus been covered over the years by funds collected from sponsors, generous donations from devotees, the sale of a variety of tasty Indian food items, including sweets, and from the sale of Tombola tickets. An article of faith for the HMA was that all proceeds from the Mela were to be allocated to the Mandir Construction Fund. As a result, the emphasis has always been on soliciting donations for the Mela.

The aim of the HMA from the beginning was to present a high quality, dignified and colourful cultural and religious programme that would appeal to people of all ages and backgrounds. The HMA EC assigned the responsibility for organizing and conducting the Mela to the Cultural Coordinator, who would be assisted by subcommittees dealing with the Tombola and food preparation. Mr. Niranjana Das was the first HMA Cultural Coordinator, serving in that position for many, many years. He succeeded brilliantly in producing a superb

cultural extravaganza every year. Skilfully interweaving Indian folk dances, classical dances like Bharatanatyam, Kathak and Odissi, classical music and vocals as well as Punjabi Bhangra, Bollywood songs and dances, Mr. Das organized memorable functions at the Pfarre Akkonplatz, the Haus der Begegnung and Lugner City that quickly became the talk of the town. This distinguished record was ably maintained by his successors as Cultural Coordinators, Mr. Satish Gandhi, Mr. Bhaskar Dobhal and Ms. Seema Kalia.

Throughout the day, a large variety of delicious Indian food was on sale, including spicy items like chole batura, vegetable curry and samosas, sweets, soft drinks, mango lassi, tea and coffee.

A membership table was also set up during the function to sell Tombola tickets, elicit donations and sign up new members to the HMA.

The end of the cultural function was the occasion for the Tombola drawing which, through the generosity of our sponsors, always included two or more round trip air tickets to India and other destinations, as well as many other attractive prizes. Our Tombola ticket sales were massive, thanks to the energetic promotional efforts of our two long serving Vice-Presidents Mr. Satish Aggarwal and Mr. Yudhvair Jairath.

Over the years, attendance at the Diwali Mela has increased dramatically, running often into five figures, making it the premier Indian cultural event in Vienna. The HMA is grateful to the large number of selfless volunteers who have worked tirelessly every year to organize and conduct this signature event.

From the beginning, the HMA EC has considered the Mela to be its flagship event, a vehicle for encouraging the involvement of all members of our community, for collecting funds for our temple project, and for raising the awareness of Hinduism and our Bharatiya culture among local Austrians. From this perspective, the Hindu Mandir Association's annual Diwali Mela has been an unqualified success.



Invocation Song at the Diwali Mela 2016.



View of the Audience at the Diwali Mela 2016. Sitting in the Front Row, from Left to Right: the Owner of Lugner City Dipl.-Ing. Mr. R. Lugner; Dr. Suhel Azaz Khan (Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of India); Mr. Mayank Sharma (Counsellor, Embassy of India); Mr. Triloki Nath Ahuja (former President, HMA); and Mrs. Amita Lugger (Co-Cultural Coordinator, HMA).

SHUBH DEEPAVALI: FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



Malak Khan

Grade 12 Student, Vienna International School

Vienna, Austria

Once, a long time ago, so it is said
There lived the King Rama who greatly led

They light up diyas and hang strings of light
They set off fireworks to liven the night.

An army to the depths of Ravan's land,
To save Queen Sita from his evil hand.

They sing and they dance to songs new and old.
They craft their rangolis in colors bold.

On his return to Ayodhya, his home,
He saw lights lining each tower and dome.

The lights, like stars that stepped down from the sky,
Stretch endlessly on the buildings up high,

They celebrated his wonderful win
As the triumph of all good over sin.

Recalling the victory: light over dark,
And bringing joy to people in each spark.

And thus, today, every year on that day
Indians gather to rejoice and to pray.



CONDUCTING LAKSHMI PUJA IN OUR MANDIR FOR DIWALI



Nilesh Nathwani

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former Vice President, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

Celebrating Diwali is one of the highlights of the year for Hindus all over the world. At the Hindu Mandir in Vienna, Diwali has been celebrated every year with pomp, not only with an elaborate puja at the Mandir, but also with a huge cultural function attracting very large crowds.

Diwali commemorates the return of Lord Rama (avatar of Lord Vishnu) to Ayodhya. It was on Diwali day that He was crowned as the king of Ayodhya after 14 years of exile and after winning the epic war against Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. Lord Rama and Sita (Goddess Lakshmi) were acknowledged as the Emperor and Empress, the divine rulers of India. By order of the royal families of Ayodhya and Mithila, the kingdom of which Goddess Sita was princess, the cities and far-flung boundaries of these realms were lit up with rows of lamps. That is why Diwali, or Deepavali, is called the festival of lamps and light. The Diwali festival also marks the beginning of the New Year according to the Vikrama calendar.

The Mandir's Diwali celebration in 2005 was on the 1st of November 2005. This date coincided with the Christian All Saints Day, and so it was a public holiday in Vienna. The late autumn day did not wear its usual dull dress that year. On the contrary, it was a brilliant, bright day and our Earth rejoiced with the distant sun filling our hearts with golden light and displaying the tranquil beauty of the departing year. Our hearts were filled with a musing glory that lit the soil and sky.

More than two hundred visitors came to our temple to celebrate Diwali and take part in the Lakshmi Puja. As was done for the previous two years, the family Jairath had organised the puja and Priti Bhoj seva for all those who visited the temple. The altar was decorated with more than a hundred small candles and were arranged in the most befitting images of ॐ and the Swastika. These lamps, lit by the ardent devotees of the temple, symbolised divine light and knowledge.

A group recital of the Shri Mahalakshmi Ashtakam was conducted 12 times. Sri Triloki Nath Ahuja, our President, had formally distributed the Ashtakam text to everyone so all of us could take part in this very

beneficial and auspicious recital. Suddenly, one felt transported to the land of lights. The Indian Ambassador, H.E. Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma, and his charming wife Meenu, along with many of the staff of the Indian Embassy, were present at this auspicious puja. At the end, Ambassador Sharma wished everyone a very happy Diwali. Special bhajans of the Divine Mother Shakti were sung and at the end of the puja an aarti of Lakshmi Mata was sung. All wished each other a happy Diwali and the spirit of universal brotherhood was felt. Ms. Sonia Singh of Air India came with boxes of earthen lamps and distributed them. Diwali is the time to exchange gifts and greetings.

The celebration ended with a beautiful glow on the faces and in the hearts of all the people who visited our temple.



GITA JAYANTI: BIRTHDAY OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA



Dipl.-Ing. Triloki Nath Ahuja

Member, HMA Board of Trustees and Former President, HMA
Vienna, Austria

The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is the most sacred, the most beautiful and the deepest philosophical scripture of all time. It is rightly acclaimed as the “celestial song,” as it is not merely a scripture but a living voice carrying an eternally indispensable and vital message of life that influences and appeals to all of humanity, irrespective of race, creed, age or religion.

Gita Jayanti is the birthday of the Bhagavad Gita and is celebrated worldwide by the followers of Lord Sri Krishna and its admirers. Gita Jayanti falls on the 11th day (Ekadashi) of the bright half of the Margashirsha month in the traditional Hindu calendar (in November–December according to the English calendar). In 2017, Gita Jayanti falls on 30 November.

It is believed that the Bhagavad Gita was rendered by Lord Sri Krishna himself as advice and teachings to Arjuna (and humanity at large) on the battlefield of Kurukshetra (in present day Haryana state, in India). It was expounded on the first day of the famous 18-day battle of the Mahabharata nearly 5152 years ago. The text is written in the third person, narrated to the blind King Dhritarashtra by his secretary Sanjaya as it transpired between Lord Krishna and Arjuna. Sanjaya was blessed by his Guru Vyasadeva with the power to remotely view the events taking place on the battlefield as they transpired.

Composed of 700 verses in 18 chapters, the Bhagavad Gita is one of the most ancient scriptural and non-sectarian philosophical works known to humanity. It teaches us how to re-establish our lost relationship with God, the Supreme Divine. Its verses embody words of divine wisdom coming directly from the infinite ocean of knowledge which continue to illumine the path of humanity age after age as it marches onward to salvation and perfection. Several spiritual masters like Adi Shankaracharya, from ancient times, to modern era mystics and philosophers like Sri Aurobindo, Swami Chinmayananda and others have written detailed commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita.

The celebration of Gita Jayanti takes different forms. In Kurukshetra, a weeklong International Gita festival is held around Gita Jayanti with the participation of dignitaries, scholars, and seekers from across the globe. It is generally observed by en masse recitation throughout the day of all 18 chapters of the Gita.

In Vienna, it is celebrated by devotees in the form of group Gita recitation of all 18 chapters, in one place led usually by the devotees of the Sri Sri Radha Govinda temple. It is followed by the recitation of the Vishnu Sahasranama, by discourses on the importance of the Bhagavad Gita, and by the singing of bhajans.

I conclude with my favourite shlokas from the Bhagavad Gita:

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज।

अहं त्वां सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥६६॥

Sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śharaṇaṁ vraja

Ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣhayiṣhyāmi mā śhuchaḥ

Meaning: Abandoning all forms of rites and duties, take refuge in Me (Lord Krishna — the Supreme) alone. I shall free you from all sins. (Therefore) do not grieve.

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः।

तत्र श्रीविजयो भूतिध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम ॥७८॥

Yatra yogeshvaraḥ kṛiṣṇo yatra pārho dhanur-dharaḥ

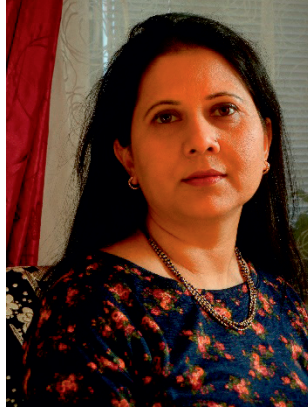
Tatra śhrī vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama

Meaning: Wherever there is Bhagavan Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, and wherever there is Arjuna, the wielder of the Gandiva bow, the supreme archer, there will certainly be unending opulence, victory, prosperity, and unfailing righteousness; such is my strong conviction.

Glory to the Supreme Lord Krishna, the Divine Teacher! For rendering timeless wisdom to humanity. Glory to Sage Vyasa, the poet of poets, who composed the Gita! May these teachings keep guiding us to lead a virtuous life!



पवनपुत्र हनुमान की प्रेरणास्पद जीवन कथा



डॉ. अलका आत्रेय चूडाल

विष्णु विश्वविद्यालय

Vienna, Austria

अजर अमर गुननिधि सुत होहू। करहुं बहुत रघुनायक छोहू॥

करहुं कृपा प्रभु अस सुनि काना। निर्भर प्रेम मगन हनुमाना॥

तुलसीदास (सुंदरकांड, रामचरितमानस)

“हे पुत्र, तुम अजर (बुढ़ापे से रहित), अमर और गुणों से पूर्ण होओ। श्री राम की हमेशा तुम पर कृपा बनी रहे।” सीता माता का यह आशीर्वाद सुनकर हनुमान जी प्रेम में मग्न हो गए।

जब हनुमान जी राम की निशानी एक अँगूठी लेकर लंका पहुँचे और सीता माता से उनकी मुलाकात हुई तो उनकी राम के प्रति अथाह भक्ति देख सीता ने उनको चिरंजीवि होने का यह आशीर्वाद दिया। माता के इसी आशीर्वाद के प्रताप से पवन पुत्र चिरंजीवि हुए। वे आठ चिरंजीवियों में से एक हैं।

हनुमान जी की कहानी और उनकी जीवन कथा बहुत रोचक, जीवन में अनुसरण योग्य, प्रेरणादायी और यथार्थपूर्ण है। उनके जीवन की हर घटना को हम अपने जीवन की प्रेरणा बना सकते हैं और हमारे अपनों को भी मिसाल दे कर प्रेरित कर सकते हैं। “बाल समय रवि भक्षि लियो” (हनुमानाष्टकम्) एक बाल सुलभ चंचलता का उदाहरण जो हर किसी बालक में होता है पवन पुत्र में भी था। प्रेम, सेवा और भक्ति के पर्याय श्री हनुमान अपने कर्तव्य पालन और सेवा के लिए हरसम्भव प्रयास करते हैं। कर्तव्य पालन के दौरान किए गए हर कामों में हमारी जैसी मानव सुलभ घबराहट उनमें भी होती है। जैसे युद्ध में घायल लक्ष्मण को बचाने के लिए “लै गृह वैद्य सुषेन समेत तबै गिरि द्रोण सुबीर उपारो” वे सुषेण वैद्य को घर सहित और संजीवनी बूटी को द्रोणाचल पर्वत सहित उठाकर ले आते हैं। जैसे हम कभी-कभी समस्याओं में घिरे अपनी शक्ति और योग्यता भूलकर अपने को कम आँकते हैं वैसे ही हनुमान जी भी अपनी योजता को भूलकर समुद्र तट पर विस्मित बैठे थे तो जाम्बवान के वचन ने उन्हें अपनी उड़ सकने की योजता का आभास दिलाया। जाम्बवान की प्रेरणा से उन्हें अपने अंदर की शक्ति का ज्ञान हुआ और वे समंदर पार कर लंका जा पहुँचे।

“राम काजु कीन्हें बिनु मोहि कहाँ बिश्राम” श्री राम का कोई भी काम किए बिना हनुमान जी को विश्राम कहाँ? किसी भी काम को मन लगाकर करना और उसको पूरा किये बिना आराम न करना दत्तचित्तता का उदाहरण है, जो हमें उनके जीवन से सीखना चाहिए।

पवन पुत्र का जीवन आज भी हमारे लिए उत्साहवर्धक और सान्दर्भिक है। असंतोष से भरी इस दुःखभरी दुनिया में वे हमें संतुष्ट होने का संदेश भी देते हैं। दुःखी होकर दर दर भटकना छोड़ श्री राम की अनुकम्पा से हमारे पास जो कुछ है उसी में प्रसन्न रहना ही खुशहाल जीवन का मूल मंत्र है:

सीताराम सीताराम सीताराम कहियो।
जाहि विधि राखे राम ताहि विधि रहियो॥
जय श्री राम!



CONGRATULATIONS ON THE HINDU MANDIR ASSOCIATION'S 25th ANNIVERSARY



Dr. Amrit Bhatia

Member, HMA Board of Trustees, and former General Secretary, HMA,
Vienna, Austria

Dear well-wishers of the Hindu community, sisters and brothers of the Hindu community, dear and respected friends in the HMA in general and especially the members of the HMA Executive Committee (EC)!

Let me welcome you on this very special occasion.

It is matter of a great pleasure that our Hindu community in Austria has reached another milestone, with one of its leading organisations, the Hindu Mandir Association (HMA) celebrating its silver jubilee. On this happy occasion, I want to congratulate not only the present Executive Committee of the HMA, but also all our Hindu sisters and brothers here in Austria and the many Austrian citizens from different walks of life who helped in making our organisation a strong one in each and every respect.

We have, of course, not reached all our goals, but it is only because of this work together for a common cause that we have been able to progress as far as we have. In 1980, Hindus from India, who were very few in number, first joined hands under the leadership of Dr. Bimal Kundu and his wife Christine Kundu and, under the initiative of Kardinal Dr. Franz Koenig, first started a temple in a small room at the Afro-Asiatische Institut hostel, located on Türkenstraße in Vienna's 9th District. Since then we have slowly and gradually been going forward to realize our goal to have a beautiful temple in Vienna. Recently, one of the main steps in the direction of constructing a Hindu temple in Vienna has been taken with the purchase by the present HMA EC of a piece of land in the 21st District, in Florisdorf. A dream, i.e. to have a beautiful temple in Vienna, is going to be realized very soon and I would like to take this opportunity to request all well-wishers of Hindus — their way of life, religion, yoga, thought and philosophy — to help the HMA with all their means and efforts to speed up this project.

Therefore, my best wishes for good luck go to our Hindu Community and its leading organisations, the HMA and Hindu Religious Organisation Austria (HRÖ). May they be successful in achieving their noble cause of construction of a temple in Vienna and informing the people of Austria about Hinduism.

Om Shanti Om!



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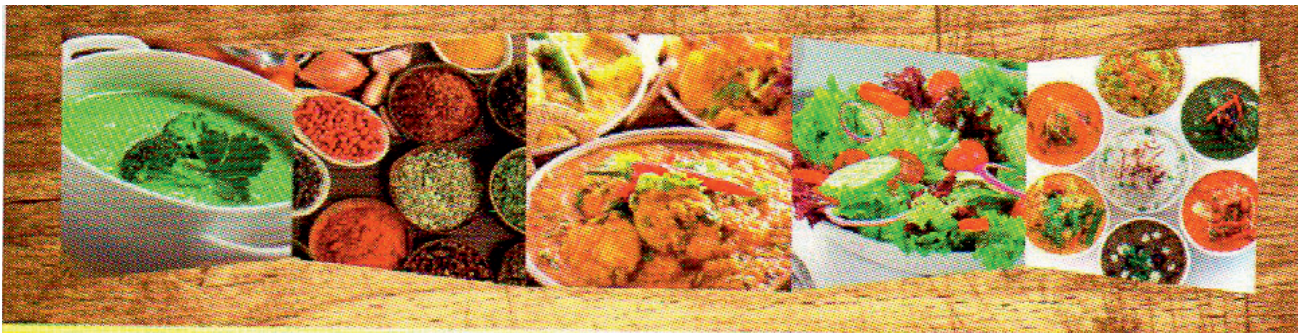
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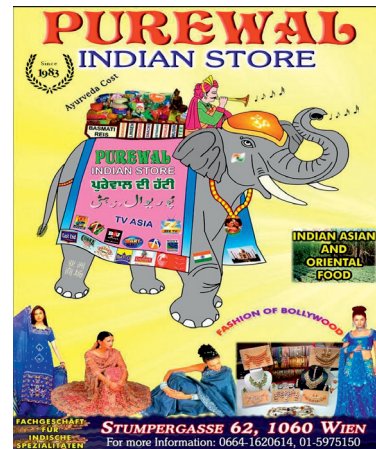
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APPEAL FOR FUNDS

Dear friends!

The Executive Committee of the Hindu Mandir Association is pleased to inform you that it has acquired a plot of land in Vienna's 21st District. This major achievement will bring us much closer to our dream of building a beautiful temple in Vienna which will serve as a haven not only for Hindus but also for people of other faiths, in accordance with the ancient principles of Sanathana Dharma.

However, the HMA cannot achieve this dream by itself. We need the generous assistance of each and every one of you — in terms of donations and seva — to make this vision a reality. Please note that all donations, including those made at the annual Diwali Mela and pujas conducted throughout the year, go to the Mandir Construction Fund.

You can place your donations in the 'Daan Paatra,' located in the Mandir, or through transfers to the Mandir's bank account in Oberbank:

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Through your generous donations you will be helping current and future generations of Hindus living in Austria to enjoy the benefits of their great religion and traditions.

We thank you in advance for your generosity. Jai Shri Ganesh!

Sukhdev Singh Chib

General Secretary

mandirvienna1080@gmail.com

Mr. Parkash Sehgal

President

parkash_1958@hotmail.com

Mr. Satish Aggarwal

Treasurer

aggarwal.gesmbh@chello.at

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ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चित् दुःख भाग्भवेत्॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चित् दुःख भाग्भवेत्॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥

लोकाः समस्ताः सुखिनो भवन्तुः

लोकाः समस्ताः सुखिनो भवन्तु

लोकाः समस्ताः सुखिनो भवन्तु

सर्वेषां स्वस्तिर्भवतु।
सर्वेषां शान्तिर्भवतु।
सर्वेषां पूर्णं भवतु।
सर्वेषां मङ्गलं भवतु॥

सर्वेषां स्वस्तिर्भवतु।
सर्वेषां शान्तिर्भवतु।
सर्वेषां पूर्णं भवतु।
सर्वेषां मङ्गलं भवतु॥

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सर्वेषां पूर्णं भवतु।
सर्वेषां पूर्णं भवतु॥

भूमि मङ्गलं
उदक मङ्गलं
अग्नि मङ्गलं
वायु मङ्गलं
गगन मङ्गलं
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मनो मङ्गलं
आत्म मङ्गलं

सर्व मङ्गलं भवतु भवतु भवतु!
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