



# HINDU HERITAGE MONTH

A RESOURCE BOOK FOR EDUCATORS, PARENTS, AND COMMUNITY



Hare Krishan *Rath Yatra*, Downtown Toronto, Canada  
Photo credit: Hare Krishna Facebook page, via Neetu Arora

RAGINI SHARMA, MSW, PHD

Toronto, November 2017



OM, the Symbol of Hinduism



### Salutations to Lord Ganesha, Ma Saraswati and Ma Durga

Photo: Celebrating Diwali, Rajasthan Association of North America: credit: Sangeeta Marathi

**Hindu Heritage Booklet produced by Ragini Sharma, MSW, PHD**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In December 2017 the Ontario Legislative Assembly declared November as Hindu Heritage month to recognize of the positive contribution of Hindus residing in Ontario. The declaration offers an opportunity for Canadians to become more aware of Hindu culture and heritage and the ways in which it has contributed to Ontario, Canada, and the world civilization. Throughout the month of November, Hindu individuals, groups, and organizations, will be celebrating and sharing their culture and traditions with local schools, neighbors, and communities.



*Photo credit: Vishnu Mandir*

This booklet is being offered as a resource to those who are interested in educating themselves about the Hindu religion, its history, cultural traditions, and contributions to the world.

Almost half a million strong, Diasporic Hindus in Canada have much to celebrate. First generation Hindu-Canadians, along with Hindus born in Canada, appreciate the freedoms and opportunities that multicultural Canada offers. At the same time, they are proud of the rich and varied heritage of Hindu civilization and its contributions to world civilization. While most Hindu immigrants to Canada came from India, the birthplace of Hinduism, many have come from across the globe where diasporic Hindus reside, for example, Sri Lanka, Guyana, Trinidad, and East Africa.

With more a billion adherents worldwide, Hinduism is the world's third largest religion, after Christianity and Islam. Hinduism is the world's oldest religion, pre-dating Abrahamic religions by reaching back 8,000 years and more as Vedic civilization. Followers of this ancient Vedic tradition often refer to it as *Sanatana Dharma* and offer to the world an extraordinarily rich cultural heritage of spirituality, literature, mathematics, science, art, and architecture which has made, and continues to make, a significant contribution to world civilization. Unfortunately, the contributions of Hindus remain largely unrecognized or unknown.

*Sanatana Dharma* is also referred to as a *Manav Dharma*, a path for Humanity, or *Jagat Guru*, or world teacher, because of the extraordinary philosophy and inclusivity that it brings towards achieving world peace. While there is no one founder nor one central authority or book for Hindus, there are common ideas, namely, self as divine consciousness, mind as witness consciousness, karma, reincarnation, and *atman* as universal consciousness, among others. Hindus have a rich array of diverse *sampradayas* (philosophies) and texts that seem contradictory. However, the existence of such diversity, even paradoxes, is not seen as a problem by Hindus who accept them as ways to explain the apparent contradictions or chaos that exists in one's mind, one's life, in nature and in the universe. While Hindus themselves celebrate, or happily co-exist, with these differences, many from Abrahamic religion can struggle with understanding Hinduism.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper speaks on contribution of Hindus.

<https://youtu.be/epct379fLCw>

## NOTE FROM RAGINI SHARMA, AUTHOR



Namaste! I want to thank the Government of Ontario and Hindu leaders who worked to declare November as Hindu Heritage Month, starting in 2017. I also wish to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to the Indigenous people who were the original keepers of this land now known as Canada.

I dedicate this booklet to my grandchild, Divya Kali Knox and to all Hindus in Canada who strive to keep the Hindu culture and traditions alive in their homes and in the Canadian diaspora.

The important and positive contributions of Hindus to Canadian society is planned to be celebrated in numerous ways in community events during the Hindu Heritage month. This booklet focuses mainly on the contribution of Hindus to the world civilization which is immense but largely unrecognized and unknown. This gap in information is because of a variety of reasons including Hinduphobia, racism and a Eurocentrism in the media and academia. Readers of the booklet may very well be surprised at the enormity and significance of the contributions made by Hindus to the world, as I was when I did my research on Yoga for my doctoral studies at York University.

As a practicing Hindu scholar and an immigrant from India since the 1970s, I bring an insider view of what is Hinduism and its contributions to Canada and the world. As is traditional in Hinduism, I offer my gratitude to my spiritual Guru, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

Thanks to Vinod Dodhia, Vikas Gajjar, and Sunil Sheoran for assistance with editing. Thanks to Bharti Sheoran, Professors Madan Lal Goel and O. C. Handa and many others for their help with materials.

The purpose of this booklet is to contribute towards increased awareness of the ancient and living traditions of Hinduism and thereby foster a positive view of Hindus and their contribution to world civilization. The booklet aims to increase positive interactions between Canadian Hindus and other Canadians by encouraging their participation in educational, social, and cultural activities that celebrate Hindu culture and the contributions. The booklet is divided into five sections: Introduction, Contributions of Hindus to World Civilization, Introduction to Hinduism, History and demographics and lastly, Suggested Activities and Resources.

I hope that Hindu parents, leaders, and organizations, along with other interested persons, will find this resource informative and useful as they take leadership roles in their local schools and communities towards participation in the celebration of Hindu Heritage Month. This booklet starts a process of a broader consultation with all the stakeholders towards creating a community-based presentation next year. This booklet therefore presents my views only, and not those of the many individuals who have nevertheless supported the publication of this booklet. I update this booklet in October 2018 in view of my involvement with the TDSB Hindu Heritage month.

I welcome constructive ideas and feedback at [ragini108@yahoo.com](mailto:ragini108@yahoo.com) which can contribute to improving the booklet for next year's celebration. I offer my congratulations and best wishes for the celebration of the Hindu Heritage Month and the coming New Year.

*Loka Samastha Sukhino bhavantu* (May the whole world be happy and content)  
OM Shanti, Shanti, Shanti (OM, Peace, Peace, Peace)

Ragini Sharma, BSW, MSW, PhD,  
October 2017  
Updated October 2018

## LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER



PRIME MINISTER • PREMIER MINISTRE

### Statement from the Prime Minister of Canada

It is with great pleasure that I join you in celebrating Hindu Heritage Month.

This year marks our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation, which gives Canadians the opportunity to look back over the span of our history to highlight what makes our country special. We are a diverse people, made up in large part by immigrants from around the world who have contributed in their unique ways to the building of our country.

In 2016, the Ontario Provincial Legislature officially recognized November as Hindu Heritage Month. This month will allow all Canadians the opportunity to reflect on the many contributions of our Hindu community to our multicultural fabric.

Over the years, our Hindu-Canadian community has thrived and greatly contributed to Canadian society, all the while maintaining important traditional connections to India that have uniquely shaped the community's rich cultural heritage.

Please accept my warmest welcome and best wishes for a happy Hindu Heritage Month!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Justin Trudeau", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ottawa  
2017

## LETTER FROM ONTARIO PREMIER



**Premier of Ontario - Première ministre de l'Ontario**

November 2017

### **A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER**

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, I am delighted to extend warm wishes to our Hindu community as we celebrate Hindu Heritage Month.

In Ontario, we draw strength from the diversity of our people — people of all faiths, all cultures and all ethnicities. No matter what is happening elsewhere in the world, We want our province to continue being a safe and welcoming place for people of all faiths.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Hindu immigrants have been coming to Canada. Today, Ontario is home to a large and vibrant Hindu community. Hindu Canadians from across Ontario have made significant contributions in science, education, medicine, law, politics, business, culture and sports. They continue to help foster growth, prosperity and innovation throughout Ontario.

By proclaiming November as Hindu Heritage Month, the Province of Ontario recognizes the important contributions that Hindu Canadians have made — and continue to make — to Ontario's culture, economy and public life.

Please accept my sincere best wishes for a joyous and meaningful celebration.

Namaste!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kathleen Wynne".

**Kathleen Wynne**  
**Premier**

MESSAGE FROM HON. ANDREW SCHEER, LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION, CANADA

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION



CHEF DE L'OPPOSITION

November 2017

Message from the Leader of the Official Opposition

*I am delighted to extend my warmest greetings to all those celebrating Hindu Heritage Month in Ontario.*

*In December 2016, the Ontario Legislative Assembly declared November as Hindu Heritage Month in recognition of the significant contributions of the province's large and dynamic Hindu community.*

*This first annual Hindu Heritage Month is a wonderful opportunity for all Canadians to learn more about Hindu culture and heritage. It is also an occasion to acknowledge the important role Hindu Canadians have played in the growth and development of the province and our great country.*

*On behalf of Canada's Official Opposition, I pleased to salute the community's achievements. Please accept my best wishes for a wonderful celebration.*

*Sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Scheer'.

*The Hon. Andrew Scheer, P.C., M.P.  
Leader of the Official Opposition*

MESSAGE FROM PATRICK BROWN, LEADER, ONTARIO PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

“Today and throughout the month of November, we acknowledge and celebrate the many important contributions Ontarians of Hindu heritage have made and continue to make to our province.

“Hindu Heritage Month, first proclaimed in Ontario in 2016, is a time to recognize the vital part that our vibrant Hindu community has played in the story of Ontario.

“I was proud to lead the PC Caucus in unanimously supporting the Hindu Heritage Month motion when it was tabled two years ago. I stood with the Hindu community then, and we will continue to build and strengthen the important bond between the Ontario PC Party and our province’s dynamic Hindu community in the months and years ahead.

“Across every sector—science, education, business, politics, the arts, and beyond—Ontario’s Hindu community grows our economy, adds to our diversity, and reflects the best of our province’s values.

“From India and Singapore, to Sri Lanka, the Caribbean and beyond, the nations and communities touched by Hindu culture are as diverse as Ontario itself—a diversity that is a hallmark of our special province.

“Over the past two years as Leader of the PC Party, I have been honoured to visit temples and mandirs across our great province—meeting new friends and learning more about this ancient faith and the traditions that sustain it. With every visit, I am reminded of the warmth that always welcomed me on my visits to India, and the many meaningful relationships that have been built in the years since.

“Our Hindu friends and neighbours continue to be an invaluable part of our province’s social and cultural fabric. The month of November provides us all with the opportunity to learn more about Hindu culture and customs, and to reflect on the many ways this dynamic community helps make Ontario a better place to live.

“Happy Hindu Heritage Month!”

<https://www.ontariopc.ca/state-ment-from-ontario-pc-leader-pa-trick-brown-celebrating-hindu-heritage-month-2017>

MESSAGE FROM ANDREA HORVATH, LEADER, NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF ONTARIO

November 10, 2017

Dear friends;

On behalf of the Ontario's New Democrats, I want to extend congratulations and best wishes to all Ontarians celebrating the first Hindu Heritage Month.

I'm so happy to be sharing in the celebrations this month.

Ontario's rich cultural diversity has always been part of what makes this province such a great place to live. By honouring, celebrating, and sharing the music, art and culture of some of the communities that make this province such a great place to call home, Hindu Heritage Month is helping to create a more vibrant and welcoming society.

On behalf of all New Democrats, I would like to thank Canadian Museum of Hindu Civilization, Voice of the Vedas Cultural Sabha and all the other organization working so hard to make Hindu Heritage month celebrations a success.

Dhun-yuh-vaad!



Andrea Horwath  
Leader, Ontario's NDP

Ontario NDP Caucus  
Room 113, Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park, Toronto ON M7A 1A5  
416-325-8300 | outreach@ndp.on.ca

## THE PROVINCIAL PROCLAMATION



*Ontario Legislative Assembly, Queens Park. Group photo in October 2016 of Provincial legislators and some members of the Hindu community who participated in organizing for the Hindu Heritage Month. Photo provided by Queen Park.*



June 25, 2017, 3<sup>rd</sup> International Yoga Day, Brampton Photo credit: Latelier Lumiere

**A bill to proclaim November as Hindu Heritage Month was introduced in the Ontario Legislative Assembly on November 1, 2016 and it received Royal Assent on December 8, 2016).**

**Legislative Assembly of Ontario Bill 56, 2016: An Act to proclaim the month of November Hindu Heritage Month**

**Preamble**

Ontario is home to a large and vibrant Hindu community. Since the first Hindu immigrants arrived in Canada at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hindu Canadians from across Ontario have made significant contributions across all fields: science, education, medicine, law, politics, business, culture, and sports. Hindu Canadians have helped build Ontario into the multicultural success story that it is and have helped to build this province into the best place to live, work and raise families. They continue to help foster growth, prosperity, and innovation throughout Ontario.

“Deepawali” or “Diwali” is the biggest of all celebratory festivals that members of the Hindu community celebrate. It falls in either November or October each year, depending on the cycle of the moon. It’s observed on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Kartik, the holiest month in the Hindu lunar calendar. Diwali commemorates the victory of good over evil. In addition, during this time of the year, Hindus also celebrate other significant festivals such as Navratri and Durga Puja.

By proclaiming the month of November as Hindu Heritage Month, the Province of Ontario recognizes the important contributions that Hindu Canadians have made to Ontario’s social, economic, political, and cultural fabric. Hindu Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about Hindu Canadians and the important role that they have played and continue to play in communities across Ontario.

Therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, enacts as follows:

**Hindu Heritage Month**

1. The month of November in each year is proclaimed as Hindu Heritage Month. See link here [http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills\\_detail.do?locale=en&Intranet=&BillID=4313](http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&Intranet=&BillID=4313)



*Puja offering. Photo: Vishnu Mandir website*



*Freedom of Religion statue, Toronto: Photo: Sanjay Varma*

## FLAG RAISING



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Flag raising event for the Hindu Heritage Month at Brampton City Hall, November 5, 2017 at an event organized by the Canadian Hindu Association. The flag will fly over the city hall for the month of November.

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Photo: Sangeeta Marathi

Her Excellency Linda Jeffrey, Mayor, City of Brampton presented a Proclamation for Hindu Heritage Month.



Photo: Sangeeta Marathi

## TDSB APPROVES NOVEMBER AS HINDU HERITAGE MONTH

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/S16035>

### **Hindu Heritage Month Act, 2016, S.O. 2016, c. 35 - Bill 56**

#### **An Act to proclaim the month of November Hindu Heritage Month**

*Assented to December 8, 2016*

#### **Preamble**

Ontario is home to a large and vibrant Hindu community. Since the first Hindu immigrants arrived in Canada at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hindu Canadians from across Ontario have made significant contributions across all fields: science, education, medicine, law, politics, business, culture and sports. Hindu Canadians have helped build Ontario into the multicultural success story that it is and have helped to build this province into the best place to live, work and raise families. They continue to help foster growth, prosperity and innovation throughout Ontario.

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By proclaiming the month of November as Hindu Heritage Month, the Province of Ontario recognizes the important contributions that Hindu Canadians have made to Ontario’s social, economic, political and cultural fabric. Hindu Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about Hindu Canadians and the important role that they have played and continue to play in communities across Ontario.

Therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, enacts as follows:

#### **Hindu Heritage Month**

- 1. The month of November in each year is proclaimed as Hindu Heritage Month.**
- 2. This Act comes into force on the day it receives Royal Assent.**
- 3. The short title of this Act is the *Hindu Heritage Month Act, 2016*.**

## 2. CONTRIBUTIONS OF HINDUS TO WORLD CIVILIZATION

India is the cradle of human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, the great-grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only. – Mark Twain

*The Complete Works of Mark Twain: Following the Equator, Volume 2, Harper and Brothers: New York, 1925*

### BACKGROUND

In thinking about the relevance of Hindu Heritage Month, one only needs to be reminded why Columbus, Vasco De Gama and other explorers were sent out by the monarchs in Europe in search of India, which was at that time a world leader in shipping, trade, and technology. They were looking for a sea route to India and China because the prosperity of the Silk Road was well known in Europe. A sea route was needed to circumvent the sea route controlled by the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, when Columbus arrived at the shores of North America, he thought he had arrived in India, hence the name “Indian” erroneously given to the Indigenous People here in Canada and all over the “New World”. In this way the so called ‘discovery’ of North America happened because of India!

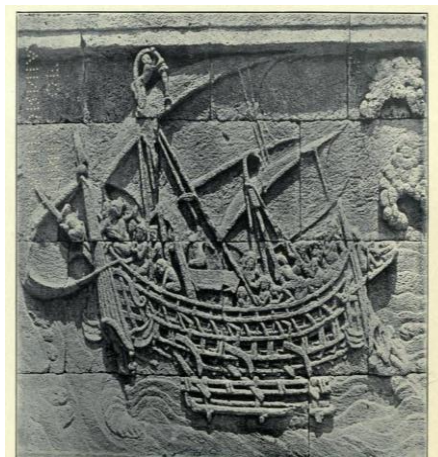
At the time in history when Europe was in what is referred to as the Dark Ages, India was a center of manufacturing, trade, art and architecture. India was an economic powerhouse before its colonization. For example, the art of navigation was born in the river Sindu 6000 years ago. A study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on the History of Economic Development from 0-2000 AD indicates that in 0 AD India had 33% of the world GDP, the highest in the world at that time. India’s GDP remained high over the next 1700 years: 28% in 1000 AD, 24.5% in 1500 AD and 24% 1700 AD. However, further to India’s colonization, its GDP had plummeted to 7% in 1913 and 4% in 1950.

*Madison, A, (2007) Contours of the World Economy 1-2030 AD, Oxford University Press.*

<http://www.theworldeconomy.org/MaddisonTables/MaddisontableB-18.pdf>

**Book on Indian Shipping online**

<https://archive.org/stream/indianshippinghi00mookrich#page/n7/mode/2up>





Hindu civilization is taught in the west merely as Indology or Asian Studies, with Greek and Roman civilization being presented as the foundation of western and world civilization. Hindu indigenous scholars suggest this oversight is a form of racism and discrimination because Hindu Civilization has contributed greatly to both. Eurocentric bias has ignored indigenous contributions and treated only western, but including Arab, knowledge as legitimate. This happened starting in the 15<sup>th</sup> century under the idea of the “Doctrine of Christian Discovery” and continues today through appropriation.

Digestion of eastern knowledge was justified by the west because the former was mostly authorless due to its antiquity or originating in indigenous oral tradition. What this meant was that ancient knowledge was neither in western journals nor patented in the west. The stamp of western ‘discovery’ on eastern knowledge became an institutionalized method to appropriate it and then claim it as western knowledge. At the same time, the predominant racist colonial lens has stereotyped Indian civilization under themes of ‘caste, cows and curry’ both in the media and academia. The colonialization of Hindus who have internalized these racist stereotypes, has contributed to this problem. Many Hindus are unaware of these contributions and this has led to a weak response or *purva paksh* (return of gaze) by Hindus.

After almost 800 years of colonization, India, which was a world center for science, mathematics, and technology till the mid-1800s, is today a country from where scholars leave to study in western universities. The section that follows is intended to provide a glimpse of the significant contribution of Hindu civilization to world civilization. The list of contribution of Hinduism presented below is by no means exhaustive or detailed, given the limitations of this booklet. References and suggested readings or online sources have been provided for those who wish to explore further on any of these themes.

**The vast contributions of Hindus to world civilization is well documented both by western and indigenous scholars. However, these contributions are mostly unknown in mainstream academia because they have been marginalized.**

## SANSKRIT

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

- Will Durant, American Historian 1885-1981 (*Case for India*, 1931)

The contribution of Sanskrit, and the Vedic civilization it represents to world civilization is vast and transformational, while mostly unknown in modern time, was well recognized in the nineteenth century Europe. Sanskrit, the language of sacred sounds as vibrations, forms the core of Hinduism. Ancient Hindu texts written in Sanskrit were intensely studied by western scholars for more than some 100 years to mine its vast body of knowledge in linguistics, mind sciences, applied science, material science, medicine, astronomy, music, metaphysics and so on.

Credit: *Sanskrita Bharati*, Canada

Suggested reading:

Malhotra, Rajiv,  
(2016) *The Battle  
for Sanskrit*, Harper  
Collins



. Historians have recorded that thousands of sacred texts were burnt or destroyed in India by Muslim invaders, evangelicals and colonizers, following a pattern of cultural genocide of indigenous cultures by colonialism for over 500 years. Also, thousands of Sanskrit texts were taken to Europe to be studied, where they remain in museums and libraries. However, due to the strong ancient oral tradition and location in isolated areas, many texts remained in isolated areas, including in Buddhist libraries and personal property of pundits.

While many sacred texts appear to be lost forever, much was also saved through the oral tradition and knowledge has continued to be passed on through the thousands of living sages and saints in India.

Some American Orientalists (headed by eminent Sanskrit scholar Sheldon Pollock) today are attempting to declare Sanskrit as a “dead language” (like Latin) and to assign Sanskrit as a subject to be studied in archives and museums. However, for practicing Hindus this appears to be an attempt to destroy Hindu civilization. For over a billion Hindus worldwide, Sanskrit lives in the very breath of their religion as OM and today Sanskrit is very much alive, both in their daily spiritual life and their cultural heritage. Hindus all over the world are working to further strengthen Sanskrit language and literature. For example, here in Canada, Hindus are working to bring Sanskrit to local schools. Due to efforts of parents, both the Peel and Halton School boards have started, in 2016, to offer classes in Sanskrit to its students.  
<https://hdsb.ebasefm.com/programs/view/364>.

For those interested in learning Sanskrit, please see these two links:

Sanskrit online through *Sanskrita Bharati* at

[https://sanskritabharati.in/classes\\_prant?s\\_bharti1=NDA2ODc4MTk2MTc4Nw==](https://sanskritabharati.in/classes_prant?s_bharti1=NDA2ODc4MTk2MTc4Nw==)

or <http://www.srishticanada.org/programs-events/culture/spoken-sanskritam-classes-by-sanskrita-bharati-canada/>

Suggested Readings:

Ram Swarup, *On Hinduism: Reviews and Reflections*, New Delhi: Voice of India, 2000.

## YOGA AND MEDITATION

**Yoga and meditation are Hinduism’s most significant contributions to world culture and civilization.**





PHOTO ABOVE: The Beatles and their wives at Rishikesh in India with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1968.

Yoga, popularized in the west by numerous Yoga gurus starting in the 1960s, is now a household word and along with meditation is now practiced by millions worldwide. A search on Google on “Yoga” brought 223 million results. Unfortunately, Yoga has been commercialized into a fad, leading to its distortion as merely a physical exercise.

Yoga is now a multi-billion-dollar business in the world and numerous patents application were made for Yoga related items, including of *asanas* (yoga postures or sequences), in the US. As well, money and power appear to be the driving force in the Lululemonizing of Yoga in the West; yoga clothing and paraphernalia are a billion-dollar business all over the world and symbolize the commercialization of Yoga.

On December 11, 2014 the UN declared June 21<sup>st</sup> as the International Yoga Day



As proposed by **Narendra Modi**, Prime Minister of India, the declaration had wide support from the international community. India has since taken the lead in promoting Yoga as Indian heritage which promotes holistic wellness and peace. Through its AYUSH Ministry, India aims to protect its ancient knowledge, including prevention of appropriation by other countries by contesting application of patents worldwide.

June 25, 2017, 3<sup>rd</sup> International Yoga Day, Brampton  
Photo credit: Latelier Lumière

## PSYCHOLOGY AND MIND SCIENCES (ADHYATMA VIDYA)

One of the most important, yet hidden or unrecognized, contributions of Hindu religion, also known as the Vedic civilization, is to the field of mind sciences, along with its applications to Psychology, Cognitive Sciences, Contemplative Sciences, and Neuroscience.

The core Vedic philosophy of the mind as an observer, consciousness as a witness and Self as divine, has led to a plethora of “New Age” movements. These ideas are so mainstream now that their origin in Hinduism is now lost, whether unintentionally or intentionally. During the European Enlightenment period, there was great appreciation for Hindu texts. After the world wars, scholars in the west were looking for answers to their existential angst and Hinduism has offered many answers.

Mircea Eliade, a Romanian philologist, wrote several editions of his treatise on Yoga originally written in 1958 and they form the foundation of studies on Yoga in the West. In his writings, he said that, “All Indian philosophy has been and still is existentialist” and expresses appreciation for the wisdom of Yoga:

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**It is impossible...to disregard one of India's greatest discoveries: that of consciousness as witness, of consciousness freed from its psychophysiological structures and their temporal conditioning, the consciousness of the liberated man...and therefore knows the true, inexpressible freedom. (Eliade, 2009 [1958])**

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Eliade, M. (2009). *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, translated from French by Willard R. Trask. Bollingen Series LVI. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. xxxiv)

*Adhyatma Vidya* or Inner Science, originating in Hindu philosophy and metaphysics, has provided the foundation of the modern “mind sciences” in west.

**Adhyatma-vidya is the disciplined and systematic knowledge of the self and the environment attained through precise observation and critical reasoning.**

This is the scientific importance of yoga, meditation, kundalini, tantra and other dharmic systems for achieving higher states of consciousness and more evolved states of body. These states serve as clean cognitive instruments for discovering the deeper layers of reality: Over the past three millennia, the Indic traditions have developed rigorous methods for refining the attention, and then applying that attention to exploring the origins, nature, and role of consciousness in the natural world. These contemplative scientists (rishis, yogis and buddhas) were living human laboratories pursuing the methods and techniques needed to refine and develop the inner scientist's capabilities. The great rishi, Patanjali, compiled the famous Yoga Sutras as a system to help humans attain their potential for higher states of consciousness.

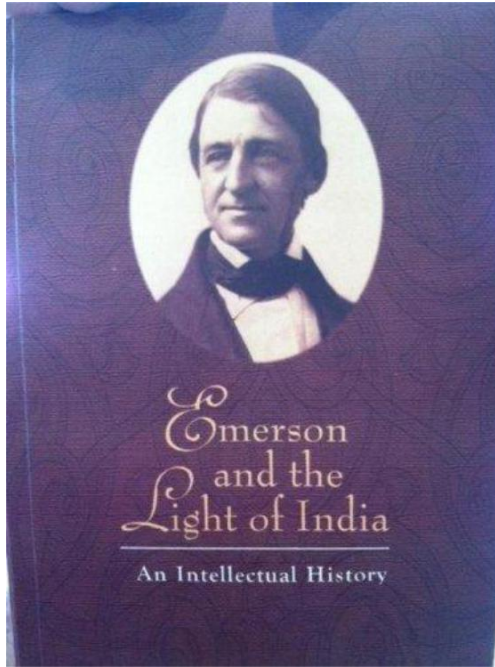
(Malhotra, Rajiv, 2011, *Being Different*, pg. 71-72)

Reading:

Mind and Neuroscience by Subhash Kak <http://www.ece.lsu.edu/kak/centers.pdf>

Historically, the Hindu scriptures had a deep influence of western thought. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau spearheaded the 'Transcendentalist' movement in the US in 1830s and 1840s. Emerson, regarded as a great thinker, was the first American who initiated a serious exploration of the Indian philosophy.

Thoreau wrote the following on the Bhagavad Gita, a book which has now been translated into 82 languages:



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In the morning I bathe my Intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita, in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial. - Thoreau

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Many of the "New Thought" movement in the United States were derived from Hindu scriptures, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. New Thought churches include: Unity Church of Christianity, Unitarian Universalist Church, Divine Science, Temple of the Universe, and others in which meditation and quiet contemplation are now commonly incorporated in their religious services.

## LINGUISTICS, EDUCATION & COMPUTATION

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It is well known that the discovery of Sanskrit by the west at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century provided the operative stimulus for the development of the comparative study of the Indo-European languages. It has also been recognized that the Paninian analysis of Sanskrit into a system of roots, stems, and suffixes pointed the way to the method which has prevailed...

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Brough, John, (1951) Theories of General Linguistics in the Sanskrit Grammarians,  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-968X.1951.tb00247.x/abstract>

Sanskrit forms the foundation of the western branch of linguistics based on the ancient Sanskrit texts. For example, the word navy is derived from Sanskrit word for boat, Nau. Starting in the 1800s scholar's in European universities were required to study Panini's grammar in Sanskrit as part of core doctoral studies in linguistics.

"The technique of calculation, called algorithm, which is today widely used in designing software programs (instructions) for computers was also derived from ancient Sanskrit text for grammar and mathematics. Sage Panini described the grammar of Sanskrit algebraically in complete detail, an achievement that has not been matched for any other language until today". - Akshar Bharati, Amba Kulkarni (2007) Sanskrit and Computational Linguistics.

[http://sanskrit.inria.fr/Symposium/DOC/Amba\\_intro.pdf](http://sanskrit.inria.fr/Symposium/DOC/Amba_intro.pdf)

"While the Sanskrit roots of modern linguistics were recognized at first, as the field has progressed, in a process of cultural appropriation, these roots have been lost/hidden/forgotten. This same process of digestion of Hindu knowledge appears to be again occurring in the field of computation linguistics through digestion of Panini's Sanskrit grammar into a computer language. Panini's grammar is so intricate in its structure that there is intense international interest in computational linguistics technology to develop algorithms for a new computer language which may enable instant, live, automated language translations on internet." - Jha, Girish Nath, Sanskrit Computational Linguistics, 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium, New Delhi, 2010

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/251329647\\_Asiddhatva\\_Principle\\_in\\_Computational\\_Model\\_of\\_Astadyayi](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/251329647_Asiddhatva_Principle_in_Computational_Model_of_Astadyayi)


In a well repeated process of digestion, this appropriation of Hindu texts will eventually be trademarked and patented by western corporations for profit, its roots to Sanskrit scholars forgotten and unrecognized.

## COMPUTERS

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### SAMSKRITAM & NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING (NLP)

The methodology of the grammar rules formulated by the Ancient grammarian Panini in his treatise 'Ashtaadhyayi' help the modern Linguistic Studies Phonetics & Natural Language Processing (NLP)



Research at NASA confirmed that the structured grammar of Samskrit is most suited for Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Indian thinkers invented zero the basis for the binary number system on which all modern computers work.

Credit: Samskrita Bharati, Canada

## INTRODUCTION TO SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

In October 2017 the Science Museum in London, UK, opened an exhibit to celebrate the global contribution of India's scientists since antiquity. (<https://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/about-us/press-office/illuminating-india-opens-science-museum>)

While most people today are familiar with Yoga and spirituality, and many are aware of beauty of Indian dance and music, temple architecture, sculpture, art, and handicrafts, not many know about ancient India's contribution to science and technology. There are many reasons for this gap in recognition. An important one is that the history of science and technology in India has not yet been fully researched or documented or not published in western journals with wide circulation. For example, in authoritative encyclopaedias (such as Encyclopedia Britannica) Indian science and technology is dealt with very briefly.

Reference: Ray, Priyadarshan & Sen, Samarendra Nath (editors) (1986) The Cultural Heritage of India, Volume VI, Science and Technology, The Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta, [http://estudentdavedanta.net/Cultural\\_Heritage\\_Vol\\_VI.pdf](http://estudentdavedanta.net/Cultural_Heritage_Vol_VI.pdf)

## ASTRONOMY

Thousands of years ago, much before Pythagoras, the ancient Vedic texts called the *Brahmana* and *Vedanga Jyotisa* described that the earth was round and rotates around the sun. The texts also calculated the earth's distances to moon, sun, and other planets. Aryabhata, a mathematician and astronomer, 476-550 CE, is most well-known for these findings. Due to Eurocentrism, this fact is not taught in academia or schools.



PHOTO: Bhugola or Earth-Ball by Ksema Karna, India, 1571 [Inv.51703] © Museum of the History of Science, University of Oxford

ASTRONOMY

जयतु  
संस्कृतम्

छादयति शशी सूर्यम् शशिनम् महती च भूच्छाया  
॥

THE MOON COVERS THE SUN AND  
THE GREAT SHADOW OF THE  
EARTH COVERS THE MOON.

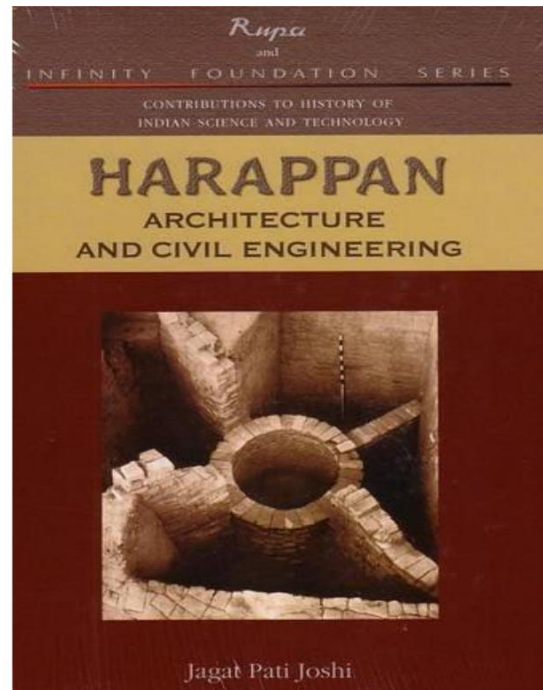
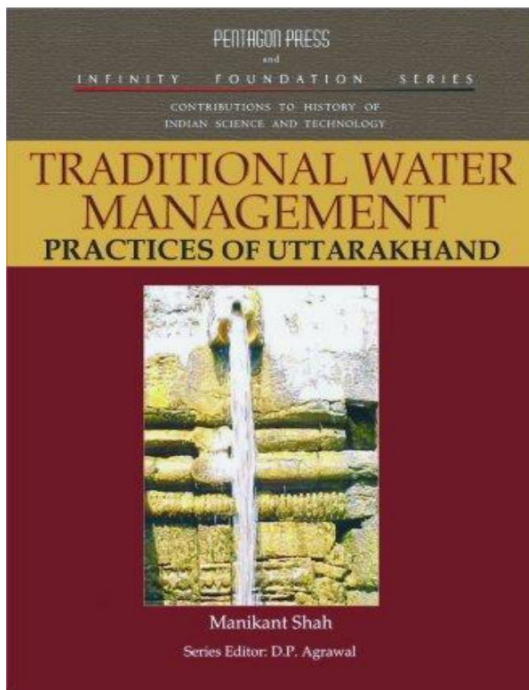
Cause of Eclipse

Aryabhata demystified Eclipse Aeons ago  
(Aryabhatiyam-Golapaadha 37) - 499 CE

Not only did Aryabhata believe that the earth rotates, but there are glimmerings in his system (and other similar Indian systems) of a possible underlying theory in which the earth (and the planets) orbits the sun, rather than the sun orbiting the earth..." - Thurston

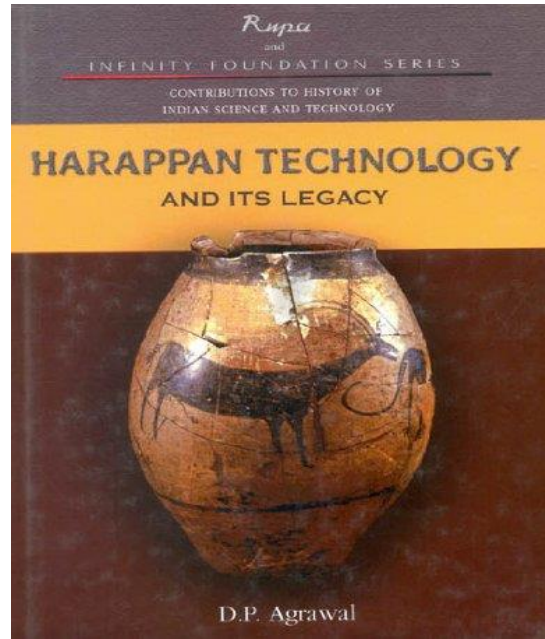
## URBAN PLANNING, BUILDING, AND ENGINEERING

Hindu scholars are beginning the much-needed work of documenting the history of Indian civilization including that of city planning, water conservation and engineering. One such initiative was taken by the Infinity Foundation, based in US and India. The proceeding of a conference on this topic has led to the publication of a dozen important volumes that I refer to here. For example, water management is a key issue for modern India, and many parts of the world, due to drought and much can be learnt from the ancient Indian technologies for application today.



**While India is famous for its fabulous temple architecture, less is known about its ancient architecture and civil engineering.**

“The Indus Civilization shows considerable variation in town planning, yet a baffling uniformity in weights and measures, as well as in motifs... Despite the modesty writ large over the civilization, it achieved great architectural, hydrological, and engineering feats. It seems the resources of the state were utilized for public works rather than on the ostentation of wealth of the rulers. The archaeological remains give an impression that the Harappan culture essentially belonged to an egalitarian society. For example, at Dholavira, besides the citadel there is a middle and lower town; essentially these consist of decent, well-made houses. The Harappans contributed to the world of scientific instruments the true saw, needles with the hole at the pointed end, hollow drills and so on which were re-invented in Europe in the Roman times. The wealth in terms of ornaments was circulated through generations, and not buried in graves; except for bronze mirrors, no costly items are found in the graves.” Joshi, Jagat Pati, Harappan Architecture and Civil Engineering, Infinity Foundation series



With over 20 sites covering an area of more than a million square kilometers, the Indus Civilization of the Harappans, is said to be as old as the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China. The settlement patterns at the sites included different ecological zones, and displayed various aspects of town planning, fortification, gateways, streets, lanes, houses, drainage system, bathing floors and platforms for houses. The outstanding buildings include the Great Bath, the granaries at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa and the 'College Building' at Mohenjo-Daro have been discussed in detail.

## HYDRAULICS

Ancient Hindu civilization had a diversity of traditional hydraulic structures, including their technology, and this folk scientific heritage has relevance in finding solutions to the prevailing water crisis and may have applications to other countries as well.

Reference: D. P. Agarwal, Harappan Technology and Its Legacy

## METALLURGY AND TECHNOLOGY

Evidence from archeological sites today prove that the ancient Hindu civilization had an advanced knowledge of metals.

Some important findings have been published in recent books mentioned in pages that follow.

PHOTO Credit: Samskrita Bharati, Canada

# METALLURGY

जयतु  
संस्कृतम्

सुवर्णं रजतं ताम्रं त्रपु सीसकमायसम्।  
षडेतानि च लोहानि  
कृत्रिमौ कान्स्यपित्तलौ ॥

### PURE METALS

  
Suvarna (Gold)

  
Rajata (Silver)

  
Tamra (Copper)

  
Trapu (Tin)

  
Sisa or naga (Lead)

  
Ayas (Iron)

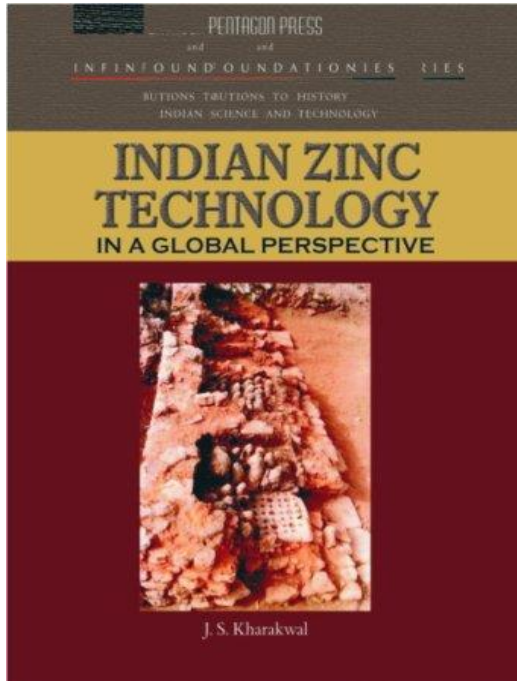
### ALLOYS

  
Kamsya (Bronze)

  
Pittala (Brass)

## ZINC

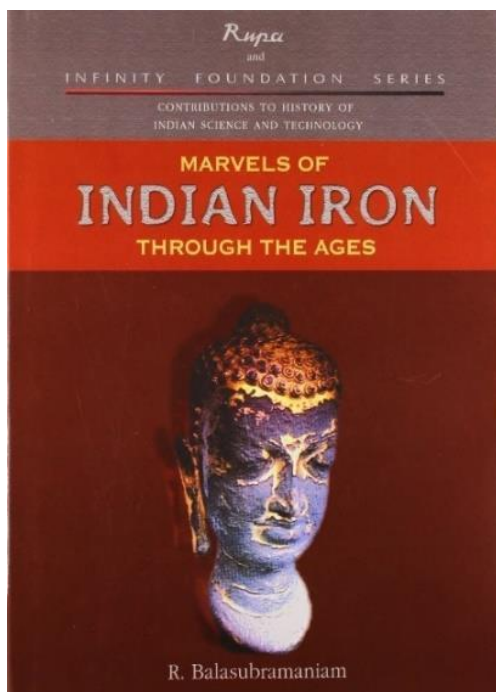
Few modern engineering students would know that zinc was discovered in ancient India.



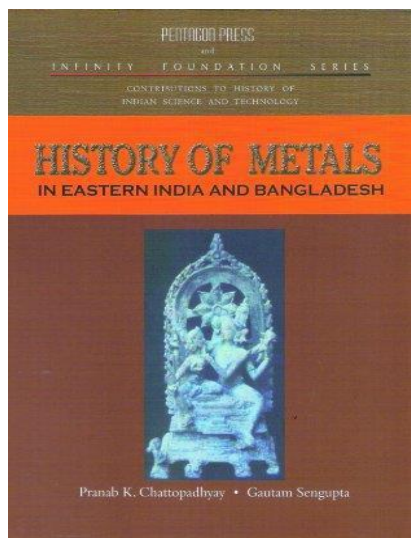
"Metallurgy had begun in the Indian subcontinent around 6<sup>th</sup> Millennium BCE. But unlike other metals zinc appeared much later, only a few hundred years ago, on the scene. Being volatile it is one of the most difficult metals to smelt as it forms vapor in the furnace when heated to around 1000°C. Through various claims have been made regarding its remote antiquity across Asia and Europe, only Zawar in India has the oldest archaeological record of pure zinc production on commercial scale.

Pure Zinc distillation was perhaps derived from Ayurvedic preparations. More than 800 years the Indians designed brinjal shaped retorts, condensers and special furnaces with downward distillation to obtain pure zinc. This was a unique achievement which is the ancestor of all high temperature distillation techniques in the world and it has no parallels. The Zawar zinc industry is the most unusual phenomenon, a full-fledged technology with neither antecedents nor successors. It was a great innovation taking place on a major scale away from Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The Zawar metallurgists brought about a breakthrough in non-ferrous metal extraction around the 12th century, thus adding glorious chapter of India's contribution to the world of History of Science and Technology." (JS Kharakwal, Indian Zinc Technology in a Global Perspective, Infinity Foundation series)

## IRON AND IRON TECHNOLOGY



The iron and steel industry in India was flourishing till the eighteenth-nineteenth century CE. The quality of the product was superior enough to be prized by the European world, viz by the Dutch, the Spanish and the British up to pre-modern times. Iron produced at Tendukhera was imported by Britain to be used in bridges across Menai Strait and in the London Bridge. However, one perceives a decline in traditional iron industry during the British period. Pranab K. Chattopadhyay and Gautam Sengupta *History of Metals in Eastern India and Bangladesh*, Infinity Foundation series



India had a glorious tradition of iron making. Indian

blacksmiths created marvelous objects which provide a concrete evidence of the exalted status of Indian's metallurgical knowledge in ancient and medieval times. Massive iron objects such as pillars and beams were made, the most famous example being the Delhi Iron Pillar which remains immune to rust for 1000s of years. The technology included forged welded cannons and the famous wootz steel.

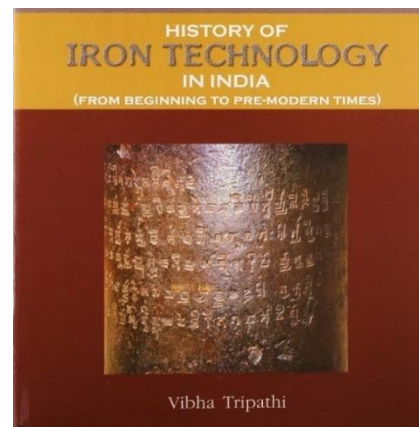
The metallurgical traditions of the Eastern India (including area now Bangladesh) shows advanced knowledge of metals. "From the minting of tiny coins to the manufacturing of massive iron and brass cannons, the people of this region have been making use of various metals in diverse manner." The hereditary artisans of these regions have preserved much of the historical knowledge of metallurgy.

"(It) covers the long span of Indian history stretching over roughly three and a half millennia from the first half of the second millennium BCE to pre-modern times...The Metallurgical expertise and the ingenuity of artisans find expression in the production of wootz steel swords with their intriguing rippling patterns. These swords and daggers were highly prized in the ancient world...(and) were marketed by the enterprising sailors of the Middle East at lucrative profits.

## BEAD TECHNOLOGY

A recent book highlights the contribution of India to the bead manufacturing and trading since the upper Palaeolithic period.

The Indian bead-makers achieved remarkable expertise in this technology over the years since its beginning. The industry initially developed on the soft organic materials, like ostrich eggshell, bone, and shell, but it developed as a specialised industry, using different raw materials, responding to the new and varied local and foreign demands. Innovation and improvement in bead technology had been a continual process...India has been one of the largest providers of beads in the world, exporting these to the markets of Mediterranean civilisations. These had been in great demand in the Persian Gulf and African countries. (RK Mohanty & Tilok Thakuria, series editor O. C. Handa (2016) Indian Beads- History & Technology, Pentagon Press)



## ARTHA SHASTRA (ECONOMICS)

An ancient Sanskrit work from about 300 CE called *Arthashastra*, authored by Kautilya, a minister in a royal court, provides the world's earliest systems of accounting and financial control based on politics and ethics. While known for decades, important ancient treatise has recently seen a revival of interest from western scholars for its relevance to modern price-level accounting.

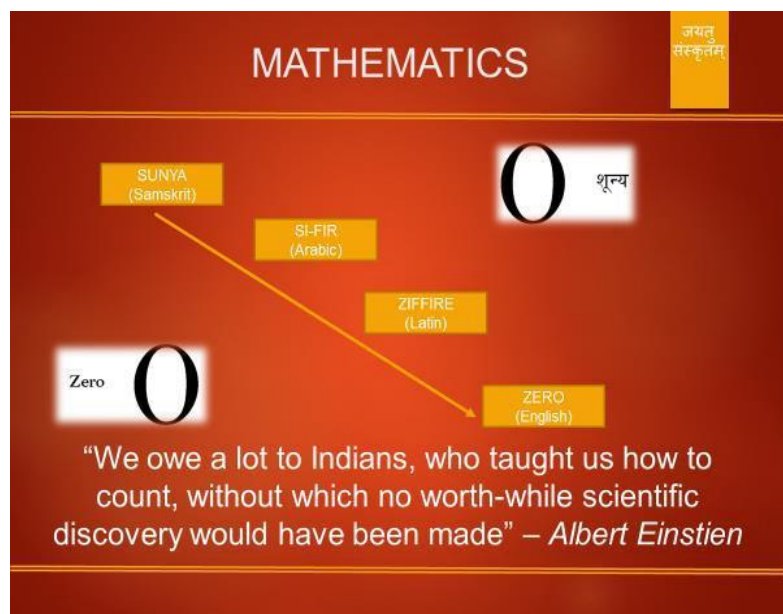
Readings: Mattessich, Richard, 1998, Review and extension of Bhattacharyya's Modern Accounting Concepts in Kautilya's Arthashastra, *Accounting, Business and Financial History*, Volume 8

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/095852098330512>

Sil, N. P. (1985). *Kautilya's Arthasāstra: a comparative study*. Academic publishers.

## MATHEMATICS

It is difficult to imagine progress in science or technology without the discovery of zero. Hindu mathematicians not only discovered the zero but other mathematic subjects such as Algebra and Algorithm, Square root and Cube root, Geometry, Trigonometry, and Calculus.



Credit: *Sanskrita Bharati, Canada*

Mathematics has its roots in Vedic literature which is more than 4000 years old and includes the mathematical genius Ramanujan (1887-1920), on whom the recent film, *The man who knew Infinity*, is based. Aryabhata and Bhaskaracharya were two, among many, brilliant ancient Hindu mathematicians who created a flourishing culture of Mathematics on the Indian subcontinent at a time when Europe was said to be in the dark ages.

The leap, made in India that transformed zero from a simple placeholder to a number in its own right indicates the mathematically enlightened culture that was flourishing on the subcontinent at a time when Europe was stuck in the dark ages. Although its reputation suffers from the Eurocentric bias, the subcontinent has a strong mathematical heritage, which it continues into the 21st century by providing key players at the forefront of every branch of mathematics.”

Christian Yates, Five Ways Ancient India Changed the World with Math.

[http://www.realclearscience.com/articles/2017/09/23/five\\_ways\\_ancient\\_india\\_changed\\_the\\_world\\_with\\_math\\_110399.html](http://www.realclearscience.com/articles/2017/09/23/five_ways_ancient_india_changed_the_world_with_math_110399.html)

## Zero and Decimals

The concept of zero is not just a numeral but also the fundamental Hindu concept of infinity or void called *Shunya*. The ancient Indian astronomer Brahmagupta is credited with having put forth the concept of zero and the decimal system for the first time in seventh century. The concept and symbol represented a qualitative advancement of the human capacity of abstraction which opened new dimensions in computation.

## Algebra

Algebra, a system of mathematics that made astronomical calculations easy was developed in India by Hindu mathematicians, including Bhaskaracharya, around the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Algebra is a short-hand method of calculation that evolved from *Beej Ganita* (Basic Math). Even the technique of calculation, called algorithm, which is widely used today in designing software programs (instructions) for computers was also derived from Indian mathematics.

From the 13th century onwards, India was subject to invasions from the Arabs and other Islamized communities like the Turks and Afghans. The system of mathematics they observed in India was adapted by them and given the name 'Al-Jabr' meaning 'the reunion of broken parts'. They took it from an external source and amalgamated it with their concepts about mathematics. This is how the name Algebra came about. The technique of algebra could have passed on to the west at the time of Christian crusades. During the Renaissance in Europe, followed by the industrial revolution, the knowledge received from the east was further developed. The original work of Bhaskaracharya was translated into English in 1816-1817.

Christian Yates, Five Ways Ancient India Changed the World with Math.

[http://www.realclearscience.com/articles/2017/09/23/five\\_ways\\_ancient\\_india\\_changed\\_the\\_world\\_with\\_math\\_110399.html](http://www.realclearscience.com/articles/2017/09/23/five_ways_ancient_india_changed_the_world_with_math_110399.html)

## Geometry

Indian mathematicians had also developed mathematical applications called *Rekha Ganita* (Line Computation), later known as geometry. The *Sulva Sutras*, ('Rule of the Chord') provided geometrical layouts or designs, called mandalas, which were used to construct altars and temples that attracted positive energies from nature. Later this knowledge was adapted to predict seasonal changes, astronomy, and other aspects of material life.

## Algorithm

The Arab scholars studied Indian use of ratios from *Rekha Ganita* and adapted knowledge of algebra and other branches of Indian mathematics. These Arab adaptations later were named "Algorismi" leading to modern term "Algorithm."

As well, the ancient sage Madhava is known as the father of calculus.

It's important to note that while this diverse mathematical knowledge began with Vedic scholars seeking perfection in construction of temples and fire-altars, the knowledge went on to be used to predict seasons for agriculture, astronomy, advanced navigation and to other material applications.

## ARCHITECTURE AND ART

Hindu civilization was built around temples and in the ancient times there were beautiful temples in every village. Even after over 8000 years of pillage and destruction, many magnificent ones remain.



Meenakshi Temple in ancient city of Madurai. [http://www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/travel\\_news/article-3270646/India-s-technicolor-temples-Dazzling-pyramids-explosion-vibrant-shades-33-000-sculptures.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/travel_news/article-3270646/India-s-technicolor-temples-Dazzling-pyramids-explosion-vibrant-shades-33-000-sculptures.html)



Ancient Hindu temples demonstrate the complex knowledge of architecture. Thousands of massive temples were carved into mountains and rocks. Others were built of stone without the use of mortar or nails. For example, Meenakshi temple, Khajuraho and Ajanta Elora.

Swaminarayan Temple in Toronto is iconic Indian temple art – built with stone, without use of nails or mortar.

Photo: Swaminarayan Temple in Toronto. Temple website

## BOTANY


जयतु  
संस्कृतम्

# BOTANY

## PHOTOSYNTHESIS

तेन तज्जलमादत्तं जरयत्यग्निमारुतौ।  
आहारपरिणामाच्च स्नेहो वृद्धिश्च जायते॥

Mahabharata, Shantiparva, Adhyaya 184-18



Water is drawn by the roots, it reacts with heat (light) and air of the atmosphere and the combinations of water, air and heat (light) makes the body fluid.

Credit: Samskrita Bharati, Canada

Ancient Hindu texts provided a wealth of knowledge on botany, for example on photosynthesis. The knowledge of plants, especially spices and herbs, led to the branch of medicine called Ayurveda (discussed later).

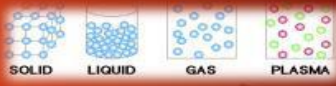
## PHYSICS

जयतु  
संस्कृतम्

# PHYSICS

तस्माद् वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाशः  
सम्भूतः।  
आकाशात् वायुः ।  
वायोः अग्निः ।  
अग्नेः आपः ।  
अदभ्यः पृथिवी ॥

From that Absolute Cause) space came, from which wind came, from wind fire came, from fire water came, from water earth came



Origin of Matter

The sequence of the creation of matter is Akasha, Vayu, Agni, Apa, Prithvi  
Modern physic gives this sequence as plasma, gas, energy, liquid and solid.

Credit: Samskrita Bharati, Canada

Ancient Hindu texts have explained many aspects of space and matter and their interactions.

The existence of the force of gravity is said to be known to ancient rishis for 1000s of years. Brahmagupta clearly stated that the earth attracts objects and Bhaskara even said it fixes heavenly bodies. It was much later that Newton “discovered” gravity. Physicist Fritjof Capra further explained in *The Tao of Physics*.

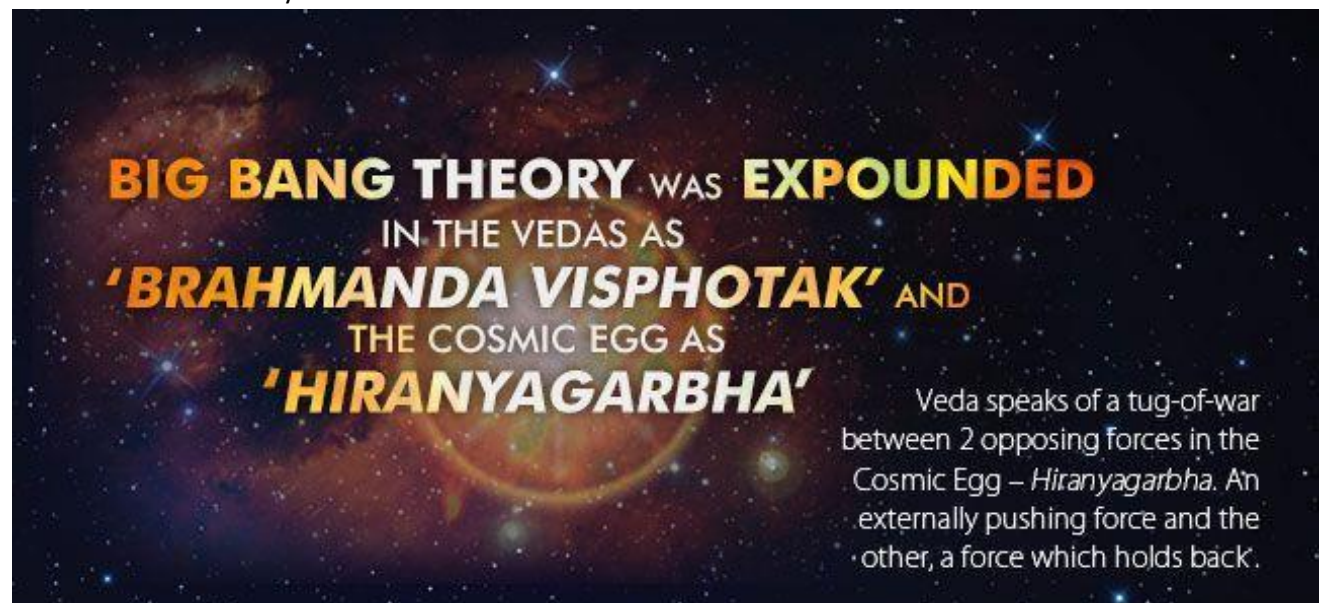
The Dance of Shiva symbolizes the basis of all existence. At the same time, Shiva reminds us that the manifold forms in the world are not fundamental, but illusory and ever-changing. Modern physics has shown that the rhythm of creation and destruction is not only manifest in the turn of the seasons and in the birth and death of all living creatures but is also the very essence of inorganic matter.

According to quantum field theory, the dance of creation and destruction is the basis of the very existence of matter.

Modern physics has thus revealed that every subatomic particle not only performs an energy dance, but also is an energy dance; a pulsating process of creation and destruction. For the modern physicists then, Shiva’s dance is the dance of subatomic matter, the basis of all existence and of all natural phenomena.

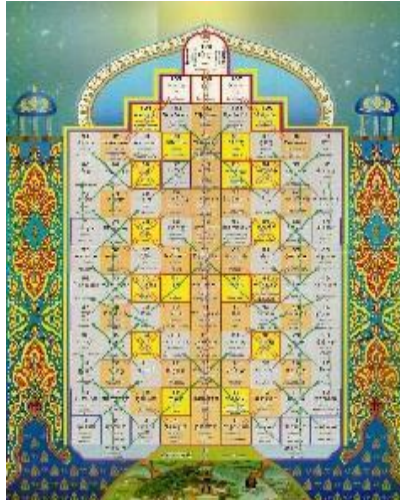
<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-maha-shivratri-why-cern-the-world-s-largest-particle-physics-lab-has-a-statue-of-lord-shiva-2186655>

Photo below: Bharat Gyan website



## SPORTS, GAMES, AND STORIES

One would be surprised to know today that games like, Chess, Snakes and Ladders, Playing Cards and Polo originated in ancient India and were later adapted by other countries. Chess was known as "*Chatur-Anga*" meaning 4 bodied, as 4 players played it. Some games were not transmitted abroad and remained confined to India, for example, *Kabaddi*, *Kho-Kho*, *AtyaPatya*, *Malkhamb*, *Gulli-danda*, which are still popular in India.



The Snakes and Ladder game was created by the 13th century poet-saint Gyandev.

The ladders in the game represented virtues and the snakes indicated vices and the game was played with cowrie shells and dices. Later through time, the game became a karma game in which good deeds take one to heaven and bad deeds bring one down the snake (regression in one's evolution) to a cycle of re-birth.

The British took the game to England in 1892 and named it **Snakes and Ladders** as a recreational game.

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/3249615?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/3249615?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

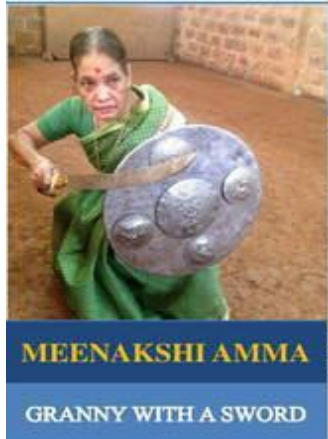
In addition, there was a transfer of folk stories from India's Panchatantra and Hitopadesha to the west, via Arabic and Chinese scholars who visited India. Many popular children fables can be traced to ancient Hindu sources.

We know that the Panchatantra stories traveled west from India and became *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* in Arabic (after the names of the two jackals *Karataka* and *Damanaka*). The name of the influential philosophical movement of Brethren of Purity (*ikhwan al-safa*) is itself traced to one of the Panchatantra stories. These stories and others from the *katha-sarita-sagara* were celebrated in the Arabian Nights and Sindbad. Scholars have also noted parallels between the Panchatantra and Aesop's fables.

Kak, Subhash, How Buddhist cultural memes were appropriated. February 6, 2016  
<https://swarajyamag.com/culture/how-buddhist-cultural-memes-were-appropriated-by-christianity/>

## MARTIAL ARTS

India has a strong tradition of martial arts which historically influenced martial arts throughout Asia and beyond, for example, the Shaolin Temple in China.



*Dhanur Veda*, a section found in the Vedas (1700 BCE - 1100 BCE) makes references to martial arts. Canonical scriptures and archaeological evidence show that Bodhidharma, a martial arts Guru from India went to China in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century and established a system of martial arts system known today as the Shaolin Temple. (Meir Shahrar, *The Shaolin Monastery: History, Religion and the Chinese Marital Arts*, pgs. 13-16)

Many forms of Indian martial arts survive today in pockets all over India. For example, Meenakshi Amma (77), recently honored by the Indian Government, who heads a martial arts school of *Kalaripayattu*. <http://indianexpress.com/article/trending/viral-videos-trending/meenakshiamma-kalaripayattu-2877207/>

## LOGIC AND REASON

Hinduism has a tradition of debate and values logic and reasoning in the search for truth, both experiential and spiritual. Nyāya's beginnings go back to the Vedic period, but its first systematic explanation is Akshapāda Gotama's *Nyāya Sūtra*, dated to the third century BCE.

The Nyāya system supposes that human beings are constructed to seek truth. Their minds are not empty slates; the very constitution of the mind provides some knowledge of the nature of the world. The four *pramānas* through which correct knowledge is acquired are *pratyaksha*, or direct perception; *anumāna*, or inference; *upamāna*, or analogy; and *shabda*, or verbal testimony. Four factors are involved in direct perception: the senses, their objects, the contact of the senses and the objects, and the cognition produced by this contact. The mind mediates between the self and the senses. When the mind is in contact with one sensory organ, it cannot be in contact with another. It is therefore said to be atomic in

**dimension.** Kak, Subhash, October 9, 2016, *A Vedic Touch to Logic in Indian Thought* <https://swarajyamag.com/culture/a-vedic-touch-to-logic-in-indian-thought-part-two>

## AYURVEDA

The Hindu word for health, *swastha*, means 'to be established in the Self' which gestures to holistic wellness - physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Ayurveda, known as the mother of medicine (Shroff, 2000), is a traditional holistic system, which aims to establish harmony among the different components of the human body, and aspects of its functioning. Treatment includes diagnosis by feeling the pulse, surgery, medicines, massage, and meditation, among other holistic interventions. Charaka and Sushruta are two famous early physicians, and the beginnings of their compendiums have been dated to seventh century BCE.

There is growing appreciation of Ayurveda all over the world (See P. M. Hegde on research on Ayurveda as modern medicine (<https://www.facebook.com/Scientific.Research.in.Ayurveda/>)). For example, Switzerland has approved Ayurveda as a complement to mainstream medicine from 2019.

The appropriation of Ayurveda, along with other indigenous knowledge, by western corporations in the areas of medicine, food, and skin care products, among others, is a concern. For example, the giant company Aveda, now owned by Estee Lauder, was started when the founder visited India and was introduced to Ayurvedic skin care products.

Reference: Duke Law School article here. <https://law.duke.edu/cspd/itkpaper3/>

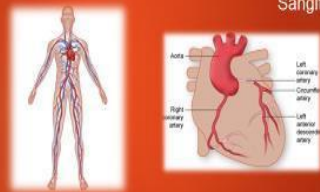
Photo: Samskrita Bharati, Canada

**MEDICINE**

**ARTERIES**

धमन्यो रक्त्वाहिन्योश्चतुर्विंशतिरीरिताः।  
कुल्यभिरिव केदारास्ताभिर्देहोभिवर्धते ॥

Sangita-ratnakara 2.105



There are 24 arteries that carry blood. These arteries take nutrient blood to different parts of the body for nourishing the body just as canals take water to farms



The AYUSH Department of the Indian Government is working to protect its indigenous knowledge with the help of the UN and other regulating bodies, including for patents. The World Health Organization recognizes Ayurveda as a Traditional Medicine and in 2003 initiated a strategy that seeks an "advancement of Ayurvedic system of medicine with a futuristic approach.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3255448/>

Photo: Artoflvingayurveda.com

Reference: Shroff, F. (2000). Ayurveda: Mother of Indigenous health knowledge.

## FEMINISM

This earth is my mother and I am the son of this earth - Atharva Veda, 12-1-12



<http://www.pragyata.com/mag/women-in-vedic-culture-362>

Among the many societies that can be found in the world, we have seen that some of the most venerating regard for women has been found in Vedic culture. The Vedic tradition has held a high regard for the qualities of women, and has retained the greatest respect within its tradition as seen in the honor it gives for the Goddess, who is portrayed as the feminine embodiment of important qualities and powers. These forms include those of Lakshmi (the goddess of fortune and queen of Lord Vishnu), Sarasvati (the goddess of learning), Subhadra (Krishna's sister and auspiciousness personified), Durga (the goddess of strength and power), Kali (the power of time), and other Vedic goddesses that exemplify inner strength and divine attributes. Even divine power in the form of *shakti* is considered feminine.

Stephen Knapp, 2017, <http://www.pragyata.com/mag/women-in-vedic-culture-362>

While the idea of feminism in the west is a modern awakening, the ancient Hindu scriptures have given feminine energy and women the highest position and role in society. Since ancient times there have been imminent female scholars, leaders, warriors, and saints. Hindus have raised the status of mother to the level of Goddess and in Hindu religion the portfolios of wealth, protection and learning has been assigned to feminine and referred to as *shakti* (as intelligent universal energy, Sanskrit non-translatable words) in the form of a *Devi*, (who embody *shakti* and loosely translated into Goddesses) Lakshmi, Durga and Saraswati, respectively. Respect for mother is extended to natural phenomena that provide sustenance for life. For example, creation and rivers are worshipped as mother.

The cow, provider of milk, is worshipped as mother. Overall, in Hindu tradition, everything good, blissful, protective and evil-destroying is associated with a mother-image.

**Hindus have been pained to see the misrepresentation and denigration of Hindu Goddess in the academia and media.** For example, the Toronto Star once carried a photo of the Goddess in the nude which led to peaceful protests by Hindus and an eventual apology. [http://www.ivarta.com/Cause/C23\\_TheStar\\_Durga.htm](http://www.ivarta.com/Cause/C23_TheStar_Durga.htm)

## ANIMAL RIGHTS

Animal rights are not new to India. Rather, they are inbuilt into its worldview because Hinduism sees all sentient being having an *atman*, divine spirit.

“Hinduism’s reach is not limited to humanity; its compassion reaches out to all, human and animal. Modern science perceives man as having evolved from animals. Hinduism sees God and the power and presence of God reflected in animals. All life is manifested from one source, and hence all life is sacred. Widespread vegetarianism among Hindus is a practical expression of this belief in the oneness of all life. Vegetarianism grows from ethical and moral considerations.” - Mandal Lal Goel (personal communication)

The numerous Hindu deities are accompanied by different animals; a fish, tortoise, boar, and lion are described as *Avatars* (reincarnations) of Lord Vishnu. Hindus revere cows; cows are more than household pets - they are family members and revered as mother. Hinduism is therefore opposed to the unnecessary medical testing of drugs and procedures on animals. Hindus have also opposed genetic modification to crops.

## ENVIRONMENTALISM AND VEGETARIANISM

Hundreds of vegetarian dishes are prepared as a *bhog* or offering to Lord Krishna at a Hindu festival. Later food is donated and consumed by visitors and devotees.



**Hindus are the world’s largest vegetarian population.**

Along with viewing animals as sentient, Hindus revere nature and worship involves the use of the five elements in nature.

Photo: Swaminarayan Mandir, Toronto.  
Mandir website

**Vegetarianism is an integral part of Hindu ethics; due to reverence for animal rights most Hindus are vegetarians.**

With the largest number of vegetarians in the world, India offers world famous vegetarian cuisine that is rooted in the nutrition guidelines presented in Ayurveda to promote wellness. Hindus are vegetarians and are opposed to the unnecessary medical testing on animals. Today, modern science is proving that vegetarianism is ecologically better. For example, it has been found that giving up beef would reduce carbon footprint more than cars.

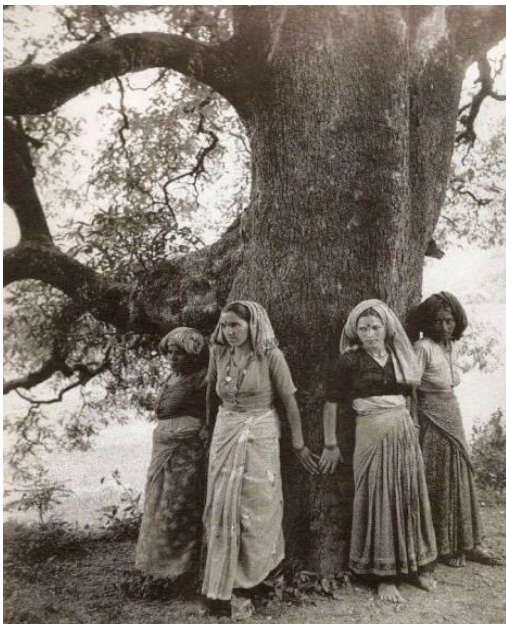
[https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jul/21/giving-up-beef-reduce-carbon-footprint-more-than-cars?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jul/21/giving-up-beef-reduce-carbon-footprint-more-than-cars?CMP=share_btn_tw)



Hindus revere animals and see them as sentient beings and many are used in religious celebration.

For example, cows, rivers, mountains and trees are worshipped. Protection of environment may be a recent development in the west, but it has been a tradition in India for thousands of years.

Photo: [goo.gl/HTyZEj](http://goo.gl/HTyZEj)



The yogic principle of *Aparigraha*, the virtue of non-attachment to material things, has inspired Hindus towards simple living and high thinking.

The first tree-hugging, as a form of non-violent resistance, happened in India in 1730. Over 300 men and women clung to trees to protect them from being cut down as raw material to build a palace.

<http://amp.weforum.org/agenda/2017/10/what-india-can-teach-the-world-about-sustainability>

According to the World Economic Forum report, India is the least wasteful economy and the Indians are most efficient in recycling and sustainable practices. India is a world leader in sustainable living. India occupies the top spot in the world in the Greendex (an index measuring housing, transport, food and goods).

## NATYA – PERFORMING ARTS



Photo left: India's Independence Day celebration in Brampton, credit: Jaison Mathew



Photo right: Children at Guruvayurappan Temple in Brampton perform. <http://www.guruvayur.ca/>

In Hinduism *Natya*, as performing arts, was traditionally understood and recognized as a tool to express devotion to the divine and a way to “Bridge the outer and inner realms.” – Shekhar Shastri

Famous Canadian Film maker, Deepa Mehta has talked about being inspired by the ancient treatise known as *Natya Shastras*, written 2, 500 years ago.

Children celebrating Diwali by enacting the Ramayana depiction by KC Group. Photo credit: Ankita Sinha



Deepa speaks on how she uses the *Natya Shastra*, an ancient Indian instructional text for artists and performers, as the base for her actors' character development process. A grid of the 9 “pure” emotions is drawn with chalk on the floor, silence being the centre that anchors all the emotions together. “Then it’s very easy for the actors to actually walk through with their lines and interpret it through every different emotion and maybe put one foot in bravery and one foot in cowardice and how would you say your line then? One in hatred and one in love? Or one without saying anything?”

<http://mixedbagmag.com/tag/natya-shastra/>



In ancient India, music, dance, drama, and other arts thrived with an unprecedented glow and popular reach; scholars thought deeply about the underpinnings of great art, the artist, and the dialogue with the audience. They saw the artist as forever engaged in building a bridge between the outer and inner realms.

In *Natyashastra*, an artist's palette could be earthly materials, nature, sound, light and her own body...

- Shekhar Shastri

Image of ancient sculptures of dance and music and quote above from <http://indianewengland.com/2016/06/awaken-performer-within-secrets-natyashastra/>

Similarly, “the narratives and iconography of Krishna dancing with his devotees exemplifies, evokes and reinforces the ‘rasa’ (inner emotional states) of the devotees as they attempt to unite inwardly with their ‘*ishta-devata*’ (personal deity). Such expressions are not reserved for use by a spiritual elite; rather, they inform and engage the entire culture and are part of the folk narratives known to every Hindu. *The natya* is created by taking significant details from each of the Vedas: *pathya* or recitative text from the Rigveda, song or melody from the Samaveda, abhinaya or acting from the Yajurveda, and sentiments from the Atharvaveda. Since the four Vedas come together in the dramatic performance, natya is called the Fifth Veda.” Kak,

Subhash, 2002, *Early Indian Music*, 2002 pg. 17

<https://www.ece.lsu.edu/kak/manila.pdf>



In Hinduism, classical dance is conceived as an internalized spiritual practice: using movement, sound, and emotion to internalize the cosmology and epistemology within the dancer's body. It is the only major world religion to have been successfully transmitted through such embodiment for so long. This is exemplified by the iconographic depiction of Shiva-Nataraja, which is a stylized projection of Shiva manifested as the ascetic master of sacred dance.

Kak, Subhash, *Early Indian music*, 2002

<https://www.ece.lsu.edu/kak/manila.pdf>

Photo: Shreenath Kalahasti Photography

## MUSIC

In Hinduism music has a place that is superior over spoken word in its value and it been imagined as an instrument of worship. The Samaveda, one of the four Vedas, is dedicated to describing its nature.



Photo above: Venky Jayaraman

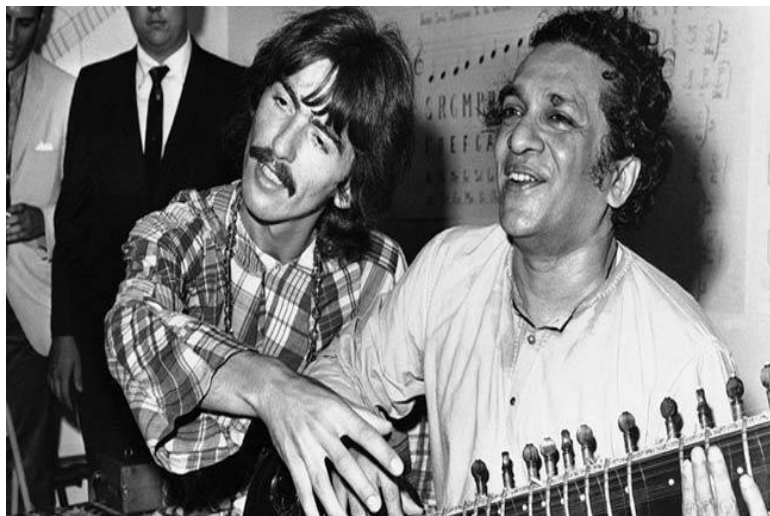
The Samaveda, meant to be sung, is equated to heaven while the Rigveda is equated to the earth. It is through music that the earthly human is advised to seek divinity. The hymns of the Rigveda are for grounding, but song and sacred theatre (provided by the ritual of the Yajurveda) are essential to soar...Music, as a constituent of Indian art, is best understood from the point of view of rasa. The sounds, presented through the body of sentiments and moods, evoke a state (rasavastha) in which transcendental bliss is experienced. - Kak, Subhash, 2002, *Early Indian Music*, 2002 pg.

2. <https://www.ece.lsu.edu/kak/manila.pdf>

**The highly developed Hindu music system has been recognized to have had impact on a wide range of west music genres, surprisingly starting with jazz and percolating into classical music and pop.**

"Gypsy bands ... travelled from village to village accompanying the 'strong' dancing of soldiers who recruited continuously for Nicolas the Magnificent's military operations. The style of this x (the so-called 'recruiting' music), – a deliberate fusion of earlier Gypsy music (such as the 16th century works preserved in organ tablature) and elements of the western European tradition, – influenced Haydn and other classical composers because it was favored by public taste. As a national fashion this style remained popular through the 19th century with composers such as Beethoven, Hummel, Schubert, Brahms, von Weber, Doppler and especially Liszt writing in a 'style Hongrois' influenced by the jagged rhythms and fantastic cadences of the verbunkos style." Linda Burman-Hall, 2000. *Haydn and the gypsies*. Pg. 20

Photo below: <http://sessionville.com/articles/the-influence-of-indian-music-on-jazz>



Jazz, with its diverse beginnings in jam sessions, the black church, night clubs, and even brothels, was forged in the cauldron of 20th century segregated America in such places as New Orleans, Kansas City, and New York, and is now heard as well in concert halls around the world. Indian music's influence on jazz is pervasive and longstanding...Its philosophical underpinnings have allowed many musicians to deepen the spiritual aspect of their music. For many jazz musicians the influences have been personal, at times abstract; informing their musical choices, but not always in a manner overtly apparent to the listener. For a few however, the influence is so strong, it is immediately apparent at every level of their music.

- Marc Rossi, 2013. *The Influence of Indian music on Jazz* <http://sessionville.com/articles/the-influence-of-indian-music-on-jazz>

### 3. INTRODUCTION TO HINDUISM



Photo credit: Himalayan Academy (2007), *What is Hinduism?* Book cover

Hinduism teaches about spirituality. Hindus believe that all humans are born as spiritual beings whose true nature is truth, consciousness and joy – referred to as *satchitananda*

“A major reason why Hinduism seems difficult to understand is its diversity. Hinduism is not a monolithic tradition. There isn’t a one Hindu opinion on things. And there is no single spiritual authority to define matters for the faith. There are several different denominations, the largest being Vaishnavism, Saivism, Shaktism... Further, there are numberless schools of thought, or sampradayas, expressed in tens of thousands of guru lineages, or paramparas. Each is typically independent and self-contained in its authority. In a very real sense, this grand tradition can be defined and understood as ten thousand faiths gathered in harmony under a single umbrella called Hinduism, or Sanatana Dharma.” Himalayan Academy, 2007, *What is Hinduism*, pg.xi

An explanation of Hinduism involves use of Sanskrit, the language of Hindu sacred texts. Most of the important Sanskrit terms which explain Hinduism do not have English equivalents and thus cannot be substituted with English ones without an explanation of their cultural and metaphysical contexts. For example, “Hello” does not capture the Hindu greeting *Namaste* which means “The divinity in me bows down to the divinity in you”. Similarly, English word “God” (as a judging, external power) does not explain *Ishwara* or *Brahman* (as all-pervading universal consciousness) and “soul” (born a sinner, who lives once) does not explain *atman* (as divine consciousness that reincarnates and accumulates karma). When used for convenience here, these English words are to be understood within their contexts, as explained.

## WHO IS A HINDU?



Photo: Hare Krishna Rath Yatra, via Neetu Arora

Traditionally Hindu religion is passed on by birth – Hindus are born into and initiated into the traditions of their family. Hinduism is not a proselytizing religion and does not seek to convert others; in fact, it upholds the individual's rights to freedom of religion. In modern times people from all over the world have chosen to practice Hinduism, mostly by becoming a follower of a Guru, a living saint who embodies the knowledge of Hinduism, or by joining a Hindu group or organization. For example, actress Julia Roberts became a Hindu after her research on her film, *Eat, Pray, Love*. Millions of people around the world are partaking in the teaching of Hinduism through the practice of Yoga and meditation or studying Hindu scriptures such as the Vedas or Bhagavad Gita for knowledge of the Self. They can do so by honoring of the traditional roots of these knowledges and without the requirement for religious conversion.



Photo on left: Service or Seva is part of Hinduism - Tree planting by Hindu Swayam Sevak, Canada

### **“GOD” AS ISHWAR, BRAHMAN AND PARAMATMA**

As mentioned earlier, Sanskrit words embody the essence, meaning or metaphysics of Hinduism and have cultural contexts, and therefore do not translate into English without explanations. This applies to the many terms used for “God” in Hinduism which are *Ishwara*, *Brahman* and *Paramatman* understood as divine universal consciousness pervading all creation, both human and non-human.

In Hinduism, there is no equivalent of an external Satan or Anti-Christ. There is no Anti-Brahman or Anti-Ishwara or Anti-Shiva whatsoever, because good and bad are inextricably intertwined...Brahman includes everything, both good and bad. The negative forces are personified as a multitude of powerful intelligences... (Malhotra, 2011, *Being Different*, pg. 189)

The sections that follow provide further explanation of these important differences.

## ONE GOD, MANY FORMS



Credit: Photo 1: Hare Krishna website



Photos 2 and 3: Vishnu Mandir

As a family of faiths, Hinduism upholds a wide array of perspectives on the Divine, yet all worship the one, all-pervasive Supreme Being hailed in the Upanishads. As Absolute Reality, God is unmanifest, unchanging and transcendent, the Self God, timeless, formless and spaceless. As Pure Consciousness, God is the manifest primal substance, pure love and light flowing through all form, existing everywhere in time and space as infinite intelligence and power. Himalayan Academy, 2007, pg. xiii

Perhaps the single most common rhetorical question Hindus face is “Why there are so many gods and why do Hindus worship idols?” In reversing the gaze on those asking this question, it becomes apparent that the questions may reveal the intolerance, even hatred, of idol worship among some in the west. It was due to this racism and bigotry that Hindus have historically experienced genocide, both cultural and physical for over thousand years. From a human rights perspective, the Hindu response to the question could be: So, what if we do? Does freedom of religion in democracies preclude “idol worship” of “many gods?” (Even though this is an incorrect interpretation of Hinduism). For those who ask this question from a place of respectful curiosity, the following explanation will be illuminating. Hinduism has a different worldview than that presented in Abrahamic religions because in Hinduism there is no separation between ‘God’ and creation, including human being. The following excerpt is helpful in explaining the Hindu worldview.

What is the nature of God in Hinduism is a question that defies a facile answer, for in the Hindu family of faiths each has its own perspective on the Supreme Being, and its own Deity or Deities. - Himalayan, p. xvi



The fundamental concept in Hinduism is that God as *Ishwara*, *Brahman* or *Paramatman*, is one but has many attributes and many functions and hence may be called by many different names or worshipped in many forms.

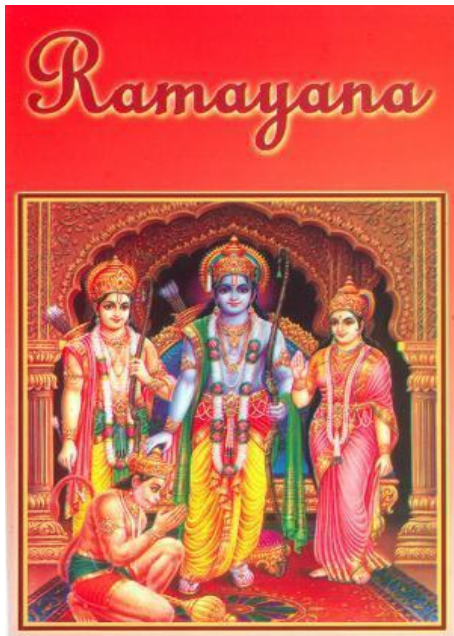
Photo of a family altar: bhaskaraprakasha.com

To provide an explanation of how the idea of One God transfers into seeing God in many forms, such as stones, trees, rivers and mountains, this quote is instructive.

Hindus believe that each conscious being is related to God as a drop is to the ocean. All these drops are part of one coherent divine play/dance called 'leela'. There is an infinite number of individual souls in the dance, each of which makes choices and receives the consequences. Liberation is the state of freedom in which the individual ego, which is creating karma and being bound by its consequences, radically transforms and loses its separateness from the Ultimate Reality.

– Malhotra, *Being Different*, 2011, pg. 295

## RELIGIOUS BOOKS



While there is no one Hindu sacred text such as the Bible or Quran, the Bhagavad Gita is most recognized as encapsulating the essence of Hinduism and is used by Hindus in courts for oath taking.

Over thousands of years, the vast knowledge in Sanskrit was passed down accurately through the oral tradition of *Guru Parampara* (lineage) and was later written down as texts. Adi Shankara, the 8<sup>th</sup> century reformer of Hinduism who founded Advaita Vedanta, wrote many important texts. Although many ancient texts were destroyed during India's almost thousand years of colonization, the current collections still run into millions of pages. For example, one text, the Mahabharata, written over 5000 years ago by sage Vyasa, is about eight times the length of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" combined.

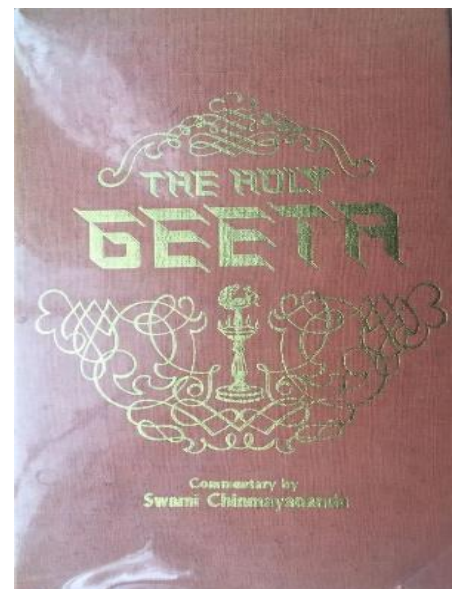
Here is an overview of texts:

“The holiest and most revered are the Vedas and Agamas, two massive compendia of shruti (that which is “heard”), revealed ...to illumined sages centuries and millennia ago. It is said the Vedas are general and the Agamas specific, as the Agamas speak directly to the details of worship, the yogas, mantra, tantra, temple building and such. The most widely known part of the Vedas are the Upanishads, which form the more general philosophical foundations of the faith. The array of secondary scripture, known as smriti (that which is “remembered”), is equally vast, the most prominent and widely celebrated of which are the Itihasas (epic dramas and history— specifically the Ramayana and Mahabharata) and the Puranas (sacred history and mythology). The ever-popular Bhagavad Gita is a small portion of the Mahabharata. The Vedic arts and sciences, including Ayurveda, astrology, music, dance, architecture, statecraft, domestic duty and law, are reflected in an assembly of texts known as Vedangas and Upavedas.” Himalayan Academy, 2007, pg. xv

The vast knowledge of the Hindu texts is deeply inspiring. Understanding them fully requires the guidance of a spiritual guru who can also explain how to apply the wisdom and knowledge to one’s daily life. Different texts emerged over time to offer both spiritual and practical knowledge of life and its purpose. The Bhagavad Geeta is accepted as the most important book of Hindus.

## SANATANA DHARMA

The term “Hindu” does not exist in the Hindu sacred texts.



The term was coined hundreds of years ago by ancient Persian travellers to refer to people living beyond the Sindhu River in India, now Pakistan (S was pronounced as H in their language). Later, the Greeks called the Hindu (ie Sindhu) “Indos” and the people “Indoi.” These words were translated into English as “Indus” and” “Indians”, terms which continue till today. Hindu prefer the term *Sanatana Dharma*; some refer to it as *Vaidika Dharma* (rooted in the Vedas) or *Manava Dharma* (religion of humanity)

Photo credit: Hare Krishna Facebook Page - Neetu Arora)

## WHAT IS DHARMA?

**Swadharma:** each person finds his or her own path.  
**Devotion** is one path.



Photo credit: Hare Krishna Facebook page, via Neetu Arora

The Hindu idea of Dharma forms the core of Hindu religion and is to be understood in context to Hindu cosmology and worldview. Two quotes below explain this context.

The word ‘dharma’ has multiple meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Monier-Williams’s A Concise Sanskrit-English Dictionary lists several, including: conduct, duty, right, justice, virtue, morality, religion, religious merit, good work according to a right or rule...Many others have been suggested, such as law or ‘torah’ (in the Judaic sense), ‘logos’ (Greek), ‘way’ (Christian) and even ‘tao’ (Chinese). None of these is entirely accurate, and none conveys the full force of the term in Sanskrit. Dharma has the Sanskrit root dhri, which means ‘that which upholds’ or ‘that without which nothing can stand’ or ‘that which maintains the stability and harmony of the universe’. Dharma encompasses the natural, innate behaviour of things, duty, law, ethics, virtue, etc. For example, the laws of physics describe current human understanding of the dharma of physical systems. Every entity in the cosmos has its particular dharma – from the electron, which has the dharma to move in a certain manner, to the clouds, galaxies, plants, insects, and of course, man. Dharma has no equivalent in the Western lexicon” (Malhotra, 2011, Being Different, p. 259-60)

**The idea of dharma therefore applies not only to humans but to whole of creation which is endowed with order and divine laws which prevail “on every level of existence, from the sustaining cosmic order to religious and moral laws which bind us in harmony with that order...Dharma is to the individual what its normal development is to a seed—the orderly fulfillment of an inherent nature and destiny”.**

- Himalayan, xiii

## THE GOAL OF A HINDU

The goal of a Hindu is to move towards merging individual consciousness, *atman*, to its source, the divine universal consciousness, *Paramatman*. The aim of Self-realization (*Atmajnana*), or God-realization (*Brahmajnana*) is understood as realizing the knowledge of Oneness of universal divine consciousness. The goal of realizing this Reality of Oneness may be achieved through direct experience, or intuition or insight. - Chinmaya Mission



The true nature of *atman* is *sat-chit-anand* (truth, divine consciousness and bliss), which is different from the Abrahamic idea of the soul being born as a sinner.

According to the dharmic traditions, man is not born into original sin, though he is burdened by his past conditioning (*from previous births*), which makes him unaware of his true nature. Fortunately, he has the innate capacity to transcend this condition and achieve *sat-chit-ananda*...Interestingly, given its link to the belief in reincarnation and karma, race, gender and other forms of identity are relative to one's current birth only; one's divine identity is most important. As well, Hindus believe that not only humans but also animals, plants and other creatures have *atman*, although only humans can achieve Self-Realization (Malhotra, 2011, *Being Different*, pg. 66)

The aim of seeking Self-Realization has often been misunderstood to mean that Hindu religion promotes neglect of worldly responsibilities or pleasure.

"There is a false concept... that Hinduism is world-negating. This depiction was foisted upon the world by 19th-century Western missionary Orientalists traveling in India for the first time and reporting back about its starkest and strangest aspects, not unlike what Western journalists tend to do today. The wild-looking, world-renouncing yogis, taking refuge in caves, denying the senses and thus the world, were of sensational interest, and their world-abandonment became, through the scholars' eyes, characteristic of the entire religion. While Sanatana Dharma proudly upholds such severe ways of life for the few, it is very much a family oriented faith. The vast majority of followers are engaged in family life, firmly grounded in responsibilities in the world." Himalayan Academy, 2007, pg. xx

Suggested readings:

Malhotra, R. (2011). *Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism*. Noida, India: Harper Collins.

Malhotra, R. (2014). *Indra's Net: Defending Hinduism's Philosophical Unity*. Noida, India: Harper Collins.

## DIFFERENT PATHS (PURUSHARTHAS) TO SELF REALIZATION



Photo credit: Swaminarayan Mandir website

Hindus have a choice of four paths to Self-Realization: *Gyan Yog* (path of Knowledge), *Karma Yog* (path of service, action), *Bhakti Yog* (path of love and devotion) and *Dhyan Yog* (path of meditation). These paths are not mutually exclusive, and most Hindus chose a combination of all four to guide them in life and their spiritual journey. While Hindus may pursue these paths on their own, the role of learning at the feet of a realized Guru is valued because a Guru can offer an individualized and intimate space for spiritual learning and growth. Because of this freedom of expression, *Sanatana Dharma* has innumerable diverse denominations lead by different sages or Gurus while being within the core Hindu philosophy.

*'Ekam Sat Vipraah Bahudhaa vadanti'*

Truth is one and the sages call it by different names - RIG VEDA, 1-164-46

Moreover, as described in the Bhagavad Gita, it is up to each person to discover his or her own unique dharma, called *swadharma*, or personal call-of-character (Chinmayananda, 1996. p. 89). Each person must discover his or her own *swadharma*, according to one's own interests, talents and inclinations. Therefore, Hindus can choose on how to move from the daily behavioral sphere of existence (*Vyavaharika*) to the spiritual sphere of realizing the Ultimate Reality (*Paramarthika*). Among them are the following (quote):

- *Darshana* (philosophy) is an intellectual method requiring analytical capabilities
- *Dhyana* (meditation) is available without the need for analysis since its entirely experiential
- *Yajna* is the embodied performance combining mental, physical and vocal components
- *Bhakti* is way to channel one's emotions towards the divine (includes music)
- *Kavya* is literature that can be merely entertaining, or can also be means of expressing transcendence (includes dance and drama)

(Malhotra, 2016, Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism. Noida, India: Harper Collins. Pg. 98)

## THE FOUR AIMS OF LIFE



Service to humanity or *Seva* is viewed to be an expression of love and is very much part of being a Hindu. Feeding others is one important aspect of service.

Photo credit: Bharti Sheoran – Hindu Heritage Month celebration in Peel District School Board, October 2017

There are four aims of life in *Santana Dharma*: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*.

*Dharma*, refers to following one's personal calling, within ethical, social, intellectual, spiritual and religious duties. *Artha* is related to "acquisition of wealth in order to progress towards higher pursuits of life". *Kama* is related to the enjoyment of pleasures of life, including all sensual pleasures such as sex, within balance and equanimity. *Moksha* "means liberation...It is the experience of emancipation and beatitude, possible only when one is free from physical, psychological, intellectual and environmental afflictions"

(*Bhagavad Gita*, 1.30-31) Iyengar, 2014, p. 267-268).



In Hinduism, *diyas* or lamps are traditionally lit to mark an auspicious occasion, such as a gathering for peace, knowledge or *puja*.

The lighting of *diyas* signifies the dispelling of darkness of ignorance with the light of knowledge



Planting trees is a service project that many Hindus are involved in. Photo: Mission Green Earth

Hinduism is not self-negating. The enjoyment of life, including participation in civic society, accumulation of wealth, enjoyment of sensual pleasure such as food and sex, are very much seen as part of living as a Hindu.

Hinduism explains the human entanglements in sense objects as *Maya* or illusion because emotions, thoughts and feelings change and are therefore do not represent the Self, which is unchanging, *Sat-chit-anand*. Hindus are taught to practice *viveka* and *vairagya*. *Viveka* means knowing that everything is changing and only the Self, is unchanging, as the observer of all that is happening. *Vairagya* is developing dispassion so that one can remain centred and better cope with the inevitable up and downs of life. At the same time material wealth and other sense pleasures are not to be shunned but enjoyed in moderation. As noted earlier, ancient India was a flourishing economy, with manufacturing and trade, where material wealth was not seen as an impediment to spiritual goals. "The Vedas stress the need for the balancing of the outer and the inner. Tīśa Upanishad 9 warns:

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Into blind darkness fall those who worship materiality.  
 Into even greater darkness fall who are absorbed only in the spirit. (IU 9)

(Kak, Subhash, December 26, 2015, <https://swarajyamag.com/books/why-india-missed-the-scientific-revolution>)

## ETHICS

In addition to the idea of Dharma, Hinduism has numerous texts that speak to the importance of ethics for individuals. For example, the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* offer the following framework for ethics, both social and personal that should guide practice.

### **Yamas: five social ethics or the universal vows:**

- *Ahimsa* - nonviolence in action, speech and thoughts
- *Satyam* - truthfulness in intention, remaining established in the higher truth
- *Asteya* - non-stealing, physically and mentally, not desiring things that belong to others
- *Brahmacharya* - continuously abiding in the awareness of Divine consciousness and celibacy (moderation in all pleasures)
- *Aparigraha* - not accumulating things unnecessarily

### **Niyamas: five personal ethics:**

- *Shaucha* - cleanliness of the body and mind
- *Santosh* - contentment and happiness
- *Tapas* - austerity and self-discipline
- *Swadhyaya* - study of the Self and abiding in the Self
- *Ishwarapranidhana* - honouring and surrendering to the Divine

These inter-related ideas are complex and require guidance of gurus or study of commentaries. For example, the idea of ahimsa or non-violence does not mean that killing is not permitted; rather it implies a duty to do least harm, when faced with a situation.

Reference: Iyengar, B. K. S. (2014). *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Noida, India: Harper Collins

Hindus brought the idea of *Ahimsa* or doing least harm to the world. It is one of their core values. *Ahimsa* means doing least harm. There have been many Hindu saints and activists who have spread the message of peace and non-violence to people all over the world. Mahatma Gandhi was one such activist for peace who inspired great world leaders such as Martin Luther King in the US and Nelson Mandela in South Africa.

Watch this film online <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2009/04/03/april-3-2009-mlk-jr-in-gandhis-footsteps/2569/>

Nojeim, Michael J (2004). Gandhi and King: the power of nonviolent resistance. Praeger, Westport, Conn:  
[http://www.academia.edu/9980363/Gandhi\\_and\\_King\\_A\\_Comparison](http://www.academia.edu/9980363/Gandhi_and_King_A_Comparison)

## HINDU COSMOLOGY



Photo credit:

<https://hinduexistence.org/2012/07/14/god-particle-cern-lord-shiva-nataraj/>

Photo of Nataraja at CERN, Switzerland

In 2004 a statue of the Nataraja was installed at the grounds at CERN. It was a gift from the Indian government.

The statue represents a metaphor between the  
cosmic dance of the Nataraja  
and  
the modern study of the 'cosmic dance'  
of subatomic particles.

Hindu cosmology sees *Ishwara* or *Brahman* as omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient divine consciousness. In Hindu cosmology, God is inseparable from creation: God is all permeating, nothing is outside God which means that there is no Satan as outside God, competing with God. Sacred texts declare *Sarvam khalvidam Brahma* – All of this is Brahman.

According to Hindu cosmology, the world exists as a projection of God – referred to as Brahman or universal consciousness, who is both transcendent and immanent: God is present in every atom of the cosmos. Being transcendent, Brahman is beyond any attributes. However, in its immanent form it may be visualized in many different ways, leading to a multiplicity of representations. It also means that in Hinduism all living being, including insects and animals have *aatma*, loosely understood as divine consciousness. The evolution of the universe is by laws (*rita*), yet sentient beings have freedom. (Subhash Kak, Hindu Perspectives, In Thomas Gale (2005), Encyclopedia of Science, Technology and Ethics)

## VIEW OF CREATION

By me is this entire universe pervaded. All things are in Me, and I in them. Know that as the mighty wind blowing everywhere rests in the sky, all created beings rest in Me. I am the Father, the Mother, the Supporter and the Grandsire of the universe. (Bhagavad Gita, 9:4, 6, 17)

Hindu texts such as the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purānas* address the question of creation.

It is said that humans arose at the end of a chain, at the beginning of which were plants and various kind of animals. In Vedic evolution the urge to evolve into higher forms is taken to be inherent in nature. A system of evolution from inanimate to progressively higher life is a consequence of the different proportions of the three basic attributes of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, which represent transparency, activity, and inertia, respectively. In its undeveloped state, cosmic matter has these qualities in equilibrium. As the world evolves, one or another of these becomes preponderant in different objects or beings, giving specific character to each. Subhash Kak, Hindu Perspectives, In Thomas Gale (2005), *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology and Ethics*, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/hindu-perspectives>

Thus, the Hindu view of creation is not in conflict with the modern scientific theory of evolution. The Vedas describe creation is cyclical with “*yugas*” (period of millions of years) of creation followed by destruction and re-birth. There is no idea end of the world, with judgement day as in the Abrahamic religion. Further God as the creator is described as creating the universe as a divine play of consciousness:

God is complete in Himself/Herself. He/she lacks nothing. God is not compelled to create. God creates for joy. Creation is an act of Ananda, joy or bliss. God fulfills himself in his creation, just as an artist fulfills himself in his creative work. As God contains all, the creation is more accurately described as a manifestation. God becomes the creation. The creation is His *Lila*, a play. But we should not conclude that it is whimsical. There is a purpose in the cosmos which is both earnest and joyful. God dwells in each article of his creation He is in us, and we are in Him. Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that the universe is strung around his neck like pearls on a string. (Prof. M. L Goel, personal communication)

Therefore, God is not diminished by his creation. He is full and complete before creation and full and complete after creation, as expressed in this important Hindu chant is as follows:

*Om Purnamadah Purnamidam*

Om. That (referring to God) is complete.

*Purnat purnam udacyate*

This (referring to Creation) is complete

*Purnasya purnamadaya*

From the complete springs forth the complete.

*Purnameva vasisyate*

When the complete is taken from the complete, what remains is still complete.

## CORE HINDU PHILOSOPHIES: SELF AS DIVINE, KARMA, REINCARNATION

### DIVINE SELF

The Hindu “Good News” is that in Hinduism every person is born divine.

Humans being are not born as sinners. For Hindus, the core of one’s being is a divine unchanging *atman* (Self, spirit) whose nature is *Sat-Chit-Anand* (truth, consciousness and bliss). The Self is stillness, an observer, and represents the *paramarthika* or spiritual plane of being. The body, along with the mind and five senses through which we perceive the world, is matter. The body, mind and senses are involved in the drama of life, much like a movie, in the *vyavaharika* or behavioural plane of existence. Both are valued as it is only through the body that one can experience the bliss of divine consciousness: the body is the temple in which the *atman* resides.

### KARMA

Most people understand the idea that for every action there is a reaction or the idea that what you sow, so you reap. However, Karma has several different connotations.

“Karma literally means “deed” or “act” and more broadly names the universal principle of cause and effect, action and reaction which governs all life. Karma is a natural law of the mind, just as gravity is a law of matter.

Karma is not fate, for man acts with free will, creating his own destiny. The Vedas tell us, if we sow goodness, we will reap goodness; if we sow evil, we will reap evil. Karma refers to the totality of our actions and their concomitant reactions in this and previous lives, all of which determines our future. It is the interplay between our experience and how we respond to it that makes karma devastating or helpfully invigorating. The conquest of karma lies in intelligent action and dispassionate reaction. Not all karmas rebound immediately. Some accumulate and return unexpectedly in this or other births. The Vedas explain, As one acts, so does he become. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action.” (Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.5). (Himalayan Academy, 2007, pg. xii)

It can mean action or latent action. The impression of an action that might give rise to another action can also be called karma. In fact, every thought or action gives rise to a karma. There is individual karma, family karma, society karma and the karma of space and time. Since it is impossible to know which karma is in effect at a given time, Lord Krishna said to Arjuna, “*Gahana karmano gatih*”, which means that the ways of karma are unfathomable. These ideas can be difficult to grasp, and Hindus have traditionally turned to living saints or enlightened gurus for understanding.

Karma has been misunderstood as leading to fatalism. Karma supports self-effort; one is to put in best effort and then let go. Past is seen as destiny, future as free will.

“The Indian approach to suffering is therefore neither fatalistic acceptance nor the opposite, belief in total freedom in man’s present condition. The desirable attitude is pragmatic and requires differentiation between the short, medium and long terms. In the present moment, there must be dispassionate acceptance of suffering, while in the medium term one must work steadfastly to minimize it, and eventually, in the long term, one must transcend the sphere in which karma operates.” Malhotra, Rajiv, 2011, *Being Different*, pg. 296

## REINCARNATION

Reincarnation or rebirth, along with Karma, are core ideas of Hinduism.

Reincarnation, *punarjanma*, is the natural process of birth, death and rebirth.

“At death we drop off the physical body and continue evolving in the inner worlds in our subtle bodies, until we again enter into birth. Through the ages, reincarnation has been the great consoling element within Hinduism, eliminating the fear of death. We are not the body in which we live but the immortal soul which inhabits many bodies in its evolutionary journey through samsara. After death, we continue to exist in unseen worlds, enjoying or suffering the harvest of earthly deeds until it comes time for yet another physical birth. The actions set in motion in previous lives form the tendencies and conditions of the next. Reincarnation ceases when karma is resolved, God is realized and moksha, liberation, is attained. The Vedas state, “After death, the soul goes to the next world, bearing in mind the subtle impressions of its deeds, and after reaping their harvest returns again to this world of action. Thus, he who has desires continues subject to rebirth” (Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.6). Himalayan Academy, xiii

The body drops like a piece of old clothing at death and is cremated; the atman moves on to rest on an astral plane until its rebirth. What is reborn is not the body, but the atman, with the memories of its previous birth only as impressions on the mind/inclinations as the essence of the previous birth.

## FAITH

On this path there is no discontinuity, no break. There is no loss of effort. Even a little bit of faith protects a man from great fear.

(Bhagavad Gita, 2:40).

For Hindus, faith is not a matter of belief in a historical God who she will face on Judgement Day. Faith is more about knowing there is a higher force that is taking care of everything: the universe and life. Hinduism teaches that man is the architect of his own life. One is shaped according to one’s faith, his deepest aspirations, and his yearning.

One becomes what one thinks, desires, and aspires to. In this view, the Spirit exists prior to Matter. If you wish to change your life, you have first to change your consciousness. Sri Aurobindo explained as follows:

The erring race of human beings dreams always of perfecting their environment by the machinery of government and society; but it is only by the perfection of the soul within that the outer environment can be perfected. What thou art within, that outside thee thou shall enjoy; no machinery can rescue thee from the law of thy being.

(M. L. Goel, personal communication)

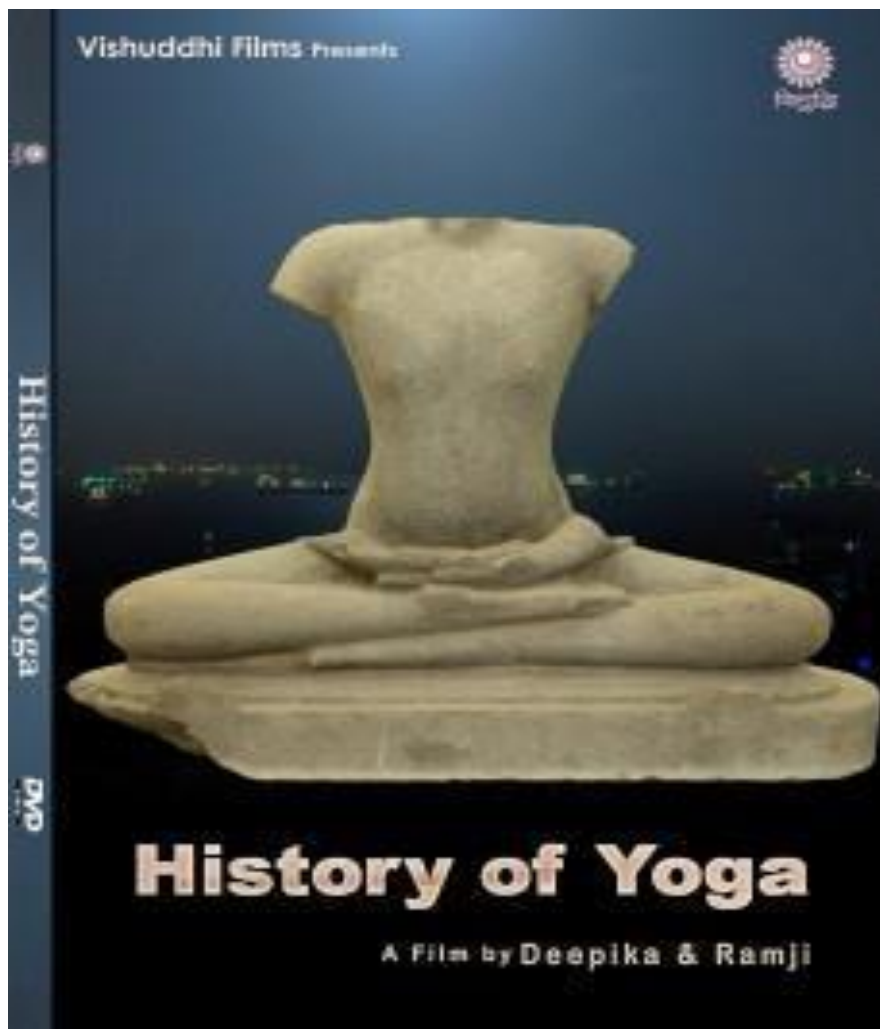
## YOGA AND MEDITATION



According to Yoga, the secret to health and happiness lies deep within every human by the very fact that the Self (atman) is *Sat-Chit-Anand* (Truth, consciousness and bliss). Yoga is the science of discovering one's own self - the very source of pure consciousness, peace, and bliss

The popularity of Yoga and meditation started with the arrival of Gurus from India to USA and Europe. While viewed mostly in the west as the physical practice of *asanas*, Yoga in fact is a catch all term to the philosophy and practice of Hinduism. Yoga, a Sanskrit word derived from 'yuj' meaning 'yoke' or union, was cognized 5000-6000 years ago in India by numerous *rishis*, a Sanskrit term for enlightened teachers or contemplative scientists (Malhotra, 2011, p. 73). Ancient texts describe yoga as the 'yoke' to mean the union of matter, meaning the body, with *Atman* (divine Self), and hence the traditional connotation of Yoga with spirituality. Another interpretation of the term 'yoke' refers to the achievement of union of the mind and body through the breath. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna elaborates on another aspect of Yoga: *yogah karmasu kaushalam* // BG 2.50 //: Yoga is skill in action. In Yogic context, the term consciousness refers to that which is beyond time and space: it is all just vibration, both at the individual level and cosmic and universal level (Shankar, 2003, p. 4). The *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, (PYS) were written more than 2000 years ago.

Patanjali is considered as “one of the earliest systematic scholars of the mind sciences in the world. His famous *Yoga-Sutras* contain an elaborate theory and framework for understanding the mind, various practices to achieve specific states, and descriptions of what the practitioner experiences at each stage” (Malhotra, 2004, p. 292)



Watch video: History of Yoga (documentary) '*History of Yoga – the Path of my Ancestors* which is a 6000-year journey into origin, evolution & development of yoga. Watch trailer here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yh4tA8jQDII&feature=youtu.be>  
Order online at <http://vishuddhifilms.com/>

Suggested book:

Iyengar, B. K. S. (2014). *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Noida, India: Harper Collins

## THE FEMININE AS DIVINE

"This earth is my mother and I am the son of this earth" - *Atharve Veda*, 12-1-12

Below: Divine Mother: Goddess Durga



In Hinduism the feminine energy or Shakti represents creative force of nature that gives life through enlivening nature's building blocks: the element of earth, water, fire, and air. Shakti enlivens Shiva, the stillness that represents the unchanging, immovable space element. Hindus have raised the status of mother to the level of divinity, as a Goddess. The concept of Mother Worship is deeply ingrained in the Hindu way of life and the mother is considered as the first Guru of the child. This concept of respect for mother is extended to other natural phenomena which provide sustenance for life. For example, rivers are worshipped as mother. The cow, provider of milk, is worshipped as mother. Similarly, the earth is treated as mother and is respected. In Hindu tradition, everything good, blissful, protective and evil-destroying is associated with a mother-image.

## HINDU FESTIVALS

Hindu festivals in India are numerous and diverse in their practice. They are usually linked with different deities, seasonal changes, harvests & celestial configurations. Interestingly, the same festival can be associated with different legends and events in different parts of India. Celebration includes going to temple or doing puja at home, wearing new festive clothes, family gatherings with special foods and giving of sweets or gifts and *daan* (charity). During festivals markets are bustling with many local fairs and art.



1. **Diwali, a festival of lights**, is the most important festival of Hindus. It is celebrated as victory of Light over Darkness, good over evil, and celebrates the return of Lord Rama from exile. As well, Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth is worshipped, and the day is celebrated as the start of the New Year for businesses.

Hindus greet each other by saying “Diwali ki Shubh kamanaye” or Shubh Deepavali”

(Best wishes for Diwali).

Diwali is also celebrated by Sikhs and Jains.



2. **Holi** is the Festival of Colours. Known as *Vasant Utsav*, it signifies arrival of spring and is also celebrated as thanksgiving for good harvest. People throw color (both in dry powder form and in water) at each other in a playful celebration which bring people together in joy, while letting go of past grievances.
3. **Ganesh Chaturthi** celebrates Lord Ganesha as the Lord of New Beginnings and the Remover of Obstacles and often involves a community procession of Ganesh *murthis* for immersion in a body of water.
4. **Raksha Bandhan** celebrates sibling relationships, sisters tie a thread, a talisman, or amulet on the wrist of their brothers(s) to symbolize mutual love and protection.
5. **Navaratri** means "Nine Nights". During this festival nine forms of Goddess Durga as *Shakti* are worshiped. *Shakti* is the personification of divine feminine power, referred to as Divine Mother who protects. The festival is celebrated with Garba dance and *dandiya*, often performed in community gatherings. Hindus fast on fruits and light foods for nine days and may go to temple.
6. **Vijaya Dashami**, also known as *Dussehra* is a major festival that occurs after Navratri, on the tenth day, to celebrate Lord Rama destroying of Ravana, symbolizing victory of good over evil.
7. **Makar Sankranti** marks the first day of sun's transit into the Makara (Capricorn), marking the end of the month with the winter solstice and the start of longer days. Along with praying to deity Surya (sun), social festivities include colorful floor decorations, children going house to house, singing and asking for treats (or pocket money), *melas* (local fairs), dances, kite flying, bonfires and feasts.
8. **Janmashtami** celebrates the birth of Lord Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu. Festivities include Dahi Handi "earthen pot of yogurt" which celebrates Krishna as a child. According to legend, baby Krishna would seek and steal yogurt and butter and people would hide their supplies high up out of the baby's reach. Krishna would try all sorts of creative ideas in his pursuit, such as making human pyramids with his friends to break these high hanging pots. This story is the theme of numerous reliefs on Hindu temples across India, as well as literature and dance-drama repertoire, symbolizing the joyful innocence of children, that love and life's play is the manifestation of the universal divine consciousness.

The above list is not exhaustive. There are many regional variations and there are 1000s of different traditions within the Hinduism with numerous and diverse celebrations.

## Hindus sharing the festival of Raksha Bandhan



Photo credits: Too 2:

<https://www.ourlondon.ca/news-story/4046116-london-hindus-thank-police-with-millenia-old->



Left: <https://www.insidehalton.com/community-story/5940475-hss-milton-halton-police-celebrate-rakshabandhan/>



The Hindu festival of Raksha Bandhan, which signifies bonds of love and protection between sisters and brothers, has become a tradition in London, Milton, Peel, and other regions. Children and women tie decorative strings on police officers, armed forces officers and politicians to foster bonds of trust and appreciation.

## HINDU PRACTICES

For Hindus, the practice of their faith involves a personal relationship, often, but not always, with a chosen deity, such as Lord Shiva, Krishna, Rama or Goddess Durga. Hindus have freedom to choose how they practice and there is no threat of their going to “hell” if they do not comply.

“Hinduism’s three pillars are temple worship, scripture and the guru-disciple tradition, around which all spiritual disciplines revolve. These include prayer, meditation and ritual worship in the home and temple, study of scripture, recitation of mantras, pilgrimage to holy places, austerity, selfless service, generous giving, the various yogas, and following good conduct. Festivals and singing of holy hymns are dynamic activities” Himalayan pg. xix.

Photo credit: Bhaskaraprakasha.com



The chanting of mantras in Sanskrit is an integral part of Hindu practice. OM is the all-encompassing, sacred symbol of Hinduism that represents all pervading substratum of the universe. OM represents the primordial sound of the universe and it is chanted at the commencement of all prayers and rituals. It is said to promote concentration and contemplation. OM comprises of three syllables, A-U-M, which represent the three states of experience: waking, dream and deep sleep. Collectively, OM represents the fourth stage, the superconscious state, referred to as *Turiya*.

Mantras are internal and sacred vibrations, cannot be substituted by other words because the value of the mantra is in a particular vibration created by its correct pronunciation as sound. Due to Hinduphobia, some western teachers, unfortunately chose to replace the mantras with other words which then do not create any effect. For example, replacing OM with “Coke” or “happy” will not have the same effect.

The correct term for worship in Hinduism is “*puja*”. Most Hindus have a “*puja* room” or space in their home where they have an altar in which they place one or more photos or murtis (statues) of a deity of their choice, based on their family tradition. Typically, a *diya* or lamp and incense is lit, flowers and fruit are offered (the offering symbolize all five elements - earth, water, fire, space and air). Mantras are chanted or listened to or repeated using beads (*japa*). Yoga followers may include yoga *asanas*, breathing practices and meditation in their daily practice, referred to as *sadhana*.



Photo: Neetu Arora

*Puja* involves chanting of sacred mantras and performances of rituals representing the five elements, typically involving a sacred *Homa* or fire ceremony, performed daily at home or on special occasions in a temple.



Most Hindus feel comfortable doing both *murti* puja and also believing in the non-duality of God and creation. Such paradoxes exist in many different aspects of Hindu rituals, practices and philosophy and for Hindus they offer great insights into the complex nature of universe and the human mind: **Opposites are seen as complementary. For example, creation and destruction, night and day, good and bad.**



It is incorrect to refer to the *murti* as an idol; the *murti* signifies the presence of a deity – so it is not the *murti* but the deity's presence that is being adored. Some Hindus follow the *Advaita* philosophy which believes in indivisible divinity and not use *murtis*. Hindus visit temples of their favourite deities. Both the solar and lunar calendars are used to identify significant dates for festivals and other auspicious times for celebrations or offerings. A temple visit is a personal experience and may involve a pundit performing a short, or long, chant for deity, for blessings and offerings. This does not involve listening to a public sermon from the "clergy". Hindus listen to discourses on sacred texts on separate forums, either at home or at the temple and may be given by lay people or by religious scholars or pundits.

Many Hindus go to temples weekly and many go only on special occasions, for example to offer prayers for a departed soul. There are Hindu ceremonies performed by Hindu priests for birth, marriage and death, initiation on the spiritual path,

celebration of ritualistic *homas* and festivals. Temples are not just a physical space but rather a place where a deity resides. The establishment of a *murti* in a temple involves the elaborate consecration ceremonies called *Pran Pratisthaa* involving chanting and *homas* to invite a particular deity to reside in the *murti*. A visit to the temple is therefore for a Hindu is for *darshan*, meaning being in the presence of the deity and thereby receive blessings.



Photos: Bhaskaraprakasha.com

# Sacred MANTRAS

It is traditional to recite sacred mantras or chants in Sanskrit at the beginning and/or at the end of Yoga practices, however, chanting is optional. The chants are meditative and create positive vibrations that are said to increase strength, will power, concentration and peace of the mind and emotional well-being. These chants require proper pronunciation and there are guidelines for their repetition and use and is best to consult with a Yoga guru for guidance about this. Even listening to audios of these chants can have a calming and positive effect on the mind. Some of the most popular chants are presented below.

| MANTRA/CHANT   | मंत्र IN SANSKRIT  | TRANSLATION  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Guru Brahma:</b> <i>In praise of the Guru</i><br>Guru-Brahma Guru-Vishnuh<br>Guru-Devo Maheshwarah<br>Guruh sakshat-param Brahma<br>Tasmayai shri-Gurave namah  | गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः<br>गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।<br>गुरुः साक्षात्परं ब्रह्म<br>तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥                  | The Guru is Brahma (the creator), the Guru is Vishnu (the Sustainer), the Guru Devo is Maheshwara (the Destroyer of evil); truly the Guru is the Supreme Brahman or Reality; salutations to that Guru.   |
| <b>Sarvepi:</b> <i>Blessings for All</i><br>Sarvepi Sukhinah Santu<br>Sarve Santu Niramayah<br>Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu<br>Ma Kaschit Dukha-mapnuyat   | सर्वेपि सुखिनः सन्तु<br>सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।<br>सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु<br>मा कश्चित् दुःखमाप्नुयात् ॥                    | May all be happy.<br>May all be free from disease.<br>May boons be showered on all.<br>Let none meet miseries.   |
| <b>Om Sahana:</b> <i>Blessings (in Prayer)</i><br><i>Before meals or group activity</i><br>Om saha na-vavatu saha nau bhunaktu<br>Saha viryam karava-vahai<br>Tejasvi na-vadhi-tamastu<br>Ma vidvisha-vahai<br>Om Shanti shanti shantihi | ॐ सह नाववतु सह नौ भुनक्तु<br>सह वीर्यं करवावहे ।<br>तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु<br>मा विद्विषावाहे ॥<br>ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥ | May the Lord protect us together.<br>May he nourish us together.<br>May we work together uniting our strength for the good of humanity.<br>May our learning be luminous and purposeful.<br>May we never hate one another.<br>May there be peace, peace, perfect peace. |
| <b>Gayatri Mantra</b><br>Om bhoor bhuvah Swaha<br>Om Tatsa-vitur-varenyam<br>Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi<br>Dhiyo Yo Naha Prachodayat  | गायत्री मंत्र<br>ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः ।<br>ॐ तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं ।<br>भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।<br>धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ।             | OM, We meditate upon the Spiritual Brilliance of that Adorable Supreme Divine Reality, the Source of the Physical, the Astral and the Heavenly Spheres of Existence. May THAT Supreme Divine Being enlighten our intellect (so that we may realise the Supreme Truth)  |
| <b>Shantipath:</b> <i>Peace-Hymn</i><br>Asato ma sat gamaya<br>Tamaso ma jyotir-gamaya<br>Mrutyorma-amrutam gamaya<br>Om Shanti shanti shantihi  | शान्ति पाठ<br>असतो मा सत् गमय ।<br>तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।<br>मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय ।<br>ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥          | Lead me from the unreal to the real.<br>Lead me from darkness to light.<br>Lead me from death to immortality.<br>OM, Peace, Peace, Peace   |
| <b>Kara-darshan:</b> <i>Palm-gazing</i><br>Karagre vasate Lakshmi<br>Karamule Saraswati<br>Karamadhye tu Govindah<br>Prabhate Karadarshanam  | कर दर्शन<br>कराग्रे वसते लक्ष्मीः<br>करमूले सरस्वती ।<br>करमध्ये तु गोविन्दः<br>प्रभाते करदर्शनम् ॥                        | Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth) resides at the fingertips, Saraswati (Goddess of Knowledge) resides at the base of the palms, Govindah (Lord Krishna) resides at the center of the palms. Every morning I bow to them all as I gaze at my palms.                           |

Credit: Vinod Dodhia

## TRADITIONAL DRESS



Photo: Ganesh Festival, Chandrashekhar Marathe Event: Panorama India 2017 in Toronto.

India is a vast country with 20 official languages, diverse cultures and regional differences. The integral unity of the tradition is still visible and important. The traditional dress for adult women is the sari (see photo) and differs for men in different regions. Women wear small dots of different colors on their forehead, called *bindis* in Hindi, for adornment. A similar mark using a sandalwood, black ash or red vermilion on the forehead is used during *puja* to signify the third eye of spirituality. Married Hindu women may wear a red powder in the hair parting to signify their status as married women. Nose rings, earrings and bangles are commonly worn as adornments.

Those who have participated in an initiation process called *upanayana* wear a white thread across the body, diagonally from neck to waist, as symbol of initiation into the dharma. There is no requirement for veiling or covering of head for women for religious purpose. However, in the middle ages, women began to cover their head and face with the ends of their sari, to hide their faces in response to the threat of violence from Muslim and other invaders.

## RESPECT FOR TEACHERS

There is a great Guru-*Shishya* tradition in Hinduism. The Hindu scriptures say that, like parents, the Guru is also worthy of worship. A guru is not simply a teacher. A guru not only gives education, but also gives inspiration and passes on experience and knowledge. For a Hindu, a Guru can be a person, a symbol or a book.

## 4. HINDUS IN CANADA: HISTORY AND DEMOGRAPHIC



Photo: Canada Day celebrations, Hindu Swayamsevak, Canada

Immigrants to Canada from India started during the late 1800s with mainly Sikhs arriving in British Columbia. Later, Hindus from all over India began immigrating to Canada along with people of Indian descent from Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname, East Africa and South Africa. Another major group of Hindu immigrants came from Sri Lanka, starting in 1940s, when a few hundred Sri Lankan Tamils migrated to Canada. In 1970 there was a mass exodus of Hindus from Uganda due to oppression by the Idi Amin Government. Later the 1983 communal riots in Sri Lanka precipitated the mass exodus of Tamils mostly to the Toronto region. (Archives Canada link has information on the history of immigration from India at <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/Pages/east-indian.aspx>)

### HISTORY

Historically Hindus have faced many barriers due to racism in Canada, both institutional and systemic, which continues to linger today. For example, a 2009 poll, by Angus Reid Strategies, which surveyed 1,002 randomly selected Canadians found “many Canadians harbour deeply troubling biases”. Across Canada, 72 per cent said they have a “generally favourable opinion” of Christianity. At the other end of the spectrum, Islam scored the lowest favourability rating, just 28 per cent. Sikhism didn’t fare much better at 30 per cent, and Hinduism was rated favourably by 41 per cent. John Geddes, McLeans, April 28, 2009 What-canadians think of Sikhs Jews Christians Muslims. <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/what-canadians-think-of-sikhs-jews-christians-muslims/>

This prejudice harks back to Canada in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when Canadian Government legislated a “Whites Only” policy. The University of Guelph’s Human Rights handbook for students available online provides a good account of this period, starting with the arrival of Sikh from India.

*In the early part of this century, Sikhs started to migrate to Canada, mainly to B.C. By 1906, about 1,500 Sikhs were living in the Vancouver area. Sir Wilfrid Laurier alleged that Indians were "unsuited to live in the climatic conditions of British Columbia and were a serious disturbance to industrial and economic conditions."*

Among the most classic examples of Canadian racism towards citizens of Asian ancestry are those enshrined in the law. The British Properties Covenant against Asians and Blacks in one sector of Vancouver, for example, specified where they could live, work and travel and whom they could employ.

As late as 1973, a residential section of Vancouver stipulated on each property deed that no person of Asian or African ancestry could stay on the premises overnight except as a servant. Similar laws in Saskatchewan went so far as to prevent white women from working for Asians.

In 1908, the Canadian government passed two orders-in-council specifically designed to prohibit East Indian immigration to Canada. One raised the amount of money an immigrant was required to possess from \$25 to \$200. The other prohibited entry into Canada of people unless they came "directly from the country of their birth or citizenship by a continuous journey and on through tickets purchased before leaving the country of their birth or citizenship."

Only East Indians were subject to these restrictions. Other immigrants were not required to have \$200 in their possession, and there were no direct sea routes from India to Canada. To circumvent the latter order-in-council, the Japanese ship Komagata Maru was chartered for a direct journey from Calcutta to Vancouver. On board were 376 Indians, all but 30 of them Sikhs. Even though all the requirements were satisfied, the Indians were not allowed to leave the ship on arrival in Vancouver. Sir Richard McBride, then premier of B.C., said that "to admit Orientals in large numbers would mean in the end the extinction of the white peoples, and we have always in mind the necessity of keeping this a white man's country."

In May 1914, two months of negotiations proved fruitless and the Komagata Maru returned to Calcutta with her load of passengers. There, British authorities opened fire on the passengers as they disembarked, killing 18 and wounding 25, and imprisoned more than 200 of the remaining. Prime Minister Mackenzie King later pressured the Indian government to stop the migration of Indians and enforced the Emigration Act of 1883 to further prevent them from leaving India.

Application of this requirement was sometimes used retroactively, preventing family reunification by barring spouses and children from immigrating.

The "Paki-bashing" of more recent years has its strongest roots in Western Canada. Canada's first race riots occurred in Vancouver in 1807, when whites attacked Asian sectors of the city.

Finally, there was the selective denial of voting rights and citizenship. East Indian-, Chinese- and Japanese-Canadians did not receive voting privileges and were prevented from obtaining Canadian Citizenship until 1947. (<https://www.uoguelph.ca/diversity-human-rights/book-page/racism-against-asian-canadians>)



Photo: <http://komagatamarujourney.ca/node/398>

Photo: Vancouver Sun archives

**In May 2016 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau provided Canada's "Apology" for the 1914 Kamagata Maru ship incident when 370 immigrants from India were denied entry into Canada.**

**"More than a century ago, a great injustice took place. On May 23rd, 1914, a steamship sailed into Burrard Inlet in Vancouver. On board were 376 passengers of Sikh, Muslim and Hindu origin. Those passengers, like millions of immigrants to Canada before and since, came seeking better lives for their families, greater opportunities, a chance to contribute to their new home. Those passengers chose Canada. When they arrived here, they were rejected."**

**- P. M. Justin Trudeau**

See documentary on the Komagata Maru incident here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sj5FUgxuYcY> More information on Komagata Maru incident at <http://komagatamarujourney.ca/photos>

Early Hindus maintained their religious traditions in mostly hostile environment which viewed racialized immigrants as a threat to the British culture and way of life of the time. Early immigrants, as pioneers, could not marry brides from India up until the 1930s. Indians were denied political rights and did not have the right to vote in Federal elections until 1947.

Religious life was centered on homes and temples which were relegated to the suburbs, being disallowed in downtown areas.

## **EMOGRAPHICS OF HINDUS IN CANADA**

**Over half a million Hindus reside in Canada in 2017.**

As per Statistics Canada, total population of Canada in 2011 was 32,852,320 of which Hindu population was 497,960 or 1.52% of the total Canadian population. Data on religious belief is only collected in every other census. The last data, collected in 2001, indicated that 77% of Canadians were Christian (43% Roman Catholic and 29% Protestant), 16.5% had no religion, 2% were Muslim. Other major religious groups were Jewish (1.1%), Buddhist and Hindu (1% each) and Sikh (0.9%).

Of the 497,960-total number of Hindus, 131,200 or 26.35% were born in Canada, 350,655 or 70.42% were Landed Immigrants/Permanent Residents and 16,105 were Non-Permanent Residents (possibly refugees, students, or temporary residents). (2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada. Before 1971, only 9,790 of a total of 1,261,080 immigrants or 0.78% were Hindu. During the next four decades, Hindu immigration to Canada, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of total number of immigrants, has increased significantly. This appears to be the result of the opening up of Asian immigration after the multicultural policies adopted by the then Pierre Trudeau Government.

| Years        | Number of Hindu immigrants | Percentage of Total Immigrants |
|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1971 to 1980 | 32,235                     | 3.70 %                         |
| 1981 to 1990 | 49,735                     | 5.24 %                         |
| 1991 to 2000 | 105,105                    | 6.83 %                         |
| 2001 to 2011 | 153, 800                   | 7.14%                          |

Source: 2011 National Household Survey". [www12.statcan.gc.ca](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca). Statistics Canada

Statistics Canada also collects data under “Canadians of East Indian origin” and reports that this group is “much more likely than the rest of the population to have a university degree. In 2001, 26% of adults who reported East Indian origin were university graduates, compared with 15% of the overall adult population.” <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-621-x/89-621-x2007004-eng.htm>

While spread all over Canada, both in rural and urban areas, most Hindus live in the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia, with Toronto area and Vancouver areas attracting most Hindus, including new immigrants.

## PROFILE OF HINDUS IN CANADA

Hindus of Canada are known for being hardworking, law abiding and successful citizens. Their accomplishments are too extensive and their names too many to list here. Numerous Hindus have been recognized for their achievements and there are too many to name here. For example, Ajit Jain, an Indian journalist of repute, has published and celebrated the achievement of Indians in Canada. His magazine called “The A-List” provides numerous examples of outstanding Indo-Canadians who collectively represent, and are a product of, the Hindu civilization of India. See at [thecrossmedia.ca](http://thecrossmedia.ca)

## HISTORY OF HINDUS IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT



Sculpture of Samudra Manthan (churning of the Ocean) in Bangkok Airport Thailand

Photo credit: Mike Powell - originally posted to Flickr as Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok

India is the birthplace of the ancient Hindu civilization and 95% of Hindus live in India. In the past had spread to Afghanistan, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, and beyond. The spread of Hinduism to these far-flung regions had happened without violence. For example, the archeological sites such as Angkor Wat, in Cambodia, which is the largest Hindu complex in the world, was a Hindu temple of Lord Vishnu built by a Khmer King. Hindu civilization has survived outside modern India, for example in Bali, Indonesia, which is the largest Muslim country in the world today, and continues to have a strong Hindu presence, including in culture, language and religion. The national emblem of the Republic of Indonesia in Sanskrit is known as “*Garuda Pancasila*” the words *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*- which means “Unity in Diversity.”

The Hindu populations in these areas were decimated after Muslim invasions and later forced conversion. **For example, in ancient Afghanistan, Hindu Gandhara got converted to Kandahar under Arab control.**

“Besides early reference in the Vedas, Ramayana and Mahabharata, Gandhara was the locus of ancient Indian-Persian interaction, a center of world trade and culture. It was a major Buddhist intellectual hub for centuries. The giant Buddhist statues recently destroyed by the Taliban were in Bamiyan, one of the important Buddhist cities of ancient times. Thousands of statues and stupas once dominated its landscape. During the Mahabharata period, the Gandhara region was very much culturally and politically a part of India. Gandhara and the neighboring countries in fact represent a prominent background to classical Shaivism.” (Wink pg. 119)

Similarly, in India, during the 800 years of Muslim invasions and rule, there was incredible destruction of Hindu temples and artifacts and forced mass conversions. Many large centers of education and libraries, such as 600-year-old Nalanda University, were burnt down and 1000s of temples were destroyed. Millions of Hindus were killed or converted by force (Goel, 1992) India today has the second largest Muslim population in the world (176 million in 2010), after Indonesia, even after its partition in 1947 which created a Muslim Pakistan ([http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/muslims/pf\\_15-04-](http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/muslims/pf_15-04-02_projectionstables74/)

[02\\_projectionstables74/](http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/muslims/pf_15-04-02_projectionstables74/)). Sadly, the persecution of Hindus continues, for example, in 1947 the population of Hindus in Bangladesh was 24% and is now 4%; similar persecution of Hindus has happened in Pakistan. The almost 200 years of British colonization of India led to further erosion of the Hindu civilization, including a huge loss of its sacred texts, symbols and artifacts. It is said that over 5000 sacred texts now lie in western museums and libraries and Indian scholars must travel abroad to access their ancient texts. For example, a folio from the Bakhshali Manuscript which proves the world’s oldest recorded origin of the zero symbol was in India now lies in Bodleian Libraries in England.

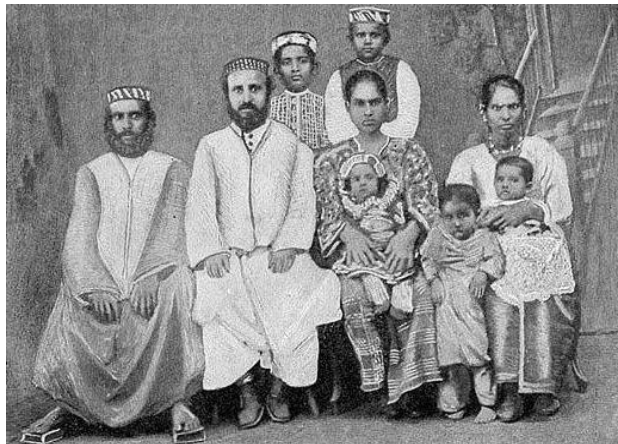
**Despite the over 800 years of cultural genocide and colonization, Hinduism has survived.** Today around 80 percent of Indians are Hindus, living in peace with other religions, including millions of Muslims and Christians.

Colonization involved the transfer of India's wealth, science, technology and other knowledge to the west, with a corresponding decline in India's economy.

A revival in Hinduism occurred during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hindu spiritual leaders such as Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, among others contributed to this revival. Hindus today are rewriting the history of Hinduism and India from a decolonizing perspective towards exposing the history of its oppression and corruption with the goal of reviving its language, culture and economy.

**Hinduism is not dogmatic. It teaches one to search for the Truth, and is not a belief system based on historical prophets.** Throughout its history, from within the Hindu fold, other dharma-based religions were born and accepted. Gautam Buddha, a Hindu king by birth, was a critic of certain Hindu ritual practices of his times and went on to develop a new philosophy. He was not persecuted – in fact Hindus accept Buddha as an avatar, divine incarnation. Similarly, the Sikh Gurus and Jain Founder Lord Mahavira expounded their new philosophies within the open architecture of the Hindu tradition. They also lived full lives and are honored even today by Hindus for their teachings.

Pluralism and respect for diversity are built into the Hindu worldview, even in modern India.



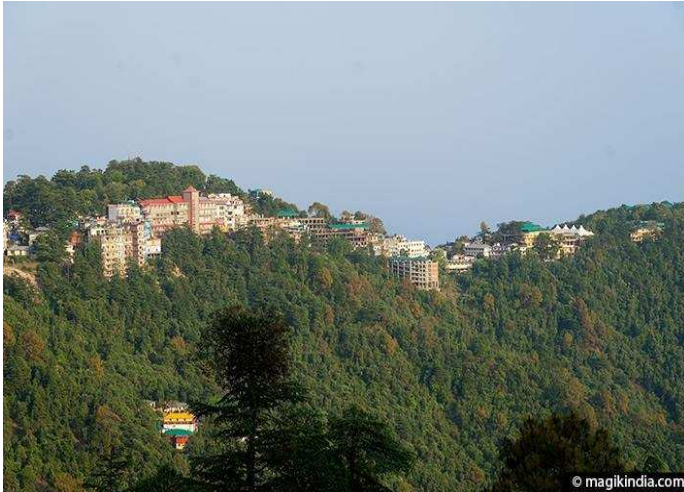
Jews found safe refuge in India: Photo:  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-cochin-jews-of-kerala/>

**“Small communities of Christians and Jews have lived in India for some 2,000 years. Christianity entered India with Thomas Cananeus of Syria in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Judaism came to India in the first century, when the Romans destroyed the Jewish temple in 70 A.D.**

**and expelled the Jews. Jews have never been persecuted or discriminated against in India. Dr. Nathan Katz describes three Jewish communities that have lived and prospered in India for centuries. In his book, *Who Are the Jews of India?***

**(University of California Press, 2000), he writes at page 4: “The Indian chapter is one of the happiest of the Jewish Diaspora. . . Indian Jews lived as all Jews should have been allowed to live: free, proud, observant, creative and prosperous, self-realized, full contributors to the host community” . (M. L. Goel, personal communication)**

Malhotra, R. & Neelakandan, A. (2011). *Breaking India: Western Interventions in Dravidian and Dalit Faultlines*. Manipal, India: Amaryllis.



In modern times, the Dalai Lama, the spiritual head of Buddhists, escaped from Tibet to India in 1959.

Due to the fear of persecution by Chinese Government, the Dalai Lama remains in India, along with thousands of Buddhist refugees who have followed him. The Indian Government has given to them refuge in Dharamshala, India and practice their religion in peace.

The Hindu religion exemplifies peaceful co-existence with other faiths. Throughout its 10,000-year history, the Hindus have never invaded another country for conversion or for land or for wealth. Through Mahatma Gandhi, the Hindu ideas of *ahimsa*, loosely translated as non-violence, have inspired great world leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., African American leader and Nelson Mandela, South African freedom fighter. Hindu Gurus have inspired millions towards living in peace and mutual respect of differences.

### References and readings

1. Dharampal (2000). *The Beautiful Tree*. Goa, India: Other India Press. Retrieved from <http://voiceofdharma.org/books/tbt/>
2. Goel, S.R. (1992). *Hindu Society under siege*. New Delhi: Voice of India. Retrieved from <http://voiceofdharma.org/books/hsus/>
3. Goel, S. R., (1990-91): *Hindu Temples, What Happened to Them*, 2 vols. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Voice of India, Delhi. Retrieved from <http://voiceofdharma.org/books/hsus/>
4. Feuerstein, G, Kak, S C, and Frawley, D, *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization*. Quest Books, Wheaton, 1995.
5. Wink, Andre, 1999, "*The Making of the Indo-Islamic World. Volume I – Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam 7th-11th Centuries*", Oxford University Press, New Delhi

### HINDUISM AND INDIGENEOUS TRADITIONS

Despite major differences in histories, there are strong similarities in the experience of colonized people all over the world. Indigenous people in Canada and Hindus in India, for example, experienced colonialism in a similar historical period and in a similar pattern. Hinduism has much in common with the indigenous traditions of the world including Taoists, Shintoists, and pre-Christian European Celts and pagans. While the world's indigenous, earth-based traditions have mostly disappeared due to colonization and Christian conversion, Hinduism has survived largely intact, mostly due to its decentralized system of practice and the oral tradition of *guru paramparas*.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Historically, Hindu religion has been misinterpreted and misunderstood in the west because it was viewed through a western Abrahamic lens which was rooted in racism and Eurocentrism. Due to Hinduphobia (a term coined by Rajiv Malhotra, 2007, p. 63) Hindus were demonized as heathen or savage. Along with idol worship, Hindu tradition and practices were characterized as weird, immoral, erotic, or exotic. As discussed earlier, such racist ideology historically led to the genocide of Hindus, both physical and cultural. The prejudiced view of Hindu literature involved stereotyping Hindu culture along the themes of “caste, cows and curries” in western academia and media. This Hinduphobic view of Hindu religion is painful for diasporic Hindus all over the world. At the same time, Hindus have become increasingly aware of the large extent to which their cultural wealth, such as of Yoga, Ayurveda, mind sciences, math, Sanskrit, has been, and continues to be, appropriated into the western ‘vault’ of civilization, and digested as western knowledge. Hindu Heritage Month is an opportunity for everyone to become more aware of and to celebrate the enormous contribution of Hindus towards world civilization.

Suggested reading:

**Rajiv Malhotra, 2016, *Academic Hinduphobia*** Free download available here <http://www.infinityfoundation.com.au/free-books/>

**Krishnan Ramaswamy, Antonio de Nicolas & Aditi Banerjee, *Invading the Sacred***, PDF available online at <https://rajivmalhotra.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Invading-the-Sacred-Final.pdf>

## 5. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

**(Can be initiated by parents, teachers, students or others in the community)**

1. Visit local temples e.g. BAPS, Sanatana Mandir, Ram Mandir, Devi Mandir, Vishnu Mandir in Toronto area
2. Visit Museum of Hindu Civilization at Vishnu Mandir and BAPS in Toronto area
3. Art project: Coloring *Rangoli* shapes and *Mandalas*. Templates and instructions for making and coloring *Rangoli* art for children and adults are available online.
4. Watch the film, '*History of Yoga – the Path of my Ancestors*' which is a 6000-year journey into origin, evolution & development of yoga. Watch trailer here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yh4tA8jQDII&feature=youtu.be>  
Order online at <http://vishuddhifilms.com/>
5. Watch documentary on the Komagata Maru incident, *Remembering Komagata Maru*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sj5FUgXuYcY>
6. Read Ali Kazimi's book, "*Undesirables: White Canada and the Komagata Maru.*" Read interview at [https://www.democracynow.org/2016/5/20/canada\\_apologizes\\_for\\_racist\\_incident\\_100](https://www.democracynow.org/2016/5/20/canada_apologizes_for_racist_incident_100)

7. Watch film, *The man who knew Infinity* - a film on Ramanuja, a Hindu math genius who attributed his discoveries in math to visions of divine *Devi*. Ramanuja was taken to England to document his knowledge. He faced racism there and was in despair and isolation, having removed from his family, tradition, and homeland. He died prematurely, due to his illness arising from the trauma of these separations.
8. Introduction to Sanskrit – invite a Sanskrit teacher affiliated with Halton or Peel School Board’s Sanskrit classes for students in schools. Halton School Board offers Language class for Sanskrit for its students, for example, see link <https://hdsb.ebasefm.com/programs/view/364>
9. Organize a Hatha Yoga lesson for students or adults
10. Organize a Mind and meditation workshop for students or adults
11. Organize Stress management seminar for students or adults
12. Organize Food Donation Drives in school or community – service is expression of love
13. Organize Garba or Dandiya dance lessons
14. Organize Community Concert of Hindu Chants – *Satsang* music for joy and peace

#### ANNOUNCED OFFICIAL CELEBRATIONS (More to be announced)

1. **Hindu Heritage Month celebration at Vishnu Temple, November 4, 2017**
2. **Hindu Heritage Month celebration at Hindu Temple. November 5, 2017**
3. **Hindu Heritage Month Flag raising, Brampton City Hall, November 7, 2017**
4. **Hindu Heritage Month Celebration at Markham City Hall, November 12, 2017**
5. **Hindu Heritage Month Celebration at Ontario Legislative Building, November 15, 2017**

#### Reading and other Resources:

1. **What is Hinduism** <http://www.himalayanacademy.com/view/what-is-hinduism>
2. **Chinmaya Mission** Hinduism, Frequently Asked Questions, <http://eshop.chinmayamission.com/index.php/hinduism-frequently-asked-questions.html> or order on line through chinmayamission.com or [ccmpublications@chinmayamission.com](mailto:ccmpublications@chinmayamission.com)
3. Hinduism, an Introduction. 2010, Part 1 and 2, Sudha Vivekjivandas, editorial consultant, Dr. Janakbhai Dave, Swaminarayan Aksharpathi, Ahmedabad, India
4. Learning to speak Sanskrit, an online resource. [https://sanskritabharati.in/classes\\_prant?s\\_bharti1=NDA2ODc4MTk2MTc4Nw==](https://sanskritabharati.in/classes_prant?s_bharti1=NDA2ODc4MTk2MTc4Nw==)
5. **Children’s book on Lord Ganesh.** <http://eshop.chinmayamission.com/index.php/ganesh-goes-to-a-party-cc-chinmaya-bala-katha-series.html>
6. **Bharath Gyan on Facebook for information**
7. **An online App called Satva App for people interested in learning to meditate** <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.meditation.tracker.android>



November is  
Hindu Heritage Month

Credit: Bharti Sheoran