



Chancellor Jean MacCormack signing the contract for the Acharya Ramsamooj Arya Lecture Series. Pandit Ramadheen Ramsamooj, looks on.

Upcoming Events 2011

Diwali Nite
Nov. 13, 2010
Main Auditorium
5:30 pm

Acharya Ramsamooj
Lecture
Nishkam Agrawal
Nov. 12, 2010
Library Browsing
noon

Bhagirathi Staff

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Acharya Ramsamooj Arya Lecture Series

Chancellor MacCormack congratulated the Center for Indic Studies for fostering a greater understanding across cultures and a greater opportunity to blend and learn from each other in ways that are really meaningful. She said that the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth has been shaped in many significant ways by people who have come from India who are members of this community. She said, "We are preparing our students for global wealth and if we cannot prepare them for a deeper understanding of the important humanity issues and spiritual issues expressed in different traditions, I think we don't provide them everything they need." She sees our students searching in philosophy, in ethics, in comparative traditions for a meaning beyond the material thing.

In concluding the event, Dr. Vanita Sastri, an adjunct professor at UMass Dartmouth and affiliated with the Meru Educational Foundation, conveyed her gratitude to the chancellor for helping them finish a book prepared for the public schools in the United States on the relationship between India and Massachusetts in 1790-1840.

Vedic Perspective of the World: Understanding the Nature of Ishwara (God), Jiva (Soul), and the Universe (Prakriti)

A new distinguished Acharya Ramsamooj Arya Memorial Lecture series endowed by the Ramsamooj family of Trinidad and Tobago was commenced at the Center for Indic Studies, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth on November 6, 2009. Acharya Ramsamooj

was a distinguished citizen of his community who was a reformist, and used Vedic texts and references to create better understanding of spiritual advancement of people. Many of his eight surviving sons live in United States and Canada, and have decided to set up this lecture series in honor of their father to advance Vedic understanding of this world.

Acharya Ramsamooj's oldest surviving son, Pandit Ramadheen Ramsamooj,

director of 3 R Foundation who set up \$1 million endowment for the advancement of "SALT" model of learning at the Center for Indic Studies in 2008, introduced this lecture series personally.

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Acharya Ramsamooj Arya Lecture Series (continued from pg 1)



Dr. Bal Ram Singh, left, with the Acharya Ramsamooj sons, Darshanand Ramdass, the speaker, and Dean William Hogan, right, on the event of the Lecture Series.

The speaker, Darshanand Ramdass, believes that understanding the nature of ishvara, jiva, and prakriti is very important in today's context of debates about religion, climate change, and sustainability. Translation of ishvara, jiva, and prakriti as God, soul, and universe, does only partial justice to this Vedic concept. The Vedic concept, in general, does not separate God from beings, and so understanding this connection is relevant to much of the confusion people have of their power, position, and role in the world.

Ramdass began by saying that, God, soul and matter are eternal and none are created. He believes that divine and soul have consciousness except matter and only the divine has bliss. The divine makes the matter to be fruitful into the five elements: space,

air, fire, water and earth. As matter is created, it keeps evolving into something new. He believes that God is a teacher of ancient teachers whose knowledge created man, implying an eternal relationship between teacher and knowledge; word, meaning and its relationship. The divine is also free from afflictions unlike man and creating a bond with the divine will bring happiness. He said this bond with the divine needs to be created through praise and prayers which will develop appreciation and love for the divine. This interaction is similar to the interaction between a child and its parents, between a student and a teacher etc. In prayer, one can also ask God for help. It is critical, however, to do the best we can before seeking God's help. One of the benefits of prayer is that "Knowledge augurs humility" when

one is seeking help. It promotes humility in the person who knows what his/her limitations are. The person who doesn't ask for help is the one who doesn't know what his limitations are. This communication will help to "experience" God in a personal way.

Soul, another eternal being that has desire, dislike, pain, knowledge and joy also seeks knowledge. The purpose of creation is to enjoy the consequences of actions and through actions of speech and body, it exerts efforts for development and realization of one's self and the divine, which is very important for human happiness.

Though the soul has independence to exert any action, it has to face its consequences which he believes is a way that God teaches matter to evolve into something better.

Darshanand Ramdass Ph.D., the speaker, studied Vedic lore (Sanskrit grammar of Panini and Patanjali) in gurukuls in India for 15 years. He earned the title, "Acharya" after finishing Sanskrit studies. His interest lies primarily in the applicability of Vedic ideas in today's world to improve people's lives. Currently, he teaches children in summer camps, temples, and home gatherings (satsangs). He is also adjunct professor at City University of New York (CUNY) senior and graduate colleges, and a postdoctoral fellow at the Graduate Center (CUNY) and New York University (NYU) in New York. His research interests are embedded in a social cognitive model of self-regulation in improving student's academic performance and motivation to learn.

From Using Gandhi's Lens Today (October 9, 2009)

By Rajiv Malhotra

In my seminar, "Using Gandhi's Lens Today", I describe a book "Hind Swaraj - Indian Dependence" that Gandhi wrote in 1909. I explain that people need to know Gandhi for who he was as a person and not base their views on what people thought

him to be. I believe that one

misconception—that Gandhi was passive—needs to be cleared up right away: He was active in his fight against unrighteousness. Not being politically inclined, he worked with people at the grass roots of Indian

society. He was one of the most fiery, audacious, and challenging of speakers who challenged the British courts, the British Empire, and even British law (governing tax). Thus he was definitely a person who actively confronted issues and was not at all a passive person. His interventionist attitude with these issues was to bring about the non-violence movement. He especially felt that industrial expansion was not sustainable. His ideals



Rajiv Malhotra on "Using Gandhi's Lens Today"

were anti-consumerism, the embodiment of truth, and non-violence. Gandhi showed that many more vegetarians can be fed than non-vegetarians from the same area of land resources. This is a sustainability issue that can be used to solve malnutrition, hunger, and poverty worldwide. Gandhi also believed that the Universe is built on diversity. He was worried about cultural genocide.

Gandhi believed that people should be different without having to apologize for being so. A "Swa-Dharma-my selfness" pursuit of righteousness which is different for different people has to be honored. 'Swaraj', meaning independence, has different levels that are 'freedom to' and 'freedom from'. 'Freedom to' is the freedom to speak or perform different kinds of work while 'freedom from' is the freedom from bondages that is created within us by each of us and created upon each of us. I strongly believe that it would be an insult to Gandhi if he were to become "domesticated" into people's interests and discourses.

Gandhi's time in South Africa had a major influence on his ideas. His initial years of rebellion were in South Africa, and this was an important part of his overall journey. Gandhi

influenced many people and nations with his ideals. I was asked why Gandhi had written strongly against Christians in India while he was an advocate of showing respect for others. Gandhi believed that the British were converting Indians into Christians. In his viewpoint, Gandhi made a pragmatic decision at that time, and was willing to compromise internal issues with non-Hindus in order to overthrow the pressing issue of the British government through use of a unified Indian voice. Therefore, he didn't take on Islamic radicalism and he supported the Khilafat, which I don't endorse. I am now worried that the three big civilizations—Christian, Islam and Maoists—are carving out different areas of present India.

I was asked how Gandhi's ideas on non-violence can be followed to fight terrorism today. In my view, what Gandhi said one hundred years ago need not necessarily be applicable today. We shouldn't be Gandhi dogmatics, doing what he says because that would not be in the space of an original thinker or a pragmatic thinker. We have to think for today, but we can use his principles to bring the community together against 'adharma'. The Gandhian way would be

to bring Muslims together who are against terrorism to fight terrorism—to use an Islamic "army", not just verbal condemnations. Gandhi also said he would fight with a weapon, but this would be his last resort. I firmly believe that many current issues in India and in the world can be solved by wearing Gandhi's lens.

US-India Relations at the Crossroads

Until the Clinton administration, India was on the fringes of United States interests and not on the frontlines. Business dealings with technology outsourcing actually preceded political interests. President George W. Bush took over in an active manner; technology and business contributed mainly to strengthening the Indo-US relationships. Indian thinkers had high hopes for President Barack Obama. But Obama has so far not put India in the center stage of his international policy; nor has he been able to visit India. Now Indians are using negative rhetoric. Public opinion says that Obama is trying to solve economic problems that are dependent on China by compromising India. Indian public opinion also says the U.S. will attempt to solve the Afghanistan problem by depending on Pakistan, and it will tilt against India.

There have been two types of Indo-US relationships: Direct Bilateral which tend to be very positive, and indirect relationships that concern third parties like China or Pakistan. This kind of relationship is very tense.

In terms of the positive Direct Bilateral relationship, business has flourished; the Indian businessman and their American counterparts are closer than ever. There are many joint ventures and collaborations. Commercial trade and industries are thriving. Indian students are enjoying good educations and careers when they graduate from UMass Dartmouth. Indian culture enjoys a lot of success in the United States and vice versa. Immigrants are thriving in this country. Nuclear Energy Cooperation was signed and the two countries are cooperating with each other to fight terrorism.

There are also pressing negative tensions

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Vedic Sciences Retreat



Vedic Sciences Retreat Speaker† and Invited Guests‡

Standing from left: Sunanda Deshmukh‡, Vinod Deshmukh‡, Emmanuel Ojadi‡, Bal Ram Singh†, M. G. Prasad†, Subhash Kakt, Koyel Ghoshal‡, Shekhar Shastri†, Raju Chidambaram†, and Jerry Solfvint†

Sitting, from left: Ravi Jatavallabhula†, Nagarajan Thirunavukkarasu‡, Siva Rasapalli‡, and Sukalyan Sengupta†.

Using Gandhi's lens today (continued from pg 3)

that are brewing in between both countries. The U.S. is concerned that India has a good relationship with Iran, while India wants to continue its relationship with Iran because it is geographically the closest for India's oil needs. The U.S. is worried that Pakistan is offended by India's successful presence in Afghanistan in terms of building a society, in social works, in education, in helping with industries, etc. The U.S. is generally concerned about human rights in India, especially concerning the Christians in India. From the Indian point of view, India is concerned that America is trusting Pakistan with weapons, while there have been many reports stating that Pakistan is misusing these weapons against India. India is also concerned about America's growing relationship with China, while China lacks democracy, transparency in governance, and

financial standings, and has an aggressive stand against its political neighbors. Indian communities in the U.S. are uncomfortable that the textbooks used in schools are not completely informative about Indian culture.

Based on these problems, India is curious to know how the U.S. is going to plan and execute its policies in these areas of growing tensions. The American policies, while dealing with these issues, leave a huge impact on the surrounding region and this is not given proper attention. The arms supply to Pakistan to "fight terrorism" threatens Indian security. India is also largely concerned about China. Andrew Rotter, a historian at Colgate University, believes that if India can understand why Americans favor Pakistan over India in many circumstances and present their concerns and policies to America clearly, these tensions can soon be relaxed.

Rajiv Malhotra is the founder and president of Infinity Foundation. He is an Indian-American entrepreneur, philanthropist and community leader. He is an active writer, columnist and speaker on a variety of topics, including the traditions and cultures of India, the Indian Diaspora, and globalization and East-West relations. Rajiv Malhotra has been appointed to the Asian-American Commission for the State of New Jersey, where he serves as the chairman for the education committee, which was created to start an Asian studies program in schools. He serves on the advisory board of the New Jersey Chapter of the American Red Cross and has volunteered in local hospice and AIDS counseling. He chairs the Board of Governors of The Center for Indic Studies.

Vedic Sciences Retreat

The Center for Indic Studies organized a unique three-day Vedic Sciences Retreat on campus. This invitation-only event brought together about a dozen academicians and thinkers (from various locations in the United States) who have inquired deeply into Vedic concepts and ideas and also attempted to present them in the framework of modern science. The small but highly-focused group and the duration of the event (3 days) allowed serious interaction among the presenters. The basic format was a one-hour presentation by a speaker followed by two hours of intense discussion where every assumption, hypothesis, model, etc. was open to question/criticism. All the participants had agreed before their arrival that this methodology was needed to ensure that their view could pass muster in accordance with the principles of modern science. The topics discussed and participants who attended are:

1. Prof. Subhash Kak, Oklahoma State University: "History of Constructions and Refutations of Indian Science" and "Can Vedic Science as Science of Consciousness be Confirmed by Experiment?"
2. Profs. Bal Ram Singh & Sukalyan Sengupta, Center for Indic Studies at UMass Dartmouth: "Using the Kinetic Theory of Gases to Measure Consciousness"
3. Prof. Lothar Schafer, University of Arkansas: "Quantum Theory and Perennial Philosophy (Santana Dharma)"
4. Prof. Jerry Solvvin, Center for Indic Studies at UMass Dartmouth: "Non-dual Science"
5. Dr. Vinod Deshmukh, formerly from University of Florida: "Neuroscience and Vedanta Perspective of Superconscious Brain"
6. Mr. Raju Chidambaram, Virginia: "Mystery of Time"
7. Mr. Ravi Jatavallabhula, Kansas City, MO: "Unified Model of Ishvara"
8. Prof. M. G. Prasad, Stevens Institute of Technology, NJ: "Vedic Perspectives of Acoustics".

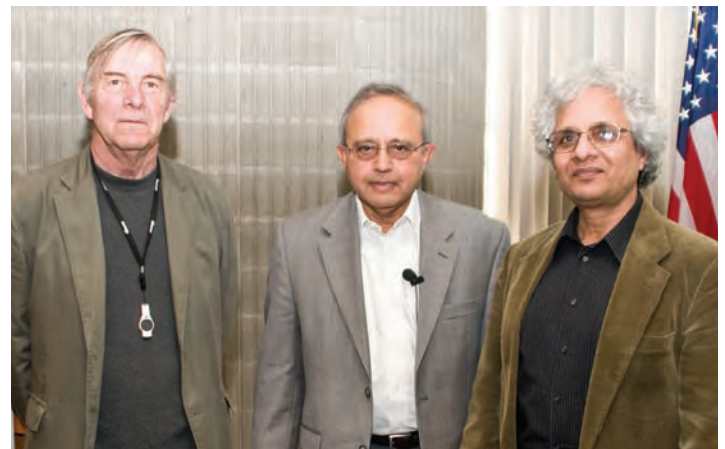
All the participants agreed that this retreat was a unique experience and the stimulating discussion after each talk enabled the presenters to appreciate how they could compose their thoughts in the light of modern science. At the same time, the effect of western philosophy on the foundational principles of modern science and its associated bias were also debated. After the retreat, each participant reworked their chapter and resubmitted it to the Center and these chapters will be put in a forthcoming book to be published by the Center.

Pravratti and Nivratti in Hindu Thought: Suresh Shenoy, PhD

The twin concepts, pravratti (P; engagement/projection) and nivratti (N; disengagement/retraction) pervade all aspects of Hindu thought. According to the Hindu world-view, space and time move in P-N cycles. The concepts of P and N permeate Hindu cosmology, eschatology, sacred literature, and history. It is important to understand that Hinduism is currently in a P period; a period of expansion of domain and influence after a dismal N period that lasted several centuries. P-N cycles fit within the broader structure of Hindu thought.

Hinduism is both a religion of pravratti and nivratti, a religion of engagement and disengagement. As cited, pravratti means projection/engagement and what is positive; and nivratti means retraction/disengagement and the negative. In the Indian flag, this concept is manifest in the Indian flag's colors of saffron, white and green with pravratti (saffron) and nivratti (green) and the color white representing 'for what is beyond the two.' The representation of the chakra or the wheel in the center of the flag signifies the cycle of both pravratti and nivratti directly referencing to the universe and its similar functions, a fundamental philosophy of the Hindu religion.

Religion is a larger phenomenon and a bigger effort. All human knowledge can be connected to religion, but not all human knowl-



Dr. Suresh Shenoy, center, with Dr. Bal Ram Singh, right, and Jerry Solvvin, Center for Indic Studies

edge can be connected to science. Science is a subset of the religious.

The term pravratti in terms of cosmology is understood as projection from the lord and nivratti as retraction back to the lord. In terms of religion i.e. from the point of view of the science of Nirvana, pravratti

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Pravratti and Nivratti in Hindu Thought (continued from pg 5)

and nivratti refer to engagement and disengagement, and from a historical point of view, as an undulating cycle of the up and down.

Hinduism has developed both of these sciences in great detail. In explaining Hinduism from an eschatological point of view, there are four things we aspire to: dharma (righteousness), artha (power and wealth), kama (satisfaction of desires) and moksha (the supreme goal). They are also known as the four goals of life—purusharthas in the Hindu religion. The first three represent nivratti and are symbolized in green, while moksha is pravratti, and is depicted in saffron.

The four stages of life are termed ashramas. They are: first stage—the celibate student; the second stage—the householder; the third stage—a retiree; and the fourth stage—a monk. The first two stages are symbolized by the color green; the second two by the color saffron. In the four paths of liberation or yogas, a person is considered to be in the state of pravratti on the path of knowledge and meditation. When on the path of devotion and action, a person is in the state of nivratti.

The concept of self knowledge and salvation is illustrated by this quotation from the mandukya upanishad: “All this is verily brahman, the self is brahman, the self has four parts.”

The four folds of existence are briefly: ‘the this world’, ‘the other world’; the third world eshwara (the lord) or saguna brahman; and the fourth world, para brahman (the absolute) or nirguna brahman. It is in the first two folds of existence that the peculiarity of the ‘I’ remains with man, and is indicated in green because man is engaged with himself. The third and fourth folds represent the color

saffron. In these two folds, the idea of ‘I’ and ‘not I’ do not exist. Time, space and causation also do not exist in these two existences, because they are relatively different. The operative principles exist between the second and the third stage of existence.

And finally, the concept of purusha (space) and prakriti (matter), a primordial factor of the universe, Purusha is equivalent to eshwarra and para brahman. It is seen as enveloping everything. All existence resides within purusha, and purusha resides within all existences. Purusha is purely space and does not go through cycles. Prakriti goes through the cycles of pravratti and nivratti and hence is dualistic in pattern. From the smallest to the largest universal element there exists this common pattern of duality, a constant recursive formula. The essence of this formula is ‘without purusha, prakriti cannot exist’—all that we see is infinitely purusha.

Suresh K. Shenoy, Ph.D., is an engineer at a multinational company in the area of the dynamic simulation of power systems. He received his B. Tech from the Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai, and his Ph.D. in Engineering from the University of Florida. He is a member of the board of directors of the Connecticut Council for Inter-Religious Understanding (CCIU). He lectures on Hindu thought at Quinnipiac University and in various other forums: classrooms, churches, conferences, and Hindu groups. He has authored numerous articles on the Hindu vision, and takes special interest in Advaita Vedanta (non-dualistic Vedanta).

God, Darwin and Intelligent Design

In Hinduism there is virtually no distinction between science and religion.

B iologist Kenneth R. Miller is a Roman Catholic and an outspoken theist. Interested in the theory of evolution and religion for a very long time, he wrote *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution* (HarperCollins: New York, 1999), and *Only a Theory: An Evolution and the Battle for America's Soul* (Viking: New York, 2008.)

Evolution is an issue that divides Americans, Miller told his audience at the Center for Indic Studies. “A couple of years ago Time magazine had a cover story called ‘Evolution Wars’. Their polls showed that Americans rejected the theory of evolution,” he said.

He said: In two statewide elections for the Board of Education in Kansas and Ohio in 2006, the theory of evolution became a burning issue. The incumbent was the leader of the anti-evolution forces on the board, a college professor from the University of Akron in marketing named Deborah Owen Spink. Her opponent was a proponent of evolution being taught in the schools called Tom Sawyer. Here's what a talk show host in Cleveland told his listeners was at

stake in this election, “If you believe in God, true creation and science vote for Debbie... If you believe in evolution, abortion and sin vote for her opponent”.

Despite such a discourse, the results of the election were as follows: the pro-evolution candidates swept the election and that control was solidified in 2008. The common denominators in both states were the people in the scientific, education or medical community who got out the vote. He said they did real politics and made a strong case for science.

Miller said he has testified in federal court in trials on evolution over the past two years. In 2004, the Dover, PA school board voted for an “intelligent design” lesson in biology to be instructed as part of the curriculum. While the teachers refused to prepare such a curriculum, an assistant superintendent instructed the class room on this subject. Dover parents then filed a federal lawsuit. “Intelligent design,” they argued, is religious in character and motivation and therefore is a violation against the First Amendment to the United



Kenneth Miller captivates the audience at the Center for Indic Culture

States Constitution. Miller explained that theists of any sort by definition believe in transcendent intelligence, sometimes expressed as a view that there is an intelligent design to the universe. But this is not what is actually meant by "Intelligent Design." "Intelligent Design" is the idea that suggests that outside intelligent intervention is required to account for the origins of living things. This distinguishes Intelligent Design from more general considerations of meaning and purpose in the universe and makes it a doctrine of special creation. By special creation, it suggests that when protein that colors our blood or the bacterial flagella or the animals of the Cambrian period were designed, they were actually created or brought into existence, by intelligence acting outside of nature.

According to Miller, the evolution battle is the result of a continuing attack against scientific rationality. "It really matters for the country's future. In the aftermath of this trial something interesting arose," he said.

"Even its advocates admit that "Intelligent Design" is a scientific failure. Phillip Johnson, the 'intellectual godfather' as everyone would agree who came up with the movement, devised a strategy for it. This is what Johnson had to say after the trial, "There is no such thing as "Intelligent Design" at the present time to propose as a comparable alternative to the Darwinian theory, which is whatever error it might contain, a fully worked out scheme. There is no "Intelligent Design" theory that's comparable. Working out a positive theory is the job of the scientific people that we have affiliated with the movement. Some of them are quite convinced that it's doable, but that's for them to prove.... No product is ready for competition in the educational world." (Philip Johnson was quoted from the *Berkeley*

Science Review, Spring 2006.)

Miller believes that evolution has huge consequences for our society. It questions our origin and purpose of life. If we are the result of chance, if we are simply the result of nature, then that puts a different moral demand on us.

"In fact, it does not put a moral demand on us.... then if, in fact, we are a creation of a being that has no moral demands, the whole idea of right and wrong is up in the air, torn apart, if Charles Darwin was right about evolution.

Kenneth R. Miller is Professor of Biology and Royce Family Professor for Teaching Excellence at Brown University. A cell biologist, he serves as an advisor on life sciences to the NewsHour, a daily PBS television program on news and public affairs, and is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Miller has coauthored four high school and college biology textbooks used nationwide. In 2005 he served as lead witness in the trial on evolution and intelligent design in Dover, Pennsylvania. His two popular books, Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution, and Only a Theory: Evolution and the Battle for America's Soul, address the scientific status of evolutionary theory and its relationship to religious views of nature. His honors include the Presidential Citation of the American Institute of Biological Science (2005), the Public Service Award of the American Society for Cell Biology (shared with Dr. Barbara Forrest in 2006), the Distinguished Service Award of the National Association of Biology teachers (2008), and most recently, the Public Understanding of Science and Technology Award from AAAS (2009).

Diwali Night 2010, the festival of lights celebrating the victory of good over evil, was held at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth in pomp and splendor. The students decorated the Campus Center and stage with a colorful Rangoli, and lit lamps to celebrate the event. A cultural program presented by students and faculty displayed the grandeur and brilliance of a traditional Indian marriage with elegant and lively dance performances. Hypnotic musical performances then mesmerized the audience. The grace and splendor of the event spoke volumes about student and faculty involvement that brought Indian culture to life. The evening came to a close with a full dinner of authentic Indian cuisine.



(left) Diwali, the festival of lights is celebrated by the lighting of lamps.

(above) Students dance to folk music wearing traditional South Indian attire.

(below) Students dance as part of the traditional Indian marriage skit.



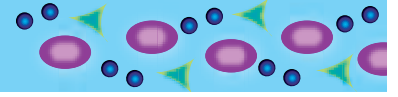


(above) Students performed a skit of a traditional Indian marriage with the witness of fire and exchange of garlands.



(inset and below) Dancers fuse classical and modern Indian music.





Indic studies in a changing world

N.S. Rajaram

Two approaches

There are two approaches to studying an ancient civilization like India antiquarian and content driven. In the antiquarian, one studies the civilization in question, be it Egyptian, Mesopotamian or whatever purely as a slice of a past that is irrecoverably lost and irrelevant to the present. For two hundred years and more, that is largely how scholars in the academic discipline known as Indology have looked at India an ancient civilization like Egypt and Sumer that is no longer living. For that reason these Indologists have called Sanskrit a 'dead language.'

But is it a true picture of India? To begin with the sacred books of ancient India, the Vedas, the Puranas and the Bhagavadgita are still the sacred books to Indians today, not just in India but worldwide; they are still studied and recited. The Hindu deity Krishna is worshiped more widely today than he was two thousand years ago. There are Krishna cults of non-Indian origin like ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness or the Hare Krishnas) that did not exist in ancient times. Most recently, the movie Avatar based on the Hindu concept of reincarnation has enjoyed a cult-like following. These are driven by what Indian tradition has to offer, its content rather than its antiquity.

Some may see this as part of a revivalist movement, an attempt to recover, if not a long lost, at least a long suppressed past. But how about Yoga, Ayurveda and even linguistics? All these have modern manifestations relating to life style management and subjects like computer science. And more recently, people are becoming aware that great thinkers of Vedanta like Shankara and Madhva had thought deeply into problems of Reality and Consciousness that quantum physicists have begun to encounter only in the last several decades. Madhva 800 years ago asked the same metaphysical questions that Albert Einstein did until his death in 1955.

This means: while the discipline called Indology for 200 years and more has tried to look at the contributions of the Indian civilization as antique curiosities of academic interest, the reality is that Indian civilization is a living, vital force that guides over a billion people all over the world and influences many more, perhaps without their being aware of it. Many non-Indians practice Yoga, follow Ayurvedic treatments, relish Indian food, and enjoy and even adopt Indian music and dance. None of this true of ancient Egypt, Sumer

or even Greece whose contributions are consigned to museums and occasional reverential 'revivals' of classical works Greek drama.

It is clear therefore that the study of India has entered a new

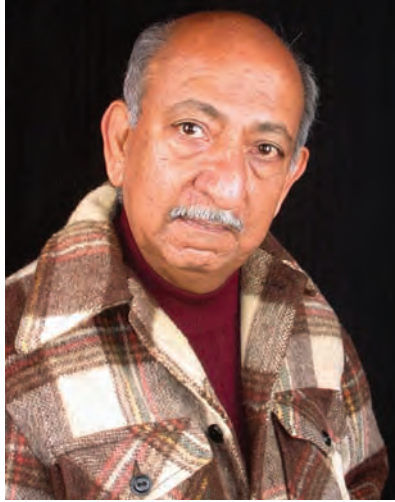
phase, one in which the ancient and the contemporary worlds meet and sometimes merge. This was brought home to me when thanks to the hospitality of the Center for Indic Studies and the 3R's Foundation I was able to spend the spring 2010 semester at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth teaching and carrying out research. I saw that unlike in most other academic centers in Europe and the United States, the Center's activities and interests are not limited to ancient India but go on to embrace the contemporary world. It conducts courses in modern languages like Hindi, holds musical concerts with innovative format like combining Jazz and Indian classical music none of which comes under the rubric of academic Indology.

It is entirely proper that Indic Studies should be taking this route off the beaten track of Indology combining the past and the present while pointing a way to the future. This is both timely and needed as the following brief survey of the worldwide scene in Indology makes apparent.

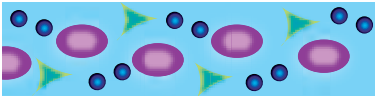
Changing world

Within the past five years, the Sanskrit Department at Cambridge University and the Berlin Institute of Indology, two of the oldest and most prestigious Indology centers in the West, have shut down. The reason cited is lack of interest. At Cambridge, not a single student had enrolled for its Sanskrit or Hindi course forcing them to close. Still more recently the present occupant of the Boden Chair of Sanskrit at Oxford expressed the view that he is likely to be the last occupant of that prestigious chair. Other universities in Europe and America are facing similar problems.

Coming at a time when worldwide interest in India is the highest in memory, it points to structural problems in Indology and related fields such as Indo-European Studies. What is striking is the contrast between this gloomy academic Indology scene and the outside world. During my lecture tours in Europe, Australia and the United States, I have found no lack of interest, especially among the youth. Only they are getting what they want from programs outside academic departments, in cultural centers like the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,



Dr. N.S. Rajaram



temples and short courses and seminars conducted by visiting lecturers (like this writer).

This means the demand is there, but academic departments are being ignored by a public that is looking for new directions. This sense was confirmed during my stay at the University of Massachusetts Indic Study Center, which does not follow the well trodden path of academic Indology rooted in 19th century colonial India. Here I found a freshness and enthusiasm that are apparent in the older Indology departments in Europe and America. What has gone wrong with academic Indology, and what is to be done?

To understand the problem today it is necessary to visit its peculiar origins. Indology began with Sir William Jones' observation in 1784 that Sanskrit and European languages were related. Jones was a capable linguist but he was also responsible for interpreting Indian law and customs to his employers, the British East India Company. This dual role of Indologists as scholars as well as interpreters of India continued well into the 20th century.

Indologists' role as interpreters of India ended with independence in 1947, but many academic Indologists, especially in the West, failed to see it. They continued to get students from India, which seems to have lulled them into believing that it would be business as usual. But today, six decades later, Indian immigrants and persons of Indian origin occupy influential positions in business, industry and now the government in the U.S. and the U.K. They are now part of the establishment in their adopted lands. No one in the West today looks to Indology departments for advice on matters relating to India when they can get it from their next-door neighbor or an office colleague or even a relative by marriage.

This means the Indologists' position as interpreters of India to the West, and sometimes even to Indians, is gone for good. But this alone cannot explain why their Sanskrit and related programs are also folding. To understand this we need to look further and recognize that new scientific discoveries are impacting Indology in ways that could not be imagined even 20 years ago. This is nothing new. For more than 50 years, the foundation of Indology had been linguistics, particularly Sanskrit and Indo-European languages. Archaeological discoveries of the Harappan civilization forced Indologists to take this hard data also into their discipline.

Today, there is a similar revolution in the offing, brought on by discoveries in natural history and population genetics based on DNA analysis. Natural history tells us that we need to take into account sea level changes at the end of the last Ice Age. This led to major developments in land based civilizations when coastal populations were forced to move to the interior. Genetics has also thrown up

surprises like the close kinship between Indian and Southeast Asian populations as well as their flora and fauna.

Looking to the future

These are exciting developments that scholars can ill afford to ignore. The questions though go beyond Indology. Sanskrit is the foundation of Indo-European Studies. If Sanskrit departments close, what will take its place? Will these departments then teach Icelandic, Old Norse or reconstructed Proto Indo-European? Can Indo-European Studies survive without Sanskrit? Do they deserve to survive when they have no relevance to today's needs and interest? These are questions that we must all now face.

So where is the study of India headed? To help see this it helps to go to the point raised at the beginning of the article: it cannot remain rooted in the past looking for relics like Proto-Indo-European or something else that is of little interest to young people today; it must offer ideas and experiences that they find relevant and exciting. Yoga is one such example: people practice it because it helps them to lead better lives today and not because its rules were laid down by an ancient sage thousands of years ago. The same is true of music and dance we enjoy them for they have to offer today, not just because of our reverence for the ancient sage Bharata.

Sanskrit also must be studied and taught in the same spirit with full recognition of and respect for its past greatness, but highlighting also the riches it has to offer today. For example there are wonderful dramas by playwrights like Bhasa, Shudraka, Vishakhadatta, Kalidasa and many more in Sanskrit and other Indian languages that audiences today can enjoy to the full. I suggest that scenes and even whole dramas (like Bhasa's one act plays) be staged by the Center for Indic Studies.

These performances can be in translation as well as in the original Sanskrit at least as far as one act plays and individual scenes are concerned. These could be turned into videos with appropriate subtitles. The same holds for popular forms of entertainment like Yakshagana. Study of India can be fun, for Indians enjoy fun as much as anyone else.

Several universities both in India and the West have translations series of Indian classics going back to the 19th century. I suggest that the Center for Indic Studies start a visual arts series of classical dramas and other works of performances with appropriate subtitles. Imagine how exciting it will be to watch a performance of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* or Bhasa's *Svapnavasavadatta* with subtitles and properly introduced by a scholar! These need not be limited to Sanskrit.

(continued on back cover)



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(Indic Studies in a changing world continued from pg 11)

Then there is the greatness of Indian thought in philosophy, metaphysics, linguistics and other fields. They are mostly in Sanskrit, but to insist that they should be studied in Sanskrit is like insisting that Newton, Gauss and others should be studied only in Latin. Great thoughts remain great even in translation. But these works must be brought into the modern age by focusing on the content, the relevance of ideas. Again, our approach must be content driven, not antiquarian.

For example, classical grammatical works of Panini, Katyayana and others must be made current by presenting their thoughts in modern linguistic forms, in a manner suitable for computer science. Similarly the great works of Samkhya and Vedanta should be recast in modern language and style, in a manner that can be useful in the modern world. They hold great potential for shedding light on problems in modern physics. This must be explored in the full.

So, the Center for Indic Studies is on the right track, but much more remains to be done. In particular the public must see the Center for Indic Studies not as another academic center but part of their

lives and hopes. I know from personal experience how hard it is to start a new academic center, especially in the arts and humanities. The public, friends of India in particular must see it as their center no less than the university's and support it in every way and help it grow and flower into a unique institution. So let us all study the past without becoming prisoners to it.

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Dr. Makkhan Lal on the book Aryan Invasion to Ayodhya: The infamous journey of famous historians. The views expressed in this article are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of the Center for Indic Studies.

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