

Community

Friday, August 2, 2002

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Scholars discuss Vedic contributions to the world

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in New York

Ancient India's contribution to and influence on the world was discussed by Vedic scholars from several countries, including China, at a conference at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, July 12-14.

Among the conference coordinators were Professor BhuDev Sharma, president of the Hindu University in Orlando, Florida, and head of the World Association for Vedic Studies, and Professor Bal Ram Singh, director of the Center of Indic Studies at UMass. The conference was organized by WAVES and hosted by the Center of Indic Studies.

Some 250 people attended the conference, which had a mix of Indian and non-Indian scholars from 11 countries.

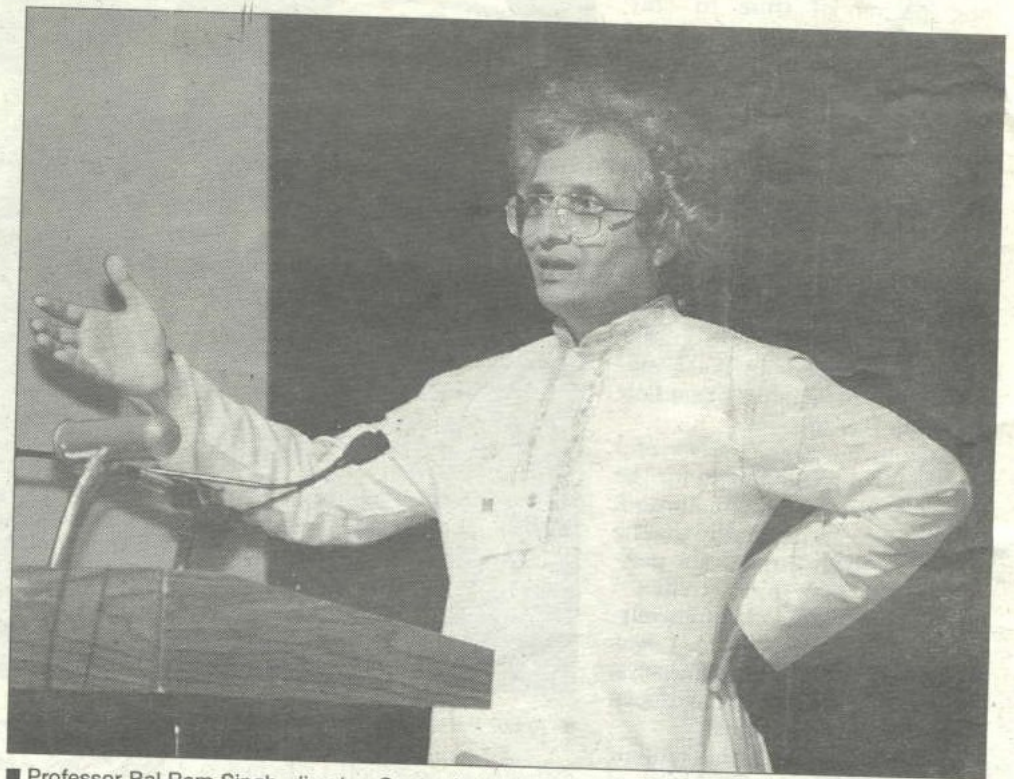
Titled 'International conference on India's contributions and influences in the world,' this was the fourth biennial international meet sponsored by WAVES. The previous conventions were held at Atlanta, Georgia, in 1996, Los Angeles, California, in 1998, and Hoboken, New Jersey, in 2000.

"The conference recounted India's major contributions in spirituality, science and mathematics, religion and philosophy, governance and administration, peace and harmony among men, pluralism and multiculturalism, ethics and human values, literature and linguistics," Professor Sharma told *India Abroad*.

"Scholars and non-academics alike presented Vedic and Upanishadic ideas of understanding, and ahimsa, to address some of the most pressing global problems in today's world," Professor Singh added.

Dr Francis Clooney of Boston College presented ideas on how today's global audience — with their diverse religious, philosophical, and cultural interests — can still learn from the language, methods, and conclusions of the Upanishads.

The inaugural session was addressed by Dr S Kalyanraman, member of the Sarasvati Nadi Shodh Prakalp and Akhila



■ Professor Bal Ram Singh, director, Center for Indic Studies, UMass, welcomes delegates

Bharateeya Itihasa Sankalana Yojna, who dealt on the civilization on the banks of the Saraswati river; Professor Fitz, who talked about *ahimsa*, Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts and the modern world; and Professor T S Rukmani, chair of Hindu Studies at Concordia University, Canada, who spoke about the Dynamics of Being and Becoming in Hindu Thoughts.

The keynote speakers were Professor V D Misra, professor of sociology at Lucknow University, and Professor Clooney, an ordained Catholic priest and professor of comparative theology at Boston College and visiting academic director of the Center for Vaishnava and Hindu Studies at Oxford.

Other speakers included Dr Cromwell Crawford, professor of religion, University of Hawaii; Yogi Amrit Desai; Dr Koenraad Elst from Belgium; Francois Gautier,

French journalist and rediff.com columnist; Professor Xinchuan Huang of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, China; Dr David Frawley of the Vedic Institute, New Mexico, Dr Vasant Lad of the Ayurvedic Institute, NM; Rajiv Malhotra, Indic Foundation of US; Dr June McDaniel, professor of philosophy from South Carolina.

Four scholars from China spoke about the influence of Vedanta, Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna's contributions to Chinese thought, Buddhism, Chinese culture, Zen; and Sufism.

A two-hour special workshop on the basic principles of ayurveda was organized with Dr Lad for interested participants. Dr Elst presented a lecture, 'Hindu influence on Christianity,' outlining how some philosophical elements of Christianity have their roots in Vedic/Buddhist tradition.