



World-renowned expert outlines the unique quality of Ayurveda

The Center for Indic Studies hosted a session on fundamental differences between Ayurveda and Western medical systems, when Dr. Avinash Lele, vice chairman of the International Academy of Ayurveda, India, and Dr. Bharti Lele lectured on the “Science of Life—‘Ayu’ meaning Life, and ‘Veda’ meaning Science.

Bharti Lele gave a holistic perspective of Ayurveda and its approach towards herbs, while Avinash Lele noted that Ayurveda is a spiritual science. Thus, people can achieve total health and harmony by observing body, mind, and spirit balance, rather than taking care only of the physical body. He said the 5,000-year-old science is a perfect fit, even in the modern high-tech world, because it emphasizes not the disease but the health of the human body, which has remained unchanged for thousands of years.

Avinash Lele noted that current health

care systems are essentially disease-oriented, whereas Ayurveda deals with all aspects of health—physical, mental, social, and spiritual. He described Ayurveda as the “Art and Science of Healthy Living,” explaining that the human body’s constitution was a unique balance of three natural energies: Vata, Pita, and Kapha. It was interesting to hear his explanation of how this system treats the mind-body balance, so that the underlying reason for an illness is resolved.

Ayurveda focuses on body constitution, and explains in very simple language how to maintain balance through diet, lifestyle, exercise, and meditation. Knowing the unique body constitution guides us in making the right dietary and life style choices. This is a science of nature, which emphasizes the importance of balancing diet and lifestyle, and instructs people on doing the right thing at the right time. ♦



Dr. Avinash Lele

Fall Events

October 17
Bollywood Movie

Nov 16
Seminar
Dr. Christopher Larkosh

Nov 17
Diwali Nite

Dec 7
Science and Spirituality

Upcoming Events

Jul 14-16, 2008
Waves 2008
Conference
University of
Central Florida,
Orlando, FL

Bhagirathi Staff

Sukalyan Sengupta
Editor

Durga Lakshmi
Kumar Palaniswamy
Assistant Editors

D Confar
Photography



Mr. J.N.L. Srivastava

The challenges of increasing India's agricultural productivity

As India moves full throttle ahead in economic growth, its agriculture sector is experiencing major changes. The government policies being developed under many types of pressures have resulted in issues with social, economic, and environmental impact not only in India but also globally.

Regarding this issue, the Indic Center facilitated an opportunity for persons to interact with key Indian dignitary, J.N.L. Srivastava, former secretary of India's Department of Agriculture. Mr. Srivastava highlighted some of the key issues of Indian agricultural productivity.

Agriculture represents the most important sector in Indian economy—approximately half of the population of more than one billion depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Agriculture also contributes about 23 percent to the gross development product, and is the main source of food and nutritional security. The agricultural sector still employs nearly 60 percent of the labor force, and national surveys indicate that women account for 34 percent of the principal workers and 89 percent of the subsidiary workers in agriculture.

The Union Government of India, along with the state governments, accorded very high priority to agricultural development in the 11th "Five-Year Plan" launched

after April, 2007. Agricultural research and production policies and programs are designed to meet a targeted growth rate of four percent in agriculture to enable the country to reach an overall growth rate of ten percent during the plan's period.

Harnessing science and technology for development poses the greatest challenge to increasing agricultural productivity in India. The past four decades have seen two waves of agricultural technology development and diffusion to developing countries. Existing international networks for sharing technologies across countries are increasingly under threat. There is today an urgent need for a system of technology flows, which would preserve the incentives for private sector innovation while also meeting the needs of poor farmers.

The next challenge lies in maintaining and enhancing the natural resource base. Finally, there is the looming danger of global warming, with its likely profound, negative effects on agriculture and food security.

Mr. Srivastava's lecture and the subsequent discussion covered many of the economic, social, and environmental issues—including the impact of globalization—related to the agriculture sector of Indian economy. ♦

Patanjali speaker focuses on contemporary religious violence

The Center for Indic Studies' Patanjali Lecture Series, held during May 10 and 11, focused on non-violence as a vehicle for rebellion. Dr. Douglas Allen, of the University of Maine, presented two lectures on: "Religion and Violence: Why is Contemporary Religion So Violent—Does Mahatma Gandhi Provide a Relevant Alternative to Religious Violence?" and "The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi: Violence, Non

Violence and Peace Education."

The first lecture series focused on Mahatma Gandhi's alternatives to other forms of religion. Allen emphasized Gandhi's philosophy of inclusion and pluralism with respect for differences, relative truth, compassion and love, and dialogue among religions.

Allen stressed Gandhi's nonviolent, ethical approach to education that offered possibilities for dealing with short-term conflict and violence. He said its greatest strength was the focus on long-term preventative education and socialization. ♦

Seminar series covers various topics such as Patient Care, Spirituality, Religious Identity, and International Relations

Spearheading the seminar series this year was "The Role of Spirituality in Patient Care, Medical Education, and Research," led by Dr. Gowri Anandarajah from the Brown University Medical School. Dr. Anandarajah discussed the benefits of spirituality as a curative force in family medicine. She said the "3Hs" of spirituality—head, heart, and hands—together offered a multi-dimensional definition of spiritual healing which has a tremendous effect on the recovery process of the patient.

Citing examples, Dr. Anandarajah explained the supporting role of spirituality in caring for the entire patient, and the evidence that has prompted many to propose a move to a biophysical/spiritual model for health. Her talk also explored theoretical models that provide a common ground for further exploration of the role of spirituality in medicine.

"Dharma" or "righteousness" is often compared with similar concepts in Chinese and Japanese traditions and Western religions. Dr. Pankaj Jain



(l-r) Dr. Gowri Anandarajah, Swami Tyagananadaji, and in last photo at left is speaker Dr. Sergio de Almeida with Professors Timothy Walker and Bal Ram Singh.

presented a seminar this spring on Dharma, Asian traditions, and Western religions. Among the themes covered by his presentation were: multiplicity of faiths, monotheism vs. polytheism, and divinity outside nature. He inspired the audience with hypotheses and extracts from his research dissertation about cultural ecology, and the unusual perspectives from Indian traditions regarding saving the planet's ecology.

Swami Tyagananadaji, of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Boston, presented a seminar on religious identity in a pluralistic environment. The Hindu Chaplain at MIT and Harvard University said that coexistence with amicability and mutual understanding serve as the foundation of a peaceful society. To be authentically religious in a pluralistic environment, one must not shy away from questions such as: "How do I relate to people whose religion is different from mine?" "If my religious views are 'right,' is everyone who thinks differently from me necessarily 'wrong?'" "Is the existence of many religions a good or a bad thing?" Reflecting on these questions is an exercise that can be both challenging and self-transforming.

Indic Portuguese ties and exchanges

Portuguese scholar Dr. Sergio Mascarenhas de Almeida led a seminar that highlighted the ties between India and Portugal. The background for his presentation were the major historical events that had a dramatic, enduring

impact on the globe, both of them with connections to Portugal and India. In one case, Columbus sailed for India in 1492 but ended up discovering America. In the second case, Vasco da Gama of Portugal found India by a maritime route in 1498. Each discovery was followed by a massive movement of Europeans to both India and America, beginning the interactions and exchanges that continue today. ♦

Indic professor conducts lecture tour of Indian universities

Professor V.T. Patil presented a series of lectures at various universities across the Indian subcontinent. His topics included democracy, secularism, Gandhian views, Nehruvian models on modern India, and the impact of global education on India.

Patil toured the vast expanse of Indian educational institutions, covering Jammu University, and universities at the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala, Aurangabad. He inaugurated the Rajiv Gandhi Chair at the Allahabad University. His programs were well-received, with animated discussions among audience members.

A special lecture on "Indo-US Relations: The Need for Strategic Partnership" was organized by the Department of Political Science of Karnataka University, Dharwar, on Feb. 24, 2007. The lecture discussed the implications of

the nuclear civilian deal approved by the U.S. Congress, and the ongoing dialogue between India and America on the so-called 123 agreement regarding peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The lecture incorporated the viewpoint that the entire process would bear fruit by mid-2008, thus opening a new chapter in relations between the two countries. This would eventually cement a strategic partnership between the two democracies with momentous consequences for the world. The lecture and subsequent lively discussion received media coverage. ♦

Swami Yogatmananda is UMass Dartmouth's Hindu chaplain

Swami Yogatmananda, resident minister of the Vedanta Society of Providence, RI, has been appointed the Hindu Chaplain for UMass Dartmouth. The Office of the Student Affairs collaborated with the Center for Indic Studies and Campus Services for the installation. There has been a steady increase in Indian students, most of whom belong to the Hindu religion, on campus; the current enrollment of 175 reflects a 79 percent increase since 2003. More than 5,000 Indian-Americans live in the Providence and southeastern Massachusetts areas, and many participate in UMass Dartmouth events. Dr. Bal Ram Singh, director of the Center for Indic Studies, said, "This is a historical event for UMass Dartmouth, and meets a growing need for students."



Swami Yogatmananda is the minister at the Providence Vedanta Society, holds a master's degree in mathematics, and has been ordained with the title of a Swami under the Ramakrishna Mission order. Born in 1953 in Karnataka, India, he joined Ramakrishna Order in 1976 and received his monastic vows in 1986. After being at Ramakrishna Math Center at Nagpur, India, for 20 years, he was posted as the Head of Ramakrishna Mission, Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

Swami Yogatmananda has participated in numerous Center activities, among them special services for students, a conference on Science and Spirituality, a conference on Karma Yoga, a seminar, and a special memorial service for the victims of the Virginia Tech massacre. ♦

Guest writers to become feature of newsletter

Starting with the next issue of *Bhagirathi*, we will introduce a regular feature: a short essay by a guest writer on some aspect of Indic studies that is of contemporary interest.

This addition has been prompted by readers' comments that although India is in the forefront in media coverage as an economic, military, and political power and resilient democracy, the country's



The Center for Indic Studies and the India Students Association joined hands to conduct the colorful event of HOLI, the Indian festival of spring. Holi means the triumph of good over evil and the conquest of sensual values by spiritual values. Holi has different mythological connotations in different parts of India. Celebrated by throwing colors and colored powder into the air, the event serves to announce the arrival of spring and the passing of winter. It is a festival that establishes an atmosphere of social merriment. People "bury their hatchets" with a warm embrace and throw their worries to the wind. Students, faculty, and other members who participated presented a delightful, colorful sight.

historical contributions have either been ignored, subsumed (without attribution) into a popular trend, or appropriated by design with the Indic component. Be it yoga, vegetarianism, environmental sustainability, multiculturalism, tolerance, or interfaith harmony, Indic knowledge systems have much to offer.

What has been lacking traditionally is a cadre of scholars with the in-depth knowledge and required scholarship in Indic studies, and the ability to communicate this knowledge in the present-day idiom. Over the course of many

seminars, conferences, workshops, and colloquia organized by the Center over the past few years, we have been introduced to many personalities who meet both the criteria listed above, but had no outlet to disseminate their thoughts.

We intend to facilitate this dialogue. Please continue to remain engaged, and provide us with your frank opinions. Contact: Dr. Sukalyan Sengupta at ssengupta@umassd.edu ♦



Bhagirathi

Newsletter of The Center for Indic Studies
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
285 Old Westport Road, North Dartmouth, MA 02747