



The Indic Center Fall Lecture Series included talks on Gandhi, the Portuguese empire, and practical spirituality

As part of the Indic Center's fall lecture series, Swami Prakashananda, Acharya of Chinmayananda Mission, Trinidad & Tobago, discussed "The Pursuit of Happiness." The scholar of Vendanta philosophy, one of several speakers in the series, began with the premise that, while all people desire happiness, many believe they cannot truly obtain it.

Drawing on examples, Prakashananda explained that happiness will continue to elude people if they believe that securing it depends on worldly objects. He stated, with emphasis, that happiness does not inhere in objects, and no object can provide eternal happiness. Happiness, he postulated, is in the very nature of "being," a state which he elaborated upon with eloquent remarks.

Dr. Hope K. Fitz, philosophy professor at Eastern Connecticut State University, gave a lecture on "Gandhi's Views on *Ahimsa*: a Path to Peace." For Mahatma Gandhi, she noted, *ahimsa* went beyond not harming—by thought, word, or



Dr. Bal Ram Singh and Dr. T. K. Roy with Dr. Hope K. Fitz whose lecture on Gandhi's views on *Ahimsa* was part of the Indic Center's fall lecture series.

deed—any living being. It also encompassed great love and compassion for all living creatures and the environment. Fitz documented the influence of Hindu, Jain, and, Buddhist traditions on Gandhi's thoughts. She also linked *ahimsa* to fearlessness and triumph over the two unfavorable attributes of the ego: *raga* and *dvesha*. Fitz suggested that, for Gandhi, *ahimsa* started as a

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Upcoming Events 2007

Patanjali Lecture Series

May 10

Religion and Violence: Why is Contemporary Religion So Violent and Does Mahatma Gandhi Provide a Relevant Alternative to Religious Violence?

Dr. Douglas Allen,
Prof. of Philosophy
University of Maine,
Orono

6:30–8:00 pm

Library Browsing Area

May 11

The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi: Violence, Nonviolence, and Peace Education

Dr. Douglas Allen,
Prof. of Philosophy
University of Maine,
Orono

noon–1:30 pm

Library Browsing Area

Annual Conference

September 1 & 2

Astronomy and Astrology: An Indic Perspective

Board of Trustees
Room, Foster 333
Details to come



(Pursuit of Happiness continued from pg 1)

moral force but subsequently became a spiritual concept. She maintained that, if we are to realize peace and well-being in our homes, communities, and the world, everyone must practice *ahimsa* and teach it to children.

Chris Jackson, an employee of Sigma Systems, Inc., and a Pfizer consultant, spoke on the balance between the secular and the spiritual parts of our lives. He discussed the principles of *sahaj marg* or the “natural path,” an India-based movement with international centers and one that has helped him achieve a purpose in life. Daily practice begins with at least 30 minutes of meditation,

enabling a person to become aware of his or her inner nature to smooth the daily routine. At day’s end, there is a period of quiet in which a person cleanses his or her mind of past impressions. This is followed by prayer and meditation, both intended to create the presence of the divine in the heart.

Dr. Timothy Walker, UMass Dartmouth assistant history professor, spoke on “The Dissemination of Drugs and Healing Techniques from Asia throughout the Portuguese Maritime Empire, 1670-1830.” He discussed the methods and impact of shipping medicinal substances, as well as healing techniques originating in Asia and spreading throughout the Portuguese maritime colonial network.

Chris Jackson (at left) addressed the balance between the secular and the spiritual, while Dr. Timothy Walker pointed out the routes by which medicinal products and healing arts reached every corner of the Portuguese maritime empire.

He focused on medicines shipped from Goa, the administrative capital of the Estado de India, and Macau, China, to destinations such as Timor, Mozambique, Brazil, and Continental Portugal. Using texts with period illustrations, Walker explained how Asian medicinal preparations and healing techniques became widely known in Portuguese-controlled enclaves in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, far from their indigenous roots, and were fully incorporated into the lexicon of tropical medicine in the

Center faculty conducts meditation workshops for the elderly

Meditation, the ancient Hindu practice for achieving a better, healthier life, is making some residents of Sippican Health Care happy these days. The Center for Indic Studies at UMass Dartmouth is bringing one of India’s great gifts to these residents.

The Elder Meditation Project, founded by the center’s Dr. Jerry Solfvin, is designed to bring meditation training to elders who may have limited access to the beneficial practice. Sippican Health Care has hosted this innovative program for three years, with good success.

Life is increasingly stressful in America as individuals spend more and more time working and competing with others for a dwindling amount of good jobs. Unfortunately, this stressful lifestyle does not always end with retirement, and it is difficult to undo years of stressful living. As a result, elders in America have become prone to anxiety and stress in record numbers. Yet many seniors have limited access to meditation training.

Today, there are thousands of studies on the impact of meditation, with recent ones targeting health and illness



Center and India Students Association celebrate Diwali and Navaratri

Continuing a decades-old tradition, the Center for Indic Studies and the India Students Association celebrated Diwali with a cultural event that embraced the two facets of Indian culture, classical and contemporary. Faculty and students as well as Indian-American children from the neigh-

borhood enjoyed the festivities. The India Students Association also celebrated the festival of *Navaratri* for the first time with the traditional *garba* dance. Both cultural programs were followed by an Indian dinner.



issues. These studies have determined that, no matter which form is chosen, meditation appears to be effective in alleviating chronic stress and anxiety and associated disorders.

What is meditation? At its essence is the intentional focusing of one's attention and awareness on one thing, which can vary greatly. One common example involves the focusing upon a word that one speaks repeatedly, and mentally, in rhythm with breathing. The object of one's intentional mental focus, however, could be a body part, a

task, a spot on the floor or wall, a sound, a pain or other feeling—virtually anything. What seems to matter is the purity of focus, maintaining awareness on the focus despite distractions and ruminations.

There has been little formal research on the effects of meditation on elders in adult care facilities or programs, but one study was impressive. The Harvard study, conducted at several nursing homes in Massachusetts, showed the eight-week meditation program significantly improved the elderly

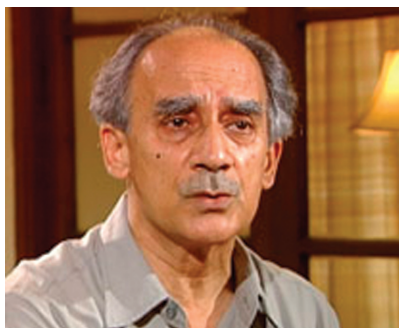
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meditators' sense of well-being, quality of life, creativity, desire to live, and mental agility. A year later, the mortality rate among those who had participated in the program was significantly lower than those in other control groups.

Encouraged by that study, Dr. Solfvin decided to introduce a similar program at Sippican Health Care. The early results were good—the residents who attended seemed to enjoy it—and attendance increased weekly. By the eighth week, the room was packed, and Sippican staffers were also coming to sessions. Dr. Solfvin has continued this program; the eight-week program in the summer of 2006 represented its third year.

Solfvin also conducted the Elder Meditation Project program at Nemasket Health Care facility in Middleboro, Hearthstone in Brockton, and Fall River's Family Services Adult Day Care program, with similar positive response.

"Without doing the necessary formal research, we can't say for certain whether this program is having a measurable impact on people's health and happiness," Solfvin said. "But those that participate certainly appear to be getting something of benefit from it."



Dr. Arun Shourie.

The economy and security situation in Asia

The economy and security situation in Asia" was the topic when Dr. Arun Shourie, member of the Indian Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and former Minister of Commerce, Industry, Communications, and Information, spoke at a seminar organized by the Center for Indic Studies.

A prominent columnist and author of 20 books, Dr. Shourie traced the rapid pace of economic growth in India. He predicted that growth in the next decade in some areas—such as organic farming and hormone-free dairy products,

and architectural and engineering services for Europe and North America—would outpace that of the more familiar information technology services sector.

Shourie also discussed challenges that could seriously impair India's economic development, among them China's desire for hegemony in Asia, the Maoists' insurgency, and Islamic fundamentalism. He pointed out that, with the current federal structure and the parliamentary system of governance, the country is ill-equipped to deal with these challenges from a strategic perspective. He made a fervent plea for consideration of alternative forms of democratic governance.

Dr. Shourie provided a status report of negotiations regarding an Indo-US nuclear arrangement, and presented his case for opposing it. In a freewheeling session, Shourie answered questions related to India's national security, the growth of Japan as a super-power, and China's military and economic growth. He also discussed the role that non-resident Indians can play in India's development.