

Press Release

Vedic Practices of Yajna, Rituals, and Tantra attract most at World Conference

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Port-of-Spain, Trinidad: Amid chants of Agni, Varuna, and others, with oblation in sacrificial fire pit at the lawns of beautiful St. Augustine Campus of University of West Indies in Trinidad, were sitting some of the highest academic, scholars, and intellectuals to explore the meanings of these ancient practices and to make sense of them for the modern world.



PVR Nasimha Rao (left) and Shekhar Shastri (right) performing yajna at the WAVES Conference in Trinidad and Tobago at University of West Indies.

The occasion was the 8th biennial International Conference of the World Association of Vedic Studies that was inaugurated by the Indian High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago, HE Malay Mishra, and the Foreign Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Surajrattan Rambachan.

World Association of Vedic Studies (WAVES) is a multidisciplinary, non-religious, academic society. It is a forum for all scholarly activities and views on any

area of Vedic Studies variously called as Indian Studies, South Asian Studies or Indology.

The conference was held along three tracks: Academic Symposium on Vedic knowledge for Civilizational Harmony, Deep dive into Understanding Vedic Practices, and a Youth Summit. While all the tracks were well attended Vedic Practices track attracted the most participants.

The Vedic practice of Yajna was much discussed as a journey of self-discovery and transformation and explained in detail; the fire ceremony was performed by Shri PVR Narasimha Rao on three days to the delight of the attendees.

“Yajna is a fire ceremony that has deep macrocosmic symbolism and has lessons for the modern man’s quest for environmental rejuvenation and balance in society,” said Shekhar Shastri, the program chair for WAVES 2010.

Prof. Subhash Kak, a leading scientist, described the astronomical significance of the Vedic Yajna especially the number 108 which corresponds to the distance between the earth and the Sun, and also the distance between the earth and the Moon – and that the Vedic Yajna is a symbolic inner journey to the inner cosmos.

Shri PVR Narasimha Rao commented, “The key is to find ways of transmitting these beautiful forms of worship and practice to the coming generations.”

The Trinidad spiritual teacher Raviji charmed the audience with his adaptation of the sacred Vedic rituals and poetic rendering of the journey undertaken by his ancestors over the past 160 years. Traveling through the island one saw colorful flags all over and Dr. Indrani Rampersad described the important role of the Jhandi’s in the Ramlila performance in Trinidad.

There were discussions on the original and scientific meanings of Karmakanda, rituals, puja, and samskaras, led by leading scholar practitioners such as Dr. Subhash Kak, Dr. Pandit Parasuram Tewarie, Dr. David Frawley, Shekhar Shastri, PVR Narasimha Rao, Swami Prakashananda, and Sri Karunamayi Devi.

Prof. K. Ramasubramanian of IIT, Mumbai commented, “The Vedic practices present ways of appreciating the intricate connections between all forms of material and existence – honoring and celebrating the mutual interdependence between all participants in the cosmic drama.”

Yogini Shambhavi demonstrated steps involved and meanings derived in worshipping Kali in the Tantra session. Ambassador CM Bhandari explained chitta as the divine mirror that can be used to learn and lead peaceful and healthy life through yoga and meditation.

A futuristic session was organized on Siksha - revitalizing Vedic traditions, in which scholars discussed innovative ideas for Vedic rejuvenation (Frawley), essential building blocks: Sanskrit and Samskara (Shekhar Shastri), Eastern wisdom and the West (Jeffrey Armstrong), and SuperAccelerated Learning Theory (based on Vedic learning system) models (Pandit Ramsamooj).

Leading author, Dr. David Frawley remarked, “Just as Yoga has been internalized and practiced by millions all over the world, a logical, deeper and simplified understanding of Puja and Yajna have the potential to transform the lives of millions.”

The Vedic practice sessions brought to the fore the continuing relevance of these practices, and need to learn them in contemporary context with modern language and terminologies. These sessions also

provided first hand experience to academic scholars, and helped them understand the deeper meanings of Vedic practices, and in the integration of theory and practice.

“This was the first time that the Vedic Practice track was introduced at WAVES , and it turned out to be a huge success in every possible sense” said Prof. Bal Ram Singh, conference chair of WAVES 2010.

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