



Ālaya Vānī

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*“Science tells you that no
two objects can occupy
the same space at
the same time. This
is true of spirituality
also. Lust and Lord
are diametrically
opposed. Hence both
can never occupy the same
space simultaneously. When
you enthrone lust, the Lord will
surely abdicate”.*

- Swami Vivekananda

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Message from the Secretary
The Council of Hindu Temples of North America

Dear Friends,

Namaste & Greetings.

Our warm greetings and best wishes to all of you and your families for the New Year 2014. The annual meeting of the Council of Hindu Temples of North America for 2014 is scheduled at the Hindu Temple of Atlanta on Saturday, April 19th. Although there has not been much progress since the last Council meeting of 2013 at the Hindu Temple of Wisconsin, we need to rejuvenate the activities beneficial to all the Temples. Vision of the Council must be broadened and membership must be increased. The Council should also be the powerful voice on behalf of all Hindu Temples and Hindus in general.

There are several issues of common concern to all the Temples - particularly safety and security of Temples, youth involvement, employee benefits, visas for religious workers, and so on. The annual meeting of the Council is the best forum for all the Temples to discuss and learn from each other by sharing experiences. One of the goals of the Temples is to educate and instil Hindu identity and pride in our youth and then help build quality leadership to continue the sacred work. Current leadership of the Temples may discuss various ways and means to accomplish this.

May the blessings of God Almighty be with all of us and our families. Look forward to seeing all of you in Atlanta.

Sincerely,
Dr. Uma Mysorekar
President, *Śri Mahā Vallabha Ganapati Devasthanam*,
Flushing, NY



Council Meeting 2013
at Hindu Temple of Wisconsin, Pewaukee, WI

MEMBERSHIP APPEAL
TO ALL THE TEMPLES



PLEASE JOIN AND BE A PART OF THE COUNCIL OF HINDU TEMPLES OF NORTH AMERICA BY BECOMING A MEMBER AND MAKING THE COUNCIL A STRONG BODY REPRESENTING ALL THE TEMPLES. THE COUNCIL CAN HAVE A POWERFUL VOICE IN DEALING WITH ISSUES SUCH AS RELIGIOUS WORKERS VISAS, ETC - COMMON CONCERN OF ALL TEMPLES.

For Further Information regarding membership form and dues, Please call
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ANNUAL COUNCIL
MEETING OF 2014
will be held on Saturday, April 19, 2014

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Please visit the new Council website at

<http://www.chtna.org>

For information as well as links and resources
to other Temples in the United States.

Contact the Council by email at:
info@chtna.org





HINDUISM AND SCIENCE COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER

by: Vineeth Nair

Since the day I was born, Hinduism has surrounded me. My family is devoutly Hindu and molded by Hindu scripture, philosophy, culture, and tradition. My father, mother, sister and I have been sitting down to pray everyday at 8:00 pm in the living room as a family for years. Yet, although I had been a "Hindu" all along, I did not really understand what religion was until I began to attend Hindu classes at the age of 12. After that point, I began to think critically about what religion was and how I wanted to embrace my faith as an awakened Hindu. Growing up, I have always been science-oriented. I studied the sciences with a passion all throughout elementary and high school and even decided to walk a scientific/medical route in college as a Pharmacy student. From what I learn now in college about physiology and chemical laws, I find it hard to deny science like I used to. For lack of a better phrase, I have come to terms with science. But this is not so because I am ignorant towards Hinduism, but rather because everyday I discover something that connects the science I love to the religion I practice.

From my Christian friends, I learned that religions like Christianity center around as a sacred theory of Creation. By "establishing" how life on Earth began they were able to further support the morals and philosophy of the Bible. From what I understand according to Christianity, the Earth was less than 100,000 years old, Intelligent Design created man, and dinosaurs never existed. As scientific as my friends were, they stubbornly refused to believe certain facts that were stated in our biology and geology text books. Personally, I have always held the highest respect for scientific pursuit, and I have always believed that if there is evidence for a theory it has some, if not total, validity. This led me to think about my own religion: Hinduism. The many religious debates I had with my Christian friends over religious principles made me realize one thing: my religion doesn't defy science but rather in its entirety, it complements science.

From being a Pharmacy student and taking medical classes, I am on the forefront of the medical revolution that is occurring now. I constantly hear about non-allopathic methods to live healthy and to treat disease. Collectively, I believe I hear the most praise about *yoga*. *Yoga*, means "to join" in Sanskrit. This refers to the union of one's individual conscious to the universal Supreme being, *Brahman*, or *Paramatma*. By casting away all worldly distractions and troubles, one is able to master oneself and

achieve physical and spiritual enlightenment. There are 4 main divisions of *yoga*: *Bhakti yoga*, *Jnana yoga*, *Karma yoga*, and *Raja yoga*. However, global medicine highly praises the school of *yoga* called *Hatha yoga*. *Hatha yoga* was introduced in 15th century India by *Yogi Swatmarama* and scribed into the *Pradipika*. *Hatha yoga* is the origin of all the modern *yoga* classes, pilates, and physical meditation that is now commercialized among millions of people in Western culture. From a physiological perspective, *yoga* is highly respected and believed to alleviate many bodily ailments. Such *yoga* is practiced through a combination of physical poses called *asanas* and breathing techniques. *Yoga* is known to help alleviate chronic ailments such as asthma, arthritis, chronic pain, depression, anxiety, insomnia, multiple sclerosis, and difficulty concentrating. *Yoga* is also believed to help with improving posture, metabolism, muscular strength, energy, flexibility, and balance. *Yoga* has also been tied to improved immune function and the lowering of triglycerides that cause heart disease. *Yoga* is a highly respected practice in the medical field, and though its benefits haven't been mapped out completely, it is gaining millions of followers world wide at a time.

Another topic I want to mention relates to one of my favorites quotes from the *Bhagavad Gita*, said by Lord *Krishna* himself :

*yada yada hi dharmasya
glanir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthanam adharmasya
tadatmanam srijamy aham*

The preceding quote is from Text 7 of Chapter 4 of the *Bhagavad Gita*. It is translated as "Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion - at that time I descend Myself". In this quote Lord *Krishna* explains the purpose of the reincarnation of God to be a correction in the world in a time when people stray away from the path of dharma and righteousness. Though the author of *Bhagavad Gita* As It Is interpreted it in such a true way, I have my own interpretation of it. Going back to core principles of nature and science, I believe the quote is an implication of the scientific principles Equilibrium and Natural Adaptation. Equilibrium, in all sciences, is stability or a state of rest. For example, in Physics, equilibrium of a mass exists when all forces acting on the mass are equal, and as a result, negate each other. In Chemistry, equilibrium exists when the rate of a forward and reverse reaction are equal, which means both sides of the reaction are of equal magnitude and direction. A fundamental belief in Hinduism is the path to *Dharma*, or one's *Vedic* duty in a lifetime. According to the *Mahabharata*, the *Vedas*, the

Bhagavad Gita and all Hindu books, the ultimate goal of a human being is to achieve his/her *Dharma* and gain good *Karma* as a result. However, in Hinduism it is explained that there are many worldly temptations that may distract one from the path of *Dharma*. In such a time, God will reincarnate into a worldly form and intervene so that justice and good is restored in the world. In my opinion, this parallels Natural Adaptation. In ecology and evolution biology, when a stress is placed on nature, whether a threat to life or an imbalance of populations, nature will re-adjust itself in some way, shape, or form, to re-reach equilibrium in an environment. Hinduism did indeed discover this theory first, as portrayed by the beforementioned quote. In Hinduism the last age of the world, called *Kali Yuga*, is a time of unparalleled evil in the world and the next reincarnation of *Vishnu* is expected to arrive in this time. Perhaps, because man is overwhelming all other life on earth, a divine intervention will be needed to restore balance to the world's natural environment.

Astrology has been a part of Hinduism for thousands of years. In *Vedic* astrology, Hindu priests use complex star, sun, and lunar formations to predict events, and determine fortune for many aspects of Indian culture such as marriages, child naming, and astrological birthdays. It is widely known that *Vedic* astrology differs from Western/Hellenic astrology in many ways, and as a result, *Vedic* astrology is a highly revered field of study. Although, such astrology is attached to culture, Hinduism was the motivation for such a science. Ultimately, it is believed that *Vedic* astrology is used to reveal one's destiny and future. In other words, astrology determines one's *karma* in this world. If, for example, one's life decisions are not correspondent to one's astrological destiny, it could lead to negative *karma*, and perhaps misfortune. For such a science, there is a large component of belief. Some say that predictions will not come to be if one does not have belief in God and *karma*.

From advanced astrology to human physiology, it seems as though science is the very foundation of Hinduism. Even in the Western world, the medical benefits of *yoga* are undoubted. *Vedic* astrology is upcoming as even a topic of study at the University level. Various scriptures in the Hindu holy books have been implicative of biological and natural phenomena and principles long before they were given a name in the modern world. Hinduism is a religion that has flourished for millennia all around the world. Thought here is discord between religion and science, I do in fact believe that Hinduism and the interdisciplinary science complement each other.

2012-13 Essay Competition Entry - College
Prize Winning Essay



RĀMĀYANA : THE STORY OF ŚRĪ RĀMA



Rāmāyana, an *Itihāsa* (thus it was) written by sage *Vālmiki*, is the inspiring life story of Lord *Rāma* (Lord *Vishnu*'s seventh avatar), the personification of *Dharma* (righteousness). Thousands of years ago, in the *Treta Yuga*, the king of *Ayodya* *Daśaratha*'s queens *Kousalya*, *Sumitra* and *Kaikeyi* shared the *prasād* from a *putra kameshti yajna*, and gave birth to Lord *Rāma*, the twins *Lakshmana* and *Satrugna*, and *Bharata* respectively. The princes excelled in scriptures and warfare. At sage *Vishvāmītra*'s request, the young Lord *Rāma* and *Lakshmana* bravely killed *Tātaka* and other fierce demons who were disrupting his *yajna*. In *Mithila*, Lord *Rāma* easily strung and broke the heavy *Siva Dhanus* (Lord *Śiva*'s bow) and won *Sita*'s hand.

The entire kingdom rejoiced when *Daśaratha* selected Lord *Rāma* to be the *yuvārāja* (next king), except *Manthara*, a cunning old maid of *Kaikeyi*. She instigated *Kaikeyi* to demand that *Daśaratha* fulfill two previously unspecified boons promised to her: 1) *Bharata* be the *yuvārāja*, and, 2) Lord *Rāma* be banished for fourteen years. *Daśaratha* and everyone else were heart-broken by her cruelty. To honor his father's promise, Lord *Rāma*, along with *Sita* and *Lakshmana* left *Ayodya*. *Bharata*, who was away, came back and was enraged by his mother's treachery which also indirectly caused *Daśaratha*'s demise. *Bharata* pleaded with Lord *Rāma* to become the king, but He firmly declined. So *Bharata* brought back Lord *Rāma*'s *pādukas* (sandals) to represent Him; and he governed as a custodian.

At the end of the 13th year, *Śurpanaka*, the *rākṣasa* (demon) king *Rāvana*'s sister passionately approached Lord *Rāma* and then *Lakshmana*, but was flippantly rejected. Angrily, she attacked *Sita*, but *Lakshmana* cut off her nose and ear. Vengefully, she enticed *Rāvana* to abduct the beautiful *Sita* for himself. *Mārica*, *Tātaka*'s son, was forced to become a golden deer and lure Lord *Rāma* and later *Lakshmana* by imitating Lord *Rāma* in distress. *Rāvana* in the guise of a *sādhu* asked *Sita* for food convincing her to come outside the invisible fire wall drawn by *Lakshmana*, and kidnapped her. *Jatāyu*, an eagle who was fatally wounded by *Rāvana* in his struggle to rescue *Sita* identified *Rāvana* as the kidnapper.

Sugriva became the king after his brother *Vali* was killed and a group headed by *Vāli*'s son *Angada*, *Jāmbavan* the chief of bears and *Hanumān* was sent South in search of *Sita*. With hopeful anticipation, Lord *Rāma* gave his signet ring to *Hanumān* to give to *Sita*. Following a lead, *Hanumān* was chosen to leap across the ocean.

Hanumān grew in size and with one leap crossed the ocean and landed in *Lanka*. *Hanumān* jumped down from the tree and revealed who he was to the overjoyed *Sita*, and gave her the ring; and she in turn gave him her *cudāmani* (hair jewelry).

Vibheeshana left his *adhārmic* brother *Rāvana* and surrendered to Lord *Rāma*. *Rāvana*'s son *Indrajit* made *Lakshmana* unconscious. Unable to locate the medicinal herbs, *Hanumān* carried back the entire *Sanjeevani* hill. *Lakshmana* killed *Indrajit* before he became invincible. Lord *Rāma* and *Rāvana* fought using divine *astras*, and *Rāvana* was finally killed by a *brahmāstra*. After *Sita* walked through fire proving her fidelity to the public, Lord *Rāma* accepted her. He became the King of *Ayodya*. *Hanumān* remained with Him, and still remains whenever *Rāmāyana* is remembered.