



Laj Utreja, Ph.D.
Founder, Institute of Spiritual Healing, Madison, Alabama, USA
www.instituteofspiritualhealing.com

Hinduism and World Peace¹

Short History

The term Hindu originates from a territorial identity given by early Persians who came to the land surrounded by the river Sindhu at the Northwest of the Indian peninsula. The word 'Sindhu' was distorted to sound like 'Hindu,' and has been used ever since.

The Hindu scriptures mention *Aryavarta*² as the land of the *Aryans* bounded on the North by the Himalayas (formed by Plate Tectonics between the Indo-Australian Plate Eurasian Plate approximately 70 M years ago) and on the South by the Vindhyaal Mountains, and on the East and West by the sea. In the ancient times, *rishis* (the ancient seers) inhabited the Himalayas where they received revelations, called *Sruti* (that which is heard, the *Vedas*). Recently³, it has been genetically determined that around that time, the first human migration took place from Africa to the southern India.

Since this migration happened over time, the inhabitants of *Aryavarta* spread as far west as Turkey and to the northwest up to Turkmenistan. *Itihasa* (the Hindu ancient stories of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*) has reference to many of the

¹ Laj Utreja, *Hinduism and World Peace*, Paper presented at IAERP Regional Peace Conference, Alabama A&M University, Huntsville, AL, July 28-31, 2009

² *Manusmriti*, 11,22,17

³ Michel Wood, *Story of India*, PBS Documentary Series, 2009

places in this extended *Aryavarta*. *Ramayana*, with local cultural injunctions, is popular in as far northeast as Mongolia to the Southeast Asia and the islands of Indonesia and Srilanka.

Historically, it is now known that *Vedic* civilization existed for well over 5000 years. The *Vedic* civilization included small territories about the size of present day townships and the cultured ones were called *Aryans*. The undersea exploration⁴ of an ancient city, Dwarka (the kingdom of Lord Krishna in 5,102 BC) off the coast of Gujarat in 1981; the existence of mythological river⁵, Saraswati springing from the Himalayas and merging in the Ganges in the Gangetic plains confirmed by satellite photography and research in plate tectonics, and existence of the Adam's bridge in Palk Strait - known as *Ram Setu* (the bridge made by special floating materiel over the strait between the southern tip of India and Sri Lanka by the army of *Vanars* for Lord Rama around 18.1M years ago⁶) in India through US space agency NASA pictures taken in 2002 all throw light on the existence of civilizations older than we know about.

The incredibly advanced stages of civilization, knowledge and technology contained in the Indian peninsula more than 5000 years ago presupposes a long stage of development and maturation beforehand. From the above description alone, it can be inferred that for such an amalgamation of people of diverse background and culture to live in harmony there must have been a thread of unity with common history, common literature imbibed in a certain way of life. This way of life is called *Sanaatana Dharma* (the Eternal Precept).

Sanaatana Dharma

Sanaatana Dharma was revealed to the early seers at the dawn of civilization by some extra-human agency, and therefore, divine. The revealed knowledge was transferred from teacher to student tradition and later codified into a compendium of 4 *Vedas*, 1,180 *Upanishads* (that which is received by sitting close to the teacher, approximately 200 are still available and 11 are prominent), 18 *Puranas* (containing the history of creation), 6 *Darshan Shastras* (schools of philosophy) and 18 *Smritis* (that which is remembered, codes of conduct related to the social living). *Sanaatana* means eternal and *Dharma* is that which sustains.

Therefore, *Sanaatana Dharma* implies pursuit of only those actions, thoughts and practices that promote physical and mental happiness in the world, harmony of an individual with the environment and ensuring God realization. Only such a

⁴ Kenneth Chandler, *Origin of Vedic Civilization*, Book in progress, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/7224153/ORIGINS-of-Vedic-Civilization>

⁵ Scientists prove existence of mythical Saraswati river, *The Times of India*, May 2, 2001

⁶ Swami Prakashanand Saraswati, *The Time History of the Religion of India*, Barsana Dham, Autin, TX, 2003

Law is good at all times and under all situations. *Sanaatana Dharma* is a feature of God. It is revealed by God in its cyclic manifestation, propagated by God, and protected by God Himself. It is not based on dogmas or creeds to be accepted as blind faith. It is based on self-realization and hence has produced great saints who have experienced God in their lives.

Whereas, we know the founders of all other major religions in the world, no human person has ever been credited with founding or revealing *Vedic* knowledge. As far as people are concerned, this way of life has always existed, although their understanding and practice have undergone evolution and development. Hindus do not say that this knowledge started some specific length of time ago. They say that this knowledge is the eternal principles of truth, good in all times and circumstances, applies to all humankind and do not change with human minds. These spiritual laws are considered to be as scientific and real as material and natural laws. When these are followed they produce incredibly positive results. Correspondingly, all traditions that sprang from *Sanaatana Dharma* under the now recognized system of faiths (with different beliefs, but all rooted in the *Vedas*), called Hinduism offer a way of life with no prescriptions besides ways of life, belief and worship.

Most interesting facet of *Hinduism* is the attitude toward religion. Most Religions have fixed intellectual beliefs. Hinduism has no such limits. *Hinduism* puts intuition above intellect, personal experiences above dogma and inward realization above outer perceptions. To a *Hindu*, intellectual views, moral values and aesthetic forms are just attitudes of the self that manifest depending upon the underlying will to express. Consequently, *Hinduism* is a multitude of beliefs that alter from age to age and community to community. *Hinduism* has gradually absorbed customs and ideas from people with whom it comes in contact and does so with ease. *Hinduism* has stood the stresses and strains of more than four-five millenniums of spiritual thoughts and experiences.

Hinduism is a way of life

The immediate derivative of *Sanaatana Dharma* is *samaanya dharma*, which is a commonsense law that proclaims, "Do not do unto others what you don't want to be done unto you." No one wants to be lied to, so do not lie. No one wants to be cheated, so do not cheat. No one wants to be hurt, so do not hurt. No one wants their spouse to be coveted, so do not covet. No one wants to be killed, so do not kill. No one wants to be converted, so do not convert. And the list goes on and on. Since the commonsense law is commonsensical, it applies to all human beings. And therefore, every human being on this earth is a Hindu by virtue of being so. Universality of Hinduism lies in allowing a person to choose and do what is right by one's own free will. *Samaanya dharma* is the only principle that can assure peace and a sustainable society assured to last forever. Therefore, *samaanya dharma* must be the guiding principle for all human conduct in its various interactions with different social, political and economic groups.

Since Hindus believe that all manifestation is pervaded by God, the responsibility to live in harmony with one's environment lies with the individual. The only controlling agency in Hinduism is the Law of Karma. Hindus believe that every action commissioned by thought, word or deed has a consequence and is governed by the Law of Karma.

Simply stated, the human values of righteousness, love, nonviolence, peace and truth form the basis of our essential nature. Consequently, any good or bad consequence of action (*karma*) is believed to be the result of a causal action of the past. That inherent principle alone is adequate for a society to live in harmony by following the prevailing laws (*dharma*). *Dharma* needs to be followed in every stage of life (*ashrama*), in any order of society (*varna*), and in any pursuit (*purushaartha*). Fulfillment of duty (*swadharma*) in society for any order and stage in life is the highest *dharma*. Adherence to *dharma* in *grihastha asharam* (married life) offers the highest benefits for spiritual advancement.

Global Peace at a Glance

Hindus believe in both a formless God without attributes and a multitude of gods with form and qualifications (with certain powers they can bestow on their followers) that control the universe. Before manifesting into forms, *Brahman* (the formless state without attributes) associates with *Shakti* (Potential) to activate *Shiva* ('the life and death' principle), *Vishnu* ('the preservation' principle) and *Brahmaa* ('the creation' principle). According to Satya Sai Baba, God manifests in all of us as righteous conduct, love, nonviolence, peace and truth.

Recognizing and understanding that universal peace is possible when all elements of manifestation are at peace by the sheer will of human beings, it is for our collective benefit that we explore the process that may channel human energy to establish and maintain peace. In fact, we sprang from peace and we'll merge in peace. While we live, we need sustaining principle in our conduct to establish peace. The concept of global peace is neither a novel idea nor a practical impossibility; it is simply a way of life emphasized by *Vishnu* (the universal preservation principle) manifested in human psyche. The outward expression of this ideal is as simple as willingness to have peace.

Consider a simple example - all human beings, sans our animal nature, are sensitive toward human suffering. Who doesn't feel disturbed by seeing people afflicted by the ravages of a war, oppression of a ruthless dictator or a deadly weather catastrophe? Even the hardest of the hearts melt at the sight of starving children and we become emotionally dejected. These thoughts are expressions of our divine origin; global peace is another expression of utilizing the universal energy to raise our awareness by assimilating only the good, the auspicious and the divine. In the context of the following verses from the *Vedas*, the world peace becomes a state of human existence, when:

Ishaavaasayam idam sarvām – While the whole universe is pervaded by God; our differences are respected as manifestations of God.

Vasudeva Kutumbkam – We see us as one global family.

Samaani va akootih samaanaa hridayaani vah; samaanavastu vo mano yathaa vah susahaasati – Common is our volition and common are our thoughts for the welfare of the human family along with the environment we call, the earth that sustains us, the waters that bear us, and the air that carries the breath of life.

Praana eva tat pancha dhaatmaana pravibhajayaitadbaana mavashtahya vidhaaryaameeti – That breath of life (vitality in all inanimate and animate creation), called *praana* is common to our existence.

When that breath of life is taken away, the peace that is possible is taken away because the life yearns for peace only when it manifests in human form. Therefore, feeling the breath of life taken away from all who lost their lives in wars, under oppression, and communal conflicts, and all those whose breath is taken away by unjust thinking and leadership of those deluded by ignorance and arrogance of power, I take this breath of life with the following volition:

Sarve Bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramayah, sarve bhadraani pashyantu, ma kashchit dukh bhaag bhavet – Oh Lord! Let all be happy, let all be free from misery, may all realize goodness and may no one suffer pain.

Lokaa samastaa sukhino bhavantu – Let all beings be happy.

When all are happy, the breath of life becomes the breath of peace, the primal cause of us all. Therefore, let us join together to have this collective will:

Om dyauh shanti, antariksham shantih, prithvee shanty, aapah shantir, aushadhayah shantih. Vanaspatyah shantir, vishvedevaah shanty, brahma shantih, sarvām shantih, shantir eva shantih, saamaa shantiredhi – May there be peace in the celestial regions, peace in the heavens and peace on earth. May the waters be appeasing? May the herbs be wholesome and may the trees and plants bring peace to all. May there be harmony among the celestial beings, perfection in the eternal being and peace in the universe. May thy wisdom, the source of peace, spread to all, and may that peace come to me.

Om shantih, shantih, shantih. Let peace prevail.