

UBEROI FOUNDATION
for RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Annual Report 2018



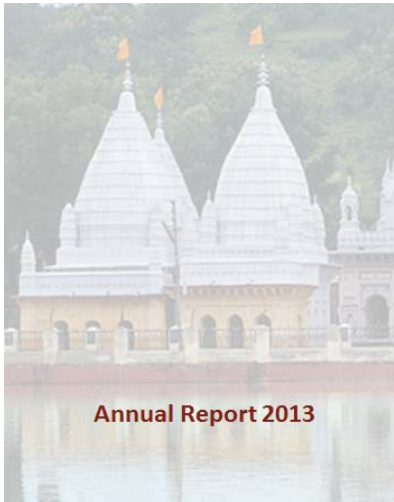
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Annual Report 2011



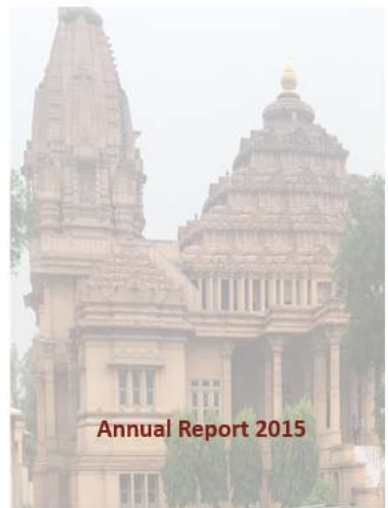
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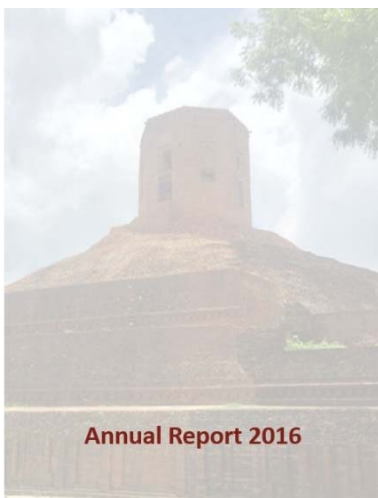
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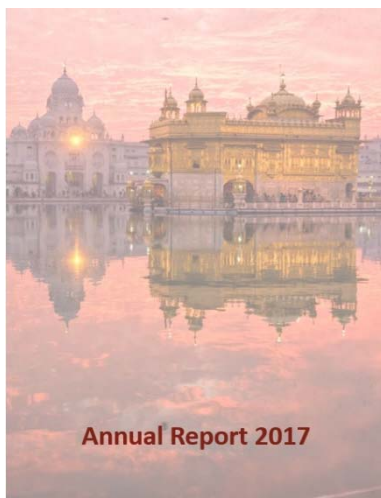
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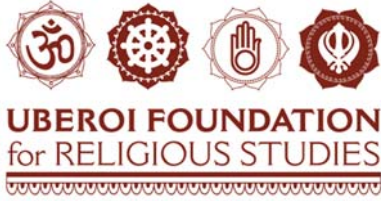
Annual Report 2015



Annual Report 2016



Annual Report 2017



Professor Ved P. Nanda
Chair of the Board
Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies
Denver, Colorado

December 2018

What an achievement the Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies has realized since its inception. Founded on November 14, 2007, the Foundation has now completed the first year of its second decade. So many dear people have taken such an active engagement in our collective mission. Certainly, my fellow trustees are a significant part of that distinguished group – Parveen Setia, Anu Bhatia, Jyothi Bhatia, and Sneha Harjai. The leadership of executive director Jim Polsfut and that of secretary Katharine Nanda have also been instrumental. Equally worthy of mention are so many old and new friends, including now the dozens of grantees of the Uberoi Foundation and the scores of experts who assemble with us each Fall.

With regard to our grantees, in 2018 the Uberoi Foundation made ten pivotal grants – some toward the work of training U.S. middle school and high school teachers in the Dharmic traditions, some toward the work of correcting distortions of these traditions in U.S. textbooks, and some toward a miscellany of conferences, books, papers, and other initiatives that help to advance awareness here in the United States of one or more of the Dharmic traditions.

Special appreciation goes out this year to Professor Yashwant Pathak, the host and chair of the 2018 Annual Experts Meeting. What a wonderful and enlightening time some forty of us shared together in October at the Patel College of Global Sustainability on the campus of South Florida University in Tampa. No fewer than 28 abstracts were presented on the topic of “Human Rights and Human Dignity: Rooted in the Four Dharmic Traditions.”

Special appreciation also goes out this year to Professor Chris Chapple of Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. The second bi-annual offering of a three-week teacher training program in India took place this past summer under the able direction of Professor Chapple. A dozen teachers took part, traveling together, staying in university guest houses, and studying in-depth each of the four Dharmic traditions.

It is a distinct honor and a privilege to serve the Uberoi Foundation as its chairman, and I remain deeply grateful to everyone who has walked and is walking with us in this wonderful endeavor.

Respectfully,

Ved P. Nanda

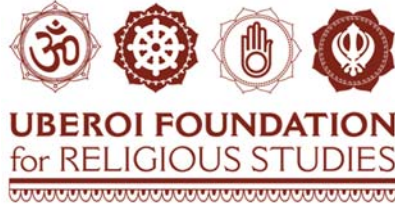


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Section I:

Overview of the Foundation

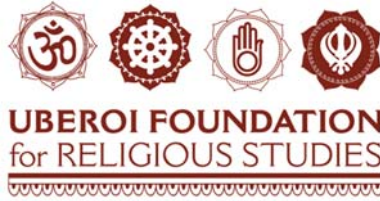


Vision and Mission

Mahinder Uberoi saw a world of many facets. He cherished the Dharmic tradition that was his birthright and felt its power as a vehicle for spiritual awakening and fulfillment. Professor Uberoi grasped the breadth of this tradition across the land of its origin and its range of experiences known as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.

The Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies is Mahinder Uberoi's legacy. After his death in November 2006, a will was read in which he wrote, "I leave all my assets for the scholarly study of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and other related religions and their music and arts." In order to honor his wishes, the Foundation was established on November 14, 2007, to encourage and support the work of scholars in these Dharmic traditions and to extend the reach of this knowledge in the United States in particular. The Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies provides a unique opportunity for the scholars of these traditions to explore their common ties in the Dharmic source.

The mission of the Foundation is summarized in these few words: *The Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies serves to raise awareness of the four major Dharmic religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism in an effort to promote understanding, communication, tolerance, and peace among the diverse peoples of the world.*



Mahinder Uberoi: The Invisible Benefactor



Mahinder Singh Uberoi was born in Delhi, India shortly after World War I, on March 13, 1924. He ultimately earned a doctorate degree in engineering and lived for most of his adult life in the United States, primarily in Boulder, Colorado. Professor Uberoi passed away in 2006 as a retired academic having chosen to live with very little pretense and ostentation. His wealth, however, was considerable, and his assets today help to raise awareness of Dharmic religions in an effort to promote understanding, communication, tolerance and peace in the world.

Education

Professor Uberoi grew up in Sialkot, India, and received a bachelors of science degree from Punjab University in 1944. Subsequently, he studied in the United States, earning a masters degree from the California Institute of Technology in 1946 and a doctorate degree in engineering from the Johns Hopkins University in 1952.

Academic Leadership

Professor Uberoi began his academic career on the faculty of the Department of Aeronautical Engineering at the University of Michigan from 1953 until 1963. During that period, in 1958, he earned early professional distinction as a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellow at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm.

In 1963, Professor Uberoi moved to Boulder, Colorado, where he lived for more than forty years until his death in 2006. From 1963 to 1975, he served as the chairman of the Department of Aerospace Engineering Sciences at the University of Colorado. Four U.S. astronauts graduated from the Department during those years, including Ellison Onizuka who died with other members of his distinguished crew aboard the space shuttle Challenger in 1986.

As chairman, Professor Uberoi added faculty and advanced basic research in the fields of fluid mechanics, modern control systems, and the biological sciences. Adolf Busemann, the father of supersonic aerodynamics, joined the department in 1963. Much of Professor Uberoi's academic career involved research and teaching far from his adopted city of Boulder, Colorado. In 1966, he was an exchange scientist with the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Between 1972 and 1974, he was an invited professor at the

University of Quebec, followed thereafter in 1974 as a visiting scientist at the Max Plank Institute of Astrophysics in Munich. From 1975 to 1976, Professor Uberoi was an honorary research fellow at Harvard University, and he returned to the University of Colorado between 1981 and 1982 as a Croft professor.

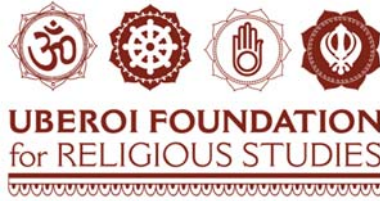
Scientific Achievement

Professor Uberoi made innumerable contributions to scholarly literature during his career, on topics such as turbulent flow, magneto-hydrodynamics, and combustion. He was the editor of *Cosmic Gas Dynamics* by Evry Schatzman and Ludwig Bierman. He served on the steering committees associated with the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics from 1966 to 1969 and with the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences from 1967 to 1969 at the University of Colorado. He organized the all-university Seminar on Environment and Public Policy from 1970 until 1975. He directed and organized a science of flight program of High School Honors Institute from 1968 to 1974, directed the Summer Institute for Disadvantaged High School Students in 1969, and directed and lectured in the Pre-Engineering Program for many years.

Posthumous Orientation

Mahinder Uberoi passed away on November 25, 2006. He never married and had no children. In 1986, twenty years before his death, he signed his last will and testament. In that document, Professor Uberoi ordered that his assets be used to establish a foundation “for the scholarly study of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism, and other related religions and their music and arts.” In implementing his mission, he made it clear that his intent was not to proselytize. “Scholars need not have any particular faith or beliefs,” he wrote. To carry out his mission, Professor Uberoi intentionally left much judgment to the men and women who would be named as trustees of the foundation. Nevertheless, by way of example, he wrote, “Obvious candidates for support are persons who are regularly engaged in scholarly work, such as universities, institutes, and religious centers.”

Deploying the assets of Professor Uberoi upon his death, the Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies requested and subsequently received authorization as a tax-exempt private foundation by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service on December 13, 2007. The five founding trustees of the Foundation wish to express particular gratitude to a former student of Professor Uberoi, Mr. Randy Nishiyama, for his tireless and selfless work in helping to lay the groundwork for the Foundation. Along with founding trustee, Parveen Setia, Mr. Nishiyama provided a most thoughtful and invaluable service in memory of the man who was once his educator.



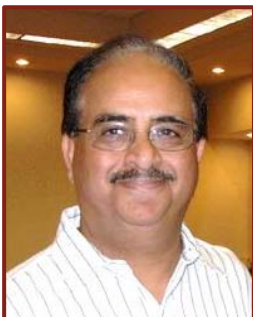
Board of Trustees



Professor Ved P. Nanda
Chair, Board of Trustees

Professor Ved P. Nanda is John Evans University Professor and Thompson G. Marsh Professor of Law at the Sturm College of Law, University of Denver and serves as Director of the International Legal Studies Program there. In 2006 Professor Nanda was honored with the founding of the Nanda Center for International Law. He was also Vice Provost at the University of Denver from 1994-2008, and since 2007 he has served as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Iliff School of Theology, Denver. He holds or has held numerous official posts in international, regional, and national professional and civil society organizations.

Among numerous national and international awards, he has received the World Jurist Association's Highest Order of Justice and its World Legal Scholar Award, the Gandhi-King-Ikeda Award for Peace-Building from Soka Gakkai International and Morehouse College, the Human Rights Award from the United Nations Association, and Civil Rights Award from B'nai B'rith. He has received honorary doctorates from Soka University in Tokyo, Japan and from Bundelkhand University, Jhansi, India. He is widely published, having authored or co-authored 23 books in various fields of international law and over 180 chapters and major law review articles. He is a frequent guest on television and radio and writes regularly on international issues for the *Denver Post*.



Mr. Parveen Setia
Vice-Chair, Board of Trustees

Parveen Setia, Vice-Chair, has been a US citizen since 1987. He is married to Minaxi Setia, sister-in-law of Anu Bhatia, and has three children, all in college. Mr. Setia graduated from Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and earned his MBA from Webster University, 2008. He is employed as Pharmacist Team Leader at the Lakeland Medical Center in Lakeland, Florida. He is actively involved in the Ekal Vidalya project to support education of children in Indian villages.



Mrs. Anu Bhatia
Trustee

Anu Bhatia, eldest of the three nieces of Mahinder Singh Uberoi, lives in Delhi with her husband. They have two daughters. She graduated from the St. Ann's Convent in Hyderabad in 1979 and obtained a diploma in Textile Designing with Distinction in 1983 and went to work for four years in a textile printing house. After she married in 1984 she has managed the family textile business. Mrs. Bhatia also takes a keen interest in social activities such as raising funds for under-privileged children and has taken part in discussions regarding social issues on national television. Regarding her uncle's legacy, Mrs. Bhatia says, "Living thousands of miles away, the most difficult task was finding people in U.S.A. who would take interest in fulfilling our Uncle's wishes. God has been kind and we are very fortunate to have such good friends to work with. As work progresses on the Uberoi Foundation we sincerely hope as trustees that by carefully choosing the plan of action we wish to act upon, we are able to achieve the vision of our late uncle."



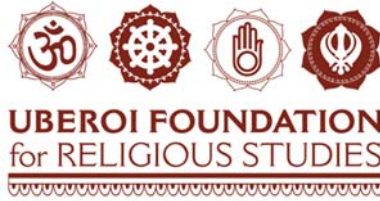
Mrs. Jyothi Bhatia
Trustee

Jyothi Bhatia lives with her husband and two daughters in Noida, on the outskirts of New Delhi. She graduated from St. Ann's High School in 1980 and completed her diploma of two years in Fashion Designing in 1982. She then worked with Paris-based garment house "Jack and Jack" for five years. She travelled extensively all over the country and to Nepal between 1982 and 1987. She has her own fashion design studio and the couple has been successfully running their own business for the last 10 years. Mrs. Bhatia and her husband were married in 1988. He is a real estate consultant in Delhi. They have two daughters, Sahiba and Vrinda. Mrs. Bhatia is actively involved in religious activities at the "Bhakti Dham Mandir," a hillside temple and ashram in Nakuchiatal, Nainital, in the Himalayas. The ashram also serves as a school to educate poor children. She says, "I thank God for this wonderful opportunity that we have, to fulfill our uncle's wishes."



Mrs. Sneha Harjai
Trustee

Sneha Harjai is the youngest of the three sisters. She graduated from Kamla Nehru College of the University of Delhi with a BA degree in Honors English. She studied travel and tourism and worked as the Travel Assistant with the Grand Hyatt Hotel for two years. She was married in 1989 to Sunil Harjai, who recently was awarded for his success as an entrepreneur in an Indian small industry. She brought her love and experience in travel to her work with her husband in their shoe exporting business, "Siddharth Exports," for which she handles the interactions and correspondence with foreign buyers, especially in the UK, Germany, and Italy. The couple has two children. About the Uberoi Foundation, Sneha says, "Our uncle has left us a purpose to fulfill which we hope to achieve with the help of our dear friends who head our foundation. We would like to put in our best efforts and move towards the goal of our foundation."



Executive Staff



Mr. James T. Polsfut
Executive Director and Treasurer

Jim Polsfut has served as the executive director of the Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies since its inception, as well as its treasurer since 2011. In addition, he serves as chair of the advisory board of the University of Denver Josef Korbel School of International Studies (the Social Science Foundation) and as a member of the boards of the U.S.-Mexico Foundation and the IPODERAC Orphanage in Puebla, Mexico.

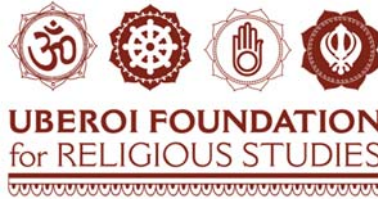
Professionally, Mr. Polsfut has focused on financial services and Latin America throughout his career. Currently, he serves as the CEO and Chairman of the Board of the North American Specialty Hospital. Previously, he helped to create a private bank and trust company called First Western Trust Bank, based in Denver. In that capacity, he served as president of First Western Development Corporation, a division of the bank responsible for corporate acquisitions. Earlier in his career, Mr. Polsfut served as general manager for GE Capital in Mexico City and in the United States, as Denver Mayor Federico Peña's assistant for finance for the City and County of Denver, and as an associate in the public finance office of Smith Barney.

Mr. Polsfut earned an undergraduate degree in Government from Harvard University and an MBA from Stanford University.



Mrs. Katharine Nanda
Secretary

Katharine Nanda, MA, JD, University of Denver, has practiced law for many years and is currently working in the criminal area through the Office of the Colorado Alternate Defense Counsel. She has been actively involved with many organizations serving the Indian community in Colorado, having served as the Chair of the Hindu Society of Colorado and a founding board member and Secretary of the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of the Rockies (Denver).



Programmatic Summary

Since Program Inception in 2008

The Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies seeks to propel the vision of its benefactor, Professor Mahinder Uberoi, in the programmatic efforts which it undertakes. The Foundation focuses principally on annual Grant Awards and an annual Experts Meeting.

The Foundation does not accept unsolicited requests for funding, but rather, extends invitations to proposed applicants based on their areas of expertise and engagement within the Dharmic traditions. A review of the Grant Awards made in 2018 appears in Section II of this Annual Report. A summary of the Experts Meeting 2018 appears in Section III.

<u>Program</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Total</u>
Uberoi Foundation, Internal Program	Experts Meeting 2008: Denver, Colorado	\$ 14,150
U of MA Dartmouth Uberoi Foundation, Internal Program	Teacher Training in Dharmic Traditions Experts Meeting 2009: Orlando, Florida	\$ 94,206
San Diego State U Fndn U of MA Dartmouth Uberoi Foundation, Internal Program	Research on Tantric Culture Teacher Training in Dharmic Traditions Experts Meeting 2010: Denver, Colorado	\$ 241,902
McGill University, Faculty of Religious Studies USF Foundation Inc U of MA Dartmouth Longwood University San Diego State University Research Foundation U of MA Dartmouth University of Michigan U of MA Dartmouth Uberoi Foundation, Internal Program	Universal Declaration of Human Rights Eastern/Indigenous Perspectives on Global Sustainability, Conflict Resolution Teacher Training in Dharmic Traditions Communications Studies & Dharmic Traditions Database and Writing Finalization of book on Dharma Sikhism Workshop Science and Vedanta Symposium Experts Meeting 2011: Los Angeles, California	\$ 231,565
So CA School of Theology Hindu American Foundation U of MA Dartmouth U of MA Dartmouth U of MA Dartmouth Hindu University of America, Orlando So CA School of Theology So CA School of Theology University of Michigan Cambridge in America SDSU Research Foundation California State University Foundation Uberoi Foundation, Internal Program	Int'l School for Jain Studies (ISJS) Dharma education outreach efforts Teacher Training in Dharmic Traditions Vedic Traditions Research/publishing on books by R Malhotra Hindu Perspective of Ageing, Death, Dying Dharma Studies Publishing Project Confluence Integrative Studies Institute Sikh 7-Day Seminar PhD of Varun Khanna at U of Cambridge Database and Writing TeachIndia! Teacher training Experts Meeting 2012: Denver, Colorado	\$ 247,591

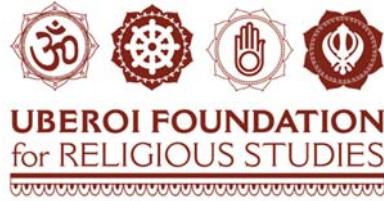
<u>Year</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Total</u>
2013	So CA School of Theology Hindu American Foundation Loyola Marymount University Maharishi University of Management U of MA Dartmouth U of MA Dartmouth Meru Education Foundation Himalayan Academy CSULB Foundation Himalayan Academy Loyola Marymount University Uberoi Foundation, Internal Program	Ahimsa High School Teachers Program in India HAF Director of Education and Curr. Reform Master's of Arts in Yoga Studies Perennial Philosophy of the Dharmic Religions Teacher Training in Dharmic Traditions Indigenous Institutions of the Vedic Tradition Meru Curriculum Leadership Training Review of Calif. School Textbook Framework TeachIndia! Project at California State University Long Beach and Northridge Documentary Resource on Hinduism and Indic Heritage Doshi Bridgebuilder Award Experts Meeting 2013: Dartmouth, Massachusetts	\$ 228,010
2014	Himalayan Academy Himalayan Academy Calif. State Univ. Long Beach Fnd Loyola Marymount University Claremont Lincoln University Hindu University of America University of Colorado Foundation University of Michigan Hindu American Foundation Inst. of Adv. Sciences University of Michigan Uberoi Foundation, Internal Program Uberoi Foundation, Internal Program	Hindu India: 300 to 1850 CE California School Textbook Controversy Revisited TeachIndia! Project at CSU Long Beach and Northridge Master's of Arts in Yoga Studies ISSJS Ahimsa Teacher Training Teachers Empowerment on Hindu Dharma Annual Lecture Series in Buddhist Studies at the Univ. of Colo. and Naropa Teaching Sikhism Comprehensive Education Reform Teacher Training in Dharmic Traditions Indian Religions Encyclopedia Colorado Teacher Training Program Experts Meeting 2014: Boulder, Colorado	\$ 242,273
2015	Hindu University of America Inst. of Adv. Sciences McGill University Insight Meditation Community of Colorado Loyola Marymount University Loyola Marymount University Int'l Documentary Asn Hindu American Foundation University of Michigan Himalayan Academy Forum for Rel. Freedom SSU Development Foundation CSULB Research Foundation Himalayan Academy Loyola Marymount University Inst. of Adv. Sciences Himalayan Academy Inst. Of Adv. Sciences Uberoi Foundation, Internal Program	Denver Teacher Training Program Nationwide Teacher Training Program World Religions Conference in Sep 2016 Earth Sila Project: Dharma-Based and Interfaith Int'l Summer School for Jain Studies (ISSJS) Creation of Center(s) for Sikh and Jain Studies American Veda Documentary Project HAF Director of Education and Curr. Reform Translation of Punjabi Clarifying Publications History of Hinduism Documentary Part 3 Writing on Vedic Correlation with Dharma OH Forum: Indian Cultural Heritage in Global Age TeachIndia week-long training California School Textbook Controversy Revisited Master in Yoga Studies Uberoi Teacher Training in India (UTTI) Program TeachIndia classroom material Uberoi Teacher Training in India Experts Meeting 2015: Tampa, Florida	\$ 324,706
2016	McGill University Inst. Of Adv. Sciences True Dharma International Himalayan Academy Himalayan Academy Himalayan Academy Himalayan Academy Loyola Marymount University Loyola Marymount University Loyola Marymount University Hindu University of America CSULB Foundation Hindu American Foundation	World Religions Conference in Sep 2016 Nationwide Teacher Training Program "Good Death, Auspicious Rebirth" resource book Indian Monasticism: Ramananda Sampraday History of Hinduism Documentary Part 4 History of Hinduism Documentary Part 5 California Textbook Issues and Teaching Aids Int'l Summer School for Jain Studies (ISSJS) Scholarships -- Study of the Dharma Traditions Professorship of Jain and Sikh Studies Denver Teacher Training Program TeachIndia week-long training HAF Director of Education and Curriculum Reform Experts Meeting 2016: Montreal Unexpended Return of Grant 2015-11	\$ 225,611

<u>Year</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Total</u>
2017	Loyola Marymount University Loyola Marymount University Loyola Marymount University Hindu University of America Hunter College Himalayan Academy Naropa University University of Michigan SSU Development Foundation University of Colorado Foundation Institute of Advanced Sciences Hindu University of America CSU Fresno Foundation Himalayan Academy Loyola Marymount University	International Summer School for Jain Studies Professor of Jain and Sikh Studies Scholarships: Study of Dharmic Traditions 1 Day Dharmic University Program The Nay Science: Reader's Guide Teach India Videos Yoga & Hindu Studies, Naropa University Consciousness Studies in Indic Traditions Uberoi Seminar on Indian Culture and Globalization Trungpa Lecture in Buddhist Studies Nationwide Teacher Training Program Denver Teacher Training Program Women, Goddesses, Yogis, and Others California Textbook Controversies and Issues Uberoi Teacher Training in India (UTTI) Experts Meeting 2017: Denver, Colorado	\$ 178,020
2018	Institute of Advanced Sciences Loyola Marymount University Loyola Marymount University True Dharma International Hindu American Foundation Manthrataalk Organization Himalayan Academy Graduate Theological Union McGill Univ. School of Religious Studies Hindu American Foundation	Nationwide Teacher Training Program International Summer School for Jain Studies Scholarships: Study of Dharmic Traditions "Good Death, Auspicious Rebirth" training Hinduism 101 and Educator Professional Dvlpmnt Annual Meeting of American Academy of Indic Studies Teach India Videos GTU Global Sustainability Initiative Remedying the Misinterpretation of Hinduism Comprehensive Education Reform Project Experts Meeting 2018: Tampa, Florida	\$ 209,680

Total Programmatic Outlay Since Inception in 2008: \$ 2,237,713

Section II:

Grant Awards in 2018



Grant Awards in 2018

A Summary

The Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies serves to raise awareness of the four major Dharmic religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism, in an effort to promote understanding, communication, tolerance, and peace among the diverse peoples of the world. The Foundation's primary source of grant-making revenue is investment proceeds from the perpetual endowment created by the estate of the late Professor Mahinder Singh Uberoi.

In 2018, the Foundation awarded ten grant allocations as listed below and as more fully described in the pages which follow.

1	Institute of Advanced Sciences	<i>Nationwide Teacher Training Program</i>
2	Loyola Marymount University	<i>International Summer School for Jain Studies</i>
3	Loyola Marymount University	<i>Scholarships: Study of Dharmic Traditions</i>
4	True Dharma International	<i>"Good Death, Auspicious Rebirth" training</i>
5	Hindu American Foundation	<i>Hinduism 101 and Educator Professional Development</i>
6	Manthratalk Organization	<i>Annual Meeting of American Academic Indic Studies</i>
7	Himalayan Academy	<i>Teach India Videos</i>
8	Graduate Theological Union	<i>GTU Global Sustainability Initiative</i>
9	McGill Univ. School of Religious Studies	<i>Remedying the Misinterpretation of Hinduism</i>
10	Hindu American Foundation	<i>Comprehensive Education Reform Project</i>



Grant Awards in 2018

In Detail

1. Institute of Advanced Sciences

Project: *Nationwide Teacher Training Program*

Applicant/Lead: Bal Ram Singh

Project Plan: The proposal is to continue to expand the current Uberoi Foundation Fellowship program for teachers into a national initiative with multiple regional centers to reach teachers who teach India-related courses in middle and high schools of the United States. In 2018, the program is proposed to run through a national center in Massachusetts as well as two or three regional centers throughout the country, including at a minimum one in Colorado and one in Kentucky. These regional centers will work on curriculum and programming with a central coordinator and consultants, and they will engage local and national volunteers, speakers, and participants as usual.

The Institute has solicited leadership applications for the regional centers from teachers who have participated in the Uberoi teacher training program, or others who have demonstrated equivalent experience or expertise. Professor Bal Ram Singh has led the UFF program for the past eight years and is now directing the program's expansion. The regional workshops constitute centralized lectures on a fixed curriculum, with individual activities and engagements facilitated in local areas. The program is expected to run in collaboration with school districts, which can share the cost of local expenses as successfully run in Denver for the past four years. Eventually, a goal is to run Uberoi workshops in all fifty states.

2. Loyola Marymount University

Project: *International Summer School for Jain Studies*

Applicant/Lead: Chris Chapple

Project Plan: For more than 12 years, Dr. Shugan Jain has welcomed professors, undergraduates, and graduate students to India to learn about the Jain traditions of Yoga, including Preksha meditation and its emphasis on nonviolence. The ISSJS offers four programs in India: a four-week Jaina Yoga program, a four-week introductory program, a six-week advanced program, and a three-week program for high school teachers. Participants study nonviolence, Jainism, and the other religious traditions of India. This experience has resulted in the advancement of several candidates to professorship

positions, the publication of many articles and forthcoming books, and a greater appreciation for the legacy of India's religions worldwide.

3. Loyola Marymount University

Project: *Scholarships: Study of Dharmic Traditions*
Applicant/Lead: Chris Chapple

Project Plan: Loyola Marymount University (LMU) requests continued support to provide scholarships to promising students who might otherwise face financial challenges in completing their studies in Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and/or Jainism. Two scholarships will be awarded to students pursuing an M.A. in Yoga Studies or Philosophy, or an undergraduate degree in Theological Studies during the 2018-2019 academic years. In order to apply for the scholarships, students will be required to complete an essay describing their interest in the study of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and/or Jainism and discuss how they would share their knowledge of these traditions in the future. Professor Chapple will closely monitor the performance of students selected for the scholarships, including their GPA, class attendance, and timely graduation rates. Ultimately, support for these students is an investment in the next generation of scholars and leaders who will promote understanding, communication, tolerance, and peace among the world's diverse faiths.

4. True Dharma International

Project: *"Good Death, Auspicious Rebirth" Training*
Applicant: Frank Tedesco

Project Plan: Funds from the Uberoi Foundation will be used to create end-of-life Dharma training modules for teaching in medical and nursing schools, hospitals and hospices. Modules will be inclusive of the four Dharma traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, and other worldviews found in India and among overseas Indians. The multi-media curriculum will include filming interviews with dying patients, their family members and attending medical personnel with a focus on discussion for advance care planning, living wills, and spiritual preparation for a happy or "good death" and confidence in an "auspicious rebirth".

5. Hindu American Foundation

Project: *Hinduism 101 and Educator Professional Development*
Applicant/Lead: Suhag Shukla

Project Plan: One of the most well-received facets of HAF's education portfolio is *Hinduism 101: Learning About Hinduism Inside and Out*. It is a multi-pronged and comprehensive effort to assist teachers, school administrators, and students. The foundation of HAF's *Hinduism 101* is an interactive, user-driven web portal (<https://www.hafsite.org/resources/hinduism101>) for learning how to teach about Hinduism according to one's own needs and pace. It allows anyone invested in teaching about Hinduism to easily and effectively convey topics in an accurate and engaging way.

Accompanying this is HAF's professional development for educators, i.e., teacher's training program. Since August 2013, HAF has offered this professional development opportunity nationwide and has trained over 2,500 teachers on *Hinduism 101*. Resources provided through the program have enabled curriculum supervisors and designers to enhance content and assessment materials related to Hinduism. Furthermore, the initiative has helped to forge long-lasting partnerships with other organizations, including universities, social studies councils, and history education groups. This effort has enabled educators around the country to improve their accuracy and cultural competency when teaching about Hinduism. In order to meet growing demands for both content and teacher trainings, HAF seeks a partnership with Uberoi to further scale this successful initiative.

6. Manthratalk Organization

Project: *Annual Meeting of American Academy of Indic Studies*
Applicant/Lead: Lavanya Vemsani

Project Plan: This is the first annual meeting of the newly founded American Academy of Indic Studies (<http://aaindicstudies.org/>) to bring together researchers and academics connected to India Studies in all subject areas of higher education. The meeting will be held in Greater Dallas Area in Texas. The Indic Studies conference will be offered with a total budget covering printing and publicity expenses, room rental for breakout sessions and general sessions, the presentation equipment, and food as part of the keynote speech events. Approximately 200 participants are expected for the two-day conference.

7. Himalayan Academy

Project: *Teach India Videos*
Applicant/Lead: Acharya Arumuganathaswami

Project Plan: This project is focused on the creation of three short videos of four to five minutes each. The topics are Hindu worship in three forms: home, temple and pilgrimage. These are intended for use in U.S. public schools, specifically sixth grade, when the history of India and the Hindu religion is commonly taught. The first video in this series, on Indian dance, was completed in 2017 and posted on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLZd7PjGJ1Y>) where it has surpassed 20,000 hits.

8. Graduate Theological Union

Project: *GTU Global Sustainability Initiative*
Applicant/Lead: Rita Sherma

Project Plan: The Graduate Theological Union (GTU) has initiated *Sustainability GTU 360* and is launching a pioneering professional MA degree in Interdisciplinary Interreligious Masters in Sustainability Studies (IMASS). The critical need is funding for Indian Religions/Cultures/Knowledge systems to be represented through a forthcoming project which seeks to convene the highest level of expertise at conferences and affiliated publications that break new ground in Sustainability Studies.

Toward that end, funds will be utilized toward:

- Foundational conferences converging diverse disciplines that focus on the key pillars of Sustainability through the lens of Interreligious Interdisciplinary Sustainability Studies
- Professional, discipline-creating textbooks developed through the conferences
- A book series

9. McGill University School of Religious Studies

Project: *Remedying the Misinterpretation of Hinduism*
Applicant/Lead: Arvind Sharma

Project Plan: The misrepresentation of Hinduism in the Western media and the academia has now become a matter of serious concern for the Dharma community both in India and the West. The latest example which highlights the misrepresentation is the presentation of Hinduism in the CNN program known as The Believers. The issues involved here are dealt with in six videos now on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/6Enlv6A089Y>. The goal of this project is to produce videos similar to the ones produced for the CNN program on a range of issues pertaining to Hinduism, such as: Is Hinduism polytheistic? Is Hinduism idolatrous? Are the Ramayana and the Mahabharata just fiction? And so on.

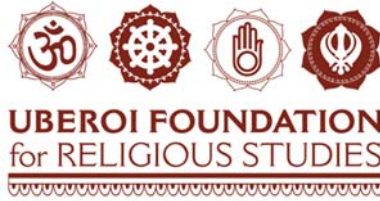
10. Hindu American Foundation

Project: *Comprehensive Education Reform Project*
Applicant/Lead: Suhag Shukla

Project Plan: The Hindu American Foundation seeks to expand funding for its education and curriculum reform initiatives, including the hiring of a California-based director responsible for the Hinduism 101 teacher training on the West Coast, working with publishers and leading textbook reform initiatives at the state and district level.

Section III:

Experts Meeting 2018



Historic Sessions of the Annual Experts Meeting

Beginning in its first year of operation in 2008, the Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies has placed a high priority on gathering together experts from the four Dharmic traditions – in one city and in one room, in order to share, collaborate, brainstorm, and engage. A brief recap of the Experts Meetings held previously follows below, along with the agenda and the bios of presenters in the Experts Meeting 2017.

2008: During its first year of operation, in October of 2008, the Uberoi Foundation hosted in Denver, Colorado, more than a dozen renowned scholars of Dharmic traditions. The scholars used their time together to sketch out the contours of the Foundation’s work. Representatives of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism were on hand in person, and a representative of Sikhism was present by conference call. Remarkably, the scholars noted how unusual it was for them to be together to reflect on the common threads that bind these Dharmic traditions and that, as scholars, they rarely, if ever, have that opportunity. It was a wonderful and meaningful beginning to the work that the Foundation had launched.

2009: Over two days in late October of 2009, the Foundation organized a second opportunity to meet with scholars. To participate in its “Uberoi Foundation Experts Meeting,” on location in Orlando, Florida, the Foundation invited twenty academicians to collaborate with its five-member board of trustees in three joint sessions. In the months leading up to the sessions, the Foundation announced its intention at the Experts Meeting to delve deeply into the commonalities of the four Indic Dharmic traditions as well as

into the ways in which those traditions contribute to society. For the Experts Meeting, Shiva Bajpai prepared a paper on *Theism: The Ultimate Reality* and Arvind-Pal Mandair and Bal Ram Singh prepared a paper on *Karma*.



At the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado: The 2010 Experts Meeting

2010: The Foundation’s Experts gathered in Denver in October of 2010 at the Iliff School of Theology. Over two full days of fast-paced discourse, the Experts revealed their considerable talents and scope. In so doing, they demonstrated a high level of academic rigor in their presentations and conversations. Deliberations at the Experts

Meeting among the scholars very successfully met the lofty charge set by the organizer, Dr. Arvind Sharma, who selected the topic of “Decolonizing Indic Studies.”

2011: In the beginning of October in 2011, the Foundation's Experts had the pleasure of meeting over two days in Los Angeles, California, with the significant assistance of co-sponsors Loyola Marymount University and Nalanda International. The 2011 Uberoi Foundation Experts Meeting, entitled "In Our Own Voices: Dharma Education in North America," sought to facilitate the emergence of innovative and creative theories, approaches, and methods to education and scholarship in Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh Dharma traditions. "In Our Own Voices" drew attention to the fact that Dharma traditions are not at the center of the dominant global discourse on contemporary issues and challenges. The voices (wisdom and discernment) of the Dharma traditions are currently on the margins. Yet they are of great significance and relevance to the crises that face humanity. The on-going goal is to position the insights of Dharma as integral to addressing these challenges. The term "In Our Own Voices" does not refer to who is talking or writing but rather refers to which lens is being used to define and understand the Dharma traditions.

2012: In mid-October of 2012, the Experts of the Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies once again had the opportunity to meet together over a period of two days. Gathering in Denver, Colorado, the Experts began with reflections on the tragic attack brought upon the Sikh Gurdwara in Wisconsin



At the Daniels Fund in Denver, Colorado: the 2012 Experts Meeting

earlier that year. The Experts then turned their attention to practical, in-depth discussions on the two programmatic priorities of the Uberoi Foundation – namely, training U.S. school teachers in Dharmic traditions and correcting distortions and inadequacies of Dharmic traditions in North American textbooks. The Experts concluded their time together by sharing brief presentations of pivotal work underway on each of these two programmatic priorities by likeminded organizations and experts.

2013: In the summer of 2013, the vitality of one of the Uberoi Foundation's primary grant-making programs served as the centerpiece of the Foundation's annual Experts Meeting. Assembling in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, the trustees gathered together a smaller, core group of Experts for reflection on the Foundation's strategy and participation in the annual teacher training program held at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Twenty Experts began their time together on July 31 with a mini-symposium in recognition of the 150th birthday anniversary of Swami Vivekananda and, specifically, on the impact of his travels to the western world in 1893. The mini-symposium's discussion included the participation of Uberoi Foundation chair Ved Nanda and Uberoi trustees Yashwant Pathak, Shiva Bajpai, and Bal Ram Singh. Witnessing the detail of the training provided to the teachers, the trustees took part mid-week in a focus placed on Jain beliefs, lifestyle, and culture, as well as an evening dance demonstration by UMass Dartmouth student Anuradha Tata. In a strategy session held in the afternoon of August 1, the Uberoi trustees brainstormed on how best to implement the intended mission of Professor Mahinder Uberoi, especially with regard to the Foundation's two fundamental priorities for the next several years – the training of U.S. teachers in the Dharmic traditions and the correcting of distortions about the Dharmic traditions in U.S. textbooks.

2014: As Fall colors descended upon the valley of Boulder, Colorado, the Uberoi Foundation gathered in mid-September on the historic campus of Naropa University. The Foundation's annual Expert Meeting began with a special Friday evening event organized by the University of Colorado and Naropa University called the *Chogyam Trungpa Lecture*, sponsored by Uberoi. Dr. John Makransky, professor of Buddhism at Boston University, served passionately and inspirationally as the keynote speaker. On the Saturday and Sunday which followed, the Foundation then focused exclusively on its theme for the Experts Meeting in 2014 – *Compassion in the Four Dharmic Traditions*. A total of 21 speakers participated in the featured sessions, along with keynote speeches offered during meal times. Following the Experts Meeting, the Uberoi Foundation assembled and edited the papers delivered over the weekend into a book for subsequent publishing and dissemination.

2015: In the beginning of October of 2015, the Uberoi Foundation gathered once again for its annual Experts Meeting, this time in Tampa, Florida, on the campus of the University of South Florida. The Jijnnya Foundation co-sponsored the meeting, represented by its executive director, Dr. Gururaj Mutalik, among others from its network.

Uberoi Foundation Advisory Committee Chairman Dr. Yashwant Pathak was a most gracious host, as were Uberoi Vice Chairman Shri Parveen Setia and his wife, Smt. Mini Setia, who reside in southern Florida. *Dharma Education in the United States – Challenges and Opportunities* served as the focus of the 2015 Experts Meeting, with many first-time participants taking part, and in



Dr. Bal Ram Singh makes a point at the 2015 Experts Meeting in Tampa, Florida

so doing, adding tremendous value. Those individuals included Dr. Vishwa Adluri from Hunter College in New York; Dr. Narinjan Kaur Khalsa from Loyola Marymount University; Dr. A.S. Pandya at Florida Atlantic University; Prof. Andrew Schelling from Naropa University; Mr. Matthew Spurlin, a PhD student at the University of Denver; Dr. Darshan Thakkar from Boston; Dr. Lavanya Vemsani from Shawnee State University; and Dr. Alice Wood from Bethune-Cookman University.

2016: On September 15, the Uberoi Foundation assembled in Montreal for its annual Expert Meeting in order to attend a special program of an Uberoi grantee, McGill University. Professor Arvind Sharma, faculty member of Religious Studies at McGill and a regular expert of the Uberoi Foundation, served as the lead organizer of the "Third Global Conference on World's Religions since September 11: From Faith to Interfaith." Co-sponsored by the Uberoi Foundation, the Conference called upon many prominent keynote speakers, including Deepak Chopra and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Following the Conference, members of the Uberoi Advisory Committee and of the Uberoi Grants Committee met in strategic planning sessions in order to review the programmatic priorities of the Uberoi Foundation and the implementation of those priorities through the Foundation's grantmaking process. A renewed commitment resulted with regard to the Foundation's focus on teacher training and textbook reform.

2017: Between September 29 and October 1, the Uberoi Foundation met in Denver in association with the Ved Nanda Center and the Sturm College of Law at the University of Denver to focus on *The Environment, Climate Change, and Sustainability from the Perspectives of the Four Dharmic Traditions*. Professors Rita Sherma, Veena Howard, Ramdas Lamb, Mugdha Yeolekar, Bal Ram Singh, Lavanya

Vemsani, Subhash Kak, Haragopal Parsa, and Appachanda Thimmaiah provided the Hindu perspective; Professors Claude D'Estree, Joan Policastri, and Matt Spurlin the Buddhist perspective; Professor Nirinjan Kaur Khas and Mr. Dilpreet Singh Jammu the Sikh perspective; and Professor Chris Chapple, Dr. Sulekh Jain, and Professor Yashwant Malaiya the Jain perspective. A most interesting dimension of the 2017 Experts Meeting was the offering of a perspective on the topic from the U.S. indigenous tradition, led by Lakota elder Grandmother Regina Brave, Lakota leader Doug Good Feather, Professor Andrew Reid, and Professor Yashwant Pathak.

2018: In Mid-October, the Uberoi Foundation met once again in Tampa, Florida, and on this occasion at the Patel College of Global Sustainability on the campus of the University of South Florida. Yashwant Pathak served as the chair and the host of the 2018 Annual Experts Meeting and the inauguration of a second decade of Experts Meetings, with this now as the eleventh in a series. Over a day and a half, a total of nine sessions took place on the topic of *Human Rights and Human Dignity: Rooted in the Four Dharmic Traditions*, a theme developed thoroughly through the presentation of 28 separate abstracts.



The 2018 Experts Meeting began with prayers from each of the Dharmic traditions.



Annual Experts Meeting 2018

“Human Rights and Human Dignity: Rooted in the Four Dharmic Traditions”

Patel College of Global Sustainability
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida

Thursday, October 11, 2018

Trustee Meeting	6:30 – 8:00
Hotel Bus to Royal Sweets Restaurant, Fowlers Avenue for Dinner (Restaurant is approximately 1 mile from the hotel)	
Working dinner for Foundation Board. Meeting continues at hotel 8:30-10:00	

Friday, October 12, 2018

Trustees Meeting	7:30 – 9:00
Breakfast at the Hotel, continue till departure for lunch	
Lunch, Haveli Indian Restaurant	12:00 – 1:30
or	
Meet at Haveli Restaurant from 10:30 to 4:00, including lunch	
Return to Hotel for Participants’ Registration there	4:00
Bus to Haveli Restaurant for all Participants for Welcome Dinner and Greeting Local Guests	6:00
UTTI 2018 Participants’ Presentation	7:30
Chair, Chris Chapple Co-Chair, Anu Bhatia	
Return to Hotel by Bus	9:30

Saturday, October 13, 2018

Breakfast at Hotel	6:30 – 8:00
Bus to the Patel College of Global Sustainability	8:00
Inauguration	8:30 – 10:00

Prayers (10-15 minutes):

Hindu

Buddhist

Jain

Sikh

Welcome by Dean Dr. Govindan Payaril on behalf of the University of South Florida (5-10 minutes)

Welcome by Dr. Yashwant Pathak, Chair, Experts Meeting (10 minutes)

Introduction of Trustees and Officers of Uberoi Foundation

Setting the Stage for the Experts Meeting, Ved Nanda

The Contemporary Human Rights Movement is Dynamic and Transformative, But It is Rooted in the Four Dharmic Traditions (20 minutes)

Session One 10:30-11:45

Presenters:

Chair Chris Chapple; Co-Chair Rita Sherma; Ram Prakash Agarwal, Swasti Bhattacharyya, Drupon Rinpoche, Inderjeet Gill, Suman Kakar

Session Two 11:50-1:00

Presenters:

Chair Bal Ram Singh; Co-Chair Yashwant Malaiya; Anjum Kumbkarni, Darryl Mercer, Debidatta Aurobinda Mahapatra, Sanjay Mehrotra, Shyam Mohapatra

Lunch 1:00-2:00

Session Three 2:00-3:15

Presenters:

Chair Lavanya Vemsani; Co-Chair Appachanda Thimmaiah; Joan Policastri; C.L. Prabhakar, Madhu Sherma, Seema Shekhawat, Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh

Session Four 3:20-4:30

Presenters:

Chair Sulekh Jain; Co-Chairs Harvind Sahota and Frank Tedesco; Jerry Solfvin, Swami Svatmananda, Veena Howard, Ramdas Lamb

Break 4:30-5:00

Session Five – Roundtable 1 5:00-6:00

Chair Ramdas Lamb; Co-Chair Dilpreet Jammu

Session Six – Roundtable 2 6:00-7:00

Chair Veena Howard; Co-Chairs Parveen Sethia and Pravin Shah

Dinner, Haveli Indian Restaurant – Advisory Committee Meeting

Sunday, October 14, 2018

Breakfast at Hotel 6:30-8:00

Bus to Patel Center 8:30

Session Seven – Roundtable 9:00-10:15

Moderators: Jim Polsfut, Katharine Nanda, Jyothi Bhatia

Open Session: Reflection on the Uberoi Foundation’s Activities over the Past Decade:

Experts Meetings, Teacher Training in U.S. and UTTI, Textbook Correction, Grants, etc.

Session Eight – Roundtable

10:30-11:45

Moderators: Yashwant Pathak, Ved Nanda, Sneha Harjai

Open Session: Planning for the Future: Comments, Counsel, Advice, Guidance

Session Nine

11:45-12:00

Concluding Remarks



Preface

It is our distinct privilege to warmly welcome you all to the Uberoi Foundation's Eleventh Annual Experts Meeting at the University of South Florida Patel College of Global Sustainability in Tampa, October 12-14, 2018. We are deeply grateful to our fellow scholars for sharing their insights and wisdom on this year's theme, *Human Rights and Human Dignity: Rooted in the Four Dharmic Traditions*. We are equally grateful to the University of South Florida and the Patel College for graciously hosting this Experts Meeting.

We earnestly hope that you will find the following abstracts of the papers to be presented at this meeting and the brief bios of the presenters helpful as you enjoy and learn from the proceedings.

Ved Nanda
Chair, The Uberoi Foundation

Yashwant Pathak
Chair, Experts Meeting

List of Abstracts

1. *Hindu Perspective of Human Rights*, Ram Prakash Agarwal.
2. *Vinoba, Sarvodaya, and Human Rights*, Swasti Bhattacharyya.
3. *Dignity and the Value of Human Life in Hindu Traditions*, Christopher Key Chapple.
4. *Talk on Developing Peace and Happiness*, Drupon Rinpoche.
5. *Human Rights and Human Dignity, Rooted in the Sikhi Dharmic Tradition*, Inderjeet Gill.
6. *Dharma and Promise of Sustainable Eco-Systems: Vandana Shiva's Innovative Interpretation of Gandhi's Principle of Swadeshi*, Veena R. Howard.
7. *Jainism and Human Rights*, Sulekh Jain.
8. *Understanding Human Rights, Human Values and Human Dignity in Dharmic Traditions (Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism)*, Suman Kaker.
9. *Meditation as a guide to maintain Human Rights, Human Dignity, and Nonviolence as Delineated by the Dharmic Traditions*, Anjum Kumbkarni.
10. *Acknowledging Divinity in All Beings*, Ramdas Lamb.
11. *Bioethics as the love of life: Lessons of Universal Ethical Diversity in Dharmic Traditions*, Darryl Macer.
12. *Human Rights and Conflicts: A Vedanta Perspective*, Debidatta Aurobinda Mahapatra.
13. *Freedom of Thought and Human Rights in Jain Tradition*, Yashwant K. Malaiya.
14. *Human Dignity and the Teachings of Bhagwad Geeta*, Sanjay Mehrotra.
15. *The Modern Human Rights Movement is Dynamic and Transformative, But It is Rooted in the Dharmic Traditions*, Ved P. Nanda.
16. *Human Rights and Human Dignity Rooted in the Four Dharmic Traditions – Buddhism*, Joan Policastri.
17. *Values, Dignity, And Rights in Ramayana: A Guidance To Posterity*, C. L. Prabhakar.
18. *Human Values and Principles ingrained in Jagannath Philosophy*, Chinmayee Satpathy (Presenter: Shyam Mohapatra).
19. *Human Rights and Human Dignity Rooted in the Four Dharmic Traditions (With special reference to Women)*, Madhu Sharma.
20. *Women's Rights and Hinduism*, Seema Shekhawat.
21. *Human Rights and Human Dignity: The Gaze of Hindu Theology*, Rita D. Sherma.

22. *The Concept of Freedom in Dharmic Traditions Addresses the Rights vs. Karmaphala Dichotomy*, Bal Ram Singh.
23. *Reading the Sacred as Engaged Text: Human Rights and Human Dignity in the Guru Granth Sahib*, Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh.
24. *H.D. Thoreau, Vedanta, and Human Rights in America*, Jerry Solfvn.
25. *Human Rights and Human Dignity Rooted in the Four Dharmic Traditions*, Sri Swami Svatmananda.
26. *Buddhism, Human Rights and Human Dignity*, Frank M. Tedesco.
27. *Human rights and Human dignity: Hinduism perspective*, A. Thimmaiah.
28. *Human Rights in Dharma Traditions: Examination of Arthasastra and Manudharmasastra, and Suhrullekha*, Dr. Lavnya Vemsani.

Abstracts

1. *Hindu Perspective of Human Rights*, Ram Prakash Agarwal, Email: Ram33156@gmail.com

Abstract:

To ensure respect, dignity, and happiness of mankind the concept of Human Rights has existed since the dawn of human civilization. The contemporary view of Human Rights, therefore, is not a new discovery. Hinduism is one of the oldest and most multifaceted spiritual traditions that has always envisioned a happy, healthy, and orderly society where each individual doing his assigned duty without an antagonism between the individual and the society. Hinduism put more emphasis on “duties and responsibilities (Dharma)” than on “rights”. Discharging of one’s duty serves to the rights of others. The roots of human welfare are enshrined in Hindu scriptures – the Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Mahabharat and Ramayana and folklores. These scriptures declared that the world is a family (Vasudhaive Kutumbakam), and all human beings are equal and divine and deserved respect, happiness, and dignity. To ensure individuals’ dignity and smooth functioning of society, Hindus devised a system of “ashrams” and “Varna” where one could discharge his duties according to his age, qualifications, and capabilities. Unlike the “right-centric” contemporary Western view, the “duty (responsibility)-centric” Hindu view provides basis for a less confronting atmosphere for social harmony and welfare. Despite of all the wonderful rules and guidelines aberrations do occur causing confrontation within the society. They are, however, addressed and attempts are made to resolve them by Hindu saints, gurus, and reformers by reinterpreting the scriptures.

Bio:

Dr. Ram Prakash Agarwal earned his M.Sc. degree from Lucknow University and Ph.D. from Banaras Hindu University. Since moving to USA in 1967, he has held faculty positions at Brown University, Boston University, and the University of Miami. Currently he is an Emeritus Professor of Medicine at the University of Miami. In addition, he has served as a Visiting Professor at the Federal University Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil and Sri Ramachandra University of Chennai.

For the past fifty years, he has been working in the field of anti-cancer and anti-HIV drug development. He is a member of the Cancer Center, Center for AIDS Research, and the Bioethics Program at the University of Miami. He has authored more than 100 scientific papers, book chapters and reviews and has served as a reviewer and on Editorial Boards of various scientific journals and the Study Sections of NIH. He is one of the cofounders and former President of the American Association of Indian Scientists in Cancer Research in USA.

In addition, Dr Agarwal has a keen interest in bioethics, spirituality and Integrative Medicine, especially Yoga as a therapeutic tool. Dr Agarwal is active in Hindu community both locally and globally. His main mission has been to explore and propagate the scientific basis of the Vedic culture and its relevance to modern world. He is a former national President of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, Chairman of the Advisory Board of VHP, founding member and member of the Board of Directors of Hindu University of America, and a Member of the Board of Advisors of the Center for Spiritual Studies at Florida International University, Miami. He has travelled to more than 20 countries, lectured on various subjects, and presented Hindu view at the interfaith dialogs.

2. *Vinoba, Sarvodaya, and Human Rights*, Swasti Bhattacharyya, Tel: (808) 282-7550, Email: bhattacharyya@bvu.edu

Abstract:

The preamble to the Universal Declaration of Humans Rights begins with the claim that the foundation of human freedom, justice, and peace in the world are grounded in a recognition of the inherent dignity, equally, and inalienable rights of all peoples. Earlier in the century before this 1948 declaration, MK Gandhi coined the term *Sarvodaya*. *Sarvam* mean “all” and “wholeness.” *Uday* means “wholistic emergence.” *Sarvodaya* implies the “wholistic growth and all-round development of all the sections of global humanity.” (Dharmadhikari, vii) *Sarvodaya* reflects Gandhi’s vision of society where the good of all, the welfare of all, the development of all is universal. Vinoba Bhave (disciple, friend, confidant, and spiritual successor to Gandhi) took up this Gandhian term and infused it into the fabric of Indian society. On his Bhoodan Yatra, for 16 years Vinoba walked from village to village throughout India, providing the people with opportunities to embody and live out *sarvodaya*. His Bhoodan Movement is an example of what human rights can look like when applied to society. In this paper, I 1) introduce Vinoba Bhave, 2) demonstrate how his Bhoodan movement embodies the principles that ended up in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 3) discuss the philosophical grounds upon which he bases his work (Shankara), and finally, I demonstrate how this philosophy and work continues into our present time.

Bio:

Swasti Bhattacharyya is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Buena Vista University. She is the author of *Magical Progeny, Modern Technology: A Hindu Bioethics of Assisted Reproductive Technology*. Her chapter, “Shiva’s Babies: Hindu Perspectives on the Treatment of High-Risk Newborn Infants,” is included in a forthcoming book *Religion and the Newborn*. She has written articles on ethics, religion, social justice, and pedagogy. In 2012, Dr. Bhattacharyya was the recipient of the George Wythe Award, Buena Vista University’s highest honor for excellence in teaching. She is a part of BVU’s Gender and Woman Studies program. Additionally, she serves on the board of the Peace and Justice Studies Association, and is actively involved with the American Academy of Religion.

3. *Dignity and the Value of Human Life in Hindu Traditions*, Christopher Key Chapple, Email: cchapple@lmu.edu

Abstract:

The topic of dignity in Hindu traditions will be considered from a variety of perspectives in this paper, beginning with theological and sociological analysis from classical texts. On the one hand, dignity within Hinduism derives from a sense of intimacy with the transcendent self, referred to in the sacred literature as the Ātman. In the Upanishads, this self is identical with the Brahman, as indicated in the phrases So’ham (I am that) and Tat Tvam Asi, Thou Art That. On the other hand, external markers indicate clearly actions that will earn one a status in society that commands dignity and respect. The term for this defining social code is Dharma, a sense of how, why, and when to perform actions in order to maintain the world order. A

sense of this innate sense of propriety will be conveyed through two early narratives, the story of a young man in search of his true identity, and the fable of an adopted daughter whose devoted parents ensure her well-being. Both these stories emphasize discovering one's place within a complex world.

The second part of this talk will explore the inversion of hierarchies for the sake of the greater good from a Gandhian perspective. Gandhi, an original anti-colonialist and among the first post-colonialists in Asia, challenged the notion that European culture and civilization improved the lot of the masses. He came to reject many aspects of what we today call "development" as inherently oppressive to the human spirit. He suggested that greater meaning and dignity can be found in not acquiescing to the notion that fast transportation, the manufacture and distribution of medicines, and abstract learning enhance the human condition. In his theory of village economy, the less complicated one's life, the greater the degree of happiness.

The third part of this presentation will explore ways in which dignity may be defined in contemporary, post Gandhian India. Vinoba Bhave (1895-1982) implemented a land distribution program known as Bhū Dān (gift of land) that broke apart big estates and gave millions of people the means to be self-supporting. India played an important role in drafting the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, particularly through the advocacy of Hansa Mehta on behalf of women. Drawing from the tradition of Yoga psychology and ethics, tools for the uplift of the Self will be explored in the context of post-colonial India. The work of several contemporary activists and writers and scholars will be explored, including Dr. Ambedkar who helped craft the Indian Constitution to guarantee human rights for all people, especially the formerly untouchables. This presentation ends with some reflections on how human dignity in India derives from an inner core wherein the certainty of one's identity and place within the world leads to a higher sense of connectivity with one's immediate group as well as the larger social order.

Bio:

Christopher Key Chapple is Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology and founding director of the Master of Arts in Yoga Studies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. He has published more than twenty books including *Karma and Creativity* (1986), *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions* (1993), *Reconciling Yogas* (2003), *Yoga and the Luminous* (2008), *Living Landscapes in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Yogas* (2019), and several edited volumes on religion and ecology. He edits the journal *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* (Brill). He serves on the advisory boards for the Forum on Religion and Ecology (Yale), the Ahimsa Center (Pomona), the Jaina Studies Centre (London), the International Summer School for Jain Studies (Delhi), and the Uberoi Foundation for Religions Studies (Denver). In the summer of 2018, he directed the Uberoi Foundation Teacher Training Institute.

4. *Developing Peace and Happiness*, Drupon Rinpoche

Abstract:

In times marked by fractured ideological divisions, the degradation of moral judgement, and a breakdown of productive communication, the timeless teachings of Buddhism continue to have a resounding power to help people work with disturbing emotions and develop inner peace. In response to these colliding crises,

what practices unique to Buddhist practice can offer helpful strategies to bring about genuine happiness in a changing and uncertain world?

Bio:

Drupon Khen Rinpoche Karma Lhabu started receiving training in Tsabtsa Monastery at the age of seven, learning the rituals and procedures for many of the Vajrayana Buddhist practices. Seven years later, he took novice ordination from Khenpo Palga. He entered the Tsabtsa Monastery's retreat centers at 18 and learned from two lamas who were exceptional yogi meditators. Under Lama Senge as his root lama, Rinpoche came to fully understand meditation and mind. He was appointed retreat master for the next cycle of retreat. He received teachings from many enlightened lamas, after which he went to the Thrangu Vajra Vidya Institute in Varanasi. He has taught in the U.K. and has been retreat master for the retreat centers on the Isle of Arran and Holy Isle. In 2015 he founded the Marpa Translation Society with the aspiration to make many of the untranslated Buddhist teachings accessible and affordable for the genuine seekers. He has been training translators and practitioners in Nepal and holds a community of several hundred retreatants and international students. His travels abroad take him to the U.K, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, North America, and Southern Africa.

5. *Human Rights and Human Dignity, Rooted in the Sikhi Dharmic Tradition*, Inderjeet Gill, Tel: 91-9814098973, Email: dr.invasi@gmail.com or dr.invasi@yahoo.in

Abstract:

Evolution of mankind demonstrates that for the very existence and development of man, it is essential to provide, "such conditions of social life without which no man can seek to be himself at his best." This quest is ingrained in the minds of all humans by Mother Nature, on which is founded the concept of inalienable rights of liberty and equality, the very precondition of justice, peace and dignity. This, on the one hand, impels internalization, and on the other hand necessitates externalization and institutionalization of these norms to guide and control the human thought and behavior. This process is termed as Dharma or Religion. As the basic moral values are universal, so are the tenets of all the Dharmic Traditions of the world. Of the prevailing Dharmic Traditions, Sikhi is the youngest and the fifth largest religion of the world. Founded by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, standing on the five virtues of Truth, Compassion, Contentment, Humility and Love; it continued to progress with successive nine Gurus. With the central message that there is only one God, whose creation we all are, as guardian of human rights and dignity, the message of equality of mankind, co-existence and universalism was vigorously promoted through word and action during the 239 years of Guruship. About 500 years later, the U. N. adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – a milestone document in the history of human rights, finds similarities as rooted in the Sikh tenets.

Bio:

Dr. Inderjeet Gill, a [Ph.D.in](#) Political Science, has taught for 27 years, worked as Principal of prestigious Government Colleges for nearly nine years, and is now Senior Fellow at Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi. She was member of Management Committees of CBSE schools and director of affiliated colleges of Punjab. She has presented papers at national and international conferences, contributed chapters and articles

to books and journals; translated books. As Principal she has been a Member of the Peer Team of the most prestigious committee - NAAC, Organising Committee of National Sports, State Advisory Committee for Staff Selection, State Library, NCC, NSS, Selection Committee for the appointment of Principals & Faculty of affiliated colleges; and recommend opening of new colleges, granting affiliation to colleges and subjects. She was member of various committees of universities e.g. UMC, Academic Council, Revolving Fund of CDC, Youth Welfare, Sports. She is panelist for Jury of University competitions and TV discussions. Colleges and schools invite her as Chief Guest of Convocations, prize distribution functions, inter-college/school competitions, and cultural events. She is invited by various organisations to address & deliver lectures. She is a member & associate of several community organisations, such as Lions, Pingalwara, and Nari Chetna Manch. She has been honored with awards and honours such as Glory of India (UK), Rashtriya Gaurav Award, Women Achievers Award, Gold Medal and Certificate of Excellence, International Institute of Success Awareness, and Asia Pacific Who's Who.

6. *Dharma and Promise of Sustainable Eco-Systems: Vandana Shiva's Innovative Interpretation of Gandhi's Principle of Swadeshi*, Veena R. Howard, Email: vehoward@mail.fresnostate.edu

Abstract:

At the dawn of the twenty first century, marked by technological advances and globalization, relevance of Gandhi's nonviolent methods for conflict resolution and his principles of *swadeshi* (use of local products) has been explored by scholars and activists. This essay focuses on Gandhi's influence on the ecological activism of one thinker, Dr. Vandana Shiva. Shiva has emerged as a global voice against industrial and unsustainable forms of agriculture. Although Shiva's work has often been studied using a Marxian lens, this paper will show how Shiva was influenced by Gandhi's principle of *ahimsā* and *swadeshi*. Gandhi was a harsh critic of the forces of globalization and corporatization as they appeared in his day, both of which have obviously amplified to almost unbelievable degrees in present times. Standing prominently in the Gandhian lineage, Vandana Shiva is perhaps the foremost amongst those who has marshalled Gandhi's economic and ecological thought into a powerful environmental and agricultural ethics.

One of Shiva's most intriguing ideas is her application of the doctrine of non-violence (*ahimsā*) to agriculture, specifically with respect to the use of seeds. Shiva emphasizes the practice of "non-violent farming," according to which—in accordance with the Gandhian tenet of *swadeshi*—production remains local and uncorporatized, in harmony with the surrounding natural resources rather than parasitic upon them. Through Shiva's own writings, this essay will show how she creatively utilizes Gandhi's principles to address modern day ecological problems demonstrating the promise of dharma for a sustainable world.

Bio:

Veena R. Howard, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Asian Religious Traditions in the Department of Philosophy, Fresno State University, where she is also the coordinator of Peace and Conflict Studies Program. She teaches and researches Asian religious traditions, Gandhi's philosophy, animal ethics, and gender issues in Indian philosophy.

Her publications include the books, *Dharma, Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, and Sikh Traditions of India* (ed.), *Gandhi's Ascetic Activism: Renunciation and Social Action*, and several articles, including "Vaiṣṇavism and Gandhi's Ahimsā: Expression of the Largest Love," "The modern monastic Santmat movement of

Bihar: building bridges between Sanātana Dharma and Sant-Mat; “Lessons from ‘The Hawk and the Dove’: Reflections on the Mahabharata’s Animal Parables and Ethical Predicaments,” “Rethinking Gandhi’s Celibacy: Ascetic Power and the Empowerment of Women,” “Non-violence and Justice as Inseparable Principles: A Gandhian Perspective,” and “Gandhi, The Mahatma: Evolving Narratives and Native Discourse in Gandhi Studies.” She has also translated three books from the modern Sant tradition from Hindi into English. Dr. Howard is committed to reviving indigenous spiritual and ethical approaches that connect personal transformation and social change.

She currently serves on the President’s Commission for Human Relations and Equity and she is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Parliament of the World’s Religions.

7. *Jainism and Human Rights*, Sulekh C. Jain, Tel: 8325948005, Email: scjain@earthlink.net

Abstract:

Human Rights are those rights which are concerned with the dignity of individuals, and are essential for our dignified living and fuller development of ourselves. In their absence our existence is reduced to a mere survival, and not worth living. The declaration of Human Rights recognizes rights to life for everyone, freedom from slavery, equality before the law, right to work, liberty and security of the human being, right to associate, and right to freedom of movement. Bhagwan Mahavir 2600 years ago advocated the equality of privileges and universal brotherhood of all living beings – humans (children, women, and men) and non-humans. Precisely here is to be traced and found the essence of human rights that Jainism stresses and believes in. Human rights in Jainism are based on three main pillars: unconditional ahimsa (non-violence), respect and tolerance of others’ differing views and beliefs (Anekantvaad or Non-one-sidedness), and aprigraha (right to own one’s own fair share of resources and no more). Nothing can be more contributory to guarantee protection of human rights than the nullification of himsa (violence). According to Jainism, the concept of human rights loses its meaning and relevance in a society raged by violence. A society free of violence is a peaceful society that is endowed with the virtue and quality to transform human rights from a concept to a reality. Bhagwan Mahavir and several Jain Acharyas after him were revolutionaries as well as great social reformers. They preached and advocated dignity and equality for all; particularly for the women who throughout history in nearly all cultures world over have been the most abused and oppressed. In my presentation, I will describe in detail how Bhagwan Mahavir and Acharya Tulsi in the 20th Century strived and worked tirelessly to uplift the status of women to a respectable, dignified and equal status in the society.

Bio:

Dr. Sulekh C. Jain has been active in many religious and social activities within the Jain and non-Jain communities in the U.S.A. and Canada. Dr. Jain is the Founder /Co-Founder of more than a dozen organizations and institutions in North America. He is past Secretary and President of Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA), Jain Society of Houston, Jain Center of Cincinnati/Dayton and several other organizations. Currently he is the Chairman of International School for Jain Studies Governing Council USA and a Board member of Mahatma Gandhi Library in Houston, Texas. Dr. Jain also authored a 328-page book titled “An Ahimsa Crisis; You decide!” Very widely traveled, in 1990 he led a

U.S. Jain Delegation to Buckingham Palace in London for a meeting with H.R.H. Duke of Edinburgh; and he participated in the Parliament of World's Religions conference in Chicago in 1993.

Dr. Jain has a PhD in Mechanical Engineering and an M.B.A. He has taught at several Universities in USA, Canada, U.K and India. He retired in 1998 from GE Aircraft Engines in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has nine US and International technical patents, has authored more than 50 technical papers and several dozen papers on Jain related subjects. He was an International consultant in technology and was the Vice President of Metalworking Consultant Group. For a few years he was also a consultant to NATO on their Science for Peace program. Dr. Jain has won awards from commercial, professional and religious organizations; particularly the JAINA Ratan award (highest award by JAINA), Award of Excellence by International Jain Sangh of New Jersey, USA and from Jain Society of Houston, Texas. In USA, Sulekh Jain and his wife Ravi Jain are active in many Indian and non-Indian organizations such as Vegan Society.

8. *Understanding Human Rights, Human Values and Human dignity in Dharmic traditions (Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism)*, Suman Kakar, Email: kakars@fiu.edu or skakar05@gmail.com

Abstract:

This paper examines the concept of human rights, human values and human dignity as represented and understood in Indian Dharmic traditions - Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism. It compares that representation and understanding with the western understanding as depicted in the Magna Carta, and the Human Rights Act of 1948, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1998) and demonstrates the utility of Dharmic traditions. India is one of the most ancient surviving civilizations. The most striking feature of this civilization is that despite an influx of diverse racial, ethnic, religious and other identities and sometimes brutal pilferage of its civilization and wealth, it has created and maintained its identity and unique socio-cultural tradition which is evolutionary, flexible, and complex. In its recorded history of more than six thousand years, its rich heritage, composite culture and dharmic traditions have enforced performance of duties leading to the protection of rights as delineated in Manava Dharma Sutra (Treatise on Human Duties) or Manusmriti. While the Magna Carta, Universal Human Rights Act, and discussion of universal human rights are the milestones of contemporary western civilization, they have been part of Indian Dharmic tradition since time immemorial – albeit there has not been much discussion of ‘right’ as it is found in western thought. The emphasis in the West has been on rights while the Indian Dharmic traditions emphasize duties and believe the “true source of rights is duty.” The ancient texts of the Vedas, Agamas, and Upanishads, Brahmanas, and Smritis, among others, address and underscore the importance of duty (dharma). They demand that all humans faithfully adhere to their earthly responsibilities (savdharma) as discussed in the Manava Dharma Sutra.

Bio:

Suman Kakar is an associate professor at the Florida International University. Her research interests are Human Trafficking, Juvenile Delinquency, and Violence Against Women and Violence in General, and Research and Evaluation. She has authored five books and numerous articles on these topics. She has presented her research at national and international conferences and given workshops. Her most recent research interests are understanding the impact of lived religions and environment on violent and aggressive behavior.

9. Meditation as a guide to maintain Human Rights, Human Dignity, and Nonviolence as delineated by the Dharmic Traditions, Anjum Kumbkarni, Tel: 813-843-4409, Email: akmindMD@gmail.com

Abstract:

“If every 8-year-old is taught meditation, we will eliminate violence from the world in one generation”- Dalai Lama.

Violence, may it be gender violence, domestic violence, or violence in society, is very closely related to Violation of Human Rights (Winkler). To maintain dignity of human life in all sectors and to preserve Human Rights, an attitude of non-violence needs to be reinstated in the society. The dharmic traditions have been consistently concordant with the teaching of mindfulness and meditation amongst the masses to help enhance the qualities of truthfulness, righteousness, character development, and facilitate ethical living.

The case of Falun Gong (Buddhist practice) and its implications for social work (Cheung) is a qualitative study conducted with Falun Gong practitioners in Canada and explores how a mindful meditative practice can facilitate peaceful resistance to global human rights violations. “When your soul is perfectly seated in your body, the dance begins automatically, and when you dance you do not dance alone” – Shiva Purana. If everyone is at the same level and unifies with the universe, human equality will be an easy and spontaneous result. Meditation and Yoga practice help with the discovery, stabilization, and cleansing of the soul. Bhagavat Gita teaches the practice of meditation including preparation and methods. In Mandukya Upanishad, Om has been described as the syllable of the whole world. Chanting of Om creates sound-breath-rhythm channel and has benefits of stabilizing serotonin and dopamine in the brain. Meditation and mindfulness help medically to bring on a relaxation response and help with parasympathetic nervous system to activate. A society which knows how to manage their stress response will be nonviolent, will learn to maintain human dignity, and will stay righteous.

Bio:

Anjum Kumbkarni, MD, MBA is a Board-Certified Internal Medicine Physician in Tampa, Florida. In her practice of medicine, she utilizes an integrative approach, including preventative medicine, meditation and mindfulness. She did her Medical School at GNDU, Amritsar, India; residency in Internal medicine at SUNY, Buffalo; and an executive MBA at USF, Tampa. She trained at Benson Henry Mind Body Medicine, Harvard University, to teach Mindfulness, Meditation and Stress Reduction. She has done SMART (Stress Management and Resilience Training) programs in the community for adults and youth. She has been a speaker at Mind Body Medicine conference for the elderly and believes in prevention and management of Dementia and Memory loss utilizing research proven techniques and mindful exercises. Dr. Kumbkarni created www.HealthMindMD.com to teach the general population about benefits of meditation and mindfulness, to help empower in healing themselves. Dr. Kumbkarni does programs on corporate wellness and has worked with Cigna, BayCare Health Systems, Verizon Wireless, and Honeywell to help their employees cope with increasing levels of stress. She plays an active role in her corporation and has been very passionate about reducing physician burnout to help her fellow physicians cope with their own stressors in this highly stressful phase in the society. Dr. Kumbkarni is a featured thinker in the book, *Daily Meditations for Visionary Leaders*, featuring 30 thinkers from four continents. She is an avid reader of scriptures of all religions and also of contemporary fiction and nonfiction work. Her niche is the combination of learnings from the enlightened intellectuals and tying it to scientific reasoning. Dr.

Kumbkarni derives her energy from the bliss of her own meditation practice and her mission and vision is to help the community by having everyone experience the tranquility.

10. Title: *Acknowledging Divinity in All Beings*, Ramdas Lamb, Email: ramdas214@gmail.com

Abstract:

Nearly all the major religious traditions in the world claim to believe in a deity who is omnipresent, i.e. everywhere. At the same time, however, the Abrahamic traditions say that their deity is not actually in everything. This is an inconsistency that has allowed many in those traditions to look down on those believers and traditions that are unlike them. It has further allowed those traditions to get away with the slaughter of millions of animals annually in this country alone. The Dharma Traditions take the concept of omnipresence much more literally, which is why all beings are seen as a part of the divine. My paper will discuss the concept of omnipresence by acknowledging the divinity of all beings, and also acting on that knowledge by seeking to both respect and serve all beings, irrespective of race, caste, religion, gender, and bodily form (i.e., both human and non-human).

Bio:

Ramdas Lamb is a Professor of Religion at the University of Hawai'i, where he has been a member of the faculty for three decades. His research and teaching expertise are on various aspects of the Dharma traditions, including asceticism, monasticism, Ram bhakti, and low caste devotional movements. From 1969 until 1978, he lived in India as a Hindu sadhu in the Ramananda Sampraday India, and he is currently working on a book about the beliefs and practices of the order and its members.

11. *Bioethics as the Love of Life: Lessons of Universal Ethical Diversity in Dharmic Traditions*, Darryl Macer, Tel: +1-949-439-9307, Email: darryl@eubios.info

Abstract:

In this paper I explore bioethics as the love of life and argue that this is the foundational value of life. Although humankind has often been responsible for colonization of knowledge and religion, the sources of wisdom are all around us. There are many lessons from indigenous philosophies and the Dharmic traditions of knowledge for sustainability. Although the underlying heritage of ethics can be seen in all cultures, religions, and in ancient writings from around the world, what is universal? Is the diversity of moral reasoning, life paths and identities the point that is universal? Should we interpret the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (UNESCO, 2005) as a descriptive account of ethics or as a prescriptive one? The context of Dharmic traditions suggests we have moral diversity, consistent with descriptions of sociology and anthropology. How do we consider the pursuit of a good-life for all creatures with Samsara and Karma? The value of suffering has been an issue discussed in bioethics, and how does it relate to human responsibility to protect human rights? Some examples of the use of anthropocentric, biocentric, ecocentric and cosmocentric ethical viewpoints will be discussed. As countries have developed spaces to discuss their values, we have also seen the role of social science as a driver towards understanding of different social relations and patterns between and within cultures, and increased understanding of our

views of nature. Creating a space is less of a challenge from the growing knowledge of human nature and life itself. Bioethics is the concept of love, balancing benefits and risks of choices and decisions, in our ethical mind. We have a duty to construct a more mature society that allows mutual respect for the diversity that we find in the world.

Bio:

Darryl Macer is President of American University of Sovereign Nations (AUSN, www.ausn.info), and Professor of Bioethics and Biomedicine at AUSN, where he also serves as Provost. He served from 2004 until 2013 as UNESCO Regional Adviser for Social and Human Sciences in Asia and the Pacific. He is credited with over three hundred academic publications (45 books; 230 Peer Reviewed papers in academic journals and books; and other academic publications in academic journals). Dr. Macer taught undergraduate and graduate students as a Foreign Professor at the University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba Science City from 1990-2005. He also serves as Affiliated Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Kumamoto, Japan (since 2007); and Director, Eubios Ethics Institute, (New Zealand; Thailand and Japan (since he founded it in 1990, www.eubios.info). Dr. Macer is also Director of the International Peace and Development Ethics Centre and Peace Park at Kaeng Krachan, and a Research Fellow at the Center for Ethics of Science and Technology, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. Dr. Macer is also the Secretary of the Asian Bioethics Association. Born in 1962 in Christchurch, New Zealand, he has a B.Sc. (Hons) in Biochemistry from Lincoln College, University of Canterbury, 1983; Ph.D. in Biochemistry at the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, and Trinity College, University of Cambridge, U.K., 1987; and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Philosophy from Kumamoto University, Japan in 2009. He has since worked in UK, New Zealand, Italy, Japan, Thailand and USA; and is a member of many international bioethics committees.

12. *Human Rights and Conflicts: A Vedanta Perspective*, Debidatta Aurobinda Mahapatra, Email: arvind.mahapatra@gmail.com

Abstract:

Though its origin could be traced to the ancient and medieval periods, human rights as a concept and policy instrument became popular in the 20th century, particularly after the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948. There are many scholarly studies on the subject, but most of them adopt a Eurocentric approach. There are very few studies that bring into focus a Vedanta perspective on the subject. The concept of practical Vedanta, popularized by Swami Vivekananda in the late 19th century, could be considered a precursor to the idea of human rights. Vedanta philosophy, Swami Vivekananda argued, has no value unless it addresses everyday problems confronted by human society, including exploitation of the weak, discrimination against women, and problems like poverty and illiteracy. During his address to the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, he famously used the simile of well frog and sea frog to distinguish between individuals who are narrow minded and selfish (well frog) and those who are broadminded (sea frog). He argued that for universal peace, it is necessary that individuals come out of their selfish boundaries and think of the world as one family (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam). This Vedanta perspective with its deep philosophical and practical underpinnings is very relevant for a debate on human rights and its relevance for the 21st century. This paper will also make a

survey of select Vedic hymns to demonstrate how those texts, written much before the concept of human rights came to vogue, could be considered the bedrock of human rights, peace and justice, and they could be studied for the benefit of the human society and the world.

Bio:

Debidatta Aurobinda Mahapatra is a Political Scientist with two PhD degrees- from University of Massachusetts Boston, USA (in global governance and human security) and from Jawaharlal Nehru University, India (in international studies). After receiving his first PhD, Dr. Mahapatra taught and researched at the Central University of Punjab, the University of Mumbai and the University of Jammu, India, from 2005 to 2012. He received Scholar of Peace Award (New Delhi) in 2007 and Kodikara Award for Young South Asian Researcher (Colombo) in 2010. He was a Visiting Fellow at Institute for Conflict Research, Belfast, UK in November 2008, Charles Wallace Fellow at Queen's University Belfast in March-April 2010 and ICSSR-RAS Fellow at Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow, in September 2010. He worked as a consultant for Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, Geneva in 2006 and 2010. He has presented over thirty papers in international conferences and delivered more than ten public lectures. He has published extensively, in the form of books, articles and opinion-pieces, on the issues related to international conflicts and peacebuilding. One of his publications was referred to by a US Congressional report in 2014, and his comments were published by Reuters in 2011. His recent publications include *Gandhi and the World*, *Conflict Management in Kashmir*, *Conflict and Peace in Eurasia*, *Making Kashmir Borderless*, and "UN Security Council and international conflicts." Dr. Mahapatra is currently an Adjunct Professor of Political Science at the University of Central Florida. He is also associated with the Center for Peace, Development and Democracy, the University of Massachusetts Boston as a Fellow and with the International Mediating and Negotiating Operational Agency, Rome, Italy, as a Senior Research Fellow.

13. *Freedom of thought and Human Rights in Jain Tradition*, Yashwant K. Malaiya, Email: malaiya@cs.colostate.edu

Abstract:

The four Dharmic traditions – Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh – have not only flourished with mutual coexistence, they have supported an environment where thinking is unfettered and justice is to be provided to all regardless of religious or other affiliations. This presentation focuses on the Jain perspective. Jainism inherently supports coexistence of multiple perspectives. Although the Jain society has been traditionally very conservative, it has not only acknowledged other traditions, there have been notable instances of Jains actually supporting them. The principle of Anekantavada is one of the key concepts in Jainism. It states that it is possible to observe a single reality from multiple perspectives and describe it differently. One notable example of Jain openness is the Dharmasthala institutions that includes the famous Manjunath Swami Shiva temple in Karnataka. It was founded 800 years ago by the Hegade family which still administers it. The family representative is termed the Dharmadhikari which has a significant influence among the Hindus as well as others in the regions, even though the Hegade family has always been well known as a Jain family. They annually organize a Sarva Dharma Sammelan which brings together all the religions. There are several examples of Jains' contributions to Hindu temples and Sikh shrines and even mosques and churches. Several rulers in India have been Jain. They include Kharvela, Rashtrakuta Amoghavarsha and Solanki Kumarapla. They honored and supported all religions as shown by the archaeological records. Many Jain

temples in some regions of India have a long history of employing Brahmin priests. The Jain society has produced a few remarkable free thinkers. They include Osho Rajneesh, Swami Satyabhakta and Arjun Sethi. India has a long tradition of accepting religious discussions and debates among the Dharmic traditions, which acknowledging the rights of all schools of thoughts, both existing and newly emerging. The presentation will include several examples of the Dharmic religions to illustrate their support of freedom of thought.

Bio:

Yashwant K. Malaiya has been a Professor in Computer Science Department at Colorado State University since 1982. He has published widely in the areas of security vulnerabilities, fault modeling, software and hardware reliability, testing and testable design. He has also published more than a dozen articles on Jain history and demography, both in Hindi and English. His first publication, in 1971, was on Jain history. Novel technical concepts developed by Dr. Malaiya and his students include “Detectability Profile” (1984) for characterizing random testing and “Antirandom Testing” approach (1995) for generating efficient testing sequences for hardware and software. He developed the Malaiya-Denton model for test coverage-reliability relationship (1994) and the Alhazmi Malaiya Logistic (AML) vulnerability discovery model (2004). He was the creator of the very first website on Hindi language in 1996, and the first major website on Jainism in 1997. He was the founder of the India Association of Northern Colorado in 1998 and has served as its elected President for four terms.

14. *Human Dignity and the Teachings of Bhagwad Geeta*, Sanjay P. Mehrotra, Email: sanjaypmehrotra@gmail.com.

Abstract:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥४-७॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥४-८॥

Yada yada hi dharmasya glanirbhavati bhārata
Abhyathanamadharmaṣya tadātmanam srijamyaham
Paritrāṇāyā sadhūnāṃ vināśāy cha duṣkṛitām
Dharmasāṅsthāpanārthāy sambhāvāmi yuge yuge

These two verses from the Holy Bhagwad Geeta provide a pillar in the teachings of Sanatan Dharma. Beyond establishing the tenet of Divine incarnation and reincarnation, they provide the reasons and time of these reincarnations. The historical Mahabharat war was a consequence of the undignified behavior of the Kauravas in women and human abuse, and their denial of giving Pandavs a right to dignified living. Mahabharat is also a battle that takes place in the modern society -- where people are often denied basic amenities and rights to have a dignified living. We need to create a social fabric where everyone has the opportunity to receive a proper education, health care, nutrition, shelter, and protection. Such a positive living environment provides individuals the right to choose their mode of honoring and worshipping God,

and express Divinity within. In this environment of freedom, we honor the constitution of our nation, the teachings of the saints and sages, and our dharmic traditions -- origins of each one of them can be traced back to the need to uphold human dignity. In this presentation, we will see how teachings in the Holy Bhagwad Geeta, with examples from other scriptures, provide the moral compass for upholding human dignity and honoring basic human rights.

Bio:

Sanjay Mehrotra is a scholar of Shrimad Bhagwad Geeta who believes in putting spirituality to practice. Grounded in the Spiritual Wisdom enshrined in Shrimad Bhagwad Geeta, as a householder, he has grown with learning the nature of God for more than 25 years. He has been blessed by numerous saints and sages from all religious traditions. He was given the Vishwa Hindu Ratna award in 2010 for his community service.

Professor Mehrotra earned his PhD from Columbia University in Operations Research. He is an expert in quantitative methodologies for decision making under uncertainty. He is a fellow of the Institute for Operations Research and Management Sciences (INFORMS). He has authored more than 100 research articles, and his research has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the Office of Naval Research, the National Institute of Health, and the Department of Energy. He is internationally renowned for his Predictor-Corrector algorithm for linear optimization. A significant part of his applied research has focused on Health Systems Engineering. He has contributed to algorithmic development in continuous, discrete, stochastic, robust, multi-objective, and risk adjusted optimization. His healthcare engineering work includes predictive modeling, hospital operations and staff modeling, and policy modeling in organ transplantation using modern operations research tools. He has served as a department editor for the Health Systems area for the journal IIE Transactions. He also served as the Optimization department editor for IIE Transactions and Asia Pacific Journal of Operations Research; and on the editorial boards of Operations Research, and Mathematical Programming. His is a past Chair of the INFORMS Optimization Society, and a past vice-president of chapter/fora and a board member of INFORMS and Health Systems Engineering Alliance. He has given numerous invited plenary and keynote presentations on his research at national and international forums.

15. The Modern Human Rights Movement is Dynamic and Transformative, But It is Rooted in the Dharmic Traditions, Ved P. Nanda, Tel: 720-971-0503, Email: nandas@earthlink.net

Abstract:

Human Rights are an integral part of all the Dharmic Traditions. Rig Ved, the ancient Vedic scripture, is the source of the proclamation that all human beings are equal. And the Atharv Ved declared that human beings have equal right over food and water. The focus also was on duties. It was, however, in the aftermath of the death and destruction of World War II that the modern human rights movement was born, with the U.N. Charter embodying the importance of human rights. What followed was the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose 70th anniversary we're celebrating this year, and subsequently the International Bill of Rights, with the two International Covenants at the core. And now, there are scores of international treaties on human rights, such as on Women's Rights, Children's Rights, Prohibition of Genocide and Torture, etc. The dramatic developments in the modern human rights movement have been the addition of legal, especially international legal, elements, adding a new perspective; providing remedies for victims; and imposing binding obligations on states. However, the major contemporary challenges are lack of implementation and effective enforcement, and the imposition of human rights rules to non-state

actors. The modern idea of human rights has indeed transformed the world, but this powerful idea can be, appropriately, traced back to the Vedas and Upanishads.

Bio

Ved P. Nanda is Distinguished University Professor at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law, where he has taught since 1965. He also serves as Director of the Nanda Center for International and Comparative Law, established in his honor by alumni in 2006. He holds or has held numerous official posts in international, regional, and national professional and civil society organizations. Among numerous national and international awards, he has received the World Jurist Association's Highest Order of Justice and its World Legal Scholar Award, the Gandhi-King-Ikeda Award for Peace-Building from Soka Gakkai International and Morehouse College, the Human Rights Award from the United Nations Association, and Civil Rights Award from B'nai B'rith. He has received honorary doctorates from Soka University in Tokyo, Japan and from Bundelkhand University, Jhansi, India.

Professor Nanda holds leadership positions in numerous international organizations and has authored or co-authored 24 books and more than 220 law review articles and book chapters. He has received numerous national and international awards, the latest being the 2018 American Bar Association International Law Award and in March 2018 he received the Padma Bhushan, one of the highest civilian awards of the Government of India, presented by President Ram Nath Kovind in a ceremony at the Presidential Palace.

16. *Human Rights and Human Dignity Rooted in the Four Dharmic Traditions – Buddhism*, Joan PolICASTRI, Email: joan.policastri@colorado.edu

Abstract:

This paper identifies and explores the concepts of Human Rights and Human Dignity as found in the Theravada and Mahayana traditions of the Buddha Dharma and provides a comparison with the values promoted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The 1948 UDHR was created to confirm the freedom, equality and dignity of all peoples, but the spirit and values expressed can be traced far back in time, and to cultures other than the Western ones on which the UDHR is based. Human Dignity is found in many Buddhist concepts and principles starting with the idea that we all have Buddha nature. Other relevant elements of Buddhism include: The Noble Eightfold Path, the Five Precepts, and the Four Dignities. Principles such as maitri (loving-kindness), ahimsa (non-violence/non-harming) and karuna (compassion) are in harmony with the UDHR. Primary Buddhist texts do not use the word “rights,” although some scholars have inferred the concept of “rights” based on the duties and obligations enumerated in the texts. Other scholars critique the language of “human rights” as a Western concept and it has been argued that the very concept of “rights” is an aggressive/argumentative idea that is counter to Buddhist harmony. Anatta (non-self), sunyata (emptiness), dependent arising, Ego, and the individual are additional topics for discussion. The situation of the Muslim Rohingya people of Buddhist Myanmar, the current #MeToo moments in several sanghas, and gender and LGBTQ issues are addressed in terms of Buddhist values and principles.

Bio:

Joan PolICASTRI began studying Buddhism in 1997 in the Shambhala Tradition where she completed the Sacred Path of the Warrior and attended Warrior Assembly at Karne Chöling in July, 2000. She attended the Y2K Dathun at RMSC and took refuge vows in January, 2001. As part of her continuing studies she

has taken classes from Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche during retreats at RMC with Jetsun Khandro Rinpoche, where she did a 10-day course on the Seven Points of Mind Training (and took Bodhisattva vows) and has done several in-person and online courses with Pema Chödrön. 30 days of January in Vermont (at Karne Chöling, as preparation for Vajrayana Seminary), and a 10-day solitary retreat at Dorje Khyung Dzong (Colorado) were also educational highlights. In the Dzogchen Tradition, she studies with Ponlop Rinpoche's Nalandabodhi sangha, starting with a memorable sangha retreat at a Catholic nunnery in the San Francisco area where she began Vajrayana practice. She also spent 4 weeks at Nitārtha's summer institute in Duncan, B.C. Finally, she attended Thich Nhat Hanh's program at CU Boulder and attempts to follow his profound practice of Engaged Buddhism.

Joan began her academic studies, and was inspired on her spiritual path, in the Political Science Department at the University of Colorado, Denver, where her Masters thesis was a comparative study of seven countries' policies towards indigenous peoples. Major topics of the study were the environment and religious issues. Joan was also the Foreign, Comparative, and International Law Librarian at the University of Denver; she co-edits an electronic resource guide on Humanitarian Law for the American Society of International Law, and is currently a faculty member of the University of Colorado Law School Library.

17. *Values, Dignity, And Rights in Ramayana: A Guidance To Posterity*, C.L. Prabhakar, Tel:847-525-0458/614-583-8775, Email: clprabhakar@yahoo.com

Abstract:

Values, Dignity and Rights are necessary for humans. When these are cared for, the human interests will be ensured. These features of etiquette are common to followers of all Religions. As long as the amity, love, understanding and friendship exist and co-exist there would be prosperity and longevity. Hinduism is a world religion that is taken as a continuation of Vedism. Its great literature describes roots and reasoning for the practices.

Rig Veda is the first human literary document annotated with these values. Rig Veda (RV) begins with a hymn to Lord Agni and contains a hymn where there is the promotion of the idea of togetherness and understanding between one another. It is Aikamatya sukta (samgacchadhvam su sahasati . . .) (RV 10.121.1-4) referencing how humans must respect conduct. In Yajurveda we have the Namakam and Chamakam mantras referring to God Rudra, who is identified with people, objects, traditions, values, dignity of labor etc. Next in chamakam, an enlisting of desires and practices of humans common to personal and impersonal concerns.

In the Ramayana, we notice roots and elaboration of these features with contexts and circumstances. There are more than 500 characters of all varieties like sages, kings, ordinary people, demons, strong and intelligent monkeys, birds, animals, etc. Here Rama, the Dharmamurti, confronted Ravana.

The message in Ramayana is: "one should be like Rama and never like Ravana." Sacrifice is the keynote to trace the ideals of human interests. Ramayana remains a source book to ensure people that their values and dignity are cared for. Truth and dharma became goals for good conduct. Rama accepted to go to forest only to make his father a Truthful Ruler. The dignity in monkeys and their king is honored for securing rightful justice. Any positive religion and philosophy with notable literature is a backup for humanism.

Bio:

Dr. C.L. Prabhakar graduated with Mathematics, Statistics and Economics from Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, studying in the Government Arts College, Anantapur. He took his post graduate degree in Sanskrit with specialisation of Alamkara Sastra from Karnataka University, Dharwad. Later, he joined as research scholar in the Centre for Advanced Study in Sanskrit, UGC, in Poona University, Pune, for Veda and Grammar Research. He was awarded Ph.d., for his thesis on Sukla Yajurveda. He joined as a Research Assistant in Bangalore University in the Department of Sanskrit and completed a project study of comparison of Taittiriya and Vajasaeya Samhitas of Yajurveda. He joined the national college and worked as Professor and Head of the Department of Sanskrit.

He founded Nada Veda Adhyayana Kendra in 1993, and remains as the founder Director of the Kendra and Chief Editor of its Monthly Bulletin (website: nvak.tripod.com). In 1994, he started a Bangalore chapter of the World Association for Vedic Studies. He has been the Chief Editor of the research souvenir, *Vedaganaga*, Volumes I to XXIII. Volume XXIV is under publication. He is an adjunct member of the Faculty of Vedas at the Hindu University of America, Orlando. He is currently working on the Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy stotra and Ramayan from different perspectives.

18. Human Values and Principles ingrained in Jagannath Philosophy, Chinmayee Satpathy, Tel: 91-0-9439175829, Email: chinusatpathy@gmail.com. **Presenter:** Shyam Mohapatra, Email: smohapat@health.usf.edu

Abstract:

Jagannath Philosophy is one of the most ancient Hindu philosophies in India. The name Jagannath implies that He is the Lord of the universe. Jagannath Philosophy widely propagates the ideology of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (One World One Family) in which human values and principles are deeply rooted. Lord Jagannath is called Lokayata Brahma or Gana-Devata (God of the people) and His religion is called Gana-Dharma (Religion of Mass). Lord Jagannath is worshiped as Patitapabana, the savior of humanity. There are many stories which narrate how a Muslim devotee like Salabaega and a low caste poor man like Dasia Bauri who were divinely blessed by Lord Jagannath. Every year during Car festival, the holy trinity of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra come out of the main temple of Puri to give pious darshan to his devotees and relieve them from pains and sufferings. This is a unique ritual which is not found elsewhere in any other Hindu temples in India or the world. This paper gives an understanding on how human ethics and ideologies are widely restored in Jagannath Philosophy. Lord Jagannath, his elder brother Sri Balabhadra and sister Devi Subhadra are worshiped together in the temple, which shows close sibling ties. The daily rituals of the deities in the temple such as Mailam (change of clothes), Abakasha (brushing of teeth), Beshalagi (wearing of clothes), Sakala Dhupa, Madhyahna Dhupa Syandhya Dhupa (food offering in morning, day and evening, respectively) are synonymous with the everyday human activities. Like human beings, the Choturdhamurty (four deities) change their bodies during the Nabakalebara (Renewal Ceremony) in every 8th -19th year. Like human beings, the deities also suffer from fever during Anasara every year when they are offered fruits, drinks, medicinal herbs and oils to cure the ailments.

Bio:

Dr. Chinmayee Satpathy is a distinguished scholar and researcher of Odisha State in India. She visited United States as Fulbright Fellow in 2016-17 for lecturing and conducting research on the Socio-Cultural Profiles of Indigenous Women Artists in India & USA: A Comparative Study. She has also successfully

accomplished her research study on Sri Jagannath Philosophy as Tagore Fellow of the Ministry of Culture, Govt of India during 2014-16 and has organized national conferences, delivered lectures in and outside India and has published many articles on various aspects of the Jagannath Philosophy in reputed journals, books and edited volumes.

Dr. Satpathy has also been awarded as a Postdoctoral Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, during 2012-14, and completed her research on the Implication of Development on Human Rights of Tribal Women in Odisha. She did research study on Indo-USA Intercultural Dialogue in the University of South Florida (USF), Tampa, Florida, USA, as a UNESCO Fellow during 2007-08. Dr Satpathy was awarded a doctorate degree in Sociology from the Utkal University, Odisha in 2006. She served as the Senior Consultant and Special Rapporteur of the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India, New Delhi. Her area of interest is related to gender and tribal issues and cultural sociology and religious studies.

19. *Human Rights and Human Dignity Rooted in the Four Dharmic Traditions (With special reference to women)*, Madhu Sharma, Tel: 98784-20336, 62395-12120, Email: madhu1952sharma@gmail.com

Abstract:

The words ‘Rights’ and ‘Dignity’ inscribed in the title are basically interchangeable terms in the manner that one is the cause and other its effect. Going through the evolution of the human rights movement, it can be understood as the story of human struggle for dignified existence for all without any exception to caste, creed, color, gender or physical and mental condition of an individual. The genesis of all religions, cults and -isms lies in the man’s fight for right. Keeping aside Hinduism and Jainism, the other Dharmic traditions – Buddhism and Sikhism – are, in fact a revolt against established norms of church or the state. If one is fighting for equal rights to worship God, the other is fighting for the rights of working classes and emancipation of women in the feudal society. As the Gita’s most quoted shloka, “*Yada-Yada hi Dharmasya*,” upholds the mantra of castigating Adharma (where humans are denied dignified existence) and exhorting Dharma (where everyone becomes entitled to righteous and virtuous life leading to peace and harmony), there comes an “Avatar” who helps to ameliorate the sufferings and neutralize disharmony. The birds-eye view of the scriptures may appear all humanistic but reading in between the lines in many a scripture, the scenario is a bit different. For example, those who suffer at the hands of landlords, Samanthas, kings, and priests are made to accept this as a reward or punishment of “Sanchit karmas” of previous births. Rather they are encouraged to surrender to “Swadharma-palana.”

Bio:

Dr. Sharma (M.A., M.Ed.), a retired lecturer in English, has been honored with numerous awards including as a debater, poetess, speaker and in essay writing competition from Government Randhir college Kapurthala. After retirement she has been immersed in reading and writing, including an Anthology of Poems “*Atthru Bane Akhar*,” (“the tears turned into words”), and a translation of Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s world-famous novelette “The Little Prince” into Punjabi. Her travelogue, “Europe Yatra,” (Punjabi). She is currently working on forthcoming books.

20. *Women's Rights and Hinduism*, Seema Shekhawat, Email: seemashekhawat@gmail.com

Abstract:

Globally, feminist movement is attempting to claim that women's rights are human rights; indicating that women should have all the rights entitled to a human being. Feminists claim that all the socially constructed identities hinder the process of gendering human rights. And, one of the major 'villains' in this context is proclaimed to be religion. Religions are considered as one of the major obstacles as far as women's rights are considered. This is true on several accounts. Religions in many ways make women subservient, lesser human beings. In the light of the above discussion, this paper will discuss the human rights of women as far as Hinduism is concerned. Hinduism is much more than a religion, it is Dharma, and that too Sanatana. It has evolved through ages and in this process, women have played a critical role. Even though the common belief is that women have a relatively lesser status in Hinduism, the fact remains that originally women held equal status. Called *Sahdharmini*, no religious activity could be complete without her presence. Respecting women was considered quite essential. Hindus worship several female goddesses. These are just few instances of the intersection of women's rights and Hinduism. However, several factors, including the foreign rule in India, brought forth anomalies, leading to systematic deterioration of women's position.

Bio:

Seema Shekhawat is a social scientist with a PhD on the intersection of gender and conflict. She is a recipient of Scholar of Peace award, Berghof Fellowship and International Peace Research Foundation grant. She conducted consultancies for Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Geneva in 2006 and 2010. Her recent publications include *Gender, Conflict and Peace in Kashmir* (Cambridge University Press 2014); *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace* (Palgrave Macmillan 2015, editor); *Women and Borders* (I. B. Tauris 2018, co-editor) and *Gender, Conflict, Peace, and UNSC Resolution 1325* (Lexington 2018, editor).

21. *Human Rights and Human Dignity: The Gaze of Hindu Theology*, Rita D. Sherma, Email: rsherma@gtu.edu

Approaches from religions to human rights and dignity arise ethical reflection and reinterpretations of the tradition's theological and philosophical structures. Such reconceptualization of central teachings and doctrines is normative to all major systems of thought and practice—rendering them as living streams. A couple of centuries of research and scholarship on Hindu Dharma, gazed at through strategized lenses, have helped engender the expectation that it should somehow be frozen in time. The major theological and ethical changes that occurred within Hindu culture from the 18th to the 20th centuries and based on Vedanta—during and after the colonial era—are referred to as “Neo-Vedanta” or “Neo-Hinduism.” Yet, the branches of Christianity and Judaism that developed during the same era—and there are dozens of them—are not termed Neo-Christianity or Neo-Judaism because such terms would question the authenticity and authority, for example, of Methodist Christianity or Reform Judaism. The idea that *only* Hinduism is frozen in time is a dangerous conception. “Neo-Hinduism” is the terms used to describe the Vedanta formulated by our leading modern-era theologians during and after the colonial period, including the theology of Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and others who have interpreted Hindu thought for human rights and towards the protection of human dignity. Terms such as “Neo-Vedanta/Neo-Hinduism” undermine the work of

major Hindu thinkers of the modern era as not quite authentic, or authoritative, because it is not what the ancient or medieval theologians had to say. We are expected to hold fast to the thought “which has been written” and cannot change. Why is that? Why can’t the Hindu tradition be seen as the living stream? Why are other religions seen as ongoing and constantly changing vibrant forces of mind and spirit in continuity with the past, but in ethical engagement with the present, when the Hindu world is not? Hindu(ism) is seen as an *artefact that is frozen in time*. This dangerous perspective occludes the power and possibility for inspiring thought and action—towards human rights and dignity—inherent in ancient and classical Hindu principles. The viewpoint that Hindu theology and ethics are not valid if they are grounded in *modern-era* exegesis (*bhāṣya* and *vritti*) pushes back against the idea of constructive Hindu theology. A frozen conception of Hindu thought and theology discourages revisioning and reconfiguration of Hindu approaches to foundational insights, principles, and doctrines to engage the unparalleled contemporary global challenges of violations of human rights and dignity. A renewal of constructive Hindu theology would speak to these challenges that we face—today. This effort to reinterpret and apply certain principles of Hinduism to human rights is a valid and legitimate way to experience, study, and practice the Hindu tradition while leaning forward and toward new horizons. Until we reclaim the gaze of our high traditions of *theology, thought, and textual contemplation* for addressing this moment in time, and its perils, all that will be left is the outer shell of colorful practices.

Bio:

Rita Sherma is a member of the Core Doctoral Faculty of the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, where she is Director of the Mira and Ajay Shingal Center for Dharma Studies and Associate Professor of Dharma Studies. She holds a PhD and an MA from Claremont Graduate University. Her research and teaching interests include Hindu Theology and Ethics; Science and Religions; Women and Hindu Goddess Studies; Art and Religions; Methodology in Religious Studies; and Ecology and Religion. She has published five edited volumes. She spearheaded the effort to establish the Hinduism program unit of the American Academy of Religion (AAR). She serves as editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Dharma Studies: Philosophy, Theology, Ethics, and Culture* by Springer. Dr. Sherma cofounded the Dharma Academy of North America (DANAM) and is an Associate Editor of the Encyclopedia of Indian Religions.

22. *The Concept of Freedom in Dharmic Traditions Addresses the Rights vs. Karmaphala Dichotomy*, Bal Ram Singh, Tel: 508-992-2042, Email: bsingh@inads.org

Abstract:

Freedom is one of the features of all that is vyakta (expressed) in the entire universe, be it material or the man. The material world is expanding entropically since its origin, starting with the big bang to free the energy and material over time and distance. Material world in short time range disintegrates for freedom into molecules, atoms, or subatomic particles, and associate in various combinations. Humans on the other hand are defined as intelligent beings, and thus express themselves intelligently through language, art, dress, food habits, and ideas, including philosophies or darshanas in case of the Dharmic traditions. The Vedic concept of living in the moment implies that one could see changes from moment to moment. A human being needs to train himself or herself to realize oneself from moment to moment, in a detached and unbiased manner. The knowledge of self provides the freedom to act according to one’s nature, and one

also develops capacity to accept the consequences without fear, anxiety, or stress. Thus, it is the knowledge of self that needs to be promoted through Yoga (Hindu), meditation (Buddhist), detachment (Jain), and charity (Sikh), with training in the traditional gurukul system. When the karma is performed as one's only right, all appropriate human rights are secured through the understanding of its phala or consequences. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was necessitated because of the colonial concept of exploitation that comes from biblical concept of chosen people, faith-based salvation through religion, and the suppression and torture of beings in the name of God. Freedom of being oneself, freedom of expression, freedom of senses, and freedom of action are the practices that dharmic traditions promote, and with that there is no need to pursue human rights, as those are attached to one's actions.

Bio:

Bal Ram Singh, PhD, has been a professor since 1990 at UMass Dartmouth (until 2014) and Institute of Advanced Sciences (current), conducting research on botulinum and tetanus neurotoxins, vaccines, antidotes, drug delivery, and also on yoga, mind, and consciousness, along with Ayurvedic biotechnology. He has published 13 books and nearly 300 articles, latest being Protein Toxins in Modeling Biochemistry. Dr. Singh is Editor/Associate Editor of four journals, including Biochemical and Biophysical Research Reports, Ayurveda Journal of Health and International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management, and is the Editor-in-Chief of Vedic WAVES, an online blog of the World Association of Vedic Studies. He is the President of the Institute of Advanced Sciences. At the Institute, he is also the Executive Mentor of the School of Indic Studies where his research includes Ayurvedic science and technology, Yoga and Consciousness, Vedic education pedagogy, and Vedic social and political traditions. Dr. Singh has been visiting professor at Georgetown University, Harvard Medical School, Yang Ming University (Taiwan), and Jawaharlal Nehru University (India). He is Honorary Professor of Amity University Haryana, Gurgaon, India, and Dean of International Academic Programs at Srimaharshi Research Institute of Vedic Technology (SRIVT), Guntur, AP, India. He is also Director of the Uberoi Foundation's Teacher Training Program. Dr. Singh received his B. Sc. from Avadh University in India in 1977 in Biology and Chemistry. He received his M.Sc. and M. Phil. Degrees from Jawaharlal Nehru University, India in Life Sciences during 1979-1982, and his Ph.D. in Chemistry from Texas Tech University in 1987. He completed his post-doctoral training at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1990, before joining the faculty of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

**23. *Reading the Sacred as Engaged Text: Human Rights and Human Dignity in the Guru Granth Sahib*,
Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, Tel: 207-859-4644, Email: nksingh@colby.edu**

Abstract:

The Guru Granth Sahib is the foundation of Sikh life, the center of all public and private ceremonies, rituals, and worship. But the exalted text also intersects dynamically with the everyday social and political reality. My presentation delves into its sacred poetics to retrieve the message of Human Rights and Human Dignity.

Bio:

Dr. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh is the Crawford Professor and chair of the department of Religious Studies at Colby College. Her interests focus on Asian Religions, feminist issues, and sacred art and poetry. Dr. Singh has published extensively in the field of Sikh studies. Her books include *Of Sacred and Secular Desire: An Anthology of Lyrical Writings from the Punjab*, *Sikhism: An Introduction*, *Cosmic Symphony*, *Birth of the Khalsa*, *Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent*, *Sikhism* (Facts on File), and *The Name of My Beloved*. She has authored almost 100 articles and chapters, and given more than 250 lectures nationally and internationally. Her views have also been aired on television and radio in America, Canada, England, Ireland, Australia, India, and Bangladesh. She has served on the editorial board of several journals including the *History of Religions*, the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, and *Sikh Formations*. She came to America to attend a girls' prep school in Virginia, got her BA from Wellesley College, MA from University of Pennsylvania, and PhD from Temple University.

24. H.D. Thoreau, Vedanta, and Human Rights in America, Jerry Solfvin, Tel: 508-636-8104, Email: jsolfvin@yahoo.com

Abstract:

Since the beginning of this millennium, immigration from India into the U.S. has very rapidly increased. (According to <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/largest-immigrant-groups-over-time>.) This is more than just a statistic because Indian immigration is increasingly visible and palpable in everyday life in America, especially in medicine, law, hi-tech industry, academia, business, and even politics. To me, this trend bodes well for the future of America not only because of the increased social, religious, economic, or political diversity it implies, but because of some ineffable promise which has more to do with human rights. Human right is a stanchion of the foundation of Indian society, as it is in America, but India has a different, broader, and deeper way of thinking about human rights which transcends the passage of time.

Here in America, Henry David Thoreau also had a different, broader, and deeper way of thinking about human rights which may have been more in harmony with India than with his own neighbors in 19th century Concord, Massachusetts. The author of "Walden", philosopher, poet, writer, activist, and lecturer, especially on the topic of human rights, Thoreau's moral and intellectual life was influenced by the Hindu Vedanta. Thoreau is sometimes called the "yogi" of Walden. He was a vegetarian. He wrote and spoke of a "higher law" which transcends standard jurisprudence and encouraged fellow citizens to protest government action that violated their moral code. When he discovered his taxes were going to be used for what he considered to be immoral purposes, he refused to pay them, and spent a night in jail instead. And his famous article, "Civil Disobedience", impressed and inspired Mahatma Gandhi more than a half-century later, while Gandhi was organizing the workers of South Africa. Thoreau did, indeed, dance to a different drummer, and was likely influenced in this by the wisdom of the ancient rishis of India. Thoreau was an avid reader, a polyglot, and Vedic literature was a favorite of his. His writings are sprinkled with overt and covert references to Vedic philosophy. Thus was I, in reading Thoreau in high school and college and thereafter, unknowingly exposed to Indian philosophy, as I suspect is true of many other Americans. I do not know for certain how much or how little my ideas on human rights have been influenced by Thoreau

and the Vedas, but knowing this, I believe that the increasing immigration from India bodes well for the future of human rights in America.

Bio:

Jerry Solfvin is an adjunct associate professor with the Center for Indic Studies at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and the School of Indic Studies at the Institute of Advanced Sciences (INADS) in Dartmouth, Massachusetts. He holds a B.A. in mathematics (Bridgewater State University), an M.S. in psychology (North Carolina Central University), and a PhD in social science (State University of Utrecht, Netherlands). His teaching career includes the US Air Force Technical Training Command and several universities including University of West Georgia, John F. Kennedy University, California Institute of Integral Studies, and San Francisco State University.

Solfvin's primary research interests revolve around extraordinary human experiences (EHEs) and he has a longtime interest in contemplative practices such as mindfulness, yoga, and meditation, especially in relation to EHEs. He has published several books and several articles in peer-reviewed journals, including Journal of Parapsychology, European Journal of Parapsychology, Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research, Journal of the Society for Scientific Exploration, and serves as reviewer for these and several others. Solfvin sits on NIH review panels on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) issues.

25. *Human Rights and Human Dignity Rooted in the Hindu Tradition*, Swami Svatmananda, Tel: 01-424-244-6306, [Email: svatmananda@gmail.com](mailto:svatmananda@gmail.com)

Abstract:

This presentation will explore Hinduism as a world religion in the context of the knowledge and wisdom of the Vedas and the monotheism of the Upanishadic Brahman and examine the evolution of Hinduism in both belief and practice, specifically based on the Vedas, and discuss Krishna's pertinent advice 'you shall see all living beings are within me.' ("... *bhūtānyaśheṣheṇa draṅṣhyasyātmanyatho mayi*". Bhagavad Gita. Ch 4 V. 35). The presentation will discuss the principles of Hinduism in relation to universal human rights and human dignity, as well as question how the sacred, divine wisdom in the scriptures has become misunderstood and corrupted over time, often resulting directly in human rights violations being committed as a result of ignorance. The role that Vedic wisdom and Hinduism can play in making a positive change by encouraging greater understanding and promoting tolerance and peace will also be considered. In conclusion, five steps will be presented that, if taken, will create greater understanding and enable more people to fully address our modern-day challenges which would, in turn make a valuable and positive contribution to the reduction of human rights and human dignity violations globally.

Bio:

Sri Swami Svatmananda is a direct disciple of Swami Dayanada Saraswati, an eminent scholar and a distinguished traditional teacher of Vedanta. As a popular and well-respected teacher globally, he lectures on Vedic knowledge including Yoga, Vedic Astrology, Ayurveda, Vaastu, and Vedanta. He has conducted courses and workshops in North and South America, Africa, Asia and Europe. Having grown up on four different continents among multiple religious traditions, he has a unique ability to connect amicably with

people from all backgrounds which he has utilised by being regularly involved in interreligious dialogue and mediation to promote social cohesion, in addition to his teaching. His experience includes being a KAICIID Fellow in 2017, and more recently presenting on subjects such as ‘Dealing with conflict objectively, while deconstructing subjective narratives’ to KAICIID in Vienna in March 2018, and ‘Deconstructing subjectivity and moving towards objectivity in conflict transformation processes’ to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland in January 2018. Prior to being ordained a monk, Sri Swami Svatananda earned dual Bachelor of Science degrees in electronic engineering and computer science and shortly after, a master’s degree in global business administration and international management. Early in his career he was a renowned expert in the field of data communication and later, he utilized his skills and entrepreneurial instinct to help start and manage over thirty business and philanthropic ventures. His career successes have been within technology, venture capital, international business and the non-profit sector. His familiarity with the lifestyles of both the East and the West, coupled with an in-depth understanding and appreciation of both cultures, gives him the rare ability to communicate the vision of Vedanta to modern listeners, enabling them to understand and assimilate his credence, ‘All is one, manifesting in a myriad of colourful expressions.’

26. *Buddhism, Human Rights and Human Dignity*, Frank M. Tedesco, Email: truedharma108@gmail.com

Abstract:

The Buddhadharma is a corpus of time-tested spiritual practices for individual liberation from samsara- the cycle of birth and death- and practical guidelines for right action. It is rooted in common human experience without dependence on divine authority. It gives highest value to understanding the nature of the human mind and freedom of critical thought and self-analysis. From its earliest teaching as found in the *Dhammapada* and the *Kalama Sutta*, it dignifies both men and women by asserting their agency to introspectively examine their own mental processes and all forms of social, cultural and religious conditioning without fear. The pursuit of truth is paramount. The sangha or Buddhist community is open for everyone of whatever social class or caste. The Buddhadharma teaches that men and women are each fully responsible for the consequences of their ethical decisions and emphasizes disciplines to purify the mind (intentions) by contemplation and meditation practices. The *Sigalovada Sutta* suggests models of conscientious behavior in forms of social relationships relevant to historic Buddha’s India that remain applicable today.

The presentation will review notable exemplars of human rights advocacy in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist countries. Each national situation represents complex sociopolitical conditions and vexatious challenges for freedom and human dignity. The careers of renowned Buddhist human rights leaders such as the Indian Buddhist statesman BR Ambedkar, Nobel laureate the Dalai Lama of Tibet, Thich Nhat Hanh of Vietnam, Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand and others will be examined in view of the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Bio:

Frank M. Tedesco, Ph.D., an activist and researcher, studied at UC Berkeley (BA, 1971), University of Lancaster, UK (MA, 1974) under Ninian Smart and the Korean Buddhist Dongguk University (Buddhist

Philosophy and Bioethics), Seoul, ROK (Ph.D., 1998). He completed six years of a doctoral program in Asian religions and psychiatric anthropology while a researcher at U Penn and Johns Hopkins Medical School. He was also a research associate in Traumatology, Graduate School Social Work, USF Tampa. He has taught anthropology and Buddhism at U Maryland, USF and elsewhere and given Dharma talks around the Pacific rim- Korea, Australia, Malaysia, Taiwan, etc. He is accredited by the national Dhamma Teachers of Korea and has taught Buddhist meditation in prisons, hospitals and hospices. He is also ADEC Certified in Thanatology. He has published widely on socially engaged Buddhism, inter-religious conflict resolution (extremist Christian arson attacks on Buddhist temples in South Korea in *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, religious persecution in the Encyclopedia of Monasticism, in Buddhism and Abortion (University of Hawaii) and social engagement in Action Dharma. Frank is currently involved in a documentary film project to facilitate cultural sensitivity among medical personnel serving critically-ill patients of the four Dharma traditions, thanks to Uberoi Foundation support. Frank published in Compassion in the 4 Dharmic Traditions of India, ed. V. Nanda (2016) and in Gandhi and the World, eds. Y. Pathak and D. Mahapatra (2018). He was an invited conference participant in “B. R. Ambedkar and Dimensions of Social Change” in Nashik, India (*Research Journey*, XIX, 2017). He has spoken at several universities in the U.S. and India.

27. Human rights and Human dignity: Hinduism perspective, A. Thimmaiah, Email: drathimmaiah@gmail.com

Abstract:

Human Rights are fundamental to a civilized society to protect its citizens, they recognize the inherent dignity and fundamental freedom of society that are the foundations for liberty, justice and peace in the world. Human rights in international law is defined as “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” It means human rights and dignity are intrinsic to human lives. The roots of human rights and dignity are embedded in the deep cultural roots of Hinduism. Hinduism has a deeper approach where it stresses on human duties or dharma than mere human rights. Mahatma Gandhi said, “all rights to be deserved and preserved came from duty well done.” The concept of Purushartha, or “goals of human pursuit,” was to establish a validity of inner spiritual and outer materialistic values of human endeavor. Vedic seers expounded human rights in accordance with the laws of nature aspiring happiness for all and misery to none.

Bio:

Appachanda Thimmaiah is Associate Professor and Director of Regenerative Organic Agriculture Program at Maharishi University of Management, Fairfield, Iowa. He received his PhD in Sustainable Agriculture from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi. His expertise is in regenerative organic and biodynamic agriculture, vedic agriculture, traditional knowledge systems, agroecology, rural development and Gross National Happiness (GNH). He has advised projects in 10 countries and worked with Governments, United Nations, International organizations, Agribusiness corporations, non-governmental organizations, and farmers associations in systems of regenerative agriculture and agribusiness. He advised the Royal Government of Bhutan for 6 years to transition the Himalayan Kingdom to organic and carbon neutral. He

serves in the Advisory board of Carbon Underground US, Indian Council of Food and Agriculture (ICFA), on the board of directors of the Demeter Association, US, and a trustee of The Cows Foundation, US.

28. *Human Rights in Dharma Traditions: Examination of Arthashastra, Manudharmasastra, and Suhrullekha*, Lavanya Vemsani, Email: lavanyavemsani@gmail.com

Abstract:

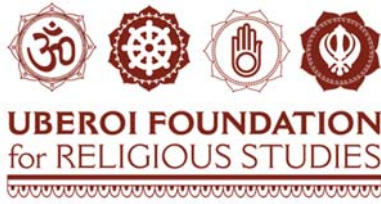
Are human rights a modern phenomenon? What do the ancient Dharmasastras say about human rights? Are human rights and animal rights different according to the dharma? These are all pertinent questions as the modern world is quickly moving into new modes of interactions through the use of information technology and social media. Humanity and concern for human well-being is as old as the existence of humanity. India developed deep thought on human well-being at individual as well as social level. Therefore, examination of human rights at individual as well as social level is examined in this paper, to understand the traditional basis of human rights in Indian civilization. Dharmic understanding of human rights is crystalized in Arthashastra and Manudharmasastra, two of the earliest texts of India, which contain important data to help understand the origin of primary thought on human rights. The questions of governance termed ‘despotic kingship’ noted in the Arthashastra and Manudharmasastra represent the core of human welfare under monarchy. Therefore, I will examine the qualities of a good ruler as noted in these texts. I will also examine Suhrullekha, a Buddhist text, containing the qualities of a good ruler. Understanding the expectations and duties of the ruler will help in understanding human rights in classical Indian thought. In addition, I will also examine the legal aspects and rights of women discussed in the three texts above. This will help advance our knowledge on traditional understanding of a ruler’s limitations with regard to rights of common men and women, in other words human rights of India.

Bio:

Lavanya Vemsani is Professor of History in the department of Social Sciences at Shawnee State University. She holds two doctorates in the subjects of Religious Studies (McMaster University) and History (University of Hyderabad). She was awarded South Asia Council of the Canadian Asian Studies Association's (SAC/CASA) Best Thesis Honorable Mention prize for her Ph.D. thesis at McMaster University. She was awarded BOT (Board of Trustees) Distinguished Teaching Award at Shawnee State University. Her research and teaching interests are varied, and multifold. She researches and publishes on subjects of ancient history and religions as well as current history of India. Her books include *Modern Hinduism in Text and Context*; *Krishna in History, Thought, and Culture: Encyclopedia of the Hindu Lord of Many Names*, *Hindu and Jain Mythology of Balarama*; and *Hindu and Jain Mythology of Balarama*. She is the Editor-in-Chief of American Journal of Indic Studies; Managing Editor of *International Journal of Indic Studies* and Editorial and Review Board Member of *Air Force Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, as well as *Canadian Journal of History*. She is currently Vice-President and President-Elect of Ohio Academy of History.

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