

# REFLECTIONS



A Hindu Cultural Center of Albany Hindu Temple Society's Newsletter devoted to the Capital District's Indian-American community particularly its seniors

## Editorial: Town Hall Meeting to Review HTS Constitution:

By Ram Chugh, Ph.D.



A Town Hall meeting to review the draft HTS constitution is planned for Sunday, April 15 from 2 to 4 PM at HCC. This open forum provides an excellent

opportunity for the membership to understand the new constitution and to provide feedback for any changes.

The suggestions from the membership will be reviewed by the HTS boards for possible incorporation in the draft constitution. The approved final draft will be submitted to General Body (GB) for a vote. The dates, process for voting and announcement of the voting result will be explained by the HTS boards through the e-bulletins.

The Capital District has witnessed a considerable increase in our community, resulting in a significant increase in the use of services offered by our temple and the cultural center. The use of the HTS facilities has grown exponentially.

This growth requires considerable coordination among the three boards, especially among the Board of Trustees and Board of Directors. It also requires making plans for future expansion of the facilities and greater effort in fund raising. In the process, it will also require greater accountability and participation from the community.

A good constitution should be responsive to meeting such changing needs. The current constitution, adopted in 2006, has served the temple well. However, to respond to recent changes and developments, the boards appointed a Constitution Task Force (CTF) in February 2017, with Dr. Ram Chugh, Rasik Shah, and Dr. Sastry Sreepada as members, to review the 2006 constitution and suggest changes.

After several months of intensive work, CTF submitted a draft of the revised constitution to the BOT chair. Later, the draft was reviewed by the HTS attorney to ensure that it met the NYS legal requirements. The revised draft incorporating the comments by the HTS attorney was approved by the three boards for sharing with the HTS membership.

The draft constitution will be presented at the April 15 Town Hall

meeting to seek input from the membership. The revised constitution should help HTS meet the changing governance and administrative needs and promote greater coordination and networking among the boards.

Revising a constitution is a monumental task but an extremely important one. The next constitution should be proactive, promote efficiency and effectiveness in the HTS operation and governance and, above all, promote greater harmony and fellowship among the boards, priests, and the community.

Take time to review the draft constitution. Take time to come to the Town Hall meeting to share your views and ideas to further improve the draft constitution. It is a responsibility that the membership should take it seriously.

**We are always looking for ways to improve the Newsletter and we welcome suggestions. Please send your comments and ideas to me at [Reflections.hcc@gmail.com](mailto:Reflections.hcc@gmail.com).**

## LONELINESS AND ISOLATION:

By Dr. Kalyan Battu, M.D.\*



Humans, like all animals, have a fundamental need for contact with others. This deeply ingrained instinct helps us to survive; it's easier to find food, shelter,

and other necessities with a group than alone. Deprived of human contact, most people suffer from emotional distress. Loneliness is essentially a more poetic term for isolation. Loneliness is not synonymous with lack of socialization as a person who is alone is not necessarily lonely, and a person who has several social relationships may still be lonely.

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A famous Urdu poet wrote 'Meri Maut Par Kisi Ko Itna Afsos Ho Na Ho Ay Dost, Par Tanhai Royegi Ki Mera Hamsafar Chala Gaya' which translates as- On my death, whether anyone feels sorrow or not, loneliness will cry saying my companion has gone away. Very touching!

### Understanding Loneliness

Loneliness is a complex, unpleasant, deep emotional feeling caused by feelings of inadequacy, imperfection, and shame. Chronically lonely people often have pessimistic bleak predictions about prospects of companionship, social connections, and supportive relationships. It is a condition of relational disconnection, social awkwardness and prolonged bouts of solitude.

Loneliness, like hunger and thirst, is a biological mechanism which triggers several neurochemical changes resulting in serious physical problems like hypertension and stroke and psychological problems like depression, anxiety, and PTSD.

If we pay attention, we realize that even small organisms like ants have social lives. Evolution proves that Socialization is a biological necessity. Neurotransmitters like Dopamine [Dorsal Raphe Dopamine] and Serotonin undergo significant changes in isolation resulting in psychological and physical problems. Scientists have identified regions of the brain that respond to loneliness. In chronic loneliness, the "brain goes into a self-preservation state that brings with it a lot of unwanted effects".

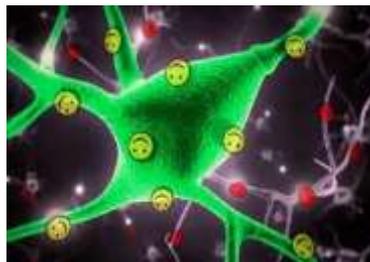


Image: iStock [edited by Jose-Luis Olivers/MIT].

In this image of the dorsal raphe nucleus, dopamine neurons are

labeled in green, red, or both (appearing yellow). More recently, researchers have been looking into the impact of loneliness on health and the data on the subject is overwhelming. People with chronic loneliness die prematurely. The reduction in lifespan is like that caused by smoking 15 cigarettes a day and is greater than the impact of obesity. The risk of a person with chronic loneliness dying in the first year of the death of their spouse increases about 70 times in elderly.

Meta-analysis of scientific literature on the subject found that social isolation increases the risk of death by an astounding 30%, and some estimates have it as high as 60%. Research has linked social isolation to psychopathology and increased mortality due to alcoholism and suicide.

### Coping with Loneliness

We are lagging England in addressing the issue of loneliness. They have many programs in place to deal with loneliness like a 24/7 call center called the SILVER LINE. A 2017 study found that more than nine million people in the country often or always feel lonely. This prompted PM Theresa May to appoint a minister for loneliness in her Cabinet recently. America is also paying more attention to loneliness. The former surgeon general said, "You might guess smoking, obesity, or the raging opioid epidemic is a serious health issue in America, and you'd be right. But you'd also be missing a quieter but also seriously deadly health menace, namely "Loneliness." Forty percent of American adults report feeling lonely (and many more may simply be too proud to admit they're suffering)"our former Surgeon General Dr. Murthy reports in [a recent Harvard Business Review article](#). Loneliness is indeed an epidemic.

Noted British TV star, Esther Rantzen has often told her story about loneliness as she continues to raise awareness about how this issue affects especially seniors. She says that her friends told her that she should have more pride and that given her popularity and

family, there is no reason why she should feel lonely. After the public learned of Stephen Fry's suicide attempt last year, the beloved British actor wrote a blog about his fight with depression. He cited loneliness as the worst part of his affliction. But the truth is that there is nobody that is immune to loneliness.

"For a social species, to be on the edge of the social perimeter is to be in a dangerous position," says Cacioppo, a neuroscientist. Most of the research in Loneliness is done on elderly people, but the truth is that it's prevalent even in young adults.

### Some Strategies

Improving social skills, enhancing social communication, increasing opportunities for social interaction, changing maladaptive thinking are key points to beat Loneliness. If you don't have a friend you can call, try to make some. Perhaps you can join an [online group](#) or volunteer somewhere, where there will be people you can chat with. Start slowly and don't worry if it takes a while to connect.

Getting social is one of the arts of living that requires a little practice so again just take one step at a time. It is not true that people stop pursuing dreams because they grow old and are lonely but, they grow old because they stop pursuing dreams. As it turns out, most grumpy old people are grumpy not because they are old, but they used to be grumpy when they were young.

Aging doesn't turn a cheerful person into a grouch.

The workplace is also very important as people spend a significant amount of time there. Many people do not develop any emotional connection with their colleagues. Recently many corporations have started providing opportunities for employees to socialize with colleagues and even to do some activities together. This is an encouraging sign.

When people have diabetes, we don't say, 'Why do you need medication? Why do you need to see a doctor?' Of course, loneliness is a natural feeling

that everyone experiences at some point in their life. But a chronic state of loneliness cannot do much good to anyone. Here are some approaches to fight loneliness.

- 1] Normalize loneliness,
- 2] Relate loneliness to your values of connection,
- 3] Identify your loneliness thoughts.
- 4] Direct compassion and tenderness toward yourself.
- 5] Build a community of connectedness.

### Challenges for the Indian Immigrants

Indian immigrants face unique challenges in dealing with loneliness like most other first-generation immigrants, especially from the eastern hemisphere. Most of the Indian immigrants are from extended families and are not used to live in a nuclear family which is common in America. Often, they are forced to live alone after their retirement and after their children got married and moved away from them. But Indian immigrants have special skills. Most of them are highly educated and developed special skills like being able to adapt to a different culture, face different odds and become successful in a new culture.

### A. Psychological Adaptation

- 1] Understand and accept the fact that loneliness is not a normal process of aging but it is a scientifically established biological mechanism
- 2] Realize that you are not alone who is feeling lonely, PROBABLY most of your counterparts are in the same boat
- 3] Identify that you are feeling lonely and realize that feeling depressed, anxious, irritable, sleeplessness, over/under eating could be due to loneliness

### B. Apply These Interventions

1] **Reward yourself.** For all, you've accomplished (a successful career, raising children). Rewarding yourself gives self-confidence and improves self-esteem

2] **Compliment others.** This improves psychological sophistication and teaches modesty. It makes it easy to make friends and be more social.

3] **Identify your strengths and weaknesses:** We all have some unique skills which are our strengths and try to make use of those strengths at the same time understand and accept your flaws.

If you are shy, try making friends of your choice, maybe someone who speaks your language, or from the same part of the country, have similar tastes and interests and so on, try to be a little bit more social and outgoing. Start with small homogenous groups based on language, state, and profession. If you are social and outgoing, you can start with relatively big heterogeneous groups like people speaking different languages, from different parts of the country, different professions and so on. This is not as difficult as many people think but needs effort and almost everybody has these strengths to varying degrees.

### C. Some Take Home Points

- 1] Accept the fact that all human beings like to have some recognition and want to share their experiences and accomplishments with others.
- 2] Sharing your experiences: write a book about yourself, it is not as difficult as you think, give a talk about something in which you have some expertise. You will be surprised to learn how many people love to listen to your experiences and feelings and how many people like to share their experiences and accomplishments with others.
- 3] Be creative and innovative. Everyone has some skill set. Develop new hobbies like reading playing some indoor games like cards and pool and joining new clubs like a book club, a walking group and so on.
- 4] Form into small groups in your community. Be part of small homogenous groups based of language, state or profession; this may be small groups like 5 or 10 families and prepare a schedule indicating each

family invite THE GROUP at least once a month and take turns.

The truth is that to improve your quality of life, you should be able to beat loneliness by whatever means you adopt. **IT IS UP TO YOU!**

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We express our deep gratitude to our contributors who took time to write these articles. Thank you for your service to our community.

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**Please send your comments and story ideas to Dr. Ram Chugh or to any member of the editorial committee at: [Reflections.HCC@Gmail.com](mailto:Reflections.HCC@Gmail.com)**

**One of the happiest moment in life is when you find the courage to let go of what you cannot change.**

## Four-Fold Goals of Life: Purushartha-Dharma:

By Dr. M.G.Prasad\*



### Introduction:

Generally, the common universal question that naturally comes to one and all is "What is the purpose of human life? and, if there is what would be that?" This question is not new, and it has been there from times of antiquity. Different answers have been found at different times. However, the Rishis of Vedic times from Bharat (India) have found an answer that could be useful to people of all times. In Samskritam language, the term Rishi etymologically means "one who knows or sees" as a seer. The Sanatana Dharma what is commonly known as Hinduism refers to the principles that govern and protect life in the universe. The foundational literature given to us by Rishis that form the basis of Sanatana Dharma are Vedas and the literature derived with Vedic basis. The Vedic literature includes historical epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata.

The Vedas and Vedic literature emphasize that the human life has a definite purpose and it is Purushartha. In Samskritam language, Purushartha has two words namely Purusha and Artha. Again the term "Purusha" etymologically refers to self (Jeeva) which, is contained in the person. The term "Artha" refers to "meaning" or "purpose" of life. Also, this Purushartha is made up of four inter-dependent goals. These four goals are Dharma, Artha, Kaama, and Moksha. This article in four parts will present four goals and their interdependence.

### Dharma:

The cosmos and universe are governed and are in operation due to immutable laws of nature. In general, it can be said that the life is governed and operated due to laws or principles at the physical, metaphysical and

spiritual levels. It is these laws that are not only governing but also protecting life. These principles together are called as "Dharma." For example, Dharma of fire is "to burn." Dharma of water is "to flow." Hence it is told that "Dhaaranaat Dharma iti" meaning "Because Dharma holds or qualifies." The Mahaanaarayana Upanishat says that " Dharmo Vishvasya Jagatah Pratishtaa" which means "Dharma is established in the Universe." Also, it is to be noted that behind the Dharma, which is seen, there are two more principles hidden. They are Rta (unmanifested principles of nature) and Satya (manifested principles of nature). For example, in the case of a tree, the roots below the ground can be seen as Rta, and the visible tree above the ground can be seen as Satya. The specific fruits resulting from that tree can be seen as the Dharma of that tree. So the three principles namely Rta, Satya, and Dharma in order are integrally related to each other.

Rta refers to hidden principles in the universe. They are unmanifest. As things manifest according to their source, then they become truths. When that truth becomes operative in the universe, then it becomes Dharma. As an example, when a thought freely occurs to person within, then it is Rta. When that thought comes out in the form of speech, then it becomes Satya (truth or truthful speech). When that truthful speech is carried out in action then it becomes Dharma. Hence Taittiriya Upanishat says "Satyam Vada and Dharama Chara", which means "Speak Truth and Follow Dharma." It is important to note that when one follows Dharma in one's life, then it will be not only beneficial for self but also beneficial for others. It is for this reason that in Sanatana Dharma it is emphasized that thought, speech, and action needs to be pure in one's life.

In the life of a human being, there is another duty with gratitude called Rna, which is related to Rta, Satya, and Dharma. We all know that a human being is dependent on and also always connected in society through interaction with family and society. Even from the birth, a human

being has five types of Rna (or duties with gratitude), and they are Deva Rna, Rishi Rna, Pitru Rna, Manushya Rna and Bhoota Rna. It is well known that there are Divinities behind the forces of nature. We depend on nature for our sustenance. So Deva Rna is the action of expressing our gratitude through prayer and worship rituals offered to Devatas (divine energies). The infinitely large amount of Vedic scriptures such as Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavata, etc., is given to us by the Rishis. It is through the application of this Vedic knowledge that we can live happily. So we need to express our gratitude to these Rishis. Fulfillment of Rishi Rna consists of both study of scriptures to increase our knowledge and also spreading that knowledge to others. The Pitru Rna is an expression of gratitude to our parents and ancestors who have nourished us in our physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development. The Manushya Rna consists of expression of gratitude to our brothers, sisters and fellow human beings. Then lastly, there is Bhoota Rna is the expression of gratitude to animals who are also our fellow living beings.

Thus we see that Dharma is based on the integration of Rta, Rna, and Satya in our life. It is important to note that Dharma also depends on the stage of our life. When we consider the four stages of life namely student, householder, contemplative and renunciation stages, our duties and responsibilities in life changes. In student life, one needs to acquire knowledge at all levels namely of the self, society and the world. One needs to not only acquire the knowledge of life-long values but also apply them to one's life. This knowledge of Dharma is obtained through the study of great everlasting classics such as Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad-gita, and Bhagavata etc. Then as a householder not only one enjoys the family life but also has to fulfill the social responsibilities. In the contemplative stage of life, which comes after fulfilling the responsibilities of householder stage, one becomes a mentor and gives back to the community and society. Also in contemplative stage of

life, one dwells more into the spiritual aspects that have been built throughout the life. In renunciation stage of life, one focuses onto spiritual values and practice that will lead the person to spiritual freedom. Thus we see that Dharma is the constant companion for a person in life. Dharma sets the values that keep the person on track. It is said that "Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitaha" which means, "When one follows Dharma, then it governs and protects the person."

### Conclusions

Thus we see that Dharma is the most important thing that should be followed throughout one's life in the pursuit of happiness throughout the life. Hence the Vedic literature emphasizes Dharma. It is for this reason that Dharma is not only the first of the four-fold goals but also must accompany when one is pursuing other two important goals of life namely wealth (Artha) and Kaama (Desires or Pleasures). Hence the order of Dharma, Artha, Kaama, and Moksha is given as the order of four-fold goals of life. In next article, we will study the important role of wealth (Artha) in our life.

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**A positive thinker does not refuse to recognize the negative; he refuses to dwell on it. Positive thinking is a form of thought, which habitually looks for the best results from the worst conditions.**

**(Vincent Peale)**

## Painkillers are a Pain:

By Amar Chandel\*



The present time can veritably be called a pill-popping era. There is a pill for every ill. We think that taking a tablet for a complication is the end of the story. Little do we realize that any medicine that has an effect also has a side effect.

You take a decongestant for your sinus trouble. Your heart will start to race. The medicine for a cough and cold will make you sleepy. Prednisone will lessen inflammation but will thin your bones. The antidepressant pill will get you a headache, blurred vision, dry mouth and constipation in the bargain. Yet, we pop pills at the first sign of discomfort.

The intensity of side effects is person-specific. It may be negligible in A but may be severe in the case of B. That is why medications should be taken only if there is no alternative—and that too only under close medical supervision. Serious side effects are worth the risk only in the case of a life-threatening disease. If the ailment is minor, one should be prepared to withstand discomfort and even pain.

If you take them at first sight of pain, you will need more and more to quell the pain associated with chronic symptoms. Overdose will soon lead to addiction.

The most grossly abused are the painkillers. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are available over the counter in spite of the fact that they cause gastrointestinal problems, especially in those who have a history of ulcers and bleeding. Even the simple aspirin can give one side effects like stomach ulcers and breathing problems.

Overdosing on NSAIDs can even damage kidneys. If one uses them while simultaneously getting rid of the reasons which caused the pain, it is all right. But simply taking the painkillers is

like ripping off the smoke detector because it is creating a racket.

The problem gets compounded when certain drugs are mixed with certain other things. Supposing somebody has a severe backache. He takes two narcotic painkillers and tops those up with a sleeping pill plus an antidepressant. That will be a lethal mixture. All medicines are tested for side effects in a stand-alone situation. When they are combined with other drugs, far more unfortunate consequences ensue.

Drinking alcohol with narcotic painkillers greatly increases accidental overdose deaths. It is not only opioid painkillers, sedatives and anti-anxiety drugs that pose a great threat. Even over-the-counter medications and dietary supplements can cause problems when combined with other drugs or taken in excess. Older people are more vulnerable because drugs linger longer in their systems because of the impaired liver and kidney functions. Several precautions are in order

1. If you are seeing several doctors, inform each of them of the medicines that you are already taking. They will be able to decide whether the medication that he is now prescribing will interact with the older ones and whether there are any duplicates.

2. Never exceed the dosage of any pill just because you think that it is not showing the desired effect. This care is all the more necessary in the case of a narcotic pain reliever. The best option is to consult your doctor and ask for a different drug or to recommend another treatment.

3. You should carry a list of the prescription medicines, over-the-counter drugs and even dietary supplements that you take regularly. God forbid, if there is an emergency that requires the prescription of new medicines, you or your attendant should be able to give your complete history to the doctor. You too should be conversant with their purpose as well as potential risks.

4. Those suffering from respiratory illnesses like asthma and bronchitis should be particularly wary of sedatives because these hamper breathing.

5. Neither give your unused medicines to anyone else nor share someone else's medicines yourself. Medications prescribed for short-term problems like pain after outpatient surgery should not be saved for future use.

6. Most important, keep all medicines out of the reach of children.

We need to be aware that there are enough food items in our home which can provide almost as much relief as chemical painkillers—minus the side effects as well. Here are some of the main ones from Mother Nature's medicine cabinet:

1. **Ginger root:** Ginger root is an aspirin-mimicking anti-inflammatory. It is more effective than drugs like ibuprofen for pain relief and is used the world over to battle inflammation associated with arthritis and ulcerative colitis.

2. **Turmeric:** Turmeric is one of the most powerful herbs in the world and contains the active ingredient called curcumin, a natural phenol which is anti-inflammatory.

3. **Holy Basil (Tulsi):** Basil is a herb commonly used in Indian dishes. Besides providing an aromatic flavor, it has numerous healing properties. It has been shown to be as strong as many traditional anti-inflammatory medications when it comes to bringing down inflammation levels and the pain associated with arthritis.

4. **Garlic:** Garlic has been used all over the world since ancient times as a home remedy for toothache, ear infections and arthritic pain. The application of garlic paste on the affected joints alleviates pain and swelling.

5. **Black pepper:** Black pepper contains piperine, a chemical which helps to counteract pain in the body. Piperine extracted from black pepper can be mixed with other ingredients to

make an analgesic cream for pain relief. But the best way to use it through seasoning where it reduces the perception of pain, inflammation and arthritis.

6. **Cherries:** Cherries have about the highest anti-inflammatory content of any food, making them ideal for remedying issues such as arthritis or chronic headaches. This is due to the presence of compounds called anthocyanins—the same phytonutrients that give cherries their deep purple colour. These tiny compounds eliminate enzymes responsible for tissue inflammation and pain.

7. **Blueberries:** Blueberries are a great anti-inflammatory because they have a lot of antioxidants which eliminate free radicals responsible for the inflammation of digestive mucous. This causes ulcers, urinary tract inflammation or poor digestion, among other illnesses.

8. **Cinnamon:** The application of cinnamon paste on the head relieves headache. Massaging with it is beneficial for joint swelling. To ease toothache, place a soaked cinnamon swab on the affected tooth.

9. **Cardamom:** Cardamom has been used as a remedy for urinary tract diseases and infections like cystitis. Studies have shown that it has gastro-protective properties and may be helpful in relieving the pain associated with stomach cramps and other stomach problems.

10. **Pineapple:** This delicious and healthy fruit contains an enzyme called bromelain, which is responsible for reducing pain, swelling and bruises that form on the body after undergoing surgery, excessive physical effort, or injury.

11. **Aloe vera:** It is a powerful anti-inflammatory because of compounds like bradykinin and salicylate. In fact, the ancient Egyptians called it the "plant of immortality". Its cooling, soothing gel is time-tested for treating burns, cuts, scrapes, cold sores and even sunburn. Aloe juice is equally good for stomach ulcers and arthritis. It

also contains vitamins A, B, C and E which have both anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant qualities. It soothes the gastrointestinal tract and is helpful in treating uncreative colitis and mouth ulcers.

*\*This article is excerpted from the author's forthcoming book, **CURE YOURSELF NATURALLY.***

*\*Amar Chandel is a Yogic Sciences and Holistic Health consultant. He is the author of two books, STRESS TO SERENITY and the best-selling PERFECT HEALTH IN TWENTY WEEKS. The present article is excerpted from his forthcoming book, CURE YOURSELF. He can be reached at [amarchandel@gmail.com](mailto:amarchandel@gmail.com)*

## Subhash Chandra Bose - India's NETAJI

By Bimal K. Malaviya, Ph.D \*



The year was 1939. The Indian National Congress was holding its annual meeting in Tripura. The president for the previous year had been Subhash

Chandra Bose, and he was nominated for a second term – a nomination that was opposed by Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi was at the peak of his popularity and powers, and his word was law in the Congress. So when he supported the rival candidacy of Pattabhi Sitaramayya, he was supposed to be a shoo-in – a slam dunk. When the votes were counted, Bose had won handily. The delegates and the public were stunned. Deeply chagrined and humiliated, Gandhi took it as his personal defeat. He was able to maneuver Bose's resignation, and Subhash Bose (given the honorific 'Netaji') formed his rival Forward Block faction.

The reasons for Bose's ascendancy were rooted in the historical context. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Congress was the instrument of nationalism and the voice of Indian freedom through an

elite deliberative process. When Tilak inspired his countrymen with his demand for Swaraj, and Annie Besant started the Home Rule League, they were cruelly silenced by the British authorities.

Then came Gandhiji on the heels of his exploits in South Africa; he transformed the Congress into a mass movement and promised to rid India of British rule within one year through his nonviolent noncooperation satyagraha. That was, of course, unsuccessful and Gandhi repeatedly suspended the Satyagrah movement with no definite direction or strategy. New heroes such as Bhagat Singh who bravely took to retributive violence to avenge British atrocities in Jalianwala Bagh massacre and the fatal assault on Lala Lajpat Rai, were summarily executed and branded as terrorists.

The Round Table Conference had been a dismal failure for the Indian cause. The British showed no signs of loosening their grip on colonial rule. The freedom movement seemed to be in disarray and road to independence was murky. So when Bose came on the scene calling for armed revolution on the Washingtonian model, he struck many a resonant chord with a weary public crying for new leadership.

With his infectious brave buoyant spirit, his soaring oratory dripping with patriotic fervor and call for sacrifice, he could galvanize the masses to a frenzy. He seemed to be the man of the hour – the salvific messiah to lead his countrymen to the Promised Land – a veritable Netaji. The public responded with unparalleled zeal. Here was a leader who now rivaled Gandhi and Nehru in popular acclaim.

In many ways, Subhash Bose was a natural for this role. Early on, he had been a brilliant young man, fired with nationalism, who rebelled against injustice and oppression in any form. His father sent him to England to study for the Indian Civil Service (ICS) examination which he passed with flying colors – among a select few Indians to do so. His family expected him to settle down with a cozy

prestigious plum career in the civil service.

But young Subhash's heart was animated by the beats of a different drummer; he heard in the wistful yearning of his oppressed countrymen; a clarion call for redemptive leadership. He resigned from ICS, headed back to India and took a plunge in the freedom struggle under the mentorship of C.R.Das – first within the Indian National Congress and later charting his independent course with his Forward Block faction. Despite indifferent health, he engaged in numerous leadership activities and was jailed by the British at least 11 times.

With the gathering storm and war clouds in Europe and the vulnerability of the British war machinery, Bose saw an opportunity of collaboration with the Axis powers to garner political, diplomatic and military support for India's freedom. Hounded by the British for his 'seditious' activities in India, Netaji made a daring, adventurous escape in the guise of a Muslim priest, traveling via Afghanistan and Soviet Union to reach Germany, where he founded the Free India Centres in Berlin (and also in Rome and Paris) to counter British propaganda. He also organized an Indian Legion to accommodate Indian POW's.

Bose had an interview with Adolf Hitler in 1942 to seek his support. Hitler, being preoccupied with his campaign in the East against the Soviet Union, was noncommittal but arranged for a German submarine U-boat to take Bose to Japan. In Tokyo, Netaji met Japanese intelligence officers; he joined an Indian expatriate nationalist Ras Behari Bose, already active there, and took control of the Azad Hind Fauz (Indian National Army, INA). From there, he went to Singapore where he proclaimed the "Provisional Government of Free India" and took a salute of 20,000 INA soldiers recruited from Indian POW's.

Under Netaji's command, the INA surged towards India reaching Rangoon, Burma, supported by Japanese forces and crossed over to Indian soil; a tricolor Congress-like flag

was proudly raised for the first time. But then the tide turned. Aided by superior American air forces, the British army overran the Japanese. Concomitantly, the INA was in retreat. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki presaged Japanese surrender, and INA's military campaign was doomed. Netaji is believed to have died in a plane crash over Taiwan on August 18, 1945, while flying from Saigon to Tokyo. His body was never found, and all manner of mystery and conspiracy theories have grown up around his "death" and disappearance; in death as in life, there was a certain mythical adventure and romanticism about him.

The British prevailed against the INA and the Japanese in the Burmese theatre of the war only because of a heavy infusion of American air power. Historians believe that it exposed the vulnerability and weakness of the British military might; it brought to them the realization of their colonies as growing liabilities which may have helped to hasten their decision to quit India. Thus, the failure of INA's military campaign notwithstanding, Netaji's incredible sacrifices and efforts were not in vain. His unique brand of leadership rejuvenated his people and kindled in them a new sense of patriotism and national pride and confidence.

Cynics may look with disdain on Netaji's making alliances with Axis powers and his flirting with Nazi Germany, fascist Italy and Imperial Japan. It was a measure of the strength of his passion and his crusading patriotic fervor and love for his motherland, which despite his strong aversion of the racism of Axis nations, he was willing to exploit the enemies of Britain in pursuit of his goals. Churchill had once remarked that he was willing to make a pact with the Devil to defeat Hitler. Netaji made common cause with the forces of evil as an expedient strategy. Perhaps it was in line with the statecraft dictates of Machiavelli and Chanakya!

Netaji continues to occupy a very special place in the hearts of his countrymen. Sometime back when his

daughter, Anita Bose Pfaff (Netaji had secretly married his longtime companion Emilie Schenk in Austria in 1937), came to India for a visit, she was warmly received with great love and affection everywhere. Bose's multifaceted life, his charismatic, messianic salvific leadership, his incredible sacrifices and the mantle of martyrdom around him have raised him in the Indian folklore, to the level of a legend akin to such historical figures as Shivaji and Rani Lakshmi Bai.

Bose and Nehru were comrades-in-arms - the "young Turks" of the liberal wing of Congress sharing their fascination for a Fabian socialist ideology. But Nehru was committed to Gandhi and non-violence, and he and Netaji had a parting of ways politically. However, they shared a deep mutual admiration and affection. Nehru came out of legal retirement to aggressively defend the INA officers in their trial for treason. Later when he became PM, he adopted Netaji's signature INA slogan "Jai Hind" as the elan with which he concluded his Independence Day perorations.

Bose's relationship with Gandhi was more complex. They were diametrically opposite ideologically. Violence in any form was anathema to Gandhi, and he considered Bose sadly misguided in following the path of armed rebellion against the British - even though the goal was laudable. Bose, like Tagore, considered non-violence a defeatist philosophy unworthy of a proud people and doomed to failure. However, their ideological differences notwithstanding, Bose and Gandhi respected and admired each other.

Gandhi called Bose a "Patriot of patriots". Bose, in his dark hour on the occasion of the launch of his military campaign, broadcast a radio message from Rangoon seeking Gandhi's blessings and called him the "Father of the Nation". That appellation caught on and still endures. Gandhiji paid tribute to Netaji after his death, 'Netaji's name is one to conjure with. His patriotism is second to none... His bravery shines through all his actions. He aimed high and failed. But who has

not failed? ... Netaji will remain immortal for all time to come for his service to India."

Bose's rich and adventurous life, so full of promise, cut short in its prime, raises one of the most intriguing "What-ifs?" of the Indian political history of the post-independence era. What if Netaji had survived the plane crash and lived to face the post-war world? If the Japanese had won the War, they would probably have given him short shrift in pursuit of their own colonial designs; but Netaji would have prevailed against them to lead an independent India. The victorious British would have put him on trial and convicted him of treason as they did to the generals and officers of the INA.

However, under the inevitable compelling public pressure, Netaji would have emerged unscathed to stake his claim for a place in the highest councils and for the leadership of free India. He would have probably negotiated aggressively with Mountbatten and Jinnah to save his beloved India from the ravages of partition. What would have been his vision for a free India? Given a chance, what kind of Prime Minister would he have been? We will never know!

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## Indians Share Culture- and Illness-in America

By Dr. Shivam Joshi, MD\*



separated according to gender, much

Growing up, I remember the *puri*-filled *garbas* with the neighborhood Indians and hearing the latest Bollywood hits filling the night. The adults were

as it is today, with the children milling in between. When comparing those uncles and aunties to the average American, I was surprised at how slim and healthy, at least outwardly, our ethnic group was. There were a few exceptions, of course, but I felt we were healthier than the average American—or so I thought.

These memories serve as a reference of Indian-American health for me, and likely for many of you. It is why, for a long time, I was surprised to hear when a beloved uncle had a heart attack or so-and-so aunty developed diabetes. Fast forward twenty years later, and the stories, despite their variations in details, are as familiar as Amitabh Bachchan's acting. Worse, I thought that these diseases, like obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes, affecting us were the product of bad luck.

But it is not bad luck that's the problem; it is the slow [acculturation](#) to the American lifestyle. The same issues affecting India-Americans have also been affecting the Chinese, Pakistanis, Koreans, and Lebanese in America. The more time spent in America, the more American you become, both culturally and medically. In one [study](#), researchers found that the risk of hypertension increased as more time was spent in America by Asian Americans after immigrating, a finding that was also seen with [obesity](#).

Whether you are Indian or not, the American lifestyle—rife with calories and devoid of physical activity—affects you equally. Indian-Americans [develop](#) diabetes at a higher frequency despite having lower rates of obesity. As such, the American Diabetes Association recommends screening Asian Americans for diabetes starting at a body mass index (BMI) of 23 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or greater, which is lower than that for the general population (BMI of 25 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or greater).

If you are an Indian-American, the [risk](#) of developing diabetes increases the more time you spend in America and the younger you were when you came to America. The lifetime risk of

developing diabetes or pre-diabetes is so [high](#) for Indian-Americans that 1 in 2 will be affected.

Worse of all, both high blood pressure and diabetes increase your risk of heart disease, which is the [leading](#) cause of death for Indian-American men and women.

Rates of death from heart disease are actually [higher](#) than our white counterparts or even other Asian-Americans. Indian-Americans typically have their first heart attack a full [ten](#) years earlier than other populations, with one-third of first heart attacks occurring in Indian-Americans younger than the age of 45. Those affected typically have a disease affecting [multiple](#) arteries of the heart, as opposed to a single artery, which is a more severe form of heart disease.

Are Indians fish out of water? Should we return to India for better health? You could, but the situation is just as bad, if not worse, in India. Although Indians in America have a higher risk of developing prediabetes than those living in India, Indians in India actually have a [higher](#) risk of developing diabetes than Indians in America. The only place an Indian has a higher risk of developing diabetes than in America is—India.

So is diabetes as much of our destiny as Diwali? It would seem that these diseases are hereditary, but the emergence of these diseases has occurred within one, or at most two, generations, which is far too quick for this to be related to our "genes." This phenomenon is almost exclusively a product of our lifestyle. Whether you are an Indian in America or India, what you eat and how much you exercise will significantly impact your likelihood of developing any of these diseases.

If we, as Indians, are to change our destiny, we should take note of our grandparents' diet. These diets were naturally low in fat, calories, and simple carbohydrates. With Westernization and rising incomes, Indians have gravitated toward foods that are higher in these substances, which has led to our epidemic of "lifestyle"

diseases. The only way to reverse the trend is to revert to those healthier diets.

The reason the diets of our elders one or two generations ago are so healthful is because they were largely a whole-food, plant-based diet, which has been shown over recent decades to be one of the healthiest diets studied. Whole-food, plant-based diets are rich in fruits, vegetables, grains, and lentils and *exclude* animal products (this includes meat, ghee, butter, and milk) and refined foods (like sweets, sev, and other processed foods). This type of diet is naturally high in protective phytonutrients, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. A plant-based diet is so powerful that it has even been shown to [outperform](#) the American Diabetes Association's own diet for people with diabetes.

Not surprisingly, it is possible to [treat](#) and even [reverse](#) these diseases. Those making the biggest changes will reap the biggest benefits. Forgoing smoking and exercising at least 150 minutes weekly are other two important pieces of this now-not-so-mysterious health puzzle.

The biggest challenge can be how to implement these types of diets.

For healthy recipes, go to the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine's webpage on healthy Indian diets (<http://www.pcrm.org/health/diets/india-program-intro>) or the webpage of Indian Plant-Based Kitchen (<http://www.indianplantbasedkitchen.com/>). It would be a shame for the next generation to see us at *garba* injecting ourselves with insulin or checking our blood pressures. Let's hope they see us in a healthier light.

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## Shared Decision Making at the Doctor's Office:

### A Shifting Paradigm

By Padma Sripada\* M.D.



*"Patients need to be partners in care; it's too important to leave to the professionals."*

The clinics at Osmania, where I trained in the 1990s, were always crowded. Patients were in and out, we performed quick exams and wrote prescriptions for the local dispensary, and notably, questions were scarce.

No one felt the need to ask questions about what their diagnosis was or understand the basis of the recommended plan for a cure because the doctor knows best. And worse, physicians would get huffy as though any questions implied the patient dared to confront his or her judgment or authority.

The environment created was such that any questioning or dialogue was actively discouraged. From what I understand, in the US the situation was not much different in terms of the authoritarian power wielded by the medical profession and several generations either willingly or begrudgingly accepted this arrangement.

Fast forward 25 years and the typical dialogue at the doctor's office here goes something like this:

**Me:** Hello Mr. X, what brings you here today?

**Mr. X:** Hey doc, I had a pain in my chest and googled it, and it appears it might be a heart attack, so can you order me an EKG and a stress test?

**Me:** (Aaaaargh!!!)

All joking aside, turns out that extensive research points to irrefutable evidence that the "empowered patients"—those who ask more questions, want details about their plan of care and ask for an

explanation about their medical problems--usually do better because they understand their conditions and rationale for treatment better. The role of the physician has evolved to partnering with the patients to help them become great at "self-management" of their medical problems.

The concept of an "empowered patient" is now the cornerstone of a revolution in the delivery of healthcare in communities, and is widely accepted as the key to improving outcomes. So much so that the World Health Organization (WHO) has weighed in on the tremendous impact of patient empowerment in improving the health of the community at large, and defines the term as: *A process in which patients understand their role, are given the knowledge and skills by their health-care provider to perform a task in an environment that recognizes community and cultural differences and encourages patient participation.*

Ideally, this will result in what is referred to as "shared decision making"--a collaborative process where the doctors and patients make treatment decisions together that take into account the best medical information as well as the patient's preferences.

Now, in a busy doctor's office, this is best achieved utilizing a technique called a "decision aid", where we help patients learn about using unbiased information, discuss the pros and cons of the various treatment strategies pertinent to the individual, and finally arrive a mutually acceptable course of action in which lifestyle changes play a prominent role.

As you can imagine, in a typical 15 min office visit, accomplishing all of this requires superhuman powers for both the physician as well as the patient. A lot of information needs to flow in an efficient as well as effective manner so that the patient can get the most benefit out of their trip to the doctor.

Short of getting a Ph.D. in the art and science of being a savvy patient, here are a few tips and tricks to help you

get the most out of your next trip to the doctor:

**Make a list:** Bring a list of all the problems you need to discuss and share with your doctor up front. They have an agenda for you as well, and eyeballing this list will help them allot adequate time for the most concerning problems. Pick the top 2-3 that are of most concern to you and make sure they get addressed.

**Call ahead:** Inform your doctor's office before the appointment of any specialists you have seen since your previous visit so they can call and get copies of your records and review them by the time you get there, and you don't spend your precious time describing it to them. If you've had any recent tests at another medical facility that is not connected with your doctor, bring those results.

**Bring your insurance cards and ID:** Required for entering into electronic medical records systems.

**Arrive on time:** You should get enough time to address your concerns and not feel rushed. Most doctors will accommodate late arrivals, but it is a huge strain on them to have to make sure they address all your concerns appropriately and not keep another patient waiting. If this is your first visit, expect to spend 15 min on paperwork. Arrive early so your appointment time is not reduced and all your concerns get addressed.

**Bring your numbers:** Reviewing blood pressure and glucose readings at every visit helps the doctor greatly in assessing the efficacy of the treatment.

**Assemble your meds:** Including vitamins and supplements. It's best to bring the actual bottles, but if you can't, bring your most up-to-date medication list.

**Use the portal:** The secure portal is the easiest way for you to get your results, ask questions, and self-schedule routine appointments. You can send pictures of skin conditions or any other visual cues that will aid your doctor's decision making. You can download

and complete forms at home so that time at the visit could be utilized in discussing your problems in greater detail.

**Be flexible:** Everybody deserves to be seen on time, but doctors often get easily derailed by the late arrivals they try to accommodate, serious medical conditions that require additional coordination and the documentation requirements that are immensely burdensome.

**Ask questions:** Understand your medical problem and the pros and cons of various treatments. Make notes or bring someone to be that extra pair of ears. Email any questions after the visit if clarifications are needed.

**Set your goals:** Before you leave, formulate an action plan that you can work on until your next appointment.

**Keep your follow up appointments:** Most medications cannot be refilled without monitoring and blood work, so when you pick up your last refill at the pharmacy make sure you have a follow-up appointment scheduled. Calling at least a month ahead for routine appointments ensures you get the time slot that works best for you.

**Be judicious with your research:** Fake information is packaged to be exciting, with an element of surprise that catches attention, so is intensely appealing while potentially fraught with inaccuracies. On the other hand, decades worth of good old sensible data in traditionally vetted websites, though boring and often dismissed, produce the best outcomes if followed. Let's face it; there is nothing sexy about diet, exercise, weight loss and stress reduction! But it has shown to produce far greater results than that vitamin pill you pay hundreds of dollars for.

We all deserve to have doctors who respect, encourage and support our quest for optimal health. Doctors enter this field because they truly enjoy helping you get there. They are indeed your personal health coaches. However, they can't do it alone. Manage your visit time efficiently, be proactive, and follow the plan of

action and you shall certainly reap the rewards of a lifetime of excellent health and happiness!

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## International Women's Day – 2018

By Annu Subramanian\*



International Women's Day. Here it is again, and the world reminds our communities that we should dedicate a day to women—to

commemorate their achievements, to acknowledge their struggles, to seek inspiration from our peers and seniors. Uplifting posts praising women are shared on social media, and women's empowerment quotations dominate conversations. It looks like women have broken the glass ceiling! Well, let's see.

Even as I was writing this piece, a friend who lives in India asked out of frustration, "Why are we celebrating Women's Day? There have been several incidents where women have been treated unfairly which have made the news." When a woman's helplessness causes her harm, we all feel angry and disillusioned. Naturally, my initial reaction to her question was to agree with her.

My response would mean that only when every woman can walk safely without the danger of being abused, we can claim to be ultimately liberated. However, after mulling over my friend's question, I decided to disagree with her. I told her that she should celebrate Women's Day because women like her are the voices of those who are voiceless. My friend, who is a successful entrepreneur and a women's advocate, has broken the glass ceiling by challenging

injustices in her professional field and by questioning unethical practices against women. And that, to me, is worth celebrating.

Education has been the key to success in my friend's life as in many others'. Women had the privilege of learning even in ancient India. For example, there were female seers like Maitreyi who was a philosopher. Gargi, who was a prophetess, raised questions about the origin of all existence. We learn from the Vedic hymns that both husband and wife were joint owners of a family property. In Rig-Veda, a daughter retained her right of inheritance and could substitute a son.

In addition, women were permitted to have a separate property of their own which came to be designed in later Smritis as Stridhan. Thousands of years ago, educated and enlightened women led the way with knowledge and insight, and they enjoyed equality with their male peers. Women like Maitreyi and Gargi were policymakers and were valued members of their society. These women of the Vedic era must not have known about glass ceilings, or were they fierce enough to break them?

With such illustrious predecessors paving the way, why did the women in the following eras face inequality? Why did society think that women had no intelligent contributions to make? Answers to these questions are yet to arrive and may not be absolute, but we can draw conclusions from the events which unfolded over time—from home to home, from a community to community. An episode that my mother shared with me offered an insight into society's view of women.

Her young neighbor was making an impressive income... that is, a lot more than her husband was earning! I was happy for this young lady, initially, but the charm began to fizzle when my mother repeated her delight a few times. Why was this wage matter a topic of conversation?

"She must be VERY SMART. Right? They both work in the same company," my mother explained.

Indeed. VERY SMART she must have been to make a higher salary when her husband had to be just Good to make a decent income, granted by a general acceptance through generations. My mother's question opened my eyes to more than our society's view of a woman's worth versus a man's worth.

It made me think about why there are still discrepancies in wages, why we still face gender-based inequality, why some are waiting for the tone to evolve in a patriarchal society, and why women make choices about their own lives and why those choices will be different from the ones men are expected to make. What prompted society to draw boundaries to a woman's wages?

In almost every industry—from academics to show business—women earn less than men. Conditioning of minds is a powerful tool that is used to normalize injustice and unfairness, and we all fall victims to this epidemic. The only remedy is when those who are courageous question authority. Many among us have demonstrated this courage, and we hope such bravery continues to rise. The fact that this young lady was earning more than her male counterpart is a testimony to her skills, to her education, to the fact that she was rising above obstacles. Here is an occasion where the glass ceiling was broken.

My mother's confusion somewhat made sense to me as I was exploring the status of women during the earlier decades. It came down a foot at times and went up an inch at other times. Why? While the male members of most families were educated for prestigious professions, a change in attitude towards gender slowly surfaced, creating a venue for the female members of the family to succeed. And that change did not happen uneventfully or smoothly.

There was a tremendous amount of resistance from the ones who did not

welcome this change. Why educate a girl when her primary job was (still 'is' in some pockets of the world) to cook, clean and procreate? But we persevered. Females, once given the gift of education, assimilated in a predominantly man's world and even proved to their elders and mentors that they were ready for newer challenges. They were more than capable of breaking the glass ceiling, and they splintered it with gusto.

Now? Do we tell the little girls that the glass ceiling does not exist? NO. Our society is a complex phenomenon. A woman is enough to some, but she is inadequate to others. The little girls, our future leaders, should be aware of the two opposite perspectives. What matters is when a little girl is educated with self-worth, dignity, and a strong sense of resilience, she will be equipped to prove to her world that she is to be celebrated. She will realize that she is ENOUGH. She will seek ancient wisdom for inspiration, so that she may lead her young ones in the right direction. And, of course, she will shatter every glass ceiling she encounters.

March is also Women's History Month. As I consider the 'ups' and 'downs' of our collective journey, I realize that our successes are not to be categorized as well-deserved because women accomplish them, and our setbacks are not to be condemned because we are not ready to tackle difficulties. We should feel encouraged by our victories and learn from our setbacks.

How can we forget that there was a time when women did not have voting rights, or the right to make major decisions regarding property and such in many cultures and nationalities? But society evolved along with mindsets and beliefs. And women's rights saw a change for the better slowly and steadily. As we continue our allied expedition to cross more milestones, let the silent strength within all of us ignite our passions and help us achieve goals that our mothers and grandmothers could only dream about.

When we hold on to that strength, there are no walls we cannot climb and no bridges we cannot cross.

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## Temple Expansion

By Tharunidhar Narravula\*



On behalf of Hindu Temple Society, I would like to take this opportunity to talk about Temple Expansion Project. I was thinking about sustainability of our institution for a while,

and I wanted to convey that the expansion plan is part of that effort.

### The inception of Our Temple

To understand the evolution of our temple, we need to look into the history of HTS. The inception of our temple started on December 21, 1975, with the first General Body meeting at St. Rose College. The very first resolution passed at that meeting was:

*"We, the residents of the greater Tri-City area in meeting assembled on December 21, 1975, at the College of St. Rose in the City of Albany, New York, at this time do hereby resolved to form the Hindu Temple Society to build a Hindu Temple in the area and maintain it and conduct religious, cultural and educational activities."*

The Hindu Temple Society of the Capital District (HTS) was formed in February of 1976. An old farmhouse with a land of 8 acres was purchased on May 1, 1976, with a bank loan. About 100 families volunteered to convert the farmhouse into a temple. With a congregation of about 400 devotees the very first puja was done on August 28, 1976, on our campus. At that time our temple was first Hindu

Temple in New York State out of New York City. HTS was given 501(c) tax-exempt status in October 1976.

After visiting our temple in 2016, my friend and mentor Sivkishen, a Vedic scholar and a prolific writer from Hyderabad, wrote to me saying that the accomplishments of our community was an example of "**Nishkama Karma**" (Selfless Act) based on the fact defined in our Vedas: "**Karmanye vadhikaraste Ma Phaleshu Kadachana | Ma Karmaphalaheturbhurma Te Sangostvakarmani** ||" - ("Your right is to perform your work, but never to the results. Never be motivated by the results of your actions, nor should you be attached to not performing your prescribed duties"). Until I read and understood the history of our temple, that statement was just words without any relevance. Siv Kishen neither knew the history of our temple nor had I ever mentioned it to him. The fact that an outsider like him was able to see that tells us that the sacrifices made by donors and volunteers were the true testament of that Vedic fact.

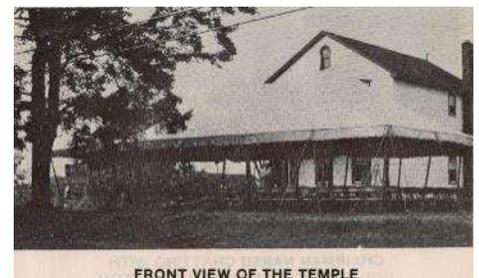


Fig: 1



Fig: 2

*The very first published photographs of our temple and the inaugural puja, which were taken on August 28, 1976.*

### Construction of our "New Temple."

With growing needs, the Temple Board of Trustees conducted the first expansion meeting on June 1, 1985. On September 13, 1986 "Bhumi Puja" was held with General Body approval. By this time community had grown tenfold to over 1000 families. A difficult decision was made to postpone the construction of cultural center due to lack of financial resources. On May 15, 1987, the board approved the construction of the new Temple complex. The construction of the current temple started in April of 1990. The open house of the temple was conducted during Diwali of 1991, and the inaugural Kumbhabhishekam was on January 15, 1992.

Sivkishen also mentioned in that letter *"Rig Veda states clearly, that the human body is the temple of God and one who kindles the light of awareness within gets true light! The sacred flame of your inner shrine is constantly bright. The experience of unity is the fulfillment of human endeavors. The mysteries of life are revealed."* To understand this I need to go further than the motto of our temple adopted during the inauguration in 1976: **"Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanthi"** - *"Truth is one, but sages approach it by different paths"*. For me, it implies that faith is personal and we need to celebrate the diversity of our rituals. This also means our motto clearly implies that the fundamental reason for the existence and the very foundation of our temple is the unity of our community. We need to set aside our inhibitions and understand each others' spiritual needs because there are many ways to find the truth, as our temple motto states. This is clearly evident in some of the specific reasons cited for having a temple during that GB first meeting were:

- Lack of religious training and education for the children
- Growing need for refreshment and retraining in the area of Hindu philosophy as well as the study of Vedas and Upanishads
- Lack of opportunities to celebrate and observe Hindu festivals

*- The potential use of talented people in the area for providing instruction and training in the field of music, art, dance, Yoga and language classes for the benefit of all – especially children*

*- Educational programs*

Again there is not a single word about any specific belief system; instead, it is all about the celebration of our values through the unity of our community.

### Construction of HCC

The first plan for HCC was approved by the GB in 2001. Later, an amended final plan was approved in 2004. The construction started in 2006 and HCC was open in 2007. The basement was completed in 2012.

### Proposed Expansion Plan

[Click here for Floor Plan of proposed expansion](#)

The growth of Indian population in the Capital District Region exceeded everyone's imagination and the needs of the community have grown respectively. Right now Capital District has about 5000 Indian families. Every one of us knows how difficult it is to accommodate the devotees during any major festival. Hence the board proposed to expand the temple, in 2015, and the GB approved. In 2017, the board appointed a committee to explore the options and to come up with a plan. In 2018, the board appointed a standing committee to oversee the expansion plans.

The plan proposes about 10,000 sq. ft. of addition, which also includes the recovery space from the existing structure. Some of the highlights of this expansion include:

- Main prayer hall that is about 3 times bigger than the existing hall
- Bigger dining hall with a new kitchen
- Office rooms and storage rooms
- Bathrooms relocation and additional parking spaces

- New plumbing for the building
- Connectivity to HCC will be part of phase II

The expansion will enable us to provide a tranquil environment, where everyone can sit and enjoy the ceremonies in the temple. The inclusion of all groups of our community without judgment is the essence of our temple motto. Enhanced prayer hall will also allow us any additional services, for example, Sai Puja. This way we can provide an integrated place of worship for everybody's spiritual needs. The bigger the number of devotees, the stronger the community we are. This is also the Mantra of our founding principles.

### Site Plan for the proposed expansion:

The current temple expansion proposal is about \$2.5 million and by no means is a small task. However, it is an achievable one, especially given the size of our community and its median level of income. We need to draw from the inspiration and commitment from our temple's history. Everyone of us can participate in one way or another without exception. The financial donation need not be a one-time contribution. It can be in installments over a period of two years, either yearly or monthly. There will be many sponsorship opportunities for you or on behalf of your family members. Soon there will be an announcement with a list of sponsorship levels, and all the donors will be recognized on a plaque in the temple. We the HTS (BOT, BOD, and BOG) boards request your support to fulfill our community needs. We thank both donors and volunteers for their contributions. We the boards also thank you for the opportunity given to serve this great institution and community. (Dr. Govind Rao, Chairman Temple Expansion Committee)

\*Tharunidhar (Tarun) Narravula is a HTS member and a volunteer at the Temple. He currently serves as a member of HTS Board. He can be reached at [tnarravula@yahoo.com](mailto:tnarravula@yahoo.com)"