



Sangh Mail

Hindu Memorial Day

Honouring Hindu Resilience

September 2024

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Sangh Mail – September 2024

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Alone we can do so little; **together** we can do so much.

-Helen Keller-

Sangh Chintan Sammelan 2024

Sangh Chintan Sammelan Celebrates Hindu Memorial Day

HSS(UK) Sah-karyawaha, Dr.Yogish Joshi, gave a message resonating with 'Resilience, Sacrifice, and Unshakable Belief in our Hindu Values' by our ancestors who paved the way with their blood, sweat, and toil to make our futures bright.

A ghee diya was lit by Dr. Harsha Jani, kendriya Sah-Sampark pramukh, and prayers were conducted before and after a tributary video. All present were humbled by deep sacrifices over centuries, by our ancestors. On this Pitru Paksha occasion, we remember them all.



Sangh Chintan S sammelan 2024

'Hindu Sangathana Karya...'

Around 210 karyakartas of HSS(UK) from all over the UK, gathered on 28th September 2024 in the Midlands to re-appraise, re-energise, and strengthen personal resolve for the coming year. Shri Ramji Vaidya, our pracharak, laid the ground with a baudhik on what is Sangathana Karya as envisaged in our Sangh Prarthana.

Shri Raveendra Surange, HSS(UK) Karyawaha, elaborated on the vastness of Sangh work. He also introduced some objectives being considered in preparations for observing the 60th anniversary of HSS in the UK, which will fall during the 2025/26 period.

There was also time allocated for karyakartas to see the work done by some invited organisations working for the development of the Hindu community.



Sangh Chintan Sammelan 2024



Scotland

Scotland Shibir 2024

'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' reverberated across the picturesque Scottish Highlands, charging the air with energy and devotion as we gathered for our third Scotland Shibir. From the 7th - 9th of June, over 150 swayamsevaks and sevikas from across Scotland gathered at the Bridge of Balgie, nestled amongst the rolling mountains.

Centred around the theme of 'Shri Ram', the Shibir included engaging bauddhiks on inculcating the qualities of Lord Rama in our everyday lives as well as how to practise Hindu Dharma in the 21st century. Despite the typical unpredictability of Scottish weather, the rain did not dampen our spirits, and shareerik activities including vyayam yoga and niyuddha were performed in open grounds whilst a Ramayana themed Maha Khel proved to be extremely popular.





There were also interesting sessions on the basics of Sanskrit, public speaking and vamshi. The Shibir was enriched by the presence of esteemed adhikaris such as Dr Ramji Vaidya (Vishwa Vibhag Saha Samyojak), Rajnikant ji Parmar (NE&S Sanghchalak), Paresh ji Mistry (NE&S Karyawah) and our Vistaarika Ushni ji.

We were also delighted to engage with the local scout rangers who thoroughly enjoyed the activities, praised the delicious bhojan and were effusive in their praise of the children's discipline and commitment - a testament to the key sanskars that Sangh instils.

Oxford

Tarun Shibir 2024

Over the weekend of 6th/8th September, we had our Tarun(i) Shibir in Oxford. A Sankhya of 130 attended throughout the weekend, of these 119 were Tarun(i)'s and 11 of them were Adhikari's and Prabandhak's. We had representation from all Vibhaag's and 33 Nagar's.



The Shibir focused on our call to action with lots of stimulating discussions around challenges and solutions to these. But also having fun throughout the weekend competing in a Maha Bharatiya Bake Off and a Maha Khel to bring all tarun(i)'s together. Ages 16-18 years were a large proportion present in the Shibir and activities were split accordingly.

Bal Gana Shibir

Halifax & Huddersfield had Day Shibir specifically for Bal Gana on Sunday 28th July. With the intent to make it a fun event with a focus on ingraining the learnings of Hindu dharma and Shaka activities in our children.

One of the highlights of the Shibir was the interactive session on Hindu dharma and dharmic symbols where participants were encouraged to ask questions and share their insights.

We all practiced our skills in kho-kho, Samata, and Achar padhati. Individual and focused practice helped Bal Gana to learn and correct themselves. In the nearby park, parents joined for extensive khel and experience sharing. Kids enjoyed a delicious lunch together which was prepared by volunteers at the venue.





Raksha bandhan

Photo by Sujan Shahi on Unsplash

Immensely happy

Bracknell Gajanan Shakha celebrated the Raksha Bandhan Utsav with the Bracknell Fire safety team along with councilor Tricia Brown. Utsav started with our Jyeshtha Gan tying rakhi to the Param Pujya Bhagwa Dhvaj followed by which, our Balagokulam kids tied Rakhi to the Firefighter team, as a token of appreciation for their selfless work to protect the society!

The team was immensely happy about this gesture and appreciated the Hindu culture. Kids were excited to have a closet look at the fire truck and had fun understanding the day-to-day work of the firefighters. Many of them showed aspiration to become a firefighter one day!



Cambridge

Interactive experience captivated members

Cambridge Shakha visited Cambourne fire station to commemorate the annual Hindu festival of Raksha Bandhan, on Monday 2nd September.

The event provided an opportunity for the community to express gratitude to the firefighters for their invaluable service. With over 30 regular members we showed our thanks to the firefighters for their crucial and valuable work as first responders by tying Rakhis, symbolising friendship and gratitude in exchange for protection.

As part of the celebration, the fire service showcased their equipment and demonstrated their daily operations, including animal rescues and dealing with emergencies like burning car parks. This interactive experience captivated members of all ages, making the event enjoyable and enriching for everyone involved.



Cheltenham

Building partnerships

Cheltenham's Kesari Shakha celebrated Raksha bandhan with various representatives of NHS, Gloucester Police, and Fire. It is where the Shakha members show respect and gratitude along with praying for the safety of guests from emergency services by tying a rakhi.



It was an engaging event to build partnerships as we showcased what the Sangh is and the significance of this festival. Guests from the emergency services gave an insightful view of the work they do, a day in their lives. A key takeaway is, how they need to respond to emergencies anytime and sometimes give up their own time.



Understanding the duties

Coventry Balagokulam visited the Coventry Canel Fire Station for Raksha Bandhan on the 17th Sept 2024. We were shown around the fire station by Watch Commander Mr Gibbs. The Swayamsevaks and Sevikas had a chance to see the day and life duties of working in a fire station, understanding the duties and risks the Fire Services carry out to protect the community in any emergency.



We finished an insightful visit by tying Rakhi's to the personnel. A short explanation was given to the Fire Service members explaining as HSS UK, we appreciate the services we receive from all emergency services, and as Hindus, we tie this sacred thread to protecting not only the individual but the bond between both organisations.



Leamington

What a day to remember!

After the fire brigade demonstration, we returned indoors to continue the Rakhi tradition. In our groups, we tied Rakhi to one another and even had the privilege of tying Rakhi to the firefighters, symbolizing our gratitude and bond of protection. The day concluded with Prarthana (prayer) and a heartfelt dismissal.



In conclusion, this year's Raksha Bandhan Utsav was a perfect fusion of tradition, learning, and community spirit. The fire brigade's visit brought excitement and a sense of awe, while Rajesh Mistry's thoughtful boudhik deepened our understanding of Raksha Bandhan's meaning. It was a day that not only celebrated bonds but also strengthened them, leaving us all with a sense of unity and purpose.'



Milton Keynes

Diversity is our strength

Emily Darlington, Hon. MP of Milton Keynes Central said: "The message we are taking to Westminster is that our diversity is our strength. As British Hindus, you bring diversity to Milton Keynes and the UK, but you also bring strength."

Callum Anderson, Hon. MP of Buckingham and Bletchley said: "It is really special that we are able to recognise the economic, social, and cultural contributions that British Hindus are making to Milton Keynes. In the weeks before the election, I received many emails promoting the Hindu Manifesto, which outlined policy priorities for the new Government to implement. I read it with strong interest and concluded that we share many of the same values and ambitions. The theme this evening of bonds of protection is also about creating the right environment so that our young people can grow up and thrive and prosper. I look forward to working with you over the coming years to help make that a reality."

PC Joe Swan said: "There are many unsung heroes within the communities. Sir Robert Peel who set up the police force once said 'The people are the police and the police are the people.' Police officers are members of the public too, we are humans as well. It is nice to see members of the community coming to support the police, to protect the police as well as the police protect them."



Northampton

Sentiment and kindness

It was our 5th year celebrating Raksha Bandhan with the police and fire service. We received a warm welcome and it was a really good session. It was nice to see kids tying Rakhi's to the emergency services.

The Superintendent also joined us this year and she gave us a card to appreciate the sentiment and kindness of sharing the celebration of Raksha Bandhan with them.



Slough

Promoting cultural values

Slough Shakha hosted a vibrant and culturally enriching Raksha Bandhan Utsav which brought together local leaders, and community members to celebrate the traditional bond between brothers and sisters but also the broader values of unity, protection, and service to the community.

One of the event's most touching moments was when the children visited the MP of Slough Tan Dhesi's office and the Slough Hindu Mandir as well as other local dignitaries.

Adding an exciting element to the event, representatives from the Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Service brought a fire truck for a live demonstration. The children were thrilled to see the fire truck up close, and the fire service team took the time to explain how it operates, demonstrating various safety features and tools.

The Mayor of Slough, Mr. Dilbagh S. Parmar praised HSS for promoting cultural values. Representatives from the Fire Service and NHS expressed gratitude for HSS's recognition of their role in the community while Nitish Rai Parwani Ji's keynote focused on the broader responsibility of protecting "Dharma."



Slough

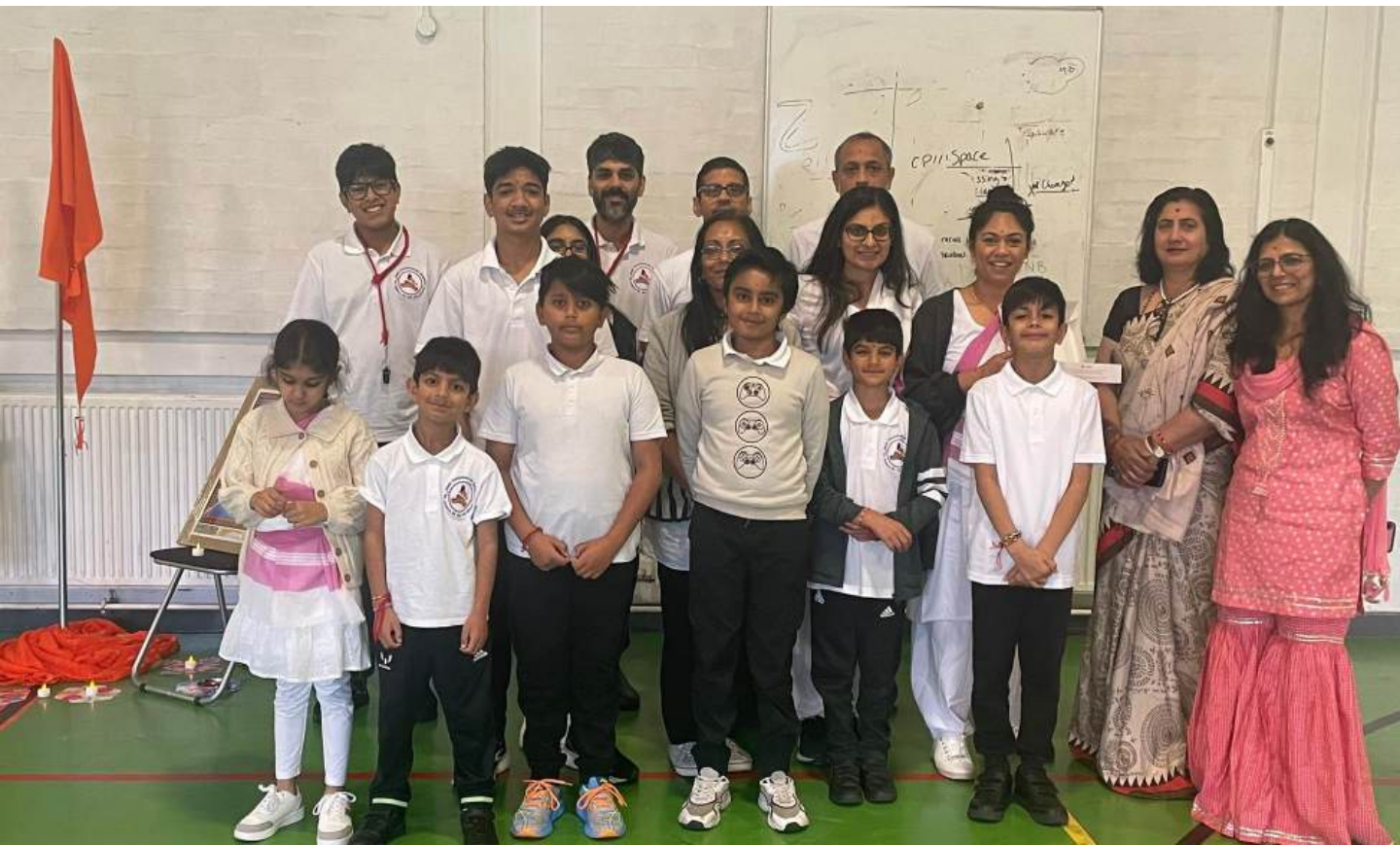
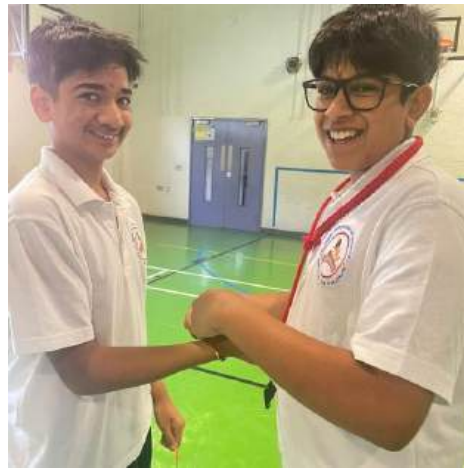


Sutton

Inspiring bhaudhiks

Govind BG had a wonderful Raksha Bandhan celebration with special guests. Mrs Sharon Kalia trustee from the committee representing Shree Geeta Bhawan Mandir Birmingham and Dr Kamini Jain president of the Jain Ashram Birmingham representing international Mahavir Jain Mission.

Two inspiring bhaudhiks received by all followed by lots of khel with team shiv against team shakti.



Wellingborough

Importance of Raksha Bandhan

Wellingborough Shakha attended the Fire Station open day on Saturday, 7th September. The event started with a speech followed by our Shakha Karyawah Nachiket Ji and Dr. Bhala Ji, who explained to everyone the importance of Raksha Bandhan and how it relates to this event.

We then tied Rakhis to the officers and special guests Councillor Lora Lawman, Chairperson North Northampton Council, Nikki Watson, Chief Fire Officer of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service along with Dr. Bhala, retired RAMC Major representing Army & the Healthcare services.





Other news

Other news

Ganesh Chaturthi - Clay Making Session

Ganpati Bapa Morya!

On Friday 24th August, Coventy Shakha in partnership with Utsav Samithi organised a Ganesh clay making session. What a turnout! Over 200 participants of all ages were led through the process.

Everyone was immersed in the joy of creating their own Ganesh in preparation for Ganesh Chaturthi. It was wonderful to see friends and families working together and supporting each other. Some of the children were finding the task challenging, but they were able to persevere with the encouragement and support of their parents.

At the end of the two-hour session, every family had a Ganesh murti that they could take home. Watching the event, we could see memories being made and relationships being strengthened, thus capturing the very essence of Ganesh Chaturthi.



Other news

Hanuman Shakha Reading Participates in the Grand Ganpati Visarjan Procession



On Tuesday, 17 September, Hanuman Shakha played a role in the grand Ganpati Visarjan celebration, taking charge of marshaling and actively participating in the Ghosh team as Ganesh Bhagwan was led through the vibrant Broad Street. The atmosphere was electric, with rhythmic dhol beats, synchronised dancing, and traditional lezim performances captivating over 1,000 onlookers.

As the parade moved through Broad Street and concluded at Thames Kings Meadow, the devotees bid farewell to Ganesh Bhagwan in a joyous and vibrant atmosphere.



Other news

Yog-Kulam TTC Graduation- Teacher Training Course

We are delighted to share that the Yog-Kulam graduation ceremony was a tremendous success. The event began with careful venue preparations and the warm welcome of our guests, both in person and online. The ceremony opened with the lighting of the Diya, symbolising an auspicious beginning. We reflected on the profound journey of Yog Sadhana and the teacher training course, followed by a beautiful chanting session and a live demonstration by our dedicated students. Certificates were awarded to the graduates, each of whom shared their personal reflections on the transformative experience.

The day ended with heartfelt feedback from students and their families, followed by the Bhojan Mantra and a shared meal, symbolising community and gratitude. All the students are excited to continue our Yog Sadhana journey together. If you haven't yet experienced Yog-Kulam, we highly encourage you to join us next year for an opportunity to explore personal and spiritual growth in a truly supportive environment.



Other news

'Hindus in Scotland – Then & Now' – A Book Launch

'Hindus in Scotland – Then & Now', a book written by our kishor(i)s and tarun(i)s was officially launched on Sunday 9th June, by our esteemed guests Shri Alok ji Kumar (International President – Vishwa Hindu Parishad), Rajnikant ji Parmar (NE&S Sanghchalak) and Lt Col (Retd) Mark Onslow (British Army).

Over several decades, the Hindu community in Scotland has made significant contributions and seamlessly integrated into the broader Scottish community, all whilst preserving our rich cultural heritage. Unfortunately, information about their history remains scarce and fails to reflect the diverse experiences of those who paved the way.



Other news



During the last year, our young swyamsevaks and sevikas interviewed numerous individuals, various temple committees, and interfaith groups and collated this unprecedented book that delves into the rich history and experiences of the Scottish Hindu community from the 18th century to the present day.

This book uncovers the lives of pioneering early immigrants, explores ongoing challenges, and celebrates the hopes and achievements of our community. It serves as a tribute to the resilience of the Scottish Hindu community, honouring those who have contributed to its vibrant legacy.

'Hindus in Scotland – Then & Now' authored by Aarna Sharma, Ananth Subramaniam, Namit Verma, Rhishay Sinha, Rucha Chandorkar, and Soumya Joshi is available for purchase through Hindu Sahitya Kendra & Amazon.

Other news

Coventry Sewa Walkathon 2024 for Heartbeat UK

The 31st of August 2024 marked a decade, in Coventry organising its yearly Sewa Walkathon! This year, donations were raised for Heartbeat UK, a charity that provides life-saving defibrillators in areas around the UK. With just over 100 participants, we raised just over £450.

John Collins, the founder of Heartbeat UK has been doing this amazing work for 15 years and has set up over 400 defibrillators so far!

Swayamsevaks and Sevikas had the option to either walk, run or cycle around the War Memorial Park. Those walking or running did 4 rounds of the park (around 8.2km), whilst those on a bike had to do a minimum of 6 rounds. After some delicious food from all, the remainder of the day was combined with Marathi Coventry Mandal Sports Day!

The best part of Sports Day was how there were activities for all ages, ranging from just 6 years old, all the way to over 80! It was a throwback for some of the parents too with events like the 3-legged race, sack race, and limbu and spoon races.



Other news

Edinburgh Valmiki Parivar Shakha – Ben Nevis Challenge

In the spirit of community and perseverance, the SewaUK Ben Nevis Challenge 2024 united 74 enthusiastic participants to scale the UK's highest peak, despite challenging weather conditions. This event tested not only physical endurance but also the strength of community bonds, embodying the adage, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

This year's Ben Nevis Challenge was marked by a record turnout of 74 people, including 24 Sevikas and 48 Swayamsevaks, with 21 young stars aged between 7 to 17 years, demonstrating the event's appeal across generations. The youngest participants, Sanav ji and Dhairyaji, both 7, along with the eldest at 75, showcased the inclusive spirit of the challenge.

As a part of this event, we have been able to raise £2341 for Sewa UK.

We invite all readers, whether seasoned hikers or enthusiastic beginners, to consider joining next year's challenge.



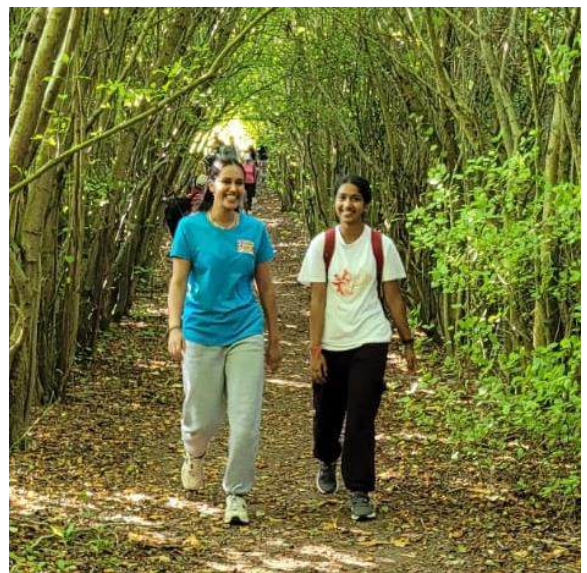
Other news

HSS Sewa - Bromley Parivar Shakha 10k Walk for King's College Hospital's Neonatal Department

On Saturday, 21st September, Bromley Parivar Shakha held a 10 km Sewa Walk around the beautiful Otford Circular Loop. The route offered a mix of easygoing paths and more challenging sections, including a tough, steep hill with what felt like an endless number of steps. Along the way, we were greeted by friendly cows, sheep, and horses, adding to the charm of the journey. We crossed vibrant corn and wheat fields, as well as wild meadows, taking in fields and woodlands rich in wildlife, filled with the joyful sounds of birdsong and surrounded by abundant wildflowers.



Other news



Participants varied in age, ranging from 5 to 60, making it a true community event. It was a real test of stamina, but all 45 of us pushed through with determination, completing the walk in about 3 to 3.5 hours.

We were also lucky to have doctors from King's College join us, along with Jitesh Ji, Karyawah of South and South London. Together, we raised approximately £1000 for King's College Hospital's Neonatal Department. It felt great to raise money for such a good cause, making it a fulfilling experience for everyone involved.

Other news

HSS Birmingham Walkathon for Acorns Children's Hospice

On the wettest day of the year, around 50 Swayamsevaks and Sevikas turned up at 9am in Solihull Park for the 5km walk to raise funds for their chosen local charity, Acorns Hospice. While the flag-off ceremony was taking place, there was a lull in the rain. But as soon as the walk started, the rain came as if everyone was walking a waterfall.

Did this put anyone off? Not a chance!

Everyone began to enjoy the experience, making the day memorable. An amount of £1698 was raised for charity, and memories were made in a day of sweet rain.





Photo by Nayan Bhalotia on Unsplash

ESSENTIAL READ

Michel Danino

Difference between Dharma & Religion

“Religion is a Western concept; the Indian concept is neither religion nor even Hinduism nor any ‘ism’ — it is Sanatana Dharma, the eternal law of the universe, which cannot be formulated in any rigid and final set of tenets.” – Michel Danino

There is a fundamental difference between Religion and Dharma. Our failure to be conscious of this difference has resulted in the creation of several crucial problems that we, as humans, have faced in this century and continue to face even today.

In modern day language, dharma is equated, quite unfairly with religion. Organized religion demands adherence of the followers to the Book and the Prophet. Anything outside the boundaries of a faith is considered irreligious, if not downright sinful. It is believed that salvation lies only through the body of the Prophet or His words. History of mankind is often a gory testament of destruction wrought by the zealots in pursuit of faith.

It is a testament of dividing people and converting them, of persecution, intolerance and subjugation, or of burning at the stakes: of the contest between the ecclesiastical and the temporal, the doctrine of two swords and of intrigues. Religion has been one of the most potent divisive forces in all history.

Dharma, however is different. It is different because it unites. There can never be divisions in dharma. Every interpretation is valid and welcome. No authority is too great to be questioned, too sacred to be touched. Unlimited interpretative freedom through free will is the quintessence of Dharma, for Dharma is as limitless as truth itself. No one can ever be its sole mouthpiece.

Dharma has the Sanskrit root dhri, which means “that which upholds” or “that without which nothing can stand” or “that which maintains the stability and harmony of the universe.” Dharma encompasses the natural, innate behavior of things, duty, law, ethics, virtue, etc. Every entity in the cosmos has its particular dharma – from the electron, which has the dharma to move in a certain manner, to the clouds, galaxies, plants, insects, and of course, man. Man’s understanding of the dharma of inanimate things is what we now call physics.

The Western cultural traditions are built around religions. The emergence of the nation-state in the 16th and 17th centuries was the product of religious conflicts of the secular State with the Church. Much of what we call modern political vocabulary emerged and acquired meaning during those turbulent periods.

Much of this vocabulary was directed at defining spheres – of the individual, of the State, of the Church as well as their inter-se relationship. The concepts of identity, ethnicity and autonomy are the products of this separation between the Church and the State. The emergence of science as a discipline made the issue of identity vis-a-vis religion more acute. Due to the dominance of much of the world by the Western countries, modernity and modernism came to be associated with these divisive concepts that originated in the West.

Hindus always recognized and respected the infinite multiplicity of approaches to satyam, the Truth (what is commonly, but incorrectly, called "tolerance"), but under the Western spotlight those approaches became so many "sects" almost rivaling each other (perhaps like Catholics and Protestants!).

Hinduism was thus cut up into convenient bits – Vedism, Brahmanism, Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism, Tantrism, etc. – of which Indians themselves had been largely unaware, or at any rate not in this rigid, cut-and-dried fashion. As for Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, which had been regarded in India as simply new paths, they were arbitrarily stuck with a label of "separate religions."

Similarly, thousands of fluid communities were duly cataloged and crystallized by the British rulers as so many permanent and rigid castes.

The concept of God is central to the definition of religion. Many Western thinkers have treated God as the most central religious concept. So much so, that they have gone to the extent of defining "religion" in terms of "God". For example, according to James Martineau, "Religion is the belief in an ever living God, that is, in a Divine Mind and Will ruling the Universe and holding moral relations with mankind."

Dharma is a very ancient word. Dharma is non-divisive, non-exclusive, and non-conclusive. Dharma is a quest for

understanding cosmic order of the universe and consciousness order at a personal level.

The word religion as used in the standard form carries three connotations as reflected in the Abrahamic religions:

- That a religion is conclusive, that is to say it is the one and only true religion;
- That a religion is exclusionary, that is to say, those who don't follow it are excluded from salvation and
- That a religion is separative, that is to say, in order to belong to it one must not belong to another.

These three notions of religion – conclusive, exclusionary and separative, give Abrahamic religions a hard-edged identity. In Abrahamic religions there has been a strong emphasis on the separation of "believer" and "non-believer" and a religious imperative to move as many people from the latter category to the former.

Truth has been conclusively and unquestionably revealed and captured in a book, and those that follow it are the only ones that are on the right path. Quite literally, this means that you are "with us or against us" – that the believers are right and represent the good who are "with God"; and all the others are misguided and are part of the darkness and deprived of any direct access to what is the ultimate good.

The worldview of the dharmic traditions is that while scriptures can be very helpful, Truth cannot be found by scripture alone but by a path of experiential realization and Self-discovery – and in that sense religion is not conclusive.

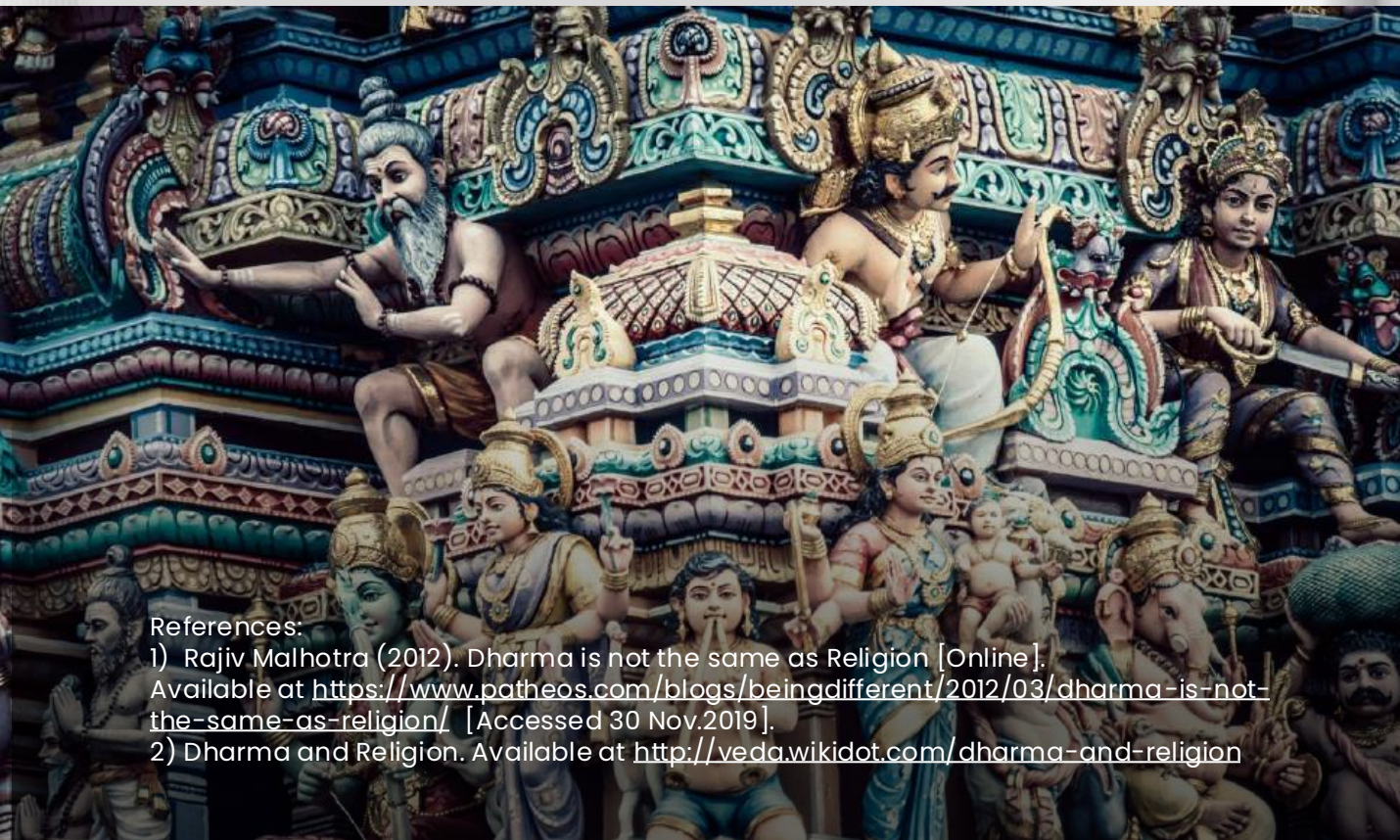
It is also not separative and exclusive in the sense of dividing the world into believers and non-believers. The dharmic worldview is that there are many tribes throughout the world, and many teachers and teachings. Each tribe has good and bad people in a continuum; people that have a greater degree of access to truth and “goodness” are worthy of respect; and others less so.

Since there is a continuum of “goodness” among individuals of each tribe, the need for converting other tribes to a particular conception of God as a religious imperative is not really there. A teacher can share his or her

understanding of the truth; and means and ways for others to access this; but there is no underlying belief that only one such way exists. These ideas find clear expression as far back as the Rig Veda, with its famous quotation:

**"Ekam sad, vipraha bahudha vadanti" – It means:
While Truth is One, the wise describe it in different ways.
– I.164.46 of the Rig Veda**

So dharma itself does not create a religious identity. One's worldly self-identity in the dharmic model derives from one's local community, profession or ancestry, jati or kul, but that identity is not a religious identity, fundamentally opposed to the existence of the identity of the “other” as a manifestation of falsehood.



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- 2) Dharma and Religion. Available at <http://veda.wikidot.com/dharma-and-religion>



We want to hear from you!

When submitting your articles, here are a few points to consider:



Provide a summary

keep articles short, highlighting the best parts



A picture tells a thousand words

select your best photos **(maximum of 8)** to go with your article in the same email



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