

Conference on Hindu and Maya Belief Systems held in Guatemala

Antigua, Guatemala, May 31, 2005 – In the tranquil environment of Antigua, Guatemala, several Hindu and Mayan elders shared their belief systems in a conference held on May 29 and 30. The two day conference which was organized by the International Center for Cultural Studies (ICCS), USA attracted over fifty delegates from five countries. Describing it as a landmark event, Dr. Yashwant Pathak, coordinator of the event said, “never before has such a symposium been organized. Efforts like these help us to understand and appreciate our root in a much better way.”



The premise of the conference was that the Vedic and Mayan civilizations were in close communication in the ancient past. Through history, both Vedic and Mayan traditions faced downturns due to their internal organizational failures and external onslaughts by other upcoming civilizations. As a result, both traditions were challenged on the issues of the survival of their traditions and propagation of their ancestral wisdom through generations.

“Preservation of Vedic knowledge was a magnitude more successful; language, rituals, clothing, etc. survived past the invaders and missionaries due to a persistent retaliation and deep rooted nature of Vedic philosophy”, explain Dr. Lata Dani, ret. professor of English, Nagpur University, India. She further continued, “We still need to interact because we want to pick up pieces of history we could have lost through time.”



The conference started on May 29 with a yagna by the Mayan elders. The Hindu participants were astounded by the striking similarity between theirs and the procedures and ingredients of the Mayan yagna. Elizabeth Araujo, an elder Mayan woman explained, “We believe in the uniqueness and the infiniteness of the almighty but still believe in its thousand aspects that are tangible. We believe that the almighty pervades in all creations; plants, animals, the sun, and the moon are all touched by its existence. We believe fire to be a source of purifications and therefore in the yagna we offer our homage through fire.”

In his welcome speech, Don Alajandro, one of the most respected elders of the Maya community, touched people’s heart by addressing them as “his brothers and sisters” who have come from so far off to build bonds. He expressed his gratitude towards the attendees and said that this meeting was in accordance with Mayan prophecy. He discussed at length the social and political challenges that the Mayan population faces today. He expressed his disappointment at the attitude of the government towards aboriginal Mayan population and said that he felt as if being “persecuted in his own land”.

Later as a symbol of brotherhood the Hindu delegation tied rakhees to the Mayan attendees.

On the second day of the conference the Hindu delegations impressed their Mayan counterparts by performing a “Hawan” according to the Vedic procedures for the peace and prosperity of the Mayan people in their own land. Towards the end of the conference an elaborate presentation was made on the revival efforts being made in the Hindu community. “Unless youth amongst Mayans don’t take up the responsibility of cultural rediscovery, it will always remain a challenge”, said Dr. Dwivedi, an ICCS executive committee member, in the end.

The conference was followed by a four day tour of the ancient temples and sites of archeological relics. “The conference was a great experience for all of us. I hope this interaction continues,” says Mohini Sarain.