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'India could work as coordinator for all religions to save humanity'

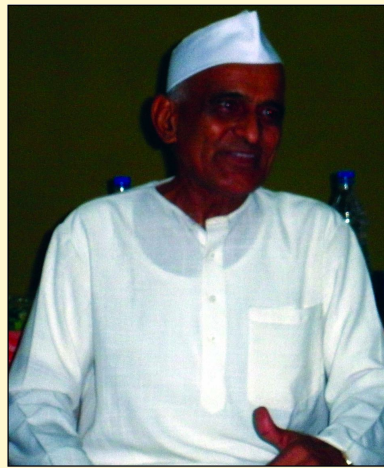
SPIRITUAL consciousness is a foundation of each and every multi-centered religion in the world. All religions in the world should identify this universal common factor. These religions should utilize their strengths towards this common factor at the centre in order to find the solutions to crisis confronting entire humanity today, said Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) Central Committee Vice-president Dr Balkrishna Naik.

Naik, who is also coordinator for Buddhists countries, was speaking on "Coordination amongst Dharma-based Cultures" at the International Centre for Cultural Studies (ICCS). Virag Pachpore, President and Vijay Bhagdikar, Secertery of ICCS shared the dais.

Stating that the entire world is facing three major problems like conversion, terrorism in the name of jihad or Maoism and materialism, Naik said that when he visited a number of countries in the world, the religious leaders in those countries also spoke on these problems.

All these religious leaders mentioned that these countries had similar challenges and similar cultural invasions.

These countries are looking towards India to find solutions to



Shri Balkrishna Naik addressing the gathering at the ICCS Hall

these problems. They felt that the countries should work together to

'These countries have a lot of hope from India because Indian culture has a strong spiritual basis. In such a situation all sects in India like Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists should come on a common platform of spirituality and work as a coordinator for saving the humanity from the impending crisis.'

save cultures, Naik added.

The VHP scholar further mentioned that these countries had similar aspirations. Each country is facing spiritual crisis. India, inspite of several cultural invasions, and slavery of thousand years is progressing on social, economical and educational fronts surmounting all difficulties.

Besides, the country has maintained and preserved its traditions and cultures braving these onslaughts.

Hence, these countries have a lot of hope from India because Indian culture has a strong spiritual basis, Naik added.

In such a situation all sects in India like Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists should come on a common platform of spirituality and work as a coordinator for saving the humanity from the impending crisis, Naik concluded.

Dr Shailaja Deshpande, ICCS Joint Secretary introduced the guest speaker and conducted the proceedings. Shri Vijay Bhagdikar proposed vote of thanks.

The program was attended by prominent ICCS members including Shrikant Gadge, Rajendra Diwe, Dr Leena Gahane, Dr Mrinalini Bande, Dr D M Saraf, Shri Ram Indurkar, Shri Sanjay Saraf, Shri Prakash Meshram, Shri Avinash Senad, Shri Prabhakar Kapre and others.

From the President's Desk

Dear Members

Namaskar and Greetings.

The last couple of months have been very busy for all us ICCS members. The monthly meetings beginning March this year continued regularly and we are carrying reports of two such meetings in details.

VHP Central Committee Vice-President and Coordinator for Buddhists Countries Shri Balkrishna Naik spoke on necessity to have coordination on Dharma-based cultures to save the humanity because these cultures can provide the right solutions to the problems confronting the human race today.

ICCS Vice-President, noted economist and Hed of the Business Management Department of Nagpur University Dr V S Deshpande's lecture at our monthly meeting gave a new insight on relationship between culture and economic growth of any country.

Besides we had a visitor from Thailand in the beginnig of this quarter. Shri Phubast Chesdmethee alias Poo visited ICCS and interacted with some of our members. He was introduced to ICCS by one of our well-wishers Shri Basant Lalji Shaw. Cultural bond between India and Thailand are very old. Shri Poo was right when he acknowledged the existence of this bond.

The report on Dr Yashwant Pathak's speech in Suriname will set in motion the process of identifying inherent unity amongst various ancient cultures. The celebration of Matariki a Maori celebration of Mother Earth by Hindu Elders of New Zealand is an indication of acceleration of this process.

'Adopt economic policies that protect culture'



ICCS Vice-President Dr Vinayak deshpane delivering lecture on "Economic Nationalism and Culture" at ICCS Hall while President Virag Pachpore and Secretary Vijay Bhagdikar look on.

In the era of globalization, free trade, free investment and exchange of culture, it is imperative on the part of the countries like India to adopt economic policies that would protect its cultural heritage, opined noted economist and Head of the Business Management Department of RTM Nagpur University, Nagpur while delivering a lecture on "Economic Nationalism and Culture" at the regular monthly meeting of International Centre for Cultural Studies.

Stating that any nation could be identified by its traditions and culture, Dr Deshpande in his studied lecture expressed a fear that in the wave of globalization, liberalization and free economy, INdia might loose its rich cultural heritage.

The free trade and commerce and liberal economic policies have made a strong impact on the culture. Common people in India had accepted the economic change. Commercialization in every walk of

life has become very visible and unavoidable. The new economic policy has decreased the moral values, eroded sensitivity and diluted sentiments amongst the individuals, Dr Deshpande said analyzing the impact of new economic wave. This change has resulted in separation, detachment and decreasing in human values. It is therefore, needed to make the civil society very strong with preserving the cultural values, Dr Deshpande said.

Earlier, ICCS President Virag Pachpore welcomed Dr Deshpande. Dr Mrinalini Bande introduced him and Secretary Vijay Bhagdikar proposed a vote of thanks. Prominent among those who attended the program were Dr Shailaja Deshpande, Dr Chhaya Naik, Dr Rajiv Ashtikar, Dr Sanjeev Kelkar, Sharad Chitre, Shrikant Gadge, Prof Ajay Patki of Swadeshi Jagaran Manch, ICCS Treasurer Vinay Bakhle, Avinash Senad, Pramod Gothe and others.

Majority of Thais consider themselves of Indian origin: Phubast Chesdmethee

International floral designer and consultant, Phubast Chesdmethee alias Poo said that majority of Thais consider themselves of Indian origin.

“At least 90 percent of Thailand's population professes Buddhism. We are from India and we believe that our roots are in India”, Poo remarked while interacting with the members of International Centre for Cultural Studies (ICCS) Nagpur.

Poo, who is also the Chairman of the Membership Committee of the World Flower Council, was in Nagpur on a business visit. He was introduced to ICCS members by noted businessman, Chairman of NECO Group of Industries and ICCS patron Shri B L Shaw, who accompanied him to ICCS auditorium.

Poo shared his views with the ICCS members on various subjects ranging from flowers to religion and current developments in Thailand. He said that the Thai people liked Sanskrit very much and many names in Thailand are derived from Sanskrit. “Even my mother's name is Subhadra”, he proudly recalled.

“Thailand happens to be a meeting point for people coming from different regions in Asia, but we revere India much because our Buddha came from India”, the world renowned florist proclaimed proudly.

Ramayana is very popular in



International Floral Designer and Consultant Phubast Chesdmethee alias Poo sharing his views at ICCS Nagpur. Noted industrialist and Chairman of NECO Group B L Shaw was prominently present on the occasion.

Thailand and we call it the story of Ram and Sita. Besides, the Thai people worship Laxmi, Ganesh, Umadevi and the Buddhist in Thailand have no inhibition in joining the worship of these predominantly 'Hindu' gods and goddesses, he said. Ganesh worship is celebrated in Thailand as in India and the Buddhist join the festival.

“We feel more comfortable with India because that sense of belonging might be in our genes”, he added.

The world famous florist liked most the magnificent temple of

Mahabalipuram and flowers of South India. He also liked the Indian sarees and the way they are worn by the women in India.

ICCS Secretary Vijay Bhagdikar introduced the guest while President Virag Pachpore welcomed him and B L Shaw with floral bouquet and ICCS publications.

On this occasion ICCS members including Dr D M Saraf, Prof A W Vyawahare, Sushama Pachpore, Shrikant Gadge, PM Deshpande, Vijay Gadkari were present.

ICCS General Body meets in Nagpur

The Annual General Body Meeting of International Centre for Cultural Studies was held on August 21, 2010. Sixteen members including former ICCS President Shri R L Pitale, Shri Ashit Sinha, Prof A W Vyawahare, Shri Vinay Bakhle, Dr Vinayak Deshpande, P M Deshpande, Shrikant Gadge, Mohan Gokhale and others attended the meeting. After approving the minutes of the last AGM, accounts for 2009-2010, the meeting adopted two amendments. By the first amendment the meeting gave its consent to raise Life Membership Fees from existing Rs 1000/- to Rs 3000/- and introduce two types of annual membership viz. Annual membership for Rs 1000/- and Students' Annual membership for Rs 500/-. The student membership is introduced to attract research and post-graduate students to ICCS work.

By another amendment the meeting gave its consent to reduce the time from one hour to half an hour to hold the adjourned meeting for want of quorum.

The meeting also decided to organize the Annual Conference in last week of January in Nagpur. The conference will be of two days duration based on the theme “Evolving Common Culture for Indian society today”.

Ancient cultures and traditions to better humanity

By Charles Chang

On the screen was "Ancient Cultures and Traditions of the World". That was what the lecture was by Dr. Pathak Yashvant was about last Friday in the University Geusthouse conference room. The scientist, attached to the Sullivan University in the United States, wanted to demonstrate the importance of preservation of ancient traditions and cultures in the world for humanity.

"Two thousand years ago the world was divided into believers and nonbelievers. If you wanted to believe in God, you had to follow him, but if we look at the old traditions, says Pathak, we see that all the old traditions talk about the total human. None of them says that if you do not believe in, you're not going to heaven!

"Pathak visited for investigation more than twenty countries, took samples from the traditions of African

peoples, the Maya, Aboriginal and Asian countries. "Tradition is divided into religion and dharma. They have no books, talk about living and dead ancestors which influence the personality. It is a way of life in which the knowledge

Dr Yashwant Pathak, Coordinator of International Centre for Cultural Studies in America recently visited Suriname. This is the report of his visit which appeared in a local newspaper there.

past orally from generation to generation. God is everywhere and can also be a woman. The (oral) tradition is based on dialogues between more knowledgeable & less knowledgeable. In the various levels is man related to nature, there is a round cycle of life and while in existence you are borrowing the Earth from the next generation. "Respect for the elderly is also strong in ancient traditions".

Pathak not only recognizes the concept of rebirth

but also the "law of karma" (who does good, will also receive good) and the philosophy of communicating with God: "Keep quiet and listen to nature. Once you start talk, God stops talking". The lecture supported by Cultural Studies of the

Directorate of Culture, organized by foundation Sewa International Suriname, a social organization consisting of mostly university students, affiliated to Sewa International which Dr. Pathak Yashvant is part of. He visited Suriname for the third time, but still focussed his lecture on 'Global'. Why is preservation of ancient cultures and traditions in this world of globalization important? "They contribute to the diversity in the world and

diversity is the soul of humanity. There is an increase in people who have a faith but also retain their traditional beliefs. More and more scientists also see the importance of conservation.

The pharmaceutical industry invests in traditions because there lies the knowledge about medicinal plants. In 2007, the Institute of Alternative Future, hundreds of scientists from leading universities in America concluded that the curriculum for all of 2029 should focus on 2060 and can not do without the Western and Eastern traditions together for a holistic approach of education. Because Western has only a low background of two hundred years, while the eastern is thousands years old. We are after all related to each other and are all part of this world. "We are one small family."

(Source: *Local Surinamese newspaper "De Ware Tijd"*)

Hindu Elders Foundation, a division of Hindu Council of New Zealand, celebrated Matariki 2010 at the Hindu Heritage Centre, Auckland June 27. Matariki is a Maori celebration of Mother Earth.

Almost 100 Hindu Elders, guests and a number of Maori Elders (Kaumatua) from various Marae participated in this celebration. Maori guests included Dennis Henson (Hoani Waititi Marae), Harold Atkinson and Bubbles Munroe (Ngati Kahungunu).

The ceremony started with the traditional Hindu way of lighting of the lamp by the invited guests and members of Hindu Elders, followed by a Hindu

prayer to Lord Ganesha. Mr Henson and Ms Munroe did the karakia.

Young children and youth from a Samoan Church group, who have regular services at Hindu Heritage

Hindu Elders celebrate Matariki

Centre, sang and performed a drama depicting the Love of God. Mr Henson recited a Maori prayer which was repeated by the Hindu Elders.

"During Matariki we celebrate our unique place in the world. We give respect and admiration to our mother earth Papatuanuku. Throughout

Matariki we learn about those who came before us. Matariki signals growth. It is a time of change. It is a time to prepare, and a time of action.

Matariki celebrates the diversity of life. It is a celebration of culture, language, spirit and people, Matariki is our Aotearoa Pacific New Year".

This was what Pravin Patel, patron of Hindu Elders Foundation, said while speaking about Matariki in Maori language.

Harold Atkinson spoke on the significance of Matariki. For the Maori of New Zealand, Matariki is the celestial signal of an ending and a beginning. The New Year is marked by the next moon after the appearance Matariki.