The Savitar: A boon from the Rig-Veda

The Vedic God of Light and Learning Alights at the University of Missouri-Columbia, USA.

By Dr. Murarilal Nagar

“He alone shines. All luminaries get illuminated by His Illumination
The whole Universe is enlightened by His light.” -Kathopanishad

It was spring of 1966. Bearing a big book, beaming with joy, all excited and thrilled, my research associate came almost running to me and asked, “Dr. Nagar, do you know what Savitar means?” (Continued p.6)

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Editor's column

NATURE
before NATIONALITY

In the beginning, Earth was without borders. The first people did not pierce Nature’s skin with stakes of claim. It was as the natives of this land now called America saw it: the Earth did not belong to us; we belonged to the Earth.

Today almost every inch of this planet is "owned." Mother Nature’s gentle face has been disfigured by her captors, but her underlying beauty can never be destroyed, for it was never created. Those who appreciate this establish and protect sanctuaries or national parks. Natural “temples” still exist at one such park. (See page 16)

The fact that a Westerner recognized the image of Hindu gods in the rocks of Arizona shows that, while each nation has its own “natural wonders,” all are connected. All collectively make up the shape of the Earth, whose beauty cannot be confined.

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Dr. Murari L. Nagar,
Dr. Ramesh Khanna
& Robert Almony Jr.
“The Praise of Shiva’s Greatness”
From Mahimnahstava, translated by W. Norman Brown

Since the way of religion is diverse, including the Triad of Vedas, the Samkhya, the Yoga, the doctrine of Pasupati, Vaishnavism, and one person considers this one best and another person that one suitable - because of the variety of preferences, you are, for men who favour different paths, straight or winding, the single goal, as the ocean is of waters.

“A mighty bull, a skull-capped club, an axe, a tiger’s skin, ashes, serpents, and a skull - only so little, O granter of boons, is the paraphernalia for your way of life; but the gods possess each his own wealth entrusted to him by a movement of your eyebrow. For a mirage of sense-objects does not delude him (Shiva) whose delight is in his soul.

“All is eternal, says one; another, this entire universe is impermanent; another proclaims that in this whole world both permanence and impermanence exist with diverse spheres of operation. O crusher of cities, though I am confused, as it were, by these various partisans, I am still not ashamed to praise you. Is not my babbling presumptuous?

“With all their might Virifca went upwards and Hari downwards to measure the majesty of you whose body was a burst of flame, but went in vain, then, O Giriśa, that when they were supremely praising full of bodily devotion and spiritual faith appeared before them of its own accord. Does not devotion to you bear fruit?

“The ten-headed Rāvana reduced the three worlds without effort to a state where they no longer opposed him and still had his [twenty] arms dominated by the itch for war. This, because he had made an offering to your lotus feet consisting of [nine of] his heads like a row of lotuses, was a consequence of unwavering devotion to you, O destroyer of the three cities.

“When Rāvana in his might was extending the forest of his arms, whose strength he had acquired through service to you, with violence against your dwelling on Kailāsa itself, you idly moved the tip of your great toe (causing him to fall) and even in Pātāla (the underworld) he could not find a resting place. Certain it is that when a trouble-maker prospers, he becomes mad.

“The fact, O boon-giver, that [the asura] Bāṇa reduced Surāman’s (Indra’s) power, though it was so exalted, and thus brought the three worlds to being his retinue, that is no marvel, since he was paying devotion to your feet. To what elevation does bowing of the head to you not lead?

“The stain which you received when you swallowed the poison, O three-eyed one, while you were swayed by compassion for the devas and asuras, who feared the sudden destruction of the universe, that stain on your throat, paradoxically, does not fail to produce beauty. Even disfigurement commands praise for one engaged in
removing a danger to the world.

“When Smara, the ever victorious, whose arrows never once fail their purpose in this world of gods, asuras, and men, viewed you, O lord, as just like the other gods, he became only an object of memory - for disdain of the self-controlled is not salutary.

“The earth suddenly fell into peril as you stamped your foot; the ether, full of the host of constellations scattered by your flailing arms which were like iron bars, was also in peril, the sky shook again and again as its curving sides were struck by your matted hair flying loose while you were dancing to save the world. Is not your power a perverse one?

“[The heavenly Ganges,] filling the sky, splendid in the scattering of its foam, which is counted to be the host of stars, the flood of waters, which seems like a mere drop on your head, makes the world seem only an island girdled by the ocean. By that alone your divine body with its enduring greatness can be imagined.

“The earth was your chariot, your charioteer he who had a hundred sacrifices (Brahmā); the lord of the mountains (Meru) your bow; your chariot wheels were the sun and moon, and he whose hands are emblazoned with sun and moon (Vishnu) was your arrow. What was the purpose of such a bombastic drum-beating when you wanted to burn up the three cities, which were no more than grass to you? The purposes of the lord with these his own creations were only sportive and not under others’ influence.

“When Hari, who [daily] used to offer a thousand lotuses at your feet, was [once] short by one, he extracted one of his lotus-like eyes.

“Skilled in ceremonies was [the prajāpati] Dakṣa, patron of the sacrifice, lord of embodied beings; the office of manipulators of the sacrifice was entrusted to the rṣis. O giver of refuge; the hosts of gods were the supervising priests.

[But] destruction of the ceremony came from you, who usually are intent upon granting the fruit of the rite. For it is certain that the sacrifices of one who performs them with denial of faith [in you] are only a kind of witchcraft.

“O lord, the lord of creatures (Brahmā), who in a stag’s form had been violently and lustfully pursuing his own daughter transformed into a doe, while he was obsessed with desire to enjoy her, and who had fled from you with bow in your hand until he reached the sky - him yonder, pierced by your arrow up to the feathering, fear-stricken as he is, your ardor for the chase does not release even to this day...

“Your sport is in burning grounds, O destroyer of Smara; Piśācas (who eat the flesh of human beings) are your companions; ashes from a funeral pyre are ointment for your body; and your garland is a string of human skulls - though your character and
your name as well may be wholly inauspicious, yet, O gift-bestower, to those who call you to mind you are the supreme symbol of fortune.

"Why they (ascetics) cause the mind in the prescribed manner to retract into the inner heart, while their breath is controlled, their body-hair erect in joy, and their eyes flooded with tears of happiness, then that which those practising self-restraint inwardly perceive, while they experience [supreme] joy as though immersed in a pool of nectar, that principle, the inexpressible, you surely are.

"You are the sun, you are the moon, you are wind, you are fire, you are water, you are space, you are the earth, you are the ātman - though it be that thus the perfected ones [of old] defined you as being limited, yet we know not that element here which you are not.

"The triad (of Vedas), the three vȳtis (states of waking, sleeping, deep sleep), the three worlds, and also the three gods (Brahmā, Vishṇu, Rudra), naming these with its three letters a etc. (a, u, m) and also that which is beyond differentiation, the fourth state, your domain, enclosed by subtle sounds, [all this constituting] you, O refuge-giver, complete and in your parts, the word Om describes.

"Bhava, Sarva, Rudra, Paśupati, and then Ugra along with Mahant, similarly Bhīma and Isāna, this octad of your names - in it severally (that is, in each name), O god, resides śruti.

To this (octad), the dear lofty seat [of truth and the gods], to you, the lord, do I offer my worship.

"Reverence to [you as] him who is nearest, O you who love the forest waste (as a sāṃnyāsīn), and reverence to [you as] him who is farthest! Reverence to [you as] him who is most minute, O destroyer of Smara, and reverence to [you as] him who is greatest! Reverence to [you as] the eldest, O three-eyed one, and reverence to [you as] the most youthful! Reverence to you as being everything, and reverence to you as Sarva the whole, being this universe!

"Reverence to Bhava (the creator Brahman), full of rajas for creating the universe, and again reverence! Reverence to Hara (the Destroyer), full of tamas for its dissolution, and again reverence! Reverence to Mrda (the Compassionate, Vishṇu), giving happiness to folk at the rise of sattva, and again reverence! Reverence to Shiva in his supreme abode, which is beyond the three guṇas, and again reverence!

"Where is this my mind, so slightly evolved and subject to distress, and where is your power, which ever leaps across the boundaries of the guṇas? Though I am therefore diffident, devotion has removed my hesitation and has set a flower offering of words at your feet.
Foreword

We present this book, the twenty-sixth Savitar, to the students of Old Missouri as a mirrored image of the present school year.

Our aim has been to give a complete review of the student life, told accurately and entertainingly. In keeping pace with the growth of the University we have slightly enlarged this book. We want to call attention in passing to a feature of the book that has been our pride from the start—the artwork, inspired by the ancient Hindu myth of Savitar, the Sun God, from which the book got its name.

We hope that this Savitar is worthy of the support you have given it; that in future years you will turn through its pages with fond memories of the year 1919-20 at Old Missouri. Our work is done if you are pleased with the result we will consider our efforts well worth while.

Unless otherwise noted, all illustrations for our cover story were taken from the 1920 Savitar yearbook. The editors of that particular Savitar issue considered the Indian artwork their “pride from the start.” They state in this Foreword that the art is “inspired by the ancient Hindu myth of Savitar, the Sun God, from which the book got its name.”
In 1894, Savitar, the Creator Sun God of the Vedas, sanctified the Savitar yearbook. May this Savitar shine here as long as that Savitar shines there. -Dr. Muralilal Nagar
Savitar Goes to School continued...

I did not know what Savitar meant. I was new to Columbia; I had been here just a few months. I had seen the name “Savitar” inscribed on some volumes in the homes of my host faculty. The books were all black and gold, glittering and shining. Peeping through glass doors, these books tempted the viewer. Yet, even for a librarian, it was impolite to open the cupboards and look into them, no matter how enchanting they looked. Therefore, these Savitar volumes remained unknown to me. It was still a night of ignorance. The day of enlightenment had not yet dawned.

I said to my associate: “I don’t know what ‘Savitar’ means. It could be a Hebrew name. I don’t know that language.”

She replied, “No, this is India’s sun god, SAVITAR!”

It was hard to believe! Savitar in Columbia, MO., a small midwestern town? Even the town’s name was unknown to me until the beginning of my correspondence with the university library. But this is what was featured on the cover of the Savitar yearbook for 1966!

The yearbook read: “Savitar was born in 1894-95 after much searching for an appropriate name. Savitar is the sun god of the Rig-Veda, a collection of praises and hymns to the oldest and most sacred gods of the East. Savitar denotes the splendor of the sun and its irresistible energy. God Savitar raises his banner high to provide light for all the world. Savitar, the black and gold deity ... golden-eyed, golden-haired and golden-handed ... is the god who sees all things and notes all the good and evil deeds of men. Savitar has irresistible power. Age cannot touch him, and nothing can withstand his will. Like the legend from which it was named, the Savitar strives to enlighten, inspire and guide. The seventy-second volume of the Savitar presents the University of Missouri, 1966.”

I bowed my head in reverence, respect and regard to that sage, saint and scholar who had the vision, wisdom and foresight to bring India’s sun god, Savitar, to the University of Missouri-Columbia as early as 1894!

But who says Savitar is a god only of India? It is the god of the entire universe. Is there any spot on this globe to which Savitar does not bring Its light? True, Savitar is a Sanskrit word, but Sanskrit is not just the language of India alone. It is the language of the entire world. It is the language of the gods.

Even the linguists have classified Sanskrit as an Indo-European language. Thus Savitar belongs to Europe as much as it belongs to India. It is a common heritage of both India and Europe - nay, the entire world.

Exactly a century ago, the staff of the Savitar of 1896-97, explained its reasons for choosing the name of a Vedic god to represent the university. The introduction to that Savitar appeared just as it is reproduced here:
Introduction...

EVER since the publication of the initial number of the SAVITAR, that of the year '94-'95, its readers and friends generally have concurred in this opinion, that Savitar in sound is pleasingly harmonious, but in meaning provokingly enigmatical. Hence this short account of its christening. When the plan for publishing an annual was complete and put into execution, the editors began casting about for a suitable name—one that would carry with it associated significance and thereby express in a degree the full intent and purpose of the proposed volume. After considerable research and cogitation Savitar was selected because we liked the size and sound of the word, and because its associations bore with them, as we thought, appropriately suggestive meanings.

Savitar is the sun god of the Rig-Veda. The word contains the root su, meaning to drive or stimulate. Savitar, and its alternate in mythology, surya, denote the splendor of the luminary and its irresistible energy. Savitar is the god who sees all things and notes all the good and evil deeds of men. His power is irresistible. Age can not touch him, and nothing can withstand his will. To him are addressed the verses, "Holiest of All the Veda:"

"May the golden-eyed Savitar come hither,
Shining forth he rises from the lap of the dawn,
Praised by singers; he, my god, Savitar,
Stepped forth and never missed his place.
He steps forth, the splendor of the sky, the wide-
seeing, far-shining, the shining wanderer."

—Rig-Veda, vii, 63.

A PEEP INTO THE PAST presents a picture of Columbia more than a hundred years ago. Sanskrit was already being taught here then. The name of Professor James Blackwell figures prominently as a powerful professor of the time. He also functioned as president of the university for some time.

He was both a teacher and an administrator. Officially, he was a professor of Semitic and modern languages and chairman of the faculty. Several students were studying Sanskrit under his good guidance.

I believe Professor Blackwell was the European scholar-sage whose sagacious thought brought Savitar to this university. Blackwell was a specialist in Latin and Greek. He could have drawn from any classical Indo-European language, such as Greek or Latin. So why did he choose to draw from India and not from Europe? Why Sanskrit?

Sir William Jones of Great Britain, one of the greatest orientalists the world has ever seen, had anticipated this question and answered it two hundred years ago:

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Timeline compiled by Betty D. Robins

WWII triggers the development of "area studies" programs. An India section was established with the Office of Strategic Services.

1941

Fulbright exchange programs begin. Noel Gist, Howard Hirt and Arthur Robins were among the first MU awardees.

1946

U.S. Agency for International Development awards the MU College of Agriculture a contract to help farmers in Bihar, Orissa, Assam and W. Bengal.

1955

Visiting Asian Professors Program starts. MU is one of 8 participants.

1957
Sanskrit is more perfect than Greek, more copious than Latin and more exquisitely refined than either," he wrote.

The centennial volume (1994) of the Savitar recapitulates the past and enlightens us further:

ROOTED IN HISTORY:

"Origins have challenged the human spirit to search through the path that is constantly being created as it moves further from where it began. The origin of a name or a tradition can be buried under piles of information and is often extremely difficult to uncover. Incredibly, the origin of a core part of Mizzou’s history exists on campus 100 years later."

"The Savitar yearbook was first published in 1894. The published volumes stand still in time as they unfold the story of how it began and what it meant to the students. The Savitar traced its own history. From the beginning, the name Savitar was considered by the students provokingly enigmatic. The editors of the first Savitar were intent on choosing a symbolic and significant name for their mission publication.”

We have seen above that the wise men of Columbia, who Christened the M.U. yearbook after the Vedic Savitar a century ago, have quoted a hymn in praise of the God Savitar saying that he is a black and gold deity. The University of Missouri-Columbia could have also derived its black and gold emblem from the same black and gold deity, Savitar.

However, what has been presented above represents only one aspect of the Lord Savitar: a natural phenomenon. It emphasizes only His physical aspect; the external view; the bright form, dazzling power and potential; the mighty majestic effulgence witnessed and experienced through our physical sense organs such as eye and skin. But God Savitar has another aspect too - more vital, truly internal, highly


National Defense Education grant helps establish a South Asian language and area center at MU. Departments could now hire South Asian specialists to teach India-related subjects.

South Asian Librarian Murarilal Nagar is the first in three decades to teach Sanskrit at MU. Sanskrit had been taught in MU’s classical language department as early as 1894!
soul, extremely subtle - that can be perceived only through an internal organ, the mind, trained in traditional lore and learning. This transcendent abstract Savitar is the principal power presiding over the world of education and learning and is much more meaningful and closely related to an institution of higher learning such as the MU. This invisible power provides the actual intellectual light, the acquisition and assimilation of which is the highest goal - the summum bonum - of human life. This light may lead a blessed being to realize the ultimate objective: immortality, freedom from the vicious circle of birth and death and the final reunion with and assimilation into the Ultimate Reality, Om Shanti, the Brahman.

The most sacred, highly honored, greatly celebrated and the premier and prime Vedamantra is dedicated to God Savitar. It is called Savitri and is also known as the Gayatri, since it is composed in that meter and protects its singer. This supreme holy hymn initiates the student into the study of the Vedas, the Sacred Lore of the Aryans. Millions of devotees have been reciting this mantra for their intellectual enlightenment and cultural advancement since the creation began, and, according to the faithful Vedic believers, there was no beginning!

The Vedic Initiation Ceremony, the Sacrament of Sacred Cord, is sanctified by God Savitar. Some ideas on this subject can be obtained from the Jan.12, 1997, issue of Ideas magazine, a Columbia Missourian supplement. A copy of this article will be sent upon request. Please write to Veda Vedanta Mandiram.
"Śaṅkarācārya once more revivified the Vedānta philosophy. In the Upaniṣads, the arguments are often very obscure. He worked out, rationalized and placed before men the wonderful coherent system of Advaita."

Śvāmī Vivekānanda
To the followers of Advaita philosophy, Bhagavadpāda Āchārya Śaṅkara is an institution. What he achieved in a short span of 32 years' life, may take a number of years to merely read, a whole lifetime to barely study, and series of lives to realize and experience the great principles. A great thinker and noblest of Advaitic philosophers, Āchārya Śaṅkara was essentially an inspired champion of Hinduism.

Śaṅkara propagated his Advaitic philosophy at a time when Hinduism was being asphyxiated by the fascinating entanglements of the Buddhistic philosophy. Hindu society was in total disarray: decadent, leaderless and disunited. The intellectual disintegration was so complete that India was divided into a number of sects with literalists, ritualists, nihilists and iconoclasts who were ready to tear and destroy all that was sacred and ancient. The society was infested with religiously sanctioned heinous practices. The uncultured and uneducated mass of people embraced Buddhism, while neither appreciating nor living up to the great and noble ideals preached by Lord Buddha.

Śaṅkara was born about 12 centuries ago at Kalady, a remote village on the banks of the river Periyar in Kerala. His parents, Śivaguru and Āryāmbā, were devotees of Lord Śiva. He was initiated into study at the age of three. Shortly thereafter, he lost his father. Āryāmbā performed the ritual of upanayanam, the investing with the sacred thread, and sent him to a gurukula (residential school). It is said that Śaṅkara composed the first book, Bālabodha-saṅgraha, at age six. Shortly thereafter, with the consent of his mother, he renounced the material life and became a sanyāsī. The great rishi Govindapāda, who lived in a cave on the banks of the river Narmadā near Omkāranātha, initiated him into Brahmavidyā and taught him for three years. During their first encounter, upon guru's enquiry as to who he was, Śaṅkara sang a hymn:

"I am not earth, nor water, nor fire, air, or space, nor a combination of all these, but the One Changeless Śiva am I. ..."

Thus he described his true identity with the Supreme reality in verses which are now known as Daśa-Śloki. As a student he wrote a commentary (bhāṣya) on the Vishnu Sahasranāma.

On completion of his study at Omkāranātha, Śaṅkara proceeded to Kāśi (Banaras). While meditating on the banks of river Ganges, he pronounced the doctrine:

Brahman, the ultimate All, is the only Reality; the only means to lead us to the goal of Realization is to overcome all sense-attractions.

Many became his disciples, one of whom later became known as Padmapāda. The learned pundits of Kāśi conferred on him the title of Āchārya, meaning the teacher. Thereafter he came to be known as Śaṅkarāchārya, while only 12 years old.

In Kāśi, on a chance encounter with a chāṇḍāla, an untouchable, Śaṅkarāchārya saw in him none other than the Absolute and bowed low to him, addressing him as a guru. There he composed five verses, Maniśā Panchakam, saying there is no distinction in Pure Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, i.e. Brahmam.

From Kāśi he journeyed to Badrikāśrama, where he re-established a temple of Lord Nārāyaṇa. During his four years at Badrikāśrama, he...
wrote commentaries on 15 books, namely: the Brahma-sūtras (Nyāya-prasthāna or the rational institute), 12 Upanishads (Śruti-prasthāna or spiritual institute), Sīmad Bhagavad-gītā (Śruti-prasthāna or institute of tradition), and Sanat Sujetā. Of these, the Brahma-sūtras, Upanishads and Gītā are together named Prasthāna-Trayī.

From Badrikāśrama

Śaṅkarāchārya came down to Uttarakāśi and Kedāranātha and journeyed to places like Kurukshetra, Indraprastha, Vrindāvana, Mathurā and Prayāga. At Māhishmatī, on the northern bank of river Narmadā, Śaṅkarāchārya won over Maṇḍana Miśra, a staunch ritualist, and accepted him as one of his disciples. Later Miśra came to be known as Suresvarāchārya.

From Māhishmatī

Śaṅkarāchārya started on a tour of southern kingdoms. He passed through Nasik-Pańchavati, Pañdharpurī, Śrīśailam and Śrīngeri. At Śrīngeri, on the advice of Śaṅkarāchārya, the famous Śrādā temple was constructed. There Śaṅkarāchārya composed a hymn in praise of Śrādā Devī.

While he stayed at Śrīngeri, the Āchārya composed several more books. They include Viveka Chudāmiṇi, Aparokṣhānubhuti, Ātma-bodha, Sarva-Vedānta-sāra-satg Brahagā, etc. At Śrīngeri he inducted another famous disciple, Toṭakāchārya.

After a lapse of about 12 years, Śaṅkarāchārya returned to Kalady and met his mother, who passed away shortly thereafter. In his home village he composed the famous songs Śiva Bhujangam and Vishnu Bhujangam.

From Kalady

Śaṅkarāchārya and his disciples journeyed to Rāmesvaram, Śreerangam and Kancheepuram. At Kanchi, he renovated the temples of Vishnu-Kānchi and Śiva-Kānchi.

From Kanchi

the Āchārya went to Venkaṭāchalam (Tirupati), Kamāṭaka, Vidarbha, Rajamahendry, Kalinga and the famous temple of Jagannātha Purī. At Purī he reinstalled the idol of Lord Jagannātha.

Thereafter the group traveled to Prayāga and Kāśi. At Kāśi, the Āchārya composed the poem Bhaja Govindam. The poem advises foolish men to seek Govinda instead of tolering for sense-gratification.

From Kāśi

they proceeded to Saurāshtra. On the way they stopped at Ujjayinī and worshipped Mahā-kāla. Their

next stops were at Gimar, Somanātha and Prabhāsa. Moving further, they went to Dvārakā and Pushkar. Moving northward, they reached Kashmir and spread the Advaita philosophy there. Passing through Takshaśila, they traveled to Jvalāmukhi, Haridvāra, Ayodhya, Pātaliputra, Nalanda and Gayā. The Āchārya then visited Nepal to worship Pushupatinātha. Finally he arrived at Kedāranātha, where he went into deep samādhi (left the mortal world).

Throughout his life, Śaṅkarāchārya was a perfect man, highly competent and supremely efficient. He established four mutts in four corners of India. The eastern mutt was established at Jagannātha Purī, the southern at Śrīngeri, the western at Dwaraka, and the northern mutt at Jyotirīdham.

Through his Advaita philosophy, Śaṅkarāchārya revived Hinduism. He resurrected ancient India; he re-awakened India’s national genius; he represented - and continues to represent - the dazzling, effulgent efflorescence of Bhāratavarsha.

Om Namah Parvātī Pate Hara Hara Mahādeva!

*The source for this write-up is primarily the publications of Chinmaya Mission, Bombay.
Book Review: *Truth is One*

by Robert Almony Jr.

In their 1954 work entitled *Truth is One*, Henry James Forman and Roland Gammon examine a quote from the Rig Veda: “Truth is one: sages call it by various names.” The book is all about different aspects of the unity of religion. It not only provides a good basic introduction to the world's many religions, but also gives commentary on the everyday life of the real people who belong to these faiths.

In its 224 pages, filled with glorious black and white photographs, *Truth is One* covers the basic background and beliefs of these great religions and philosophies. Especially in India, religion and philosophy are inseparable. After all, every religion began as someone's philosophy on life, death and whatever lies beyond.

Among these philosophers, manifestations of God or great prophets who inspired the world's major religions are Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muhammad and Baha'u'llah. These manifestations of God are not God in human form, but, like flawlessly polished mirrors, they perfectly reflect His qualities. They are the pure channels through which God makes Himself known to humankind. In the words of [ask who said this and where it came from]: “They are all sent down from the heaven of the Will of God, and as they all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith, they therefore are regarded as one soul and the same person. ... They all abide in the same tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech, and proclaim the same Faith.”

Although each manifestation of God has founded a new religion with its own character, all of the religions are part of the overall process through which God reveals His will for humanity. All are part of the “changeless Faith of God,” which is “eternal in the past, eternal in the future.” Each manifestation brings new social teachings suited for his time, but the essential message never changes. The revelations of the manifestations of God are like the successive chapters in *Truth is One*, all of them leading toward the latest chapter in the revelation of God’s word for humankind.

After reading the beautifully illustrated encyclopedia *Truth is One*, one might want to read Houston Smith’s *The Religions of Man*. Smith’s book provides a more in-depth introduction to the great religions of the world.

In their enlightened introduction, Forman and Gammon quote a reference made by Dr. Bhagavan Das in his *The Essential Unity of All Religions*. It is as follows:

“The Anthem of the Universal”

One Cosmic Brotherhood,
One Universal Good
One Source, One Sway,
One Law beholding us,
One Life enfolding us,
In Love alway.

Lust, Greed, Fear, Envy and Hate
Long made us Desolate.
Their reign is done.
Race, Color, Creed and Caste
Fade with the Nightmare Past,
Man wakes to learn at last,
All Life is One!

-from the World Fellowship ©
by Brian W. Kuhar

The Swastika. ...

For the most recent seven decades of its 12,000-year history - since it was adopted as Hitler's National-Socialist flag in 1920 - it has been a symbol of racism and anti-Semitism. Even as early as the 19th century, Aryanists were trying to prove a connection between the swastika and the Aryan culture as a means of race identification.

What is the real origin and meaning behind this symbol? The emblem has been found to have been carved into Mammoth ivory dating from 10,000 B.C. in what is now the Ukraine. The source and significance of this ancient symbol has been obfuscated for centuries, and the correct answers may not exist as of yet.

In 1894, Count Goblet D'Alviella wrote of the swastika that “there is hardly a symbol which has given rise to more varied interpretations.” [D'Alviella, op cit., p.45]

The most common interpretation among Indians is that the swastika symbolizes the movement and power of the Sun. As a ritualistic sign, the swastika is one of the most ancient symbols, sun-worship being the most ancient of religions.

According to Hindu astronomy, the auspicious form of the Swastika represents the celestial change of the Sun to the Tropic of Capricorn and is regarded as a male.

“In the ancient scriptures, the right-handed Swastika is associated with the Sun, and hence an emblem of the Vedic cosmic possession and evolution thereof, around a fixed centre. The left-handed Swastika, which moves anti-clockwise, represents the Sun during the Autumn and Winter, and is regarded as female and inauspicious.” [Chatterjee, Gautam, Sacred Hindu Symbols, New Delhi, 1996, p.40].

The swastika is also used to adorn the walls and doors of buildings “to protect them from the wrath of evil spirits or furies of nature.” [Nathan, R.S., Symbolism in Hinduism, Bombay, 1983, p.93] Ganesha, guardian of the gates to the Sun, might use the powers of the swasti-ka to protect his mother’s abode from unwanted visitors like Shiva.

But this is all legend. How did the subject of harmless stories and philosophical interpretations get twisted into a larger-than-life symbol of terror? How did the swastika get to Europe, and specifically to Germany?

To tackle this question, the Rev. Norman Walker, in his book The Real History of the Swastika, suggests that the symbol was migratory. “In the sixth and seventh cities of Troy very few swastikas were found, but in the third, fourth and fifth cities they were found in hundreds,” he wrote. “That is to say, the swastika came in with the Hittites, and went out with the coming of the Aryans. ... Wherever the Aryans migrated and destroyed the older civilization, the use of the swastika died out - it seems to be specially associated with the pig-tail wearing, hook-nosed and beardless Hittites, the early Elamites, Machus, Huns, and American Indians.”

Chatterjee wrote: “Swastika, the graphic symbol, is found in almost every ancient and primitive cult all over the world. The most ancient Swastikas have been found in the Harappan Civilisation in India, Susa in Persia, and Sarmara in Mesopotamia. This symbol is frequented upon in ancient Greece, Cyprus, Crete and Rhodes. According to Leonary Von Matt, it was a favourite symbol on the coins.
of ancient Greece and India. Swastika is also found engraved upon the funeral urns which have been dug up in northern Italy.”

This shows that the use of the swastika was widespread throughout the most ancient cultures, but is it certain that the swastika traveled with the Hittites as the Rev. Walker supposed? Or did it originate with the Aryans, as Michael Zmigrodski, a Polish librarian and swastikaphile suggested in 1889.

After meeting with Aryanists and swastikaphiles from around the globe, Zmigrodski concluded that the swastika was “a way of claiming kinship and assuming race identity” for the Aryans.” [Quinn, p.24] But it should be remembered that this is coming from a man whose self-appointed duty was to “promote the swastika as the heraldic device of the Aryo-Germanic family” [Quinn, p.23]. And, being as many who attended the 1889 conferences were anti-Semites, their opinions on the origin of this symbol may have been skewed.

W. Norman Brown, professor of Sanskrit at the University of Pennsylvania, tried, as did Walker, to free the swastika from the grasp of the Aryans. Brown claimed the swastika belonged to a peaceful and more advanced Indian culture called the Dravidians, which was destroyed by the invading Aryans. In a 1933 pamphlet, he wrote: “The present Nazi claims are untenable. Just as their theory of Aryan racial purity is fanciful, so, too, their use of the swastika as an Aryan-Christian symbol, with aspects of anti-Judaism, anti-pacifism and anti-Marxism, is entirely arbitrary.”

[Brown, Norman, The Swastika, A Study of Nazi Claims of its Aryan Origin, New York, 1933]

Who were the Aryans? The dictionary defines Aryans as the speakers of the languages ancestral to the Indo-Iranian languages, but does a common language suppose a common race as the Nazis would have us believe? Isn’t it also possible that the language traveled nomadically and the native population learned it from travelers? Not trying to confuse history with legend, but “in the Rigveda, the Aryas lay siege to and conquer the forts of another tribe, the forts being interpreted as the defences of an indigenous people conquered by the chariot-riding Aryas, who had, it was supposed, advanced from their mysterious European Urheimat.” [Renfrew, Colin, Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins, Harmondsworth, 1987, pp.178-190]

It also seems to me that the Aryans did in fact use the swastika as a means of promoting race identity, a sort of ancient graffiti claiming kinship. This is shown by the writings of Walker and Brown, as well as by the Indian scriptures which provide a seemingly easy definition for the swastika as part of primitive Sun-worshipping cults and later symbolizing the arms of Vishnu.

Hitler and Nazi Germany took some ill-researched ideas about the origin of the ‘racial purity’ and adopted a symbol which was believed to be of their own pure Aryan origin. Because of the atrocities performed in that brief decade in history, the original meaning of the swastika may be lost forever to the hatred of the Nazis. But there is hope. In Woody Allen’s Sleeper, a film set mostly in the future United States, a man is seen at a party wearing a shirt with a huge black swastika emblazoned on the front. The fact that no one at the party has any reaction to the symbol seems to suggest that Allen believes time can heal all wounds (Woody Allen being a Jew himself) and that a symbol means, culturally, just what you want it to mean.\[15\]
It is a golden opportunity for me to write this short note on the Glory of Savitā Devatā and Sūrya Deva and their interrelation. I have been reading the Upaniṣads for the last three years. However, this was my first chance to write on what I have been reading. This note starts with a common prayer from the Rgveda as follows:

ॐ सिद्धान्ते देव सबिदुद्रितानि पराशुर। यदृ पद्म तन आसुर।

Om Viśvāni deva Savitar duritāni parāsu. yad bhādṛāṃ tanna āśuva.

O Savitā Devatā, remove all our sins, sorrows and sufferings. Bless us all with all that is auspicious and blissful.

The Vedas tell us how the creation began:

सूर्यचन्द्रमसाह दहात यात्यापृविमकः गुप्तम।

Suryacandramasau dhātā yathāpūrvam akalpayat. divam ca prthivīṃ cāntariṣkam ato svāḥ.

Dhātā, the Creator, created the sun, the moon, heavens, earth and ether as before.

And here is the सूत्रप्रक्रिया (process of creation) in brief as expounded in the Upaniṣads:

The Saguna Brahma is the Creator. His first embodied being is Brahmā (the Prajāpati), who was created in order to create the prāja, progeny. He first creates the gross elements as ether, air, fire, water and earth. Thereafter, the moveable and nonmoveable beings start growing.

The Chāndogyopanishad (1. 6. 6-7) describes the Luminous Person in the Solar Orb:

“Of all the phenomenal objects, the sun was regarded with the greatest wonder and admiration by the ancients everywhere.”

-Swāmi Nikhilananda

golden to the very tips of his nails - His eyes are like a lotus flower, red as the rump of a monkey.

His name is Ut, for He has risen (udita) above all evil. He, too, who knows this rises above all evil.

य आदित्यो तिथित।

Ya Ādityo tiṣṭha.

The Vedas tell us how the creation began:

एयोधन्तरां यहिरण्यमयं: पुरुषोऽक्रमेऽयिव हिरण्यमयस्यहिरण्यकस्य आप्रवकल्ज्जते सर्वं ॥ ६ ॥

Tasya yathā karyasya punārkakṣevokthayam yadvititā pracho taṃ sarvam pāpaṃ udājita udājat hāve sarvapriyaḥ pāpmabhya ya evam veda.

Now, the Golden Person Who is seen in the sun - Who has a golden beard and golden hair, Who is

Let us see what Bhagavadgītā (15. 12) says:

यद्यदित्यतम् तेजो जगव भास्यस्तविक्रियम्।

Yad ādityagatam tejo jagad bhāsayaṇe kīlarum.

Yaccandramasī yaccānaṃ tat tejo viddha māmakam.
The light in the sun, which illuminates the whole universe, that which is in the moon and that which is in the fire, know that all that light is Mine.

Swāmī Nikhilananda, in his general introduction to the Upanishads (1:86), discusses Brahman and says of the sun:

"Of all the phenomenal objects, the sun was regarded with the greatest wonder and admiration by the ancients everywhere. Its rays dispel darkness, and the daytime is generally filled with various activities by which a civilization is created and developed.

"The Upanishads describe the Sun as a symbol of Brahman. The Gāyatrī mantra is directed to the Puruṣa dwelling in the Sun. The natural sunlight is a symbol of spiritual light. The natural sun is the phenomenal form of Brahman."

"SAVITĀ' literally means stimulator, rouser and vivifier. He is sometimes equated with Sūrya. According to Sāyana, the sun before rising is called Savitār, and after rising till its setting, Sūrya." (Monier-Williams)

We may safely say that what we perceive with our physical external organs is the sun, while what can be known only through the internal organs, the intellect, is Savitā. One is concrete; the other is abstract. Savitā is the power of sun.

Sāvitr Mantra (Bṛhadāraṇyakopanishad 5. 14. 1-8) presents detail on Sacred Gāyatrī:

The most celebrated Vedic prayer, the Sāvitr mantra, commonly known as the Gāyatrī mantra, is dedicated to Lord Savitā.

The worshipping invokes his blessings to receive the energy for the mind to make it introvert, so that he is able to meditate upon the mighty, majestic effulgence of God Savitār to achieve intellectual enlightenment.

The great glory of gorgeous God Savitār has been sung not only in the Vedas and Upaniṣads, but also in the Epics and Purāṇas. The first and foremost Sanskrit poet, Vālmiki, in his monumental magnum opus, the Rāmāyana, has brought forth visible and invisible power of the Sun; how He helped his hero, Rāmacandra, to score victory over destructive demon Rāvana.

\[\text{"Sun before rising is called Savitār, and after rising till its setting, Sūrya."} \quad \text{-based on Sāyana}\]

Bhagavān Rāmacandra had been engaged in a fierce fighting with Rāvana for quite some time. He was not able to subdue his enemy. Actually, he was fighting as a human being to honor the boon given to Rāvana by Brahmi. He could not utilize His mighty power that he possessed. He was feeling tired. He was exhausted; feeling helpless. He was awfully worried. He was puzzled and did not know what to do. How to conquer the foe who was proving so unconquerable? (Rāvana had an amṛtakālaśa in his belly.)

Sage Agastya visits Rāmacandra on the battlefield. He instructs Rāmacandra to offer his prayers to Lord Savitā. Rāmacandra follows the instruction. He acts according-ly. And he scores victory! This is the power and potential of the great God Savitār.

This is a Puranic prayer in praise of Lord Nārāyaṇa, who inhabits the center of the Śavitrmanalā (Sūrya's Orb). He is to be always meditated upon: He is seated on a lotus seat, is bedecked with beautiful armlets; ear ornaments shaped as makara (crocodile) and a pearl necklace. He wears a kīrtī (an ornamental crown) over the head. His body is all gold. He holds a conch-shell and a discus. This Nārāyaṇa is to be worshipped always by all.

Even the most common people in India use the epithet "SūryanaNārāyaṇa" to denote their beloved God, the Sun.

There are many traditions still prevailing in India. It is believed that Sūrya protects and maintains the law and order of the whole universe. On special sacraments, people go out in the open to have his dārśana (view) and adore him with prayers for blessings.

All over India, faithful devotees go to the nearest reservoir of water in order to worship the rising sun and pray for their health, happiness and welfare. Some would prostrate twelve times or more and offer Sūrya namaskāra, which combines worship and exercise. 

\[\text{Dhyeyāḥ sādā}
\text{Savitramālamadhyavartī}
\text{Nārāyaṇah}
\text{sarasijāsamṣāsviṣṭah}
\text{Keyuravān makarakunālavan kīrtī}
\text{Hārī hiraṇmayavapur}
\text{dṛṣṭaṁkhačakrāh} \]
Planning a summer vacation? Keep an eye out for the three

HINDU GODS SEATED IN THE GRAND CANYON

By William A. Noble

In his description entitled “The Grand Canyon of the Colorado River,” Francios E. Matthes wrote: “Of all the geographic features of the United States that are famed for their scenic grandeur, the most extraordinary, the most truly unique, is the mile-deep canyon which the Colorado River has carved across the high plateaus of northwestern Arizona. The alpine mountain ranges of this country are equaled and excelled in height, if not in spectacular beauty, by those in other lands, but though there are elsewhere deep canyons, some of even greater depth than the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, there is not one that can match its vastness, its majesty, its ornate sculpture, and its wealth of color. Whoever stands upon the brink of the Grand Canyon beholds a spectacle unrivaled on this earth.”

Those individuals with an interest in India will be excited to discover that three of the most spectacular remnant formations within the Grand Canyon National Park are named after the gods of the Hindu triad: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

As erosion has proceeded within the great bend of the Colorado River, many erosional remnants have been left standing within the Grand Canyon. Because the northern and western rims within the bend are so much farther away from the river, there are more and larger features left there. The largest of these erosional remnants was named “Shiva Temple” by Clarence E. Dutton, writer of the first major work on the Grand Canyon entitled Tertiary History of the Grand Canyon District, published in 1882.

The Shiva Temple and other similar remnants in the western United States are called buttes. Because viewers who look into the Grand Canyon are so overwhelmed by the stupendous vistas with their many features, some might find it hard to realize the Shiva Temple rises over five thousand feet above the places where the Crystal and Trinity canyons below it meet the inner gorge of the Colorado River. If the entire mass of the Shiva Temple could be moved onto equivalent terrain, its rise above would parallel the rise of Mount Washington above the nearby lowland of New Hampshire! The flat top of the Shiva Temple spreads over a mile, and the way its summit surface matches with terrain levels of the Kaibab Plateau offers proof that it was once but a small portion of a former high plateau level.

Dutton gave the name “Vishnu Temple” to another erosional remnant to the north of the Colorado River, and there are those who consider this feature to be the most spectacular in the Grand Canyon because of the way it stands as a towering spire.

A third erosional remnant was later named “Brahma Temple” in order to complete the towering triad Dutton had - whether knowingly or unknowingly - founded. The Brahma Temple is also pointed at the top and is easily seen as a person looks northward across the Colorado River from Yaki Point on the south rim of the Grand Canyon. All three temples can be viewed together from Miners Spring.

The great majority of the millions of people visiting the Grand Canyon probably do not know the Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva temples even exist. Among the few individuals who do know about them, some might not have any idea about the nature of the deities. Their visits could be far more rewarding if they did know this. Reflection on these three gods, combined with feelings of oneness with nature, can lead - in the Hindu sense of bhakti or rejoicing - to the ecstasy of knowing that you are One with all creation.

Hinduism typically promotes myriads of ways for each person to be a pilgrim having the right and necessity to develop his or her own faith. Like the Christians with their God - the Holy Spirit - Hindus have their Brahman, their Atman, their Universal Spirit. The spirit of creation, which is all-pervading in the universe - which dwells within and everywhere without - is difficult to contemplate. A universal spirit of creation is virtually impossible to create in the image of humans, yet people still try to attribute this united spirit to individual gods.
It is Shiva, a god who is simultaneously destructive and creative, who wonderfully demonstrates the provision in Hinduism for letting us mere egocentric humans feel more comfortable by thinking about the many facets of the spiritual with anthropomorphic imagery. All such related thoughts help us obtain increased, yet slight, knowledge of the Great It; the Incomprehensible; Controller of the Universe; Creator of Life; who is beyond anthropomorphic imagery.

There are many images of Shiva. If there are gods and goddesses, then Shiva can be thought of as the Supreme Deity, controller of all, whom you can reverentially approach for assistance. In undertaking a new endeavor, He can be the one to turn to for a blessing. In the logic of opposites that is part of Hinduism, if there is maleness, there must also be femaleness. Thus, Shiva has a wife who may be called Parvati. Our very creation depends upon the uniting of two members of the opposite sex.

My favorite image of Shiva is that of Lord of the Animals, sometimes shown with the image of a deer springing from His hand. What a wonderful Lord who creates not only us, but all other creatures of the earth who are our brothers and sisters in creation! Is it not the ultimate reality for all of us mere mortals to consider ourselves as wondrous miracles among the endless and countless miracles that characterize all of creation!

The image of Shiva Nataraja in southern India depicts a dancing Shiva beating out the endless cycles of time with a tribal drum. The cosmic halo around Shiva is related to the fact that there will be total destruction and the end of a cycle, but a fresh cycle with new creation will inevitably follow. An old house must be destroyed in order for a new one to be created in its place. There are, of necessity, eternal cycles of destruction and creation, and All forever changes.

Shiva Nataraja dances on a demon with one hand pointing downward toward the body. This conveys the message of there being a moral order in the world, with the sinful ultimately being destroyed.

It is probably safe to say the most common image of Shiva throughout India is that of the linga, male principle, conjoined with yoni, the female principle. This one gets right to the heart of demonstrating what creation is all about. It is creation linked to endless miracles that is our ultimate reason for reverence and humility.

Vishnu, the Preserver, is the third manifestation of the Hindu triad. Because any human endeavor depends first on the preservation of the body, there is an obvious need for a deity like Vishnu.

So there is Brahma the Creator, Shiva the Destroyer and Vishnu the Preserver, all of whom can be found in the ancient rocks of Grand Canyon National Park.

*The author, a retired MU geography professor, was born in India (see right) to a Scottish father and an Australian mother. He has worked as a U.S. park ranger at Wupatki National Monument, which isn’t far from the Grand Canyon.

Noble’s Endeavors

A young boy huddles next to his older sister on a crowded ship leaving Bombay. Each cabin has only two bunks to accommodate 10 people. The troop transport ship is filled with 3000 Italian prisoners of World War II on their way to captivity in New Zealand. After the prisoners are dropped off, the 12-year-old Bill and his 18-year-old sister, Dorothy, are headed the opposite direction: toward freedom, or at least what is called “the land of freedom.” They are sailing to America.

Young Bill Noble is neither a refugee nor an immigrant. He has nothing but freedom on his seasick mind. Having grown up in a strict British boarding school in the Nilgiri Hills, he could hardly fathom the concept of freedom even if he tried. Bill is probably conjuring up images of the jungles and paddy fields where he used to play to avoid looking at the angry faces all around him. He might be remembering the scent of curry at his parents’ house in order to forget the salty stench of unbathed captives, a smell that cannot be remedied by opening the portholes because they are five decks down and the edge of a wild typhoon threatens to flood the ship.

Bill’s sister has something else on her mind as she presses her face against the closed porthole to watch destroyer escorts disappear from sight in the thrashing waves. Dorothy prefers not to remember her life in India; instead she dreams of the freedom she can’t wait to encounter at the American university she will attend. It is a freedom Bill will experience six years later in 1950, and he will stay in academia from then on.
Sri Jeeyar Swamiji Sanctifies Columbia

On May 27, Sri Tridandi Chinna Srimannarayana Ramanuja Jeeyar Swami blessed Columbia, Mo., with his holy presence. Dr. Murari Nagar escorted the Swami through the vast collection of Sanskrit texts at MU's Ellis Library.

After his visit, Sri Jeeyar Swamiji wrote a gracious letter, dated June 16, 1997. Here is what he had to say about his short stay in Columbia:

Mangalashasanams to Shri Morarji and Smt. Sarla Deviji and to all our Bhagawat Bandhus in Columbia, Mo.

When we were in your pretty town, we enjoyed your programs and we greatly appreciate the interest evinced in knowing more about Vedic traditions. Our visit to the Vedic Library made us aware of the absorbing work you are engaged in. The Luxmi Puja was also most pleasing. We are most impressed by the keen interest you have shown in enhancing Vedic knowledge. Our very best thoughts for success in all your Adhyatmic endeavors.

Your first copy of Om Shanti is ready to blossom forth and spread the fragrance of our spiritual and Vedic heritage. Once again our best wishes for its progress and success as a leading publication benefiting all people yearning for learning about the Vedas.

Jai Srimannarayana!

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