

Om

The Voice of
Veda Vedanta
Mandiram



Shānti

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Shānti Dūta: Harbinger of Peace

Compiled by
Dr. Murari L. Nagar

Scholars differ as to the meaning and significance of the constituent elements of the capital of the Aśoka column at Sāmāth. One scholar, B. Majumdar, believes the so-called "bell" is not really a bell, but an inverted lotus with sixteen petals. He goes into great detail about the statue, which is a harbinger of peace and symbol of

the Republic of India.

"The capital is really the symbolic representation of the great religious event of the Buddha's appearance and the promulgation of his wonderful dharma, which was first preached in Sāmāth. Upon the 'bell-shaped' lotus there is an abacus having four figures, namely an elephant, a bull, a galloping horse and a lion, each separated from the other by a disc or

Editor's column

Introducing Om Shānti

It was the first and only peaceful revolution in recorded history. It showed the world India is not willing to compromise her principles, which happen to be the same ones champions of the American Revolution held sacred: freedom and self-sufficiency.

There is one principle, however, that colonial freedom fighters failed to understand: nonviolence. Our ideologies are the same, but our cultures are different. The concept of self-sacrifice is foreign to most Americans.

India's victory 50 years ago is the best example of what can be accomplished through peaceful action. We must learn to understand and respect the principle of peace (shānti).

The only way to universal peace is through understanding. One goal of *Om Shānti* is to dispel the myth that there are cultural barriers preventing Indians and Americans from living in unity. In Truth, All is indeed One.

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● Special thanks to:
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wheel (chakra) with 24 spokes. These four symbolical animals probably represent the four principal events of the Buddha's life. The elephant stands for the conception of the Great One, as in a dream, just before her conception, his mother Māyādevī, saw a white elephant entering her womb. The next symbol is the bull, which represents the Zodiac sign Taurus, in which the nativity of the Buddha occurred. The third symbol of the galloping horse depicts the Buddha's Great Renunciation. It was on the renowned horse

Kanthak, that he left the imperial city in the dead of night and went far away in search of Truth. And lastly, the fourth symbol, the lion, represents probably the Great Master himself, Lion of the Śākya race, Śākyasiṃha, the Buddha, the Enlightened One.

"The four wheels with twenty-four spokes represent the Dharma-chakra (Wheel of the Law) that the Buddha set rolling to the four quarters of the globe. The twenty-four spokes that sustain the Wheel stand for the twenty-four (later reduced to four) modes of principal causal relations held in the Buddhist philosophy.



The Lion Capital of Aśoka

"Next, the top of the capital. It is surmounted by four lions set back to back with gaping mouth, as if in the very act of roaring. They may, therefore, be taken as representing monks proclaiming the glories of the Buddha and his teachings to the four cardinal points.

"The Wheel which originally adorned the (pinnacle of)

capital as a crowning feature consisted of thirty-two spokes, symbolizing the Great Buddha himself, the very embodiment of his own dharmaśarīra, having thirty-two chief signs of the Great Superman." Ω

*From *A Guide to Sāmāth* (1947)

What a tangled Web we weave

Sites where Eastern and Western threads in the Web meet.

●The Jiva Institute will soon sponsor the web site for Shantidoot, a multilingual Indian news magazine. The bi-monthly magazine, known for its intriguing articles on Indian topics, has subscribers in over 150 countries!

<http://www.jiva.org>

For information, e-mail: info@jiva.org

●The National Taiwan University in Taipei is developing interactive teaching of several languages. Sanskrit is one of the languages being offered. The project is just in its beginning stage.

<http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/e-cbs.htm>

●This site presents a collection of Sanskrit documents in both English translation and Devanagari font. Extremely comprehensive!

<ftp://jaguar.cs.utah.edu/private/sanskrit/sanskrit.html>

For information, e-mail: sai@cs.utah.edu

●If Sanskrit is your interest, this web page is a directory to Sanskrit sites.

<http://www.lehigh.edu/~ksn2/sanskrit.html>

●This world wide web site lists network resources of interest to Indologists. New additions include "An invitation to Upanisadic philosophy" by Sreedhar Chintalapaty and J.D. Smith's Cambridge files. Also, a South Asia Gopher which includes a directory of active scholars, lists of teaching materials for South Asian languages, documentation of computer fonts and text-processing programs for South Asian languages, job advertisements and more.

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~ucgadkw/indnet-general.html>

Vedic studies making WAVES

The newly established World Association of Vedic Studies (WAVES) will be open to all those interested in "scuba-diving" through the vast, mysterious pool of information provided us by the ancient Vedas and other ancient Indian texts. WAVES will dedicate its studies to the literature, philosophy, philology, linguistics, ritual, archaeo-astronomy, yoga and science of the Vedas.

The association hopes to publish a peer-reviewed research journal on Vedic and ancient Indian studies. WAVES also plans to hold a biennial conference beginning in August 1998. Forming research and study circles in various Vedic disciplines is another goal of the organization.

The idea for WAVES developed out of the International Conference on Indus-Sarasvati Age and Ancient India. The conference was held in Atlanta, Ga., in October 1996. Over 300 participants from Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Caribbean, India, Italy, Nepal, the Netherlands, Mauritius, Mexico, Surinam, the United Kingdom and the United States attended. Prominent archaeologists, historians, philosophers, political scientists, theologians, Sanskritists, Vedic scholars, scientists, engineers, academics and medical specialists presented 60 papers at the conference. The participants were so impressed with the quality of the presentations that several decided to form an academic organization

to hold similar conferences and provide new forums for Vedic studies.

Chair of the steering committee is Dr. Bhu Dev Sharma, professor and chair of the department of mathematics at Xavier University of Louisiana. Other members of the committee include Dr. Shiva G. Bajpai, professor of history and director of the center for Asian studies at California State University at Northridge; Dr. Deen Bandhu Chandora, M.D., from Atlanta, Georgia; David Frawley, American Institute of Vedic Studies; and Dr. Subhash Kak, professor, department of electrical/computer engineering at Louisiana State University. ☉



Om: The Holy Syllable

OM is the Aksara, or imperishable syllable.
OM is the Universe, and this is the exposition of OM.
The past, the present and the future,
all that was, all that is and all that shall be, is OM.
Moreover, All else that may exist beyond the bounds of time,
that too is OM.
- Māṇḍūkya Upanishad

The triad (of Vedas), the three vṛttis (states of waking, sleeping, deep sleep), the three worlds, and also the three gods (Brahmā, Vishnu, Rudra), naming these with its three letters (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.
- The Mahimnastava (Prayer to Śiva)

Trayīṃ tisro vṛttīs tribhuvanam atho trīnapi surān
akārādyair varṇais tribhir abhidhat tīrṇavikṛti.
Turīyaṃ te dhāma dhvanibhir avarundhānam aṇubhiḥ
samastam vyastam tvām śaraṇada grṇātyom iti padam.

India: "The one land all men desire to see"

Mark Twain's views of India from *Following the Equator*

Compiled by
Ramesh Khanna, MD

"This is indeed India! The land of dreams and romance, of fabulous wealth and fabulous poverty, of splendor and rags, of palaces and hovels, of famine and pestilence, of genii and giants and Aladdin lamps, of tigers and elephants, the cobra and the jungle, the country of a hundred nations and a hundred tongues, of a thousand religions and two million gods, cradle of the human race birth place of human speech, mother of history, grand mother of legend,

to pay his growing debt. The lecture tour provided him some money, while a look at the world provided him with the material for *Following the Equator*, Twain's final travel book. A deft humorist, masterful satirist, great novelist, memorable travel writer and gifted essayist, Twain went on to become one of America's most popular writers.

first civilization; she had the first accumulation of material wealth; she was populous with deep thinkers and subtle intellects; she had mines, and woods, and a fruitful soil. It would seem as if she should have kept the lead, and should be today not the meek dependent of an alien master, but mistress of the world, and delivering law and command to every tribe and nation in it. But, in truth, there was never any possibility of such supremacy for her. If there had been but one India and one language - but there were eighty of them! Where there are eighty nations and several hundred governments, fighting and quarreling

HIGH TIMES IN THE CAPITAL OF THE DECCAN.
"MARK TWAIN"
"AT HOME"
POONA GYMKHANA.
WEDNESDAY, 29TH JANUARY
PLAN OF HOUSE: PHILLIPS & CO., LD.

In India

Mark Twain

On India

great-grandmother of tradition, whose yesterdays bear date with the mouldering antiquities of the rest of the nations - the one sole country under the sun that is endowed with an imperishable interest for alien prince and alien peasant, for lettered and ignorant, wise and fool, rich and poor, bond and free, the one land that all men desire to see, and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for the shows of all the rest of the globe combined."

These are the words of Mark Twain, who, along with his wife Olivia and their daughter Clara, visited India in 1896 during a round-the-world lecture tour. For several years, Twain had undergone a series of financial setbacks. He was forced to embark on a world-wide lecture tour to raise money

On India

"There is only one India! It is the only country that has a monopoly of grand and imposing specialities. When another country has a remarkable thing, it cannot have it all to itself; some other country has a duplicate. But India - that is different. Its marvels are its own; the patents cannot be infringed; imitations are not always possible. And think of the size of them, the majesty of them, the weird and outlandish character of the most of them!

"It takes eighty nations, speaking eighty languages, to people her, and they number three hundred million.

"India had the start of the whole world in the beginning of things. She had the

must be the common business of life; unity of purpose and policy are impossible; out of such elements supremacy in the world cannot come."

In India

On arrival in Bombay on January 20, 1896, Twain wrote, "A bewitching place, a bewildering place, an enchanting place ..." In retrospect a year later, while working on the book "Following the Equator," he wrote, "even now, after the lapse of a year, the delirium (of) those days in Bombay has not left me, and I hope never will."

On visit to Benares, Twain exclaimed, "Yes, the city of Benares is in effect just a big church, a religious hive whose very cell is a temple, a shrine or a mosque; and whose every conceiv-

able earthly and heavenly good is procurable under one roof, so to speak ... a sort of Army and Navy store, theologically stocked."

Fascinated by the color and picturesqueness in Jaipur, Twain said, "This one is not like any other that we saw. It is shut up in a lofty turreted wall; the main body of it is divided into six parts by perfectly straight streets that are more than a hundred feet wide; the blocks of houses exhibit a long frontage of the most taking architectural quaintnesses, the straight lines being broken everywhere by pretty little balconies, pillared and highly ornamented, and other cunning and cozy and inviting perches and projections, and the whole of them have the soft rich tint of strawberry ice-cream. One cannot look down the far stretch of the chief street and persuade himself that these are real houses, and that it is all out of doors - the impression that it is an unreality, a picture, a scene in a theater, is only one that will take hold.

"Then the wide street itself, away down and down and down into the distance, was alive with gorgeously-clothed people - not still, but moving, swaying, drifting, eddying, a delirious display of all colors, and all shades of color: delicate, lovely, pale, soft, strong, stunning, vivid, brilliant; a sort of storm of sweet-pea blossoms passing on the wings of a hurricane; and presently, through this storm of color, came swaying and swinging the majestic elephants, clothed in their Sunday best of gaudiness, and the long procession of fanciful trucks freighted with their groups of curious and costly images, and then the long rearguard of safety camels, with their picturesque riders. For color, and picturesqueness,

and novelty, and outlandishness, and sustained interest and fascination, it was the most satisfying show I had ever seen, and I suppose I shall not have the privilege of looking upon its like again."

The plight of servants troubled Mark Twain when he was in Allahabad, the "City of God." He translated it as "Godville."

"India had the start of the whole world in the beginning of things. She had the first civilization; she had the first accumulation of material wealth; she was populous with deep thinkers and subtle intellects; she had mines, woods and a fruitful soil."

- Mark Twain



"I was up at dawn, the next morning. In India the tourist's servant does not sleep in a room in the hotel, but rolls himself up head and ears in his blanket and stretches himself on the veranda,

across the front of his master's door, and spends the night there. I don't believe anybody's servant occupies a room. Apparently, the bungalow servants sleep on the veranda; it is roomy, and goes all around the house. I speak of the men-servants; I saw none of the other sex. I think there are none, except child-nurses. I was up at dawn, and walked around the veranda, past the rows of sleepers. In front of door a Hindoo servant was squatting, waiting for his master to call him. He had polished the yellow shoes and placed them by the door, and now he had nothing to do but wait. It was freezing cold, but there he was, as motionless as a sculptured image, and as patient. It troubled me. I wanted to say to him, 'Don't crouch there like that and freeze; nobody requires it of you; stir around and get warm.' But I hadn't the words. I thought of saying 'jeldy jow,' but I couldn't remember what it meant, so I didn't say it. I knew another phrase, but it wouldn't come

to my mind. I moved on, purposing to dismiss him from my thoughts, but his bare legs and bare feet kept him there. They kept drawing me back from the sunny side to a point whence I could see him. At the end of an hour he had not changed his attitude in the least degree. It was a curious and impressive exhibition of meekness and patience, or fortitude or indifference, I did not know which. But it worried me, and it was spoiling my morning. In fact, it spoiled two hours of it thoroughly. I quitted this vicinity then and left him to punish himself as much as he might want to. But up to that time, the man had not changed his attitude a hair. He will always remain with me, I suppose; his figure never grows vague in my memory. Whenever I read of Indian resignation, Indian patience under wrongs, hardships, and misfortunes, he comes before me. He

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becomes a personification, and stands for India in trouble. And for untold ages India in trouble has been pursued with the very remark which I was going to utter but didn't, because its meaning had slipped me: 'jeldy jow!'"

Twain blends whimsical anecdotes, sharp-eyed commentary and serious social critique. The Taj Mahal induces an interesting reverie. Twain notes, "I had read a great deal too much about it. I saw it in the daytime, I saw it in the moonlight, I saw it near at hand, I saw it from a distance; and I know all the time, that of its kind it was the wonder of the world, with no competitor now and no possible future competitor; and yet, it was not *my* Taj. My Taj had been built by excitable literary

people; it was solidly lodged in my head, and I could not blast it out.



"The Taj represented man's supremest possibility in the creation of grace and

beauty and exquisiteness and splendor, just as the ice-storm represents the Nature's supremest possibility in the combination of those same qualities. I do not know how long ago that idea was bred into me, but I know that I cannot remember back to a time when the thought of either of these symbols of gracious and unapproachable perfection did not at once suggest the other. If I thought of the ice-storm, the Taj rose before me divinely beautiful; if I thought of the Taj, with its encrustings and inlayings of jewels, the vision of the ice-storm rose. And so, to me, all these years, the Taj has had no rival among the temples and palaces of men, none that even remotely approached it - it was man's architectural ice-storm." ☉

Check out these books to learn more about intellectual, political and cultural cooperation between India and America

☉ Early American Interest in Vedanta

by J.P. Rao Rayapati

Many American transcendentalists of the 19th century felt a deep-rooted connection with Indian thought, especially Vedanta philosophy. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Margaret Fuller even sought out and published Vedic literature in their journal, "The Dial."

☉ India and America

by K.R. Narayanan

Discusses the intellectual and political ties between two young democracies, India and America. Narayanan examines the reasons behind Indo-American relations in this century.

☉ Roosevelt, Gandhi, Churchill: America and the last phase of India's Freedom Struggle

by B.K. Shrivastava and M.S. Venkataramani

Former U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt was very sympathetic toward Mahatma Gandhi's fight for freedom. Roosevelt wrote an appeal to Churchill to let India have its independence.

☉ India and America: Historical links

by Mohinder K. Manchanda

This book traces the history of "foreign relations" between India and America. It examines political and cultural links between the two.

SPIRIT STONES

of Southern India

I was driving down the highway when a crude wooden cross caught my eye. At first, I thought someone must have hit an animal on the road and buried it there. However, when I talked to Bill Noble, a geography professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia, he told me it is highway patrol policy in some western states, such as Montana and Wyoming, to mark the spots where fatal accidents occur. Noble also said he has seen similar markers on mountain roads in South America. This just goes to show, something that might initially seem to be a peculiarity of a certain region might have worldwide roots. Although it may be nothing more than policy in America, some tribal people in southern India believe a person's soul remains in a certain spot after death. When a tribal woman becomes pregnant, a stone, or churinga, is selected for her unborn child's spirit, which attaches itself to this "spirit stone" and stays with it even after death.

The Arunta tribe of Australia utilize sacred caves and rock shelters to hold a churinga for each female and male member of the tribe, according to Spencer and Gillen's *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, 1899. A churinga is composed of stone or wood and is often incised with decorative motifs. Upon the death of any member, the related spirit of the person is believed to be conjoined with his or her churinga. Spirits eventually wander away, and pregnancy in a female occurs when a spirit enters her womb. Thus, there is a primitive and charming concept related to the transmigration of spirits.

Although there is no counterpart of this belief system in India, some of the tribals of southern India place spirit stones in the open, in dolmens (table-like tombs), in above-surface cists or in simply constructed temples. Spirit stones were once invariably water-smoothed stones from stream beds, but among tribals who have not abandoned the cult practice, there is now a tendency to deposit a sculptured stone instead. The common belief is that the spirit of a deceased person will be bound to the spirit stone for a while, but will then go to a supernatural abode and not return to earth for another existence.

So far, our research of the virtually unknown spirit stone cult has shown the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu and adjacent areas to have the strongest surviving elements of the cult. Both the Irulas and Kurumbas of the Nilgiris tend to believe in spirit stones, as do the Bettu Kurumbas and

Kasabas who inhabit the Mysore Ditch just to the north of the Nilgiris. Uralis inhabiting the Dimbhun region to the northeast of the Nilgiris still leave spirit stones in temples with thatched, hipped-roofs. The members of an extinct Urali patri-clan once brought

"Is it too outrageous to suggest that the ancestors of the Arunta and other Australian aborigines had, perhaps, some cultural ways in common with Australoid inhabitants of southern India?"

- William A. Noble

either the dug up bones of their deceased or the deceased themselves for burial at Nungundi in the higher eastern Nilgiris. Near this burial site are the piled-up spirit stones long ago left in a temple (mostly disintegrated by now) for the deceased members of the extinct patri-clan. In researching farther from the Nilgiris, we now know that the Sholagas of the Billiginrangan Hills to the north of the Nilgiris still deposit spirit stones within a dolmen. A similar practice has long since been abandoned by the Malayalis (not to be confused with the inhabitants of Kerala) of the Shevroys to the east. However, in the nearby Kollimalais to the south, there are Malayalis who still believe that departed spirits dwell in stones deposited in dolmens. While the Posaalis of the Melagiri Hills to the northwest of the

Shevroys no longer deposit spirit stones for their dead, dolmens with ancestral spirit stones still stand in nearby jungle. The Mala Arayans, living on the lower western slopes of the High Range in Kerala, were once unique in constructing small above-surface stone cists, each for a single spirit stone.

Is it too outrageous to suggest that the ancestors of the Arunta and other Australian aborigines had, perhaps, some cultural ways in common with Australoid inhabitants of southern India? Why are such distant people associated with deposited objects believed to hold the spirits of the departed for some time? Some dolmens in southern India represent a very ancient way to provide shelter for sacred spirit stones.

We know that the Bettu Kurumbas leave a spirit stone on the ground, near a tree, during the funeral. One Irula site has spirit stones piled together on the ground. With the exception of a Kurumba temple with a pyramidal thatched roof and a rectangular thatched temple, which has long been in ruins, Kurumba spirit stones are generally kept in dolmens. Although the Irulas often live close to Kurumbas, they have only small and dolmen-like temples with piled stone walls and flat roofs, or thatched temples with hipped roofs to house their spirit stones. ©

*Based on the research of William Jeadhas, the Rev. Philip Mulley and the writer, William A. Noble.

THE 24 SPOKES OF THE DHARMACHAKRA

Ancient Indian Interpretation:

1. Primordial Prakṛiti (Infinite Universal Nature)
2. Mahat-Tattva (Universal Intelligence; Buddhi)
3. Ahaṅkāra (Individual Consciousness)
4. Manas (Conscious Mind)
5. Pāni or Kara (Hand)
6. Pāda (Feet)
7. Pāyu (Anus)
8. Vāk or Vāc (Larynx)
9. Upastha (Genital Organ)
10. Śrotra or Karṇa (Ears)

11. Cakṣuṣ or Netra (Eyes)
12. Tvak or Tvac (Skin)
13. Jihvā (Tongue)
14. Nāsikā (Nose)
15. Śabda (Sound)
16. Sparśa (Touch)
17. Rūpa (Form) of Tejas (Light)
18. Rasa (Flavour)
19. Gandha (Smell)
20. Ākāśa (Ether)
21. Vāyu (Air)
22. Agni (Fire)
23. Ap (Water)
24. Pṛthivī (Earth)

Buddhist Interpretation:

1. Root
2. Object
3. Predominance
4. Contiguity
5. Immediacy
6. Co-nascence
7. Mutuality
8. Foundation
9. Inducement
10. Pre-nascence
11. Post-nascence
12. Repetition
13. Karma

14. Karma-result
15. Nutriment
16. Faculty
17. Jhāna
18. Path
19. Association
20. Dissociation
21. Presence
22. Absence
23. Disappearance
24. Non-disappearance

*Meanings from Nyanatiloka's *Buddhist Dictionary* and *Chakra-Dhvaja* by Vasudeva Agrawala

Happy 50th Birthday!

From:



To:



Celebrating the rebirth of a free land on Aug. 15, 1947!

DID YOU EVER NOTICE?

While the Dharmachakra, or Wheel of Law, on the flag of independent India has 24 spokes, the circle in the crest of Missouri's state flag is lined with 24 stars.

The national flag of India is tri-color (saffron, white and green). In the center of the white band, there is a wheel in navy blue. The design of the wheel is drawn from the chakra appearing on the Sarnath Lion Capital of Aśoka. Various sages, scholars and Paṇḍits have given different meanings to each of the chakra's 24 spokes.

Buddhist philosophy relates the 24 spokes to the 24 modes of condition. Paccaya means "condition" and stands for something upon which something else, the "conditioned thing," is dependent. ☺

**To get in touch with Veda Vedanta Mandiram:
(573) 449 - 5871 or ellsiris@showme.missouri.edu**

Don't Miss

the Noel P. Gist International Seminar on

**"The Empowerment
of Women in**

Southeast Asia:

**The Thai-Mid Missouri
Leadership Exchange."**

presented by Marie Scruggs,
public school administrator and
participant in the 1996 exchange
in Thailand.

Noon to 1:20 p.m.

February 13, 1997

207 Memorial Union