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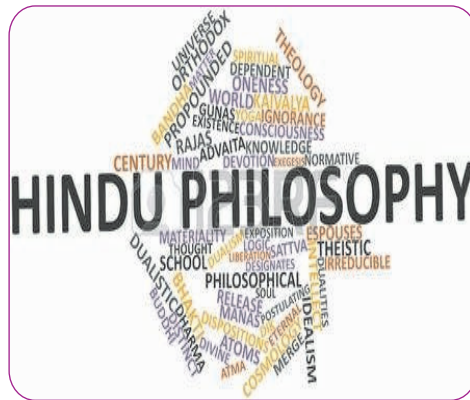
## HINDU PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNITED STATES

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### ABSTRACT: -

**A**fter cold war, the bilateral relations between India and the United States were gained new era. There were multilateral talks and visits of delegates between both of these countries. It extended the strategic, economic, trade, commerce, defence, nuclear deals,



educational ties, cultural links, etc. It is highlighted that, Indian culture is mainly derived from Hindu philosophy. Hindu culture is also present in the US, which shows the cultural diplomacy between India and the US. The Americans are fond of Indian philosophy and are following different practices such as Yoga, meditation, Vedic chants,

education based on Vedas, etc. The paper described the Hindu philosophy in the United States as part of Cultural Diplomacy.

**KEYWORDS:** Hindu Philosophy, nuclear deals, educational ties, cultural links.

### INTRODUCTION :

There is all round co-operation and sharing mutual interests from both the sides of Government of India and Government of United States. The cooperation may be in defense, strategic issues, nuclear issues, global peace initiatives, economic, trade, etc. These issues play significant role in achieving peace and harmony between these two countries. Above all, there is also another significant issue that is, people of both countries have to play important role in improving and maintaining cooperative relations between these countries. The people of United States and India are interact each other, sharing their cultural issues, getting education in these different nations, getting jobs in these countries, spreading culture of their own country each other, etc. These activities of the people of India and United States help to get good relations with one another. These activities are classified and grouped under 'Track-II' diplomacy or 'Civil Society Links' between India and the United States. In India such efforts of people of two countries are also known as 'Public Diplomacy' (Shantanu Chakrabarti, 2003).

United States is open to diverse philosophical and religious ideas. The Hindu population of USA is the world's eighth-largest; 10% of Asian Americans, who together account for 5.8% of US population, are followers of the Hindu faith. The fact that Indian spiritual ideas have found a niche in US is a testimony to the openness and confidence of the American society. Religious and cultural contact between the United States and India took place outside the sphere of government before the Second World War. In 1920s, most of the Indian public's contact with the United States was through their exposure to American Christian missionaries. The first of these evangelical groups had travelled to India early in the nineteenth century, but in relatively small numbers and, as far as the rates of Indians converting to Christianity were concerned, with limited success (Gordon, 1997). Their educational and social works, such as the Reformed Church's Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital in the state of Tamil Nadu, established in 1900, had a more lasting and positive impact on Indian society. The presence

of Western missionaries in India during the late nineteenth century also had the unintended consequence of helping to spark India's Hindu revival movement, and by the turn of the twentieth century one of its most prominent groups, the Ramakrishna Order, had established several Hindu missionary centers in the United States (Lubelsky, 2012).

### HINDU PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNITED STATES:

American interest in Indian spirituality can be traced back to the Transcendentalist Movement of the middle of the 19th century. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were the leaders of the Movement. Others included Margaret Fuller, Palmer Peabody, James Freeman Clark, and Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. Madam Helena Blavatsky and Annie Besant founded the Theosophical Society which attracted followers in the West. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, in all nations there are minds which incline to dwell in the conception of the fundamental Unity. This tendency finds its highest expression in the religious writings of the East, and chiefly in the Indian Scriptures, in the Vedas, the Bhagavat Gita, and the Vishnu Purana.

In limited American circles, at least, Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore had a noticeable impact on American opinion of India, Vivekananda mainly because of his appearance at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, which made him the focus of nationwide publicity for some time and led him to spend considerable time in the United States. Swami Vivekananda spent two years in the United States, and lectured in several cities including Detroit, Boston, and New York. In 1902, Swami Rama Teertha visited the US for about two years lecturing on the philosophy of Vedanta. In 1920, Paramahansa Yogananda was India's delegate at the International Congress of Religious Liberals held in Boston. Rabindranath Tagore has been awarded with the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 (the first Asian ever to be so honored) and because of his five visits to the United States between 1912 and 1931, which were not wholly pleasant experiences either for him or for some of the Americans whom he met (Borra, 1975).

Paramahansa Yogananda followed and established the Self Realization Fellowship in 1920. Yogananda's popular Autobiography of a Yogi has sold in millions. More recent religious entrants in America include the following: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Swami Muktananda, Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, Swami Rama, Vishnu Devananda, Sacchidananda, Chinmayananda, Dayananda, and Kripalvananda. Deepak Chopra is a popular new age writer and speaker. A dozen centers teach Integral Yoga based on the writings and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother of Pondicherry.

During the 1960s, Hindu teachers found resonance in the US counter-culture, leading to the formation of a number of Neo-Hindu movements such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) founded by Swami Prabhupada. People involved in the counter-culture such as Ram Das, George Harrison and Allen Ginsberg were influential in the spread of Hinduism in the United States. A student of Ram Das, Jeffrey Kagel devoted his life to Hinduism in the sixties and is now making many CDs chanting the sacred mantras or spiritual verses. He has been very successful and is considered the rock star of yoga. George Harrison started to record songs with the words "Hare Krishna" in the lyrics and was widely responsible for popularizing Hinduism in America with the younger generation of the time. A joint session of the United States Congress was opened with a prayer in Sanskrit (with some Hindi and English added), read by Venkatachalapathi Samudrala, in September 2000, to honour the visit of Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajapayee.

Many of the Indian cultural institutions are set up in US. Yoga is now ubiquitous in the region as a path to health and wellness. Many thousands of Latin Americans are followers of Sai Baba, Brahmakumaris and Hare Krishna. Collaborative research was begun in US on Indian philosophy and the US Professors are interested in the following areas of Indian origin:

- + Yoga and Meditation: being the top priority as a science to develop the harmonious personality.
- + Sanskrit: being the only language of the world so systematically developed which can be digitalised just as the computer language.
- + Vedas & Vedic Mathematics: being the source of abundant knowledge and easy to practice.
- + Ayurveda: for the cure without side effects and towards more natural therapies for human ailments.
- + Kautilyan Economics: being the most treasured and systematically developed economic policies since

ages.

- + Indian Art and Culture including Music and Dance: the invaluable source of soul soothing; vivid and amazing art and culture of India attracts many US researchers.
- + History & Anthropology: the development of human civilization and the roots of Indian history explore another vista for common interest.

The Indian-Americans have formed a multitude of associations of a local or national character, sometimes based on region, religion, language, community, or caste, deriving from their Indian past.

As stated by Goel (1999), Pensacola in NW Florida supports numerous Hinduism-related spiritual groups. Pensacola is a medium sized southern city with a metropolitan population of about 400,000. It is not a huge metropolis like Atlanta or New York.

- + Integral Knowledge Study Center.
- + Self Realization Fellowship.
- + The Sai Baba Group.
- + Theosophical Society.
- + The Siddha Yoga Meditation Center.
- + Hatha Yoga classes are held at the Pensacola Junior College, the University of West Florida and at half a dozen additional sites in the city. Pensacola is the home to at least a dozen teachers of Hatha Yoga.

Spiritual practices derived from Hinduism and Buddhism are finding a niche in America. From 10 to 20 percent of Americans identify themselves as “spiritual but not religious” (Fuller, 2001). Many Americans practice yoga and meditation. Group chanting of Sanskrit mantras or Kirtans attracts many participants. Krishna Dass, Jai Uttal and Gaura Vani draw crowds.

The New Thought spiritual movement is a growing movement in the United States of which, the Unity Church of Christianity, Science of Mind, Divine Science, Self Realization Fellowship and the Centers for Spiritual Awareness are most important. Goel (1999) writes that Unity Church of Christianity teaches following precepts which reflect Hindu and Buddhist views rather than Christian dogma:

1. God is absolute good, everywhere present. The Hindu Upanishad says: “Isha vasyam idam sarvam.-- In the heart of everything, of whatever there is in the universe, dwells the Lord.”
2. Every human being has a spark of divinity within, the Christ Spirit within. Our essence is of God, and therefore human beings are inherently good. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, “I reside in the heart of all beings. I am in them and they are in Me.”
3. As human beings we create our experiences by the activity of our thoughts. Everything that shows up in our lives has its beginning in thought.
4. Prayer and meditation is the best way we can heighten our connection with God.
5. Belief in reincarnation among Church members is common.
6. Within Unity, Jesus is regarded by many members as a teacher, a way-shower, not “the only begotten son of God.”
7. Unity Church is non-sectarian. One does not give up one’s faith to join the Church.

Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, the founders of the Unity Church, adopted a vegetarian diet. Vegetarianism is a growing movement in United States. The close association between Hindu principles and the New Thought teachings is clearly evident.

The believers of Hindu religions are also present in the US and it is evident from the Hindu temples built at different parts of the US. Major temples include Shiva Murugan Temple, Concord, CA (1957), The Maha Vallabha Ganapathi Devasthanam, New York (1977), Malibu Hindu temple, Calabasas, Shree Raseshwari Radha Rani temple at Radha Madhav Dham, Austin, Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj Temple, Western Hemisphere, Shri Vishnu Temple, Tampa, South Florida, Parashakti Temple, Pontiac, Michigan (1994), Lord Someshwar Temple, Clyde, North Carolina (2011), etc and it is estimated that more than 450 Hindu temples are built in the US.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS:**

Hindu religion is the oldest religion across the world. The principles and practices are based on tested truths in terms of healthy and well being of people. For instance, vegetarianism, Yoga, Meditation, etc are best practices to lead good health and well being. In this way, they have attracted millions of Americans. As such, they are following different practices of Hinduism. Many of the institutions are also engaged in research and development in Hindu epics, Vedas, Upanishads, chants, etc. In this way, Hindu philosophy has become most popular in the US, which has improved to cultural relations between India and the United States.

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