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COMMUNITY POST

Human empowerment convention a big success

Friday, 11.21.2008, 03:55am (GMT-7)

India Post News Service

CHICAGO: The Sixth Annual Human Empowerment Convention 2008 was recently held at Ramada Inn O'Hare in Elk Grove Village, a suburb of Chicago. Attended by hundreds of delegates from across the globe, scholars and intellectuals presented papers and deliberated on issues including yoga philosophy, meditation, and many social, historic and contemporary developments affecting as well as influencing Hinduism in India, US and worldwide. The theme of this year's convention was "Empowerment of Sanatan Hindu Dharma" by facilitating discussions of Indic studies by propagating Indic traditional knowledge in the West.

This year a new segment consisting of the larger Dharma family to include many pagan and tribal traditions with common set of beliefs has been added. The Convention has highlighted the goal of "Human Empowerment" or "ennobling the whole humankind" following the Vedic message.

Prasad Yelamanchi, a member of the Host Committee of HEC, speaking to India Post, said, "India is a modern nation, yet born again in 1947, nearly after a thousand years of subjugation by alien invaders beginning from Alexander the Great, 300 BC and ending with British Colonialism. But it is also an ancient civilization going back to several millennia. India withstood the onslaught of several invasions and continued to spread her ancient wisdom through her saints and sages.

Modern times however brought in different kind of attacks from fanatic evangelists and Jihadis that are getting to be much more dangerous because they are aimed at destroying India's culture, heritage and values through forced or induced conversions. Not just Indian Hindus, but Hindu Diaspora spread throughout the world is finally catching up with this sad phenomenon.

This Convention is a mechanism to bring awareness to the community of this cancerous development in the body politic of India, which is mainly victimizing the Sanatan Hindu Dharma, and empower the community to address it appropriately. The Convention was held from October 31-November 2. Its Plenary Session, American Dharma Congress, was presided over by Jeffrey Armstrong, well known author, philosopher, Vedic astrologer, and an active practitioner of Sanatan Hindu Dharma and Krishna Consciousness, who has spent his life spreading the knowledge of Vedanta in Vancouver, Canada and USA.

Jeffrey Armstrong said, "The challenges we face must be viewed from the global perspective especially in view of the attacks on our Dharmic tradition from inside and outside. As the process of our renaissance is continuing Sanatan Dharma needs to be sustained and expanded through its outlook of, "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," meaning the World is One Family by renewing our alliances with various Sampradayas including the serious yoga practitioners, intellectuals who are attracted to Indic schools of philosophy, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Romas (Gypsies) and many others.

Dr Ian F. Hancock, Nowlin Regents Professor of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Austin was the Keynote Speaker. Dwelling into the history of Roma, an Indic People, Romani Reality and the Gypsy Myth, he explained that despite many analyses about the period of their northbound migration from India, it must have begun in 1500 BC. Gypsies originated in the Punjab region and in all certainty began in large numbers by sixth or seventh century AD because of constant invasions by Islamic warriors.

:: | EVENTS

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Romani language consists of many military Indian words. Among the other traditions, Rev. Ahriana Platten spoke about Paganism, which according to her is practiced by over 5 million people in the US alone. She said that their origin is traced to Western Europe. Their name comes from Pagans that means Country Dwellers or agrarian, considered as children of mind."

Our culture tells us that we are divinely descended. Our Holy Book is Earth. We look to Nature to tell us what is available to us." Elder Jakes, Chief of Mohawk Nation of the Wolff Clan spoke about their traditions. He also spoke of the intimate relations of Native American with the Nature.

He said, "Chief" denotes the Chief Peace Maker. "We believe in equality. We get the gift of life from earth and pray her as our Mother. We are thankful to sacred water. We thank vegetables, fruits, medicinal herbs, animals, trees, birds, wind (grandfathers), Sun and Moon (grandmothers), Stars and whole nature. They sustain us give us the gift of life.

Our life is an unending ritual of Thanksgiving." Meryl Runion said that through the practice of Yoga women are discovering themselves and expanding their own nature and among the more than 10 million practitioners of Yoga in the US, the majority are women. Some important papers include the Challenges and Opportunities in North East India with special reference to Arunachal Pradesh by Vijay Anna Swamy, Proj. Director of Research Institute of World's Ancient Traditions, Cultures and Heritage, Arunachal Pradesh; Vedic Vac and Hellenic Logos, by Dr Nicholas Kazanas, Director of Omilos Meleton Instt., Athens, Greece; An India-Israel-U.S. Alliance: The Last Great hope for Humanity, presented by Dr Richard L. Benkit and finally Prospects for an Indo-Israel-U.S. Alliance by Dr Bhisma Agnihotri, Ambassador at Large for Non-resident Indians worldwide during BJP administration. Pradip Parikh, as Presiding coordinator, highlighted the prospects of building an Indo-US-Israel Alliance to combat terrorism.

He observed that the US soil is largely unaffected since 9/11, but attacks on India and Israel are continuing unabated. However, by no means US interests are safe and therefore these three countries, who have a great deal in common, will have to bring their resources together.

Dr Richard Benkin said that all of humanity is at risk. But this terrible scourge can be defeated only if there is a sustained effort by India, Israel and the US because they each are powerful enough, they share the same principles of freedom and defense and more importantly each are targeted for extinction by the enemy.

Speaking about the victimization of minorities in different parts of the world, especially Bangla Desh, he lamented the plight of the Hindus, who have reduced to be the second class citizens, being attacked by the hooligans among the majority community at their whims and caprice. He also noted the pitiable position of Kashmiri Pandits who have become refugees in their own country and even in the ghettos of their own country a neglected specie.

He remarked that if Hindus in India and elsewhere continue to show apathy and indifference to the fate of their brethren he would himself initiate steps to redress their conditions, amid applause from the audience. In one of the highly interesting and intellectually stimulating seminars on the subject, "The Scythe, The Hammer and the Tricolor" Dr Koenraad Elst, Dr C.I. Issac, Dr Vijayan Nampoothiri and Dr Sanat Menon presented information about conditions of the Hindu Society in the State of Kerala, politically dominated by the Communists and religiously by Muslims and Christians, where conversion and communism are indulging in cleansing the Hindu society. According to Sanat Menon they are substantially successful in their mission.

He urged the Hindu society to awake and go forward to stop the unabated activities of missionaries, communists and also Islamic jihadists before it is too late. Yet another fascinating study and seminar in the Convention was, "Indian Media's War on Hinduism" ably presided by Dr Adityanjee. Participated by erudite scholars, writers and spiritual leaders and teachers, the parallel session focused on the prejudiced role of the Indian media dominated by journalists and media barons who are Christians and Christian sympathizers.

Many media companies are under control of Western companies through cross holdings with almost all leading Ad companies in India being foreign subsidiaries of global Ad agencies. Important subjects like Government Control of Hindu Temples, presented by Dr Prakashrao Velagapudi, Leverage against Conversions by Pradip Parekh were held in the Final Seminar, World Hindu Congress.



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The Seminar was concluded with the Keynote Address by Aruneshwar Gupta, Dy Advocate General, Govt. Of Rajasthan who hoped that someone amongst us is writing the history of the role of Hindu Diaspora in the renaissance of Hindu Dharma in its mother land. The Convention concluded with vote of thanks by Shashi Kejriwal, Convention Chair.

Surendra Ullal



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