



# Being a Hindu in America

*Challenges and Solutions*



**Daily Practice: Individual and Home**

**Camp Vivekananda 2008  
Inawendiwin NJ & Tolland MA**

*Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America*



# Individual and Home

## *Morning to evening routine*



All of nature is governed by regular cycles, so should our lives.

- What do you do when you get up in the morning?
- How do you start your day?
- What should be your daily routine as a Hindu?
- What are the essential things one must do?
- Importance of routines, keeping a regular schedule.

Rise early in the morning **5-6 AM**

**Prayer- Kargre Vaste**

Say "Ram Ram, Namaste to all at home"

Turn on Bhajan

Shower

**Yoga/Surya Namaskar**

**Short 5 Step Pooja**

Breakfast

School/Work

Back from School/Work

Wash Hands/Feet/Face

Snack

**Study**

**Play/Meditation**

**Aarti**

**Bhojan Mantra**

Dinner

**Study**

Set School Bags/Work Items for Next Day

**Night Prayer**

In bed by **10-11 PM**



# Individual and Home Prayers



Prayer is a means of finding peace within ourselves. It gives us time to plan our day. Meditation helps us clear our thoughts, calm our mind. Prayer impacts our spiritual practice at three levels, namely action, thought and attitude:

- ❑ **Action:**
  - All actions that are preceded by prayer for spiritual benefit are performed with spiritual emotion **and hence fewer errors are committed.**
- ❑ **Thought:**
  - So long as the mind is active, thoughts will continue. They pose an obstacle to dissolution of the mind. Useless thoughts also cause wastage of energy. Prayer is an extremely useful tool to prevent this. **Prayer reduces worry and enhances contemplation.**
- ❑ **Attitude:**
  - A prayer done with spiritual emotion **initiates the process of contemplation within a seeker** and this assists him to become calm.



A Hindu when he/she wakes up in the morning say the following prayers before getting out of the bed, “**Karagre Vasate Lakshmi**” and “**Samudra Vasane Devi**”.

Thanking Mother Earth for stepping on her with our feet, even though she holds on to us and bears us without complaint or discrimination.



# Individual and Home

## *Eight-fold (Astanga) YOGA*



- ❖ YOGA reveals that the way to break the karmic cycle is to interrupt the cycle at the VRITTI level
- ❖ Yoga is the restriction (control) of the modifications of the mind
- ❖ CHITTAVRITTI refers to the various thoughts (or thought-forms) of the mind
- ❖ Yoga is called a sovereign science because **it must be experienced directly, that is, one must practice it oneself and verify the results with one's own experience.**

***Yoga chitta-vritti nirodhah.***  
*Chapter 1, Sutra 2, of the Yoga Sutras*



8. SAMADHI
7. DHYANA
6. DHARANA
5. PRATYAHARA
4. PRANAYAMA
3. ASANA
2. NIYAMA
1. YAMA

- ❖ One attains the highest state of consciousness
- ❖ Is freed from ignorance and egocentricity
  - the cause of one's pain and suffering
- ❖ One gains complete mastery of the mind and is no longer controlled (motivated or moved) by one's samskaras (past impressions).

Proven tool for **managing stress**, sharpening the **intellect** and improving performance at school or at work



# Individual and Home

## Food We Eat



Before sitting for food, the place is purified, a seat is put and in a leaf the articles of food are served. Before taking the food, a little water is sprinkled making a line all round the leaf repeating some Vedic Mantras. This repetition purifies the food..

- ❑ According to Hinduism, food is verily an aspect of Brahman (annam parabrahma swaroopam). Because it is a gift from God, it should be treated with great respect.
- ❑ The gross physical body is called annamayakosh or the food body, because it is nourished by food and grows by absorbing the energies from the food. **Hindus offer food to God mentally before eating.**
- ❑ In the Bhagavad gita Sri Krishna declares that food is of three types as are sacrifices, austerity and charity.
  - **Sattvic (pure)** food is that one which increases longevity, purity, strength, health, happiness and taste and which is juicy, oily, durable in nature and liked by sattvic people.
  - **Rajasic (hot)** food is that one which is bitter, sour, salty, hot and spicy, burning and which gives unhappiness, sorrow and disease.
  - **Tamasic (intoxicating)** food is that one which is stored and devoid of any juices, dried, foul smelling, decomposed, left over, refrigerated and indigestible



*'From food are produced all creatures which dwell on earth. Then they live by food, and in the end they return to food. For food is the oldest of all beings, and therefore it is called panacea. Taittiriya Upanishad*



# Individual and Home

## *Vegetarianism*



- ❑ There are three main reasons for being a vegetarian:
  - the principle of nonviolence (ahimsa) applied to animals;
  - the intention to offer only "pure" (vegetarian) food to Ishwar and then to receive it back as prasad; and
  - the conviction that non-vegetarian food is detrimental for the mind and for spiritual development.
- ❑ Vegetarianism is the key to good health and happiness.
- ❑ The Hindu view is multi-dimensional, including the
  - ecological,
  - medical and
  - spiritual

**Ayurveda Says:**  
If you want to live long do two things:

1. Eat less
2. Exercise







# Individual and Home

## Clothes We Wear



- ❑ Our clothes reflect our personality and reflect who we are. Our dress should be clean, appropriate and modest. **Wearing Indian clothes should make us feel proud of our heritage.**
  - We should wear Indian clothes at home.
  - Dress properly whenever we visit the temple.
  - We should dress in Indian clothes when visiting friends.
  - We should also dress in Indian clothes at work or at school whenever there is a special occasion.
  - That helps identify us as a Hindu and also gives the other people an opportunity to learn.
  
- ❑ The color of clothes also has significance.
  - White is the color of purity and gives you peace.
  - Black is inauspicious.
  - Red color gives you energy. It is the color of auspiciousness, and is the color worn by brides at weddings.
  - The color orange is the color of renunciation; it gives one strength to concentrate on one's austerities.
  - The color green attracts money.
  
- ❑ Do not to take shoes into the home and walk barefoot whenever possible.
  
- 7 ❑ **Hindu home is a mandir. So it should be kept clean and pure**



# Individual and Home

## Language We Speak



- ❑ At home we must speak in our mother tongue, without exception.
- ❑ Encourage all children to learn 4-5 languages including Sanskrit. That will connect them to their roots.
- ❑ **CAN WE BECOME INDIAN WITHOUT SPEAKING OUR MOTHER TONGUE?**
  - The question of whether or not we can be Indian without fluency in the Indian language is a question that has emerged since European colonialism and imperialism.
  - Professor Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1986), an African scholar and a Kenyan writer: "*language is a carrier of culture.*"
  - Specifically, language is embedded with the particularities of a culture, such as its values, norms, morals, philosophies, beliefs and ideologies which a culture develops and accumulates throughout its history.
  - Thus, according to Professor Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1986), language is a "*collective memory bank of a people's experiences in history.*"

The Indian language is a precious treasure for it took our ancestors many centuries to develop it. It has survived despite European colonialism, neo-colonialism, and language imperialism. It is our duty to keep it alive for the next generation of Indians. We echo the words of our Native American relatives: "If our language is to live our children must speak it."





# Individual and Home

## *Home Environment*



- Your home is like a mandir.
- Create an atmosphere of a Hindu home, have a prayer room, Hindu icons, pictures all over.
- When someone enters your home they should know right away that this is a Hindu home.
- “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.”

- What are the guidelines for the members of the family when they are at home?
  - Quiet, no yelling, speak softly,
  - Respect, no banging doors, walking softly
  - Keeping shoes outside
  - No dirty language
- Sharing all the chores strengthens the family unit.
  - Everyone looks out for and helps each other.
  - The elders protect the youngsters, and they in turn respect the elders.
  - Younger members of the family learn from the elders, who are role models.



# Individual and Home *Home Environment*



## □ Conduct

- Satsangs at Home
- Satya Narayan Pooja
- Havan
- Akhand Ramayan, Vishnusahasranama

## □ Karva Chauth, Ahoi

## □ Perform at least the following Samskars for Children

- Simantonayan
- Namakaran
- Annaprasan
- ChurnaKarna
- Upanayan
- Samavartan
- Vivah



# Activities to Do as Self/Family



Activity	Applicable to	Frequency	Exceptions
Prayer/Mala	Self	Daily	None
Yoga & Meditation	Self	Daily	None
Learn about Hindu Heritage, History	Self/Family	Always	None
Aarti	Family	Daily	None
Dance & Music	Self	Weekly	None
Dinner	Family	Daily	None
Visit the Mandir	Family	Weekly	None
Bal Vihar	Family	Weekly	None
Camp	Family	Yearly	None
Visit India	Family	Yearly	Some
Camping Trips	Family	Yearly	Some
Samskars for children	Family	Age Appr	None
Satsangs, Havans ...	Family	Half Yearly	Some



# Visible Signs & Behaviors



Visible Signs & Behaviors	Applicable to	Exceptions
Respecting Elders; Touching their feet	Self	None
Polite in Speech	Self	None
Courteous in Behavior	Self	None
Welcome guest, sit and talk to them	Self	None
Greet Everyone with Namaste, Ram-Ram, Jai Sri Krishna (No Hi, Hello)	Self	None
Wear Tilak, Bindi	Self	None
Wear Indian Clothes at home, festivals, mandir, to friends	Self/Family	None
Speak in Mother tongue at home	Self/Family	None
Wear chain with Om, Swastika, Hanuman..	Self	None
Wear raksha (kalava) on wrist	Self	None
Greet People on Phone with " <b>Hari Om</b> " (No hello)	Self/Family	None