

**WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR VEDIC STUDIES (WAVES) Successfully Completes a
Worldwide Conference on Varna, Jati and Kula (Caste)**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vedic Scholars Discuss a Multitude of Aspects of India's "Caste" System

Piscataway, NJ (World Assoc. for Vedic Studies - WAVES) August 5, 2011. –

On July 31, 2011, WAVES concluded a well-attended three-day conference on Varna, Jati and Kula (Caste) that featured prominent scholars worldwide and robust youth participation from high school, college and graduate school students, including members of Gayatri Pariwar, HSC and Youth for Sewa. For three days, scholars from various institutions and with diverse backgrounds presented historical, anthropological, social, and spiritual aspects of the Caste system in India.

The conference was co-sponsored by **All World Gayatri Pariwar** and inaugurated by **Dr. Pranav Pandya** (Head, All World Gayatri Pariwar and Chancellor of Dev Sanskriti University). Other prominent speakers at the conference included **Swami Tattvaidananda** (representing Arsha Vidya Gurukulam and the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha), **Dr. Subramanian Swamy**, **Dr. R. Vaidyanathan**, **Rajiv Malhotra**, **Dr. MG Prasad**, **Dr. Madan Lal Goel**, **Suresh Chauhanke (Chairman and Managing Director of Sudarshan TV)**, and **Prof. Ved Nanda**. In addition, several students participating in the youth forum made presentations reflecting unique Hindu-American perspectives on the topic of caste. They expressed a yearning to learn more about Hinduism from authentic sources and appreciation for the original jati / varna system, which many felt had continuing relevance in modern times.

Dr. Pandya, in his inaugural address, remarked, "The origin and purpose of Varna-Ashram-Dharma (the core foundation of Indian civilization) is rooted in the main purpose of life, which is to achieve Self-enlightenment and perfection, for which the Varna-order provided the choice of a suitable path and support system for a thriving social fabric and personal life attainments, including social upliftment and material development as desirable side effects."

Dr. Pandya further noted that, "Had Varna-order been imposed upon the society by brute force, then it would not have survived the test of time in a highly decentralized, diverse, pluralistic and autonomously distributed society that India has represented through the ages."

The conference drew nearly 100 participants over the course of the weekend, sparking lively and provocative discussions. At the conclusion of the conference, many of the attendees voted to adopt a set of resolutions reflecting several of the key points emerging from the conference presentations.

In particular, it was agreed that jati / varna in their original form were beneficial for the psycho-spiritual development of the individual and for social harmony and prosperity. In fact, several participants on the conference panel on Western Perspectives on Varna, Jati and Kula, including Jeffrey Armstrong and Krishna Kirti Das (Christopher Shannon), strongly advocated for the incorporation of Jati / Varna principles into modern Western society.

Second, it was agreed that the negative social practices of untouchability and the like result from a degenerated and distorted social system that cannot be equated with Jati / Varna and that it is unfair to condemn Jati / Varna for the social evils associated with a social system that is a grossly corrupted distortion of Jati / Varna. Hindus worldwide condemn untouchability and other such negative social practices as discrimination. "Well, if people have completely discarded the genuine Varna-order, and instead rolled out an unjust and corrupted order, then it's utterly unreasonable to slander the genuine Varna-order," was the view of Yuga-rishi Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya (founder of All World Gayatri Pariwar), as quoted by Sanjay Saxena at the conference.

Third, there was consensus that it is inimical to Hindu interests for others, including Hindu organizations not based in India, to conflate Jati / Varna with racism or crimes against humanity—this is a matter for Indians to solve as an internal social issue under the sovereign power of India and one in which much progress has been made by the Indian government, the democratic / legal institutions of India and the grassroots efforts of many Hindu organizations and acharyas.

The resolutions adopted by the WAVES conference will be separately published, along with conference proceedings and a detailed paper setting forth Hindu perspectives on Jati / Varna / Kula.

The reactions of youth participants at the conference were of appreciation for the forum and readiness for engagement. "I am very grateful for this opportunity to learn so much about my culture", said Kshama Desai of Youth for Sewa. "It was fantastic to see Hindu youth brainstorming the values of their tradition in such a constructive way", said Sashi Kejriwal, President of WAVES. Ravi Jaishankar, Secretary of the HSC (Hindu Students Council) National Body, eloquently expressed the need for the community to provide support to his generation to carry forward the Hindu tradition.

A series of presentations were made highlighting the ways in which the original and practical concepts of Varna and Jati can be integrated with modern social, economic, political, and spiritual lives throughout the world. Projects are likely to evolve to critically evaluate useful elements of the system for the benefit of society.

For more information go to www.wavesinternational.net , or contact: Kalyan Viswanathan; 614-668-1668; email at varnajati2011@gmail.com