

Press Release

World Conference Celebrates Vedic Wisdom for Civilizational Harmony

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Port-of-Spain, Trinidad: The WAVES 2010 conference held in Trinidad last week attracted over 100 scholars from all over the world. WAVES stands for the World Association of Vedic Studies and Vedas are considered to be the earliest known texts of the human civilization; Vedic studies is the discipline which has emerged from that tradition of researching, practicing, and teaching the Vedas and its associated literature, science, and art.

Participants shared their insights on the inner meanings in the Vedic literature and discussed the future of Vedic knowledge systems such as yoga and Ayurveda. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trinidad & Tobago who addressed the conference, observed that there could be no clash of civilizations in a global society when governed by the Vedic precept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and that Ayurveda is an affordable, accessible, and non-invasive medicine system.”

Inaugurating the conference, the Indian High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago HE Malay Mishra observed that “the Vedic message of ‘*service to people is service to the supreme*’ transcends time and place and that listening to the Vedic scholars had created a new enthusiasm to examine the current global issues in a harmonious light.”

Leading scientists, artists, and philosophers deliberated on many deep issues at the beautiful St. Augustine Campus of University of West Indies in Trinidad.

“The universal insights of the Vedas have much to guide and inform us in this challenging global climate, especially in building ethical, functioning democracies,” said Prof. Bal Ram Singh, conference chair of WAVES 2010.

Prof. Subhash Kak, a leading scientist who was much in the press a few years back for resolving Einstein’s ‘Twin Paradox’, addressed the conference on the topic of ‘Vedic Insights and the current World Crisis.’ Prof. Kak said, “The current crisis is a result of the view that consumption must drive the growth of nations, but maybe there is a need to concentrate on wellbeing instead. WAVES embraces all of science and also other aspects that can potentially be encompassed by science.”

According to Dr. Kalidas Shetty, a biotechnologist from Boston, “science is always in search of integrative paradigms that can interconnect different bodies of knowledge - Vedic knowledge systems incorporate multiple dimensions naturally with little intellectual or social stress.” Dr. Shetty was a scientific advisor to US Secretary of State Colin Powell.

The conference was held along three tracks: Academic Symposium on Vedic knowledge for Civilizational Harmony, Deep dive into Understanding Vedic Practices, and a Youth Summit.

The Vedic practice of Yajna organized and performed by Shri PVR Narasimha Rao and Shri Shekhar Shastri, the program chair for WAVES 2010, attracted delegates and participants of all shades and colors alike.

In addition, there were presentations on how the Diaspora has adapted and re-created sacred Vedic rituals – especially, the Trinidad spiritual teacher Raviji charmed the audience with his poetic rendering of the journey undertaken by his ancestors over the past 160 years. Traveling through the island one saw colorful flags all over and Dr. Indrani Rampersad described the important role of the Jhandi's in the Ramlila performance in Trinidad. Sanskrit scholars debated in Sanskrit on the ways of bringing 'Social Harmony', and women leaders recounted their empowerment through the Vedic heritage.

Jeffrey Armstrong, a celebrated author and a popular yoga teacher, talked about his new bestseller book 'Spiritual teachings of the Avatar' – which takes off from the recently released 3-D movie, "Avatar", and there were wonderful musical performances by the Kanniks and several Trinidad artists.

One of the high points of the conference was the Youth Summit, where high-school and college students interacted on important questions in a lively manner over the four days. The Youth Summit spanned issues related to Hindu identity, relationships, family, and social activism in the form of a series of conversations between youth leaders and invited scholars. Dr. Vanita Shastri, the youth track chair said, "WAVES seems to have unleashed the latent curiosity of the youth to learn the deeper significance of the Vedic practices, and the inheritors of the future are ready to take charge."

Kavita Pallod, a youth leader from University of Texas, Austin stated that "the challenges for a Hindu student appear insurmountable on the campus, but the moment you take a stand for a just cause, solutions start unfolding."

Numerous Vedic scholars participated in the conference including: David Frawley, T.S. Rukmani, Douglas Allen, Sethuraman Rammohan, Oleg Perzashkevich, Sampadananda Misra, Aseem Shukla, S. Kalyanaraman, and K. Ramasubramanian.

"The content was superb and I salute the organizers for their personal commitment and sacrifice," remarked noted legal expert and Vice Provost of the University of Denver, Dr. Ved Nanda.

"I have attended many conferences in my long career, but this has been phenomenal - what great energy," said Prof. Triloki N. Pandey of University of California, Santa Cruz.

Swami Jyotirmayananda (Dakshin Kannada, India), a regular WAVES attendee, observed that "this is the best WAVES conference among the five I have attended so far."

Dr. Dyer Narinesingh, the Acting Principal of the University of West Indies, acknowledged that the success of the WAVES 2010 had opened up a new dialogue between the people of Trinidad and Hindus all over the world.

The WAVES conference honored Prof. Nicholas Kazanas, Rajiv Malhotra, and Hindu American Foundation (HAF) for excellence in areas of serving the cause of Vedic values; awards for community service in TT were given to Mr. Satnarayan Maharaj of the Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha, Dr. Ramdath Ramkissoon of Saraswati Mandiram, and Prof. Hari Shanker Adesh of Bharatiya Vidya Sansthaan.

"This conference was a historic event in the celebration of Vedic traditions and we are deeply touched by the warmth and hospitality of the people of Trinidad and Tobago", said Sashi Kejriwal, President, WAVES.

The conference was hosted by Saraswati Mandiram with support from a number of Trinidad and Tobago organizations, such as: the Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha (SDMS), The National Council for Indian Culture (NCIC) and the Vedic Mission, and many others.

Pandit Ramadheen Ramsamooj, the Conference Coordinator and the architect of bringing WAVES to Trinidad and Tobago expressed satisfaction with the conference. "We have brought the Vedic knowledge to the shores of Trinidad and Tobago to empower their tradition, and we have done well in this endeavor", said Pandit Ramsamooj.

WAVES: World Association of Vedic Studies (WAVES) is a multidisciplinary, non-religious, academic society. It is a forum for all scholarly activities and views on any area of Vedic Studies variously called as Indian Studies, South Asian Studies or Indology.

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