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HISTORIC HINDU JEWISH DECLARATION

Swami Dayananda Saraswati organised the first Hindu-Jewish meet in February 2007 at New Delhi. Facilitated by “[The World Council of Religious Leaders](http://www.wcorl.org)” (<http://www.wcorl.org>), this was a great event as both the Hindu and Jewish traditions, which do not have aggressive programs of conversion, and advocated a way of life to accomplish the view.

- This Hindu-Jewish dialogue was aimed at highlighting common cultural features and common philosophies behind the two religions while gladly accepting the differences. A joint declaration was issued acknowledging the shared values of two traditions and for deepening the bilateral relationship predicated on the recognition of One Supreme Being.
- A second summit was held at Jerusalem, February 17-20, 2008. The Government of Israel supported the meet and the entire Rabbinate and Jewish scholars participated in the dialogue. The Hindu delegation consisted of members of the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, including representatives of Shankaracharyas. This second meet was as extraordinary as the first one in that it emphasized and illustrated the importance of honest dialogue between any two religious traditions to resolve seemingly irresolvable differences. The Jerusalem meet concluded with a landmark declaration that Hindus worship “One Supreme Being” and are not really idolatrous. The implications of this are profound in content and far-reaching in effect.
- Judaism was born of the complete repudiation of idol worship and rabbinic literature abounds with denunciation of idolatry. Due to an incomplete understanding, Hinduism has been perceived by the Jewish traditions as idolatrous and promoting many gods. For centuries, both the Hindus and Jewish people have experienced at the hands of aggressive religions extremely violent consequences of wrong perceptions. The Historic declaration made at the Jerusalem meet sets to rest the wrong notion that Hinduism is idolatrous. The declaration reads: “It is recognized that One Supreme Being in its formless and manifest aspects has been worshipped by Hindus over millennia. The Hindus relate to only the One Supreme Being when he/she prays to a particular manifestation. This does not mean that Hindus worship ‘idols’. They worship *devataas* who are manifestation of the One Supreme Being”. The Chief Rabbi announced that it was a matter of relief to know that their hitherto held perception was wrong. (*On this declaration one can read Swami Dayananda Saraswati’s article published by the media*). This declaration is indeed a hallmark declaration showing way for meaningful dialogue between leaders of different religious traditions and to help remove wrong perceptions arising from lack of understanding and / or misunderstanding.
- The 3rd Hindu-Jewish meeting will be held in 2009 in the US.

HINDU LEADERS MEET CHIEF RABBIS AND PM OF ISRAEL

<http://www.hinduismtoday.com/hpi/2008/2/26.shtml#3>

KAPAA, HAWAII, USA, February 26, 2008: From February 17th to 21st, Hindu swamis and religious leaders from India visited Israel, at the invitation of the Israeli foreign ministry, the American Jewish Association, the World Council of Religious Leaders and the Rabbinate of Israel. They met with the Chief Rabbis of Israel, the President of Israel, members of the foreign ministry, the Mayor of Haifa and many other respected dignitaries.

It was a beautiful meeting of two ancient, non-proselytizing, non-converting religions who shared their beliefs, their traditions and their ideals with each other, finding much common ground between the two ancient traditions.

The program began in Jerusalem on the evening of the 17th February. On the 18th, they joined a discussion between Hindu leaders and Jewish leaders at the Mt. Zion Hotel in Jerusalem. Important issues such as icon worship, calendars, the meaning of the swastika and many others were discussed with great understanding and mutual respect. In the evening, the group was hosted by the Israeli Parliament where they met the Israeli Prime Minister and members of the foreign ministry, and they were greeted by a special welcome by the Israeli Parliament in session.

On the 19th February, they had a meeting with His Excellency, the President of Israel. In that evening they were hosted for a special dinner by the American Jewish Committee, headed by Rabbi David Rosen. On the 20th February, they traveled to Haifa where they met with local communities of other religions in Israel, including the Druze and the Bahai'i as well as local Christian and Muslim leaders. The final dinner was hosted by the President of Haifa University. The first Hindu-Jewish summit had taken place in Delhi in the previous year, on February 2007.

The group was formed by were Swami Avdhesanand Giriji (Acharya Mahamandaleshwar, Juna Akhara), Swami Paramatmanandji (Secretary, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha), Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji (President and Spiritual Head, Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh), Swami Madhav Priya Dasji (Swaminarayan sampradhaya), along with other revered leaders and an eminent team of Hindu scholars. Swami Dayananda Saraswati was scheduled to play a major role in the event; however, unfortunately he was unable to attend at the last minute.

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AJC HOSTS JEWISH AND HINDU WORLD LEADERS IN JERUSALEM

<http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=ijlTl2PHKoG&b=849241&ct=5043777&printmode=1>

February 19, 2008 – Jerusalem – The American Jewish Committee hosted a celebratory evening event at the Second International Hindu-Jewish Summit in Jerusalem last night.

The February 18 – 20 summit brings together 20 Hindu leaders, including some of the most important names in the contemporary Hindu world, with Jewish leaders including the Chief Rabbis of the State of Israel and the Rabbinat's Commission for Interreligious Dialogue.

"Almost by definition, diplomatic relationships are superficial and transient," said Rabbi David Rosen, AJC's International Director of Interreligious Affairs. "By developing and deepening interreligious understanding and intercultural ties, one gives far more substance and durability to such relationships."

The International Hindu-Jewish summits are an initiative of the World Council of Religious Leaders (WCORL), and are held under the auspices of the All India Dharma Acharya Seba and the Chief Rabbinat of Israel.

The first summit took place last year in Delhi and explored commonalities in the respective Jewish and Hindu traditions and identities. In Delhi the delegates committed to continue meeting and develop initiatives to promote social justice, religious freedom and mutual education about Hinduism and Judaism.

This week's summit in Jerusalem has been organized in cooperation with AJC and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The main colloquium took place yesterday in Jerusalem, followed by a celebratory dinner at Beit Moses, AJC's Israel/Middle East Office. While in Israel, the leaders also are meeting with President Shimon Peres, government ministers, as well as Christian and Muslim religious leadership.

Rabbi Rosen, who is also a member of the Chief Rabbinat of Israel's Commission for Interreligious Dialog, and participated in the first summit, expressed his deep satisfaction that AJC is playing such a key role in this bilateral development.

"Never before has such a high level delegation of Hindu leaders visited Israel, let alone for an official dialogue with the Israeli religious establishment and under national auspices," said Rabbi Rosen.

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HINDU AMERICAN FOUNDATION JOINS IN HISTORIC HINDU-JEWISH SUMMIT HELD IN ISRAEL

http://www.hafsite.org/media_press_release_israel.htm

New York, NY (February 26, 2008): The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) was represented in a delegation of Hindu spiritual and lay leaders that visited Israel last week to attend the Second International Hindu-Jewish Summit organized by the World Council of Religious Leaders (WCORL) in conjunction with the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The goal of the Summit, according to Bawa Jain, Secretary General of WCORL, was to further develop and promote understanding and mutual respect between the leaders of The Chief Rabbinate of Israel and The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, an apex unifying body of many of the most prominent Hindu religious leaders. This 2008 Summit was a continuation of the first Summit held in Dehli, India in February 2007.

"This historic coming together of the two oldest religions will further efforts towards religious diplomacy and alleviate many of the deep-rooted misunderstandings of the past 2000 years," said Bawa Jain, after the Summit. Jain invited Sheetal Shah, Director of Development for HAF, to travel to Israel as a Hindu representative to the Summit.

The Hindu delegation, which arrived in Jerusalem on February 17, consisted of several prominent Hindu leaders including Swami Avdhesanand Giri, Swami Paramatmananda Saraswati, Swami Chidanand Saraswati, and Swami Madhavpriyadas. Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the convener of the Dharma Acharya Sabha, was unable to attend the Summit due to health concerns.

"The Summit was an extraordinary opportunity for leaders of both religions to come together and uncover a number of similarities between Hinduism and Judaism," said Sheetal Shah, upon her return to the HAF office in New York. "This Summit personified the spirit of true pluralism as we discovered and celebrated the theological, ritual and spiritual similarities that our religious traditions share. HAF was honored and humbled to join our dharmacharyas on this mission."

In addition to the planned discussions between the leaders of the Rabbinate and the Hindu delegation, which led to the formation of a new Declaration of understanding, the groups also met with Israeli President Shimon Peres, Minister Isaac Herzog at the Knesset, and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Majalli Whbee. During the delegation's audience with President Peres, they discussed similarities between Jewish and Hindu beliefs, mutual hopes for lasting peace in the Middle East and the importance of a strong Israeli-Indian relationship.

"This Summit was remarkable first and foremost because of the level of the participation and not just the high level Hindu leaders," said Rabbi David Rosen, who heads the AJC's Department of Interreligious Affairs. "While the first Summit last year was obviously the breakthrough, the level and extent of Israeli Rabbinic leadership that participated in the meeting in Jerusalem was unparalleled."

At the Summit, Rabbi Rosen formally read the Declaration upon which the leaders of the Rabbinate and the Hindu delegation had agreed. The nine-point Declaration broadly (a) reaffirms the common Hindu and Jewish belief in One Supreme Being both in its formless and manifest aspects; (b) expresses their common world view of the sanctity of human life; (c) recognizes that all religions are sacred for their people and therefore, no one should denigrate or interfere in the religious practice of others; (d) recognizes that the Svastika is an ancient Hindu symbol and was misappropriated by the Third Reich; and (e) calls for serious reconsideration of the Aryan Migration Theory--a largely discredited, racist theory that posits that an invasion by nomadic, non-Indian tribes conceived the Vedic civilization.

"In particular, the agreement of the belief in One Supreme Being having various manifestations and the recognition of Svastika's auspiciousness in the Hindu tradition were monumental steps in building an understanding between the two religions," said Shah, adding that HAF will work hard to highlight the Declaration in various fora over the next year.

Despite snowy conditions in Jerusalem, the Hindu delegation visited and said their prayers at the Kotel, also known as the Western Wall, one of the holiest sites for Jews. The delegation also paid their respects to those who perished in the Holocaust during a visit to Yad Vashem, Israel's memorial to the Holocaust victims.

As the delegation traveled to Haifa on the last day, they met with leaders of the Druze community and paid their respects at the Ba'hai Center. In Haifa, the Mayor, Mr. Yonah Yahav, the city's Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen,

along with the city's Christian and Muslim religious leaders greeted the delegation.

"Above all, this meeting provided the opportunity not only for friendships to develop between the religious leaders, but to shatter distorted stereotypes and misconceptions that all too often have contributed to keeping the Hindu and Jewish worlds apart," added Rabbi Rosen. "Most of us who were privileged to be part of this momentous gathering had the feeling that we were part of the beginning of a new historic era of understanding and cooperation between our two faith communities."

THE FULL TEXT OF THE DECLARATION can be found at
<http://www.hafsite.org/pdf/2nd%20Jewish-Hindu%20Summit%20Final%20Declaration%2002-27-08.pdf>

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THE HINDU-JEWISH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

(Feb. 5-7, 2007, New Delhi, India)

<http://frfnet.org/1st-Hindu-Jewish%20Summit%20Report-Final.pdf>

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THE HINDU-JEWISH SUMMIT

(Feb 5-7, 2007, New Delhi), The Jerusalem Post

Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yona Metzger and other leading rabbis from around the world signed a declaration Tuesday with leading Hindu leaders in New Delhi that denounces terrorism and violence.

"Although, Muslim extremism was not singled out, it was at the forefront of many participants' minds," said Rabbi David Rosen, international director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee, speaking from New Delhi.

The resolution was signed during a summit organized by the World Council of Religious Leaders.

"The most important Hindu leaders in India gathered for the first meeting of this kind out of respect for the Jewish faith," said

Metzger in a telephone interview with The Jerusalem Post from the summit.

"Several Hindu leaders expressed their dismay at Muslim violence," added Metzger. "They told me that both Judaism and Hinduism were the mothers from which all other religions suckled. But sometimes the offspring bite the breast that feeds them."

In a joint declaration, the religious leaders affirmed their shared values, condemned violence, and pledged to address the challenges of poverty and illness.

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THE FULL TEXT OF THE DECLARATION

(February 5-6, 2007).

Declaration of Mutual Understanding and Cooperation from the First Jewish-Hindu Leadership Summit Delhi 17-18 Shvat, 5767; February 5-6, 2007.

The first Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit took place in Delhi on February 5 to 7, 2007, at which the delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel convened with major religious leaders of Hindu Dharma. It is planned that this historic gathering will lead to ongoing bilateral meetings on shared values and common concerns, many of which were highlighted at this summit.

The participants affirmed that:

1. Their respective traditions teach faith in one supreme being who is the ultimate reality, who has created this world in its blessed diversity and who has communicated divine ways of action for humanity for different peoples in different times and places.
2. The religious identities of both Jewish and Hindu communities are related to components of faith, scripture, people hood, culture, religious practices, land and language.
3. Hindus and Jews seek to maintain their respective heritage and pass it on to the succeeding generations, while living in respectful relations with other communities.
4. Neither seeks to proselytise, nor undermine or replace in any way the religious identities of other faith communities. They expect other faith communities to respect their religious identities and commitments, and condemn all activities that go against the sanctity of this mutual respect.

5. Both the Hindu and Jewish traditions affirm the sanctity of life and aspire for a society in which all live in peace and harmony with one another. Accordingly they condemn all acts of violence in the name of any religion or against any religion.

6. The Jewish and Hindu communities are committed to the ancient traditions of Judaism and Hindu Dharma respectively, and have both, in their own ways, gone through the painful experiences of persecution, oppression and destruction. Therefore, they realise the need to educate the present and succeeding generations about their past, in order that they will make right efforts to promote religious harmony.

7. The representatives of the two faith communities recognise the need for understanding one another in terms of lifestyles, philosophy, religious symbols, culture, etc. They also recognise that they have to make themselves understood by other faith communities. They hope that through their bilateral initiatives, these needs would be met.

8. Because both traditions affirm the central importance of social responsibility for their societies and for the collective good of humanity, the participants pledged themselves to work together to help address the challenges of poverty, sickness and inequitable distribution of resources.

9. The representatives of the two faith communities also agree to constitute a Standing Committee on Hindu-Jewish Relations.

Rabbi Yona Metzger. . . . Swami Dayanand Saraswati
Chief Rabbi of Israel. . . . Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha

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HINDU-JEWISH DECLARATION REMOVES MISCONCEPTIONS

[Swami Dayananda Saraswati](#)

(New Indian Express, 9 March 2008)

An extraordinary inter-faith meet between Hindu and Jewish religious leaders - an event with the potential to pioneer a paradigm shift from conflict to harmony among all religions - took place at Jerusalem a couple of weeks ago. The historic meet emphasized and illustrated the importance of honest dialogue between any two religious traditions to resolve seemingly irresolvable differences.

Last year Hindu and Jewish religious leaders, representing the two oldest traditions in the world, commenced an inter-religious dialogue in New Delhi. Following that the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the delegation from the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha held the second round of inter-religious dialogue at Jerusalem in February 2008.

The Jerusalem meet concluded with a landmark declaration that Hindus worship 'one supreme being' and are not really idolatrous.

The implications of this are profound in content and far-reaching in effect.

Judaism was born of the complete repudiation of idol worship and rabbinic literature abounds with denunciations of idolatry in an entire tractate of the Talmud devoted to this.

The importance of this issue in Jewish and other Abrahamic traditions cannot be overstated. Since its first encounter with these religions, and due to their incomplete understanding of its Sastras, Hinduism has been perceived by them as idolatrous and promoting many gods. The Hindus have for centuries experienced the extremely violent consequences of this wrong perception. The historic declaration made at the Hindu-Jewish summit at Jerusalem on February 18, 2008 sets at rest the wrong notion that Hinduism is idolatrous.

The declaration reads:

'It is recognized that one supreme being in its formless and manifest aspects has been worshipped by Hindus over the millennia. The Hindu relates to only the one Supreme Being when he/she prays to a particular manifestation. This does not mean that Hindus worship 'gods' and 'idols'.' The Jewish leaders, in so many words, owned their perception of the Hindu tradition as erroneous and came up with the declaration which the Hindu delegation could happily accept. This establishes that honest and bold dialogue can completely reverse wrong views and erroneous perceptions held over millennia. It emphasizes that leaders of every religion need to be informed about the basics, vision and beliefs of other religious traditions.

In India Hindus not only gave sanctuary to the Jews when they were hounded out all over the world but also gave them the freedom to pursue their religion with dignity. Yet their notion, entirely due to a wrong perception, that Hindus worship many gods without one Supreme Being and that they are idolaters remained, with the result their theological conflict with Hinduism was seen as irreconcilable. Now after an honest and open dialogue they have realized that the accommodating heart of a

Hindu is born of his/her acceptance of one Supreme Being who is invoked in many ways and in many forms by different faiths including theirs.

In fact, the crux of the problem was no doubt the worship of forms.

When they understood that no form is separate from Isvara and the particular form enshrined in a temple is but an altar of worship, they did not see any real issue to contend with. They were visibly relieved and thanked the delegation for removing the wrong perception held for more than two thousand years.

Once the fundamental misconception was removed, the Rabbinate, not surprisingly, also affirmed the following declaration on the sensitive issue of the svastika, the sacred symbol for the Hindus:

'The svastika is an ancient and auspicious symbol of the Hindu tradition.

It is inscribed on Hindu temples, ritual altars, entrances and even account books. A distorted version of this sacred symbol was misappropriated by the Third Reich in Germany and abused as an emblem under which heinous crimes were perpetrated against humanity, particularly the Jewish people. The participants recognize that this symbol is, and has been for millennia, sacred to Hindus, long before its misappropriation.'

The importance of this affirmation may be understood from the fact that a Hindu temple in Detroit was vandalized a few years ago by the Jewish community offended by a huge svastika rangoli at the entrance of the temple.

Another critical element in the declaration is the acceptance that all faiths are sacred and inviolable and that religious conversion is in itself violence. If all faiths, particularly the Abrahamic family of faiths, accept this declaration the fundamental cause of religious disharmony will be gone for good. Several other and significant issues were discussed at the summit, leading to mutual understanding.

Leaders of both religions came out of the mutually enriching meeting, wiser.

I write about this meeting and its outcome because it sets a new bar for inter-religious dialogue. To ferret out what is common in our traditions and agree that we have some common ground is not enough; it is not enough to skirt around tough issues and "agree to disagree". No, to be beneficial to all, to foster enrichment rather than impoverishment of our religious traditions, dialogue must be conducted on the points of intersection of our conflicts with ruthless honesty. We should have the courage to probe, question, listen and even agonize if we have to, but never

shirk. Above all, the dialogue must be rooted in the deepest and most comprehensive grasp of the scriptures of the respective faiths.

Dialogue is the ancient Hindu model for promoting mutual understanding of religious truth and avoiding or resolving conflicts between faiths. Dialogue between enlightened leaders of the faiths prevents the differences among them from spilling on to the streets and turning into uncontrollable issues. That was how in this ancient nation religious harmony was conceptualized, promoted and sustained for thousands of years.

Now this needs to be globalised for promoting peace among religions.

The only means to conflict avoidance and resolution is dialogue among different religions. The Global Foundation for Civilisational Harmony [GFCH] which was inaugurated by His Holiness Dalai Lama in January 2008 in Delhi, and in which some well-known religious and spiritual leaders of different faiths participated, has a very significant role to play to bring about this healthy understanding among religions. The GFCH needs to organize meaningful dialogue between leaders of different religious traditions and help remove wrong perceptions arising from an absence of true understanding of each other's faiths, paving the way for harmony and mutual respect among religions. All religious faiths and religious leaders must extend their whole-hearted support to this great initiative.

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HINDUS-JEWISH MEET REMOVES MISCONCEPTIONS

<http://newstodaynet.com/newsindex.php?section=12&catid=21&id=6767>

An inter-faith meeting between Hindu and Jewish religious leaders was held at Jerusalem recently.

The historic meeting emphasised and illustrated the importance of honest dialogue between two religious traditions to resolve seemingly irresolvable differences.

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Following that the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the delegation from the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, held the second round of Inter Religious dialogue at Jerusalem in February 2008, says Swami Dayananda Saraswathi.

The Jerusalem meet concluded with a landmark declaration that Hindus worship 'one supreme being' and are not really idolatrous.

The implications of this are profound in content and far-reaching in effect. Judaism was born of the complete repudiation of idol-worship and the rabbinic literature abounds with denunciation of idolatry in an entire tractate of the Talmud devoted to this.

The importance of this issue in the Jewish and other Abrahamic traditions cannot be overstated. Since its first encounter with these religions, due to their incomplete understanding of its Sastras, Hinduism has been perceived by them as idolatrous and promoting many gods, says Swami Dayananda Saraswathi.

The Hindus have, for centuries, have experienced the extremely violent consequences of this wrong perception.

The historic declaration made at the Hindu-Jewish Summit at Jerusalem on 18 February, 2008 sets at rest the wrong notion that Hinduism is idolatrous.

The declaration reads: 'It is recognized that one supreme being in its formless and manifest aspects has been worshipped by Hindus over the millennia. The Hindu relates to only the one supreme being when he / she prays to a particular manifestation. This does not mean that Hindus worship 'gods' and 'idols'.

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It emphasises that leaders of every religion need to be informed about the basics, vision and beliefs of other religious traditions, says Swami Dayananda Saraswathi.

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Now after an honest and open dialogue they have realised that the accommodating heart of a Hindu is born of his / her acceptance of one Supreme Being who is

invoked in many ways and in many forms by different faiths including theirs, says Swami.

In fact, the crux of the problem was no doubt the worship of forms. When they understood that no form is separate from Isvara and the particular form enshrined in a temple is but an altar of worship, they did not see any real issue to contend with.

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If all faiths, particularly the Abrahamic family of faiths, accept this declaration, the fundamental cause of religious disharmony will be gone for good. Several other and significant issues were discussed at the summit, leading to mutual understanding.

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Now this needs to be globalized for promoting peace among religions. The only means to conflict avoidance and resolution is dialogue among different religions.

The 'Global Foundation for Civilizational Harmony' (GFCH) which was inaugurated by His Holiness Dalai Lama in January 2008 in Delhi, and in which some well-known religious and spiritual leaders of different faiths participated, has a very significant role to play to bring about this healthy understanding among religions.

The GFCH needs to organise meaningful dialogue between leaders of different religious traditions and help remove wrong perceptions arising from an absence of true understanding of each other's faiths, paving the way for harmony and mutual respect among religions.

All religious faiths and religious leaders must extend their whole-hearted support to this great initiative, says Swami Dayananda Saraswathi.

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HINDU-JEWISH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT OPPOSES PROSELYTIZATION

<http://www.organiser.org/dynamic/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=171&page=6>

Chief Rabbi of Israel Yona Metzger made a touching reference to the lasting contribution made by the BJP leader L.K. Advani in furthering the friendship and co-operation between India and Israel. The Chief Rabbi, the highly regarded Jewish pontiff, was lavish in his praise for India's Leader of Opposition, as he was speaking at a dinner hosted at the Prithviraj Road residence of the BJP leader.

The Chief Rabbi said, "It is seldom that I go to somebody's residence to participate in a reception. Our custom does not allow this. But, here, I came to Shri L.K. Advani's residence, as if I were going to my own home. It is a debt that we owe to the leader. As India's Internal Minister, he was the first Indian top official to visit Israel. He played a major and sustained role in furthering and cementing the relations between the two countries. We immensely value this gesture. Our people are greatly indebted to India. This is one country where Jews were never persecuted and enjoyed great hospitality. It is as a mark of gratitude that I am here, in this dinner, hosted in my honour."

The Opposition Leader's residence became a meeting place for the religious heads of three major faiths in the world, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam. It was a pleasant surprise for everybody, Indian Muslim scholars and theologians met Israeli Jewish Rabbis on the night of February 6 to call for peace in West Asia at this dinner. RSS Sahsarkaryavah Shri Suresh Soni was also present at the dinner. The Chief Rabbi of Israel was joined by several senior Rabbis from European countries and Israeli Ambassador David Danieli. Muslim scholars from India included Prof. Akhtar-ul-Wasey, director, Jamia Milia Islamia, Sirajuddin Qureshi, President of India Islamic Cultural Centre, Wasi Ahmed Nomani, Jurist, Jameeluddin Ilyasi president of All India Imams Organisation and Umer Ilyasi, president, Sufi Sant Sangam.

Highly respected leaders of the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha including Swami Dayananda Saraswati was also present on the occasion.

Shri Bawa Jain, secretary general of World Council of Religious Leaders (WCORL), that organised the three-day Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit said the conference would not have been possible but for the help of the Leader of Opposition. He recalled the sterling leadership qualities of the BJP leader and his tireless endeavour towards unity of religions, interfaith dialogue and peace among faiths.

Shri Advani, in his brief welcome speech, emphasised the great Indian tradition of equal respect to all faiths. He said, the distortion of Indian secularism had reached a stage where, secularism has come to mean a state eschewing religion. The language of religion has a significant role in shaping the character of the state. It is not a state without religion, but a state that respects all religions, that is at the essence of secularism. The distortion and intolerance to religion have come because of the spell of Marxism on Indian political leadership, he said.

The World Council of Religious Leaders and All India Movement for Seva effectuated the signing of a declaration between Hindu and Jewish leaders in New Delhi on February 6. The protocol of co-operation was signed between Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yona Metzger and Swami Dayanand Saraswati, convener of the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha in the presence of leaders of both the ways of worship.

Highlighting the objective of the summit, which began on February 5 at Hotel Taj Palace, Shri Bawa Jain, said the world is facing innumerable conflicts and unresolved differences globally. "Since 82 per cent of the world follows different faiths and looks up to the religious leaders to guide them spiritually, this conclave propagates and promotes the message of peace and harmony. Hinduism and Judaism are followed world over and our aim is to show that the road to prosperity is built on the strong foundation of peace and harmony," he added.

The declaration primarily acknowledges the shared values of the two traditions, as well as the common challenges. It condemned all forms of religious violence. In the declaration both the Hindu and Jewish leaders affirmed the sanctity of life and aspired for a society in which all live in peace and harmony with one another. Both the Hindu and Jewish traditions also realised the need to educate the present and succeeding generations about their past so that they make right efforts to promote religious harmony. The representatives agreed to constitute a standing committee on Hindu-Jewish relations.

After signing the declaration, Swami Dayanand Saraswati said the Hindu-Jewish dialogue would act as a benchmark for others to follow and emulate, resulting in better environment for one and all. "I have always believed in peaceful co-existence in a multi-religion environment, which thrives on each other. This development is a step in this direction and I am happy the Chief Rabbi has joined hands in this movement," he added. He further said each tradition should respect the common values. The religious heads have great responsibility to lead the people of their respective traditions. Since, we don't want to get hurt or cheated, we should not hurt or cheat others.

Lauding the efforts of WCORL, Rabbi Yona Metzger said though inter-religious dialogue has increased recently, the Hindu-Jewish declaration is a significant move, which highlights the necessity of expanding interfaith community to eastern traditions. "For thousands of years we have marched on parallel causes and now built bridges of cooperation between the two religions. Jews have lived in India for 2,000 years and have never been discriminated against. This is something unparalleled in human history," added Rabbi Yona Metzger.

The Indian Council of Religious Leaders organised a meeting of various religious leaders belonging to different faiths at Oberoi hotel on February 7. The religious leaders representing Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Judaism passed a resolution resolving for unity and universal peace. The leaders unanimously said without peace and unity the world cannot face the global challenges. Besides the Hindu and Jewish leaders who had been attending the conference since February 5, Maulana Zameeluddin Ilyasi, president of All India Imams Organisation, Bishop Anil, representative of Arch Bishop Delhi, Dr Manjit Singh, former chief of Akal Takht, Gurudwara Anandpur Sahib, Shri B.K. Modi, noted industrialist and Buddhist leader were among the prominent leaders who attended the conference.

The Jewish delegation included Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger, Shri Oded Wiener, Chief Rabbi David Rosen, Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber, Rabbi Dr Israel Singer, Rabbi Moshe Garelik, Chief Rabbi Albert Guigui, Chief Rabbi Isak Haleve and Chief Rabbi Benito Garcon-Serfaty. The representatives of the Jewish community in India included Shri Solomon Sopher, Rabbi Abraham Benjamin, Shri Benjamin Reuben, Shri Ezra Moses, Shri Issac Samson, Rabbi Joshua Kolet, Lt. Gen. (retd) JFR Jacob, Shri Ezekial Malekar, Shri Nissim Moses.

The prominent Indian Hindu leaders associated with the conference included Kanchi Shankaracharya Swami Jayendra Saraswati, Swami Chidanand, Dr Pranav Pandya, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Swami Maheshwaranand, Swami Vishvesh Teertha, Swami Balagangadharanath, Swami Avimuktasvaranand Saraswati, Shri La Sri Nachippa Jnana Desika Swamigal, Shri Murli Madhav Priyadas, Swami Sachidananda Saraswati, Swami Vidyananda Bharati, Sadhu Atmaswarupdas, Swami Vishveshwaranand, Swami Gurusharanand Giri, Swami Hansadas, Swami Maheshwaranand Puri, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Viditatanand Saraswati, Swami Chidrupanand Saraswati, Swami Sarvabhutanand, Swami Aparoksanand, Swami Prabhuddhanand, Swami Sambuddhanand and Swami Nityabuddhanand. Noted jurist Shri L.M. Singhvi and columnist and BJP leader Shri Balbir Punj also participated in the summit.

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A HINDU SAINT -- WHOSE HEART BEATS FOR ISRAEL

<http://www.weeklyblitz.net/index.php?id=323>

<http://www.sanghparivar.org/blog/rkm/a-hindu-saint-whose-heart-beats-for-israel>

India is a faith based country whose nature is very much religious although in Indian context religion is very much different what generally people conclude from this word. Religion in India has some different meaning from pre reformation

age of Western world where church and state had no separation and western world fought hard to evolve the concept of secularism. In Indian context religion is not intermingled with state and Hinduism as a religion has no institution as church to dictate state. In this way definition of religion is very much different in Indian context which is not pregnant with danger of fundamentalism. For thousands of years India has a diverse culture as Hinduism has never been confined in one prophet and one book. Hinduism evolved itself as a principle for universe and here duty for every one is defined as religion. For thousands of years India has its identity in its religiosity and now even in modern world India is being identified with its religiosity as its nationalism. But this religiosity has wide range of coverage for every faith and religions. India showed its generosity thousands of years back when this nation which carries history of continuity for last five thousand years first overwhelmingly sheltered to Jews when they were forced to leave their promised land. This strong bond of relationship between Hindus and Jews has continuity for thousands of years. From time to time Hindus saints raise this issue and praised Jews for their great heritage, culture and legacy.

India as a faith based country and most populated Hindu country always keep lot of reverence for saints and sages. In modern history of 20th century we have lot of Hindu saints who crossed the confinement of rituals or routine worship and dreamed something big. One name which we remember in this tradition is Swami Vivekanand who addressed the world religious conference in 1893 in America and opened the door for internationalization of Hindu religion. After his speech in 1893 he became popular in the whole world but particularly in India his popularity changed the era and Indian youth of 20th century got international exposure. His contribution to modern India is more than any political or social leader. Every political or social movement was organized by those figures who drawn inspiration from Swami Vivekanand. Swami vivekanand was such a visionary person that he taught Indian people to see their problem in global perspective and being a faith based and religious country people responded him and heard him carefully.

Again India is on the verge of change and country is facing lot of internal and external problems from security to nation building, in this hour of crisis Indian people again hope for a Saint to guide them.

Few days back I had a chance to visit Haridwar a holy pilgrim for Hindus and well known for spiritualism ,yoga and meditation. In this visit I got a chance to meet an influential saint with richest following in India Swami Avadheshanand Giri. He is the chief of Juna Akhara a tradition of sages in Hindus. This Akhara is a conglomerate of various saints and sages which counts in thousands. In Hindu

tradition there is a big role of Master(Guru) and disciple . The purpose of my visit was to witness the ceremony of Gurupooja (worship of Master) and in this way I had a chance to meet Swami Avdheshanand and spend some time with him. During my brief interaction in various sessions it was known to me that how much passion he has for Israel. Being a saint his heart beats for mankind but his first love after India is Israel. He gave me a book of Israel to read which articulates the ancient history of Israel with comparison of its contemporary situation. His passion got overflowed when he showed in that particular book how third temple mount has been converted into a mosque. He was the saint who had a privilege to lead the Indian delegation in Israel in this year in “presidential conference-Facing Tomorrow”. With his lot of experiences from Israel he has realized the necessity of strong Indo-Israel relations.

In present scenario where some religions have been used to achieve political goal with lot of blood shed it was always nice to see a saint talking for progress of country with security and spirituality. Religiosity in India has influenced people to such extent that administrative machinery and political structure did not decide the future of India but it is force of saints and sages with their followings have the last laugh. Taking this truth into consideration vision of Swami Avadheshanand ranks him to a realistic saint who is not only worried for his traditions and rituals but want to contribute in nation building as well.

In my meeting I was a curious listener and tried to analyze his vision which culminates in strong and developed India. He has worked a lot to organize and collect hundreds of scientists to search for those ancient rivers of India who have vanished in course of time. This initiative from a saint sounds unusual as we have some different concept for religion and faith but Swami Avadheshanand has broken the tradition and he is working overtime day and night to fulfill his vision as well as his rituals and traditional worships etc. One thing which inspired me was his love for Israel and its culture as well as respect for its technological advancement in irrigation and defense. In his visit to Israel he had a chance to meet with agriculture minister who has taken the project of drip irrigation in farming. According to Swami Avadheshanand this technology could prove to be a revolution in Indian agriculture sector. Story does not end here he ranks Israel as natural ally of India in cultural and strategic areas also. Swami Avadheshanand is a different saint who believes in using new technology with an IPOD with him to see the film on holocaust whenever he gets chance.

He has several program to execute .He looks to have more social and spiritual interaction between Hindu saints and Rabbis as well students of both countries along with thousands of Jews who come to visit India every year.

Indians in particular and Hindus in general term Jews and Israel as their allies but due to cold war syndrome and leftist inclination of academicians and pursuance of polity for political correctness India took 44 years to have a diplomatic relationship with Israel and it happened in 1991 only when government headed by P.V.Narsimha Rao initiated on this front and both countries opened embassies in their countries. After 15 years of diplomatic relationship between these two countries who have several similarities in them started to come close to each other. Now time has come to have more cultural and social interaction between people of these countries and when this has been initiated by a saint in India nobody could question about its long term success.

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INDIA AND ISRAEL: COMMON ALLIES; COMMON TARGETS.

By Dr. Richard L. Benkin

<http://www.interfaithstrength.com/images/India&Israel.htm>

Along with the United States, India and Israel are the nations most prominently in the crosshairs of Islamists everywhere. Superficially, the two countries could not differ more: population, area, poverty levels, urbanization, and so forth. Their more essential commonalities, however, make them natural allies against the same enemies: genocidal Islamists from the outside; and a politically ascendant moral weakness from the inside.

They came into being within a year of each other shortly after World War II. Both waged a protracted resistance against European occupiers, which along with the post war collapse of the British Empire won both peoples independence on their ancient soils. Neither birth was without trauma, however. Both nations faced partition demands from South Asian Middle Eastern Muslims who refused to live under Hindu or Jewish leadership. Though it was a blatantly racist demand, the international community capitulated and offered to partition the new countries. While it did not even debate the legitimacy of these Muslim demands, we can only imagine how it would have reacted if the situations were reversed and Jews and Hindus refused to live in Muslim countries. Quite differently if history is any guide. Ancient Jewish communities in newly created Syria and Iraq were in immediate danger, yet found no protection or even support for autonomous status.

In South Asia, Muslims accepted the partition, and the largest and most rapid migration of people in history that accompanied it; while exact figures have been

elusive, estimates of at least 30 million people are considered reliable with an additional 500,000 killed. Thus were born the nations of Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan, part of which later became Bangladesh. Yet, Muslim leaders to this day do not recognize India's legitimacy as a Hindu country. They argue that since there were periodic Muslim leaders in the pre-British era, the entire nation is Muslim in accordance with Muslim law.

Whether out of pique, overconfidence, or religious hatred, Middle Eastern Muslims rejected partition. They vowed to destroy the Jewish state and carry out a massive genocide. Several Arab nations jointly tried just that, but newborn State of Israel prevailed against all odds and with the hostility of that same international community. The Muslim Arabs miscalculated badly, something they would do again and again. Several subsequent Arab attempts at genocide were equally disastrous, despite international passivity (save the United States in 1973). Instead, Muslim race hatred was rewarded with massive amounts of aid and an attempt to re-write some sort of historical legitimacy for the Arabs. The Muslims of the Middle East, like their South Asian brethren, still refuse to recognize this non-Muslim state's right to exist.

As a result, both nations face the danger of a potential fifth column. Indian Muslims hold clearly identified "Muslim" political positions, often at odds with "Hindu" ones; and a large part of the Israeli Arab community has made clear its loyalty to Arab positions that undermine the Jewish state. Moreover, both Israeli Jews and Indian Hindus need to wake up to the fact that, no matter how just their cause or how defensive their actions, they cannot expect anything but opposition to their fight against radical Islam from all but an oppressed minority of Muslims. The goal of Islamists and their clients remains the same for India and Israel: their total eradication and replacement by an Islamic State. For decades, Arab states made no secret of their intention to destroy Israel; some still do. Europe's always lurking anti-Semitism made marginalizing the world's only Jewish state easy; India is just too big. The Muslim states tried aggressive warfare against both nations, b

ut failing at it time and again changed tactics so that Israel and India face terrorist attacks by their surrogates. Israel has had to deal with terrorism longer, and many Indians believe that the success of Israeli counterterrorism makes it a model for them. But the most curious and significant fact is that both nations have the power to destroy their enemies; yet, both nations refrain from doing so.

Neither country needs to suspend the rule of law or otherwise become like their enemies to succeed; they are better than that and need to remain so. Their enemies make it clear that they can't wait to get their hands on some weapons of mass destruction so they can use them against these two great democracies. On

the other hand, both India and Israel have had them for decades and have never used them. Alone they can achieve success, but together they could be an indomitable force against Islamist terror and the nations that support it. Moreover, they both have to cast out the same demons and follow the same strategy for it to happen.

First, stop pandering to the enemy, both inside and outside of the country. Indians call it pseudo secularism. Israelis just call it appeasement. Both democracies bend over backwards to show the world that they are sensitive to their Muslim minorities; but let's remember that they are minorities in both countries. While free governments have no moral right to deprive them of basic rights or of social or legal equality. But that same system of morality does not require the majorities—Hindus in India, Jews in Israel—to show their compassion by giving into every alleged slight, merited or not.

Second, be unyielding in goals and principles. Leaders in both Israel and India (as well as many in the United States) have a basic misunderstanding how our enemies and their potential allies—who also are out potential allies—understand our actions. Too often, they confuse “understanding” with moral relativism. For instance, neither they nor their cohorts in Europe spoke of “the white man's burden” to bring civilization to the rest of the world. Yet, how different is that discredited concept from an Imam's call to bring the rest of the world under Islam or peoples of all faiths under Sharia law? And they have never publicly condemned that imperialistic and racist policy. For decades, democracies have prided themselves on inclusion and lowering barriers that previously limited interaction among ethnic and religious groups. Yet, in India, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, Muslims are given free reign to apply Sharia law in various matters even if it conflicts with national principles of freedom and decency. Those leaders who believe they are showing their compassion are showing nothing more than weakness. For if we are willing to look the other way when our enemies routinely violate our principles we claim to hold dear, we appear to have no principles at all—something that Islamists claim in order to seduce converts to their cause.

Third, characterize the enemy with the inflammatory rhetoric that accurately reflects what they are. Imagine even one Jewish Sabbath service at which the Rabbi exhorts the congregation to seek out all Muslims and slaughter them; even imagine an Israeli Rabbi saying the same thing about all Arabs. You can't; it doesn't happen. And we know that because if it did, there would be world wide outrage, newspaper condemnations, cries or outrage from every human rights NGO, and maybe even a UN investigation. Rabbis and the Israeli government would be even quicker to condemn it. Yet, the converse occurs every Friday at

mosques throughout Israel—that's every Friday—official PA and other Muslim radio stations even carry those racist and murder-inciting statements. But the Israeli government does not issue equally loud condemnations or apply laws against incitement to religious hatred (which it surely would apply to Jews). It does not protest to the United Nations or to the various Arab governments that claim to be “peace partners.” Why not? Every time a Muslim leader—secular or religious—uses the language of hate, Israeli, Indian, and US leaders must loudly condemn it as such. Call on Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the UN to investigate it. Plaster every airwave with our outrage and the indecent statements of imams and tyrants. Remain strong together and others will join. Make those who would rather skulk away in silence stand in front of television cameras and justify hatred again and again and again until their duplicity and moral cowardice force a change.

Recently, I was part of a US Congressional briefing about minority oppression in Bangladesh. When I rose to spoke, I expressed my own outrage that I was the first speaker to call the action against Bangladeshi Hindus what it really is: ethnic cleansing. I also asked if there could be any doubt that Bangladesh's Vested Property Act is racist? Yet, no one calls it what it is. Every time that hated law is mentioned, it should be described as the “racist” Vested Property Act. Every time the plight of Bangladesh's Hindus is noted, it must be called ethnic cleansing. Our enemies use hyperbole all the time to paint themselves as victims, and the world buys it. How much more important is it that we use the same language to describe events that actually fit it!

Fourth, reject outdated perspectives and the self-interest of governments in trouble. Indian and Israeli governments both seek approval from Europe like it is some sort of moral arbiter in this world. Yet, Europe's one consistent response to evil has been silence; appeasement. Indian leaders especially need to drop their Euro-centric bias. For Europe has never modeled moral behavior in the face of immorality. All of Europe either participated or was complicit in the Nazi holocaust of the Jews; it did nothing to stop genocide in its former African colonies of Nigeria (Biafra), Rwanda, the Sudan, and in countless other places where the body counts have been ignored. Can we really expect Europe to do anything but express regret after Israel's 6 million Jews are murdered; or after there are no more Hindus in Pakistan or Bangladesh?

Moreover, we have seen weak governments in both countries choose the course of appeasement in the false hope of strengthening their own position. In India, the left-center Congress Party has entered into agreements with Indian communists upon whom they are now dependent. In Israel, a Prime Minister facing imminent indictment has just concluded a deal that broke Israeli pledges

never to release terrorists who had Israeli blood on their hands. Indians and Israelis must let them know that in an effort to save their own skins, they are willing to sell out their children. And they must do so with profound outrage.

Fifth, use the military power at your disposal to dispatch those who are killing your own children—and generally calling those who do heroes!

One final bit of perspective. Some years back, my mother, wife, and daughter were enjoying a meal in a Jerusalem pizza parlor. Several weeks later, an Arab terrorist walked into that same pizza parlor and exploded a bomb, murdering 15 people including seven children. I realized that if my mother, wife, and daughter were there that day, the people who dispatched the murdered would have rejoiced in their deaths; and further that anyone who would rejoice in the death of my mother, wife, and daughter, is an enemy with whom peace is impossible.

And the time to act on that realization is now; tomorrow might be too late.

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HINDU DHARMA ACHARYA SABHA

- For the first time in the history of India, heads of Hindu religious institutions have come together under one umbrella organisation known as “The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha”, convened and formed by Swami Dayananda Saraswati in 2002.
- It is a unifying body that provides leadership, guidance and collective voice for the Hindus against callous disregard of Hindu sentiments and adverse propaganda against Hindu Dharma.
- The Sabha has presently 143 members who are Mandaleshwars and heads of ancient traditional institutions that are a few hundred years old and consists of Acharyas belonging to all the ancient Sampradayas of Hindu Dharma each having a congregation of millions of people.
- The Sabha is a federation of religious leaders with a religious trust consisting of 11 of these leaders. These 11 trustees (with exception of the managing trustee) are variable and hold the office for a three-year term. A new team of trustees then take over at the end of 3 years. This trust is an official body of the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha and through this trust the Acharya Sabha is engaged in various activities. There are regional committees each with their own convenor.
- The Acharya Sabha has held 3 annual conferences since inception. Information on the Acharyas Sabha activities and the resolutions passed during the 3rd

conference in Sri Adichunchangiri Math, near Bangalore, is online at <http://www.acharyasabha.org>

- One of the activities that Acharya Sabha is seriously engaged is in matters of religious endowments and temple governance in many states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The Sabha provides leadership at various levels including legal and legislative process and its statutory changes in the manner of temple governance. It advocates temple committees comprising local temple worshipping communities for transparent and accountable management.

Also Refer:

<http://www.vivekanandagospel.org/RenaissanceofHinduDharma.pdf>