

Uberoi foundation fellowships and their objectives

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Uberoi Foundation Fellowship

Introduction

What is "Dharma"? What is "the dharma"? Considering how central the concept of Dharma is to the belief systems of billions of people, it is startling how few Americans actually know what Dharma means. An unofficial poll conducted sporadically over the last twenty years, asked hundreds of Americans. Many people reply, "Doesn't it have something to do with 'karma'?" Or, "It's something like Karma, isn't it?" But Dharma? They're lost from there... Everyone knows what karma is, you reap what you sow... so you gotta' follow the golden rule, and don't harbor vengeful thoughts because in the end, they'll get theirs... But Dharma?

Dharma is a living concept and the central philosophical orientation for over half the religions on Earth. Dharma is the primary ethical guide used by almost two billion human beings to plan practical and productive lives based on moral and compassionate ideals and daily practices that will develop higher consciousness and God-like virtues of awareness, generosity, kindness, and forgiveness. Dharma is philosophically rich, with a vast assortment of fascinating metaphysical, spiritual, and practical categories and meanings- both abstract and concrete.

In general, Dharmic traditions have their honorary origins in the geographical region known as the Indian Subcontinent. Dharmic faiths are currently practiced by well over a billion people throughout the world, including Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs. These faiths that are now known as Dharmic, evolved and developed through several millennia. The history of the development of the Dharmic traditions spans thousands of years, from primordial Hindu images unearthed by archeologists at sites in Baluchistan dating from 8,000 BCE up through colonial era documents, actual historical records about the founding fathers of Sikhism, their military encounters, and involvement in international politics. Study of Dharma incorporates elements of philosophy, history, linguistics, geography, politics, anthropology, and other areas of academic and societal interest.

Objectives

Coverage of Dharmic traditions in American schools is limited primarily because of the lack of appropriate teaching materials, and the unfortunate shortage of teacher training in that neglected area of study. The Uberoi Foundation has provided funding to the Center for Indic Studies at UMass Dartmouth to offer financially supportive fellowships in order to fund the attendance of secondary level Social Studies teachers at the Educational Seminars on the Dharmic Traditions. One of our main immediate goals for this educational experience is that the participants will work together to create lessons in which they can introduce ideas from the Dharma workshop into different areas of their courses and to various groups of students.

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