



6th ICCS International Conference

**Exploring Divinity
Through the Feminine in
Ancient Cultures**

2018, Mumbai, India

Contents

Summary of the Event

6th Conference Agenda

Conference Keynote Speeches, Papers & Workshops

Participants' Experiences

Coordination Team



Summary of the Event

Around 250 delegates of over 32 countries and more than 25 ancient traditions¹, were present at the inauguration of the 6th International Gathering of Elders in Mumbai, India, between February 1st and February 4th 2018.

Every morning there would be morning rituals and salutations to the morning sun rising in the east over looking the forested hills around Keshav Shristi. In an iconic setting, removed from the hustle and bustle of India's urban life, the venue of the conference was idyllic, with birdsong reverberating throughout the campus. In the afternoon, the shade provided by tree canopies was welcome, and the lawns were lush green and moist. With delicious, and relatively mild food, catering for the international pallet, and the warmth & organisation shown by the local volunteers was a real highlight.

The ICCS is a platform to bring together ancient traditions from around the world. The premise being that all of these ancient traditions although having outward differences in expression and utterance, share the same underlying reverence for Nature and are truly plural. Hindu society, being the oldest, and arguably most vibrant ancient tradition in the world, which can still be classed, in some sense as a flourishing civilisation, naturally takes on the mantle of host. The international gatherings are a platform which takes shape every 3 years to help elders build meaningful relationships with each other, and share stories, as well as build global support networks to resist the ongoing persecution that is happening globally by various governments and some Christian and Islamic groups.

A Yezidi group arriving from Armenia and Iraq not only shared their heart-wrenching stories about the atrocities they have faced from Islamic State groups; but also sang the Indian national anthem in

Hindi to a rising ovation from the 250-strong audience. A genuine feeling of warmth and camaraderie was felt. Folk songs from around the world were sang, and various classical dance performances were showcased. It was as much of a celebration of these cultures as it was an educational, networking conference.

Elders, like Pat McCabe from the Diné Nation, raised in the Lakota tradition of the Native American peoples, spoke eloquently, while remaining hard-hitting in her keynote address that ancient traditions must come together in a real meaningful sense in order to push back against the socio-economic forces harming the Earth. The emphasis on feminine divine was the set theme, and a special focus was set on protecting, nourishing and living harmoniously with Nature. The role of women in ancient traditions was a recurring theme throughout the workshops which re-enforced the idea that women must come to play a central role as an equal partner in shaping our society. Papers highlighting linguistic commonalities, to ritual similarities, and shared experiences of colonialism were presented. All coming to make a powerful impact on the delegates that their concerns are not local, but global, and that their response too must be global and not only local.

The challenge seems clear enough. And the solution is equally as clear – that of a complete overhaul of the socio-political-economic framework in which our societies operate underpinned by a Judeo-Christian narrative. The first step in causing the paradigm shift is to build meaningful relationships, and real understanding first with the Elders, and then with the young people who will have the energy and conviction to work towards a way out of the apparent quagmire.

Sachin Nandha - UK

¹ **Countries:** Armenia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Guatemala, El Salvador, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Phillipines, Russia, South Africa, Thailand, USA, UK, Vietnam, etc. **Ancient Traditions:** Arhuaco, Yanakuna, Embera, Diné, Lakota, Mohawk, Cherokee, Passamaquody, Mississauga First Nation, Maya-Lenca, Romuva, Tengri, Latgalian(Baltic), Maori, Yoruba, etc.



Conference Agenda

Feb 1st <u>THURSDAY</u>	Feb 2nd <u>FRIDAY</u>	Feb 3rd <u>SATURDAY</u>	Feb 4th <u>SUNDAY</u>
DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4
	6.00am - 7:00pm - Yoga & Meditation	6.00am - 7:00pm - Yoga & Meditation	6.00am - 7:00pm - Yoga & Meditation
7.30am- 8:30am - Opening Ceremony (Elders All Regions)	8.00am - 8:30am - Ceremonies	8.00am - 8:30am - Ceremonies	
9:30am - 10:15am - Procession	10.00am - 11:30am - Speakers Presentations	10.00am - 11:30am - Speakers Presentations	9.00am - Closing Ceremony (Elders All Regions)
11.00am - 12:00pm - Official Inaguration			
1.00pm - 2:30pm - Speakers Presentations	1.00pm - 2:30pm - Speakers Presentations	1.00pm - 2:30pm - Speakers Presentations	Onwards - Satyanarayan Puja Activities / Conference Closing
3.00pm - 4:00pm - Keynote Speech	3.00pm - 4:00pm - Keynote Speech	3.00pm - 4:00pm - Keynote Speech	
4.30pm - 5:30pm - Parallel Activities (Films, Yoga & Meditation, Workshop)	4.30pm - 5:30pm - Parallel Activities (Films, Yoga & Meditation, Workshop)	4.30pm - 5:30pm - Parallel Activities (Films, Yoga & Meditation, Workshop)	
5.45pm - 7:00pm - Parallel Activities (Sweat Lodge, Fair/ Exhibition)	5.45pm - 7:00pm - Parallel Activities (Sweat Lodge, Fair/ Exhibition)	5.45pm - 7:00pm - Parallel Activities (Sweat Lodge, Fair/ Exhibition)	
8.00pm - 9:00pm - Evening Cultural Programme	8.00pm - 9:00pm - Evening Cultural Programme	8.00pm - 9:00pm - Evening Cultural Programme	



Conference Keynote Speeches, Papers & Workshops

	Topic	Speaker	Country
K	The Science of Right Relations: An Indigenous View of the Medicine of Gender	Pat McCabe	United States
K	Expression of Feminine Divinities in the Spirit and the Mundane	Nivedita Bhide	India
K	Feminine Divinity Source of Universal Motherhood	Rashmi Singh	India
P	Women healing through traditional songs	Theresa Bear Fox	United States
P	Celebrations of Divinity Through the Feminine in African Traditional Cultures	Delores Zola Rowlette	United States
P	Women in Ancient Traditions and the Current Sexual Harassment Issues in the U.S.	Ved Nanda	India / United States
P	Evolving Stages of Feminine Divinity	Dhanshree Anantvijay Patrikar	India
P	Exploring Divinity through the Feminine in context to Indian Classical Music	Ketakee Ingle	India
P	The healing of the witches in Europe	Pat McCabe	United States
P	Feminine Powers in Romuva Tradition	Inija Trinkuniene	Lithuania
P	Papatunanuku : Our Feminine Life force	Raewyn Bhana & Lorna Dyall	New Zealand
P	Life Processes and Goddesses	Dr. Raama Golwakar	India
P	A Saga of Suffering and Survival of Community by the Keren Pggayor Ethnic Group of Mae Wang, Chiang Mai Thailand	Dr. Phisit Kotsupho	Thailand

Conference Keynote Speeches, Papers & Workshops

	Topic	Speaker	Country
P	The Great and Happy Mother of Hungary	Andras Privat Kereszty	Hungary
P	The Anito Ritual of the Kalinga Women in Northern Philippines	Remedios Pamittan-Quilang, Ph.D	Phillipines
P	Females in Thai Rice Culture	Dr. Sophana Srichampa	Thailand
P	Divinity in the feminine: The Yezidi Story	Yezidis Group	Iran & Armenia
P	Who is a Hindu?	Sachin Nandha	United Kingdom
P	The power of the feminine in Iroquoian culture	SD Youngwolf	United States
P	Exploring Feminine Divinity of Indian Rivers in the Rigveda	Asha Pandey	India
P	Restoring the Bhartiya view of Nature as our “Divine Mother”	Abhijeet Dwivedi	India
P	Ancient Wisdom Healing with Earth’s Medicine	Esstin Mcleod	Canada
P	The rituals of tribal Filipino women in the northern Philippines: An expression of connection with divine	Elena Singh-Toquero, Ph.D	Phillipines
P	Restoring the Bhartiya view of Nature as our “Divine Mother”	Abhijeet Dwivedi	India
P	The Feminine Deities in the Balinese Society: Local Genius, Indian Influences and its Worship	Dr. Phil. I Ketut Ardhana	Indonesia
P	The Divine Earth Mother, uNomkhubulwane	Dr. Lietsela Nomagugu Patience Ngobese	South Africa

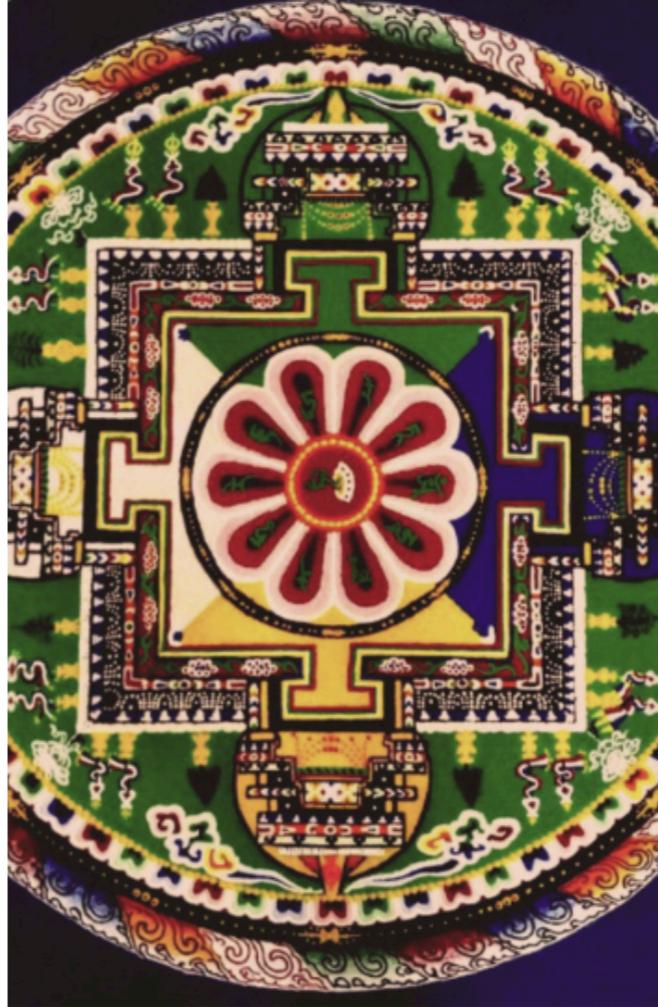
Conference Keynote Speeches, Papers & Workshops

	Topic	Speaker	Country
P	Restoring the Bhartiya view of Nature as our “Divine Mother”	Abhijeet Dwivedi	India
P	Under the Banyan Tree	Anando Ghosh	India
P	<i>Bagüe-Bachué</i> : the feminine as the Supreme Spirit and the Demiurge in the Muisca civilization	Shruti Agnihotri	India
P	Exploring Divinity in the Feminine in Masto Cult	Prem Kaidi	Nepal
P	The Delhi’s and Manjaris of Radha: The Exemplification of Raganuga Bhakti	Sneha Nagarkar	India
P	Exploring Divinity in the Feminine - African Perspective	Dr. Paul Katuse	Kenya
P	5000 years of religious evolution – The social role of female divinity in the transformation of society	Kevin Gründel	Lithuania
W	Wholistic Indigenous Practices	Esstin Mcleod	Canada
W	BoDE Workshop	Neil Bhaskar & Catherine Bhaskar	United States
W	Romuva Meditation	Inija Trinkuniene	Lithuania



Sand Mandala of Green Tara

Mandala is a Sanskrit word which means a Circle. In Tibetan, it's called dul-tson-kyil-khor (Mandala of colored powders). The Lamas or the Tibetan priests do it as a teaching tool and metaphor for the “*impermanence*” of life, the sand **Mandala** is constructed as vehicle to generate compassion, and a social/cosmic healing of the environment: to reconsecrate the Earth and its inhabitants. A Mandala is an integrated structure organized around a unifying center.



We extend our special thanks to the artist who offered the drawing on the “Tibetan Sand Mandala of Green Tara” during the 6th ICCS International Conference:

The Monks of Sera Mey Monastery, Bylakuppe, Mysore, His Venerable Rimpoche Siling Tongkhor, His Venerable Gueshes: Ngawang Rigphel, Ngawang Palden, Samdup Samten and Nyima Nyima and Secretary Mr. Jampa.



About Tara and its Origins

Tara (Sanskrit, "star") is a Buddhist Goddess and Bodhisattva. She is characterized by her compassion and is especially popular in Tibet, Nepal and Mongolia.

In Tibet, where Tara is the most important deity, her name is *Sgrol-ma*, meaning she who saves. The mantra of Tara: **Om tare tuttare ture svaha** is the second most common mantra heard in Tibet, after the mantra of Chenrezi: *Om mani padme hum*.

The Goddess of universal compassion, Tara represents virtuous and enlightened action. It is said that her compassion for living beings is stronger than a mother's love for her children. She also brings about longevity, protects earthly travel, and guards her followers on their spiritual journey to enlightenment. Before she was adopted by Buddhism, Tara was worshipped in Hinduism as a manifestation of the Goddess Parvati. The feminine principle was not venerated in Buddhism until the fourth century CE, and Tara probably entered Buddhism around the sixth century CE.

According to Buddhist tradition, Tara was born out of the tears of compassion of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. It is said that he wept as he looked upon the world of



Mandala of Green Tara | Portrait of Devi Saraswati | Traditional Rangoli

suffering beings, and his tears formed a lake in which a lotus sprung up. When the lotus opened, the Goddess Tara was revealed.

A similar tradition has White Tara born from the tears of Avalokiteshvara's left eye and the Green Tara born from those of his right. In a third legend, Tara was born from a beam of blue light emanating from one of the eyes of Avalokiteshvara. Tara is also the consort of Avalokiteshvara.

Green Tara, with her half-open lotus, represents the night, and White Tara, with her lotus in full bloom, symbolizes the day. Green Tara embodies virtuous activity while White Tara displays serenity and grace. Together, the Green and White Taras symbolize the unending compassion of the Goddess who labors day and night to relieve suffering.

Participants' Experiences



Eldad Kindseth

“Preservation & Protection Hindu Religion, Culture & Ancient Values”

Due to the similar work, I do in India and through family connections, friendships, and associations with leaders and organizations allied with the Founder of ICCS and likeminded individuals, I was invited to attend as a delegate, to observe, advise, and assist the 6th ICCS conference in Mumbai. I represented the Indian movement “Preservation & Protection of Hindu Religion, Culture, and Ancient Values” on behalf of my adopted home, India, and specifically, from my home state of Odisha.

I have been very enthusiastic about ICCS and what it represents as the PAN India movement with which I am affiliated being started in India and having similar aims and objectives. Our movement works towards preserving and protecting the nations, peoples, and their ancient traditions, customs, and cultures by initially protecting and preserving Hindu religion, culture, and ancient values which are being systematically undermined, altered, and destroyed in a coordinated effort by foreign Christian missionary forces. India and its Vedic-Hindu tradition is the world's parent civilization and the last remaining great civilization which has not yet fully succumbed to cultural destruction and conversion which has taken place around the globe. But let us not be deluded and shortsighted. India is in great danger! The same agenda and mindset, which in times past pushed all other ancient traditions and cultures around the globe to the point of extinction, have now joined forces in a coordinated effort to ensure that history repeats itself on the Indian subcontinent. We've reached a point where India has more missionaries and the money that sponsors them than any country on

earth. If the Indian-Vedic tradition falls, so do all the other pre-Christian ancient cultures and traditions which are being revived, restored, and on the upswing today in large part because of the efforts of sponsoring organizations like ICCS. Thus, our movement aims to restore India's former greatness by recreating unity, patriotism, nationalism, love of country, proud sense of self-identity, and a revived understanding and appreciation among the Indian population, of the greatness of their history, spiritual and scientific achievements, and most importantly their ancient traditions and culture. The only way to achieve this is for Indians to realize their own greatness and rewrite an accurate version of history based on evidence rather than the missionary, colonial, and imperialist version to which it now adheres.

Attending the ICCS conference was one of the most emotional, valuable, and memorable events of my life, an event of global significance. The conference elicited tears of joy and sadness, the joy being that finally, in our generation and in our time, after 2000 years of preplanned, organized, and relentless forced conversions, death, cultural destruction, imposed conformity, and the global enforcement of a “one shoe must fit all philosophy,” the plan to create a single universal religious empire is being openly questioned and challenged by organizations such as ICCS and allied movements, individuals, and the delegate attendees. The sadness is the remembrance of all that has happened and the realization that the greatest threat to humanity and the human experience is not climate change, environmental hazards, or the extinction of plant and animal species.

The greatest and most tragic event which has been and still is taking place for the last 2,000 years and has swept the entire globe has been Cultural Genocide. Throughout the conference, listening to the speakers, sitting in on the presentations, observing the sacred circle, and talking to the delegate representatives of the nations, peoples, and pre-Christian traditions and cultures it didn't matter whether the delegate was from northern Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and so on, the message, history, and experience from all delegates was similar. The Christian missionary agenda previously never existed. All our ancestors had a pre-Christian culture, tradition, and way of life which was very similar in belief and customs and can be traced back to the Vedic traditions and culture of ancient India. So much of this culture has been systematically altered and destroyed. Our ancestors were forced to hate and were told that their way of life was bad and evil. They were called all manner of derogatory names such as pagans, heathens, idolaters, cannibals, barbarians, rapists, savages, uncivilized, and devil worshipers. Because of this ongoing onslaught, our ancient culture and traditions are at the brink of extinction and in need of preservation and restoration. The entire focus of India, through its representative organization ICCS, is to save the world, humanity, and our global communities from further cultural extinction.

At the ICCS event, the sheer greatness of the Hindu-Vedic tradition and culture was on full display in all its openness, hospitality, peace, community, and family. All the international delegates, from the moment of arrival, were treated like royalty with the greatest of hospitality and all the goodness which the Hindu culture has to offer. The sponsors, organizers, and coordinators of the event were very gracious and did a tremendous job in making all necessary arrangements and preparations for the international visitors. It was

a privilege and an honor to meet the elders, representatives, and offspring of so many ancient cultures and traditions which have faced tremendous persecution, and despite all opposition, continue to struggle and observe the ways of their forefathers. I respect such individuals that have the courage and willingness to stand up for what they believe, and it is all such individuals I want to stand up for and be with because I can call them my own family and dearest friends with all my heart and gladly consider them to be a part of my family, friends, and community. I felt connected and united with all the tribes, whether it was the elders and delegates from the Lakota, the Mayans, Yazidi, Latvian, African, or Hindustan. The entire conference was a very inspirational and spiritual experience. Participating in all the prayer ceremonies, including the Sanatan Dharma puja was very uplifting. The community of nations getting together to take back what was lost was comforting. There is no doubt that, for the duration of the conference, our pre-Christian ancestors were rejoicing as their children were at last seeking to rediscover and return to the ancient beliefs and customs. We were all going back to a time when religious conflict was almost nonexistent and tribes and groups of people had their differences, but most cultures had a general respect for each other's gods, beliefs, and ways of life without judgement or discrimination, a great era before the mass conversions took place. Being in the presence of like-minded individuals I also felt that ancestral calling, and it made me remember my ancestors who were also forcibly converted after waging war for hundreds of years against those who sought to change their religion and culture.

In conclusion, the event was so important and so successful, in my opinion, not only because of the sheer number of attendees from all over the world and from all aspects of life but also the entire concept and for what the conference stood.

Where did we as the human species go wrong? What was the reason for all this material and cultural destruction? What were we, as the representatives of the global community, under the protection and guardianship of the Indian Vedic-Hindu community trying to achieve? In a nutshell, the domino effect started about 2,000 years ago in Rome when, in pursuit of expanding a defeated and crumbling military empire, the concept of creating organized religion was formed. Religion and the concept of God was then used by the empire and militarized, politicized, commercialized, corporatized, and radicalized for personal gain, ambition, money, power, and control. Thus, the empire converted from a materialistic empire with borders to a religious empire without borders and in the process, the missionary mindset, the belief in “one shoe must fit all,” concept was invented and created for invasion. The philosophy was that the religious empire would expand at whatever the cost south, north, west and lastly east. The foundation of the philosophy stood on the foundation that all must be destroyed, rebuilt, and then replaced. Out of the old, we will build the new and will rewrite history as is deemed fit using a narrative which justifies and promotes further expansion of the religious empire. It was from this chain of events, that the last two millennia has completely changed human development and history. It was this empire building modus operandi with the help of the dogmatic missionary mindset which later evolved, and working in tandem with colonialism, imperialism, and thereby created generations of victims, which in turn after conversion, became tomorrow’s victimizers. Starting in Europe and taking around some 1,000 years to convert the Europeans, the Roman Christians then moved on to Russia, North America, South America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, then Asia. It is an unfortunate fact of history that Europeans were the first victims of this violence and conversion, and after living through the Dark Ages in which religion was used to terrorize the population, in time, the

first victims became the victimizers and consequently became the first face of this new racist, dogmatic, intolerant, colonialist, and imperialist mindset which swept the globe. So much of our current history has been written by the victors and not the victims, but now a mechanism has finally been put into place whereby we at ICCS have come together from the global community, representing our different pre-Christian traditions and cultures. We are taking steps to set right what has been wronged. We are restoring what has been destroyed. We are rediscovering the heritage and culture of those who had been forcefully converted. We are retelling, rewriting, and exposing history as it really happened based on evidence and including all points of view, namely that of the victims. We are trying to expose the missionary movement for what it really is. We are supporting India, arguably the world’s founding and greatest civilization, in its current struggle against the same destructive forces that have been at work in other parts of the world for thousands of years. We are uniting with one voice and telling the accused that we see what they are doing, and we are going to stop Cultural Genocide in its tracks. It is time for unity in diversity.

Eldad Kindseth - India & USA

Ved Nanda

For too long, it was in the realm of speculation that ancient traditions in the world with outward differences have much in common. Amazingly, the vision and dedication of a group of academics and volunteers of the International Center for Cultural Studies (ICCS) provided enough empirical evidence to prove its accuracy. Established in 1997, ICCS is a shining example of the superb institutional structure that for the past three decades has demonstrated the veracity of the oneness among the ancient traditions.

The theme of the Sixth ICCS Conference and Gathering of the Elders, held in February 2018 in Mumbai, “Exploring Divinity Through the Feminine in Ancient Cultures,” was intriguing indeed. I was deeply impressed with the camaraderie, warmth, and good will that were so pervasive. Thoughtful and lively conversation, interactive presentations, and informal discussions that went late into the night demonstrated deep understanding and affection among 250 delegates from 32 countries who were in attendance. These international conferences are appropriately hosted by India, the most ancient tradition.

On reflection, it was such an uplifting experience every day – from rituals and salutations to the rising Sun in the mornings to captivating presentations and interactions throughout the rest of the day. Let me relate only a selected few of the many memorable events I will always cherish from my stay at the conference venue, the idyllic Keshav Shristi. Here they are:

Listening to the stories of several Yezidis (they were also present at the Fifth ICCS Conference in Mysore) who seek justice and have been turned away from every national and international avenue they have approached, gave me chills. We spoke at length on human rights and I do pray that they succeed in their efforts toward vindication of their rights.

Major Surendra Mathur, who has been helping Romuva Lithuanians so that they receive recognition from their government as a minority. Earlier, Major Mathur had asked me to write a letter to the government recommending such recognition for the Romuva. The group participated and meeting the Romuva priestess, Inija, was the highlight of my trip. I found out that after the conference Major Mathur took some Hungarian elders on a visit and lo and behold, between Ajmer and Jaipur they found their “Kuldevi,” Shakambari Devi. They intend to build a temple the Devi in Hungary.

I was deeply impressed to hear the eloquent and convincing talk by Elder Pat McCabe, raised in the Lakota tradition of the Native Americans.

The planning and execution of the conference were exquisite. So were the very gracious hospitality and warmth shown to us in Mumbai. I salute the organizers and the volunteers – I came back with a renewed enthusiastic reverence for Mother Earth.

Ved Nanda - India & USA

Lorna Dyall

The conference was well organised planned and achieved the objective to expose all who participated in the place of the “feminine” in divinity and that ancient cultures across the globe share many similar values, beliefs, practices and respect of the female power and strength as a fundamental part of any creation.

Stories shared by way of papers, workshops, discussions and networking were a powerful part of the conference which provided the material for all to grow and develop and consider the future of the globe, the connections between all creatures, the elements of the universe and the place and contribution that humankind has created. We were all aware without significant changes in our role in healing the planet, there would be a limited future ahead for all who inhabit in the globe and without the intervention of the “feminine divine”, our expectations of the future would be limited to perhaps under a century on earth.

We found the spiritual sessions which recognise the “feminine divine”, uplifting, scared and profound. To move forward, we may need to go back and recognise that all life depends upon the sun, earth, water, elements of the universe such as wind, earthquakes, floods for they create the opportunity for cleansing and creation of the new.

We also recognise that whatever happens in one part of the world has ramifications for all ripple effects create movement, change, cleaning, growth and new opportunities. Prayers for those without water, clean air, safe and reliable food, appropriate housing and employment are matters that in countries, such as, New Zealand, Canada, England, USA and other western countries are often taken for granted, yet we are now facing similar challenges that other

countries have not yet had the opportunity or privilege or gratitude to achieve.

The conference highlighted the importance of gratitude that we need to appreciate our time, place and space on earth and attempt to support all by our actions, thinking and wise use of resources. It was a privilege to travel from Aotearoa to India to share our experience as Maori and Indian women from down under.

Nau te rourou naku te rourou
Your basket and my basket

Lorna Dyall- New Zealand

SD Youngwolf

The Sixth International Gathering of the Elders was a wonderful experience for all who came, for both returning and new participants. I have attended each gathering since the first in 2003, and it was the best yet in my opinion. The only thing missing was the participation of the tribes from Northeastern India, who usually come and perform beautiful traditional dances. The camaraderie felt and enthusiasm for the events was palpable.

The opening ceremony was appropriate and effective in directing the participants consciousness toward the SACRED. The various morning ceremonies displayed the beauty and richness of diverse traditions, and the fireplace in which the fire was kept going for the duration of the conference provided a good meeting place for the exchange of teachings and ideas as well as the sharing of music and stories, in an environment touched by the Sacred. The talks and papers provided information about various traditions and viewpoints on the theme of the Divine Feminine, a topic I thought was particularly appropriate in today's world, where women are reclaiming their power. Different approaches were expressed, but similarities in approach and relationship were obvious. The cultural sharing was quite inspirational, as the arts have always played an important part in carrying on the culture, teachings, and truth of the scattered parts of our diverse human family.

For my part, I helped in the opening ceremony by smudging participants with sage, a common practice for purification in Native American traditions. I gave a talk on "The Power of the Feminine in Iroquoian traditions", conducted a sweat lodge ceremony, sang Native American songs in the cultural sharing, and gave two

storytellings, all of which were well attended. I was gratified by this opportunity to share my people's history, culture, values, and music. Many besides myself, were greatly touched by the sharing and learning occasioned by this conference, as evidenced by the responses of participants from all corners of the world. Aho and JAI MA!

SD Youngwolf - United States

Divya Prabha

My experience at the ICCS conference this year was deep and profound. It was a great honour to be able to be part of this. Gathering of elders from indigenous communities from around the world is probably one of the greatest things that can be done in the present time for not just bringing people together but for seeing and realising that unity in diversity. This unique event held in India every few years where everyone has the time and space, in both an academic, ceremonial and literally celebratory environment to come together with the depth of their traditions and share without any discrimination is indeed a divine gift.

Apart from the Community of Sanatana Dharma in India we see indigenous and ancient spiritual communities around the world discriminated against where ancient traditions for the majority have been replaced by modern religions or even an absence of any tradition except for individuality. There is an urgent need in the world for this cultural heritage and these traditions which are the ultimate way to restore sustainability, a sense of well being and purpose as well as peace to a troubled world. These ancient traditions which all hold common threads are the answer to be able to lead a better life which is content, in tune with the divine and serving higher purpose that which is limited by individuality. Everybody has thousands of years of tradition behind their philosophy and practice traceable to ancient times.

In particular at this gathering the timing for discussions on the Divine feminine could not be better starting with a standing up of feminine energy around the world with the #metoo campaigns but also the

mystical and spiritual evocative form of the divine mother for healing the differences around the world and the necessary healing of the world itself. All the elders irrespective of their origin spoke of earth as their mother and the divinity and holiness of that divine feminine energy. It was incredible to go from one room where we would be hearing the ancient tradition of storytelling from North American Indian tribes to another where the female divine form as described in the form of rivers in the Vedas would be discussed. The three days were filled numerous moving events from different cultures. From short films to round circle story telling, from cultural programs to academic paper presentations. There was a great balance of organised presentations but also a chance to discuss with people on an individual and group level.

The attempted destruction of the Yezidis by ISIS is incredulous for this day and age and touched the souls of all. The rousing calls of the Maori women through their songs left one feeling awakened. The traditions of the medicine men from Colombia, Guatemala and North American Indians left us with the sense of perfectness of nature and the sense of care and wonder by Mother Earth for her children through these plants that have for thousands years healed and given a sense of well being to millions of people through the ages. The gentleness of prayer and song from Latvia and Lithuania was astounding as were the incredible similarities with the Sanskrit language.

Indeed the Sanskrit roots were evident in many of the traditions. The Tibetan Buddhist's beautiful mandala and chanting which was then taken back to the form of dust at the conclusion of the programme served as a reminder of the transitory nature of this individual life which yet can leave a lasting impact both good and bad. From Hungary we experienced their tradition where they simulated crossing the ocean of consciousness. From Germany we met the elders that could trace their roots to Rajasthan and to this day celebrate and worship Kali. Whichever tradition we listened to and shared, the self responsibility role in this world could not have been emphasised more. Pat McCabe from beginning to end brought all the elders together guiding and inspiring us. Many gave inspired and moving messages perhaps the most notable of all was from the medicine men of Colombia where awareness and unity was urged as the real need of the moment to protect the earth and the divine. From the traditions of Africa we were blessed with divine visions reminding us the importance of this time and the responsibility we have towards healing this earth and be part of the peace.

The whole experience was literally universal. In sharing our traditions with each other it brings a unity to our communities where we can have a shared vision based on divinity. I particularly enjoyed the morning gathering for ceremony where we got to experience the spiritual upliftment through different traditions with deep reverence. A sense of brother and sisterhood exists in gatherings like this where there are no boundaries and division but simply a shared goal for a better world based on ultimate truth. Understanding that ultimate truth, that we are simply all one is all that is needed and this coming together is an essential and leading part of the movement gathering momentum to awaken people's consciousness to bring about much needed change in the world.

Divya Prabha - United Kingdom

Rika Higa

This is the third ICCS conference that I participate. I'd like to express my gratitude.

We could share joy, sorrow, suffering the knowledge and exploring the way to peace.

Every time I'm deeply impressed your warm welcome and hospitality, ceremonies and intention inherited from the ancestors. I'd like to make the best use energies I got here from now on.

I'm conducting prayers with my husband and doing ceremonies for political economic stability and various issues in Japan and the world so that we can avoid war and pray for nature's gentle energy.

When praying, I will continue to wish for everyone to smile, support and cooperation, so that people will be able to welcome such delight and share as soon as possible.

Rika Higa - Japan

Adriana Salazar Vega

To me, true intention of “*doing something*” involves creating spaces to share, learn, teach and strengthen traditions and ceremonial practices, which allow the union between human beings and nature. When it happens, it is a clear manifestation that there is a great purpose behind.

For me, being able to help and participate in the development of the 6th conference of ICCS was an opportunity to understand the significance of gathering indigenous Elders, together with other like-minded people. I personally experienced the transparency and honesty that this organization has, towards accomplishing its mission. As a young woman and a believer of this profound purpose, seeing this example of self-less work its a great motivation. I learnt that creating harmonious relationships with Nature its an organizing principle of the Universe. We are all interconnected.

Weeks after this empowering 4 days conference, I can see that the mission continues right in my hometown, with the communities, with the peoples.

My commitment as a “*volunteer for life*” its stronger than ever. The great support and work of ICCS inspires me to keep working as part of the multicultural human family. A family united under a vision of Universal Well-being.

In this gathering we have met, to give ourselves life, to share a story, a feeling, a memory, knowledge. Moving towards the infinite and eternal, the truth.

Adriana Salazar - Colombia

Iya Efunshade (Delores Zola)

My divine experience in India was a testimony of our (Elders) commitment to be one unified group with an agreed vision to make a difference in the world. My full circle experience accumulated the love, compassionate relationships, new relationships, community gathering and welcoming that I experienced in 2003. It was not only the intellectual presentations, artists display, fine cuisines, colorful country from Delhi to Mumbai, and the welcoming open arms that greeted the delegation a long the way. It was the highest divine spiritual energies that guided us during our time there and to this day. My healing experience was one I can not forget, having my prayers for healing answered make me cry still. I am so happy to have been an instrument of hope and healing for others, and conduit for messages and so much more. Our work has only begun as we have awakened the divine feminine in ourselves and in the lives of others. The joy of reconnecting with delegates from previous conferences and the excitement of meeting new delegates has set a firm foundation for a relationship that will last a lifetime.

I look forward to the continued dialogue, support and commitment that we will all bring to this experience.

Much love and respect

Delores Zola - United States

Inija Trinkuniene

It was a big pleasure and honor to participate in the 6th ICCS conference

near Mumbai, at the same place where the first conference was held. This is a great tradition, already, and extremely valuable meeting of many representatives of traditional cultures worldwide. This was a great opportunity to share and celebrate dignity and expression of every unique and indigenous culture, We got deep common inspiration to go further in the way of fostering, strengthening and revival of every native culture and religion.

The choice of female divinity as a strategic theme of the conference, to my mind, was very successful, important and actual for current spiritual situation of many national communities and countries over the world, Lithuania included. Numerous reports, which were presented in the conference, was a valuable help to look at the manifestation of divinity from various perspectives. The conference surely will give great impetus for further investigation and better understanding of human spiritual harmony issues.

The multi-dimensional nature of the conference was what made it sophisticated and solid. The numerous aspects from which the topic of the conference was approached, starting from musical elements, finishing with scientific presentations and interactive workshops, contributed a lot to the in-depth analysis of the topic and the all-encompassing intellectual dialogue between participants. Due to the diverse layers which the conference consisted of, its participants representing different forms of art and various scientific fields were able to openly share insights among

themselves and achieve common conclusive results of their respective discussions during the conference.

It is not possible to convey shortly those emotions, incitement and joy of common procession of the participants of the conference together with many Indian friends and nice girls blessing the procession with flowers, many other expressions of commonness and solidarity, and especially joint participation in rituals of various traditions every morning during the conference. Not to mention very impressive and pithy Indian cultural program every evening.

With a deep love to Indian land and people in our hearts, we, Lithuanian Romuva representatives in the conference, are taking this opportunity to express our gratefulness for this remarkable event which will stand as pillar for all our life. Looking forward to meet again, wishing harmony and growth for all indigenous communities, all our big friends.

Inija Trinkuniene - Lithuania

Coordination Team

ORGANIZERS

Shekhar Patel

Shyam Parande

Saumitra Gokhale

Priscilla Alvarado (General Coordination)

Anil Vartak

Vyavastha Vibhag (Event Management Team)

Vyavastha Pramukh	Event in charge	Sunil Mishra
Sah Vyavastha Pramukh	Deputy Event in charge	Harish Nair
Karyalay Vyavastha Pramukh	Office administration	Milind Deo
Nivas Vyavastha	Accommodation	Adriana Salazar & Ashish Gokhale
Yatayat - Mumbai	Transport - Mumbai	Gyanendra Mishra
Yatayat - Local	Transport - Local	Premchand Gupta
Bhojan Vyavastha	Food and refreshments	Virendra Ved
Prachar/maddhyam	Publicity/media	Ratnesh Shukla
Vaidyagiy Sahayata	Medical assistance	Sushil Jaggi
Prakash our dhvani	Light and sound	Deobrat Sen
Adhikari Vyavastha	Statutory compliance	Kamlesh Chaudhari

Coordination Team

Vyavastha Vibhag (Event Management Team)

Shabdh/chithra lekhan	Audio/video recording	Vishwas Marathe
Paryatan	Tour	Ratnesh Shukla
	Ceremony	Suresh Pandey
	Sessions	Devendra Pai
Sanskrutik kaaryakram	Cultural Evening Program	Prasit Bhatt
Shobha yatra/utghatan	Procession/ Inauguration	Akhil Shrivastav
Samarop	Finale + General Coordination	Gautam Jhaluka
	Keshav Srushti	Dau Dayal Sharma
		Anupam Shukla
	Rambhau Malgi Prabodhini	Govind Ambardekar
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