

Samvaada with Mr. Kalyan Visvanathan, Executive Vice President , Dharma Civilization Foundation (subsequently abbreviated as DCF)

Q1: (Questioner: Rajiv Malhotra) : There are several issues with Kalyan's write up -

1. It appears that DCF's knowledge of this field is still limited to what I had explained to them over 2 decades. In fact, Kalyan writes, "All of this is not new. Rajiv Malhotra's own appraisal agrees with the above assessment". It is not that "I" agree with them, but they (claim to) agree with me. What he ought to write is: "All of this is not new to RM, because that is who we learned it from in the first place." What this admission would bring out is that they are spending millions of dollars of community funds with no research into the industry itself, beyond what they had picked up from me - which is old knowledge that I have superseded ever since. I explain in my Toronto workshop what has changed in my thinking based on this experience. Every statement he makes about this "industry" is a summary from my talks that Kalyan attended for a decade, his interviews with me on this industry (which he later removed from his internet radio station), and other sources of mine. But I know what is obsolete about this data, and he does not seem to go beyond this old perspective.
2. DCF assumes (with no study of a precedence) that the best way to change the academy is by helping the very same system that is to be changed. Have we not learned lessons from colonial Indology where this was tried?
3. Have they studied the prerequisites that were put in place by Muslims, gays, feminists and others who have successfully influenced western academics? What are those? I do not find DCF being even aware that any such prerequisites are important. Similarly, in the case of Buddhist and Sikh studies - what did they do before funding chairs? DCF needs to start there and not bypass this inquiry.
4. Similarly, they need to study how various other fields got established/modified in the academy - what have been the dynamics for fields like postmodernism, feminism, subaltern studies, human rights, etc.? Have they studied these enough to draw important lessons that can be used? The write up by Kalyan does not indicate any such knowledge.
5. An obvious DCF blind spot is based on where I left things with them many years back: This is their sole emphasis on Religious Studies. Do they understand the dynamics across various disciplines and how these fields relate to each other - like history, anthropology, political science, gender studies, and others? Why do they assume that influence within Religious Studies is isolated? (Kalyan correctly summarizes my remarks from my various talks on these departments, but does not indicate "so what" and how does this effect DCF's strategy.)
6. Given Kalyan's claims of having done his homework, can he please explain to us what are the specific goals, objectives, milestones, benchmarks for each DCF program - such as GTU? If he were an investor in a business venture, he would want a document on that concrete deliverables that are measurable and a program to track these. Can he share this with us? Was this attached to any contract signed with the university so both sides know what the expectation is?
7. Kalyan writes: "GTU i.e. the Graduate Theological Union is not a single denomination Seminary." He does not seem to appreciate what the real issues are. How does single or multiple denominations matter to the issue of bias? Princeton Theological Seminary near my house is also multi-denomination and I have closely studied it for 20 years. The issue is the usage of

Western/Abrahamic hermeneutics/theories and methods. The lens does not change if it is a seminary that trains priests for multiple denominations.

8. Has DCF studied academic models other than "gifting" - giving money away to someone else's control is the easy part.
9. The idea is not to "prematurely root for its failure" but to convince DCF to prevent failure or at least raise the probability of success. DCF says it is open, but open in what sense - other than being open to soliciting funds from the public?
10. I agree with him that it is unnecessary for every "businessman" donating \$ to have studied the field at the same level of detail as I did. But it IS NECESSARY for those leading the program (like him and the trustees) to have studied the field intensely. You cannot become a responsible player without this expertise.

I hope they can take this as constructive criticism.

Q2: (Questioner: Shivaswamy Turuvekere)

Dear friends, In Bharath itself there is progressive decline of Dharmic civilization and the western Techno-Industrial civilization is spreading under the garb of globalization. Why DCF cannot try to create more awareness among Hindus and Bharatiyas at large starting from Bharath by utilizing their resources and scholars. Is it not possible to make our own country the VishwaGuru once again.

Q3: (Paragraph wise Critical Analysis : Shibu Shivaram)

Critique of DCF EVP's response to concerns raised on Rajiv Malhotra platform.

Preamble

Rajiv Malhotra raises valid concerns, pertaining to safeguarding Hindu interests, when working with the Academic Institutions in the USA. He has rightly pointed out that there are many risks associated with investing in Hindu Studies in the Academy, and Hindus have made many unwise investments in the academy in the past. DCF agrees with these views.

Para 1

So far so good. Key points to note here

Para 1.1 Kalyanji agrees that Hindus have made unwise investments in the academy in the past.

Para 1.2 DCF agrees with these views

But unfortunately, in addition to expressing legitimate concerns, his criticism centers on a charge i.e. an accusation which can be summarized in the following way - Dharma Civilization Foundation is incompetent, its principals are incompetent, and they are likely to cause more harm than good, despite their best intentions.

Para 2

This is a reactive statement. It has no valid point to make other than responding to an accusation. But we would all be benefited if the dialogue is a samvaada that is exchanged for the purpose it has to serve, which is to evolve a better understanding on both sides.

This paragraph could have been utilized to clearly specify the concerns to which he is responding, rather it talks only about the specific judgment on the leaders' competence. I believe on both sides of the debate (Rajivji as well as DCF) it is essential to refrain from personal judgments, which essentially suppress the issues of contention to the back burner.

Dharma Civilization Foundation disagrees with Rajiv's assessment, as a matter of public record. We also believe that this criticism stems from Mr. Malhotra's lack of knowledge and to hear-say information about DCF's mission, structure, methods, accomplishments and future direction. He has not formally requested interviews with DCF so far and has not strived to perform an appropriate study of DCF's activities and knows very little about how DCF functions.

Para 3

Kalyanji is entering into dialogue mode here. Which is great. We can expect subsequent statements to clarify specifically disagrees with Rajivji's assessment. But I am not too sure he has either had a dialogue , good enough to understand the issues brought forth and effectively respond to them.

This is DCF's response to his criticism. It is not an invitation to a protracted E-Mail exchange, and is not meant to invite bystanders into an extensive dialog. DCF believes that many well-meaning people get into meaningless and even abusive verbal duels in the on-line world, which they would not, if they had to have a face to face conversation. DCF is particularly concerned that such a deterioration of dialog in an important domain should not occur, within a community of people who support, and seek to foster the development of, the study of f Hindu Dharma, and wish to do the right thing on its behalf.

Para 4

This is a disappointing response from a leader. A good leader should recognize a few things here

- a. Rajivji is not a bystander in the online world.
- b. Deterioration in dialogue is only possible if both sides have an agenda of their own. If the agenda is the same , deterioration in dialogue is not possible. Dialogue becomes 'samvaada' instead of 'vivaada' or 'vithandaa'.

DCF's work:

First we must begin with an understanding of what DCF is trying to do. We request the readers to visit DCF's web site (www.dcfusa.org) and review its contents thoroughly.

Para 5

I have done that already. Kalyanji should have an understanding that majority of the people to whom he is responding are learned people. The website talks about missions and specific programmes such as GTU. However the website does not address the concerns raised on Rajivji's forums.

DCF believes that the work of transforming the academic study of Hinduism, must be done primarily within the academy, and not merely from outside the academy.

Para 6

Academic study must be transformed within academy . This statement is a precursor to defending the GTU decision.

While creating a “home team,” of intellectual Kshatriyas outside the academy, who have read Rajiv Malhotra’s books, and have attended a few of his lectures, may offer some value in the internet world, it does little to bring any kind of fundamental shifts in paradigms and methods within the Academic world.

Para 7

This is something we can agree with. An academic response to academy is a strong force to counter academic propaganda.

Credentials are critical within the academic world, and unless similar work, is being done within the academia, it cannot be fundamentally altered.

Para 8

This is something also something we can agree with. However you will see below how the definition of the word ‘academic world’ does not come forth clearly , and is not based off solid understanding, rather a reactive tendency to do something quickly rather than a well thought through strategy.

There is a chasm between the world of the academia which is inside the fortress – walled off so to speak through the instruments of qualifications, credentials and academic peer review, and the free-wheeling world of the online free market of ideas on the internet, where anyone can offer a view point or a perspective, without any credentials whatsoever.

Para 9

Kalyanji has very clearly understood the academia. The fortress that is sending out arrows of destruction towards Hindu culture. A few people making ruckus in the villages is not going to break the barrage of arrows arising from this fortress.

From an information dissemination stand-point, while the internet might have broken down barriers belonging to an earlier era, it cannot substitute for the rigorous process of getting the credentials within the academy i.e. acquiring a Ph.D., writing books that are peer reviewed within the academy and gaining currency within the academic world as a ‘respected’ scholar.

Para 10

Kalyanji is comparing internet vs. formal academia in the same way as he compares a well organized army vs. guerilla warfare . This makes perfect sense. However please hold on to where he lets us down in the next paragraph.

The West has established the standards for what constitutes ‘academic excellence’ and ‘scholarly expertise’ and we cannot wish away this fact that these are the rules of the game.

Para 11

This is the most horrible and disappointing mindset. This is half the battle won for the West. I don’t think Kalyanji understands the word game changer. Even if we agree to the west's narrative on academic excellence and scholarly expertise, the BIG question is , HOW SAFE IS IT to allow the WEST'S FRAMEWORK to ‘officially’ direct the FUTURE NARRATIVE of Hindu religious studies and as Rajivji spelt out, the specific linkages to study of history, politics, and so on. Kalyanji DOES NOT RESPOND on these issues, since as discussed in the response at **PARA 3 and PARA 5** above, he has neither understood, nor sought to understand the concerns being raised.

When we wish to play cricket, we have to accept the rules of Cricket. Our excellence in Kabbaddi will not count in the world of cricket. But Indians are not incapable of being excellent at Cricket – We just have to embrace the challenge and its associated rules.

Para 12

We can play cricket (play academic studies). But is it NECESSARY to play it in ENGLISH GROUNDS AGAINST FOUR SWING BOWLERS ON A DAMP PITCH AND BAT FIRST WITH 5 SPINNERS IN OUR TEAM?

The Academic Study of Hindu Dharma

The academic study of Hinduism is part of an established discipline called “Religious Studies” within the Western world, which has been funded extensively both by the State and by Private Foundations. The reality is that today, to the extent that Hinduism is being studied at all within the Departments of Religious Studies, it is being studied through the lens of critique and exclusively through Western categories that help them problematize Hinduism, and deconstruct it in various ways.

Para 13

Excellent assessment here. Fully agree.

The American Academy of Religion, the largest scholarly association of academic scholars of religious studies in the world has a membership of around 11,000 scholars, most of them credentialed within the discipline. In addition, the association that represents scholars of theological schools has a membership of over 8,500 scholars with degrees such as Doctor of Theology or Doctor of Divinity etc.

Para 14

Good concise summary of what AAR is. Note the degrees are called ‘Doctor of Theology’ and ‘Doctor of Divinity’.

It is interesting to note that the Western interpretation of the word “Secularism” allows the State to fund the study of religions as long as all, or most, religions are being studied, (e.g. University of California, Santa Barbara and many others) whereas, in the Indian interpretation of the word “Secularism”, the study

of Religion itself has been outlawed i.e. literally banished from the University environments, with appropriate exceptions made for the minorities. So a discipline called “Religious Studies” does not exist anywhere in India. So there are no home grown scholars from India who can represent Hindu Dharma in the Public Square.

Para 15

Is this NOT the BIGGER ISSUE IN HAND? The fact that a Hindu who has undergone study in India in a traditional gurukulam cannot represent Hindu dharma in public square? If they cite the ‘branding’ created by ‘PhD,’ university system’, isn’t the primary LONG TERM strategy , to in fact work towards REBRANDING traditional knowledge systems? Where is the battle of credentials won? INSIDE American Academy Of Religion?

The battle is not won by fighting inside the enemy’s fortress, the battle is won by BREAKING the fortress.

“So there are no home grown scholars from India who can represent Hindu Dharma in the Public Square.”

The poorest statement till now.

Further, in the US, India and Hindu Dharma are being studied substantially in the discipline of “Area Studies”; in particular “South Asia Studies” which were funded by public-private partnerships engendered by the State Department during the Cold War era, when the American commitment was to understand the world and map it according to its own needs. So in addition to the department of religious studies, Hinduism as a religion and Hindu culture and Civilization is studied in the west from many different angles, through departments such as anthropology, history, classical languages, South Asian Studies, political science, international relations, psychology, sociology, cultural studies, philosophy, arts etc. Each of these departments has their own way of fragmenting and deconstructing Hindu Dharma using a variety of Western lens and categories. Each therefore produces its own bias, which then is elaborated progressively and disseminated through a large community of Scholars, who build upon each other’s work, extensively quoting each other’s’ works, relying upon each other’s position, prestige and power. Bias and Prejudice have grown into the status of established truths about Hindu Dharma within the Academy. Scholars who go against the norms, either through creating research or organizational structures that challenges existing paradigms, are professionally undermined.

All of this is not new. Rajiv Malhotra’s own appraisal agrees with the above assessment.

Para 16

Kalyanji CLEARLY UNDERSTANDS THE PROBLEM. But how about the solution????? And the concerns raised on his proposed solution of GTU.

Creating a paradigm shift

Rajiv Malhotra's work in explaining the problems within the Academy and the challenges associated with bringing about a systemic change within the academy is truly path breaking. He has filled a vacuum where there was an absence of critical thinking on the part of an independent scholar, who was not in some way beholden to the academy and its power structures. He has been successful on two counts. Today, there is a greater degree of awareness of the key issues involved. They have also served to challenge the assumptions of the established scholars within the academia to a certain extent, who have in some ways closed ranks to blunt his criticism. However, there are strict limits to the effect an outsider can have on the structures of the academy.

Para 17

This is like saying I can't break the fortress, so let me join ranks with them and hopefully they will let me win a few battles.

DCF believes that the work of transforming that discipline, i.e. the discipline of the Academic Study of Hinduism and ensuring that Hindu Dharma is properly positioned in the schools and colleges needs to be done **within the academy**. It cannot be addressed merely by writing books outside the academy and conducting seminars for lay people. DCF believes that ultimately it has to revolve around the creation of hundreds of scholars within the Academy with Ph.D.'s in religious studies and in Hinduism specifically, as well as other affiliated disciplines, who begin to act as a counter-weight to the establishment's ways of studying and presenting Hindu Dharma. There is a need for a critical mass here – one scholar here or there will not make much of a difference, and as Rajiv himself has pointed out, they may get swept away into the methodologies and positions of the establishment.. But when a sufficient numbers of Hindu Scholars, working within the Academy, occupying prestigious Chairs, begin to offer a more authentic perspective and presentation of Hindu Dharma, it will change the terms of the discourse in the Academy. **This is a fundamental belief that underlies DCF's work.**

Para 18

My statement in para 13 is being elaborated by Kalyanji himself . He says

*“DCF believes that the work of transforming that discipline, i.e. the discipline of the Academic Study of Hinduism and ensuring that Hindu Dharma is properly positioned in the schools and colleges needs to be done **within the academy**.”*

Pray how is he going to do that. Does he have a contract with a university to run an independent chair with no interference from the university? Why doesn't he spell out the details of the contract in this response. Again the reason is a NON understanding of the points of concern.

Funding the Academic Study of Hinduism

Hindus have not funded the academic study of Hinduism to any great extent, and when we are not doing it, we cannot very well complain that the scholars are taking “Anti-Hindu” or “nuanced non-confrontational” positions consistently. After all, as long as these scholars are occupying positions within the Academy, funded by the likes of Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Templeton Foundation, or even the Secular University systems funded by the State or Christian Seminaries and so on, they cannot very well offer perspectives that contradict the prevailing preferred narrative within the Academy, without

incurring some risk to their own careers and livelihoods. Scholars tend to be risk averse as a whole, at least when it comes to their careers, and it is easier within the prevailing environment to “not go against the grain of the establishment”, and to write anything that challenges the centers of power within the academy; the risks are just too severe. In fact the system of rewards and punishments prevailing within the academy incentivizes those scholars who join the bandwagon and reinforce prevailing biases and prejudices, and adversely impacts scholars who go against the grain and write controversial and provocative material.

Para 19

Excellent , so his strategy is to take on the following using FUNDING

- a. Ford Foundation,
- b. Rockefeller Foundation,
- c. Templeton Foundation, or even the
- d. Secular University systems funded by the State
- e. Christian Seminaries

The DCF is going to **OUTFUND ALL THESE ORGANISATIONS SO THAT ACADEMICS HAVE A CHANGE OF MIND AND FORWARD OUR NARRATIVE**

For Scholars to stick their neck out and write material that is provocative and potentially game changing, they must be confident that they can manage the “backlash” from the academy. This is possible only when they are protected by environments where their positions and appointments within the academy are not threatened. This requires a much wider level of funding from the Hindu community than has so far been forthcoming.

Para 20

Hindu community is now going to **OUTFUND THE CHURCH< ROCKEFELLER AND TEMPLETON**. This is the strategy. No comments.

It is in this context, that Dharma Civilization Foundation aspires to be an influential Foundation in the years to come by funding scholars, professors, chairs, students, research, writing projects and journals, which is expected to change the trajectory of the way Hindu Dharma is being studied in the Academy, and even how the various Dharma Traditions as a group are being studied. Many of the principals of DCF are very familiar with Rajiv Malhotra’s efforts. His contribution in creating awareness around the issues with the Academic Study of Hinduism, is an important contribution. He has also challenged the biases and prejudices of the established Scholars within the Academy. All of this matters in raising consciousness of this major issue. However his work exists largely outside the academy. DCF believes that this, though important, is not enough. There must be engagement with the Academy itself, by a community of scholars.

Para 21

Mere repetition of what he has already said.

Thus, DCF's work is also necessary and important and, we believe, critical. In the years to come, we hope that not only will DCF be very successful, but there will be many more such Foundations which will invest in the Academic Study of Hinduism and carry this work forward.

Para 22

No specific solution to address the problem at hand is spelt out.

Managing the "Risks" involved

There are numerous specific challenges involved in funding the study of Hindu Dharma within the Western Academy. Rajiv Malhotra has pointed out that there is a history of Hindus making contributions to the American Academy at specific universities where the donor's intent was honored for a time, only to be taken over in course of time, and appropriated by the prevailing environment that is committed to studying Hinduism through a lens of suspicion.

Para 23

Finally something serious, LOOKING FORWARD EAGERLY to the next paragraph.

Rajiv Malhotra is correct that this is a real risk.

Para 24

WOW. Great. Appreciate.

Undoubtedly, the Hindu community as a whole needs to learn how to manage this risk effectively with the University system.

Para 25

HOW? Effectively is a good word. But HOW?

The Jews, Buddhists and Islamists, and even Jains and Sikhs are all doing it.

Para 26

How are they doing it? Are they doing it? Do you know that they are doing it?

The Buddhists have funded some 14 Chairs so far, the Sikhs have funded 6 Chairs, the Jains have funded at least 3 chairs, and the Jews have funded nearly 230 chairs (approximately).

Para 27

Great. What are the results? Have you studied those?

It is the Hindus alone who have not yet opened their account, and are stuck at zero.

Para 28

OK.

It is short-sighted to argue that Hindus alone will never learn this and are confined permanently to be incompetent in this area.

Para 29

Irrelevant line.

In its engagements with USC, UCI and GTU, DCF is critically examining the key issues involved in managing this risk effectively.

Para 30

What issues and HOW? **Let us see how he critically examines in the rest of the paragraph.**

If we don't learn from past mistakes and missteps, and continually fine tune our engagement strategy with the University system, as a community we will never be able to make a real difference within the discourse in the academy, and will be confined to work outside the academy which will make at best a marginal difference to the discourse within the academy.

Para 31

Now this is sounding more and more like Rahul Gandhi's speech to Times NOW. Women empowerment, youngsters.

DCF is committed to learning to manage this risk ongoing and demonstrating some successful experiences and case studies, so that the Hindu community at large can begin to believe that this is possible. As difficult as this may be, **DCF believes that it is possible.**

Para 32

How is this possible. Not clear.

DCF is further committed to building this body of knowledge and expertise that would enable DCF to ensure that the funding given to the University is being utilized effectively, and consistent with the vision and intent of the donor.

Para 33

How?

Further, DCF is also committed to ensuring that businessmen who may not be deeply studied or knowledgeable in this domain to nevertheless make an important difference working with DCF. It is unnecessary and even impossible for every businessman to do the study of this domain to the extent that Rajiv Malhotra has.

Para 34

Agreed. This is the point I was making on the forum that leaders need not be subject matter experts. But they need to be wise enough to hire one if they don't have the expertise.

Nor is it necessary. As long as the key Principals of DCF are able to understand these risks and manage them effectively – DCF believes that it can guide many businessmen to do the right thing on behalf of the Hindu Community.

Para 35

Agreed. But so far he hasn't shown any signs of having understood the risks or of managing them. This section was titled 'risks' but so far I haven't seen a SINGLE risk being pointed out.

In this regard DCF is working with the following framework of principles.

1. **Avoid mistakes made in the past:** One of the center-pieces of DCF's mission is to help the Hindu Community at large to avoid the mistakes which were made by previous donors. DCF has therefore studied the pitfalls of previous endeavors by interviewing donors (e.g. Navin Doshi) and is committed to breaking new ground in this regard.

Para 36

Great news. What were the lessons learnt , risks faced, risks that will be avoided.

2. **Identify favorable environments:** Another pillar of DCF's work, is to identify environments within the academy that will be favorable to hosting Hindu Studies, and privileging the Hindu perspective i.e. and insider perspective on Hindu studies. There is much more to this, than merely meeting some of the key academicians, and concluding that they seem to be "nice people". DCF has done extensive due diligence with each environment that it is engaging with – at USC, UCI and GTU, so far. No environment is perfect, and DCF has taken care to evaluate positives and negatives, and assess relative potential. In cases, where the environment was found to be unfavorable, DCF has withdrawn from further pursuit.

Para 37

What is the definition of the word "ENVIRONMENT"? And does DCF HAVE THE EXPERTISE to define what is FAVORABLE?

3. **Start slow and test the waters:** Before jumping into making a full commitment of a chair at a university, DCF commits to a shorter term pilot project experiment. This may involve funding courses taught by adjunct faculty or funding a short term visiting professor say for a period of 1 or 2 years with a major university. Such testing identifies two things early, i.e. one, whether there is a demand for Hindu studies in that environment, and two, whether administration and the culture of the institution are suitable and willing to work towards helping us realize DCF's vision. It is important to recognize that even within an environment that may on the whole be generally hostile to Hindu interests, we can nevertheless find here and there, certain islands or oases where the Hindu interest can be reliably safe-guarded, provided we fund it properly and manage it carefully.

Para 38

We will enter the fortress of the enemy and find small pockets where we are offered safety for the time being. That will help us win the war.

4. **Promote Scholar – Practitioners:** Many of the problems associated with the academic study of Hinduism arises from the fact that the Western Scholars are not practitioners of Hindu Dharma – Very often they are Practitioners of other Religions which have a built in animosity towards Hindu Dharma or they tend to be Atheists or Skeptics when it comes to religion in general. DCF is keen to promote Scholar Practitioners, who have been brought up within one of the major Hindu Sampradayas and have learnt within the community of practitioners, preferably under a Guru or Acharya. DCF believes that this is the best guarantee for the Scholar's orientation and approach when it comes to the study of Hindu Dharma.

Para 39

This is dangerous. Now we are sending soldiers trained in or blessed by our generals and asking them to find small pockets within the enemy camp that offer safety.

Risks I see are :

- a. Soldiers can defect to enemy camps easily.
 - b. These defected soldiers become OUR voices within the enemy camp.
 - c. These defected soldiers can 'SUBDUE' true soldiers who are fighting on our side.
5. **Enter into legally sound "Gift Agreements" with the University:** DCF has retained academicians as advisors who can help with capturing the donor intent in appropriate academic language, and lawyers to write these gift agreements, and safe-guard donor intent. DCF takes these gift agreements very seriously and is also crafting special language that will allow for DCF's future involvement during transitions within the University. Gift agreements have to be negotiated carefully with the Faculty and Administrative staff within the University, and there are numerous areas, where there must be give and take between the Donor and the University. This is new territory for the Hindu community on the whole, and DCF is again breaking new ground in this area.
6. **Creating Favorable Conditions for Appropriate Faculty Appointments:** Universities often cite "Academic Independence" in protecting their right to appoint their own Faculty Search Committees, and following University "Protocols" in making independent Faculty appointments. This is one of the places where the donor's intent in funding a position can get thwarted by a Faculty Search Committee that has a different perspective on filling the position. Even though DCF may not be able to sit on the Faculty Search Committee itself, DCF is forging a path towards the appointment of faculty, through meaningful consultations and inputs that can further the vision articulated in the Gift Agreement. Ascertaining the culture of the institution as to whether it is favorable or unfavorable to the DCF vision is a central element of DCF policy.

Para 40

Important point

Even though DCF may not be able to sit on the Faculty Search Committee itself, DCF is forging a path towards the appointment of faculty, through meaningful consultations and inputs that can further the vision articulated in the Gift Agreement.

SO we DON'T decide faculty. We only offer consultations.

7. **Maintain an ongoing relationship with the Chair Holder:** DCF has academic advisors whose role is to create benchmark measures for the Chair holder, and to observe and measure faculty performance. This involves sometimes, starting with the Chair holder as Visiting professor before committing DCF to support a full time position. This is something that needs to be managed over the long term, and potentially long after the current Principals of DCF have moved on. Therefore DCF is committed to institutionalizing this knowledge and developing junior members of the team, to do this work effectively long after the initial funding has been completed, and when transitions begin to occur both within the administrative staff

Para 41

Does DCF CONTROL APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR HOLDERS?

8. **Create Centers of Excellence within the Academy:** An individual chair funded by the Hindu Community, occupied by a Hindu friendly scholar may make a certain level of positive impact, but DCF believes that this will be insufficient. When multiple Chairs are funded within a single environment, there is an opportunity to develop a Center of Excellence in the Academy. The Study of India must be extracted from the discipline of South Asian Studies i.e. India needs to stand apart from the clutch of South Asian countries. Hindu Studies must be firmly established within the Departments of Religious Studies, and Hindu Scholar-Practitioners must present a more authentic and positive view of Hindu Dharma within the Academy. New Degree programs in Hindu Studies and Dharma Studies need to be created.

Para 42

What's a Hindu friendly scholar? Good intentions , no strategy.

9. **Engage with successful businessmen and demonstrate success stories:** Successful business leaders may want to seem important - and seek public admiration, some more than others. This is not necessarily bad, if it can be channelized properly. Further, many businessmen also genuinely want to make a difference. It is a reality that the altruistic goal of making a real difference in the community at large, is often mixed up with personal aspirations for recognition and admiration. Only in rare cases, as in perfectly enlightened beings, is the self-interest so completely eliminated that they can stand in the complete purity of Dharmic interest. DCF believes that finding a workable middle ground that balances the individual businessman's goals and interests, and DCF's vision and mission to make a lasting and permanent difference on behalf of Hindu Dharma is both realistic and achievable. DCF further recognizes that every businessman cannot become an expert in an exclusive domain such as the academic study of Hindu Dharma – They do not have the time and energy and interest to do the kind of study. It is like saying “Roger Federer is a horrible basketball player” which is true but irrelevant. However, DCF believes that when

supported by a group of academic advisors and attorneys, this knowledge gap can be managed effectively.

Para 44

Pointless paragraph. We need Kshatriyas and Brahmanas (selfless service) and the HELP of Vaishyas (who fund for dharma pursuits).

10. **Build an Open and Influential Foundation:** DCF is committed to developing into an influential public Foundation that has the expertise, and can guide the larger Hindu Community including those influential and wealthy Business men and women to do the right thing – i.e. in investing in transforming the discipline of the academic study of religion as it applies to Hindu Dharma and other Dharma traditions. DCF's Board of trustees are prestigious well educated community members with a common vision. Also DCF's Board is not closed. It is open to all those who want to contribute their time and resources in a meaningful way. All major donors are offered positions on Board of Governors with gives them total transparency as well as the capacity to influence decisions. There is an advisory board consisting of experts in various fields e.g. academicians, legal and financial experts and others if they have the credentials and time to devote to this work.

Para 45

Can you please name the advisory board. And in the future the advisory board should respond to concerns raised.

In Conclusion

The fundamental transformation of the Academic Study of Hindu Dharma will arise only through the emergence of a community of Scholars within the Academy who can defend Hinduism, present it accurately, authentically and constructively, who are both scholars and practitioners, and who are supported by Hindu money, and not left at the mercy of the Western funding agencies to fend for themselves. DCF believes that a Center of excellence with 5 or 6 scholars working together and funded by Hindu money can make a big difference. 3 to 4 centers like this could create a new center of gravity and be game changing within the academy. Scholarly work that is game changing will emerge as a natural course of such formations within the academy. A by product will be the presence of authentic teachings on Hindu Dharma at the under graduate level that can impact many thousands of young students as part of their GE coursework.

Engaging with the academy in the west is a complex matter, and cannot be simplified into a few black and white truths. For example, the criticism that DCF is “**Empowering a Christian Seminary to run the discourse on Hinduism**” is a naïve and simplistic view. GTU i.e. the Graduate Theological Union is not a single denomination Seminary. By the way Christian Seminaries come in many denominations i.e. Catholic, Jesuit, Dominican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist etc. etc. GTU is a consortium of Seminaries some of which are not Christian. Further, they have expanded their offerings to include programs in Judaism, Buddhism and Islam in addition to the various Christian denominations that constitute their consortium. GTU is committed to becoming a multi-religious institution that offers programs in all the world's major religions, and is very keen to work with Hindus, Jains and Sikhs. DCF

is working with GTU after a thorough and comprehensive due diligence report on the opportunity. DCF believes that the commitment of GTU to become a multi-religious institution and the commitment of DCF to establish a Center of Excellence for the study of Hindu Dharma have a natural concordance. GTU also understands the principle of studying religion as Practitioners, and is open to DCF establishing an independent Hindu institution that will include predominantly scholar – practitioners of Hindu Dharma. After a very thorough due diligence process, DCF has established a road map that offers significant autonomy and independence to the proposed Hindu Institution within the GTU.

Para 46

Finally something worthwhile to critique!

Questions

1. How do we say the NON CHRISTIAN programs have been successful
2. Where is the due diligence report that you refer to
3. Name 5 research papers that have established that GTU is a true multi religious institution
4. Significant autonomy must include MANAGING APPOINTMENTS IN THE FUTURE. Is that included?

Dharma Civilization Foundation has been in existence for only two years now, (at the time of this writing) and its success or failure has to be assessed over a longer period of time. It would on the whole be better for the Hindu Community to work towards ensuring DCF's success than to prematurely root for its failure.

PARA

The DCF need not succeed. WE have to succeed. DCF should consider itself a PART of the Hindu community. I would appreciate if he concluded saying that “ I am hopeful DCF would work towards ensuring the success of the Hindu community and seek continued support to forward this goal”

Om Tat Sat

Q4: (Questioner: Sudhindra Rao) : Mr. Kalyan's reply to the "original" concerns raised by Dr. Malhotra give us an impression that he / DCF is completely aware of the risks that Hinduism faces if DCF fails in its duty of conducting due diligence in ensuring that Hindu phobic individuals (specifically Professors born into Abrahamic faiths who gaze Hinduism through the Western lens) do not get appointed on the Chairs which DCF sponsors.

But we need not look any further to test the above premise. Dr. Gerald James Larson who holds or once held the following positions is a case in point:

- Rabindranath Tagore Professor Emeritus, Indian Cultures and Civilizations, Indiana University, Bloomington
- Professor Emeritus, Religious Studies, Department of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara
- Chair, Committee on Research and Scholarship and Member, Board of Directors, American Academy of Religion (1993-1999)

- **Research Professor (visiting professor on part time recall), Program In Religious Studies, University of California, Irvine (2011-)**

Now, the last position which Gerald Larson holds is due to the largesse showered on University of California, Irvine by DCF.

1. Gerald Larson critiqued Dr. Rajiv Malhotra's Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism, in an essay titled "The Issue of Not Being Different Enough: Some Reflections on Rajiv Malhotra's Being Different" which appeared in *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 16, 3: 311–322.

- A. In contesting Dr. Malhotra's position on integral unity amongst the Dharmic religions, Larson says "He fails to see that he is undermining his own argument for "being different" by obliterating the vast differences between and among the various religious and philosophical traditions of India." To support his intellectual position what does he do? Of all the people, he quotes Wendy Doniger!!

He continues " Put another way, what Malhotra presents is what Wendy Doniger (The Hindus: An Alternative History. New York: Penguin. 2009, 29, passim) has provocatively called the "Brahmin imaginary," that is, the standard Brāhma~ical view of Indic religion and philosophy in its Neo-Hindu garb." Now this is the same Wendy Doniger whose views and contempt for anything related to Hinduism is reflected in her assessment of *The Bhagavad-Gita* as under:

"The Bhagavad Gita is not as nice a book as some Americans think... Throughout the Mahabharata ... Krishna goads human beings into all sorts of murderous and self-destructive behaviors such as war.... The Gita is a dishonest book ..." (Quoted in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 November, 2000)"

Physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, Director of the Manhattan Project (who was popularly known as the Father of the Atomic Bomb) always gave *The Bhagavad Gita* as a present to his friends and kept a copy on the shelf closest to his desk. At Franklin Roosevelt's funeral he read a passage from the Gita chapter 17 verse 3 "Man is a creature whose substance is faith, what his faith is, he is". In 1963, the Christian Magazine asked him to list his 10 most influential books, he chose the Bhagavad Gita as one of them.

The above life testimonies go on to show that a scientifically trained (through theory and foundation of empirical hypothesis as well as through the actual methods of enquiry i.e. experiments, observations etc.) mind tasked with providing an extensive burden of proof for the claims to discovery held *The Bhagavad Gita* in very high esteem but someone who had poor knowledge of Sanskrit and who used Psychoanalysis to view Hinduism held the same *Bhagavad Gita* in utter contempt.

It is worth noting that Psychoanalysis is neither generalizable nor can it be advocated in social vacuum. Psychoanalysis has severe limitations in that - it is devoid of any objectivity, is deeply impacted by reflectivity (as the observer and the observed are the members of the same species), is subjective and racial or religious prejudices may reflect

what seems like common sense within a group of people. However, prejudicial beliefs rarely stand up to what is actually the case. Combine this with complete absence of - empirical evidence, objectivity & control, predictability, replication and the hypothesis testing - key benchmarks to be attained for any scientific proposition to succeed, Wendy Doniger epitomizes a deeply inimical mind who writes with the sole purpose of denigrating the age old customs, traditions as well as the philosophy that the Hindu civilization is renowned for. Her extreme hatred toward Hinduism is reflected in her biased interpretation of Hinduism's holiest book *The Bhagavad Gita*.

Now what can you deduce about someone who associates and quotes Wendy Doniger to ridicule Rajiv Malhotra? Can Gerald Larson be trusted to be favorable towards Hindus and Hinduism? By seconding Doniger's thought, Gerald has compromised his objectivity and is thus "guilty by association".

- B. Gerald Larson does not stop at Doniger. In his quest to belittle Rajiv Malhotra and his work, he quotes Peter Watson, the author of *The Modern Mind: An Intellectual History of the 20th Century (2002)* as under "Whatever list you care to make of twentieth century innovations, be it plastics, antibiotics, and the atom or stream-of-consciousness novels ...or abstract expressionism, it is almost entirely Western."

There is no denying that Western influence reigned supreme in almost all spheres of modern human quest for intellectual enquiry and revival, perhaps since the dawn of the Renaissance Period in Europe. But how does the advancement of Western thought and spirit of enquiry negate the advancements made by other civilizations be they the Indus Valley or the Mesopotamian or the Egyptian Civilizations? This perceived superiority of Western thinkers does not in any way buttress Gerald's position vis-a-vis that of Rajiv Malhotra's especially the one related to integral unity of Dharmic religions.

So by quoting Peter Ward to legitimize Western superiority, Gerald Larson exhibits a preconceived negativity about Rajiv not based on any rational reason, but solely on basis of Indic roots of Rajiv. This is a cleverly disguised tactic which in all probability Gerald inherited consciously or sub-consciously from an institutional aversion to anything non Western in origin.

2. Gerald Larson was a Principal Investigator (with Pratapaditya Pal and Rebecca Gowen) and received a 30,000 \$ grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, for an art exhibition, catalog and symposium entitled "In Her Image: The Great Goddess in Indian Asia and the Madonna in Christian culture." (1979-80).

Does the symposium title itself reassure us that the manner of description / comparison about Hindu Goddesses is from an individual who holds Hindu religion in high esteem? How on earth can anyone place Madonna and the Hindu Goddesses on the same pedestal, even for the sake of a theoretical comparison?

3. Gerald Larson has held important positions at the American Academy of Religion (AAR).

The precursor to AAR, the original - Association of Biblical Instructors in American Colleges and Secondary Schools - was conceived as an organization for Professors and scholars of ***Biblical Studies*** which then eventually metamorphosised into the current secularized American Academy of Religion. This has happened over AAR's 105 year existence.

But it will be a terrible mistake to presume that a secularized nomenclature has necessarily resulted in AAR's transformational outlook towards religions non Biblical in origin. AAR even today is closely associated with the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). In 1969 the two groups founded the Council for the Study of Religion, the first of several joint ventures.

So study and analysis of non-Abrahamic religions through the Christian theological prism is deeply embedded into the AAR much like the biological information embedded into the DNA of an organism. One cannot expect fair treatment and a rational study of concepts of Brahman from an "insider" who is very deeply part of the Christian establishment.

Wouldn't it be very naïve on the part of the Hindus to even expect that Gerald Larson will portray Hinduism in the correct (without any prejudice and bias) light, given his intrinsic association with the Christian academic fiefdom?