

# Educators' Society for the Heritage of India

A Non-Profit Organization for Educators to Network and Share Resources



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## Newsletter March 2005

### ESHI – An Update

Several developments came through for ESHI in the last quarter of 2004. An organizational structure is now in place and ESHI is operational, thanks to overwhelming enthusiasm expressed by so many professors, teachers, community leaders and students to support ESHI. Here is a brief list of developments.

#### ESHI recognized as a tax-exempt Organization

- ESHI has been recognized as a tax-exempt organization by the IRS under section 501©3. All donations to ESHI are tax-exempt, retroactively from December 2003 when ESHI was incorporated. If you haven't made a donation or are yet to become a member, this is the time!

#### ESHI Website - with a new look

- A new-look and easy-to-browse website with lot more information is now up. You are reading this report at the new website! Take a few minutes and browse through. Your feedback is important and will be appreciated.

#### ESHI Conference - 2004

- The ESHI conference held at Rutgers University, NJ in September 2004 was very successful. A large number of professors, teachers, community leaders, representatives from the New Jersey Department of Education, members and students all participated in the conference. Check out the conference details at [Conference-2004 – A Report](#). A summary is available in this newsletter at [Conference-2004 – A Summary](#).

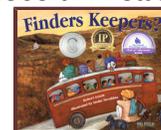
#### ESHI – the Organization

The initial organizational structure of ESHI has been formed with much thought and discussion among the ESHI board members. Their focus has been on the functional areas of the organization. Accordingly a committee of experts is responsible for each of the functional areas. Here is a brief outline:

- The Executive: ESHI is headed by a President. All functional committees are headed by Vice-Presidents who are members of the Executive. A Treasurer and a General Secretary are also members of the Executive. The functional committees are as follows:

### [The Beautiful Tree](#)

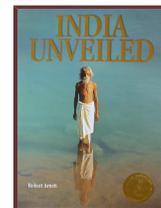
Robert Arnett's



[A Tribute to Hinduism](#)

[All About Hinduism](#)

Robert Arnett's



[iPrem - for resources on Hinduism](#)

- o Research & Resource Development Committee – develops resources
- o Education & Training Committee – provides seminars for middle/high school teachers and public institutions
- o Textbook Review Committee K-12 – reviews K-12 level textbooks
- o College Level Review Committee – reviews college level text/content
- o Journal Committee – publishes ESHI Journal and Newsletters.
- o PR Committee – publicizes ESHI organization in media and community.
- o Fundraising Committee – raises funds for ESHI projects.
- Board of Advisors – consists of renowned professors and educators, advises ESHI functional committees on all academic matters, as required.

For more details, go to article ESHI – the Organization. For a complete list of officials, please visit About Us.

### **Content Review Process**

- A few K-12 textbooks have been reviewed and are under discussion with the Textbook Review Committee.
- ESHI has identified three states: Texas, California and Florida to start the textbook review process.
- Compilation of a comprehensive list of all textbooks being used in the three states is currently under way.

### **ESHI – Upcoming**

- Textbook reviews – Some textbooks have been reviewed and the review and alternative text is under discussion with the Review and R&D committees.
- More review will follow on completion of comprehensive list of textbooks followed in the three states.
- A review and approval process is under discussion and will be implemented soon. Education & Training Committee and R&D Committee are discussing the process.
- A review and approval process for alternate textbook content is under discussion. R&D Committee, K-12 review committee are discussing the process.

### **ESHI – Conference 2004**

#### **Conference Summary**

“Contemporary Conceptions of Studies on India in Academia” was the topic of first national conference organized by **Educators’ Society for the Heritage of India (ESHI)**. It was held at Rutgers University, N. J from September 24-26, 2004. Co-sponsor was **Hindu Students Council (HSC)**.

The objective of the conference was to bring together professors, other scholars, teachers, and students who are interested in education about India. During the conference information was shared on issues related to the education about India in schools and colleges and work that is being done by various individuals and organizations across USA.

Additionally, attendees received guidance, encouragement and tools to enable them to engage in improving the educational environment and resources about India.

Academia and media often stereotype India in negative ways. However, Indian Americans generally do not challenge the stereotyping in an organized manner. As a result, negative views of India, its culture and traditions continue to perpetuate in North America. ESHI was formed to remedy this long-standing problem. Its mission is to function as a network and intellectual think tank of professors, other scholars, teachers and students. The purpose is to provide authoritative information and authentic resources related to India's heritage, culture, history, and languages to middle school and high school teachers, colleges, curriculum developers, education officials and policy makers. This information will also be available to the media, including textbook authors and publishers; inter-faith organizations; non-profit organizations; political leaders and the general public.

Among the presenters at the October conference were Kanchan Banerjee and Dr. Ved P. Chaudhary, ESHI co-founders and board members who presented the background, motivation and mission of ESHI. Professor T. S. Rukmani, Chair in Hindu Studies at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, delivered the keynote lecture, explaining the great cultural heritage of India. It was followed by a plenary session with various scholars, experts and students – Prof. Nirmal Singh; Ms. Seema M. Singh, Esq., Chairperson of the Asian Studies Initiative (NJ); Dr. Piyush Agrawal, former Superintendent of Schools in New Jersey and Florida; Mr. Nikunj Trivedi, Vice president of Hindu Students Council (HSC); Dr. John Dougherty, Director of Curriculum Standards at the New Jersey Department of Education – who spoke about the challenges and issues that exist in the education system in the United States.

Prof. Kamal Sridhar, Director of India Studies Center at SUNY/Stony Brook, Dr Bal Ram Singh, Director of Center for Indic Studies at University of Mass. at Dartmouth, Dr. Surendra Gambhir, Founder and Director of Penn-in-India program, Univ of Pennsylvania, and Dr. K. C. Gupta, President of Hindu University, spoke about the programs at their universities. Sunny (Jiten) Singh, a Ph.D. Student at Rutgers University presented a summary of his doctoral research on Kautilya's Arthashastra that the concept of state, which is considered a European construct of the 16th or 17th century, was in fact propounded by Kautilya in 200-300 BCE.

In other sessions, information was shared about various initiatives taken in different parts of the country for providing education about India to middle or high school teachers and students. These include Texas-based "Indic Culture and Traditions Seminars" (ICATS) and a Florida-based program initiated by Mr. Abhinav Dwivedi, a Board member of Hindu University of America; Yashwant Belsere, a teacher in Florida

and others. Also presented was information on Mona Vijaykar's "India in Classrooms (IC)" California-based program and Meru Education Foundation's programs bringing on arts, culture, history and languages of India to the Boston area schools and its teacher-training modules to promote teaching about India in a more appropriate manner.

Assemblyman Upendra Chivukula and Prof Anand Mohan shared their invaluable thoughts, ideas, and experiences based on their long careers in the political and academic areas respectively. The conference was concluded with an inspiring talk by Sw. Prabhakari Devi, of the Vedic Foundation in Austin, TX, who appealed to the audience to always keep in mind our objective of improving education about India in schools and colleges. She advised that we must unite our efforts, involve more like-minded individuals from our community, raise more funds and make ESHI a professional organization that can effectively carry out its important mission. "Working together", she said, "we shall succeed in this noble mission."

Click here for [\*\*ESHI – Mission and Motivation\*\*](#)