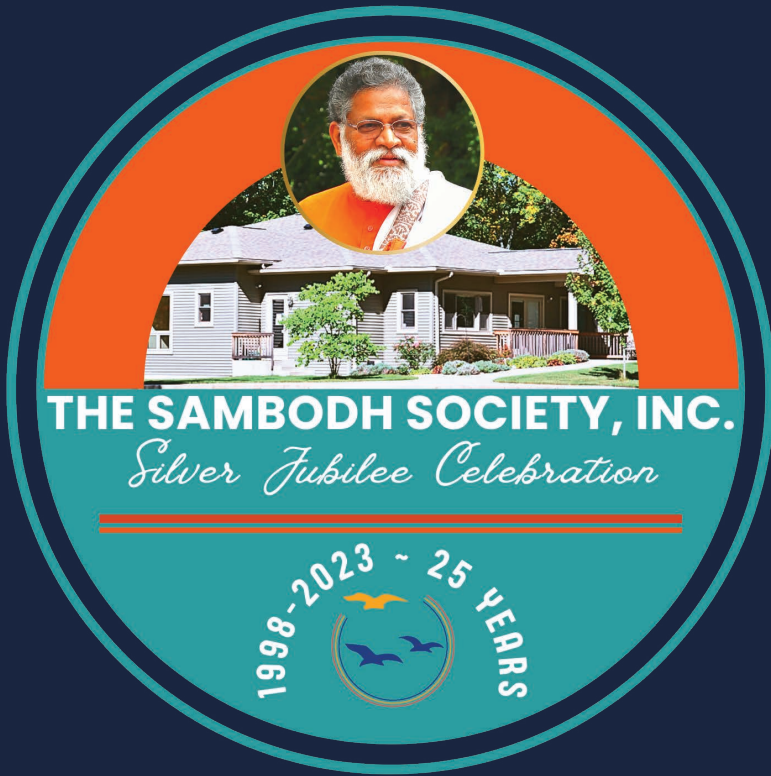


SHIVAM

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF
THE SAMBODH SOCIETY, INC.



3 DAYS • AUGUST 4-5-6, 2023

THE SAMBODH SOCIETY, INC.
6363 N 24th St., Kalamazoo, MI 49004
(269) 492-0544 • thesambodhsociety@gmail.com

DAY 2: SATURDAY, AUGUST 5, 2023 • 9AM–4PM

Seminar

Advaita Vedanta and Contemporary Life Challenges — Talks and Panel Discussions

1. Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work and Humans

AI is increasingly applied in all aspects of human life—in factories, offices, homes, travel and transport, entertainment, hospitals, academia, research, policing, defense and war. Corporations, governments, political parties and charities are using AI power to snoop on private information and influence individual tastes, choices and behavior in shopping, policing, elections and philanthropy. Criminals and terrorists are using Internet space to peddle their nefarious ideologies and spurious products. As in the case with any technology, AI has beneficial as well as malevolent applications. As AI becomes more sophisticated and its applications more pervasive, humans will be replaced by machines from more and more jobs and there is fear of mass unemployment, accumulation of wealth in a few elites and large swaths of populations lost to drugs, depression, destitution, and violence. On the other hand, we can expect better, faster, efficient and inexpensive delivery of governance, health and educational services, banking, policing and justice. What will be the future of people and their wellbeing in an AI dominated world and who will be the winners and losers is the million-dollar question that will be addressed and debated in this session.

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2. Environment and the Future of Life on the Planet

The last five hundred years of relentless economic development powered by science, technology and mass production and distribution have lifted a large number of people from the jaws of crushing poverty. Average life expectancy has increased, quality of living improved, child mortality decreased, infectious diseases like malaria, smallpox and polio have been completely wiped out. We are able to feed, clothe and house 8 billion souls on this planet. But the downside of development is becoming starker and more ominous. Depleted natural resources like fossil fuel, fresh water, fertile soil on the one side and polluted rivers, contaminated ocean beds, endangered biodiversity, melting glaciers, punctured ozone layers, nuclear and E-waste on the other—all due to extensive use of non-degradable plastic, fertilizers and pesticides—the list goes on and on. Soon the planet can become inhospitable. Where do we draw the line between the imperative of development and impending environmental catastrophe is the looming question that this session will debate and shed light on.

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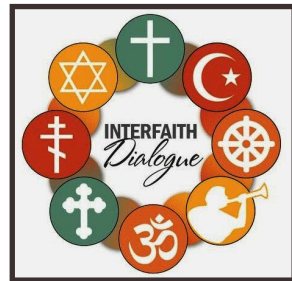
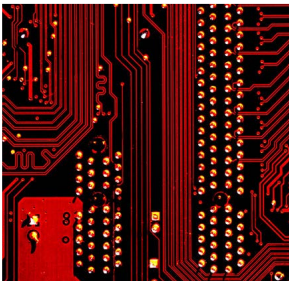
Seminar

3. Interfaith Dialogue and the Future of Global Peace

Peace is paramount in a world armed to the teeth with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. People fight for control of scarce resources. This fight is camouflaged in the name of ethnicity, religion, language, nationality, ideology, elections, sports, etc. After World War I and World War II, it was the Cold War and then the ‘economic war’, and presently a new ‘cold/hot war’ is brewing between the status quo power (America) and the revisionist power (China). The destructive power of non-state actors, like Al Qaeda and rogue states like N. Korea, are side-shows in this mad dance of organized violence. Under the shadow of nuclear weapons, a World War III is unthinkable and is to be avoided at any cost. Most wars were waged in the name of religions and ideologies. Religion, based on faith, is the antithesis of reason; the former divides and the latter unites. Faith is rigid, reason is flexible. Faith runs blind-folded, reason with open eyes. Faith gives no option, while reason provides choices. Every individual, group, and community have their own faith, which makes them apprehensive and suspicious of dissimilar others.

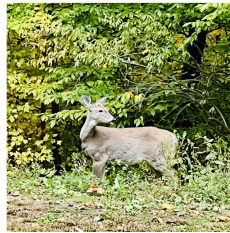
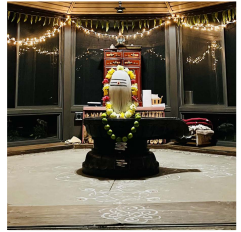
Diversity of faiths and beliefs are healthy and are to be encouraged, provided that we learn to communicate and exchange ideas, concepts and beliefs and values on a nonviolent platform. There is miscommunication between faiths, ideologies, specialists, rulers and ruled, parents and children, and the saga goes on, like Babel’s Tower. The challenge is to cultivate a culture of respectful dialogue, without smothering differences, in a spirit of ‘unity in diversity’, which is very important for the future of peace. What is needed is faith/belief moderated by reason and common purpose. What we face today is a stark choice between peaceful coexistence or total annihilation. Choosing conversation rather than conversion is a choice between a ‘salad bowl’ versus a ‘melting pot’.

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