CONFERENCE REPORT: WAVES 2026

A Global Gathering for the Reintegration of Ayurveda and Vedic Sciences

The 17th International WAVES Conference, organized by the World Association for Vedic Studies (WAVES International) in collaboration with Maharishi International University (MIU), Fairfield, Iowa, and Hindu University of America (HUA), Pine Lakes, Florida, was held from July 30 to August 2, 2026, at Maharishi International University. Themed **"Living Wisdom: Reintegrating Ayurveda and Vedic Sciences in the Modern World,"** the conference marked the 30th anniversary of WAVES. The event served a dual purpose, functioning as both the 17th International Conference of WAVES International and the 30th India Conference of the Wider Association for Vedic Studies (WAVES-India), reflecting three decades of parallel growth between the organization's global and Indian chapters.

Spanning five days, WAVES 2026 included a dedicated pre-conference workshop, "Detox the Ayurvedic Way: A Pre-Conference Immersion in Panchakarma," held at The Raj, Fairfield, Iowa, and a post-conference workshop, "Ayurveda Education in the US: Standards, Integrity, and the Future," convened on August 3, 2026. The conference drew an engaged international audience of more than 150 participants from India, the United States, Europe, and Belarus. Beyond its role as a scholarly gathering, it functioned as a working forum where Ayurveda's classical foundations were examined alongside practical questions about its future — including approaches to teaching, regulation, resource sustainability, and the preservation of Ayurveda as a living tradition rather than a historical artifact.

Academic Symposium

During the Academic Symposium, scholars presented papers spanning a wide range of topics within Ayurveda and Vedic Sciences. This breadth reflected the intellectual scope of the conference and the spirit of respectful dialogue that bridged classical wisdom with critical inquiry. Sessions addressed subjects including Ayurveda, consciousness, artificial intelligence, psychology, education, Sanskrit, Vedic science, architecture, health, research, leadership, and cultural continuity. Rather than treating these as isolated disciplines, the conference demonstrated their integration within a connected knowledge ecosystem that remains relevant to contemporary society.

The program spanned **14 parallel academic tracks**, allowing scholars from disciplines including clinical Ayurveda, Vedic philosophy, integrative medicine, education, and conservation science to present focused research while remaining part of one connected conversation. Sessions moved fluidly between classical textual scholarship — drawing on the Charaka Samhita, Manusmriti, and Taittiriya Upanishad — and contemporary clinical and public health applications, reflecting the conference's core aim of reintegration rather than separation.

Distinguished Speakers

The conference included distinguished speakers and session chairs, such as Dr. Tony Nader, Dr. John Hagelin, Shri Rajiv Malhotra, Dr. Subhash Kak, Shri Kalyan Viswanathan, Dr. Shashi Tiwari, Dr. Bal Ram Singh, Vaidya Vandana Baranwal, Dr. Candace Oliver Badgett, Dr. Narayanan Komerath, Dr. David Scharf, Dr. Anil K. Maheshwari, Dr. Marc Halpern, Dr. Raj Vedam, and Shri Nilesh Nilkanth Oak. Additionally, a diverse group of presenters discussed topics such as women's health, cardiometabolic wellness, medicinal plant conservation, and the philosophical foundations of Samkhya and Ayurvedic thought. Sponsoring organizations, including MAPI, the University of Vedic Wellness, Komal Herbals, and Harmony Healing, provided critical support that facilitated the achievement of the conference's objectives.

Distinguished speaker Dr. Tony Nader, renowned Vedic Scholar and President of MIU, commenced the conference by posing a question that has engaged Vedic seers, physicians, and scientists: Is the body merely a biochemical mechanism, or is it a self-organizing, self-healing manifestation of the same intelligence that structures the universe? This inquiry established a conceptual framework for subsequent discussions, particularly regarding the interrelationship among health, consciousness, and the organizing principles of life. A significant antecedent to this conception of health is found in Vedic literature. In Ṛgveda 7.66.16, Vasiṣṭha invokes the Sun as the “bright eye” established in the east and aspires that human beings may behold this beneficent light for a hundred autumns and live for a hundred autumns. This verse associates human longevity with ongoing participation in the broader rhythms of the natural and cosmic order. Dr. Shashi Tiwari, renowned Vedic Scholar and President of WAVES India, examines this congruence in her research on Āyuṣ (Longevity) in the Vedas, providing context in which the aspiration for health and longevity is not conceived independently of the larger order of life. Her research draws upon Vedic passages to examine the intrinsic relationship of āyuṣ with yajña, karma, and dharma in the ancient tradition.

Within this broader conceptual framework, Dr. Nader articulates the Ayurvedic approach to health as preventive, rhythmic, and constitutional, not solely curative. This approach engages the body's innate intelligence by means of practices such as dinacharya, ritucharya, ahara, rasayana, and, when necessary, panchakarma. These practices are founded on the principle that the inherent intelligence, which structures the universe, actively cares for itself and, through itself, the wider field of life in which it is embedded.

In his talk, Dr. John Hagelin, President Emeritus and Distinguished Professor of Physics at MIU, addressed the potential relationship between consciousness and collective well-being. He referenced research indicating that even a small proportion of a population practicing advanced meditation may generate measurable social effects, citing the 1993 Washington, D.C. study involving 4,000 Transcendental Meditation (TM) practitioners, which reported significant reductions in crime.

By positing that consciousness is connected to a universal field, this Vedic, consciousness-based approach is proposed to accelerate human development through the stabilization of pure consciousness, a state associated with coherent brain functioning.

Extending the discussion from consciousness and collective well-being to the nature of physical reality, the question of what may underlie ordinary physical reality was taken up explicitly by Dr. David Scharf, Professor and Chair, Department of Physics, MIU, in his talk, "Consciousness and Quantum Field Theory: Bridging Science, Philosophy, and the Vedic Perspective." He discussed the relationship between consciousness and material explanations, stating:

“Attempting to explain consciousness through materialism is like trying to understand waves without recognizing the ocean that gives rise to them. Just as the ocean is the silent source of all its waves, the dynamic expressions of consciousness emerge from the unbounded self-interacting field of pure consciousness, the unified source of all knowledge and existence.”

A related exploration of the relationship between human experience and health appears. Dr. Bal Ram Singh, President, Institute of Advanced Sciences, Dartmouth, MA, and WAVES International, researches Rasāyana Shastra and explores how Navarasa, or the nine emotions, are linked to Tanmātra chemistry. Navarasa offers a framework for understanding and expressing the full range of human emotions as shaped by sensory perception. Evidence suggests a connection between these emotions and health outcomes.

The discussion of consciousness and intelligence also extended to artificial intelligence. Shri Rajiv Malhotra, President, Infinity Foundation, explored the limitations of artificial intelligence from a Vedic perspective in his presentation, "Meditation Beyond the Hard Limits of AI." Referencing Sri Aurobindo's concept of Cosmic Consciousness, which intentionally becomes inconscient, then involutes and evolves, the talk argues that intelligence can simulate consciousness without being conscious. In a related examination of technology and consciousness, Dr. Subhash Kak, Regents Professor at Oklahoma State University, investigated the relationship between technology and consciousness in his talk, "Revisiting the Veda in Light of the AI Revolution,” chaired by Shri Sashi Kejriwal, President of WAVES International. Dr. Kak discussed the advanced capabilities of AI chatbots such as ChatGPT, Grok, and Claude, which can communicate in multiple languages, engage in coherent dialogue, compose poetry, and solve complex intellectual problems. He contextualized these achievements within the Vedic understanding of reality, highlighting research on the societal impact of AI agents and presenting evidence supporting the argument that AI will never attain consciousness. Dr. Syagnik Banerjee,Professor of Marketing at UM-Flint and an Affiliate Professor at Michigan Institute of Data Sciences (MIDAS)presented "The Identity-Fuzziness Conundrum: Darshan and Pramana as Premise for Defining Personal Data"explaining the significance of empirical reality and evidence processing in the context of para/ apara vidya, drawing from literature on Darshans and Pramanas which rely on ontologies that speculate a diverse set of self-construals, ranging from autotelic to surrogate

models of identity, relating to different epistemologies that range from deterministic to probabilistic approaches, and identifying the transformed natures of pratyaksh, shabd, arthapatti, anupalabdhi, anumana and upamana in a digital environment.Moving from AI to a broader civilizational perspective, Dr. Raj Vedam, faculty at The Hindu University of America, delivered a keynote address titled "Culture as a Knowledge Continuum: A Civilizational Framework for Understanding Indian Culture." Dr. Vedam focused on the enduring influence of Eurocentrism on India, tracing its effects from the colonial era to the present. He examined how Indian civilization has been interpreted through European frameworks and the resulting implications for India's knowledge systems, economy, identity, and institutions.

Alongside these discussions of civilizational knowledge and contemporary challenges,Shri Kalyan Viswanathan, President of HUA, presented "From the Veda to Contemporary Hinduism: Continuity and Discontinuity." He addressed the unease associated with the term "Hindu" among both outsiders and insiders to Hindu Dharma, and examined the continuities and discontinuities to clarify the relationships between the terms "Vedic" and "Hindu" and the various ways they may be understood. Dr. Anil Maheshwari, Professor emeritus of Management & Information Systems, MIU, spoke on "Blissful Living Made Accessible," discussing bliss as a practical and attainable state grounded in the harmony of body, mind, and consciousness, rather than as a distant ideal. Dr. Candace Oliver Badgett, co-Founder of The Raj and an International Administrator of The Women's Wing of the TM Organization, presented on "Safeguarding the Holistic Framework of Ayurveda." She emphasized that Maharishi's insight into the integral unity within the entire body of Vedic Science provides the foundational perspective necessary for Ayurveda to fulfill its promise of offering a path to real health, which Ayurveda defines as the full unfoldment of human potential in higher states of consciousness.

Addressing the practical applications of Ayurvedic knowledge, Dr. Narayanan M. Komerath(1) and Padmavathy P. Komerath, (1) a retired Professor from the Daniel Guggenheim School of Aerospace Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology, in their presentation "Ayurveda-Led Diagnostic Telemedicine: Patient Perspective," describe a model in which the Vaidya and her clinic serve as the first point of contact, supported by on-site trained medical technicians who use modern diagnostic equipment and a high-resolution, robust telemedicine link. The link connects, via government-run data servers that protect data, to the best experts anywhere as needed. In a discussion of Ayurveda's contemporary reception, Shri Nilesh Nilkanth Oak presented "Āyurveda Roots of Modern Medicine," examining societal perceptions of this traditional practice and the suspicion of it that remains prevalent. He noted that patients often approach Ayurveda when all other paths fail. Vaidya Vandana Baranwal, Convenor, 17th WAVES Conference; Faculty, HUA, gave her talk, "Conserving Ayurveda's Medicinal Resources: Threats, Substitution, and Sustainable Utilization." Finally, Dr. Marc Halpern, Founder of the California College of Ayurveda,

shared his keynote, “Living Ayurveda: A Healing Journey,” chaired by Shri Mahadevan Seetharaman, Dean of the California College of Ayurveda at HUA.

Panel Discussions

The panel **"**Reclaiming Shakti: A Vedic Perspective on Women's Strength," chaired by Candace Badgett, explored the timeless narratives of the PanchaKanya — Ahilya, Draupadi, Tara, Mandodari, and Sita — as embodiments of feminine strength, wisdom, and resilience within Vedic tradition. Panelists examined how these five iconic women's stories offer enduring insight into courage, dignity, and inner power relevant to contemporary conversations on women's empowerment. The panel included Amrita Shrivastava, faculty member in the Physiology and Health Department, MIU and Dr. Sankari Wegman, Associate Professor of Physiology and Health and Assistant-Director of the MS in Integrative MedicineMIU, Vaidya Vandana Baranwal, founder, AyurveDatri; Women Wellness Solutions, Ohio, and Namyata Pathak, founder, Ayu.Care Center for Whole Person Health and Well-being, California.

A second major panel, **"**Living Wisdom Through Time: Ayurveda — Past, Present, and Roads Ahead," was chaired by Vaidya Vandana Baranwal. Panelists included Shri Nilesh Nilkanth Oak, Dr. Candace Oliver Badgett, Shri Yelloji Rao Mirajkar, National Convenor, GIST, NJ, Shri Mahadevan Seetharaman, and Vaidya Sushma Jakkula, Founder, President and Practitioner at Ojas Ayurveda Health Center, FL.

Conclusion

WAVES 2026 offered a rare confluence of classical scholarship and contemporary inquiry, bringing together physicians, physicists, philosophers, and educators under a shared commitment to reintegrating Ayurveda and Vedic sciences into modern life. From explorations of consciousness and artificial intelligence to panels honoring feminine strength within Vedic tradition, the conference underscored that these ancient sciences remain not relics of the past, but living frameworks with continued relevance to health, culture, and human flourishing. As WAVES International and WAVES India mark three decades of dedicatedwork, this year's gathering reaffirmed its role as a vital bridge between tradition and the modern world.

Post-Conference Work-shop on Ayurveda Education in the US: Standards, Integrity, and the Future: Consensus Outcomes

The closing session of the workshop summarized the group's consensus on three central commitments:

- Establish a Council of Schools to independently develop, maintain, and oversee Ayurvedic educational standards throughout the United States.

- Designate WAVES International as the formal coordinating organization to facilitate dialogue, collaboration, and implementation of this process in the United States.

- Develop a 10-year strategic plan for Ayurveda in the United States, addressing education, research, professional recognition, regulatory pathways, and integration with mainstream healthcare

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Institutional and Collaborative Commitments

- WAVES International will mediate and coordinate the formation of the Council of Schools and related initiatives.

- All participating schools will appoint representatives to the newly established Council of Schools.

- The committee will further develop the name and structure of the proposed coordinating body for Ayurvedic schools and colleges.

Additional Actions Proposed During Sessions

- Organize a unified conference to bring together accreditation, certification, and membership organizations under one umbrella (proposed by Dr. John Hagelin).

- Form a think tank to develop a 10-year plan for the Ayurveda profession.

- Strengthen relationships with the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India.

- Establish an advisory group of business professionals to expand job opportunities and develop clear, appropriate public-facing branding for Ayurveda in the United States.

Conclusion

The workshop concluded with a shared commitment to collaboration, academic rigor, ethical leadership, and the development of practical roadmaps for accreditation, competencies, research priorities, and policy advancement. This conclave marked a significant step toward enhancing the credibility, consistency, and long-term growth of Ayurveda education in the United States. With the agreement to establish a separate Council of Schools, the coming months will determine whether this momentum results in the coordinated, unified structure the profession requires.