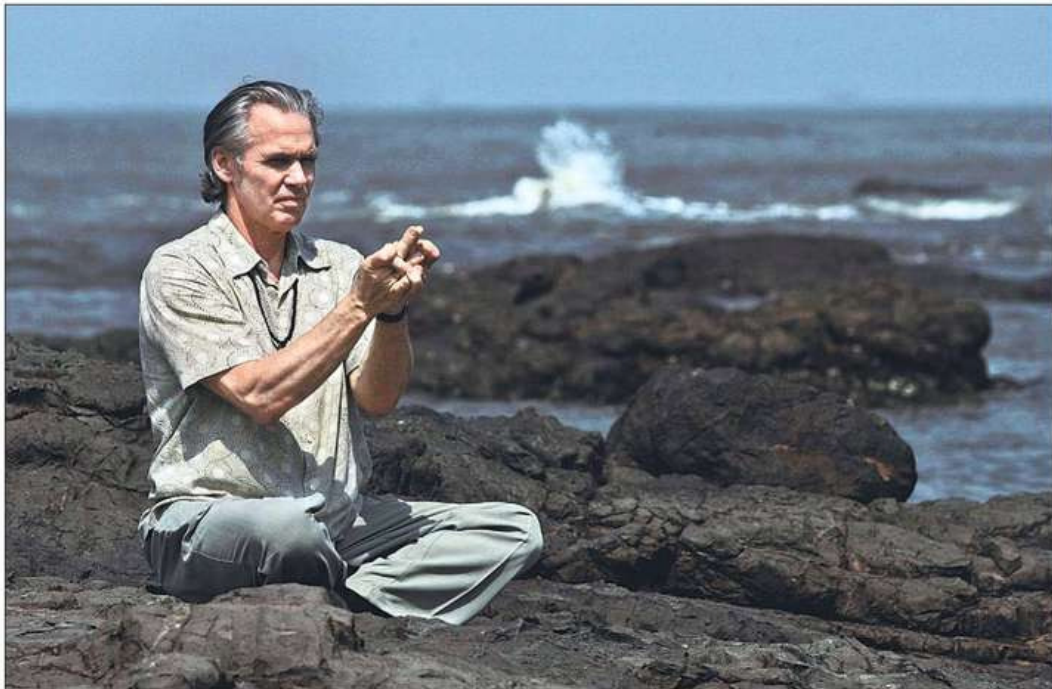


Hindustan Times

The dharma initiative

Sanskrit scholar and American promoter of Hinduism
in city to root Indian youth to religion's philosophy



ANAND SHINDE/HT

Motivational speaker Jeffrey Armstrong, who promotes Hinduism, at Bandra Bandstand on Wednesday.

Purva Mehra
Mumbai, April 2

JEFFREY ARMSTRONG greets everyone with a *namaste* and introduces himself as Kavindra Rishi. That's a *nava* (new) Hindu name conferred on him for his award winning abilities as a mystical poet of the Vedas.

Armstrong's website grants him embellished titles, such as the 'Western master of Eastern knowledge'. But his American looks defy the authority of these laurels. He wastes little time in launching into a discourse on Hinduism as the only way of life that can save humanity. The spiel aids in sealing the distance between his words and his appearance.

The 61-year-old attributes his induction to Hinduism to his philosophical bent. "Since my teens, I've always had questions, the answers to which kept leading me to India. I took a guru and spent five years in an ashram in North America living as a *brahmachari*. So India came to me be-

fore I went to it," said the Vancouver-based ascetic, back in his adoptive country, Canada.

Armstrong's involvement is disarming. He is fluent in Sanskrit (learned from a guru in Benaras), has read the Vedas several times, and is currently involved in publishing his translation of the Bhagwad Gita. He even gave up his seven-year management job in Silicon Valley, California, with Apple Computers to prove the sincerity of his Vedantic pursuits.

"I took a vow that I would only teach the knowledge of Hindu Vedic Sanatana Dharma. It's a necessary medicine for the world. I want to serve, promote bio-diversity, sustainability and ecology all of which have origins in Indian culture," said Armstrong, who can also cook Indian fare including desserts and play the sitar.

The scholar backed his monastic learning with a degree in literature and comparative religion. He makes his bread as a motivational speaker at Fortune 500 companies.

"My main concern now is WHY (World Hindu Youth). This generation is stretched between two cultures and never has an answer to why they're still Hindu. I've had the same experiences and am able to take the Indian culture and incorporate it into practices across the world. I am a cheerleader for Hindu dharma," said Armstrong.

The brand ambassador of Hinduism has been practicing astrology for the past 36 years. That's how he came to acquire the Hindu moniker Kavindra Rishi. "I've written 1,500 poems translating Vedic knowledge into English. The knowledge from India is full of universal truths and that has to be carried forward."

While Rishi is restoring the faith of Hindus across the world through his organisations Vedic Academy of Sciences and Arts and Vedic Friends Association, he admits that non-Hindus are more accepting of him as a promoter of Hindu knowledge.

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